OXFORD

The Oxford History of Historical Writing

VOLUME 2

400–1400

EDITED BY
Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson

THE OXFORD HISTORY OF
HISTORICAL WRITING

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The Oxford History of Historical Writing is a five-volume, multi-authored scholarly survey of the history of historical writing across the globe. It is a chronological history of humanity's attempts to conserve, recover, and narrate its past with considerable attention paid to different global traditions and their points of comparison with Western historiography. Each volume covers a particular period, with care taken to avoid unduly privileging Western notions of periodization, and the volumes cover progressively shorter chronological spans, reflecting both the greater geographical range of later volumes and the steep increase in historical activity around the world since the nineteenth century. *The Oxford History of Historical Writing* is the first collective scholarly survey of the history of historical writing to cover the globe across such a substantial breadth of time.

Volume 1: Beginnings to AD 600

Volume 2: 400–1400

Volume 3: 1400–1800

Volume 4: 1800–1945

Volume 5: Historical Writing since 1945

THE OXFORD HISTORY OF HISTORICAL WRITING

Daniel Woolf

GENERAL EDITOR

The Oxford History of Historical Writing

VOLUME 2: 400–1400

Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson

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General Editor's Acknowledgements

The Oxford History of Historical Writing has itself been the product of several years of work and many hands and voices. As general editor, it is my pleasure to acknowledge a number of these here. First and foremost, to the volume editors, without whom there would have been no series. I am very grateful for their willingness to sign on, and for their flexibility in pursuing their own vision for their piece of the story while acknowledging the need for some common goals and unity of editorial practices. The Advisory Board, many of whose members were subsequently roped into either editorship or authorship, have given freely of their time and wisdom. At Oxford University Press, former commissioning editor Ruth Parr encouraged the series proposal and marshalled it through the readership and approvals process. After her departure, my colleagues and I enjoyed able help and support from Christopher Wheeler at the managerial level and, editorially, from Rupert Cousens, Seth Cayley, Matthew Cotton, and Stephanie Ireland. I must also thank the OUP production team and Carol Carnegie in particular.

The series would not have been possible without the considerable financial support from the two institutions I worked at over the project's lifespan. At the University of Alberta, where I worked from 2002 to mid-2009, the project was generously funded by the Offices of the Vice-President (Research) and the Provost and Vice-President (Academic). I am especially grateful to Gary Kachanoski and Carl Amrhein, the incumbents in those offices, who saw the project's potential. The funding they provided enabled me to hire a series of project assistants, to involve graduate students in the work, and to defray some of the costs of publication such as images and maps. It permitted the acquisition of computer equipment and also of a significant number of books to supplement the fine library resources at Alberta. Perhaps most importantly, it also made the crucial Edmonton conference happen. At Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, where I moved into a senior leadership role in 2009, funding was provided to push the project over the 'finish-line', to transfer the research library, and in particular to retain the services of an outstanding research associate, Assistant Editor Dr Ian Hesketh. I am profoundly grateful for Ian's meticulous attention to detail, and his ability ruthlessly to cut through excess prose (including on occasion my own) in order to ensure that volumes maintained editorial uniformity internally and together with other volumes, not least because the volumes are not all being published at once. A series of able graduate students have served as project assistants, including especially Tanya Henderson, Matthew Neufeld, Carolyn Salomons, Tereasa Maillie, and Sarah Waurechen, the last of whom almost single-handedly organized the complex logistics of the Edmonton conference. Among the others on

whom the project has depended I have to thank the Office of the Dean of Arts and Science for providing project space at Queen's University, and the Department of History and Classics at Alberta. Melanie Marvin at Alberta and Christine Berga at Queen's have assisted in the management of the research accounts, as has Julie Gordon-Woolf, my spouse (and herself a former research administrator), whose advice on this front is only a small part of the support she has provided.

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Foreword

Daniel Woolf, General Editor

Half a century ago, Oxford University Press published a series of volumes entitled *Historical Writing on the Peoples of Asia*. Consisting of four volumes devoted to East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia, and based on conferences held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in the late 1950s, that series has aged surprisingly well; many of the individual essays are still being cited in our own day. The books were also remarkably ahead of their time since the history of historical writing was at that time firmly understood as being the history of a European genre. Indeed, the subject of the history of history was itself barely a subject—typical surveys of the early to mid-twentieth century by the likes of James Westfall Thompson and Harry Elmer Barnes, following Eduard Fueter's paradigmatic 1911 *Geschichte der Neueren Historiographie* [History of Modern Historiography], were written by master historians surveying their discipline and its origins. The Oxford series provided some much needed perspective, though it was not followed up for many years, and more recent surveys in the last two or three decades of the twentieth century have continued to speak of historiography as if it were an entirely Western invention or practice. Since the late 1990s a number of works have been published that challenge the Eurocentrism of the history of history, as well as its inherent teleology. We can now view the European historiographic venture against the larger canvas of many parallel and—a fact often overlooked—interconnected traditions of writing or speaking about the past from Asia, the Americas, and Africa.

The Oxford History of Historical Writing is conceived in this spirit. It seeks to provide the first collective scholarly history of historical writing to span the globe. It salutes its great predecessor of half a century ago, but very deliberately seeks neither to imitate nor to replace it. For one thing, the five volumes collectively include Europe, the Americas, and Africa, together with Asia; for another, the division among these volumes is chronological, rather than by region. We decided on the former because the history of non-European historical writing should, no more than that of its European counterpart, be viewed in isolation. We chose the latter in order to provide what amounts to a cumulative narrative (albeit with well over a hundred different voices), and in order to facilitate comparison and contrast between regions within a broad time period.

A few caveats that apply to the entire series are in order. First, while the series as a whole will describe historical writing from earliest times to the present, each individual volume is also intended to stand on its own as a study of a particular

period in the history of historical writing. These periods shrink in duration as they approach the present, both because of the obvious increase in extant materials and known authors, but also because of the expansion of subject matter to a fully global reach (the Americas, for instance, do not feature at all in volume 1; non-Muslim Africa appears in neither volume 1 nor volume 2). Second, while the volumes share a common goal and are the product of several years of dialogue both within and between its five editorial teams and the general editor, there has been no attempt to impose a common organizational structure on each volume. In fact, quite the opposite course has been pursued: individual editorial teams have been selected because of complementary expertise, and encouraged to 'go their own way' in selecting topics and envisioning the shapes of their volumes—with the sole overriding provision that each volume had to be global in ambition. Third, and perhaps most importantly, this series is emphatically neither an encyclopedia nor a dictionary. A multi-volume work that attempted to deal with *every* national tradition (much less mention every historian) would easily spread from five to fifty volumes, and in fact not accomplish the ends that the editors seek. We have had to be selective, not comprehensive, and while every effort has been made to balance coverage and provide representation from all regions of the world, there are undeniable gaps. The reader who wishes to find out something about a particular country or topic not included in the *OHHW*'s more than 150 chapters can search elsewhere, in particular in a number of reference books which have appeared in the past fifteen or so years, some of which have global range. Our volumes are of course indexed, but we have deemed a cumulative index an inefficient and redundant use of space. Similarly, each individual essay offers a highly selective bibliography, intended to point the way to further reading (and where appropriate listing key sources from the period or topic under discussion in that chapter). In order to assist readers with limited knowledge of particular regions' or nations' political and social contexts, certain chapters have included a timeline of major events, though this has not been deemed necessary in every case. While there are (with one or two exceptions) no essays devoted to a single 'great historian', many historians from Sima Qian and Herodotus to the present are mentioned; rather than eat up space in essays with dates of birth and death, these have been consolidated in each volume's index.

Despite the independence of each team, some common standards are necessary in any series that aims for coherence, if not uniformity. Towards that end, a number of steps were built into the process of producing this series from the very beginning. Maximum advantage was taken of the Internet: not only were scholars encouraged to communicate with one another within and across volumes, but draft essays were posted on the project's website for commentary and review by other authors. A climactic conference, convened at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada in September 2008, brought most of the editors and just over half the authors together, physically, for an energizing and exciting two days during which matters of editorial detail and also content and substance were

discussed. A major 'value-added', we think, of both conference and series, is that it has introduced to one another scholars who normally work in separate national and chronological fields, in order to pursue a common interest in the history of historical writing in unique and unprecedented ways. As the series' general editor, it is my hope that these connections will survive the end of the project and produce further collaborative work in the future.

Several key decisions came out of the Edmonton conference, among the most important of which was to permit chronological overlap, while avoiding unnecessary repetition of topics. The chronological divisions of the volumes—with calendrical years used instead of typical Western periods like 'Middle Ages' and 'Renaissance'—remain somewhat arbitrary. Thus volume 1, on antiquity, ends about AD 600 prior to the advent of Islam, but overlaps with its successor, volume 2, on what in the West were the late antique and medieval centuries, and in China (the other major tradition of historical writing that features in every volume), the period from the Tang through the early Ming dynasties. Volumes 4 and 5 have a similar overlap in the years around the Second World War. While 1945 is a sensible boundary for some subjects, it is much less useful for others—in China, again, 1949 is the major watershed. Certain topics, such as the Annales School, are not usefully split at 1945. A further change pertained to the denotation of years BC and AD; here, we reversed an early decision to use BCE and CE, on the grounds that both are equally Eurocentric forms; BC/AD have at least been adopted by international practice, notwithstanding their Christian European origins.

It became rather apparent in Edmonton that we were in fact dealing with two sets of two volumes each (vols. 1/2 and 4/5), with volume 3 serving in some ways as a bridge between them, straddling the centuries from about 1400 to about 1800—what in the West is usually considered the 'early modern' era. A further decision, in order to keep the volumes reasonably affordable, was to use illustrations very selectively, and only where a substantive reason for their inclusion could be advanced, for instance in dealing with Latin American pictographic forms of commemorating the past. There are no decorative portraits of famous historians, and that too is appropriate in a project that eschews the history of historiography conceived of as a parade of stars—whether Western or Eastern, Northern or Southern—from Thucydides to Toynbee.

The present volume, though chronologically the second of five in the series, is last to be published. The editors, Professors Sarah Foot and Chase Robinson, respectively scholars of early medieval Europe and the Islamic Middle East, have assembled contributions from specialists in a number of regions of the world spanning the millennium from 400 to 1400. As they note in their introduction, periodization (always a challenge in projects of global scope) is especially complicated during this very long era (which is one reason why this volume overlaps in its early centuries with ground covered by volume 1 and, in some chapters, stretches at the other end into the time scale of volume 3). The centuries covered

here witnessed the bureaucratization of an already old Chinese tradition of historical writing under the Tang dynasty, and further significant innovation under the Song and Yuan near the end of the period; it also saw the adaptation of Chinese historiography by nearby East and Southeast Asian countries, in particular Japan, Korea, and Vietnam; an additional influence throughout the region was Buddhism, imported from India and Sri Lanka. Elsewhere, the seventh and eighth centuries saw the emergence and rapid expansion of Islam, and with it an especially vigorous tradition of historical writing in Arabic, Persian, and other languages. In Europe, with Christendom divided between Greek East and Latin West, late antiquity gave rise to a host of new genres, beginning with the works of the great 'barbarian' historians of the sixth to eighth centuries, new universal and church histories, continuing with the 'gesta' or deeds of kings, emperors, and powerful ecclesiastical figures, and ending with the urban chronicles that start to appear, along with the towns whose social and economic life they reflect, in the thirteenth century. Throughout the millennium migration, war, and trade contributed to the spread, limited though it may have been, of one culture's historical forms elsewhere. This happened, for instance, in the adaptation of Chinese historical forms, rooted in Confucianism, elsewhere in East Asia, and in the dissemination of Islamic historical writing outside its Middle Eastern birthplace, eventually reaching as far afield as Southeast Asia. The number of languages used in extant historical writing remained quite limited in much of the world, though the use of vernacular tongues, once quite sporadic, increased in the last quarter of the millennium. In rare cases, the conqueror would adopt both the language and the historiography of the vanquished, as happened during the short-lived tenure of the Mongol Yuan dynasty over China.

Professors Foot and Robinson note that this is a millennium through most of which 'peoples' rather than 'nations' are (along with religions and royal, imperial or aristocratic dynasties) the more meaningful unit around which historians organized their writings. With a geographic range as broad as that in volume 1, the chapters begin in the Far East with China, Korea, Southeast Asia, and Japan and thence travel westward, embracing India, Islam, and Byzantium, ending in Western Europe thereby (as is the case in volume 3) explicitly de-centreing the privileged European historiographical achievement. The later chapters of the book adopt either a topical or a genre-based approach, exploring forms of historical writing from the local to the universal, from the court-centred to the religious; in some cases they offer explicit comparisons among historiographical traditions often studied separately, for instance those of Western or Eastern Christendom and Islam (where contacts were more regular than, say, between Europe and East Asia). Collectively, the authors of this book have illuminated both the familiar and the more obscure corners of the historiographical corpus bequeathed to us by an age which we in the modern West have by long tradition called 'medieval'—this in itself being a term that has limited application once one leaves the confines of Christian Europe for the east.

NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

Non-Roman alphabets and writing systems have been routinely transliterated using the standard systems for each language (for instance, Chinese using the Pinyin system). For the transliteration of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Syriac we have followed the rules set out by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Non-English book titles are normally followed (except where meaning is obvious) by a translated title, within square brackets, and in roman rather than italic face, unless a specific, published English translation is listed, in which case the bracketed title will also be in italics.

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Editors' Introduction

Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson

Parallel administrative, financial, and ideological features in Roman and Chinese imperialism may reflect a 'first great convergence' at more or less opposite ends of the Eurasian landmass between about 1000 BC, and the late sixth century AD, when the tendency towards political polycentrism in the Mediterranean west and the periodic restoration of imperial unity in East Asia come to constitute separate trajectories.[1] Now it might be said that in privileging structure over the accident, the contingent, and the individual, such comparative analyses necessarily discount the very differences that give rise to multiple social formations; in this sense, they are exercises in the social sciences, rather than the humanities. Even so, it would be churlish to deny that, at the very least, modes of comparative history, global history, or historical sociology are heuristically useful, especially inasmuch as they function to lay bare Eurocentric and teleological approaches that stubbornly persist, in some cases reassuring the anxious West of its singular achievement and cultural superiority.[2]

The Oxford History of Historical Writing is predicated upon the uncontroversial proposition that societies across the globe and across recorded time produced varieties of historical writing that are worth understanding. Its coverage is not uniform, in part because not all societies produced historical writing that survives. North and South America, which lacked writing systems (though they had other means of graphic commemoration such as glyphs), represents an obvious example; there, as in sub-Saharan Africa, the loss of oral history has meant the loss of narrative history. A less obvious example comes in the densely lettered late antique culture of the Sasanian Empire; the military match of its Byzantine rival, the state itself seems to have produced very little in the way of historiography, be it 'official' (in the Chinese sense) or indirectly patronized (in the Islamic), leaving modern-day historians with the difficult task of assembling material written by

[1] Walter Scheidel, 'From the "Great Convergence" to the "First Great Divergence": Roman and Qin-Han State Formation and Its Aftermath', in Scheidel (ed.), *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires* (Oxford, 2009), 3–10.

[2] See, for a very recent example, Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (London, 2011).

minorities and outsiders. In smaller part, the current volume's inconsistency also springs from the shape of modern scholarship itself, which is so uneven. Accounts of the 'rise of the West' are compelling not just because they are reassuring, flattering, or familiar, but also because they tap into deep veins of historiography. Some of these are relatively new, but others reach back into the Renaissance and Enlightenment, assembling, recording, translating sources that have been culturally valorized through history—the Greek and Roman 'classics', their Western and Byzantine offshoots during the Early and Later 'Middle Ages' (to a lesser extent), and, eventually, the rise, flowering, and wilting of modern 'scientific' historical writing. It remains a regrettable fact that our knowledge is woefully incomplete even in those non-European traditions that produced history-writing in copious amounts, such as the Islamic Middle East and Chinese East Asia. The gaps that remain in this volume reflect the grossly unequal distribution and uneven pace of scholarship that characterize the study of historical writing as global phenomena, especially in the pre-modern period.[3]

Taken singly and collectively, the volumes in this series thus reflect the state of an uneven field. This, the second of five volumes, covers the period between 400 and 1400, thus overlapping with the first, which closes in about 600. The editors of that volume called its end-point 'artificial', which is certainly the case: although the first decades of the seventh century witnessed the rise of two new Asian superpowers, the Muslim conquerors and Tang dynasts, along with associated historiographic trends, elsewhere the seventh century makes no sense at all. The Armenian script was invented around 405, and its historical tradition follows closely. We shall see that in 600 Byzantine historical writing was beginning to run into the ground, and it would only regain its speed in the middle of the eighth century. The roots of Korean historical writing also pre-date the seventh-century watershed. Several contributors have consequently backtracked into the sixth and fifth centuries, so as to trace earlier developments and, in some cases, identify origins. The contributions in this volume close about 1400, which usefully marks the rise of European hegemony, a development now increasingly understood within a broad Eurasian context.[4] In one case (the Slavonic), the contribution here substantially overlaps with the chronology assigned to the succeeding volume.

Of course periodizations are frequently criticized as arbitrary; and many historians like nothing more than to subvert them by describing continuities that cross those arbitrary divides. There is a different point to make, however, which contrasts these early volumes with later ones. The events of the year 1945, which draws the line between volumes 4 and 5, had global significance precisely because they took place in the rapidly globalizing world of the twentieth century, where

[3] In a few other cases in this volume (such as Sri Lanka and pre-Columbian Mesoamerica), it must also be said that commissions did not produce contributions.

[4] See, for example, John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400–2000* (London, 2007).

transport and technology moved peoples, goods, and ideas great distances at great speeds. In the pre-modern period, there is no question of finding a '1945', a date that signifies a cluster of proximate and world-transforming events. The closest one that comes early in this period may be the Battle of Talas, when Muslim armies of the Abbasid dynasty defeated a Tang army under the Korean commander, Kao Sien-Chih, in 751; it is often said that these captives introduced Chinese techniques of paper manufacture into the Islamic world, but what is clearer is that the battle halted Chinese expansionism into Central Asia. The closest one that comes later in our period may be 1206, when a Mongol named Temujin was elected as Chinngis (or Ghenghis) Khan, whose movement of conquest created within two generations the largest Eurasian polity in history and, in some sense, what some call the first 'world system'.[5] This said, neither 751 nor 1206 (much less 400, 600, or 1400) can be said to set or redirect historiographic trends that transcended what, for the most part, were discrete traditions. Indeed, pioneers in historical thought were not necessarily trendsetters even within their own traditions, surely the best example being none other than a geographical and intellectual outlier named Ibn Khaldun, the oft-cited 'father' of economic and social scientific thinking whose paternity emerged only centuries after his death in 1406.

In the pre-globalized world of 400–1400, we shall see that a diversity of historical writing is the rule. Leaving aside comparisons so gross as to be heuristically useless, one can confidently say that there is no question of finding historiographic convergence across Asia, much less the globe. Diversity of language, approach, subject matter, genre, and much more besides, is what we should expect and what we find in a world altogether less homogeneous than ours. Less obvious forms of diversity should also be noted; medium is one. In the eastern Mediterranean, history-writing on parchment or vellum was the norm, and, as it happens, the epigraphic 'habit' of inscription-writing (on stone) had fallen off considerably during the third century. During the ninth and tenth centuries, Chinese techniques of paper manufacture were taking hold in the Near East, and the new, cheaper medium elbowed aside processed animal skins and papyrus in the Islamic world, Europe stubbornly holding out until the fifteenth century. By contrast, history-writing in Southeast Asia was carried out in stone and metal throughout much of our period, paper appearing selectively during the eleventh century. The spread of technology was culturally mediated.

In the period covered by this volume, historical writing developed at wildly differential speeds and along regional, linguistic, religious, and cultural lines that, *as a general rule*, ran parallel to each other, cross-pollinating, transecting, or fusing in ways that scholarship has so far failed to measure in any systematic way.

[5] For a provocative view, see Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250–1350* (Oxford, 1991).

Why this is so is an extraordinarily complicated (and poorly understood) issue, but one partial answer can be provided by way of explaining the asynchronous nature of the contributions and highlighting the complex interplay of identity, time, language, and past. Human groups typically become a 'people' before or as they become subject to ethnographically inflected history-writing on the part of others, typically neighbours, travellers, or conquerors; the results are mixed at best, and '[t]radition, experience and expectation were the determinants of vision', as J. H. Elliott wrote of how Europeans perceived the New World.[6] But 'peoples' are more fully fleshed out by proto-nationalist history-writing of their own making. Ethnogenesis is a politico-cultural process, and history and language are crucial ingredients in culture. The roots of Armenian historical writing can be traced to the religio-ethnic processes that created the Armenian 'people' in the fourth and fifth centuries. Similarly, the historical writing of the Rus', which appears much later, in the tenth century. The case of the Jews, who produced little conventional—that is, chronographic—history in this period shows that, once endowed with a history, 'peoples' did not necessarily have to maintain it on their own; this is why the Jewish tradition appears in volume I, but not here. Meanwhile, the case of the Copts, who did write a fair amount of history, chose to write more of it in the language of their non-Christian rulers (Arabic) rather than in their own.

All of this said, there are nonetheless commonalities that transcend the regional, linguistic, religious, and cultural variables that conditioned historical writing during the chronological period assigned to this volume. Writers in different geographical locations who chose diverse forms of writing through which to preserve the remembered pasts of unrelated peoples and places all shared a concern with chronology and the representation of time, an awareness of place and its relevance to the accounts they told, and—in tailoring their narratives to specific audiences—frequently displayed a self-conscious awareness of the purposes to which historical writing might be put.

Traditions of historical writing already existed, of course, in China and in the Greek- and Latin-speaking worlds in the period before that covered by this volume, but in several of the regions explored below we can begin to perceive a perceptible historical consciousness which came with the introduction of the technology of writing. Early attempts at memorializing significant past deeds and figures in writing could take non-narrative forms; several of the chapters in the first part of the volume consider first examples of inscriptions, or of the writing down of genealogies of kings (records designed to demonstrate—or confer—royal legitimacy, which in many cases had previously been remembered orally) before turning to connected narratives (see the chs. by Whitmore, Bentley, Hirschler, and Berend). The fresh mechanisms that written media offered for the

[6] J. H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New: 1492–1650* (Cambridge, 1970), 20.

preservation and dissemination of memories previously preserved through oral means (such as via the recitation of poems, epic tales, or other legends) provided a significant stimulus to the writing of history in many regions, sometimes but not always associated with the introduction of written sacred texts. Thus in Japan, the appearance of the first historical narratives accompanies the introduction of written Buddhist scripture (see the ch. by Bentley), the emergence of Islam proved key in the development of Arabic as a written language that promoted and expressed administrative, ideological, and religious unity (see the ch. by Robinson), and in Central Europe historical writing emerged from combined political and religious change, specifically Christianization (see the ch. by Berend). Christianity brought with it not just a new technology but also changed cultural attitudes which occasioned the rethinking of received attitudes towards the past (see the ch. by Bagge). The precedent for tracing narratives of peoples offered by the Old Testament, and the account of the origins of the Christian church in the Book of Acts inspired many medieval Christian historians (see the ch. by Shepard). In Armenia, as Theo van Lint shows, the transition to written records proved a complex process, since a significant interval of time separated the official introduction of Christianity in Armenia and the development of an alphabet in which to write the Armenian language. While unable to write in their native language the Armenians continued to use oral modes of memory preservation beyond the conversion, but existing modes of memorialization gradually underwent profound changes when clerics using Iranian models replaced orally transmitted epics of former kings with a written history of salvation organized according to Christian chronology, not cyclic time (see the ch. by Breuker, Koh, and Lewis). Writers in different faith-traditions thus saw in writing the means of preserving memories that might otherwise have been forgotten, as well as the mechanisms for controlling precisely which versions of past events found permanent record (see the chs. by Foot, Shepherd, and Bentley).

Since new faiths brought with them fresh notions about calculating and representing time, the extent to which chronology dominated historical writing in the period covered by this volume is unsurprising. In Part II, Andrew Marsham discusses a particular group of histories which defined themselves as universal because their authors located the beginnings of their story either at Creation or in the remote ancient past, and attempted to survey all of past time, often across a wide geographical span. Other authors limited the scope of their enquiries within a narrower time-frame, but still demonstrated an interest in modes of representing elapsed past time, and often used time as one of the principles by which to organize their material. Collections of annals, lists of past events plotted chronologically against a linear sequence of years, represent the most common form of such historical writing; examples occur widely across all the regions explored in this volume from China to Scandinavia, Persia to Scotland. While Judaeo-Christian and Islamic monotheism shared an understanding of time that was both linear and fundamentally eschatological (in that it located past and

present eras on the forward-moving arrow that led inexorably towards the eschaton), not all temporal conceptions employed by historians in this period were linear. Generational time, the rhythm of successive generations of a ruling dynasty, or of a particular people or ethnic group gave a different temporal model for organizing historical texts, where the lines were vertical rather than horizontal (see the ch. by West). Cyclical as well as linear conceptions of time were sometimes encompassed within fundamentally linear schemes and could also colour historical writing, as for example Daud Ali shows was the case in India during the centuries studied in his chapter. Different cultures and religious traditions nonetheless held some common views about the role of divine intervention in determining the fate of humanity, in how divine agencies affected earthly events, and in how earthly time and divine time related. Divine displeasure manifested through various sorts of natural and man-made disasters could portend future misfortune.

In addition to exploring diverse modes of representing past time, historiographers experimented with literary forms to find the most appropriate genre in which to represent the pasts they sought to preserve. Where writing was a novelty, authors might seek to record in written form the sorts of information previously remembered by oral means which may in part explain why so many historical works from this period so closely resemble lists (see the chs. by Hartman and DeBlasi, Foot, West, and Cheikh); the use of verse rather than prose may similarly indicate an oral origin for material that was ultimately written down.

One of the striking features of the range of historical writing surveyed in this volume is the diversity of genres across all the regions under discussion; perhaps equally striking is how this diversity cuts across discrete historiographic traditions. Annals and lists were compiled equally in China, Byzantium, the Islamic, and Western European worlds; genealogies and biographies of rulers and leading local figures were composed in all regions; there survive universal histories in Latin, Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, and Persian, a pattern that may reflect a distinctive West Eurasian orientation; the use of collections of letters to preserve information about the past is attested in Armenia, Eastern and Western Europe and many historians and chroniclers inserted the texts of letters into their narratives to support parts of their argument (see the chs. by Van Lint, Berend, Lifshitz, and Hudson). Many factors influenced the choices historians made about genre including the availability of literary models and, of course, whether or not authors wrote within a tradition in which writing about the past was already long established.

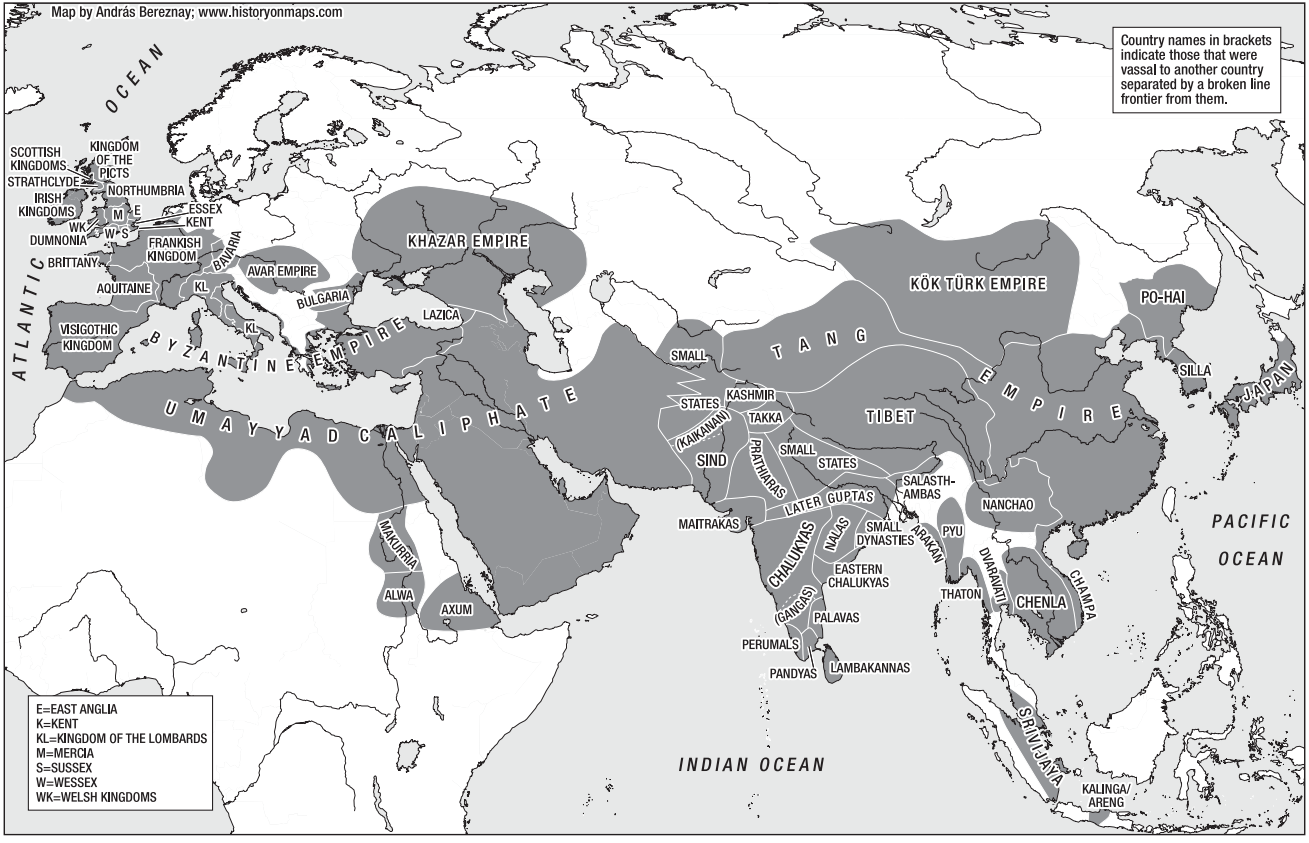
The circumstances in which a new work was composed and its intended audience could prove equally significant in determining the form it took. Adoption of a new religion, military crisis, dynastic instability, and political change all inspired innovation in literary form. For example, the Italian chaplain to the papal legate to Hungary in the 1230s wrote an eye-witness account of the Mongol invasion of Hungary in the novel form of a letter addressed to his patron, the

Carmen miserabile [Lamentation] (see the ch. by Berend). Felice Lifshitz shows how different sorts of historical narrative emerged in the barbarian successor states to Rome in the medieval West, tracing the role of ethnogenesis in shaping a people's view of its own past; formation of a centralized, aristocratic state in seventh-century China led to the emergence of an official historiography which was part of the bureaucracy of that state (see the ch. by Hartman and DeBlasi). While some writers could shape narratives of the past in order to celebrate present realities (and even prophesy for the future) (see the ch. by Briggs), others saw admonitory uses for the past. History's didactic function was as apparent in China and the Arab worlds as in Eastern and Western Europe; in India the moral logic of the past spoke to both present and future audiences (see the ch. by Ali). Chinese history made much of the use of the metaphor of history as a mirror, using the rather blunt tool of praise and blame to polish that image and Japanese writers adopted the same image (see the chs. by Hartman and DeBlasi and Bentley). Examples of the genre of the mirror for princes, texts that use the past to advise (and warn) contemporary rulers occur from all regions, including India, Russia, Hungary, the Abbasid Caliphate, Byzantium, Frankia (the future France and parts of Germany), and Ireland.

Of course historical writing could serve multiple purposes and speak to much wider audiences than those its authors might have envisaged. Motives that drove writers in one era to attempt to create usable pasts did not necessarily continue to resonate for later generations, who might still draw on those earlier narratives to meet new, contemporary needs (see the chs. by Kaldellis and Innes). Official, state-commissioned (or state-sanctioned) accounts present different versions of past events from those composed by individuals writing at a distance from the centres of power. Language could be used to serve various purposes too; in some regions one must distinguish between histories written in the language of bureaucracy, those sponsored by religious communities or institutions and written in their sacred languages, and texts composed in a people's vernacular; in other areas (including the Greek, Islamic, and Chinese worlds) bureaucratic, religious, and spoken linguistic communities overlapped. That history could, and did, provide entertainment is self-evident: successive generations enjoyed reading or listening to the celebration of the heroic valour and glory of kings and military commanders, the supernatural powers bestowed on the holy (see the chs. by van Lint, Kaldellis, and Robinson). Audiences in search of diversion frequently found it, especially where the boundaries between the factual and the fictional blurred (see the chs. by Kaldellis and Briggs).

Taken singly, the contributions to this volume are intended to introduce the reader not only to the distinctive features and trajectories of global historiography between 400 and 1400, but also to some of their common approaches and features. Part I accentuates those distinctions. Organized geographically, and moving from east to west, the chapters in the first half of the volume give appropriate prominence to traditions that have traditionally been marginalized by a

conventional, Eurocentric approach to historical writing. The purpose here is to provide a concise and readable overview of the principal genres and historical development of each tradition, with attention to the distinctive characteristics of each. Since our aim is to examine historical representation in different cultures, and not in separate countries, we have chosen not to give the historiographies of separate 'nations' individual treatment. Equally, this is not the place to devote chapters to single figures (such as Bede or Ibn Khaldun) however iconic they have become in the history of historiography. Exceptional or especially significant figures are treated in the context in which they operated. Part II explores, often tentatively and experimentally, commonalities shared across space. Taken collectively, the contributions thus document the remarkable resourcefulness, ingenuity, and creativity of our pre-modern historiographers. Many of these worked in regions left peripheral or marginal in more conventional overviews, and all of them wrote in a transitional period of global history: rooted in the venerable cultures of antiquity, they preserved and interpreted global passages into the increasingly integrated world of the early modern period.



Map 1. Polities of the Medieval World, *c.*700



Map 2. Polities of the Medieval World, *c.*1000


Country names in brackets indicate those that were vassal to another country separated by a broken line frontier (or sea) from them. The unnamed dark coloured states in southern Italy are Capua (NW), Benevento (NE) and Salerno (south).
KIEVAN RUS
VOLGA BULGARIA
KIEVAN RUS
POLAND
HUNGARY
BULGARIA
GEORGIAN STATES
SMALL STATES
ARMENIA
EMPIRE
HAMDANIDS
BUWAYHIDS
FATIMIDS
KARMATIANS
MAKURRIA
ZAYDIS
ALWA
ETHIOPIA
KARAKHANIDS
GHAZNAVIDS
GURJARA-PRATHIARAS
KASH.
HINDUS
Q
CHAHAM.
SMALL STATES
ABHIRAS
CHAULUKYAS
PARAMARAS
CHALUKYAS
SMALL DYNASTIES
CHOLAS
LAMBAKANNAS
TIBET
SMALL DYNASTIES
CH
PALAS
K
SD
EASTERN GANGAS
EASTERN CHALUKYAS
HARIPUNJAYA
ARAKAN
PAGAN
PEGU
THATON
DVARAVATI
NANCHAO
LIAO/KHITAN EMPIRE
SONG EMPIRE
KORYO
JAPAN
PACIFIC OCEAN
ANNAM
CHAMPA
KHMER
SRIVIJAYA
EAST JAVA KINGDOM
INDIAN OCEAN
ARAB CITY STATES
Papal States



Map 3. Polities of the Medieval World, *c.*1300


Country names in brackets indicate those that were vassal to another country separated by a broken line frontier (or sea) from them.
to DENMARK
SWEDEN
TEUTONIC O.
LITHU.
(RUSSIAN PRINCIPALITIES)
POLISH STATES
GOLDEN HORDE
HUNGARY
SE. BULGARIA
BYZANTINE EMPIRE
GEORGIA
(RUM)
SSS
EMPIRE OF TRAPEZUNT
CHAGHATAYIDS
YUAN EMPIRE
(KORYO)
JAPAN
IL-KHANIDS
(LITTLE ARMENIA)
KINGDOM OF CYPRUS
DUCHY OF ATHENS
PRINCIPALITY OF ACHAIA
MAMELUKES
(TIBET)
KHALJI SULTANATE OF DELHI
SMALL DYNASTIES
OMAN
SISODIYAS
VAGHELAS
PARAMARAS
YADAVAS
EASTERN GANGAS
KAKATIYAS
(PAGAN)
ARAKAN
PEGU
CHIENGMAI
ANNAM
PHAYAO
CHAMPA
KHMER
LAVO
SUKHOTHAI
PACIFIC OCEAN
SMALL STATES
ALWA
RASULIDS
ETHIOPIA
IFAT
HADYA
DAWARO
BALI
HOYSALAS
PANDYAS
CHERAS
(SMALL STATES)
SMALL MALAY STATES
MAJAPAHIT
ARAB-SWAHELI CITY STATES
INDIAN OCEAN
ZIMBABWE
Dependencies of Mongol Empires
English held in France

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PART I

THE TRADITIONS OF HISTORICAL WRITING, 400–1400

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Chapter 1

The Growth of Historical Method in Tang China

Charles Hartman and Anthony DeBlasi

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

Modern periodizations of Chinese history locate within the period 600–1400 key transformations that eventually developed into major elements of 'modern' Chinese political, social, economic, and intellectual life. The historiography written during this long and complex period is closely linked to these changes. Accordingly, this first of two chapters devoted in this volume to Chinese historical writing will begin with a brief overview of China during the first half of this period (618–959).

In 589 the Sui dynasty (589–618) brought an end to the four hundred-year division of the country into multiple, competing states, initiating a second resurgence of the centralized, dynastic centre in Chang'an after the first unification of China under the Qin dynasty in 221 BC. The ensuing Tang dynasty (618–907) continued and refined this process. Early Tang leadership was based on Northern Chinese aristocratic clans, whose large land holdings enabled them to dominate society and government. Beginning in the late seventh century, however, a series of challenges to this dominance slowly eroded the authority of the aristocracy and led to its eventual demise. The first was the gradual spread of the idea of meritocracy certified by a civil service examination. The inauguration of the first permanent examination system in 683 by the Empress Wu (r. 685–704), the only woman ever to rule China as empress under her own legal authority, was a key step. Although it was limited to only a dozen or so graduates per year in Tang, and therefore not initially a significant threat to aristocratic dominance, under the Song dynasty (960–1279) it became a major recruiting mechanism for civil servants.

The second challenge came from foreign mercenaries who comprised large portions of the Tang military. Court control over these forces, most stationed on the northern and western borders, began to weaken in the eighth century. In 755 a major rebellion, led by An Lushan, military commander of the northeast region in the area of modern Beijing, seized the Tang capital at Chang'an. The dynasty

survived only by ceding de facto control over large regions of the country to other military governors in exchange for their immediate support against the rebels. Fighting continued through 763, further fragmenting the Tang aristocracy's economic base and shattering its earlier monopoly of political and military power. The result was a much-weakened centre, with economic and political power devolved to regional military commanders. After the formal end of Tang in 907, these regional commanders continued to dominate north Chinese political life throughout the first half of the tenth century, the Five Dynasties period (908–59).

The third challenge, linked to the second, came from a drastic expansion and monetization of the economy. From the eighth through the early eleventh centuries, China evolved from a country of agriculturally based localized economies into one with linked regional economies based upon a combination of agriculture and commerce. The weakening of the Tang centre both enabled and forced the autonomous military governors to develop regional economic specialization, trade with neighbouring areas, and devise alternatives to land-based taxation.

The aristocracy's dominance of government had led, during the course of the Tang, to its gradual concentration in the imperial capital. The growth of regional powers and the transformation of the economy undermined the wealth and influence of this aristocracy. It was not able to survive the final turmoil that brought down the Tang. The historical forces that destroyed the aristocracy continued and by the Song had created a new elite.

The full emergence of the centralized, aristocratic state in the seventh century brought about an official historiography that was part of the bureaucracy of that state. Beginning in the Tang, each dynastic court maintained an office of historiography. Over time, a regularized process evolved that, in theory and often in reality, turned the daily production of court bureaucratic documents into an official history of the dynasty. Although this process was ongoing throughout the dynasty, the final, standard 'dynastic history' was usually completed after the dynasty's demise by its successor state. A detailed understanding of official historiography is a central goal of these chapters. Sixteen of the so-called Twenty-Four Dynastic Histories—twenty-four distinct histories that begin with the *Shiji* [Records of the Scribe] of Sima Qian and end with the *Mingshi* [Ming History] of 1735—were compiled between 600 and 1400. Indeed, the very concept of a series of dynastic histories that, taken together, would present an official history of successive, legitimate Chinese states, dates from the eleventh century.[1]

[1] For basic information on the dynastic histories see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (rev. edn, Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 501–15. This book is an essential bibliographical reference and handbook for the student of any period of Chinese history. For extensive coverage of primary sources for the period from Sui through Yuan see ibid., 818–78. On-cho Ng and Q. Edward Wang, *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China* (Honolulu, 2005), 108–92 presents a detailed survey of Chinese historiography from Tang through Yuan.

GENERAL ISSUES IN CHINESE HISTORIOGRAPHY, 600–959

Chinese notions of time and history are cyclical. All phenomena occur within cyclically repeating patterns. The early Chinese *Yijing* [Classic of Changes] is the classical expression of this concept. Sixty-four hexagrams—the total number of possible permutations of six either solid (*yang*) or broken (*yin*) lines—represent the totality of natural and human experience. Each hexagram is a temporary assemblage of solid and broken lines that will soon morph into another configuration in a continuous and unending cycle of change. Wisdom, originally obtained through divination, consists of knowing where in this cycle one reposes at any given moment in time. Such wisdom makes intelligent planning for the future possible. If this wisdom is personal and concerns present circumstances, then the insight is psychological. If it is general and concerns the past, then the insight is historical—in the traditional Chinese sense. Also, since natural and human phenomena are both subject to the same set of forces that underlie all change, they are thus interlinked—natural disasters (an earthquake) manifest human disasters (death of the sovereign) and vice versa. Despite sporadic and fascinating dissents, these views remained central to traditional Chinese concepts of time, change, and history.

The opening statement of the first Tang emperor's 623 edict ordering compilation of the histories of five previous dynasties partakes of these notions to form a succinct definition of the purpose of history: 'the historiographers make record of the sovereign's words and his actions so one may investigate and verify the causes of success and failure and penetrate to the essence of all change; one may thereby compile analogical models to encourage good and repress evil; one may learn much from the past and use it as a mirror for the future.'[2] The view of history as a collection of 'precedents' (*diangu* 典故, *gushi* 故事) was closely related to the idea of history as a mirror. Events in the present were reflections of patterns that had occurred in the past, and the results of those patterns in the past were indications of outcomes in the future. Precedent in this sense means a specific historical event that may serve as rationale, model, or justification for a proposed future course of action. Tang writers were heirs to a long tradition of using precedents in political debate.

In addition to the *Yijing*, Tang historians inherited, as part of the Han dynasty Five Classics (*Wujing*) canon, two historical works that shaped their views about what historians should do and how they should do it. Early traditions held incorrectly that Confucius had edited the *Shangshu* [Venerated Documents] and compiled the *Chunqiu* [Spring and Autumn Annals]. In its 'old text' configuration, the *Shangshu* anthologized fifty addresses and proclamations by kings and ministers

[2] Liu Xu, *Jiu Tangshu* (945; Beijing, 1975), 2597.

from the earliest periods of Chinese history. The *Chunqiu* is a terse, annalistic chronicle of the state of Lu that covers the period 722–481 BC. The earliest Han commentarial traditions attribute to both works an embedded quality called 'praise and blame' (*baobian* 褒貶).

A primary concept of Chinese history-writing, 'praise and blame' refers to value judgements the historian (in this case supposedly Confucius) is perceived to have inserted into his work. The two works, however, present contrasting models for how the historian might manipulate his sources to articulate 'praise and blame'. In the *Shangshu*, essentially an anthology model, the historian selects primary documents for their inherent positive or negative value as topical exemplars, and arranges these texts, supposedly unedited, in ways that highlight and enhance his chosen themes. In this model, the historian copies existing text verbatim, but inserts 'praise and blame' into his assemblage through the selection of original content and the purposeful juxtaposition of sources.

In the *Chunqiu* model, the historian actively edits his sources to create a chronicle. A distinctive feature of *Chunqiu* exegesis was the assumption that Confucius had edited his sources using coded linguistic tags that inserted his moral judgements on specific events and personalities into the chronicle. For example, the term for a military action that Confucius considered morally justified differed from his term for an unjustified action. The compilation of an apparently 'simple' chronicle thus becomes with every entry an expression of the historian's judgement.[3] The official dynastic histories, with their division of sources into 'basic annals' (*benji*) and 'monographs' (*zhi*), employed both models. A characteristic feature of Chinese historiography throughout this period was the search both for enhanced formats that would update and optimize these ancient models and for new formats that would combine the features of annalistic and topical histories.

As it evolved from Han exegesis, the notion of 'praise and blame' appears, especially in modern hindsight, as a rather blunt, didactic tool with which to polish the 'mirror' of history. In actuality, opinions on its theory and praxis differed widely; and discussions about the proper role of 'praise and blame' in all kinds of history-writing recur throughout the period. The early Tang historians, fortified by the newness of the dynasty and by aristocratic bonds that linked sovereign and servitor, took quite seriously the underlying notion of using history to speak truth to authority. But less than a century later, Liu Zhiji, one of China's seminal critics of its traditional historiography, expressed deep reservations about the ability of his contemporaries to meet the classical standards of their craft. Later, Han Yu also wrote to a friend lamenting the inability of contemporary historians to achieve the earlier ideal: 'I hold that for all historians the *Chunqiu* contains a complete, basic set of standards for praise and blame. Yet later writers have been unable even to record truthfully what happened in a way that would

[3] For details see Wai-yee Li, 'Pre-Qin Annals', in Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 1: *Beginnings to AD 600* (Oxford, 2011), 415–39.

make good and bad self-evident. How could such ignorant and lazy historians ever manage to articulate praise and blame?'[4]

Han Yu's frustration resulted from the conflicting goals of different groups—different 'stakeholders'—in historiographical projects. The first tension was between the monarchy as sponsor of the work and its compilers. Early Tang historiography reflected the conflict between the monarch's desire for legitimization and his administrators' desire to use history to remonstrate and admonish him. Thus, Emperor Taizong (r. 627–49) ordered the composition of the *Jinshu* [History of the Jin] in 646 and personally composed several passages. The Jin (265–420) had been the last dynasty before the Sui to rule over a unified empire; and the monarchy traced its origins to this dynasty and sought precedents from its administrative practice. But the history's authors, a committee of twenty-two senior advisors and scholars, constructed a historical narrative that 'mirrored' their own long-standing political advice to Taizong on a range of issues, including against military expansionism and against investiture of imperial clan members in local administration. Needless to say, the *Jinshu* is more an agenda of seventh-century political issues than an accurate history of the fourth century.[5]

The second problem that Han identified was bureaucratic factionalism, which began in earnest with the transition from aristocratic to bureaucratic government in the decades prior to Han Yu's letter and continued to intensify throughout the Song period. Contending bureaucratic factions produced contending accounts of their recent past (and also of their historical origins). Since control of the official historiographic function always passed to the victorious faction, that faction, during its time in power, composed historical accounts that justified itself and slandered its opponents. If returned to power, its opponents reversed the process. One cannot understand the surviving sources without grasping this phenomenon. Unfortunately, it is difficult to correct this factional bias in the Tang official sources, since so few sources outside the official *Jiu Tangshu* [Old History of the Tang] of 945 and the *Xin Tangshu* [New History of the Tang] of 1060 survive.

Finally, Han Yu recognized a tension between the duty of the historian as scribe simply to copy existing text in an honest way and the higher injunction to insert his own evaluations. The earliest meaning of the Chinese graph *shi* 史 (the root of the modern Chinese term for history, *lishi* 歷史) was 'employee' or 'servant'. As literacy increased over the course of the first millennium BC, *shi* came to mean 'scribe' with implications of a minor official charged with the maintenance of calendrical and astrological records—as was Sima Qian. An evolution of the word to mean 'history', implying the interjection of evaluative judgements into otherwise supposedly neutral text, came only in the seventh century with the apparatus of official court historiography, the participation of high level government administrators in history-writing, and the reluctance of such persons to be

[4] Ma Qichang (ed.), *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* (Shanghai, 1957), 387–9.
[5] David McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China* (Cambridge, 1988), 169–70.

seen as engaging in a purely 'scribal' function. Despite this development, one cannot overestimate the importance of mechanical copying of existing text in Chinese historiography, nor ignore the constant tension between verbatim copying of text and evaluative manipulation of text. As we shall see below, official historiography and the making of dynastic histories were defined largely as exercises in copying text.

PRINCIPLES AND ORGANIZATION OF OFFICIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY, 600–1400

Despite dynastic transitions, official historiography during the period 600–1400 manifests a sustained development. This section, therefore, covers court historiography as a continuous development from Tang through Yuan. In China, 'official historiography' refers to histories written and historical records maintained by the 'Office of Historiography' (*shiguan* 史館), a bureaucratic unit of the central imperial court administration. First mentioned under the Northern Qi dynasty (550–77), during the seventh century such an office had become a regular fixture among the plethora of court academic agencies and libraries. Basically, there were two models. First, since one of the chief councillors (*zaixiang*), the highest officers of the central court administration, was routinely concurrent director of historiographical operations, there was often a physically distinct Office of Historiography attached to either the Secretariat (*Zhongshu sheng*) or the Chancellery (*Menxia sheng*), both major centres of court document flow and the two administrative units under the direct control of the chief councillors. This model was in operation throughout much of the Tang and in the Song through 1082. Second, after 1082, many academic functions, including historiography, were centralized in the Imperial Library (*Bishu sheng*), whose supervisor reported directly to the emperor.[6]

Rarely under either model did the 'office of historiography' have quota allotments for regularly billeted positions (i.e. its own officials). Much more common

[6] For basic studies in English of middle period Chinese official historiography see Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History Under the T'ang* (Cambridge, 1992), 5–30; William Hung, 'The T'ang Bureau of Historiography before 708', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 23 (1960–1), 93–107; Wang Gungwu, 'The *Chiu Wu-tai Shih* and History Writing during the Five Dynasties', *Asia Major*, 6:1 (1957), 1–22; Karl A. Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng, *History of Chinese Society: Liao* (Philadelphia, 1949), 610–14; Hok-lam Chan, *The Historiography of the Chin Dynasty: Three Studies* (Wiesbaden, 1970); and Hok-lam Chan, 'Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories', in John D. Langlois, Jr. (ed.), *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton, NJ, 1981), 56–106. There is no comparable study in English of Song dynasty historiography, but see John H. Winkelman, *The Imperial Library in Southern Sung China, 1127–1279* (Philadelphia, 1974). For comprehensive studies in Chinese see Cai Chongbang, *Songdai xiushi zhidu yanjiu* (Taibei, 1993); and Wang Sheng'en, *Songdai guan fang shixue yanjiu* (Beijing, 2008).

was to appoint officials as needed to staff specific projects. The term 'official historian' (*shiguan* 史官) refers to any official appointed to work on such a project. It does not imply, therefore, a person who had special training or interest in history. However, high placement in the civil service examination launched a young official on a 'fast track' toward senior court positions, and this track often began with a history office appointment. The vast majority of Song chief councillors began their careers as 'official historians', and so obtained an early appreciation of the interlocking relationships among history-writing, governing, and political dominance. At the same time, major historians, although they often served multiple tours in official historiographical appointments, continued their historical work on their own initiative, often while serving in provincial positions or between appointments.

Continual interaction between official historiographical service, with its access to historical archives, and private interest and initiative, with its ability to work free of bureaucratic constraints, is a controlling factor behind the quality and nature of the surviving 'private' history-writing. Finished copies of officially compiled historical works on the reigning dynasty were confined to a restricted circle of court officials; wider circulation either in print or in manuscript was proscribed by statute. Enforcement, however, was sporadic; and copies of many such works circulated openly in literati circles, where knowledge of the dynasty's history benefited examination candidates.

Official historians engaged in three kinds of undertakings: (1) they compiled histories of former dynasties, usually the dynasty immediately preceding their own; (2) they compiled histories of their own dynasty; (3) they maintained dynastic archives. Most dynasties accomplished the first task rather early after their founding. Completion of the history of one's predecessor signalled a claim to one's own legitimacy, a claim that usually included an official version of the dynasty's own origins. By 636, eighteen years after its founding, the Tang had already completed histories of five predecessor states. The Song completed a history of the Five Dynasties in 974, fourteen years after its founding. An exception to this pattern was the Yuan dynasty. Political rivalry between nativist and sinicized Mongol factions and related disputes concerning which dynasty should be considered the legitimate predecessor of the Yuan delayed completion of the histories of the Liao, Jin, and Song dynasties until 1345, a full eighty-five years after the Yuan founding.[7]

The major function of court historiography was to maintain a record of court administration and to condense routine bureaucratic documentation into a 'state history' (*guoshi* 國史). The accompanying diagram (see Fig. 1.1) illustrates this process as it existed at the point of its most mature development during the twelfth century. 'Court'—the central governing mechanism of imperial China—

[7] For a detailed consideration of this issue see ch. 23 by Peter Lorge in this volume.

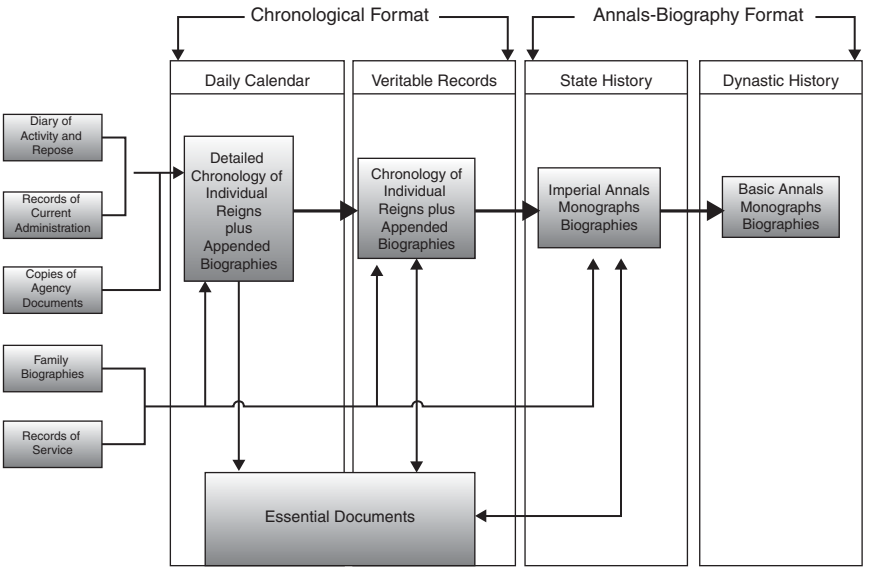


FIG. 1.1. Tang–Song Official Historiographical Compilation Process.

Source: The diagram is based on Hirata Shigeki, 'How to Analyse Political Material: A Preliminary Survey', in Research Group of Historical Materials in Song China, *The Study of Song History from the Perspective of Historical Materials* (Tokyo,2000), 108–28, AT 111.

comprised a series of daily audiences and meetings between the emperor and senior administrators that began at dawn and often lasted into the early afternoon.[8] Institutions and processes for the transformation of court documents such as edicts, memorials, and policy discussions into 'state history' took initial shape in seventh-century Tang and reached an apogee of complexity and sophistication in twelfth-century Southern Song. In its mature form, the process began with a 'Diary of Activity and Repose' (*qiju zhu* 起居注), a record of the daily actions and words of the sovereign, as well as a 'Record of Current Administration' (*shizheng ji* 時政記), a monthly administrative summary produced by the office of the chief councillors. Statutes also required central government agencies to send notice of significant events within their jurisdictions to the history office.[9] Beginning in early Song, a 'daily calendar' (*rili* 日歷) was compiled at the end of each month from the sources. The daily calendar also contained draft biographies of officials, inserted into the chronicle under the date of their death. After the death of an emperor, the daily calendar was then condensed into 'veritable records'

[8] Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History*, 35–8.
[9] Ibid., 27–9 for Tang practice.

(*shilu* 實錄), which became the official historical record of that emperor's reign. Both genres employed a strict chronological format (*biannian* 編年).

From time-to-time as was deemed expedient, an emperor might order the compilation of a 'state history'. A state history drew upon material from the veritable records of successive reigns and reworked this material into the annals-biography format (*jizhuan* 紀傳). This format contained the three basic divisions of a 'standard history'—the basic annals of each emperor (*benji* 本紀), topical monographs (*zhi* 志), and biographies (*liezhuan* 列傳). Production and maintenance of the state history was a cumulative process that continued over the course of the dynasty, since all three divisions needed to be updated as time progressed. The transformation from daily calendar through state history mandated a process of intense compression that traded synchronic detail for extended diachronic coverage. As a dynasty moved forward in time, and as its politics and views of its own past became more complex, this compression process took longer; and the longer the process, the greater the chance that contemporary political events would complicate the terms and dictate the details of the compression.

The basic annals were highly compressed chronicles of major court actions, their terseness imitating the *Chunqiu*. As an example of the degree of this compression one may consider the history of the annals of the first Southern Song emperor, Gaozong (r. 1127–62). The *Gaozong rili* [Gaozong Daily Calendar], completed in 1176, fourteen years after his abdication in 1162, contained 1,000 chapters. The *Gaozong shilu* [Gaozong Veritable Records], completed in 1202, forty years after the end of his reign, contained 500 chapters. The 'Gaozong Basic Annals' in the present *Songshi* [History of the Song], which are probably largely identical to those in the thirteenth-century *Zhongxing si chao guoshi* [State History of the Four Restoration Courts], contain only nine chapters.

The monographs, beginning with those in Sima Qian's *Shiji*, attempted to compensate for the disjointed, telegraphic nature of the basic annals. They gathered texts, usually edicts and memorials on the same subject, and arranged them chronologically to form summary histories of dynastic institutions. In Tang and Song, the state histories—as well as the received standard histories that descend from them—contained monographs on state ritual, music, the calendar, astronomy, state finance, law, portents, geography, bibliography, bureaucratic posts, and the official examination system.[10] Production of the monographic sections of a 'state history' was usually tasked to officials with the required technical expertise. After the 1020s, an 'Office of Essential Documents' (*Huiyao suo*), a unique Song institution, facilitated this task by maintaining copies of court documents and historical records divided and archived into administrative subdivisions that overlapped to a considerable degree with the monographic subject areas of state history. Versions of 'essential document' collections from both Tang and Song

[10] Ibid., 198–236 details the origins of the basic annals and monographs in the *Jiu Tangshu*. Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 511–15 treats monographs in the standard histories.

survive and constitute a major body of primary source material for the study of these dynasties.[11]

Although related in origin, the historiographical character of the surviving collections of essential documents and the topical monographs from the dynastic histories are quite different. On the one hand, the essential documents were archival, reference collections, compiled methodically without overt didactic comment, that have survived through very imperfect manuscript transmission to modern times. Thus, although replete with scribal transmission errors, their relative lack of contemporary editing and reworking renders them the most politically neutral of surviving primary sources. On the other hand, contemporary historians working on the always politically charged 'state history' selected and rewrote edicts and policy memorials to present in the monographs a prescriptive retrospective on specific administrative problems.

The biographical sections comprise the largest portion of the dynastic histories.[12] Scholars who consult them as primary repositories of biographical data often find them lacking in comparison to the standards of modern biography. It is important, therefore, to understand their origin and purpose within the contemporary historiographical system. A major Tang historian compared the 'basic annals' of the dynastic history to the *Chunqiu* and the dynastic biographies to the official commentaries on the *Chunqiu*, thus implying that the 'basic annals' were the official 'text' of dynastic history and the monographs and biographies should be read as commentary to that text.[13] This perspective explains the clear priority in production effort accorded in Tang and Song times to the basic annals at the expense of the monographs and biographies.

The draft biographies inserted into the veritable records in Tang and into the daily calendar in Song derived from 'family biographies' (*jiazhuan*) and 'records of service' (*xingzhuang*) that the families or younger associates of deceased officials submitted to the history office. In Song, the latter were polished versions of the personnel dossiers (*yinzhi* 印紙—literally 'stamped papers') in which each Song official recorded details of his career—postings, promotions, performance evaluations, commendations, reprimands, and so on. 'Records of service', therefore, were laudatory, accentuated the positive, and could also be used to apply for posthumous honours that resulted in emoluments and preferments which directly benefited the deceased's family. At each stage of the state history compilation process, the official historiographers were charged to verify the information these drafts contained, but few had the interest or tenacity to do so. Accordingly, conflicting accounts of the same event often survive in the dynastic histories, and

[11] Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History*, 108–18; Cai Chongbang, *Songdai xiushi zhidu yanjiu*, 149–72; and Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 522–4.

[12] See Denis Twitchett, 'Chinese Biographical Writing', in W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (eds.), *Historians of China and Japan* (London, 1961), 95–114.

[13] Liu Zhiji, as cited in Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History*, 64.

these passages present the modern historian with opportunities to penetrate beneath the stereotypes and topoi of the genre.

Biographies chosen for inclusion in the state history were withdrawn from the veritable records, revised when necessary and possible, and provided with an evaluation that characterized the individual's contribution to the dynasty. A direct manifestation of 'praise and blame', these evaluations characterized their subjects either by placing them together in labelled groupings (e.g. imperial relatives, the loyal and the brave, Confucian scholars, literary figures, eunuchs, nefarious ministers, recluses), or by appending an official comment (*lun* 論). Although largely ignored by modern historians, these evaluations often reveal the 'take' of the contemporary historiographer towards the subject and provide important clues that can help decode a given biography.

Secondary scholarship often presents official Chinese historiography as a seamless process. In actuality, contemporary historians expressed frustration with every stage of the process, many parts of which were dormant for long periods of time, thus producing gaps in coverage and the necessity at later stages to back-fill these gaps. For example, the integrity of the Court Diary was fundamental to ensuing stages of the process. However, after the middle of the eleventh century, the two court diarists were stationed too far from the dais to hear actual discussion between the emperor and officials. Consequently, following an audience, officials submitted to the diarist copies of their memorials along with their own summary of the conversation. Furthermore, no diarists were present for the 'inner audiences' at which more sensitive matters were discussed. Accordingly, the Court Diary recorded only routine, settled matters. The court diarists functioned essentially at the pleasure of the emperor and chief councillors.

In short, the coverage, quality, and character of the surviving official record depended directly upon the vitality of the Court and the strength of its institutional practices, and these fluctuated greatly both from dynasty to dynasty and within each dynasty.

Many scholars accept the dynastic histories as 'primary sources'. Yet in reality the surviving standard histories from this period are vast cornucopias of text many rewritings, reworkings, and recombinations away from their origins and original contexts as primary documents. Consequently, when utilizing official Chinese history-writing, the student must first understand the condition of the historiographical process at the given points in time under study.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF TANG HISTORIOGRAPHY

As the preceding survey indicates, Tang era historians pioneered important developments in middle period historiography. Naturally, these contributions cannot be separated from their specific historical compositions. These innovations

generally fall into four basic categories. First, Tang official historians achieved the full realization of the dynastic history in the annals-biography format, producing several complete histories in this genre. The historical bureaucracy described above also laid the necessary foundation for the dynastic history of the Tang itself, a work completed after its final collapse. Second, beyond the dynastic history format, Tang historians created three different approaches to institutional history. These ranged from a basic description of the Tang bureaucratic organization to the general evolution of institutions. They also recognized the value of primary documents as illustrations of the functioning of the imperial state and created a format to preserve those seen as most important. Third, the emergence of a self-conscious historical sensibility, manifested principally in the career and writings of Liu Zhiji, continued to develop during the Tang. Finally, the scope of the Tang imperium aided the emergence of a major new genre of historical writing: local history. This last would not achieve its golden age until the late imperial period from the fourteenth through to the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the history of the genre in the Tang and Song periods clearly parallels the other great transitions in middle period history.

THE DYNASTIC HISTORIES AND THE MISSION OF THE TANG COURT

The completion of eight dynastic histories during the first four decades of the Tang represents an enduring contribution to Chinese historical scholarship. Although it is possible to fault these histories from the vantage point of modern historiographical standards, they express well the confidence of the period.[14] Part of the Tang project of creating a unified, expansive, and enduring empire was to create, as a contrast object, an account of the preceding period of division. Taken together, these works surveyed the history of earlier regimes and portrayed their disunity against the unity of the Tang. Most of these histories were produced under imperial commission, and the politics of the period meant that they were accomplished at varying speeds. The *Jinshu*, finished in 646, took only two years to complete, whereas others took almost twenty years.[15]

The *Jinshu* and the *Suishu* [History of the Sui] were histories of earlier dynasties that had reunited the heartland, the Jin after the Three Kingdoms period, and the Sui after the Six Dynasties era. Emperor Taizong commissioned the *Jinshu* in the mid-640s, and it supplanted earlier works that had survived into the Tang dynasty. Writing this history was a sizable undertaking that resulted in a work of 130 chapters composed by a committee of twenty-one scholars overseen

[14] See McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China*, 165–70.

[15] Wilkinson has arranged this information in convenient tabular form in his *Chinese History*, 503–5.

by Fang Xuanling, who served Taizong as a chief counsellor.[16] The text follows the annals-biography format, with imperial annals, eleven monographs, and general as well as thematically grouped biographies.

The *Suishu* provided, however, even more immediate lessons for the early Tang political elite than did the *Jinshu*. The Sui had accomplished the singular historical task of reuniting the fractured heartland after almost four centuries of division. Yet, it collapsed dramatically less than thirty years later. The Tang had emerged from the chaos of anti-dynastic rebellions. The Sui–Tang transition therefore concerned the legitimacy of the Tang itself. Even more than the Jin, the Sui trajectory also begged the question of the relationship between dynastic power and dynastic longevity. The *Suishu* expressed clearly the sentiment at the heart of the dynastic history format: political power rests on the quality of the emperor and his careful attention to the needs of the moment.

The *Suishu* was, like the *Jinshu*, a committee production, overseen by Wei Zheng, the well-studied advisor to Tang Taizong. The text itself is shorter than the Jin history, understandable given the short duration of its imperium, but it was proportionately longer (an average of two-thirds of a year per chapter as opposed to 1.2 years per chapter for the *Jinshu*) suggesting the importance of the Sui precedent.

The contents of the text are not particularly exceptional. The imperial annals draw the necessary cautionary lesson: dynastic ruin develops over time. As the historian's comments on the first Sui emperor, Sui Wendi (r. 581–604), put it: 'In tracking the source of its decline and examining the portents of its chaotic destruction, these arose with Gaozu [Sui Wendi] and came to completion with [Sui] Yangdi. The genesis was long, not simply a matter of a single morning or evening. Its subsequent lack of sacrifices and sudden destruction were not [merely] unlucky.'[17]

The text's biographies share the approach of contemporary dynastic histories with the biographies of important officials supplemented by thematically grouped ones. The ten monographs now included in the *Suishu* were completed in 656 and are valuable surveys of the usual subjects throughout the period of division. Topics include state ritual, music, the five cosmological phases, the calendar, astronomy, finance, penal law, administrative geography, the bureaucracy, and bibliography. Because these chapters cover the entire period of division, the *Suishu* monographs are a valuable topical supplement to the individual official histories of those dynasties. The monograph on bibliography also set the precedent for the fourfold bibliographic classification system (i.e. classics, history, philosophy, and literary collections). The bibliography has also allowed scholars to reconstruct the history of now lost texts.

[16] McMullen, *State and Scholars*, 169–70.
[17] Wei Zheng, *Suishu* (Beijing, 1973), 2.56.

The early Tang determination to establish the historical background to its own founding by producing definitive histories of the preceding dynasties depended on a conceptual framework in which the culture itself had to be protected from division. Tang textual scholarship and interpretive histories of the Han period (206 BC–AD 220) reflect this concern for dynastic unity. Ban Gu's *Hanshu* [History of the Han] had provided an account of the enduring empire, while Sima Qian's *Shiji* had provided the historical justification for thinking about imperial development in universal terms. Both works had suffered from textual errors during transmission, inspiring rival interpretations. Early Tang historians applied traditional commentarial modes in an attempt to unify these differences. Yan Shigu was a key figure in this effort. His *Hanshu zhu* [Commentary on the History of the Han], completed in 641, attempted to correct textual errors and offer definitive interpretations of Ban Gu's great history. The similarity in titles between Zhang Shoujie's *Shiji zhengyi* [Corrected Meanings of the Records of the Historian] and Kong Yingda's *Wujing zhengyi* [Corrected Meanings of the Five Classics] suggests a strong link between the drive for a unified text of the Confucian canon and a unified understanding of early dynastic history.[18]

The Tang historians did not limit the didactic function of providing a mirror for emperors and officials to the standard histories. Wu Jing produced the first in what would later become during the Song period a regular series of works in the genre of Sagacious Administration (*shengzheng*). His *Zhenguan zhengyao* [Essentials of Administration during the Zhenguan Era] drew on Wu's experience working on veritable records and the national history to present a focused, didactic account of court discussions during Emperor Taizong's reign. The *Zhenguan zhengyao* succinctly catalogues the major issues in early Tang government and presents an argument about how an emperor should conduct himself and decide imperial policy.

The *Zhenguan zhengyao* is divided into forty topical sections. Each section is organized chronologically and records both verbal and written dialogues between Emperor Taizong and his advisors. The work presents these communications as a model of sagely governance. Wu begins with sections on the role of the ruler and how he should interact with his officials. First, the text offers the reader accounts of the role of the ruler. These sections present an ideal of the emperor as one concerned with his own limitations and who seeks guidance from his officials. Next, the text addresses the practice of government in the abstract with sections relating to virtues and vices among officials. Finally, Wu examines the actual policies of government, in areas such as agriculture, criminal justice, taxation, the use of the military, and imperial inspection tours among others. The portrayal of Emperor Taizong and his ministers consistently emphasizes their collegiality and harmony.

The so-called *Jiu Tangshu* [Old Tang History], is the first dynastic history produced from documents generated and processed through the court

[18] See McMullen, *State and Scholars*, 163–4, 173–5.

historiographical functions described above. Completed in 945 during the Later Jin dynasty by a committee under the nominal direction of the Chief Councillor Liu Xu, the work comprises two hundred chapters in the standard annals-biography format, beginning with twenty chapters of basic annals, followed by thirty chapters of monographs. The remaining 150 chapters are biographies. The committee made some important interpretive decisions, for example, including the Empress Wu years (690–705) within the basic annals, thus recognizing her reign as part of the Tang succession despite appending harsh comments on her rule.

The biographies of the *Jiu Tangshu* also follow the familiar pattern established by the experience of dynastic history composition during the early Tang, being a mix of chronologically arranged biographies of important officials in specific categories (e.g. chief counsellors or generals) and biographies grouped according to familiar themes such as literary talents and exemplary women. The text also added categories of particular significance to Tang history, such as a section on eunuchs and a double chapter on anti-dynastic rebels. Finally, as the next chapter will make clear, in comparison to the extensively reworked eleventh-century *Xin Tangshu* [New Tang History], the *Jiu Tangshu*'s verbatim copying of original documents, subsequently otherwise lost, significantly enhances its value to modern scholars.

China's division after the final Tang collapse created difficult historiographical problems for early Song historians. The first dynastic history completed by the Song office of historiography was the 974 *Jiu Wudaishi* [Old History of the Five Dynasties] which covered the period from 907 to 959. Its textual history is complex. Ouyang Xiu's revision, as discussed in the next chapter, soon eclipsed the initial 974 work. During subsequent centuries, the *Jiu Wudaishi* gradually fell out of circulation and was nearly lost. Qing period (1644–1911) scholars partially reconstituted the text from quotations in the massive Ming encyclopedia, the *Yongle da dian*. Modern scholarship has greatly improved on these Qing efforts.[19]

The *Jiu Wudaishi*'s mission to record the history of five different dynasties necessitated a slight adjustment to the annals-biography format: annals and biography sections grouped together for each dynasty are presented in chronological order, followed however by monographs that treat the entire period. The work also includes biographies of 'usurpers', referring to the rulers of states in south China that were largely independent of the Five Dynasties.[20]

[19] Chen Shangjun, *Jiu wudaishi xinji huizheng*, 12 vols. (Shanghai, 2005) masterfully reconstructs the work, based largely on quotations in early Song encyclopedias.

[20] For a useful review of lost and surviving works on the tenth-century see Johannes L. Kurz, 'A Survey of the Historical Sources for the Five Dynasties and Ten States in Song Times', *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, 33 (2003), 187–224.

INSTITUTIONAL HISTORIES OF THE TANG

Although monographs provided official historians an opportunity to survey historical change during the period covered by a given dynastic history, the annals-biography format emphasized the interplay of individual action and personal morality in history. Tang historians also produced works revealing interest in the impersonal conditions of Tang government. Peter Lorge elsewhere in this volume (ch. 23) has discussed institutional history during this period. The three works to be discussed here all illustrate how institutional history relates to larger Tang historiographical issues. By recording how the imperial state functioned, they illuminated the impact of institutions on human history.

The *Tang liu dian* [Six Institutions of the Tang] provides a systematic outline of Tang government. Commissioned by Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–56) and completed in 738 under the nominal supervision of the Chief Counsellor Li Linfu, the text takes the legendary six divisions of the ancient Zhou government as an organizing principle, but clearly reflects the priorities of Tang administration.[21] The *Tang liu dian* contains two layers of text. The main text lists the number and rank of each official post in the Tang bureaucracy along with brief descriptions of the duties of these posts. However, the work's second textual layer, an interlinear commentary provided by its compilers, is of greater interest to modern historians and renders the *Tang liu dian* a work of historical scholarship instead of simply an organizational chart. The commentary records in great detail the origins and subsequent evolution of the various posts, tracing where necessary these origins back to pre-Tang periods. The commentary also reproduces Tang legislation on government organization, much of which has otherwise been lost.

Historians also privately produced institutional histories. Du You's *Tongdian* [Comprehensive Institutions], completed in 801, is the most important of these private efforts. Although discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this volume, its importance requires some discussion here as well. Du made the work's purpose explicit in his preface where he asserted that institutional history was indispensable for good government. He argued that the moral transformation of society (via the traditional ideal of 'transformative education' [*jiaohua*]) must be premised first on the material well-being of the people. To ensure these conditions one must establish proper government institutions and recruit qualified officials. Only then could ritual flourish and create a moral society. In framing his argument, Du connected the pragmatic functions of the state to the traditional moral concerns of imperial ideology.

[21] See Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History*, 101–3.

The *Tongdian* was a massive undertaking in two hundred chapters. True to the emphasis in his preface, Du began with the economic system (*shihuo*), tracing the fundamental relationship between food and government back to its literal roots:

> Grain is what governs people's fate, land is what produces the grain, and people are what the ruler governs. If one has the grain, then the needs of the state are complete. If one delineates the land, then people have enough to eat. If one examines the people, then the labour service will be equitable. Understanding these three ideas is called governing.[22]

From there Du proceeds through his basic sections: economics, recruitment, bureaucracy, ritual, music, criminal justice, administrative geography, and border defence. Du's order suggests that he saw the first three (economics, recruitment, and the bureaucracy) as the core issues. The latter five sections address those functions of the bureaucracy that promote a stable society. Du's understanding of the state, however, was not simply materialist, despite the fact that he began with material conditions. Half of the entire work is devoted to the ritual system. In this sense, Du's work represents an important transition moment. He was simultaneously a product of the Tang world that emphasized the politico-moral importance of ritual, but he also thought more sceptically about cosmological explanations of state power in favour of material and institutional ones.[23] Moreover, the content of the *Tongdian* represents an historical argument about these issues. Every section begins its account in remote antiquity and draws the argument into the Tang. In other words, Du You understood Tang institutions as the product of a long evolutionary and historical process.

As an historical project, the *Tongdian* is significant in several ways. First, it represents a dramatic growth in the sophistication, in both scale and scope, of institutional history. The *Tang liu dian* had maintained a close focus on the bureaucratic apparatus itself and confined its historical information to the commentary. The *Tongdian* went a step further and took up issues beyond the strict confines of the bureaucratic system, promoting its historical matter into the main text. In doing so, Du You created a new type of history. Subsequent bibliographers recognized this distinction when they classified the *Tang liu dian* in the bibliographic category on bureaucracy and the *Tongdian* as administrative history. The power of the *Tongdian* was such that it essentially created the genre of 'administrative history'. During the next 1,100 years, nine other comprehensive administrative histories were produced in China, collectively known as the 'Ten Comprehensives' (*Shitong* 十通), a fitting tribute to Du You's original.

The last of the institutional histories to be discussed here also created a new genre. The *Tang huiyao* [Tang Essential Documents], a work with a complicated textual history, pioneered the genre of document collections. Subsequent Song

[22] Du You, *Tongdian* (Beijing, 1988), 1.3.

[23] David McMullen, 'Views of the State in Du You and Liu Zongyuan', in S. R. Schram (ed.), *Foundations and Limits of State Power in China* (Hong Kong, 1987), 65–6.

historiographers adapted its format to provide a historical archive of collected precedents for government reference and operation. The current version of the *Tang huiyao* is a reconstruction of a 961 Song court compilation, but this 961 work was based on two earlier private works produced during the Tang. The 'essential documents' format changed therefore from a private project to an official endeavour during the course of the ninth and tenth centuries, and thus became a fundamental component of Song court historiography. The present *Tang huiyao*, despite its somewhat tortured textual history, remains a valuable source for Tang history through the mid-ninth century.[24]

A large work in one hundred chapters, the *Tang huiyao* collects primary documents concerning various aspects of Tang government. Its complex organization enabled its compilers to include material on many issues. A brief sample may serve to indicate the breadth of the work's coverage. There are sections on imperial names and titles, ritual debates, regulations on court procedure, omens, natural disasters, regulations concerning the clergy, official recruitment and the examination system, changes in the taxation system, and relations with non-Chinese groups. Unlike the *Tang liu dian*, the distinctive focus of the *Tang huiyao* is on the actual process of government operations. And, as explained above, although its categories often mirror those of the monographs in the dynastic histories, its texts are relatively free of subsequent political manipulation. Therefore, its various sections reveal not only the evolution and functioning of Tang governance but also the way officials debated key policy issues. It represents therefore a third perspective on dynastic institutional history.

LIU ZHIJI AND CRITICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

The growth of Tang official historiography, innovations in historical writing, and the proliferation of private historical writing triggered a corresponding critical examination of the historian's craft. As early as the Western Han era (202 BC–AD 23), Sima Qian, in his justly famous autobiographical account, had eloquently articulated the historian's sense of mission. Systematic thinking about writing history progressed markedly during the Tang. The *Shitong* (史通) [History Understood in Depth], completed by Liu Zhiji in 710, is the best example.[25]

Liu had extensive experience working on official historiographical projects, and his book addresses a wide range of historical and historiographical issues. The work's twenty chapters are divided between ten inner and ten outer chapters. The inner chapters contain thirty-six surviving sections (three have been lost). The outer chapters contain twelve sections. The inner chapters first discuss the forms of his-

[24] See Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History*, 109–18.

[25] Edwin Pulleyblank, 'Chinese Historical Criticism: Liu Chih-chi and Ssu-ma Kuang', in Beasley and Pulleyblank (eds.), *Historians of China and Japan*, 136–51.

torical writing. Liu begins by identifying six genres of historical writing ranging from the canonical *Shangshu* to the annals-biography history of the Western Han period. From there, Liu surveys the various components of historical writing, such as the compilation of basic annals, genealogy, and biographies. He then moves to specific historiographical techniques, examining topics such as the writing of evaluations, periodization, and commentary. The inner chapters also contain his views on the literary aspect of historical writing, where he criticizes historians who distort the record and extols what he calls 'straight words'.

The outer chapters follow a slightly different format. Rather than being systematic explorations of a specific topic, these chapters collect discrete comments on overarching topics. Chapter 12, for example, contains eighteen comments on various official histories. Chapter 13 has twelve comments on 'doubting the past'.

Taken as a whole, the *Shitong* presents fairly consistent views about how official historians should conduct themselves. Liu's greatest commitment was to impartiality in the historical record, and he repeatedly condemned historians who let their biases affect their history.[26] The *Shitong* suggests that political pressure was a widespread problem in the Tang office of historiography, one that resulted in slow progress and historical distortion. Liu's spirit of independence also manifests itself in his willingness to take on revered targets. For example, he took issue with accounts in the Classics and challenged the interpretations of his forebears. He was also fairly sceptical of supernatural explanations for historical events.

Liu Zhiji was an individual who took historical evidence seriously, even if the modern historian might not share his conclusions or his commitments. He represents a step towards the methodological advances of the great Song historians. Beyond that, his *Shitong* allows the modern reader to see how Chinese historiography appeared from the vantage point of the early eighth century. Liu places the writing of history in a broader context just as his contemporaries did for government institutions.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

589–618	Sui dynasty
618–907	Tang dynasty
626–49	Reign of Emperor Tang Taizong
645	Buddhist monk Xuanzang returns from India and begins translating Sanskrit texts
684	Empress Wu assumes imperial throne in her own right
705	Empress Wu removed from throne and Tang Dynasty restored
712–56	Reign of Emperor Tang Xuanzong, widely seen as the Golden Age of the Tang

[26] McMullen, *State and Scholars*, 177.

734	Li Linfu becomes Chief Councillor
751	Defeat of Tang army at Talas River by forces of the Abbasid Caliphate
755–63	Rebellion of An Lushan ravages north and central China. Rebels seize the Tang capital at Chang'an, and large regions of the country fall under the control of military governors
762	Death of the great poet Li Bai
770	Death of the great poet Du Fu
780	Promulgation of the Double Tax system recognizes the importance of semi-autonomous provincial administrations
805–20	Strengthening of central authority under Emperor Tang Xianzong
834	Sweet Dew Incident ensures eunuch dominance of Tang court
845	Short-lived, but devastating, Huichang-era suppression of Buddhism
907	Tang Dynasty ends as its last emperor is forced from the throne
908–59	Five Dynasties period

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Chapter 2

Chinese Historiography in the Age of Maturity, 960–1368

Charles Hartman

THE HISTORICAL SETTING

The founders of the Song dynasty (960–1279) reconsolidated central power and eliminated the provincial regimes that had developed in the wake of Tang decentralization. Heirs to the experience of two centuries of military administrations in North China, the Song monarchs fostered astute policies that promoted and took advantage of continuing economic expansion. During the first thirty years after 960, they expanded this entrepreneurial model to their entire realm. Monopoly and commercial taxes slowly supplanted taxes on agricultural output as a larger share of government revenue. Wealth spread more widely and deepened the relationship between government and the economy. To administer their new polity, the Song emperors recruited through the examination system a new class of bureaucratic elite that Western writings on China often call the 'literati'. The aristocrats of Tang had given way to the merchants and bureaucrats of Song.

Although the Song expanded Chinese economic and political power into South China, it never completed the conquest of all the traditional 'Chinese' lands in the north. The Song coexisted with a series of so-called alien or conquest dynasties to its north and west. In all cases, these were dynasties whose ruling houses, unlike the Song, were not ethnically Han Chinese, whose native languages were not Chinese, but whose governmental structures manifested various degrees of exposure, mainly to Tang dynastic models, including to Tang traditions of historiography. The Khitan people, a proto-Mongol confederation, viewed its Liao dynasty (916–1125), for example, as the direct successor of the Tang state. The Jurchen, a proto-Manchu people, rose against their Khitan overlords, founded their own Jin dynasty (1115–1234), and proceeded to wrest control of the North China plain from the Song in 1125, dividing the Song dynasty into two halves, the Northern Song (960–1127), with its capital in Kaifeng, and the restored Southern Song (1127–79), with its capital in Hangzhou. The Mongols, following the pattern of these earlier Inner Asian peoples, created a dynasty for

their Chinese lands, the Yuan (1260–1368), which for the first time in history brought all of the territory of modern-day China under non-Han rule.[1]

HISTORICAL METHODS, 960–1400

The transition from an aristocratic to a literati culture during the Song dynasty profoundly changed Chinese historiography and led to an age of maturity that lasted well into the thirteenth century. Although indebted to Tang models, Song historiographical theory and praxis responded to the surge in bureaucratic documentation produced at all levels of government and to the spread of printing technology after the tenth century. The emergence of the literati as a major intellectual and political force in the eleventh century produced the first universal history of China since Sima Qian, *Zizhi tongjian* [The Comprehensive Mirror of Aid in Government], completed by Sima Guang in 1084. Song historiography encompassed both a drastic expansion in the scope of historical knowledge and increasingly nuanced interactions between official and private historiography and between historical knowledge and government policy-making. Following Sima Guang, Li Tao and Li Xinchuan crafted a defined Song tradition of history-writing and attained levels of sophistication, especially concerning the organization and interpretation of source texts, not reached in Europe until the Renaissance, nor in China again until the seventeenth century. Also, in response to the growing importance of regional administration during the twelfth century, local histories took shape as a distinct and permanent historical genre.[2] Toward the end of the dynasty, ever-expanding participation in the civil service examinations stimulated new pedagogical formats that set the pattern for the teaching of history in China until the twentieth century.

Post-Tang historians shared many of the assumptions of their predecessors. The use of the familiar metaphor of history as 'mirror' (*jian*) in the title of Sima Guang's magnum opus, *Zizhi tongjian*, signalled his expectation that the book would assist the Song monarchs with imperial administration. Sima Guang compiled history in a way that placed contemporary policy issues in the context of the cyclically repeating patterns of the past—look into history, identify a past point in a pattern that corresponds to the present situation, read what ensued after that point in the cycle, and so obtain insight to help plan for the future. History, thus

[1] For detailed surveys see Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 5, Part One: *The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279* (Cambridge, 2009); and Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 6: *Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368* (Cambridge, 1994).

[2] This chapter does not discuss local histories. For an excellent survey see James M. Hargett, 'Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers and Their Place in the History of *Difangzhi* Writing', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 56:2 (1996), 405–42.

understood, presents a comprehensive mirror for future action and a powerful aid for policy formulation.

Song authors expanded earlier ideas on the relation of history to contemporary policy. During the Song, the citation of 'precedents' became a major rhetorical device used in political argumentation and advocacy. New policy initiatives or policy changes required the collection from history of appropriate precedents. And, as policies changed, so new interpretations of history were formed and new histories written.[3]

Song historians also redefined the traditional concept of 'legitimate (or orthodox) succession' (*zhengtong*) and used it to revitalize historiography. In 1040 Ouyang Xiu reinterpreted *zheng* to mean 'a moral right to succession' and *tong* to mean 'the fact of unified political control'.[4] Although scholars would debate for centuries over how to apply these principles to historical events, Ouyang Xiu's interjection of Confucian moral standards into questions of historical legitimacy created the concept and possibility of a standard, 'orthodox' universal history of China and so revolutionized Chinese historiography.

This possibility took shape in two ways. First, already by the mid-eleventh century, court historiographers were at work on re-editing and creating a uniform edition of seven existing dynastic histories that covered the period 420–589. Court sponsorship of the project carried an implied imprimatur for the resulting view of 'legitimate succession' through this divided period that had preceded the Sui reunification in 589. Eventually printed in the 1130s at Meishan in Sichuan, the 'seven histories of Meishan' constitute the first uniform editing and printing of a series of dynastic histories. The phrase 'the seventeen histories' first appears around the turn of the twelfth century to refer to a series that codified and strung together the 'standard histories' (*zhengshi*) of an orthodox succession of 'legitimate' (*zheng*) dynasties. These dynasties now constituted the 'orthodox' history of China, and these seventeen histories form the nucleus of the present 'twenty-four dynasty histories'.[5]

Second, the Northern Song redefinition of *zhengtong* and the resulting narrative of Chinese history as a single string of legitimate dynasties made possible the creation of a continuous politically unified calendar. This unified chronological base simplified the presentation of history across dynastic boundaries in both time and space. Because each competing dynastic entity used the reign periods of its own sovereigns to maintain its own calendar and its own set of historical records, the writing of a universal history had been both morally problematic (which sovereign was legitimate?) and practically

[3] Robert M. Hartwell, 'Historical Analogism, Public Policy, and Social Science in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century China', *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), 690–727.

[4] For a review of Chinese ideas about dynastic legitimation see Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under the Jurchen-Chin Dynasty* (Seattle, 1984), 19–48.

[5] For the seventeen histories in Song see Wang Mingsheng, *Shiqi shi shangque* (Changsha, 1937), 1136–9.

difficult (which calendar was the 'real' calendar?). The eleventh-century moral redefinition of 'legitimate succession', however, furthered generation of a single morally correct calendar for any point in Chinese history, thus enabling all sources to be calibrated to this 'legitimate' calendar. Sima Guang's *Zizhi tongjian*, the first universal history of China in a thousand years, was the first major expression of this possibility. At the same time, 'illegitimate' calendars and sources as well as non-Confucian value systems (Buddhism and Daoism) were marginalized and omitted from the master narrative of Chinese history found in the dynastic histories, the *Zizhi tongjian*, and its reworkings and continuations.[6]

THE PROBLEM OF PRIMARY SOURCES

True primary sources for middle period Chinese history—contemporary objects that survive intact to the present—are, with rare exceptions, only the Dunhuang manuscripts, stone inscriptions, and contemporary printed books. The value of the manuscripts from the Dunhuang cave library is well known, and they have revolutionized the study of Tang history by providing a window on local society and governance whose specificity of detail does not recur, in primary documentation, until much later. But the Song dynasty never controlled the Dunhuang area, so these manuscripts do not concern Song issues.[7] Stone inscriptions, mainly engraved biographies placed both inside and outside the tomb, but also stele inscriptions at temples and scenic locations, survive in great numbers from this period, and continue to be unearthed. They provide fascinating data when compared against the textually transmitted biographies in the dynastic histories and other literary sources and serve as a unique historical source for otherwise unknown individuals.[8]

Government sponsored printing from wood blocks began in earnest in the tenth century and private, commercial printing had become widely established by the twelfth century. Surviving Song imprints, however, are exceedingly rare. The vast majority of works printed in Song do not survive in Song editions, and later reprintings freely censor and amend texts. A vast number of Tang and Song historical documents (memorials, documents of court and personnel administration, and epitaphs) survive in the 'collected works' (*wenji*) of authors from these

[6] This chapter does not discuss the distinctive Buddhist and Daoist traditions of historiography during this period. For useful surveys see Jan Yun-hua, 'Buddhist Historiography in Sung China', *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 114 (1964), 360–81; and Judith M. Boltz, *A Survey of Taoist Literature* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987), 54–136.

[7] For a basic orientation to the Dunhuang manuscripts see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (rev. edn, Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 826–35.

[8] For an introduction see Valerie Hansen, 'Inscriptions: Historical Sources for the Song', *Bulletin of Song-Yuan Studies*, 19 (1987), 17–25.

periods.[9] But only a small fraction of these collections survive in contemporary imprints. There are, for example, surviving remains of 'collected works' from 741 Song period writers. A recent photostatic reprinting of 405 'rare editions' of such collected works, however, reproduces only fifty Song editions, and only one of these is a Northern Song edition.[10] Every text in these collections is theoretically a primary source, but the printing and transmission history of each individual text must be verified to establish textual accuracy.

A unique source of Song documents is the repository known as the *Song huiyao* [Song Essential Documents]. As explained in the preceding chapter, this collection derives from contemporary Song archives of official documentation that were continually updated over the course of the dynasty.[11] But the surviving version was compiled only in the nineteenth century by copying texts from the *Yongle dadian* [Yongle Encyclopedia], a large encyclopedia completed under the Ming dynasty in 1408 and discussed in detail below. Documents in the *Song huiyao*, therefore, although they derive from primary sources, have been extensively edited, copied, abridged, and recopied, and are best used in coordination with other parallel sources.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND SURVIVING SOURCES

The Song–Yuan period also witnessed explosive growth of the genre known in Chinese as *leishu*, 'classified writings', and usually rendered into English as 'encyclopedias'. Many of these works are fundamental to research in Chinese history. Originally devised as digests of previously existing books and documents classified and transcribed for court reference, Southern Song scholars adapted this format to devise reference works and study aids for all levels of pedagogical use, and such works soon became a mainstay of commercial publishers. For modern historians, the three richest surviving titles are the imperially commissioned *Cefu yuangui* [Grand Tortoise from the Storehouse of Writing] of 1013, the *Yuhai* [Ocean of Jade] by Wang Yinglin, and the *Wenxian tongkao* [Comprehensive Investigations of Records and Documents], completed in 1308 by Ma Duanlin. This chapter will discuss the first two works; Ma Duanlin's compilation is discussed elsewhere in this volume. These works are valuable for historical research because, like the 'essential documents' collections, they preserve extracts from

[9] Robert M. Hartwell, 'A Guide to Documentary Sources of Middle Period Chinese History: Documentary Forms Contained in the Collected papers (*Wen-chi*) of Twenty-One T'ang and Sung Writers', *Bulletin of Sung-Yuan Studies*, 18 (1986), 133–82.

[10] Shu Dagang (ed.), *Song ji zhenben congkan*, 108 vols. (Beijing, 2004).

[11] See the preceding chapter in this volume for a survey of the development of official historiography during the Tang–Song period. For a thorough review in Chinese see Cai Chongbang, *Songdai xiushi zhidu yanjiu* (Taibei, 1993).

many works, including the state histories, 'veritable records', and 'daily calendars', that have not survived as integral works.

The *Yuhai*, in two hundred chapters, resulted from the preparations of the most learned scholar of the thirteenth century for the state examination in 'wide learning and resonant prose' (*boxue hongci*). Only forty scholars in the Southern Song passed; and the last two, in 1256 and 1259, were Wang Yinglin and his brother. A pass accorded immediate appointment to the Imperial Library and a position as drafter of imperial documents. Between 1242 and 1252, Wang Yinglin prepared his study materials by secretly copying documents from the Imperial Library, and arranging them chronologically into topical categories for easier reference and retrieval. The present *Yuhai* was printed by his descendants between 1330 and 1340. Divided into twenty-one sections and 230 subsections, the work is particularly rich in Song historiographical sources that Wang copied from the Song archives and that do not survive elsewhere.

Of particular importance in this regard is the monumental *Yongle dadian* (1403–24), completed in 1408.[12] The largest literary project ever undertaken in China, 2,169 scholars worked for four years to classify and copy over seven thousand original works dating back to the Zhou dynasty. Never printed, the original manuscript was lost by the seventeenth century, but about 90 per cent of a unique 1567 manuscript copy survived well into the nineteenth century, when much of it was looted or burned during the Anglo-French invasion of Beijing in 1860. About eight hundred chapters from a total of 22,877, or roughly 3.5 per cent of the original work, remain, although occasional fascicules continue to surface.

Qing court academicians in the eighteenth century reconstituted 385 works by extracting quotations from the then still extant 1567 copy of the *Yongle dadian*. Among these were many of the 'primary' sources for Song history—Li Tao's chronicle of Northern Song, Li Xinchuan's chronicle of Southern Song, and the *Song huiyao*. These works can be used to balance the text of the *Songshi* [History of Song], the dynastic history of the Song completed in 1345, although none are primary sources in the true sense. They are, rather, vast collections of processed primary documents, each coming to the present through its own unique history of selection, editing, and transmission. The encyclopedias thus offer multiple views of otherwise lost primary sources, but neither the encyclopedias nor the works reconstituted from them can be used uncritically as primary sources.

AN EARLY SONG ENCYCLOPEDIA

The *Cefu yuangui* [Grand Tortoise from the Storehouse of Writing], in one thousand chapters, is the last of four enormous court-sponsored 'encyclopedias' under-

[12] See Wang Zeng-yu, 'The *Yung-lo Collectanea* as a Source of Materials for the Study of Sung History', *Gest Library Journal*, 4:2 (1991), 91–9.

taken in the first half-century of Song rule. In 1005, immediately following the Treaty of Shanyuan which ended warfare with the Liao dynasty to the north, the third Song emperor, Zhenzong (r. 997–1022), ordered work to begin on a collection of 'events from successive ages pertaining to rulers and servitors'.[13] The emperor himself took an active role in the work's execution, setting guidelines, controlling content, and reviewing drafts. His preface describes the work, completed in 1013, as a continuation of his father's similar compilations in literature, philosophy, and medicine, and as the dynasty's attempt to organize historical knowledge in a way that would make that knowledge useful to present and future administration.

To this end, the work is divided into thirty-one major divisions, beginning with 'emperors', followed by other heads of state, and ending with foreign countries. A general preface explains the function of each division within the administrative structure of government in general and within Emperor Zhenzong's government in particular. These divisions, in turn, are divided into 1,104 subdivisions, each with its own smaller preface that summarizes the contents of the subdivision. Although the thirty-one divisions are administrative categories, many of the subdivision labels convey heavy moral overtones. These moral categories enabled the emperor and his editors to exercise the historiographical 'praise and blame' function by filtering the work's sources for suitable didactic exemplars. Individual documents are arranged chronologically within each subdivision and range from the beginnings of Chinese history through 959. Major sources for the earlier periods are the Zhou classics and Han histories. For later periods, however, the editors quoted extensively from the original Tang and Five Dynasties' 'veritable records' which were kept in the imperial library at Kaifeng, the Song capital and also the capital of the preceding Five Dynasties' monarchies. The court printed the work soon after its completion in 1013. A palace fire destroyed the imperial library in 1015, making the *Cefu yuangui* today 'perhaps the richest single source for T'ang history, and certainly the most important source for the history of the Five Dynasties'.[14]

The work's structure, its many prefaces, and especially the division entitled 'state history' (*guoshi*) provide a good sense of early Song historiographical issues and values before the literati revolution of the mid-eleventh century. These are classic 'praise and blame' principles as articulated in early Tang: the honest record of the historiographer keeps the monarch careful in word and deed and serves as a guide for future generations. But Emperor Zhenzong's vision, like that of his early Tang forebears, is not sectarian. His preface specifically mentions the inclusion of Buddhist and Daoist sources; the 'state history' survey includes the Daoist progenitor Laozi as an example of an early historian. This view neither ignores

[13] Li Tao, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian*, 34 vols. (1183; Beijing, 1979–95), 61.1367. For a comprehensive study of the *Cefu yuangui* within the larger context of Northern Song historiography see Chia-fu Sung, 'Between Tortoise and Mirror: Historians and Historiography in Eleventh-Century China', Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2010, ch. 2 ('The *Grand Tortoise* and the Encyclopedic Vision of History'), 82–143.

[14] Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History Under the T'ang* (Cambridge, 1992), 117.

Confucianism nor privileges it. Emperor Zhenzong is equally open-minded on the intersection of moral and political legitimacy. His preface admits that positive exemplars may arise from both legitimate and from 'intercalary' rulers, 'illegitimate' rulers who ruled between legitimate ones. At the same time, the structure of the work gives pride of place to the monarchy and the military at the expense of the civil bureaucracy. Zhenzong neither ignores the literati nor does he privilege them. In these senses, the work stands as an antithesis to the historiographical vision of literati historians such as Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang. And this antithesis no doubt accounts for the relative obscurity into which *Cefu yuangui* fell, despite its imperial imprimatur, in subsequent generations.

OUYANG XIU AND HISTORY FOR THE LITERATI

Ouyang Xiu is perhaps the central figure in the eleventh-century evolution of the fully developed literati personality. A scholar of omnivorous interests and talents, as well as an engaged government official and political operative, he presents the quintessential combination of intellectual vitality and political engagement that defined the Northern Song 'Renaissance man'—the literatus.[15] There were about twenty thousand 'officials' (*guan*) in Ouyang Xiu's time. Only a small fraction chose to emulate literati standards, but this group comprised those who had entered the upper ranks of officialdom by placing well in the civil service examinations. Over the course of the eleventh century, this small but powerful subset of the bureaucracy began to exert itself as independent intellectuals and even, in rare cases, as independent political actors—in short, to carve out independent 'space'—relative to, yet within, the imperial state.

As a classicist, Ouyang Xiu set in motion a scholarly critique of the Zhou dynasty 'Confucian' canon that led to a redefinition of Confucian principles and an effort to apply these redefined principles to contemporary administration. The debate thus begun continued throughout the dynasty. As a writer, he developed and propagated a vigorous, concise, and flexible 'prose [inspired by] antiquity' (*guwen*), a style that became the vehicle of choice for much Song political and intellectual discourse. As a historian, he sought, through rigorous application of 'praise and blame' techniques, to rewrite the history of Song's immediate past in a way that would support and enhance his claim for the role of literati values in Song political life.

Ouyang Xiu brought his passion for Confucian redefinition and for literary style to his work as a historian. Both historical works that carry his name are rewrites. On his own initiative as a private scholar, he began work on *Wudai shiji*

[15] The classic biography remains James T. C. Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu: An Eleventh-Century Neo-Confucian* (Stanford, 1967); see also Ronald Egan, *The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–72)* (Cambridge, 1984).

[Historical Records of the Five Dynasties] as early as 1036 but refused to declare the book finished or to circulate it widely. The court ordered his family to submit the manuscript after his death in 1072. By the turn of the century, his work had supplanted the *Jiu Wudaishi* [Old History of the Five Dynasties], compiled by court historians in 974. The *Xin Tangshu* [New History of the Tang] was a court-sponsored project to replace the existing *Tangshu* [History of the Tang], officially compiled in 945. The work was finally completed in 1060 after a protracted fifteen-year gestation, in which Ouyang Xiu participated for six years.

Both the 'old' histories (together covering the period 618–959) that Ouyang Xiu worked to replace were repositories of original documents, slightly patched together from the veritable records with little editorial oversight and minimal application of 'praise and blame'. The urge to revise both works arose from the common feeling that neither work presented the documents of history in ways that addressed contemporary issues. For the court, these issues were the economic strain and military problems caused by the Tangut wars of the 1040s. For Ouyang Xiu the private writer, these issues were the creation and definition of the new literati identity. Ouyang found objectionable the moral ambiguity of the older works and the overwhelming evidence they offered to document the non-Confucian, bureaucratically ad hoc, and military nature of late Tang and Five Dynasties society. They were archives; and he rewrote them into advocacy.

To this end, the *Wudai shiji*—the last dynastic history composed by a single individual—cut the length of the earlier 974 history by half. Ouyang Xiu eliminated original documents from the annals and rewrote them using a sparse, coded programme language that imitated the *Chunqiu* [Spring and Autumn Annals] and telegraphed his moral verdict on each 'event'. He jettisoned all but two of the monographs, because they detailed government structures and practices, many of which still existed in Song government, that he opposed. He grouped biographies together to illustrate positive Confucian moral categories and their antitheses. He drastically expanded the notion of editorial commentary, which the traditional dynastic history format confined to a limited number of fixed locations in the text. Instead, Ouyang Xiu inserted his own commentary at will. An intense historical 'presentism' motivates many of these insertions, in which Ouyang Xiu opines on border policy, political factionalism, imperial succession, and dynastic legitimacy. In all cases, he finds Five Dynasties' practices deficient and introduces his commentaries with the phrase 'I lament' rather than the traditional 'the historian comments'. His 'antique prose' links together the entire work into a coherent programme in which every passage contributes to Ouyang Xiu's unified message—that literati government is preferable to military government.[16]

[16] Tze-ki Hon, 'Military Governance versus Civil Governance: A Comparison of the *Old History* and the *New History* of the Five Dynasties', in Kai-wing Chow, On-cho Ng, and John B. Henderson (eds.), *Imagining Boundaries: Changing Confucian Doctrines, Texts, and Hermeneutics* (Albany, NY, 1999), 85–105.

In the classic formulation of Etienne Balazs, in China 'history was written by officials for officials'.[17] More precisely, official history since early Tang had been written by court officials for court use, and the 'old' histories of the tenth century conformed to this paradigm. But Ouyang Xiu wrote for a larger literati audience, an audience that overlapped the category of 'court officials' but whose interest in history was quite different. Ouyang Xiu's sharply redefined moral categories addressed an audience of individual literati eager to establish their own identities vis-à-vis the state and each other. History, for Ouyang Xiu and for this audience, was a series of personal moral dramas, not simply a vast collection of precedents, some of which might work and some not, as in the *Cefu yuangui*. Instead, the new literati reader was attracted to the individual personalities of history. Reading history became a psychological exercise in imagining oneself as a player in the dramas of the past, an exercise that would hopefully shape personal development and form moral character. This new relationship between historian and audience challenged the authority of the state to determine history. This challenge, and the tensions that resulted from it, determined the subsequent course of Chinese historiography.

SIMA GUANG AND THE *ZIZHI TONGJIAN*

When Emperor Shenzong (r. 1068–85) finally saw Ouyang's history, he was not amused, remarking that Ouyang's moral outrage had prompted him to 'bemoan everything and anything'.[18] But the latent emergence of a new audience and a new purpose for history, as well as the state's need for an updated paradigm for consulting precedents, prepared the way for the creation of Northern Song historiography's greatest monument—and certainly among the seminal masterpieces of Chinese history-writing—the *Zizhi tongjian*, a 294-chapter chronicle that narrates the history of China from 403 BC to AD 959. Sima Guang's history and its subsequent abridgements, permutations, and continuations provided the basic understanding of Chinese history, both in China and in the West, until the introduction of Western historiography and Marxism into China in the twentieth century. Even today, it remains a primary reference for scholars who work on those periods of Chinese history within its coverage.

Like Ouyang Xiu, Sima Guang ranked among the premier literati of the age, rising eventually in 1086 to the position of Chief Councillor, the highest civil administrator of the state.[19] Already in the 1060s, having earned in his capacity as imperial tutor the trust of Emperor Yingzong (r. 1063–7), he requested permission to prepare

[17] Etienne Balazs, 'L'histoire comme guide de la pratique bureaucratique (les monographies, les encyclopédies, les recueils de statuts)', in W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (eds.), *Historians of China and Japan* (London, 1961), 78–94, at 82.

[18] Li Tao, *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian*, 263.6441–6442.

[19] For a recent biography see Xiao-bin Ji, *Politics and Conservatism in Northern Song China: The Career and Thought of Sima Guang* (Hong Kong, 2005).

for imperial use a continuation of the *Chunqiu*, arguing that the unwieldy format of the standard histories made them unsuitable for instructional purposes. Sima Guang, accorded total control over the project, began work in 1066 with two assistants, Imperial Library access, and secretarial support. The arrangement, whereby the emperor supported a private scholar to compile a historical work independent of the court's regular historiographical bureaucracy, was unprecedented in Song history.

In 1067, however, the political ground shifted upon the death of Emperor Yingzong, the ascension of Emperor Shenzong, and the latter's reliance upon the 'New Policies' (*xinfa*) of Wang Anshi, which Sima Guang opposed. This political opposition, between the 'new' party of Wang Anshi and the 'old' party led by Sima Guang, dominated Song politics during the composition of the *Zizhi tongjian*. In 1071 Sima Guang was forced to accept a sinecure in Loyang, but the emperor allowed him to relocate the history project and continued to fund the operation. The finished work was submitted to the court in 1084, and Emperor Shenzong composed a preface endorsing the work.

The *Zizhi tongjian* created a new format for writing history by combining, both methodologically and intellectually, elements from official and private historiography. Its composition entailed three stages. First, Sima Guang and his assistants gathered from standard histories and veritable records a detailed list of 'events' (*shi* 事) and compiled these into a 'general outline' (*zongmu*) that was probably in tabular form. They then combed the full range of available sources, not only official sources, for relevant passages and catalogued them under each event. The present work cites by name about three hundred titles consulted, most of which do not survive. Second, the assistants, each a specialist in a given chronological period, compiled this material into a 'Long Draft' (*changbian*). When multiple sources treated the same event, as long as the sources did not conflict, the clearest and longest, presuming it contained all the details of the other versions, was to be copied. If other versions contained additional details not in the longer version, the assistant was to integrate the versions. However, if the sources conflicted, the assistant was to ascertain by investigation which version he believed more creditable, copy that account, but append the rejected account along with the rationale for his decision in a note. Third, Sima Guang personally condensed the 'Long Drafts', reworked the notes on conflicting sources into an 'investigation of differences' (*kaoyi*), and added his own commentary. The original 'Long Draft' on Tang history, for example, was six hundred chapters versus eighty chapters for the Tang in the received, finished book.[20]

The *Zizhi tongjian* employed methods of textual reduction and copying similar to those of official historiography, but widened its textual base to include private sources. Hitherto, revision of officially compiled state histories had been

[20] The fullest description in English of the composition of the *Zizhi tongjian* remains E. G. Pulleyblank, 'Chinese Historical Criticism: Liu Chih-chi and Ssu-ma Kuang', in Beasley and Pulleyblank (eds.), *Historians of China and Japan*, 135–66.

problematic because, unintentionally and often intentionally, the earlier archival sources from which they had been distilled had often disappeared. In Song, few official sources for Tang history below the level of veritable records survived. Therefore, Ouyang Xiu and others, in an effort to reshape the paradigm for Tang history, had inserted private, 'anecdotal' material into the (*Xin*) *Tangshu*, and, according to many contemporaries, had done so uncritically. The 'investigation of differences' not only solved the problem of how to juxtapose official and unofficial sources but also established a precedent for preserving the 'rejected' version of events when the sources conflicted. The format that eventually resulted—preferred version of events in larger typeface text; alternative versions and explanatory rationales in smaller typeface notes—rendered transparent for the reader the decision making process of the historian. No longer a simple consumer of preserved precedent, the reader became, with the historian, an active participant in the critical and evaluative process of understanding history.

There is no doubt that Sima Guang initially intended this dialogue between historian and reader for a reading audience of one—Emperor Yingzong. As events unfolded, however, and as Sima Guang moved from political insider as tutor to Yingzong to political outsider as opposition leader under Shenzong, his putative readership expanded to include the literati audience that Ouyang Xiu had only dreamed of addressing. Most modern scholars agree that the outlook of the *Zizhi tongjian* correlates closely with Sima Guang's other copious writings on political institutions. Others go further and believe that the work projected 'old party' policies onto earlier Chinese history in an effort to create a historical apologia for what was perceived in the 1070s as a failed political agenda.[21] There is no doubt that the *Zizhi tongjian* presents consistent historical justification for an idealized political structure that is at odds with the 'reform' policies of Wang Anshi.

For Sima Guang, the state is a Confucian hierarchical structure with the emperor atop a civil bureaucracy comprised of many hierarchically ordered, interlocking administrative units, each with rigidly defined duties relative to each other. The 'old' party advanced this structure (as opposed to the more fluid, ad hoc structure advocated by the 'new' party) because it made possible greater literati control over government in the face of the power of the monarch and the military. By the selection of appropriate 'events' throughout history, the *Zizhi tongjian* showcased those sovereigns who had been wise enough to better their rule through acceptance of remonstrance and rejection of military expansionism. Although Sima Guang never directly challenged the theoretically unlimited power of the sovereign, he stressed that the emperor's major duty was to select properly qualified senior administrators and not to intervene, nor to allow others to intervene on his behalf, directly into lower levels of the hierarchy. The imperial role, like that of all others,

[21] Ming K. Chan, 'The Historiography of the *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien*: A Survey', *Monumenta Serica*, 31 (1974–5), 2–38.

was to be functionally defined and limited. Each level of the hierarchy, including the emperor, was to deal only with the levels immediately above and below it.

HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE SOUTHERN SONG (1127–1279)

The period following the death of Sima Guang witnessed the apogee of Song imperial power, and the political and historical vision of the *Zizhi tongjian* held little attraction. In 1133, however, as part of its efforts to rebuild the dynasty following the loss of North China to the Jurchen in 1127, the 'restoration' court at Hangzhou reprinted the book. Every major work of Chinese historiography for the next two hundred years responded in some way to the *Zizhi tongjian*. These responses may be divided broadly into two categories. First, the possibilities inherent in Sima Guang's 'investigation of differences' inspired Li Tao and Li Xinchuan to develop this critical function and apply its methodology to the documents of contemporary Song history. Their sophisticated technical ability to combine and compare official and private sources created a hybrid official-private historiography that attempted to control and correct distortions in both groups of sources. Their endeavours created standards of historical scholarship that would not be attained again in China for five hundred years. Second, the expanding literati audience that Sima Guang had addressed in the *Zizhi tongjian* prompted Zhu Xi and his followers in the Learning of the Way (*daoxue*) movement to devise new pedagogical formats that compressed Sima Guang's work and revised the mechanics of its presentation, the better to incorporate historical knowledge into their programme of moral and political reform.

Sima Guang himself recognized that he had created a large, unwieldy work, whose chronological format frustrated quick identification of the major themes through which he had hoped to link disparate 'events'. He therefore compiled a thirty-chapter 'detail register' (*mulu*) as an index and study aid. He may also have begun work on an eighty-chapter abridgement of his full text. In the first decades under Emperor Xiaozong (r. 1162–89), the transformation of the Learning of the Way movement into a powerful vehicle for literati education accelerated the need for a reduced format of the *Zizhi tongjian* as well as an updating of its Northern Song understanding of the place of historical knowledge in moral education.[22]

ZHU XI AS HISTORIAN—THE OUTLINE AND DETAILS FORMAT

As early as the 1160s, Zhu Xi and his disciples were experimenting with ways to modify the *Zizhi tongjian*. The *Tongjian gangmu* [Outline and Details Based on

[22] For a comprehensive survey see Tsong-han Lee, 'Different Mirrors of the Past: Southern Song Historiography', Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2008.

the Comprehensive Mirror] was printed in 1219, nineteen years after his death. Although the exact nature of Zhu Xi's contribution to the finished work remains unclear, the work's structure, goals, and much of its language are certainly his. The new 'outline and details' (*gangmu*) format attempted to solve two problems that Zhu Xi perceived in Sima Guang's work: first, the earlier work's length, strict chronological format, and absence of references linking 'events' made it difficult to perceive historical cause and effect; second, this difficulty impeded ready understanding of the moral lessons of history. Accordingly, Zhu Xi extracted a series of 'outline events' (*gang*) and rewrote them using the coded, telegraphic language of the *Chunqiu*, thus inculcating a 'praise and blame' verdict into each 'event'. The primary meaning of the graph *gang* 綱 is a large rope that forms the support structure for the smaller ropes of a net; and Zhu Xi's *gang* are morally encoded 'headlines', which, chronologically arranged, provide the structure or 'outline' of history. The 1219 edition prints the *gang* in large typeface. Unlike the *gang* passages, which are chronologically fixed, the *mu* (detail) passages, double-spaced under each *gang*, freely select and combine texts from different time periods to fashion a narrative, cause-and-effect sequence that illustrates the moral message imbedded in the headline. The 'details' also append extracts from contemporary Learning of the Way authors that support the 'outlines' historical verdicts.

In 1241 the Song court confirmed Zhu Xi's commentaries on the Confucian classics as state orthodoxy, a move the Yuan court reaffirmed when it made his teachings the core of the revived civil service examinations in 1313. The *Tongjian gangmu* became the master narrative of Chinese history and the standard pedagogical handbook for its study. For Zhu Xi, personal moral insight gained through study and reflection on the Confucian classics was a primary value and the goal of all education. History was a secondary value, a source of examples that could teach about the consequences of moral choices and so reaffirm moral insight from the classics. The *gangmu* structure supports this conception of history. The 'outline' is not really an outline of history but rather an outline for education in morally correct action. The 'details' provide moral casebooks that enable the student to understand the moral contexts in which historical actions took place. Such 'historical' understanding in turn supports the lessons of the classics.

Although the *Tongjian gangmu* aimed to demonstrate the presence of moral universals in history, its content nevertheless reflects contemporary twelfth-century issues. Two major concerns in Zhu Xi's selection of 'outlines' were to establish an unambiguous line of transmission for a unified imperial mandate (only one legitimate emperor at the same time) and clearly to demarcate autocratic ministers and their associates as responsible for dynastic decline. The former reinforced the Song claim to political and cultural superiority over the Liao and Jin dynasties beyond the Song border to the north, and the second reinforced the Learning of the Way claim to moral superiority over its political opponents at home. Although Zhu Xi differed with Sima Guang on details and focus, he

supported Sima Guang's defence of the hierarchical state as a bulwark against autocracy, and he sought support for those values in earlier Chinese history.

Although Qing dynasty 'evidential scholarship' eventually undermined the authority of the *Tongjian gangmu*, and modern historians ignore the work, its influence in China and on Western conceptions of Chinese history cannot be overemphasized. In the eighteenth century, the Jesuits crafted a 'general history of China' from the Manchu translation of the *Tongjian gangmu* and its continuations, and their work remained for two centuries the most detailed account of Chinese history in the West.[23] In support of their claims to political and moral authority, the Song literati from Ouyang Xiu to Zhu Xi had created visions of how they imagined the past to have been. Those visions, in turn, through the influence of the *Tongjian gangmu*, became the improbable story of what China had really been.

LI TAO AND THE SICHUAN SCHOOL

A different response to the *Zizhi tongjian* arose from Sichuan province in the far west, where a local tradition of historical scholarship and publishing matured in the twelfth century and produced two works that constitute, from the modern perspective, the pinnacle of Song historiography. The first of these was the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* [Long Draft Continuation of the Comprehensive Mirror of Aid in Government], originally a work in one thousand chapters that extended Sima Guang's chronicle to cover the history of Northern Song (960–1127). Li Tao, working alone and largely without state support, conceived the project in the 1140s. He submitted his work to the court in four instalments between 1163 and 1183. A broadly learned scholar who passed the highest civil service examinations at the age of twenty-three, Li Tao's career alternated between local postings and four brief appointments in the capital, totalling only eight years, during which he worked on court historiography projects. Only fragments of his collected works survive, making it difficult to reconstruct details of his biography, his political alliances, and policy orientation. However, following the death of the autocratic Chief Councillor Qin Gui and the ascension of Emperor Xiaozong in 1162, broad-based literati efforts to restore Northern Song political institutions through appeal to the 'policies of the ancestors' (*zuzong zhi fa*), a vague collection of state-building precedents attributed to the Song founders, serve as background to the organization and execution of the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian*. Li Tao's political mentors advocated these efforts and secured his court historiographical appointments.

In the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* Li Tao applied Sima Guang's methodology to the documents of Northern Song 'state history' in an effort to bring greater

[23] J. A. M. de Moyriac de Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine, ou annales de cet empire; traduites du Tong-Kien Kang-Mou*, 13 vols. (Paris, 1777–85; repr. edn, Taibei, 1968).

accuracy and utility to the dynasty's own history. In the twelfth century, this history was still a work in progress. Political descendants of major Northern Song figures were still influential; at least three versions of the *Shenzong shilu* [Shenzong Veritable Records] existed, and veritable records for the final and crucial 1100–27 period had yet to be compiled. Li Tao's task was thus considerably more delicate than Sima Guang's, who, by ending the *Zizhi tongjian* in 959, had avoided direct comment on his own dynasty. At court, Li Tao worked on 'definitive' state history; at home, he worked simultaneously on his own private commentary to that history. The tension of this difficult balance appears in the memorials that accompanied his submissions. He twice asked the emperor to convene an 'editing conference' that Li Tao hoped might determine the definitive version of the many events in Song history for which his *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* presented conflicting versions. The conference was never called, and Li Tao never proceeded past the 'long draft' stage to the condensation of a definitive history of Northern Song. And therein lies the enormous utility of the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* for the modern historian.

Li Tao developed Sima Guang's 'investigation of differences' into a powerful scholarly apparatus to express his own critical opinion on matters of textual and historical veracity. Sima Guang had relegated 'investigations of differences' to a separate work apart from the main text, and the two were not joined and printed together until the thirteenth century. Li Tao, on the other hand, inserted double-spaced interlinear commentary between the single lines of his main text. Following Sima Guang's practice, for every 'event' Li Tao copied selected passages from available sources to construct a version he deemed credible. He included in the commentary the full text of sources from which he had quoted, as well as versions he had rejected, and his reasons for doing so. This union enabled Li Tao, through subtle interplay between text and commentary, to present evidence for detecting and correcting bias in both official and private sources. The precision of Song documents, which normally carried both an exact date and the full bureaucratic titles of all those through whose hands the document had passed, afforded Li Tao a powerful analytical tool to compare disparate sources on the same event. Rather than allowing Song bureaucracy to overwhelm his historical task, Li Tao used it to attain control over his sources. For example, already in the 1140s, before beginning the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian*, he compiled tables of the precise tenure dates for occupants of all major court positions. Because subsequent writers were usually unable to reconstruct the bureaucratic precision of the original, this data allowed him to detect altered original documents, forgeries, and 'slanders'.[24]

[24] Charles Hartman, 'The Reluctant Historian: Sun Ti, Chu Hsi, and the Fall of Northern Sung', *T'oung Pao*, 89 (2003), 100–48, esp. 118–30, which explicates in detail the interrelation between text and commentary in Li Tao.

LI XINCHUAN AND THE *JIANYAN YILAI XINIAN YAOLU*

Li Xinchuan, drawing upon the same Sichuan scholarly traditions as Li Tao, adopted the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* model and applied it to post-1127 Song history. Working between 1196 and 1208, he compiled the two hundred-chapter *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* [Chronological Record of Important Events since 1127], which covers events during the reign of Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127–62).[25] Only two other titles from Li Xinchuan's once voluminous writings on historical and other subjects survive. Two instalments of *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji* [Notes on Court and Province since 1127], completed in 1202 and 1216, remain. Finally, the *Taoming lu* [Record of the Way and Its Destiny] is an annotated collection of documents on the history of the Learning of the Way movement.[26]

In the *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu*, Li Xinchuan applied Li Tao's critical methodology to the one thousand-chapter *Gaozong rili* [Gaozong Daily Calendar]. In 1176, Li Tao himself, then Director of the Palace Library for only two months, had written in the calendar's preface that 'considering how many historians have for over thirty years gathered and joined together this great multiplicity of documents, how could I personally dare to ensure they are free from omissions, contradictions, and departures from truth?'[27] It was precisely this task to which Li Xinchuan set himself in the *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu*, using over two hundred sources, to unravel the distortions and manipulations in the daily calendar. When his sources would not enable a resolution, he noted laconically that the issue 'awaits further investigation'. These exacting standards, his practice of preserving conflicting accounts, and his honesty in admitting what he could and could not deduce from his sources make the *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* the most important surviving source for early Southern Song history.

Li Xinchuan's commentary in the *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* often draws connections between separate passages in an effort to surmount the limitations of the annalistic format. His second major surviving work, *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji*, was clearly conceived to function alongside the *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* and as another vehicle to coordinate related material. Divided into twelve sections that mirror the divisions of the *Song huiyao*, then further subdivided into discrete topics, the *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji* collect and organize passages from the *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* and later texts to present a detailed history of Southern Song

[25] John C. Chaffee, 'Sung Biographies, Supplementary No. 2: Li Hsin-ch'uan (1167–1244)', *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies*, 24 (1994), 205–15 contains the most detailed biography in English. See also Charles Hartman, 'Li Hsin-ch'uan and the Historical Images of Late Sung Tao-hsüeh', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 61:2 (2001), 317–58.

[26] Charles Hartman, 'Bibliographic Notes on Sung Historical Works: The Original *Record of the Way and Its Destiny* (*Tao-ming lu*) by Li Hsin-ch'uan', *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies*, 30 (2000), 1–61 reconstructs the original text from quotations in the *Yongle dadian*.

[27] Cited in Ma Duanlin, *Wenxian tongkao jingji kao* (1308; Shanghai, 1985), 21.531.

administrative, educational, military, and economic institutions. The discrete topics of the *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji* foreground historically significant 'events' from the even flow of the *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu*. Unlike the *Song huiyao* and the encyclopedias, which indiscriminately mix the vital and the trivial, Li Xinchuan's *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji* presents a master historian's eye for the pertinent detail and a sure ability to generalize from those details. His notes, especially the sections on taxation and the military, contain a wealth of numbers and statistics that undergird and contextualize modern understanding of the Southern Song state.

Li Xinchuan accomplished most of his work alone in Sichuan, far from the capital and state support, under deteriorating economic and political conditions. In recognition of his scholarship, he was granted a government position at age fifty-nine and proceeded in 1231 to the capital where he worked intermittently on court historiography. In 1234 the Mongol invasions of Sichuan forced his permanent relocation to the east. His *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji* presents a pessimistic view of contemporary Song institutions and a critique of Southern Song's inability to retake North China. The *Taoming lu*, his last surviving work, presents a bleak assessment of the fortunes of the Learning of the Way movement for Song moral and political renewal and discomfort with the movement's contemporary leadership.

THE RISE OF PEDAGOGICAL HISTORY

Although both Li Tao and Li Xinchuan adopted the annalistic format, neither followed *Chunqiu* practice and embedded morally coded tags into their main text. A fundamental difference concerning the sources, origins, and relationship between the main text and commentary demarcates the 'annalistic' format of Li Tao and Li Xinchuan from the 'outline and details' format of Zhu Xi and his Learning of the Way followers. One may label this difference 'documentary' versus 'pedagogical'. Sima Guang and his Sichuan successors constructed their main text for each 'event' through an analytical juxtapositioning of quotations from identified primary sources, and this procedure reflected their historical evaluation of those sources. Their commentaries presented the documents and judgements behind those evaluations. For Zhu Xi and his followers, the main text of an 'outline and details' work was a collection of self-composed, formulaically created tags, usually with no direct textual connection to a primary source. The commentary was a collage of primary text (often without identification of source) mixed with secondary comment from previous Learning of the Way scholars, and was intended to support the moral judgements coded into the main text. The former was historical scholarship; the latter was moral education.

It was the latter, however, that prevailed in the thirteenth century and led to the decline of the former. Although the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* drew praise

from Li Tao's contemporaries, Zhu Xi objected to citations of material in the commentaries that he considered objectionable and agitated against the work. As the thirteenth century progressed, there was little commercial interest in printing enormous, controversial compilations like the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* and the *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu*. Although extracts from the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* were printed, and the full text may have been printed in Sichuan, the blocks did not survive the Mongol invasions in the 1230s. The *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* may have been printed in 1253, but even by the early fourteenth century, the Yuan court historians could not locate a complete copy. Rather, printers joined forces with unemployed scholars to condense, rewrite, and reformat these larger works of historical scholarship into commercial handbooks for examination preparation.[28]

This movement produced several new formats that condensed and reorganized larger 'documentary' compilations into 'pedagogical' handbooks. Among these formats was the 'topical narratives' (*jishi benmo*—literally 'beginnings and ends of recorded events'). Yuan Shu inaugurated the genre in 1174 with *Tongjian jishi benmo* [Topical Narratives from the Comprehensive Mirror], a rearrangement of Sima Guang's work into 239 topical categories within which 'events' were arranged chronologically to form a consistent, focused narrative. The device facilitated access to the *Zizhi tongjian*, but the choice of topics further imposed a master narrative on Chinese history that privileged literati concerns and political values. Topics such as 'eunuch intrigues in the Latter Han' and 'victorious campaigns of the Tang founders' foregrounded literati notions of Chinese history as a history of the centralized, civil-administered dynastic state.

Neither the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* nor the *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* survives in their original form. Both were copied into the *Yongle dadian*, but not before large portions of their texts had disappeared and their commentaries became contaminated with Learning of the Way content, probably in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The political triumph of the Learning of the Way during this period, with its distinctive programme for moral based historiography, condemned the longer works to oblivion. Their recovery, albeit imperfect, over the last two hundred years has transformed the study of Song history. Li Tao and Li Xinchuan's combination of personal initiative and official historiographical employment, their high standards of source control, their passion for accuracy of detail, their concern for the intellectual integrity and independence of the historian's task, all place their accomplishment closer than any other historian of the Song period to those of modern professional historians. Relative lack of recognition of this status—compared, for example, to the general acclaim accorded Sima Guang as a historian—derives from the imperfect textual condi-

[28] Charles Hartman, 'Chen Jun's *Outline and Details*: Printing and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Pedagogical Histories', in Lucille Chia and Hilde De Weerds (eds.), *Knowledge and Text Production in an Age of Print: China, 900–1400* (Leiden, 2011), 273–315.

tion of their surviving works and the narrow time frames upon which those works concentrate. Unlike Sima Guang whose work is known to all historians of China, the works of Li Tao and Li Xinchuan remain the province of Song specialists. Yet their accomplishments as historians place them among the greatest Chinese historians of all time.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

960	Establishment of Song dynasty with capital at Kaifeng
1004	Peace treaty with Liao dynasty in the north
1038–44	War between Song and the Tangut Xixia dynasty
1069	Wang Anshih inaugurates the reformist New Policies
1086	Sima Guang rescinds many of the New Policies
1100–26	Reign of Emperor Huizong
1115	Jin dynasty begins
1125–6	Jin capture Kaifeng; end of Northern Song
1127	Emperor Gaozong declares restoration of the Song dynasty
1138	Southern Song capital established at Lin'an
1142	Peace treaty with the Jin dynasty in the north
1161	Jin invasion of Song territory
1162	Gaozong abdicates in favour of Emperor Xiaozong
1195–1201	Proscription of *daoxue* teachings
1206–8	Unsuccessful Song invasion of Jin
1234	Mongols destroy the Jin dynasty
1241	Song monarchy accepts *daoxue* teachings as state orthodoxy
1260–1368	Mongols establish Yuan dynasty in northern China
1275	Mongols capture Lin'an, effectively ending Song rule

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Chapter 3

The Birth and Flowering of Japanese Historiography: From Chronicles to Tales to Historical Interpretation

John R. Bentley

KOJIKI AND *NIHON SHOKI*

Early Japanese historiography *seems* to burst suddenly on the historical stage in the beginning decades of the eighth century. *Kojiki* [Record of Ancient Matters], in three books, is presented to Empress Genmei (r. 708–15) in the first month of 712.[1] *Nihon shoki* [Chronicle of Japan], Japan's first official historical chronicle in thirty books, is presented to Empress Genshō (r. 715–24) in the fifth month of 720. The capital had been moved to a new site, in Nara, in the third month of 710, so the compilation of new histories is perhaps a natural outcome of this move to imitate China by building a permanent capital. However, neither this simple chronology nor its analysis should be taken at face value. Most scholars agree that the decree of Great King Tenmu (r. 672–86) issued in the third month of 681 was the impetus for the compilation of both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Tenmu is recorded as having commanded twelve imperial princes and court officials to record and confirm *Teiki* [Imperial Record] and the various accounts of ancient times.[2] A related edict appears in the preface to *Kojiki*, where the compiler Ō no Yasumaro notes that Tenmu had declared, 'We hear that the manuscripts of *Teiki* and *Honji* [Original Words] which are kept by the various houses already differ from the truth with many falsehoods added. . . . Thus we desire now to compile and record *Teiki*, and investigate and get to the bottom of things related to *Kuji* [Ancient Matters], removing error and establishing the truth, and transmitting to future generations these things' (*Kojiki*, Preface). The underlying assumption related to these imperial decrees is that a variety of historical records existed prior to the completion of either *Kojiki* or *Nihon shoki*, suggesting that a serious

[1] Unless specified, all dates are AD.
[2] All translations are the author's own, unless specified otherwise.

historiographical movement had begun *at least* several decades before the appearance of Tenmu.

In an apparent attempt at hagiography, the historiographers of *Nihon shoki* claim that Shōtoku Taishi, the supposed creator of Japan's first constitution, was also the first to compile a number of historical works. The event is dated 620: 'During this year the Heir (Shōtoku) and Great Minister Shima discussed things together, and recorded *Tennōki* and *Kokki*, along with [a number of other records].' There is some debate about whether *Tennōki* [Record of the Heavenly Sovereigns] and *Kokki* [National Record] constitute actual works, or are simply rubrics used to define the early stages of the historiographical process.[3] What perhaps can be said with some certainty is that the *Nihon shoki* compilers are essentially showering Shōtoku Taishi with credit for the creation of historical works *that did in fact exist*, but were of unknown authorship by the time of Tenmu. Umezawa makes a very compelling case that complete histories existed prior to the compilation of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.[4] Thus, while Tenmu's decree to correct perceived inaccuracies in *Teiki* and *Honji* was politically motivated, we should not doubt the veracity of the claim that a number of historical works predated *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.

While one must acknowledge that scholars are unsure when the historiographical process began in Japan, most concur that the process was underway by the mid-seventh century. It is natural to assume, as there is no concrete evidence to the contrary, that when the Korean Peninsular kingdom of Paekche introduced Buddhism with its corpus of written scripture to Japan in the sixth century, historical works—both Chinese and Paekche—were also introduced.[5] This suggests that early Japanese historiography was a Paekche-filtered version of Chinese record keeping. By the era of Tenmu the Paekche filter was being removed, and Japanese historians went directly to Chinese sources for their models. A natural question here is the political motivation for such a move. John S. Brownlee has argued, 'The imperial state had a strong purpose in writing history: to establish an understanding of the past that would enhance its supremacy.'[6]

Kojiki consists of three books: Book One, 'Age of the Gods'; Book Two, 'Jinmu down to Ōjin'; and Book Three, 'Nintoku to Suiko'. On the surface it appears that the historiographers divided native history into three stages: mythology, legend, and history—but this view is too naive. As Takamitsu Kōnoshi has

[3] It seems clear that the compilers of *Nihon shoki* considered the *Tennōki* and *Kokki* to be actual titles, because the record states several decades later, 'Soga Omi Emisi and others were about to be put to death, so they set fire to *Tennoki* and *Kokki* and all their treasures. Fune Obito Esaka quickly took *Kokki* which was about to be burned and presented it to Naka no Ohoe' (645:6:13).

[4] Umezawa Isezō, *Kiki hihan* (Tokyo, 1976); and Umezawa, *Zoku Kiki hihan* (Tokyo, 1976).

[5] Cf. Johns. Bentley, *Historiographical Trends in Early Japan* (Lewiston, 2002), 59–73.

[6] John S. Brownlee, *Political Thought in Japanese Historical Writing: From* Kojiki *(712) to* Tokushi Yoron *(1712)* (Waterloo, 1991), 9.

argued, the *Kojiki* historiographers wanted to lay claim to a large territory, in imitation of the Chinese Empire, so after the mythological origins recorded in Book One, Book Two outlines a two-stage creation process of state versus periphery: (i) Jinmu unifies the country and establishes his capital in Yamato, and later Prince Yamato Takeru puts down rebellions in the western and eastern regions of the islands; (ii) then Ōjin—by proxy through his mother, Jingū—invades the Korean Peninsula and subdues Silla. According to a poem later sung by Ōjin, the court wished to portray Paekche, Silla's neighbour and arch-enemy, as having already submitted its allegiance to the Yamato Court.[7] Thus, the political purpose for the compilation of *Kojiki* can be said to portray the vast realm controlled by descendants of the Sun Goddess (Amaterasu). It is interesting, however, to note that China is never mentioned in *Kojiki*. This may have been because the work was compiled mainly for internal consumption, but it has been argued that the compiler(s) wanted to create a unified realm where the descendants of Amaterasu reigned supreme, independent of China.[8]

Nihon shoki travels the same ideological path as *Kojiki*, but it is a much more complicated historiographical project. The 'Age of the Gods' section is relegated to the first two books of this thirty-book compilation. The importance of the lineage of the ruling house originating from Amaterasu is given full weight, however. The reign of Jinmu is elevated to a separate book, where the story of his unifying the realm is given full attention, and he receives the title 'the first Great King who ruled the land', a title also strangely given later to the tenth ruler, Sujin. Takioto Yoshiyuki argues that the early historiographers, in an attempt to lengthen a terse native history to compete with the centuries-long time span of Chinese history, split a legendary 'founding' ruler into two actors: Jinmu and Sujin.[9]

On the surface, at least, we can also say the compilers of *Nihon shoki* viewed diplomatic history as starting with Queen Jingū, her account being the first where Chinese records are quoted, *Wei zhi* [Wei Chronicles] quoted three times, and the Jin Dynasty *Qi ju zhu* (court diaries) once. This demonstrates that the compilers equated the primitive Wa Queen Himiko—who is recorded in *Wei zhi*—with Jingū. The early historiographers also put great emphasis on the records of Paekche, quoting three Paekche histories a total of twenty-six times. At the end of the reign of Great King Keitai (*c.*530), the compiler adds this enlightening note:

> One manuscript says, 'The Great King passed away in the twenty-eighth year of his reign, Kinoe Tora.' The text above says the twenty-fifth year (Kanoto I) because it was based upon the

[7] Kōnoshi Takamitsu, *Kojiki: tennō no sekai no monogatari* (Tokyo, 1995), 193–222. Yamato is the ancient name of Japan, but I use them interchangeably here.

[8] Ibid., 222–3.

[9] Takioto Yoshiyuki, *Kamigami to kodaishi no nazo o toku:* Kojiki *to* Nihon shoki (Tokyo, 2005), 87.

text in *Paekche pongi* [Original Record of Paekche]. The Paekche text says that in the third month of the Kanoto I year, the army advanced to Ara and camped at Koltak Castle. During this month, the people of Koguryŏ put their king, An, to death. It is also heard that both the Great King and Heir to the throne of Yamato passed away. That is why the year Kanoto I fits the twenty-fifth year. Readers of later generations will perhaps be able to discern which date is correct. (531.11.5)[10]

It is thus clear that the compilers of *Nihon shoki* put greater weight on the calendar found in the Paekche chronicle than in their own native account. This suggests that the Yamato Court viewed Paekche history as a standard with which to link their history.[11]

Here it should be made clear that other than travelling the same basic path of history, *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* are fundamentally different works, and we should resist the temptation to lump them together.[12] While *Kojiki* lays the groundwork for a large realm under control by the sovereign, the text is very much inward looking, concerned with the royal family, as well as other families at court and their genealogy, containing the names and lineages of two hundred families, while *Nihon shoki* only lists a little over one hundred such families. *Nihon shoki*, on the other hand, is much more outward looking, concerned with the ruling family, and events surrounding those in power related to their hold on domestic and international territory. While *Nihon shoki* was compiled as an official history of the court, *Kojiki* is very much a literary project for internal consumption, containing 112 songs (poems), and putting a high premium on *the word*. This is accomplished by mixing classical Chinese with phonetic spellings of certain important religious nouns or verbs. Here is a simple example to illustrate this hybrid form of Chinese, with Chinese script in large type if representing classical Chinese, and smaller type if representing phonograms to represent native Japanese words (where the semantic value of a Chinese graph is ignored, and only the phonetic reading is important): 三歎、詔云阿豆麻波夜 *MITABI NAGEKASITE aduma paya TO NORITAMAPIKI* ('Three times he sighed, "aduma paya [oh, my wife]" ').

This textual format gives one the impression that perhaps certain sections of *Kojiki* were initially intended for recitation. This complex linguistic structure made the text difficult for later generations trained on purely classical Chinese models to read and process, and is the leading cause for the work having fallen out of the public memory within less than a century after its completion. On the other hand, *Nihon shoki* is written in beautiful classical Chinese, compiled with the intent to be shown to Chinese and peninsular envoys. *Nihon shoki*, being an

[10] Quotes from *Nihon shoki* and other later histories are given in a date format (i.e. year.month. day).

[11] It is true that the *Nihon shoki* compilers have *edited* these Paekche quotes, but these changes are more cosmetic than anything else. As an example, 'king of Wa' has been changed to 'heavenly sovereign', or 'land of Wa' has been changed to 'honorable land'.

[12] Cf. Umezawa Isezō, *Kojiki to Nihon shoki no kenshō* (Tokyo, 1988), 61.

officially sanctioned history, is one way in which the court appealed internationally to the status of the state being an independent entity of its neighbours, and therefore entitled to equal treatment.

Unlike *Kojiki* which ignores China, *Nihon shoki* provides ample entries dealing with its important neighbour. However, it is not what the compilers of *Shoki* included about China that is interesting, but what they deliberately ignored. For example, *Songshu* [History of the Song] notes that five different kings of Wa (Yamato) sent envoys to the Song Court during a sixty-year period (421–78). The last of these five kings even sent a long missive (in Chinese) requesting a title demonstrating his military prowess and hegemony over a number of *domains* in both the Japanese archipelago and the Korean Peninsula. In the end the Song emperor grants part of this fifth king's request, and bestows a rather abbreviated grand title on him, but none of this political jockeying appears in *Nihon shoki*. Also, regarding the three quotes from *Wei zhi* mentioned previously, the compilers have conveniently left out the name of the queen, Himiko, and instead simply record 'the queen of Wa', making the connection with Jingū obvious. Finally, the compilers never record any accounts of Wa/Yamato sending tribute to China. Kōnoshi concludes that the compilers of *Nihon shoki* have portrayed Yamato as an equal of China, and as the record makes it appear that Yamato has tributary states on the Korean Peninsula, it is an empire, like China, worthy of respect.[13]

As noted above, the historians at the Yamato Court were inspired and guided by Chinese notions of history and historiography,[14] but this does not mean that they swallowed everything whole. The historiographers were well aware of the Chinese idea about the Mandate of Heaven, where a virtuous ruler came to power because of this mandate, and when an evil ruler had lost the mandate, upheaval occurred, and a new ruler took the throne, often in a violent overthrow. It is clear that Tenmu's court historians were determined to demonstrate that an unbroken lineage back to Amaterasu existed in Japan, which is fundamentally different from the Mandate of Heaven. However, this Chinese thinking about a 'mandate' still can be seen in the story line starting with Great King Nintoku. He is portrayed as a virtuous ruler (the Chinese word *de* 'virtue' used four times in his record). The record says that he let his palace fall into disrepair, sacrificing his own standard of living to help the people become prosperous. His grandson in the fourth generation, Buretsu, is later portrayed as a cruel and evil ruler, and the end of his record notes, 'He dressed warm in the winter and forgot about the shivering masses. He ate exquisite food, forgetting the starving people' (506.3.no day). The beginning of the record of the following ruler, Keitai, mentions this about Buretsu: 'He originally had no male or female children, and so there was no heir' (507, pre-ascension). In this way, the historiographers paint

[13] Kōnoshi Takamitsu, *Kojiki: tennō no sekai no monogatari* (Tokyo, 1995), 223–5.

[14] See ch. 1 by Charles Hartman and Anthony DeBlasi and ch. 2 by Hartman, both in this volume.

Buretsu as having lost the Mandate of Heaven, and being punished with no heir. With the throne empty the court is obligated to locate a suitable replacement. Keitai appears on the scene, recorded as a descendant of Great King Ōjin in the fifth generation, making it possible for another virtuous king to take the throne, and it is this lineage that *Nihon shoki* claims continues unbroken down to Tenmu.

Another interesting break with the Chinese historiographical tradition is the inclusion of a large amount of poetry (or what could be termed song, as the record notes that these are sung). Early Japanese society viewed poetry as a form of communication, a method to help resolve conflict (either peacefully or by force), and so it was a worthy vehicle to telegraph history. Thus *Kojiki* contains 112 poems, while *Nihon shoki* contains 128, written in phonograms. In the case of *Kojiki*, many of these poems are clearly love poems, often exchanged between the sovereign and his queen or consort, but in the latter half of *Nihon shoki* we find poems being used for political purposes. Some poems, called 'spell poems', are used to portend evil consequences because of the abuse of power at court. Examples include poems which metaphorically outline the dangers of the despotic Soga family, while there is also a very cryptic poem at the end of Saimei's reign where the court is chastised for failing to save Paekche from the jaws of the invading Silla-Tang forces.[15]

The final books of *Nihon shoki* record fewer legendary or fantastic events, as the focus shifts to historically based domestically and internationally unsettled events, with hints here and there that portend a change in society. This sets the stage for Tenmu, whose administration is concerned with legal matters at court, succession, and the consolidation of power. Piggott argues that after having been victorious in the Jinshin Disturbance (672), Tenmu with his wife and successor, Jitō, were able to reshape the court, introducing the *ritsuryō* system,[16] based on the Tang Code, create a 'divine royal iconography', and graft Chinese culture into a court-culture based on Shintō.[17] This required the historiographers to be conscious of what and how they portrayed the throne, as the sovereign was still living, or his/her blood-successor was on the throne during the various phases of compilation.[18] It is these final books in *Nihon shoki* that provide a template for successive historiographical projects which eventually lead to five other imperially ordered histories. These five plus *Nihon shoki* constitute what scholars have traditionally called *Rikkokushi* or Six National Histories.

[15] This poem is translated in John R. Bentley, 'Gengogaku-teki na takara o himeru *Nihon shoki* (Linguistic Gems to be Found in *Nihon shoki*)', *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū*, 1 (2006), 132–40.

[16] *Ritsuryō* refers to the penal and administrative codes adopted by Japan.

[17] Joan R. Piggott, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship* (Stanford, 1997), 127–8.

[18] Ibid., 128.

SHOKU NIHONGI

As a testimony to the impact that *Nihon shoki* had on Japanese historiography, the titles of the next three official histories contain an abbreviated version of the title (*Nihongi*): *Shoku Nihongi* [Continued Chronicle of Japan], *Nihon kōki* [Latter Chronicle of Japan], and *Shoku Nihon kōki* [Continued Latter Chronicle of Japan]. It can perhaps be said that the true legacy of *Nihon shoki* is that it ushered in Chinese-style record-keeping and historiography. In 701 the court promulgated the Taihō Code, and then in 718 issued the Yōrō Code, which was a minor revision of the Taihō. These two codes were modelled after the Tang Administrative and Penal Codes (651–3). Chapter Two, Article Six of the Yōrō Code mentions that the accountability for the compilation of the 'national history' resided in the Ministry of Central Affairs. Whereas the Tang Code specified that there should be three types of records kept—*Qi ju zhu*, veritable records, and national histories—the architects of the Taihō-Yōrō Code determined to portray the aura of the sovereign as somewhat mysterious and divine, so the keeping of court diaries was ignored, aside from recording the words of decrees and edicts as well as the sovereign acting in public.[19] Thus, in the beginning the Japanese court only produced national histories, and then later veritable records.[20]

The second imperially ordered history in the series, *Shoku Nihongi*, came about in fits and starts, being an account of two internal upheavals, as well as two separate decisions to move the capital to a different location during the Nara era (710–94). The existence of two imperial edicts, one in 794, and again in 797, attests to the difficulty of finishing the task of compiling a successor to *Nihon shoki*. According to these two edicts, it appears that during the reign of Junnin (r. 758–64) when Fujiwara Nakamaro was at the height of his power, he sponsored a historiographical project recording the reigns of Monmu (r. 697–707) down to the year 757, or the year before Kōken abdicated the throne. These edicts record that a draft of this project in thirty books existed at court. Kishi Toshio has argued that this project was done in honour of Nakamaro's grandfather, Fubito, who was alive when *Nihon shoki* (also in thirty books) was presented to the throne.[21] Regarding this draft the edict notes, 'There is much rice and salt (i.e. many trivial details), but important events are missing' (797.2.9). It is possible that as Nakamaro was obsessed with turning the court into a miniature Tang China, the compilers were obliged to record events that would support this philosophy, and as a result other important events were ignored. With the destruction of Nakamaro and his

[19] Ikeda On argues that records of the ruler's actions were not established, so this record did not exist. See 'Chūgoku no shisho to *Shoku Nihongi*', in *Shoku Nihongi*, vol. 3 (Tokyo, 1992), 642.

[20] This description is based on ibid., 626–49.

[21] Kishi Toshio, *Fujiwara Nakamaro* (Tokyo, 1987), 306.

army during his revolt in 764, this project was abandoned, and the unfinished draft was shelved.

The 794 edict notes that Kōnin (r. 770–81) had ordered a history be compiled, which was later completed in twenty books, dealing with the years from 758 to 777, a twenty-year period, but the results were 'preserved only as a draft, and the document is not fitting a historical record' (794.8.13). Thus, an edict was reissued in 797 for a record to be compiled, recording events from 697 down to 791. This chronicle was to be based on these earlier projects, with the historiographers erasing redundancies, filling in gaps, and making the text fit the proper model of a Chinese history. Sakamoto Tarō outlines that the compilation process occurred in three stages: (i) the initial compilation in the Junnin era (covering the years 697–757) in thirty books; (ii) the Kōnin project, which consolidated the document from stage i, with the addition of the history for the years 758–770 in twenty books; (iii) the addition of the reign of Kanmu, and the re-editing of the twenty-book Kōnin project which was then consolidated into fourteen books. The end result is a work in forty books.[22]

In spite of what was said above about the Nara Court focused primarily on 'national histories', it is clear that there were historians at court who kept a variety of records, just not court diaries. In the fourth month of 702 *Shoku Nihongi* mentions a record of provincial governors. In the fourth month of 713 there is mention of cultivated field records of various Buddhist temples. In the following month of 713 there is mention of a historical register. In 724 we have mention of Buddhist records, and in 730 we see tax records. Unfortunately none of these records are quoted. It is plausible that these recorded local events, committing to paper what was in the local 'memory'. While the following quote includes much that is fantastic, the basic premise of historical records being kept is credible: 'There was never a time when the storehouses were empty, filled with tribute from the various provinces, and there was never a time when the scribes did not record the wonders that were like those of the plan of the Yellow River' (736.11.11).

While *Nihon shoki* copied phrases and text almost verbatim from a large number of Chinese sources to construct its precise chronology-based story, introducing each sovereign with stock phrases lifted from Chinese works praising the ruler's character, very little of this 'fabrication' is seen in *Shoku Nihongi*. The compilers of *Shoku Nihongi* make a brave attempt to construct their own Chinese text based on the grammatical rules of Chinese, rather than copying entire sentences from Chinese historical sources.[23] Because of this, one characteristic of Chinese records, biographies, is given little prominence in *Shoku Nihongi*. This perceived deficiency is rectified in later histories, however.

[22] Sakamoto Tarō, *Rikkokushi* (Tokyo, 1970), 176–8; and John Brownlee, *The Six National Histories* (Vancouver, 1991), 95–6.

[23] Cf. Kojima Noriyuki, *Jōdai Nihon bungaku to Chūgoku bungaku*, vol. 3 (Tokyo, 1962), 1462–70.

One of the starkest differences between *Nihon shoki* and *Shoku Nihongi* is the portrayal of society. *Nihon shoki* naturally has a mystic quality to it. While there are revolts, wars, or injustices, in the majority of cases these are discussed in a magical, almost providential manner, demonstrating to the reader that the sovereign is indeed the offspring of the Sun Goddess, and Yamato is a blessed land. *Shoku Nihongi*, on the other hand, does a rather remarkable job of portraying some of the bleakness of society at the time. Two examples are illustrative. In the first example, the court wished to move the capital from Fujiwara to what would later be called Nara or Heijō. Labour was conscripted to build the palace and surrounding capital city, but problems arose. In the ninth month of 711 Empress Genmei issues the following decree:

> Lately we have heard that the conscripted labour from the various provinces charged with building the capital have become physically exhausted, and there are many who have abandoned their posts. We have forbid such dereliction, but this does not prevent the rate of desertion. Currently the barrier around the palace is not yet finished, and guards for the palace are insufficient. The present temporary barracks will be constructed and the arsenal must be well protected. (711.9.4)

This decree illustrates how hard life was for the commoner who was conscripted to help build the new capital. This is in stark contrast to the story of Nintoku who is said to have sacrificed his own palace upkeep for the good of the commoner.

A related example deals with the provinces from which labour and militias were conscripted. In 723 Dazaifu, the governmental headquarters for Kyūshū, made the following report to the court:

> 'The militia of the three provinces of Hyūga, Ōsumi, and Satsuma are frequently called out for duty to put down uprisings of the Hayato. On top of that their crops have not produced well, and poor conditions have occurred in succession, so the people are hounded by famine and cold. When we discreetly investigated the matter we found that after the men have been on militia duty, they sometimes experience famine and pestilence. Because of this we beg the mercy of the throne, and respectfully ask that these men be exempted from the rice tax for a period of three years.' The Emperor granted this request. (723.4.8)

Another important innovation in *Shoku Nihongi* is the inclusion of a hybrid script, much like that found in *Kojiki*, used to record imperial edicts (*senmyō*). These were composed in an archaic language, converted into a hybrid form of Chinese and then recited at specific events. As this format is not found in *Nihon shoki*, it is possible that the original compilers of *Nihon shoki* avoided this hybrid script, because one of their purposes was to create a polished Chinese record.[24]

[24] It is clear from internal evidence in *Nihon shoki* that these imperial edicts existed earlier than *Shoku Nihongi*. In the sixth year of Keitai (*c.*512), the Great King appoints Mononobe Arakahi to be the imperial spokesperson to an envoy from the kingdom of Paekche. The format of the edict is unfortunately unknown.

Whatever the reason, the compilers who contributed to *Shoku Nihongi* included sixty-two of these important edicts. Interestingly, this same kind of hybrid script also appears in the Shintō liturgies, suggesting that imperial edicts had the same weight and religious significance as a liturgy.[25] This likely demonstrated to the reader that the sovereign was indeed a deity incarnate, or as the edict wording describes, a visible deity.

Chapter 21, Article One of the Yōrō Code (*Kōshiki-ryō*) specified that imperial edicts were to be written using certain phrases, and read aloud to the attending audience, while imperial decrees were to be written (in pure classical Chinese) and posted. This article is based on the Tang Code where there were seven different formats for official documents from the Tang emperor. It is unclear if these five Japanese formats were created parallel to Tang's seven, or if there were five differing formats already at court, and these were simply inserted into the Japanese version of the code where the Tang formats corresponded. The first three formats for imperial edicts from the Japanese sovereign have roughly the same wording: 'All give ear to the emperor who reigns over Yamato (the origin of the sun) as a visible deity and speaks the following by way of decree.' These imperial edicts were prepared for events such as the ascension of a new sovereign, changing a regnal year designation, granting a promotion in rank, praise for service, and later for castigation or punishment. While these edicts are found in all later records of *Rikkokushi*, after about a century the majority of these become formulaic and less well understood by the court. An illustration of this is found recorded in *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*: 'Imperial Prince Nakano of the second princely rank passed away. . . . The Prince was adept in the way of offering congratulatory imperial edicts. He was proficient in the model of using the sounds (to write the edicts), and was a rare prince who had knowledge of the standard' (867.1.17). Thus, this archaic form of language was difficult to understand for most at court by the late ninth century.

Analogous to *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, *Shoku Nihongi* also contains poetry, but there are vastly fewer poems than the previous two works. This likely reflects the fact that Chinese historiography kept literature and poetry separate from actual history, and by the period of *Shoku Nihongi*, the compilers were making an effort to adhere to the continental model more closely. In spite of this model, *Shoku Nihongi* includes eight poems. These are grouped in three reigns: Shōmu (r. 724–49), Shōtoku (r. 765–70), and Kōnin. The single poem recorded in the beginning of the reign of Kōnin is a spell poem, but instead of portending evil consequences, it portends an auspicious event, the ascension of Kōnin to the throne; thus, the poem is used to show the reign of Kōnin was a natural course of events.

[25] There is a clear distinction here, as the liturgies are words spoken to the deities on behalf of the sovereign, but the imperial edicts are words spoken to the people (native or foreign) on behalf of the ruler.

NIHON KŌKI

Emperor Saga (r. 810–24), a son of Emperor Kanmu (r. 781–806), was an astute student of Chinese learning. His reign is known as a time of great Chinese cultural influence, and this can be seen in a number of compilations. In 814 a Chinese poetic anthology, *Ryōunshū* [Collection of Poems that Fly above the Clouds], was compiled. In 815 a project to compile a list of the genealogies and the families in the capital region—a project begun by his father, Kanmu—was finished and presented to Saga. In 820 *Kōnin kyaku* [Regulations of the Kōnin Era] and *Kōnin shiki* [Procedures of the Kōnin Era] were compiled. *Kōnin kyaku* was a compilation of official edicts, decrees, legislation, and regulations that had been issued since the Taihō Code in 701 down to 819. Unfortunately, the text has been lost, and its contents are only known through quotes. *Kōnin shiki*, also a lost compilation, contained regulations for ceremony and practices at court and for courtiers. Along with these attempts to bring order to the court, Saga also decreed that a history be compiled. It is believed that in imitation of Chinese histories, Saga desired to compile a history of the end of his father's reign (792–806), and the following reign of his brother, Heizei (r. 806–10). The historiographical work was begun in 819, but a series of deaths severely delayed the project. In the space of six years three of the four members of the committee had died, along with Saga who had commissioned the work. The next sovereign, Junna (r. 824–34) reconstituted the committee, and asked that Saga's reign now be included. The work was not completed until 840, during the reign of Ninmyō (r. 834–51). Only Fujiwara Otsugu, one of the original committee members appointed by Saga, was able to see the project through its twenty-one-year process of compilation.

The work was originally completed in forty books, and covers the years 792–833, but the manuscript has suffered from a lack of adequate transmission, so that only ten of the forty books survive today. Scholars have been able to piece together much of the lost sections, because two later historical works, *Ruijū kokushi* [A Categorized Selection of the History of the State] (*c.*892), compiled by Sugawara Michizane, and *Nihongi ryaku* [An Abbreviation of the Records of Japan] (*c.* eleventh century), have taken quotes from *Nihon kōki* (as well as other works) and arranged these by subject. Regardless that this information is available and fills in many gaps, the following description of *Nihon kōki* deals specifically with the extant sections.

One interesting stylistic change in *Nihon kōki* is the inclusion of biographies of courtiers of the fourth rank or higher, included in the entry announcing their death. While most of these biographies were rather simple, it is interesting that when Wake Kiyomaro passed away in 799, a very elaborate biography was compiled, including much about his ancestors. The most interesting, and perhaps main, reason such a lengthy biography was included, centres around the powerful figure Dōkyō (d. 772), who was manoeuvring to place himself on the throne, though he was a commoner. At one point the court dispatches Kiyomaro to

the Hachiman Shrine to determine the will of the gods on the issue. The divine oracle announces that a commoner should never be placed on the throne. This consequence likely was the central focus for the compilation of Kiyomaro's detailed biography, because Saga had been determined to strengthen the position and authority of the throne. But these biographies were not compiled simply to glorify courtiers. Sakamoto notes that it is a characteristic of *Nihon kōki* to include the shortcomings of the deceased individual in these biographies, as well as the strengths.[26]

Shoku Nihon kōki, *Nihon montoku tennō jitsuryoku* [True Record of Japanese Emperor Montoku], and *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* [True Record of Three Generations]—the fourth, fifth, and sixth works in the *Rikkokushi* series—continue the pattern set forth by the preceding histories. However, rather than dealing with larger eras, these histories, especially *Shoku Nihon kōki* and *Nihon montoku tennō jitsuryoku* record only one imperial reign. *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, as its title suggests, records three reigns. Brownlee notes that though the powerful Fujiwara family assisted in the compilation of these last three histories, they focused on recording the affairs of the emperor and his court. The opulence and power of the Fujiwara are recorded in a different genre of historical records, noted below.[27]

It perhaps can be said that these later histories made a more conscious effort to align with the Chinese tradition. This resulted in interesting entries related to natural phenomena, such as: 'There was a great wind that snapped trees and killed the grass. We record it because it is a calamity' (850.5.2). 'It thundered. Why is this worthy of note? To record something strange' (850.12.14). 'There were water fowl which looked like herons but smaller. I was not able to find out their variety. They gathered in the plum tree in front of the palace. Why is this worthy of note? To record something strange' (851.3.27). 'In the spring it was cold and frost descended. Why is this worthy of note? To record a calamity' (854.3.23).

The final history of the *Rikkokushi*, *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, is a fitting example to illustrate how Chinese-inspired historiography had morphed into a rather staid, dry, lifeless genre. *Sandai jitsuroku* is a very large work that records information in minute and monotonous detail. A harsh comment could be levelled about the sheer cases of repetition. Every year in a reign, and almost every month are recorded without fail. It is important to note that by the late ninth century the Chinese model of historiography no longer suited the needs of the Japanese, and there was a movement to develop a new model. With the well-worn belief that the imperial family descended from Amaterasu in an unbroken lineage, and built on a tradition that the ruling family would last forever, the interests of the literate turned away from daily affairs at the bureaucratic court, and focused

[26] Sakamoto, *Rikkokushi*, 237; and Brownlee, *The Six National Histories of Japan*, 132.
[27] Brownlee, *Political Thought in Japanese Historical Writing*, 37.

more on literary affairs surrounding powerful people in the capital or the up and coming warriors from the surrounding environs. The greatest break with tradition, however, was that this newer model would be written in Japanese.

HISTORICAL TALES

As Brownlee notes, the year 858 was a pivotal year for Japanese historiography.[28] This is the year Fujiwara Yoshifusa assumed the position of Regent, which effectively weakened imperial rule. Another important event occurred in 969 when the office set up to compile the next history, *Shin kokushi* [New National History], was closed. With these events Chinese-style historiography faded. What took its place was a variety of native historical tales written in the vernacular as opposed to the chronicles written in classical Chinese. The first of these historical tales is *Eiga monogatari* [A Tale of Flowering Fortunes] (hereafter *Eiga*). It is important for a number of reasons, perhaps the most prominent being that most scholars of *Eiga* believe the author to have been a woman, Akazome Emon.[29] Another important aspect of this work is the readership. While *Rikkokushi* were meant to be shown to foreign envoys and then later to be reference material for a court modelled after Chinese legal codes, historical tales were intended to be read by courtiers with their elegant and refined tastes. This required a text written in Japanese, infused with poetry, narratives from everyday life, and stories surrounding the court.

Eiga assumes the chronological framework of Chinese-style historiography, but it is not a chronicle. Also of interest is that the work is fixated on genealogy, but it is not a register. The tale begins with an opening line that demonstrates the author was aware of the historiographical tradition: 'There have been more than sixty Emperors in this country since its beginnings, but I cannot describe all of their reigns in detail. I shall merely attempt to speak of the most recent.'[30] *Eiga* starts in the third year of Tenroku (887), which is the final year recorded in *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, showing an awareness of history being recorded in an unbroken line.

Clearly, however, *Eiga* and the works that follow are not histories, but rather tales that *tell* history. This tale is concerned with the more private activities of aristocrats at court, events such as marriage and birth. While not 'history' in the modern sense, a variety of entries provide valuable information about earlier events that apparently were omitted from previous chronicles. Regarding the origin of *Man'yōshū* [Collection of a Myriad Leaves/Poems], Japan's first native

[28] Brownlee, *Political Thought in Japanese Historical Writing*, 42.

[29] See William H. McCullough and Helen Craig McCullough, *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes: Annals of Japanese Aristocratic Life in the Heian Period*, 2 vols. (Stanford, 1980), i. 37–50 for issues surrounding the problem of the authorship of the tale.

[30] Ibid., i. 69.

poetic anthology, *Eiga* records, 'in the fifth year of Tenpyō [758], during the reign of the Takano Empress, a sovereign had instructed the Tachibana Minister of the Left and a group of other senior nobles and courtiers to compile *Man'yōshū*'.[31]

One of the criticisms levelled against this tale is that of inaccuracy, or sloppy recording. As William and Helen Craig McCullough note, 'perhaps 15–20 percent of the dates given in the text or implied by its chronological scheme disagree with other sources, and in nearly all cases it is clear that it is the *Eiga* author who is at fault'.[32] The greater issue with the historical value of the record concerns deliberate embellishment or fabrication of events. A flagrant example is recorded on the fifteenth day of the tenth month of 969: 'just as everyone was busy with preparations for the forthcoming Purification and Thanksgiving, it was announced that Morotada had died at the age of fifty. . . . His daughter Hōshi (the Sen'yōden Consort), his sons, and all his other relatives were dazed with grief.'[33] This seemingly innocuous entry is marred by the fact that Hōshi had died two years earlier. One could argue, however, that the author's intention was not primarily to record history, but that she was chiefly concerned with a portrayal of the court worthy of the opulence and importance of the Fujiwara family, specifically its great patriarch, Michinaga. Hōshi was an imperial consort, so the portrayal of her grief for her father may have been more important than facts. On the other hand, one could add that these errors are proverbial 'Homeric nods'.

Not long after *Eiga*, a series of historical tales called 'the four mirrors' appeared, the first being *Ōkagamai* [The Great Mirror]. The idea of a mirror as a metaphor for history is attributed to the Chinese historian, Sima Qian when he said people in the present can use past events as a mirror to judge between the two.[34] In spite of the obvious Chinese association, these four works have little in common with Chinese historiography. Dealing with similar material as *Eiga*, namely the rise and prosperity of the Fujiwara family, *Ōkagami* uses a more historically conscious framework. Vignettes are arranged according to a prominent figure, be it an emperor, minister, or chancellor, and these are set in chronological order. While *Eiga* is a linear telling of events, *Ōkagami* is a more compartmentalized work, delineated by character and the attending story. A common historiographical device among these 'mirror' historical tales is the narrator: each tale is illuminated by an old man or woman of great age.[35] Here the importance of the oral tradition and 'collective' memory seems to make a comeback. I have previously argued that in early Japan family genealogies and histories were orally transmitted, and this tradition reappears in a different form in these quasi-historical tales.[36] This conventional method of historical transmission finds a new actor in the form of the

[31] Cf. ibid., i. 79. [32] Ibid., i. 33. [33] Ibid., i. 102.

[34] See ch. 1 by Charles Hartman and Anthony DeBlasi in this volume.

[35] In the case of *Ōkagami* the story is told by two men, one who is 190 years old, and the other who is 180.

[36] Bentley, *Historiographical Trends in Early Japan*, 60–5.

ancient narrator. The question then becomes, what is the difference between these tales and those normally categorized as *setsuwa* ('folk tales and anecdotes')? As Helen Craig McCullough argues, these tales are not 'brought together for . . . religious instruction of the implicit advocacy of ethical theories . . . , but rather [for] the examination of Michinaga's career and its significance'.[37]

Ima kagami [The Present Mirror], the second work, goes further than just the history of a prominent aristocratic family, but deals with the theme of continuity at court and in the world. The period covered by the tale spans 1025 to 1170, a time of change and strife, with conflicts in 1156 and 1160, but these are never related. As Brownlee has mentioned, it was not the author's intent to mention these upheavals,[38] rather the theme of the work is that the elegance of the court transcends time. The narrator of *Ima kagami* claims to be the granddaughter of Yotsugi who is one of the narrators in *Ōkagami*, and at one time served the venerable author, Murasaki Shikibu; thus, there is an attempt to connect this work with *Ōkagami*, reminiscent, perhaps, of the successive earlier histories *Nihon shoki*, *Shoku Nihongi*, and so on. As with *Nihon shoki*, these historical tales give poetry prominence in the narrative. A simple example appears in Book Ten of *Ima kagami*:

> The governor of Settsu, a man named Norinari, went to some village deep in the mountains, and descended to a garden at dusk. He wandered here and there repeating the words: *afare naru kana* 'How utterly profound!' . . . . An imperial guard named Tokinobu who was also outside replied: *fi kurureba* 'When the sun sets' *tokoro dokoro no* 'one can hear the ringing of' *kane no kowe* 'bells hither and thither'.
>
> Norinari replied, 'What an improper thing to say'. Tokinobu caught a frog from a well and kept it as a pet. When it died, he made dried frog.[39]

The third 'mirror' is *Mizu kagami* [Water Mirror], which is the least interesting of the four, as the author uses the same format as the previous two 'mirrors', but has the narrator regurgitate information lifted from *Fusō ryakki* [An Abbreviated Record of Fusang], a history of Buddhism in Japan laced with quotes from *Nihon shoki* and others from *Rikkokushi*. The final work, *Masu kagami* [The Clear Mirror], continues the tradition noted above, but now outlines affairs at court during what later comes to be called the Kamakura period. The narrator juxtaposes the court (emperor) against the shadow court (retired emperor) and the shogun. This work was completed between 1368 and 1376.[40] By this time the author had a variety of historiographical models to rely on: *Rikkokushi*, historical tales, military tales, and analytical historical works, such as *Gukanshō* and *Jinnō shōtōki*, both noted below. As George Perkins argues, the author of *Masu kagami*

[37] Helen Craig McCullough, *Ōkagami: The Great Mirror* (Princeton, 1980), 17.
[38] Brownlee, *Political Thought in Japanese Historical Writing*, 55–6.
[39] Bentley, *Historiographical Trends in Early Japan*, 193–4.
[40] Cf. George W. Perkins, *The Clear Mirror: A Chronicle of the Japanese Court during the Kamakura Period (1185–1333)* (Stanford, 1998), 261.

took a cue from *Ōkagami* and set about 'to tailor historical writing to the taste of an aristocratic readership by employing elegant devices of the fictional tale'.[41] Interestingly, some believe the narrator, an old nun, to have been added later to imitate *Ōkagami* and *Ima kagami*, as she appears at the beginning and then only intermittently and mechanically in a few places in the work. Regardless, the purpose of the work is clear: to demonstrate that while the military government had been transferred to Kamakura in the eastern part of Japan, the imperial court and its influence remained in Kyōto, vibrant and significant.[42]

Lastly, I hesitate to place *Azuma kagami* [The Eastern Mirror] here, because while it shares *kagami* in its title with other historical tales, it is *not* a historical tale. It is a historical chronicle that documents the Kamakura Bakufu (*fl.*1185–1333), written in a hybrid Chinese script. It was compiled some time after 1266, the final entry in the work. The record is chronologically based and reminds one of *Rikkokushi*. It even includes a few poems, much like *Shoku Nihongi* or *Nihon kōki*. The work itself is important as it is one of the few historical accounts of the Kamakura Bakufu and the crucial events surrounding the Jōkyū War of 1221, when Emperor Go-Toba attempted to gain autonomy from the Kamakura Bakufu, but his attempt was crushed and he was exiled.

MILITARY TALES

As literary sentiments heightened in the Heian era (794–1192) the courtiers, the main readership of any historical material, craved works that contained literary substance, including tales and poetry, but which also dealt with history. In the early days of Heian a debate among Buddhist sects became quite intense, and a Tendai priest, Saichō, made several attempts to persuade others that Tendai Buddhism should be adopted by the Japanese. In his work *Shugo kokkai shō* [Essays on Protecting the Boundaries of the State] (818) he appealed to others by announcing that Tendai was superior to other sects because it could protect the state. Buddhist thought began to appear in a variety of traditional writings, including histories.

With the decline of governmental influence from the court in Kyōto, warrior groups in the capital began to exert greater control. This resulted in a number of military campaigns, the first one being the Hōgen Disturbance of 1156. As a number of powerful warrior groups came to vie for national power, the literate became interested in their stories. *Hōgen monogatari* [Tales of Hōgen] retells the story of the rivalry of imperial power—between Toba, Sutoku, and Go-Shirakawa (who were either emperors or retired emperors at one point)—aristocratic

[41] Ibid., 16. [42] Ibid.

power—between Fujiwara Tadamichi and Yorinaga, both sons of Fujiwara Tadazane—and warrior power—between the sons of Minamoto Tameyoshi. The author who remains unknown to this day looks down on the court, disparaging their literary past times, and praise is lavished on the warriors for their stereotypical attributes of bravery, loyalty, and strength.[43]

The next tale, *Heiji monogatari* [Tales of Heiji], picks up the story where *Hōgen* leaves off. This tale recounts the Heiji Rebellion of 1159–60. Like *Hōgen*, the author addresses three levels of intrigue that lead to the rebellion. The major difference between *Hōgen* and *Heiji* is that the latter goes beyond a simple retelling of the complex tale; the author now includes investigations into principles of good governance, centred mainly on Confucian ideals. Brownlee points out that oral recitation can explain some of the idiosyncrasies of these military tales. He notes that in *Hōgen monogatari* the narrator claims that Minamoto Yoshitomo's force consisted of 1,700 warriors, and then actually names about one hundred of these men. If the text was actually meant to be read, it would be terribly tedious. It is possible that we can infer that the recitation of these names meant the descendants of these warriors were part of the audience.[44]

The final military tale is the most famous, *Heike monogatari* [Tales of Heike]. Instead of focusing on a single tragic hero, as the previous two tales do, *Heike* is actually a retelling of a large number of episodes revolving around individuals who displayed their bravery in the two-decade long struggle between the Taira and Minamoto. The opening lines are well known: 'The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind.'[45] The philosophical thinking of Buddhism is clear in *Heike*. Rather than praising the military prowess of the Minamoto in their crushing defeat of the Taira, the author dwells on the sorrow of the defeat of the once-dominant Taira and expresses sympathy for their plight.[46] This work does not engage in deep political commentary, but illustrates the tripartite intrigue between those surrounding the imperial ruler, and the two warrior factions. The author is very conscious of his audience, and describes the numerous battle scenes in great detail, even down to minute details about the clothing of the warriors. In the end, however, the tone of the tale is one of 'all is vanity', and that one must have faith in Amida Buddha. Noted above, these tales were apparently written to be recited, and in the case of *Heike*, Buddhist monks travelled the countryside, reciting the tale as they played the lute.

[43] Delmer M. Brown and Ishida Ichirō, *Future and the Past: A Translation and Study of the Gukanshō, An Interpretive History of Japan Written in 1219* (Berkeley, 1979), 387–8.
[44] Brownlee, *Political Thought in Japanese Historical Writing*, 73.
[45] Helen Craig McCullough, *The Tale of the Heike* (Stanford, 1988), 23.
[46] Brownlee, *Political Thought in Japanese Historical Writing*, 74.

THE ADVENT OF ANALYTICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

With Emperor Go-Daigo's rebellion against the Kamakura Bakufu, known as the Kenmu Restoration (1333–6), the shogun set up a rival court when he proclaimed Kōgon, a cousin of Go-Daigo, to be emperor, thus creating a Northern Court (Kōgon) as opposed to the Southern Court (Go-Daigo). The origins for this unprecedented bifurcation of the imperial court, along with the ever increasing influence of *mappō*, the Buddhist notion of decline and moral corruption, were the contributing stimuli for Jien, author of *Gukanshō* [The Jottings of a Fool].

Gukanshō, written in 1219, attempts to provide a political analysis of the past that can prevent disaster in the future. Jien, being a Buddhist priest of high standing, was acquainted with Minamoto Yoritomo, the founder of the Bakufu. Jien wrote in Japanese for a wider audience, and described the inevitable decline at court. This decline matches well the decline of his family, the Kujō, which started with the triumph of the Minamoto over the Taira. *Gukanshō* lists abuses by the imperial court that hastened this decline: ignoring the principles of Shōtoku Taishi's constitution, creation of and appointments to needless offices, bribery, excessive use of regents and abbots, and the decline of the Buddhist clergy.[47]

Gukanshō begins by providing a chronology of Chinese then Japanese rulers, allowing Jien to lay the foundation for an exposition of the 'golden age' in two countries, so he can juxtapose that with the present. Jien then maps Buddhist thinking on this chronology, showing that the era of Jinmu corresponds to the pure law of Buddhism. He then illustrates that entry into the debilitating period of *mappō* occurred in 1052, a period of decline for the imperial court.[48] An important analytical tool Jien uses in his work is connecting events to *dōri* ('reason, principle'). Jien writes,

> Why did Prince Shōtoku delay funeral arrangements for his father . . . become engaged in many battles involving the slaughter of people, and only then make arrangements for his father's funeral? Here we have a truly marvellous Principle: since the way of the Buddha was being obstructed, the Prince felt he should remove that obstruction before concerning himself with the burial of his father.[49]

Because Jien uses this term *dōri* rather loosely in describing various events, Brownlee cautions that 'every reader must strive to create a structure to contain Jien's ideas. Hence there are many possible interpretations.'[50] Jien's original innovation in historiography is his use of periodization and principle (reason) to describe and analyze events. His reaction to the seeming demise of the imperial house was to describe the past as a way to attempt to predict and change the future.

[47] Ibid., 94.
[48] Cf. Ibid., 95–6.
[49] Brown and Ishida, *Future and the Past*, 28–9.
[50] Brownlee, *Political Thought in Japanese Historical Writing*, 98.

The final record, *Jinnō shōtōki* [Chronicle of the True Succession of the Divine Sovereigns] (1339), was written by Kitabatake Chikafusa. He was also greatly interested in the imperial institution, so much so that he felt compelled to write a history about the legitimate branch of the split court. His work was written not long after the Kamakura Bakufu had been destroyed during the Kenmu Restoration, which also witnessed society melting into turmoil and warfare. The Northern Court and the Southern Court had come to blows, and the Ashikaga family who came to power after the fall of the Bakufu had thrown their support behind the Northern Court. Chikafusa wrote his history to support the legitimacy of the Southern Court, which also was militarily the weaker of the two factions.

Chikafusa takes a Shintō-oriented slant as opposed to Jien's Buddhist one; he did not see history necessarily trending downward. Chikafusa writes, 'Although people may forget the past and its lessons, heaven never loses sight of the right way. . . . [T]he wicked will not last long but will perish, and the disordered world will ultimately be set right. This is the principle of things, now as in ancient times.'[51] He starts his history with the famous words, 'Great Japan is the divine land.'[52] This thus lays the foundation for the imperial succession of the various 'emperors', from Jinmu down to Go-Murakami, the ninety-seventh ruler. Jien believed that the universe of *mappō* had only allotted one hundred slots for sovereigns to fill in Japan and said, 'Now that we are in the 84th reign not many more are left.'[53] Chikafusa countered by declaring, 'We also have the theory of "one hundred kings", but this should not be taken literally to mean one hundred . . . the character for hundred implies without limit, as can be seen in such usages as *hyakkan* [officials at court; lit. one hundred officials] and *hyakushō* [peasants; lit. one hundred surnames].'[54]

After listing the emperors and providing various details about each reign, Chikafusa evaluates the problem of imperial decline from what could perhaps be termed a socio-economic analysis. In the reign of Go-Daigo he writes,

> with the advent of Emperor Go-Daigo, government of the country was unexpectedly returned to the court, and it was thought that this would provide opportunity to rectify the accumulated evils of many years. . . . Now, even the holdings of estate patrons are being improperly included in the pool of lands used to reward meritorious warriors. As a result great hereditary families have been reduced to mere entities with empty titles.[55]

He also faults the greed of warriors in causing the bankruptcy of the traditional system: 'These days a popular saying has it that if a warrior should enter into a

[51] H. Paul Varley, *A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns:* Jinnō shōtōki *of Kitabatake Chikafusa* (New York, 1980), 255.
[52] Ibid., 49. [53] Brown and Ishida, *Future and the Past*, 19.
[54] Varley, *A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns*, 84. [55] Ibid., 259.

single battle or suffer the loss of a vassal he will demand that "My reward should be all of Japan; half the country will not be enough!" '[56]

Chikafusa also astutely analyses the defeat of Emperor Go-Toba in the Jōkyū War:

> Since the age of Shirakawa and Toba, the ancient way of government had declined steadily, and in Go-Shirakawa's time armed rebellions occurred and treacherous subjects threw the country into disorder. . . . Minamoto no Yoritomo restored order by his own force of arms; and although the imperial house was not returned to its former state, the fighting in the capital was quelled and the burden of the people was eased. . . . The Jōkyū incident cannot be likened to a conflict in which enemies of the throne rise in rebellion and are victorious. Since the time for opposing the Kamakura regime had not yet arrived, heaven clearly would not permit Go-Toba's actions to succeed.[57]

Thus, rebellion against the Kamakura Bakufu was to occur at a time 'heaven' deemed appropriate: Go-Daigo's later Kenmu Restoration is described as 'a wondrous act of heaven'.[58] With this Chikafusa argued not only for the legitimacy of the Southern Court, but also for the tradition of imperial rule, and the return of the warrior to their traditional, subservient role.

Chikafusa's work brings historiography in Japan full circle. The earliest surviving histories in Japan were built around the divine rule of the sovereign. With the weakening of this government, courtiers read quasi-histories that either revolved around the aristocratic court at the capital or the warriors who fought for power in and around the capital. As conflict and strife took its toll on Japan, Jien and Chikafusa rose to the occasion to record and organize history, analyse the causes of the conflicts, and suggest ways that future conflict could be avoided. Thus historiography in Japan became less of a simple account of the past: it had morphed into a medium like a mirror, where the past also illuminated the present and future.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

607	First recorded embassy from Japan sent to Sui China
660–3	Combined Tang–Silla forces defeat Paekche, Japanese naval force destroyed by Tang at Paekch'on
672	Jinshin Disturbance; Tenmu destroys his nephew's forces and is victorious
673	Tenmu ascends throne and institutes a long process of aligning the government with Chinese culture, laws, and regulations
710	Permanent capital of Nara is established
764	Fujiwara Nakamaro revolts and is destroyed; Dōkyō gains greater power
794	Permanent capital of Heian is established

[56] Ibid., 260–1. [57] Ibid., 225. [58] Ibid., 250.

858	Fujiwara Yoshifusa becomes regent, and strong imperial rule is weakened
1156–60	Hōgen and Heiji disturbances cause destruction in the capital
1180–5	Genpei War, ending with the destruction of the Heike in 1185
1192	Founding of Kamakura Bakufu
1333–6	Kenmu restoration causes split in the courts

KEY HISTORICAL TEXTS

Eiga monogatari (written between 1028 to 1107); in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, vols. 31–3 (Tokyo, 1995–8).

Gukanshō (*c.*1220); in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei, shinsōban*, vol. 20 (Tokyo, 1992).

Heike monogatari (*c.*1371); in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, vols. 45–6 (Tokyo, 1994).

Ima kagami (*c.*1170); *Ima kagami: honbun oyobi sōsakuin*, ed. Kasama Shoin (Tokyo, 1984).

Jinnō shōtōki (*c.* 1338–41); in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei: shinsōban*, vol. 21 (Tokyo, 1993).

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Chapter 4

Indian Historical Writing, *c.*600–*c.*1400

Daud Ali

The eight hundred years under review in this chapter were both eventful and formative for the evolution of South Asian society and culture. The Gupta period (350–550) inaugurated processes of economic, political, and cultural development which over the next millennium were to bring nearly all regions of the subcontinent into a single historical trajectory. This period, sometimes called 'early medieval', saw the continual evolution of diverse warrior lineages into regional and sub-regional 'court polities' with developing agrarian bases. The dynastic history of this period of Indian history is extraordinarily complex—major families included the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Malkhed, the Chālukya families of the Deccan and Gujarat, the Cholas of Tanjavur, and the Paramāras of Dhar. Despite the seeds of variation which regional development inevitably brought, certain economic, political, and cultural features linked these polities into a sort of coherent 'ecumene', characterized by the expansion of agriculture, peasantization of non-agrarian groups, evolution of refined court cultures, and support for the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temple religions. From the eleventh century, northern India, whose history had always been partly tied to Central Asia, saw the increasingly frequent presence of Turkish and Afghan Muslim warrior groups, a phenomenon which culminated at the beginning of the thirteenth, with the establishment of a Muslim sultanate in Delhi. This marked the beginning of a profound reconfiguration of elite cultures in the subcontinent, gradual at first, but deep enough in its implications, and only fully realized later, during the Mughal period. Despite meteoric military success and political consolidation in the first 150 years, the Delhi Sultanate was strained by provincial rebellions and its final collapse was precipitated by Mongol attacks from Central Asia, after which regional sultanates exercised autonomy.

Conceptions and narratives of the past evolved substantially during this period. It is ironic, however, that despite the volume and diversity of historical discourse produced during this time period, the scholarly resources, both conceptual and empirical, to help us take account of this culture are patchy at best. Indeed, the very premise of this chapter—that historical writing in India was sufficiently developed to merit its own history—would have been barely thinkable just fifty

years ago. This general impression was due to the long-held colonial assumption that 'ancient India' was without any proper tradition of historical writing, a mark of its inadequate intellectual traditions and stunted civilizational development. The 'Muslim' period, with its Arabic and Persian chronicles, fared somewhat better from this perspective, but, deemed ultimately to be the product of an 'outsider' culture, did little to change the basic characterization of India as a land without historical consciousness. So strong was this position that it was barely shaken (and in fact partly reiterated) by the otherwise landmark collection of essays on *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* assembled under the direction of C. H. Philips in 1961.

It will not be my concern here to treat the history of these positions or the more recent (but sporadic) criticisms they have evinced. It may suffice to say that the accumulated effect of these discussions, and the rise of renewed interest in pre-colonial South Asian history and literature, has rendered the idea that South Asia lacked traditions of historical writing or historical consciousness, as propositions *tout court*, largely unsustainable. The only exception to this trend, it should be noted, is the 'indigenist' position, heavily indebted to postcolonial studies, that has argued India's lack of historical consciousness should be seen as a virtue, history being an alien, European concept implicated in epistemic and material violence.[1] Scholars working more closely with early materials, however, have developed a number of more refined positions on the question of historical writing in early India. Even those who have maintained the older position of India's lack of historical writing have developed more sophisticated arguments which have not relied on Orientalist assumptions. Scholars have claimed, for example, that historical consciousness and historical writing were not so much 'absent' in early India as 'de-emphasized' or even 'denied' by the epistemological assumptions of Brahmanical orthodoxy and its ideological quest to place the Veda 'outside' of history.[2]

Alongside these positions have been more forceful pleas for a reconsideration of different sorts of narratives about the past in South Asia, from inscriptions and 'biographies' to Persian chronicles, as specific forms of historical thinking.[3] One remarkable and early work to make this case is the sadly neglected study of historical biographies in Sanskrit published in 1966 by V. S. Pathak—a work I will

[1] Ashis Nandy, 'History's Forgotten Doubles', *History and Theory*, 34 (1995), 44–66.

[2] See Sheldon Pollock, 'Mīmāṁsā and the Problem of History in Traditional India', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 109:4 (1989), 603–10; and also Roy W. Perrett, 'History, Time and Knowledge in Ancient India', *History and Theory*, 38:3 (1999), 307–21.

[3] On inscriptions, see Daud Ali, 'Royal Eulogy as World History', in Jonathan Walters, Ronald Inden, and Ali, *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia* (New York, 2000); and Sheldon Pollock, 'Making History: Kalyāṇi, A.D. 1008', in *Śrīnāgābhinandanam: M.S. Nagaraja Rao Felicitation Volume* (Bangalore, 1995); on Persian chronicles, see Blaine Auer, *Symbols of Authority in Medieval Islam: History, Religion, and Muslim Legitimacy* (London, 2012).

have occasion to return to repeatedly below.[4] In more recent times, some discussion has emerged around sub-generic or 'vernacular' textures in historical writing.[5] Taken as a whole, this literature suggests a more inclusive definition of history-writing. Yet, in the rush to affirm the presence of historical writing in pre-colonial India, and to rectify Orientalist assumptions, there has also been a tendency—partly fuelled by the will to bestow upon India an early 'modernity'—to cast certain pre-colonial historical writing in strikingly modernist terms. Thus a number of approaches have sought to demonstrate that India had a 'real' sense of history, discerned either quite plainly, though deeply mystified by India's detractors, or subtly, in 'sub-generic' markers apparent only to natives. These studies have extolled some texts as 'real' history while disqualifying others as mythic, poetic, or conventional. Such exclusionary operations, however, tend to reproduce the same meta-generic oppositions between history and its others, which had earlier excluded all of South Asian writing on the past.[6] Moreover, the rather positivist conception of history underlying these discussions has in any case been exposed as hopelessly parochial, excluding from its ambit many early historical traditions in both Asia and Europe. For these reasons, I prefer here to work with an open set of diagnostics for understanding historical discourses. The intention, in other words, is not to distinguish 'real' history-writing from counterfeit, but to appreciate the variety of discourses about the past, to understand their basic features, assumptions, conditions of production, and relations with power.

Historical writing in South Asia between the seventh and fifteenth centuries may be divided into two convenient categories which very broadly define the canvas of historiographical material: writing in Indic languages, and writing in Persian. The former group is constituted for the most part by texts written in the Sanskrit language, with some important contributions in Middle Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages. The latter (in the period treated in this chapter) is confined almost entirely to texts relating to the Delhi Sultanate. By the time that the Delhi Sultanate was established in the thirteenth century, Persian had become the ecumenical or cosmopolitan language of the Eastern Islamic lands, serving as a medium for courtly, official, and administrative purposes. Dividing discourses in this way, between Indic and Persian, has the disadvantage of giving the impression of a neat chronological periodization. Yet texts in Indic languages continue to be produced throughout the period of the Delhi Sultanate and well beyond, while Arabic and

[4] V. S. Pathak, *Ancient Historians of India: A Study of Historical Biographies* (London, 1966).

[5] Particularly following the important publication of Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India* (Delhi, 2001) and the recent discussions generated by the book, as found in *History and Theory*, 46 (2007), most notably the remarks of Pollock (ibid., 366–83) and response of the authors (ibid., 409–27). See also Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chatterjee (eds.), *History in the Vernacular* (Delhi, 2008). As the period treated in this book falls beyond the scope of our enquiry here, its specific arguments will not be treated.

[6] The gravest error of this approach has been to take at face value what are actually *claims* made by nineteenth-century historians and then to use them as diagnostic tools to unearth structures which apparently conform to them.

Persian texts treating India also pre-date the thirteenth century. From the fourteenth century vernacular literatures come to play an increasingly important role in historical discourse, but they remain largely beyond the scope of this chapter.

Some basic features and assumptions unite all historical writing from this period. Historical narratives, like knowledge more generally, presupposed a world whose basic constituents were different than those of the modern 'scientific' cosmos often presumed by modern historical writing. Three points are relevant for an initial distinction. First, and most basically, what was deemed as constitutive of the knowable universe was measured by a broader set of parametres. Many superhuman or 'unseen' powers and entities were assumed to be part of the 'furniture' of everyday life, and enter into historical narratives on a regular basis. What modern historians like to call 'historical agency' was often complex in such narratives—for many writers, individual and corporate agencies often overlapped with (but were not erased by) super-ordinate or divine agencies. Second, the material and immaterial universe was understood to be infused with *value*—a strong sense of moral weight lay behind a hierarchy of social and material being which constituted both society and the natural world. This association of value and being—often articulated through theological ideas—gave the human world a historical and ontological purpose, and the narration of history reflected this value structure. Finally, there was typically no strong and inimitable 'break' which separated writers and audiences in their present from the worlds of their pasts. This is not to say that there was no perception of a remote past or a sense of 'what had happened', but instead that there was no conception of the past as a museum, a litany of events somehow fully dissociable from the present. Indeed, various forms of moral logic embedded in the past were seen to flow not only into the present but had the power to take command over the future.

HISTORICAL WRITING IN SANSKRIT

Intellectual production in Indic languages during this period was overwhelmingly dominated by writing in Sanskrit. The authors of this writing were preponderantly (but perhaps not exclusively) Brahmins—men educated in the Sanskrit language and who held a variety of secular or religious offices. Understanding their role as 'historians' is problematic partly because of the fact that there existed no separate 'discipline' or 'genre' recognizable as 'history' which was clearly demarcated from other fields of knowledge. The closest approximation to something like a knowledge exclusively about the past was the *itihāsa-purāṇa* 'tradition', treated at length by Romila Thapar.[7] These texts have been known as 'myths'

[7] Romila Thapar, 'Historical Traditions in Early India: *c.*1000 BC to *c.* AD 600', Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. I: *Beginnings to AD 600* (Oxford, 2011), 553–76.

or 'legends' to many modern commentators, but the terms *purāṇa* (literally 'old') and *itihāsa* (literally 'thus indeed it was') make no pretension to being 'myth' as opposed to history. On the other hand, they hardly exhaust the types of narrative available about the past during the time period considered in this chapter. Many court poets wrote histories of kings and their families within the general framework of what can be called *kāvya*, or 'art poetry', a meta-generic category which could include prose, verse, or theatre, and which operated under formalized aesthetic conventions.

The methods of composition used by the authors of these different genres varied. The authors of the *purāṇa*s, who represented their texts as the utterances of great sages of the past, drew widely from circulating storytelling traditions (*akhyāna*) about the great kings of yore along with genealogies or chronicles (*vaṁśa*) of the sages and gods, and patched these together with other materials available to them. The *purāṇa*s were largely preserved in an oral context, and crucial to their transmission were reciters or 'bards' (*sūta*s) who were capable of interpolating or omitting large amounts of material to meet the needs of their audiences.[8] The 'textual' traditions of the *purāṇa*s are thus highly unstable. Inscriptions and court poems, which were largely written compositions, tended to be the work of single authors—chroniclers, lauds, and poets at the courts of kings. While all of these works surely drew on earlier accounts of different varieties, they rarely acknowledge them. Even when they did so, the boundaries of 'source' and 'historian' were not recognized. Authors often incorporated earlier material into their own compositions using a variety of narrative devices to effect continuity and seamlessness without any distinction of authorship and attribution.[9] This handling of 'evidence' may be related to parallel figurations in legal and śāstric traditions.[10]

The *purāṇa*s are universalist, cosmological histories composed by adepts of the theistic religious orders of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism. While some of the older *purāṇa*s can be dated to the first centuries AD, the writing of new *purāṇa*s and supplementation of existing ones continued throughout the first millennium and

[8] See Ludo Rocher, *The Purāṇas* (Wiesbaden, 1986), 53–8.

[9] For a discussion of strategies of incorporation in chronicles see Michael Witzel, 'On Indian Historical Writing: The Role of Vaṁçâvalîs', *Journal of the Japanese Association for South Asian Studies*, 2 (1990), 1–57.

[10] In this connection one may refer to the claim of Hayden White that the development of historical consciousness in societies was 'somehow' related to concerns over the functioning of law. Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987), 13–14. Though legal traditions in Sanskrit have elaborate rules of treating and verifying testimony and evidence, which might otherwise suggest a similar handling of materials by the poet-chronicler, it should be noted that the 'sources' drawn on in legal argumentation were not memorialized as 'events' or 'cases' but were instead a vast tradition of free-floating moral maxims (*nyāya*s). This use of precedence, therefore, does not rely on any referral to past 'decision events' (cases) but on a more amorphous collective wisdom of the sages of old—implying different historical assumptions, as pointed out by Donald Davis, 'Maxims and Precedent in Classical Hindu Law', *Indologica Taurinensia*, 33 (2007), 52.

well into the second. Moreover, in addition to a traditional list of eighteen so-called great *purāṇa*s (*mahāpurāṇa*s), scores of new texts continued to be composed, particularly during the period of 600 to 1400. Among these must be included what the tradition comes to call the 'secondary' *purāṇa*s (*upapurāṇa*s), often associated with particular regions, as well as those linked to specific shrines or localities (*sthalapurāṇa*s, *mahātmya*s) or even caste groups.[11] The earlier *purāṇa*s include descriptions of creation and the universe, and stories of the gods, sages, and kings of the famous lunar and solar dynasties, while locality and caste *purāṇa*s, very common after the sixteenth century, relate the histories of particular places or groups, against a similar backdrop.

The cosmological or universal framework of the *purāṇa*s is of the utmost importance for the articulation of historical time in medieval India—as found in both the *purāṇa*s themselves as well as in other sorts of texts. According to the *purāṇa*s, cosmic time was measured through the repetition of countless cycles of creation, degradation, and renewal which formed part of an eternal hierarchy of epochs (*manvantara*) and cosmic formations (*kalpa*) understood as the actual life rhythms of great beings, ending, of course, in the Supreme Lord, of whom time itself was an aspect.[12] Divinity in these religious orders was highly 'emanationist' and radically immanent. Viṣṇu was particularly associated with kingship and was thought to have incarnated himself at various times in both the lunar and solar lines to save the world from destruction. Despite the apparently cyclical and eternal nature of this cosmic framework, time was also experienced as linear. The authors of the *purāṇa*s understood themselves to be living in a dark age of moral decline known as the *kali yuga* in the epoch (*manvantara*) of Vaivasvata. The 'ancient' knowledge of the *purāṇa*s, however, had been revealed in an earlier age of comparative virtue, at the commencement of the *kali yuga* and preserved by *sūta*s. The recent history of the authors is thus narrated in the future tense and cast as a prediction rather than a narration of past events. In these accounts, the great ancient dynasties of the sun and moon narrated elsewhere in the *purāṇa*s, are predicted to end in the *kali yuga* amidst worsening conditions as the end came near.

The *purāṇa*s left four important legacies which shaped the perception of history in early medieval India. First, they connected the world of their listeners not only to the hoary past of ancient kings and sages in previous eras, but to the drama of creation itself. Given the ubiquity of the Puranic traditions, it would seem that their cosmogonic and epochal concerns were thus a 'presence' felt in everyday life. Second, the links between past and present were established through the mechanism of genealogy, or *vaṁśa*, what Thapar has called the 'epicentre' of Puranic thinking about the past.[13] The *purāṇa*s, and many texts after them, con-

[11] On the diversity of Puranic literature see Rocher, *Puranic*, 67–80.
[12] *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.3.6–7.
[13] Romila Thapar, 'Genealogical Patterns as Perceptions of the Past', *Studies in History*, 7:1 (1991), 35.

ceived of the past as a connected succession of human lives. Third, they conceptualized the present as an era of moral decline. This perception imbued temporality with a moral *telos*, one which had diverse implications for human agency in historical narratives. Finally, as theistic texts, they articulated a vision of history which was infused with divine agency, not as an unseen guiding hand or divine providence, but as a set of presences or epiphanies embodied in a hierarchy of lordships. God's agency was thus not a script to be read by the historian beneath the skein of quotidian events, but a palpable and hence continually operative presence in historical narrative. It was often seen as deeply entangled in various human agencies, as we shall see.

These features of Puranic narrative were everywhere apparent in medieval India, but perhaps nowhere more obviously than in inscriptional eulogies (*praśasti*) and lineage chronicles (*vaṁśāvalī*). From about the fourth century, royal courts throughout the subcontinent began to issue land grants to Brahmin communities and temples—inscribed on copper sheaves or stone walls—which were prefaced by eulogies praising the valour of the donating king and his family. These inscribed eulogies, often in ornate verse, were composed mostly by little-known court poets and lauds to celebrate the deeds of the monarch in question and, increasingly from the fifth and sixth century, his family back through the generations. Dated either in regnal years or in any one of a number of reckoning eras, such inscriptions survive in prodigious numbers and form perhaps the single most important source used by modern historians to reconstruct the dynastic history of early medieval India.[14] From about the seventh century AD many lineages trace themselves back to the royal families of the sun and moon mentioned in the *purāṇa*s, while rival monarchs are depicted as embodiments of the churlish kings of the *kali yuga*. In many eulogies the king is explicitly identified with a Puranic god, usually some form of Viṣṇu, who was particularly associated with worldly sovereignty. While at one level this was surely a means of creating noble ancestry and therefore legitimate authority for powerful families, it also implied an understanding of the past—that the royal lines of the sun and the moon said to die out in the *kali yuga* could be revived by the appearance of lost or neglected branches, and that these families could be invested with the divine particles of one or other Puranic deity.

*Vaṁśāvalī*s are dynastic 'chronicles' preserved for certain regions or families, similar in structure to inscriptional eulogies, but typically less ornate in style. They are organized, like *praśasti*s, as generation by generation genealogies though they typically provide elaborate Puranic origin myths, often with interludes of fallen status, to explain the rise of new families.[15] In contradistinction to inscrip-

[14] On this genre see Richard Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages* (New York, 1999).

[15] See the analysis of Romila Thapar, 'The Mouse in the Ancestry', in Thapar, *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (Delhi, 2000), 797–806.

tional eulogies, which tend to include ever more elaborate praises of their royal patrons and their immediate predecessors, the more historically 'recent' parts of many *vaṁśāvalī*s, nearer in time to their composition, are often narrated as simple king lists. This may be attributed to the composition of these texts, which unlike inscriptions, were not typically eulogies to praise a king, but accounts preserved by royal lines themselves, which were subject to generational supplementation, making any firm dating for such texts problematic at best.[16] Important *vaṁśāvalī*s exist for kingdoms in Nepal, Rajasthan, Chamba, and Kerala and may be dated between 1000 and 1500, though most have been subject to ongoing interpolation.[17] The style of the *vaṁśāvalī*, it should be noted, was occasionally expanded upon, in more self-consciously poetic compositions as in the case of Kalhaṇa's Kashmiri chronicle, the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* [Stream of Kings], or the Buddhist chronicles of Sri Lanka, the *Mahāvaṁśa* [Great Chronicle] and *Dīpavaṁśa* [Chronicle of the Island], but was also a wider mode of narration which can sometimes be found embedded in otherwise biographical or narrative court poems.

More self-consciously literary compositions in Sanskrit typically narrate either the events around a specific conquest or the career of a particular monarch, and thus are often called either *carita* (literally the account of the 'deeds' of an individual, but often an account of his life) or *vijaya* (literally 'victory'). These could either be in prose or verse and crossed a number of genres, including prose stories (*ākhyāyikā*), verse compositions (*kāvya*), and epic court poems (*mahākāvya*). A profoundly influential text for authors during the period of this chapter, one which surely justifies the starting point of this survey, was the *Harṣacarita* [The Deeds of Harṣa], a Sanskrit prose work in the *ākhyāyikā* genre composed by the poet Bāṇa at the court of King Harṣa of the Puṣyabhūti family at the beginning of the seventh century.[18] The text narrates in ornate style the career of Prince Harṣa, focusing particularly on the events leading to his accession to the thrones of both his father's kingdom in Thanesar (over his elder brother Rājyavardhana) as well as that of the powerful Maukhari kingdom based in the city of Kanauj. As Pathak has pointed out, the central theme of the *Harṣacarita* is the king's attainment of political success as symbolized by the Goddess or Royal Fortune (*rājyaśrī*), also the name of Harṣa's sister, who was given in marriage to the king of Kanauj, widowed by the evil Gauḍa king, and rescued by her brother. Later court poems

[16] On the composition of *vaṁśāvalī*s, see Witzel, 'Role of Vaṁçâvalîs'.

[17] For Chamba, see 'The Chambā Vaṁśāvalī', ed. and trans. J. Ph. Vogel, in Vogel, *Antiquities of Chambā State*, pt. 1 (Delhi, 1994); for Kerala, see *Mūṣikavaṁśamahākāvyam*, ed. and trans. K. P. Menon (Delhi, 1999).

[18] The *Harṣacarita* calls itself an *ākhyāyikā* and for later rhetoricians becomes the *locus classicus* of the genre. On the *ākhyāyikā* and its relation to other genres, particularly the story, or *kathā*, see S. K. De, *Some Problems of Sanskrit Poetics* (Calcutta, 1959), 65–80. The most important study of the text is V. S. Agrawala, *The Deeds of Harsha: Being a Cultural Study of Bāṇa's Harshacarita* (Varanasi, 1969).

include Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* [The Deeds of he Who had Courage as his Mark], a verse poem composed in the latter half of the eleventh century under the Cāḷukya king Vikramāditya VI (1076–1126), describing his patron's struggle for the throne with his brother Someśvara II; the *Pṛthivīrājavijaya* [The Victory of Pṛthivīrāja] of Jayānaka at the end of the twelfth century celebrating the Chāhamāna king Pṛthivīrāja's (1168–92) short-lived victory over the armies of Muizz ud-Dīn Muhammad of Ghor; the *Gadyakarṇāmṛta* [The Prose-Ambrosia of the Ear], a prose work written by the court poet Vidyācakravartin for his patron, the Hoysaḷa king Narasiṁha II (1220–35), recounting his victory over the Pāṇḍyas of Madurai; and the *Madhurāvijaya* [The Conquest of Madhura], a verse poem written in the fourteenth century by Queen Gaṅgadevī, celebrating the conquest of Madurai by her husband, the Vijayanagara king Kampaṇṇa (1361–74). Two notable literary sub-genres of the historically themed court poem were the *śāstrakāvya*, an expository treatise, usually in verse, on a technical subject which provided illustrations narrating the history and achievements of a patron and his family, and the *śleṣakāvya*, a bi-textual poem, which through *paronomasia* and punning, simultaneously told a traditional story as well as the deeds of a lineage or king.[19]

The predominant themes of these court narratives, like inscriptional praise eulogies, were typically related to royal careers. A key theme for many court poems was the attainment of a kingdom by a prince, often in the context of rival claimants. Both the *Harṣacarita* and *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* present narratives in which the eldest son is passed over in succession, and may thus be seen as texts which served to legitimate contested passages of authority.[20] Another key theme in many narratives is that of conquest, sometimes represented as a 'victory over the quarters' (*digvijaya*), the subject of numerous epigraphic accounts, where the king chastises the haughty pride of neighbouring monarchs to gain universal dominion. Sovereignty is often personified as the Goddess of Fortune (Śrī or Lakṣmī). In poetic descriptions, the Goddess was compared to a fickle woman, wandering, in Decamron-esque fashion, from one royal suitor to the next.

The most acclaimed Sanskrit historical *kāvya* is the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Kalhaṇa, composed in Kashmir in the middle of the twelfth century. Unlike many of the texts mentioned above, the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* has generated perennial interest among philologists and historians, who have found in it the closest approximation to

[19] Notable examples among the former include Halāyudha's *Kavirahasya*, a text on verbal roots which devotes its verses to the praise of his patron, the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Kṛṣṇa III (940–56); Hemacandra's *Dvyāśrayakāvya*, a grammar of Sanskrit and Prakrit which also tells the history of the Caulukya kings of Gujarat, particularly King Kumārapāla (1143–72); and Vidyanātha's *Pratāparudrayaśobhūṣaṇa*, a text on poetics which celebrates the deeds of the Kākatīya king Pratāparudra (1289–1323). An important *śleṣakāvya* was Sandhyākaranandin's *Rāmacarita*, which simultaneously narrated the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic and the career of the Pāla king Rāmapāla (1087–1141).

[20] On the *Harṣacarita* see Devahuti, *Harṣa*: *A Political Study* (3rd edn, Delhi, 1998); on the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* see Pathak, *Ancient Historians of India*, 56–83.

'real' history that early India has to offer.[21] This largely rests on the remarkable and unprecedented introductory verses of the text, which discuss its scope, sources, and 'methods'. Kalhaṇa acknowledges that his account was composed after consulting various materials (what the modern historian might call 'sources'), including a local *purāṇa*, past chronicles and king lists, inscriptions, literary compositions, and even temples. Just as remarkably, Kalhaṇa extols the powers of the poet, who, seeing the past in his 'mind's eye', brings it before his audience, and who, 'having put aside affection and revulsion', should relate past events 'like an arbiter' (*stheya*).[22] It is difficult to know how to read these rather unusual statements—whether we should understand Kalhaṇa as voicing an implicit and widely understood set of principles current in literary circles throughout the subcontinent, or whether he represents something strikingly new or confined entirely to Kashmir. The truth may lay somewhere in between. For one, Kalhaṇa's text seems to be part of a tradition of writing much like the *vaṁśāvalī* tradition known elsewhere in the subcontinent (but perhaps most notably in Nepal), which was open to ongoing revision and supplementation. Not only does Kalhaṇa refer to *vaṁśāvalī* texts no longer extant, but after him we have no less than five extant works—all dating between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, written by different authors—with the title *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, the most famous of which are those by Jonarāja, Śrīvara, and Śuka.[23] Also, like many *vaṁśāvalī* texts, the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* is not so much a eulogy but a chronicle, though not one which belonged to a specific family. Kalhaṇa (and here he may be distinguished from the later *Rājataraṅgiṇī* authors, some of whom enjoyed court patronage) did not seem to enjoy an official position at the Lohara court, though his father served as a minister to King Harṣa (1089–1101). Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī* purports, instead, to be the history of the region of Kashmir, beginning from the outset of the *kali yuga* down to his own times.

But unlike many *vaṁśāvalī* texts, Kalhaṇa seems to have been more self-conscious in his use of previous materials. He even notes when his sources were inadequate—as in the case of thirty-five kings after Gonanda II, whose names and deeds were 'immersed in an ocean of oblivion' 'because of the destruction of family traditions' (*āmnāya*).[24] Moreover, the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* has a textual integrity of its own. When it was continued in later centuries, supplements were preserved as discretely authored texts. This is probably due to the fact, as Walter Slaje and

[21] See the recent study of Walter Slaje, 'In the Guise of Poetry: Kalhaṇa Reconsidered', in Slaje (ed.), *Śāstrārambha: Inquiries into the Preamble in Sanskrit* (Wiesbaden, 2008), 207–44. For a dissenting view see Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*, 254–61.

[22] See *Rājataraṅgiṇī* 1.4–15.

[23] These have received little attention. See the improtant study of Walter Slaje, *Medieval Kashmir and the Science of History* (Austin, 2004), 1–30, esp. 7–9.

[24] *Rājataraṅgiṇī* 1.83. For a discussion of Kalhaṇa's editorial methods see B. Kölver, *Textkritische und Philologische Untersuchungen zur Rājataraṅgiṇī des Kalhaṇa* (Wiesbaden, 1971); and, more recently, for an illuminating discussion of Kalhaṇa's methods of composition in comparison with those used in the *vaṁśāvalī*s of Nepal, see Witzel, 'The Role of Vaṁçâvalîs', 26–43.

others have pointed out, that these texts were conceived of as compositions with some literary pretension.[25] In the case of Kalhaṇa this is explicitly so, as he mentions that his *kāvya* was to be dominated by the 'flavour' (*rasa*) of *śānta*, or 'equanimity', an aesthetic sentiment extensively theorized and developed by Kashmiri intellectuals in the eleventh century. It is in this respect that it is possible to distinguish Kalhaṇa's work from other courtly *kāvya*s. Not only does Kalhaṇa not celebrate any particular monarch or family, the narrative of the text, as it progresses through the centuries, presents a world of ever more foolish and depraved kings. Here Kalhaṇa relies on the trope of moral decline associated with the *kali yuga*, to be sure, but unlike other court narratives which represent particular kings and families as beacons of virtue in dark times, Kalhaṇa presents the careers of Kashmir's kings as unmitigated folly.

While this cynical perspective might partly reflect the vicissitudes of his own family's career at court, there is undoubtedly some larger vision at work in the text which must be accounted for. As Slaje points out the implicit poetic template may have been the *Mahābhārata* [Narrative of the Great Bhārata War], which eleventh-century Kashmiri theorists like Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta had seen as the very embodiment of *śānta rasa* because, and here comparison with the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* is instructive, the extended battles and revolving fortunes in the text gave rise to 'world-weariness' which itself was a valued spiritual sentiment.[26] From this perspective, Kalhaṇa's narrative of the fractious kings was meant to demonstrate the futility of political gain and assist the reader in developing a sense of equanimity toward worldly ephemera. It is significant that Kalhaṇa achieves this end through a striking realism uncharacteristic of the courtly *kāvya*s reviewed above. This is apparent not only in colourful and sometimes even lurid descriptions, but in the prominence of a large cast of what aesthetic treatises deemed 'middling' or 'lower' character types—corrupt scribes, wily courtesans, and a variety of thieves, spies, and assassins—all involved in incessant intrigue. While such persons surely give a sense of realism to the narrative, their appearance is largely unprecedented in the eulogistically inflected court literature. It is instead in the 'story' or didactic genres, often set in putatively fictive settings, that such characters abound. In Kashmir, the works of Kṣemendra and particularly Somadeva in the eleventh century may have provided clear prototypes for Kalhaṇa. If this was the case, it is perhaps ironic that the most 'realistic' Sanskrit historical narrative may be more indebted to fictional 'story' literatures than the traditions of the historically placeable eulogistic court epics.

It is not only in Kashmir that such genre boundaries began to blur. In western India, partly under the influence of Jain intellectuals patronized by the Paramāras of Malwa and the Cauḷukyas of Gujarat, traditional court narratives begin to refract new historicities and expand their horizons. The poet Padmagupta

[25] Slaje, *Medieval Kashmir and the Science of History*, 8; see also Slaje, 'In the Guise of Poetry'.
[26] See ibid., 225–9.

Parimala composed the *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* [The Deeds of the New Vikrama], in honour of his patron, the Paramāra king Sindhurāja (995–1010) of Dhārā. The poem depicts the heroic deeds of Prince Sindhurāja and his courtship of Princess Śaśiprabhā of the Nāga (serpent) family, whose abode was the subterranean city of Bhogavatī. The king falls in love with the princess while hunting and pursues her as she is taken away by her guardians to the underworld. Sindhurāja meets her father, king of the Nāgas, who asks him to retrieve golden lotuses from a pond in the pleasure garden in the capital city Ratnavatī of his mortal enemy, the demon Vajrāṅkuśa. Sindhurāja, assisted by the king of the Vidyādharas (supernatural beings living in the Himalayas), defeats Vajrāṅkuśa and returns with the lotuses, thereby winning Śaśiprabhā's hand in marriage. Unusually, the poet represents his living patron in a narrative with elements typically reserved for 'story' literature in Sanskrit—magical transformations, animal-characters, and *nāga*-princesses. It has been noted that elements of the narrative may refer obliquely to the contemporary political situation.[27] Yet it is not the appearance of supernatural figures as such that marks a change in the discourse of courtly history, but rather their function in the narrative. Unlike Puranic myths in courtly texts which may be taken at face value, the supernatural scenarios of the *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* invite interpretive correspondences with contemporary reality, as if the poet intended, according to Pathak, to cover these events 'in a semi-transparent', almost magical, veil.[28]

From the thirteenth century, Jain intellectuals also created entirely new forms of historical discourse. First, we have a number of eulogistic life-stories of men other than kings—ministers, merchants, and monks. Notable among these are the set of biographies of the famous ministers Vastupāla and Tejaḥpāla, who served the Vāghela kings Lavaṇaprasāda and Vīradhavala in thirteenth-century Gujarat.[29] The *Jagaḍūcarita* [The Deeds of Jagaḍu] of Sarvānanda, composed in the same century, describes the life and deeds of a famous local merchant, and several hagiographies exist for Jain monks of the Śvetāmbara order, the most famous of whom was undoubtedly the polymath Hemacandra.[30] In addition to biographies (*carita*s), Jain writers also produced shorter prose narratives called *prabandha*s which related tales about eminent people. These works mixed the moral didacticism and realistic style of the story (*kathā*) literature with the historic conventions of traditional *carita* literature. The most well-known work of this type is Merutuṅga's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* [Wishing Stone of Narratives], composed in 1305 at the Vāghela court. After treating stories of the great emperors

[27] See Pratipal Bhatia, *The Paramāras (c. 840–1305 AD)* (Delhi, 1967), 59–73.

[28] Pathak, *Ancient Historians of India*, 149–51.

[29] See Vijaya Muni (ed.), *Kīrtikaumudī of Someśvaradeva and Sukṛtasaṁkīrtana of Arisiṁha* (Bombay, 1961); and Chimanlal Dalal (ed.), *Vasantavilāsamahākāvya of Bālacandra Sūri* (Baroda, 1917).

[30] For select translations of monastic biographies relating to Hemacandra see Georg Bühler, *The Life of Hemacandrācārya*, trans. M. Patel (Santiniketan, 1936).

of yore, particularly the famed King Vikramāditya, Merutuṅga turns to episodes in the lives of kings of more recent times, particularly those of the rival kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa. His stories contain a level of detail largely unprecedented in Sanskrit writing, including dates and events corroborated by other sources. They are mixed, however, with seemingly deliberate historical anachronisms and fairy-tale elements, what Sheldon Pollock has called a sort of 'magical realism' *avant la lettre*.[31] This curious mix has been attributed to the moralistic nature of these tales. Yet stories of the King Bhoja (r. 1011–55) of Malwa, survive Jain didacticism, appearing in a variety of literary contexts in subsequent times. The example of Bhoja is perhaps the best documented case of a historically verifiable local king gradually entering into the vast storehouse of popular memory across the subcontinent. It is perhaps significant that this tradition evolved in the context of an entirely new political and historiographical dispensation—that of the Delhi Sultanate.

HISTORICAL WRITING IN PERSIAN

North-western India had been a zone of contact between Arab, West Asian, and Indic cultures from as early as the eighth century. Arabs appeared at the ports of Sindh just four years after the prophet's death, and by AD 711 an Umayyad general had conquered the region. Sindh remained in Arab hands until its conquest by the Ghaznavids in the eleventh centry. The literatures of this early period, and particularly from Sindh, are largely in Arabic, and include not only hadith commentaries but some notable biographical anthologies (*tabaqat*), and Ismaili texts. Further north in the empire of the Ghaznavids the remarkable study of India and its peoples was written in Arabic by the Ghaznavid intellectual al-Biruni.[32]

Ghaznavid military expeditions into northern India during the eleventh century intensified interactions, and by the time they and their successors, the Ghurids, established seats of power in the Punjab and further east in the twelfth, Indians, Arabs, and Central Asian Turks and Afghans were long familiar with one another. The realignments of these Afghan empires into the Punjab eventually culminated in the establishment of an independent Sultanate in Delhi at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The 'Delhi Sultanate', a modern designation for a succession of Turkish and Afghan lineages dominant in large parts of northern India from Delhi from the thirteenth century until the coming of the Mughals

[31] Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley, 2006), 184.

[32] Al-Biruni's text is known as the *Kitab Taḥqiq mā lil-Hind min maqulah maqbulah fi al-'aql aw mardhulah* [The book of Investigations into al-Hind: That which is Acceptable to the Rational Mind and that which can be Rejected], and was written for the Ghaznavid court. Some scholars suggest that the *Chach Namah*, a Persian text celebrating the conquest of Sind by Ummayad armies in the eighth century, is based on an Arabic original.

in the sixteenth, may give the impression of a robust and continuous empire. In actual fact, the stability of the Sultanate was tentative indeed at first and throughout the first half of the thirteenth century, during which the Delhi Sultanate was little more than a powerful garrison state, and relations with both the wider Islamic world as well as local societies were minimal. But as the Turkish and Afghan émigrés put down roots in northern India, more complex social structures arose, and a class of literate and educated religious specialists (*ulema*) and 'men of the pen' (*ahl i qalam*) become prominent as authors of many of our first sources related to the Sultanate. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, men from the Islamic lands of Central Asia continued to arrive and settle in Delhi and other parts of South Asia, partly driven by the scourge of Mongol depredations, but also because of the famed wealth and possibilities of fortune that the sultanates of South Asia offered. The already established reputation of Persian in the region also undoubtedly facilitated the absorption of these literati. It is from the ranks of these men that the Sultanate's poets and chroniclers were drawn—and they brought with them the rich intellectual and literary legacies of the Persianate world.

Nearly all historical discourses relating to the Delhi Sultanate were composed in the Persian language, which had come to dominate the court cultures of Islamic Asia from as early as the ninth century. More specifically, Delhi had inherited the literary culture of the Ghaznavids and Seljuks, under whose patronage a rich Persian court culture had flourished throughout the eleventh century. The reign of the Ghaznavid Sultan Maḥmūd, famous for his raids into northern India to plunder Hindu temples, saw the completion of Ferdowsi's epic *Shah-nama* [Book of Kings], depicting the heroic deeds of both the pre-Islamic and Muslim kings of Iran with its implicit teleological 'hope for a ruler from the East combining Iranian and Islamic ideals of sovereignty'.[33] This text formed an important thematic and stylistic inspiration for many Persian authors writing from India—though no Persian history of the Delhi Sultanate attempted to weave India's pre-Islamic past into a heroic prelude for the introduction of Islam into the subcontinent. This was, no doubt, because Indian elites, unlike those of Iran, never converted in large numbers (at least during our time period) and thus required no assimilation of their past. At the same time, the elite of the Sultanate frequently looked back to Central Asia and beyond for their sense of identity.

History was generally referred to by the Arabic term *ta'rīkh*, which denoted a subject rather than a genre. History was deemed crucially important from the very outset of Islamic learning, because of its role in recording the events of the early Islamic community and its perceived utility in verifying the Prophetic traditions (hadith).[34] These functions gave history-writing a strong connection

[33] Julie Scott Meisami, *Perisan Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999), 41.

[34] Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiorgaphy* (Cambridge, 2003), 15–16.

with religious authority, communal identity, and law. The Sultanate historian Ziya' al-Din Barani, in the opening of his *Ta'rikh i Firuz Shahi* [History of Firuz Shah] (*c.*1357), confirms as much. In enumerating the seven benefits of historical study, Barani notes that in addition to familiarizing the faithful with the deeds of the prophets, 'history is the twin-brother of the science of *ḥadīth*', helping to verify and confirm the reliability of the narrators of tradition.[35] Just as important for Barani was history's role in providing a storehouse of policy examples to assure sultans and *wazīr*s in difficult times, and its role in assisting the exercise of reason and the development of virtues more generally. Despite, or perhaps more accurately, because of, these ideological burdens, historical discourse as knowledge about the past was complex. In the Persianate world, it crossed a number of literary genres and styles in both prose and verse, making any single or all-embracing literary classification of historical writing impossible.[36] While history had no specific or immutable form, modern scholars have nevertheless been able to mark out various types of historical discourse from different angles. Drawing on these, it may be useful to distinguish two broad categories which contain historical narrative, on roughly formalist grounds: general prose histories of Islam or Islam in a particular region as well as dynastic histories of regional empires and self-consciously literary compositions, either eulogistic biographies, usually in prose, sometimes called *manāqib*, or in various other genres.[37]

The first category, sometimes thought of as 'universal histories' or 'chronicles', contains the texts most frequently used by historians to reconstruct the political and social history of the Delhi Sultanate. Chief among these in the period covered in this chapter are the *Shajara-i Ansab* [The Tree of Geneaologies] of Fakhr-i Mudabbir, presented to the first sultan of Delhi, Qutb al-Din Aibak, in 1209 and the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* [The Generations of Nasir] of Minhaj al-Siraj Juzjani, written for the Delhi sultan, Nasir al-Din Mahmud, in 1259–60. The two texts differ considerably in structure and style. The former, only partially published, consists of 137 genealogical tables prefaced by a long introduction containing a brief narrative, beginning with a description of the cosmos, the seven climes, the prophets, and moving quickly to the history of Ghazni and Lahore and the rise of Qutb al-Din Aibak. This account stands in sharp contrast to Juzjani's work, which is a collection of connected biographical narratives (*tabaqat*) rather than a set of genealogical tables. Though chronologically arranged, beginning with the prophets and the four rightly guided caliphs and ending with his own times and the

[35] See Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing* (London, 1960), 22–3.

[36] Noted in Auer, *Symbols of Authority*, 22.

[37] For somewhat more detailed classfications, see the discussions of Peter Hardy, 'Some Studies in Pre-Mughal Muslim Historiography', in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London, 1961), 116; and Sunil Kumar, *The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate* (Delhi, 2007), 366–77.

Mongol scourge of Islamic Asia, the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*'s twenty-three chapters are essentially divided along the lines of groups who shared some affiliation with one another. This structure sometimes leads to more than one treatment of a single event from different perspectives.[38] The *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, like the *Shajara-i Ansab*, sees the sultan of Delhi as an exemplary leader of the Muslim community.

A final history which may be considered is Ziya al-Din Barani's *Ta'rikh i Firuz Shahi*, composed in 1357 for Sultan Firuz Shah Tughluq (1351–88). Unlike Juzjani, who had emigrated from Ghur, Barani was among a generation of intellectuals and writers born in north India. He served as court counsellor (*nadīm*) for Muhammad bin Tughluq (1324–51), but was among the courtiers who lost favour at the accession of Firuz Shah Tughluq, during whose reign he wrote his history. Barani's chronicle has an avowedly didactic tone and tends to see the past as a litany of wise deeds and follies, a feature so pronounced that historians have tended to categorize this work as a 'didactic' or '*Furstenspiegel*' history. This is somewhat problematic, not only because the ethical dimension of history, as we shall see, was a feature of all Indo-Persian historical writing, but because Barani had himself written another text in the 'Mirrors for Princes' genre, the *Fatawa-i Jahandari* [The Decrees on Ordering the World].[39] Moreover, Barani clearly sees himself continuing the historical project of the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri.* After praising this work, he states that his history continues from where Juzjani's had ended, at the reign of Balban. The *Ta'rikh i Firuz Shahi* is the first Indo-Persian history which clearly situates itself in relation to a past historiographic tradition of the sultans of Delhi.

Into a second category of historical discourse may be placed compositions of a self-consciously literary nature which treated the past. Such works had influential precedents in the Samanid, Seljuk, and Ghaznavid court literatures. Among the first composed in South Asia, and thus one of the first historical narratives available to us for the history of the early Sultanate, was the *Taj al-Ma'athir* [The Crown of Glorious Deeds] of Hasan Nizami, a native of Nishapur, who emigrated to Ghazni and then Delhi, during the reign of Sultan Iltutmish (1210–36). Composed as a celebration of the military successes of the Ghurid sultans in India, the *Taj al-Ma'athir* embodied the developed refinements of Persian literary culture, with extensive use of literary figures combined with extensive displays of knowledge in various contemporary court sciences. Later, the celebrated poet Amir Khusrau of Delhi, writing at the courts of the Khalji and Tughluq sultans from 1289 until his death in 1325, composed a number of pan-

[38] As noted by Kumar, *Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate*, 368, and used throughout as a point of departure for a new reading of the nature of Sultanate polity.

[39] See Mohammad Habib and Afsar Salim Khan, *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate* (Allahabad, 1960). The 'counsels' (*nasihat*s) of this text are placed in the mouth of Mahmud of Ghazni as exhortations to his 'sons'. See Nilanjan Sarkar, '"The Voice of Mahmūd": The Hero in Ziya Barani's *Fatawa-i Jahandari*', *Medieval History Journal*, 9:2 (2006), 327–56.

egyrics and longer narrative poems (*masnavi*) on historical themes. These include the *Qiran al-Sa'dayn* [The Conjunction of Two Beneficient Planets] on the quarrel and reconciliation between the Sultan Muizz al-din Kaiqubad and his father Bughra Khan, the *Miftah al-Futuh* [The Key to the Victories] on the military victories of Sultan Jalal al-din Khalji, the *Duwal Rani Khizr Khan* [Duval Rani and Khizr Khan] describing a tragic love story between the son of 'Ala' al-din Khalji and the daughter of the Hindu king Karna of Narhwala, the *Nuh Sipihr* [The Nine Spheres] describing the country of Hindustan, and the *Tughluq Namah* [The Book of the Tughluqs] on the victory of Sultan Ghiyath al-din Tughluq (1321–5) over Khusrau Khan in 1320. Amir Khusrau's use of the *masnavi* genre, usually reserved for mythological and romantic tales, to treat temporally restricted or 'local' historical contexts, was innovative and influential.[40] Though often dismissed by modern historians as riddled through with poetic convention, they show both a localization and maturation of courtly historical sensibilities within India.

Another invocation of Persianate literary style was 'Isami's *Futuh Salatin* [Victory of the Sultans], an ambitious poem on a more expansive historical canvas, but in the florid style of the Persian *masnavi*, avowedly styled upon the precedent of the *Shah-nama*. Composed at the court of the first independent sultan of the Bahmani dynasty in the Deccan in 1349/50, the *Futuh Salatin* begins its narrative with the military campaigns of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids and narrates the history of the Sultanate down to his own time, reserving special praise for key rulers like the celebrated Sultan 'Ala' al-din Khalji (1296–1316). In addition to these finely wrought verse narratives were prose works of literary orientation celebrating the careers of various sultans. Amir Khusrau is author of the *Khazain al Futuh* [The Treasure House of Victories], detailing the events and conquests of 'Ala' al-din Khalji. We also have at least two surviving works in the *manāqib* genre which have survived from the fourteenth century, both praising the qualities (*manāqib*) of the Sultan Firuz Shah Tughluq—the anonymously authored *Sirat-i Firuz Shahi* [Biography of Firuz Shah] and Shams al-din Siraj 'Afif's *Ta'rikh-i-Firuz Shahi* [History of Firuz Shah]. They are unusual, as the genre was usually associated with sufi *shayks* and religious scholars. The latter of these texts may have been part of a larger and now lost composition which had chapters on other Tughluq sultans as well.[41] Both portray Firuz Shah Tughluq as an ideal man and paramount Muslim ruler in a conventionalized manner largely analogous to the *carita* narratives in Sanskrit. As in Sanskrit, the highly stylized representations of rulers often tell us more about the evolving values of the court or historian than they do about events on the ground.

[40] On these works see Sunil Sharma, 'Amir Khusraw and the Genre of Historical Narratives in Verse', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 22:1–2 (2002), 112–18.

[41] On this text see Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, 40–55.

It has been widely noted that much historical writing in Persian during this period had pronounced tendencies toward didacticism. The topic of history was inherently ennobling, according to Barani, as it helped develop one's discriminating capacities, provided examples of good and bad actions (and their outcomes), and gave rise to virtues like patience and resignation. Indeed, even eulogistic genres had a potentially instructive end, for the praise of the worthy was always accompanied by the censure of the wicked. The moralizing tendencies of historical discourse, however, made special use of the religiously textualized past. Blaine Auer has demonstrated how historians portrayed the Delhi sultans with constant reference to their good deeds or follies, and constructed symbolic and metaphoric relationships between their situations and those of figures from the 'sacred past'. Various figures—pre-Islamic prophets, Muhammad, the friends of God, and the early caliphs—were invoked as paradigmatic exemplars for the sultans of Delhi through explicit and implicit comparisons. This had the function, on the one hand, of creating moral linkages between the present and the past; on the other, it also served to legitimize and sacralize the sultan's authority through that very same link to the past. To take one example, Juzjani uses the story of Yousuf (Joseph) to frame his account of the rise of the Shamsiya lineage of Iltutmish after the death of Qutb al-Din Aibak, accentuating the humble origins of greatness (both Yousuf and Iltutmish were sold into slavery at a young age) and the fact that Iltutmish had the signs of God's choice of Iltutmish to rule.[42] Such invocations made the distant Islamic past a continual presence in the historical understanding of the present.

As the sultanate's power expanded from the end of the thirteenth century, Muslim provincial settlements were established towards the south and east of Delhi. These 'regional' centres, at first loyal to the centre, gradually consolidated their own power bases at the expense of Delhi. Regional assertion characterized much of the latter half of the fourteenth century, in a process that Simon Digby has called the 'provincialization' of the sultanate.[43] When the Mongol Timur sacked Delhi in 1398, the sultanate was but a shell of its former power. The fifteenth century, which is beyond the scope of this chapter, was a time of regional political development, with separate sultanates appearing in Malwa, Gujarat, Bengal, and the Deccan. Delhi continued to function as a political centre into the sixteenth century, but Persian literary culture and historical writing there fell into decline, with the newly established 'regional' sultanates becoming notable centres of literary production. It was not until the latter half of the sixteenth century that Delhi's prominence as a centre of Persian literary culture was restored, when the Mughals implemented a deliberate policy of Persianization. Persian historical discourse entered an entirely new phase under the Mughals.

[42] Auer, *Symbols of Authority*, 41.

[43] Simon Digby, 'Before Timur Came: Provincialization of the Delhi Sultanate through the Fourteenth Century', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 47:3 (2004), 298–356.

ONWARD TO NEW PASTS

The broad language divisions which have organized the presentation of texts in this chapter gives the impression of two rather autonomous traditions or spheres of history-writing. Yet for at least three hundred years of the time surveyed in this chapter, Persian and Sanskrit historical traditions lived their circulatory lives in strikingly close proximity to one another. Proximity, however, does not necessarily breed familiarity or exchange. Beyond the exception of al-Biruni's remarkable eleventh-century account and analysis of the beliefs and practices of the inhabitants of al Hind, where he presented Puranic notions of time and space, there is no formal acknowledgement—or, for that matter, any readily discernible unstated influence and interaction—between the two historiographical traditions. Sanskrit court literatures, for example, show at first little change or perturbation with the appearance of Persianate culture in northern India in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Muslims, designated by a variety of conventional ethonyms (*mleccha*, *turuṣka*, *yavana*), are simply juxtaposed with local dynasties in the quest for wealth and supremacy and pass entirely without comment.[44] Even in the *Pṛthivīrājavijaya*, the Chāhamāna king Pṛthivīrāja III, identified with Rāma, vies with the king of the *mlecchas* to obtain the Goddess of Fortune. Persian narratives place the Hindu into well-worn tropes which, despite their use by nationalist historians to prove Islamic depredations, may be based on well-established convention rather than on-the-ground interaction. There are different ways of reading this ideological and historiographical situation. An earlier generation of nationalist-era historians read these narratives as part of a clash of civilizations during India's 'medieval' period, manifested in one formulation as a conflict of epic historiographies of 'conquest' and 'resistance'.[45]

More recent work, however, has suggested quite the opposite, that the representation of new realities within the established conventions of Sanskritic and Persianate historiography should be seen as an interactive 'translation' or assimilation of political cultures rather than confirmation of their fundamental incommensurability. These seamless assimilations, however, were not without more transformative interactions in practice. The re-use of pillars to memorialize conquests and exhibit mastery over the past by the Delhi sultans was likely the appropriation of an indigenous practice, just as the adoption of certain dress styles by the Vijayanagara kings in the fifteenth century was an adoption of

[44] See B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims* (Oxford, 1998).

[45] Aziz Ahmad, 'Epic and Counter-Epic in Medieval India', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 83:4 (1963), 470–6.

Persianate court protocol.[46] This wider transformation of both Muslim and Hindu elite cultures into a multi-centred, shifting, and hierarchical array of commensurable practices and representations—aspects of a single, complex ecumene—is a gradual but inexorable process beginning from the fourteenth century. At the level of historical writing, such transformations are palpable from the fifteenth century, when bardic and courtly narrative traditions in western India, interact to create new martial identities defined in relation to an imperial Muslim centre.[47] A careful study of such texts undermines the older bifurcation into epics of 'conquest' and 'resistance' and demonstrates a far more complex historiographical palette as we move into early modern times in South Asia.[48]

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

606–47	Reign of Harṣa, king of Kanauj
630–43	Hsuan Tsang visits India
712	Arab armies under the Umayyads conquer Sindh
800	Rāṣṭrakūṭa conquest of northern India
973	Chālukyas of Kalyani defeat the Raṣṭrakūṭas of Malkhed
1000–26	Mahmud of Ghazni launches successive raids into northern India
1010	Chola king Rājarāja completes the great temple at Tanjavur
1148	The poet Kalhaṇa of Kashmir writes the *Rājataraṅginī*
1192	Pṛthivīrāja Chauhan is defeated by Muhammad of Ghur
1206	Delhi Sultanate founded by the former slave Qutb-uddin Aibak
1290	Khaljis come to power in Delhi
1298	Marco Polo visits India
1310	Armies of Alauddin Khalji conquer kingdoms of South India
1320	Tughluqs come to power in Delhi
1336	Vijayanagara Empire founded
1347	Foundation of the Bahmani Sultanate in the Deccan
1398	Timur sacks Delhi

[46] See Finbarr Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval Hindu–Muslim Encounter* (Princeton, NJ, 2009), 246–55; and Philip Wagoner, '"A Sultan among Hindu Kings": Dress, Titles, and the Islamicization of Hindu Culture at Vijayanagara', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 55:4 (1996), 851–80.

[47] See Ramya Sreenivasan, 'Alauddin Khalji Remembered: Conquest, Gender and Community in Medieval Rajput Narratives', *Studies in History*, 18:2 (2002), 275–96.

[48] For a critique and revision of this thesis see Michael Bednar, 'Conquest and Resistance in Context: A Historiographical Reading of Sanskrit and Persian Battle Narratives', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2007. See also Romila Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of History* (Delhi, 2004). For South India see Cynthia Talbot, 'Inscribing the Other: Inscribing the Self; Hindu–Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37:4 (1995), 692–722; and Philip Wagoner, 'Harihara, Bukka and the Sultan: The Delhi Sultanate in the Political Imagination of Vijayanagara', in David Gilmartin and Bruce Lawrence (eds.), *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia* (Tallahassee, 2000), 300–26.

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Chapter 5

Kingship, Time, and Space: Historiography in Southeast Asia

John K. Whitmore

Writings dealing with the past were reconfigurations of time and space as the writers sought to provide and construct some definition of the reality in which they existed. For Southeast Asia, these centuries show us little in the way of what we might call written history. Nevertheless, there do exist scattered patterns, in time and space, throughout the region that brought the past into the present. While a certain 'present-ness', or focus on the 'now', seems to have been a defining characteristic across Southeast Asia,[1] especially in this early period, the past did crop up for certain specific purposes, and it is on these instances that I shall focus.

The topic of Southeast Asian historiography in these ten centuries divides itself neatly into three fairly clear categories that progress through this period. First and foremost, there was the epigraphy, materials carved mainly into stone (but also metal). These were the main surviving forms of writing for almost all the classical polities that emerged in the region from the seventh century on. In much of the region, these writings tended to disappear in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The second category consisted of writings on paper (or other materials like palm leaves) from the royal courts of two specific regions, eastern Java (the area that would become known as Majapahit in the fourteenth century) and northern Vietnam (the realm of Đại Việt) during the centuries from the eleventh through the fourteenth. In these two courts, we see scholars of different ideologies composing texts for their kings. Finally, at the end of the period considered here, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as the international trade routes brought and reinforced universal ideologies (Islam and Theravāda Buddhism) deeper into the region, the island world for the former, the mainland for the latter, localities began to write their own histories and to integrate these histories into the grand cosmic schemes of these religions.

[1] O. W. Wolters, 'Southeast Asia as a Southeast Asian Field of Study', *Indonesia*, 58 (1994), 3.

EPIGRAPHY

The inscriptions in this early era across Southeast Asia tended toward the moment, recording specific acts (temple dedications, land endowments, etc.) and looking toward the future, not the past. While these stones and metal plates gradually themselves became markers of the past as the years progressed, they rarely commented specifically on what had gone before the circumstances they marked. Yet, on occasion, these compositions reached back in the form of genealogies, royal or ministerial, meant to explain and legitimize the current situation. Like histories, these genealogies were composed and constructed to present certain realities.

The genealogies of Angkor (in present day Cambodia) reflect these tendencies. They were not common and provide information that can be confusing, particularly when measured by standard European (or Chinese) ideas of what succession should have been. Michael Vickery has examined the inscriptions holding such information and compared that of the Angkorean period (ninth–twelfth centuries) with what we know of the pre-Angkorean age (seventh–eighth centuries), there being almost no fit between the two eras.[2] While much effort and explanation has been made in trying to make the two ages cohere, Vickery indicates that this is futile. Each age had its own logic, and they barely matched. Making sense of the information provided in the inscriptions requires determining their purposes, and these were not to make direct links from the later centuries back to the earlier. Instead, the authors of these inscriptions constructed genealogies stretching into the past in such a way as to grant legitimacy to their kings and ministers.

This process began in what is now Cambodia during the seventh and eighth centuries. By the second half of the seventh, inscriptions had begun to list aristocratic and royal predecessors. A few decades later, in the early eighth century, a genealogy appeared going back to the divine/mythic origin tale of the Brahman Kaundinya and the Naga (Serpent) Princess Soma. In this early period, some seventeen genealogies exist that show succession, often via female connections. They seem to show a shift from maternal succession of chieftainships (*pon*) to a paternal succession of more regional lords (*mratan*). Essentially, in royal terms, these inscriptions were reaching back for both distant divine and more immediate human legitimacy via both female and male lines.

What appears to have happened was a growing competition among royal/aristocratic factions as the generations went by. Jayavarman II (r. 802–34), seen as the first great Angkorean ruler (in the early ninth century), began the establishment of this empire, yet his patrilineal descendants seem not to have followed him. The

[2] Michael Vickery, 'Some Remarks on Early State Formation in Cambodia', in David G. Marr and Anthony C. Milner (eds.), *Southeast Asia in the Ninth to Fourteenth Centuries* (Singapore, 1986), 102–11; and Vickery, *Society, Economics, and Politics in Pre-Angkor Cambodia* (Tokyo, 1998), 260–70.

rules of succession are little understood, but, aside from pure power, they seem to have involved female as well as male relationships, and the purpose was to construct a deeper genealogy than one's predecessors or rivals. On the one hand, in 947–8, this meant developing the mythology going back to the Rishi Kambu and Mara, the mating of Indic and indigenous lines in the far past. More specifically, it involved capping the immediate biological line at a deeper/higher point than earlier rulers had done. The ancestors, particularly the ultimate ancestor, became markers of status for the royal line. Where the successions seem to slide horizontally along the kinship chart (with tensions from father–son vertical claims), the genealogies boosted each king's claim by going deeper into the past and higher on the ascendants' structure via both male and female connections.

Thus, Indravarman (r. 877–89) ignored his immediate predecessors and strove for 'a more ancient lineage' than theirs (in Vickery's phrase).[3] His successor and son, Yasovarman (r. 889–900), then had a genealogy constructed that peaked a generation earlier/higher than his rivals, descendants of Jayavarman II. Rajendravarman (r. 944–68), half a century later, proceeded to 'increas[e] the pyramidal distance', pushing the apical ancestor back and increasing the genealogical complexities. In Vickery's words, 'pyramidal genealogies of increasing height were constructed in order to establish precedence over contemporaries'.[4]

These royal genealogies may be checked by examining those of ministerial families with their own kinship links to the royal families. Put together for different purposes, marking their own status, these inscriptions provide a corrective to the royal claims and allow us to see how the latter were operating to outdistance rival (and related) families with such claims. As the kings and their successors took the throne, they would rework the genealogies in their favour and deepen/heighten them. Later Angkorean kings like Suryavarman I (r. 1002–50) could speak of the Kamvuvamsa (line of Kambu) and the succession up to themselves. Such would continue to develop until the last great ruler Jayavarman VII (r. 1181–1218) as innovations in this line continued to emerge.

Vickery's work is the most detailed we have on epigraphy and genealogy across Southeast Asia in these early centuries. Other parts of the region can be used for comparison. Moving to the east, we encounter the interrelated situation of Champa (now central Vietnam) which, over the centuries, interacted strongly, and in parallel ways, with the Cambodian scene. Champa's genealogies differed among themselves in time and space.[5] Ruling over a number of varied regions, the kings of Champa had different locations and ideologies of legitimacy. The first generations were in the north (Amaravati, near present day Đà Nẵng). Here,

[3] Vickery, 'Some Remarks on Early State Formation in Cambodia', 104.

[4] Ibid., 106.

[5] R. C. Majumdar, *Champa: History and Culture of an Indian Colonial Kingdom in the Far East, 2nd–16th Century A.D.* (1928; Delhi, 1985), 35–7, 40, 42, 45, 46, 56–60, 62–5, 93, 96–101, 113, 123. Individual inscriptions (Ins.) are given by number in parentheses in the main text.

in the sixth, seventh, and early eighth centuries (Ins. 7, 9, 12, 20), the kings saw themselves linked to Ganga (Goddess of the holy river Ganges), with specific Brahman/Ksatriya connections involving both male and female lines. In the mid-seventh century (Ins. 12), one connection via a sister's grandson was the Khmer throne and its link back to Kaundinya and Soma, so the rulers of Champa were aware of the Khmer genealogy of the time and perhaps also sought to compete with them on such grounds.

Through a good portion of the eighth and ninth centuries, the power shifted to the south (Panduranga, near Phan Rang), and no genealogies have been found in the inscriptions there. In 875, 909, and 911, again in Amaravati to the north and at both Saivite and Buddhist institutions, inscriptions (Ins. 31, 39, 42, 43) show a genealogy differing from that of Ganga. This one went back to the Great God (Mahadeva) who sent Bhrgu to Champa, and the latter's son Uroja, 'king of the world', led to the king's ascendants. Yet the inscription (Ins. 31) stresses that the king, through his own ascetic efforts 'of many previous births', gained the throne on his own, 'not given by the grandfather or the father'. Perhaps it was this king, Indravarman (r. 875–*c.*898), descended from local lords, who brought the power over Champa back to Amaravati, becoming a 'maharajadhiraja' or king of kings. In the genealogy, Indravarman substituted the divine names of Bhrgu and Uroja for two kings of the earlier Ganga line, thus literally lifting his line above theirs and placing Mahadeva at the apex of the action. Ministers and their female connections to past royalty are mentioned prominently, and such genealogies probably cemented the relations among the ruling class.

The mid-twelfth century shows an interesting twist on genealogy as legitimacy. Inscriptions of 1140 and 1143 (Ins. 69, 71) reached back in time not through kingship but by means of previous lives, that is, reincarnations. Indravarman in the above inscription of 875 (Ins. 31) had claimed that his merit gained in earlier existences had brought him to the throne, not his immediate ancestors. Here Jaya Indravarman III (r. 1139–45) intimated that, having been king thrice already (including the above mythic Uroja), he was now justifiably king once more, and he made the statement in both north (Amaravati) and south (Kauthara). Not by virtue of past generations, but by dint of his own spiritual essence across the generations was he on the throne of Champa. (Prior experience did count!) Perhaps lacking legitimate ancestry himself, he put aside biological genealogy for this spiritual progression as the avatar of the god Uroja throughout the history of Champa. The following ruler, Jaya Harivarman I (r. 1149–66) in his inscriptions of the 1150s (Ins. 72, 74) too claimed to be an avatar of Uroja, this also the fourth time as king for him, but he capped this claim by noting his immediate royal ancestors, their Brahman and Ksatriya status, and in particular Paramabodhisatva (a Buddhist figure), 'the supreme king'. Here, though, it was his own great victories over the Khmer armies of Angkor, their mountain allies, and the Vietnamese that counted the most.

Much of this fighting took place in Vijaya, in the central region of Champa, which had connections with Angkor. After the Khmer domination of Champa in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, it was Vijaya that emerged as the new dominant region of Champa.[6] The post-Khmer rulers kept their genealogy (Ins. 94–5) to the hard and fast immediate ancestors, grandfather, father, and younger brother, each 'a great king of kings'. A final inscription (Ins. 112) in the following century and in the south also spoke just of the king's immediate family.

To the west lay Pagan (now Burma/Myanmar), and there the inscriptions too had genealogies for royal legitimacy.[7] This empire emerged later, founded by Aniruddha (r. 1044–77), and its kings would first bring order to competitive chaos, then declare their links to the original cosmic ruler, Mahasammata, who had been the first to bring order out of the cosmic chaos. (Kyanzittha [r. 1084–1111] and Narapatisithu [r. 1173–1210] are known to have done so.) They thus justified the violence required for their own ascension to the throne. While the emphasis on *kamma* (karma) meant an individual's merit could override kin-based succession, lineage still counted. The royal court worked hard to consolidate the descent of the line of Mahasammata, marrying the eldest princess to her (half) brother the heir apparent. As in Cambodia, this line included the union of the cosmic solar male and the *naga* (serpent) female that was re-enacted with each royal pair. The resulting single genealogy was thus maintained and adjusted to fit the political realities (i.e. different patterns of actual succession). From the mid-twelfth century, at the centre of each succession stood the chief queen and her eldest daughter. Descent from the former, but more particularly marriage to the latter, provided legitimacy and maintained the royal genealogy.

Thus, in Pagan, there existed the one genealogy, unlike the competing genealogies (and reincarnations) of Angkor and Champa. In Java, at first central (Mataram), then eastern (Majapahit), there were no genealogies, rather an emphasis on territorial integration, space rather than time. Jan Wisseman Christie flatly stated, 'No Javanese king committed his genealogy to stone in the manner of those in Cambodia [or Champa or Burma], or mentioned in his inscriptions, by way of affirming his legitimacy, his relationship with his predecessors.'[8] There was one early king list (early tenth century) in central Java, but it was only that, with no claims of relationship. What counted was the ability to bring and hold

[6] John K. Whitmore, 'The Last Great King of Classical Southeast Asia: "Che Bong Nga" and Fourteenth-Century Champa', in Tran Ky Phuong and Bruce M. Lockhart (eds.), *The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society, and Art* (Singapore, 2011), 168–203.

[7] Michael Aung-Thwin, *Pagan: The Origins of Modern Burma* (Honolulu, 1985), 10, 57, 63–4, 153–9, 237.

[8] Jan Wisseman Christie, 'Negara, Mandala, and Despotic State: Images of Early Java', in Marr and Milner (eds.), *Southeast Asia in the Ninth to Fourteenth Centuries*, 73–6, at 73; and Boechari, 'Epigraphy and Indonesian Historiography', in Soedjatmoko *et al.* (eds.), *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography* (Ithaca, 1965), 36–73.

together the varied territories, the individual's *sakti* (ascetic power). Very presentist, the inscriptions of Java recorded specific events, especially as regards landholdings. Another king list (1041) of east Java became much more fundamental as it spoke of the disintegration of central power and its resuscitation in battle by the new ruler Airlangga (r. 1016–45). This event would, implicitly or explicitly, form the historical background in succeeding centuries. Overall, the emphasis in the inscriptions of Java tended to be, not the ascendants (the ancestors) but the descendants (the progeny), the future rather than the past.

In general, it was space rather than time that was central in east Java. The glory of royalty over the land grew in the inscriptions, and Airlangga was seen as 'the umbrella over the *maṇḍala* of the island of Java'.[9] From their base *bhumi* (land) at the core of their power, the kings worked to extend their protection (shade) over Yavadwipa *maṇḍala*. Keeping it all together was the main royal aim. Where the genealogies tended to be pushed back in time, in Java the writings may have tended to push outward and to be integrative in space, implying the passage of such through time and associated with past kings.

COURT WRITINGS

Apart from the scattered inscriptions cited above, only two royal courts, those of east Java and northern Vietnam, are known to have produced relatively extensive writings. These writings provide different approaches to the pasts of their respective regions, approaches that reflected the kinds of uses of the past seen in the inscriptions.

In east Java, the central fact, explicit and implicit, was the unification of the realm by Airlangga in the eleventh century mentioned in the inscription noted above and that king's subsequent division of his realm for his two sons upon his death. This dividing of the realm would haunt the Javanese court writings for the next three centuries. Their stress would be on the effort to integrate this territory, both geographically and socially. As with the inscriptions in Java, space more than time was their focus, though the past acts of Airlangga always remained the backdrop for their descriptions.

In examining the Old Javanese *kakawin*, poetic literature of east Java from the eleventh century to the fourteenth, we see the localization of Indian epic works, especially the *Mahābhārata*.[10] From the beginning, around the year AD 1000, there were royal recitations of these epics. Then, in the age of Airlangga, following his great victory and unification of the kingdom, the poet Kanwa composed

[9] Christie, 'Negara, Mandala, and Despotic State', 74.

[10] Kenneth R. Hall, 'Traditions of Knowledge in Old Javanese Literature, c.1000–1500', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (*JSEAS*), 36:1 (2005), 1–27; and Tony Day, *Fluid Iron: State Formation in Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, 2002), 64–5, 180, 197–9, 207–9, 236–53.

the *Arjunawiwaha* [Marriage of Arjuna] to celebrate the event. This text described how in defeat Arjuna gained *sakti* on a mountain and with the aid of the gods returned to victory and his realm. The tale emphasized social (male/female) integration and, with it, the landscape of Java. From his spiritual and physical victory, he brought proper order to human life and integration to both the natural and the social worlds. Such was the duty and the goal of the east Javanese ruler, to protect and maintain the realm/world. Arjuna's/Airlangga's achievement was, through this *sakti*, to unite the natural and the supernatural realms, to put aside division. The poetic language employed brought space and time, landscape and human action, into alignment and, through the ritual power of recitation, illustrated land and society as they should be. The text embodied the succession of the Javanese kings.

Yet Airlangga had divided his realm for his sons and had set the stage for the nightmare of the later centuries. This ancestral duality had to be solved. The passage of the *Arjunawiwaha* through time served both as a reminder of and as the means to resolve it. To be Viṣṇu, the maintainer/resolver, was the goal. One hundred years later, in the mid-twelfth century, came the *Bhāratayuddha* [Wars of the Bhāratas] by two poets, first Sedah, then Panuluh. Derived as well from the *Mahābhārata* of India, this text too dealt with the integration of natural landscape and social court, putting aside the potential for division. Its symbol was the garden—nature integrated with the social and providing fulfilment for all. King and queen working together in a controlled and disciplined manner ensured this and thereby brought protection to the realm. Thus came the desired unity of the land.

This theme of countering the potential for division culminated two centuries later in the great east Javanese kingdom of Majapahit. This realm was built on a dichotomy, the rich agricultural hinterland with its temples and the wealthy international commerce that flourished in this age with east Java as a major node in the trading network. Here we have the *Parthayajna* [Book of the Forest] which set up the *Arjunawiwaha* of three centuries earlier. At its centre were Arjuna and his ascetic union of human and divine as he took upon himself the protection of the world. His travels to the mountain were a procession through Java, and his victory the denial of its division. Going beyond the eleventh-century text, this work combined kingly victory with the proper ritual practice as taught by a sage to achieve this aim. Here hero and ritual specialist, in the form of the king and his grandfather, joined in gaining this union.

There followed, through the 1360s and 1370s, two major texts further demonstrating this theme, the great *Nāgarakrtāgama* or *Désawarnana* [The Description of the Regions] of Prapanca and the *Arjunawijaya* [Arjuna's Victory] of Tantular, both composed by poets for their ruler Hayam Wuruk (r. 1350–89). Written as invocations of Viṣṇu, these works sought union with Him and to bring His protection over the unity of the realm. 'World Maintainer' contested 'World Destroyer' with the aid of 'World Renouncer' and won by the strength of his union with his queen. Again the king progressed through (maintained) his realm

and witnessed its prosperity and that of its temples. Thus was the authority of the throne established, in harmony with his priest and his queen—it could not be divided. Lurking behind this was Airlangga, his initial victory and his subsequent division of the realm, as well as the potential for competition and split among brothers or royal wives backed by their aristocratic families.

Where the *Arjunawijaya* portrayed the king and his realm through a mythic and cosmic tale, the *Nāgarakrtāgama* was a description of the actual king, Hayam Wuruk, and his progress through his physical kingdom. At one point, the poet spoke of a temple on the spot where Airlangga had split the kingdom and where, three centuries later, the king's grandmother had had ritual performed to reunite it. Marked by unity, stability, and prosperity, Majapahit as spatially portrayed herein was the culmination of the centuries long effort to harmonize the landscape, the temples, the society, and the court of Java. Yet, as the mythic texts continued to point out, behind this glorious union always lay the human possibility of contestation and division.

This argument reached its ultimate statement in the *Sutasoma* [Prince Sutasoma] (a later work by Tantular, author of the *Arjunawijaya*). Focusing on the Tantric ritual fusion of Siva and the Buddha, Hindu and Buddhist, he constructed a mystic maṇḍala that overlay the realm, overcame obstacles, and ensured unity. The king portrayed here bound together past, present, and future, protected the cosmos, guarded the *dharma* (truth), and was the *cakravartin*, the Universal Ruler, who embodied the maṇḍala of Java. As in the inscriptions of Champa, he was the latest reincarnation of Vairocana, Lord of the World, with his queen a part of the unified flow of past into future. Embodied too in this flow from past to future was the royal line of Majapahit via both male and female links over the previous one hundred years and into the future (which turned out not to be the case).

These beliefs of time and space had their embodiment in stone as well as in text during the fourteenth century. Candis (temples) like Surawana, Jago, and Panataran around east Java told tales in their bas-reliefs very similar to those of the *candi bahasa* (temples of language), that is, the *kakawin*, noted above.[11] Illustrating the *Arjunawiwaha* and the *Parthayajna*, the bas-reliefs at the Surawana and Jago temples projected the image of the king and his ascetic *sakti* gained through Tantric rites in mythic form maintaining the unity of the maṇḍala, while those at Candi Panataran from just before Hayam Wuruk's reign pictured the *Rāmānya* and the potentiality of division and chaos, echoed in a scene at Candi Surawana.

And this potentiality became reality in short order as Majapahit fell back into conflict early in the fifteenth century. The dichotomy of agriculture and commerce, inland and coastal, would lead to further division. The continued emphasis

[11] See also Peter Worsley, 'Narrative Bas Reliefs at Candi Surawana', in Marr and Milner (eds.), *Southeast Asia in the Ninth to Fourteenth Centuries*, 335–67.

on spatial integration against the temporal theme of disintegration remained a basic truth in the Javanese courts. Not even the magnificence of Majapahit could escape that threat.

The court of Đại Việt, on the other hand, focused on the temporal more than on the spatial. Like the inscriptions of Angkor, Champa, and Pagan, the court and its writers pursued legitimacy through time and succession, each dynasty pushing the origin of the land further back in time. To be noted here was the strong influence of China, for almost a millennium the overlord of this territory, now Đại Việt. Though not dominating, this close link continued to offer the Vietnamese options not open to the other realms of Southeast Asia. In particular, from the early eleventh century, the sinic patrilineal dynastic model became increasingly attractive to the Vietnamese ruling class and so, differing from the other realms of the region, male lineages (clans) dominated the court of Thăng Long (now Hanoi).[12]

Late in the eleventh century, there appeared the *Báo Cực Truyện* [Records on Declaring the Unfathomable], of which we have only fragments, mainly from a fourteenth-century text, the *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* [Compilation of the Departed Spirits in the Realm of Việt].[13] What we know of the eleventh-century text indicates an effort to draw from the past in order to create a model of Buddhist kingship linked strongly to local spiritual powers. Apparently written by a Buddhist scholar, this work connected the founding kings of the Lý dynasty (1009–1225) who ruled through the middle of the eleventh century with earlier perceived 'rulers'. The first of these 'rulers' was the local Chinese official of the late Han dynasty of China, Shi Xie, known to later Vietnamese as Sĩ Vương (King Sĩ). He and his family kept northern Vietnam stable and prosperous, within an international Buddhist milieu, as the Han dynasty crumbled to the north. King Sĩ's spirit was then said to have appeared before another powerful Chinese official in Tang times, Gao Pian (for the Vietnamese, Cao Vương, King Cao). This ninth-century figure saved the northern lowlands from highland invasion. These two 'kings', together with powerful local spirits, provided the indigenous essence carried on by the local kings as the latter formed the realm of Đại Việt and its capital of Thăng Long. Firmly rooted in the Sino-Vietnamese past political and religious power, both Buddhist and indigenous, and in the new central location, this text helped to create a tradition of kingship for the new monarchy as the temporal came to include the spatial, the territorial integration.

After the first three Lý rulers and their establishment of the monarchy of Đại Việt, with its now established historical tradition, the fourth Lý ruler, Nhân-tông

[12] O. W. Wolters, 'Lê Văn Hưu's Treatment of Lý Thần Tôn's Reign (1127–1137)', in C. D. Cowan and Wolters (eds.), *Southeast Asian History and Historiography* (Ithaca, 1976), 203–26.

[13] Keith W. Taylor, 'Authority and Legitimacy in Eleventh-Century Vietnam', in Marr and Milner (eds.), *Southeast Asia in the Ninth to Fourteenth Centuries*, 143–5, 156–61; Olga Dror, *Cult, Culture, and Authority: Princess Liễu Hạnh in Vietnamese History* (Honolulu, 2007), 14–17.

(r. 1072–1127), and the Queen Mother brought their developing Thiền (in Chinese, Chan; in Japanese, Zen) beliefs out of the private royal palace into the public royal court. This stronger Buddhist monarchy added a new historical trend to the existing one, linking Đại Việt to the succession of master and disciple monks who had passed the *dharma* along from the Shakyamuni Buddha both directly from India and via monks in China to Thăng Long. The Vietnamese monk Thông Biện composed the *Chiếu Đối Lực* [Collated Biographies (of Buddhist Monks)] to encompass this new tradition of the past, preserved in the fourteenth-century *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh* [Compendium of Outstanding Figures of the Thiền Garden].[14]

Thereafter, power shifted into the hands of queen mothers, their families (local powers), and court ministers. The twelfth-century text, *Sử Ký* [Historical Record] (title taken from the famous Han dynasty text, the *Shiji* [Records of the Scribe] by Sima Qian),[15] reflected these changes in power. Again known only from scattered fragments, also mainly from the *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* of the fourteenth-century, it was written by Đỗ Thiện, a court figure in the first half of the century. In it, he stressed the roles of those assisting the rulers, rather than the rulers themselves, and his patron was undoubtedly a powerful minister like his contemporary kinsman Đỗ Anh Vũ. Looking back into the eleventh century, Đỗ Thiện selected key supporting figures, historical and spiritual, who helped maintain the realm and thereby underwrote the role of the powerful court figure in his own time.

At the same time, literati voices had begun to appear outside (and contesting) the royal court. Probably from the growing coastal region (and its Chinese population), these voices surfaced in the following century as the new coastal (and Chinese descended) Trần dynasty took over control of the capital and the realm. First (most likely in the first half of the thirteenth century), there was the *Việt Chí* [Record of Việt] by Trần Phố, though we know little of it. It was probably the initial compilation of the record of the (now deposed) Lý dynasty and might well have brought in the external commentary of the previous century. Finally, in 1272, there came the official chronicle of the new dynasty, covering the history of their land up to the end of the Lý (in Chinese fashion, though the Vietnamese selected the chronicle form of Sima Guang's *Zizhi Tongjian* [The Comprehensive Mirror of Aid in Government] over the topical approach of Sima Qian's *Shiji*). The author was a coastal scholar named Lê Văn Hưu, and he set the intellectual pattern of the

[14] John K. Whitmore, 'Why Did Lê Văn Thịnh Revolt? Buddhism and Political Integration in Early Twelfth Century Đại Việt', in Kenneth R. Hall (ed.), *The Growth of Non-Western Cities, Primary and Secondary Urban Networking, c. 900–1900* (Lanham, MD, 2011), 113–31.

[15] Taylor, 'Authority and Legitimacy in Eleventh-Century Vietnam', 165–7; Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley, 1983), 151 n, 308, 318, 319, 342–3, 354; and Taylor, 'Voices Within and Without: Tales From Stone and Paper about Đỗ Anh Vũ', in Taylor and John K. Whitmore (eds.), *Essays Into Vietnamese Pasts* (Ithaca, 1995), 75.

new age.[16] In his *Đại Việt Sử Ký* [Historical Annals of Đại Việt], Hưu both pushed the beginning of the realm's history back from the late Han dynasty (*c.* AD 200) to the beginning of that dynasty (*c.*200 BC) and made the crux of Đại Việt's monarchy the defence of 'the South' against 'the North' at a time of great threat from the Mongols. In particular, he began his chronicle with the Chinese southern overlord of the second century BC, Zhao Tuo (for the Vietnamese, Triệu Đà), who embodied just this southern resistance. Hưu also praised Sĩ Vương and Cao Vương, stressing their defence and maintenance of the realm against both northern and western threats. Thus, while the Trần royal family was heavily sinic and brought the scholars much more solidly into play, their stance as seen in this chronicle was strongly against imperial Chinese influence in their land. Yet Hưu also railed in no uncertain terms against the culture of their predecessors, the Lý: too soft, too lenient, not structured enough, improper, ignorant. The Buddhism and the indigenous patterns of the earlier age should not have been tolerated, and Chinese knowledge and values, especially the patrilineal, should have been stronger.

From the beginning of the fourteenth century, the ideological tide turned as a strong effort began in the court of Đại Việt to bring the varied segments of the land together by means of a Buddhist orthodoxy. This orthodoxy was that of the Thiền school of the local Trúc-lâm (Bamboo Grove) sect. Strongly aristocratic and royal, the throne of Đại Việt, from the late thirteenth century through the first third of the fourteenth, picked up the late eleventh-century Buddhist construct of Thông Biện and worked to integrate the many varied forms of Buddhism in the localities across the land into a single body of thought protected by the spiritual powers of the land. The Trần ruler, Minh-tông, as seen in his poetry, strongly advocated the 'oneness' (*dharmadhatu*) of the cosmos and of the land. The text of 1329, written by a Buddhist archivist, Lý Tế Xuyên, the *Việt Điện U Linh Tập*, described efficacious spirit cults from the past that successfully protected the throne, the realm, and the religion. In particular, the Buddhist text of 1337, the *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh*, worked to bring the scattered and varied elements of Vietnamese Buddhism from past centuries into a coherent Thiền whole that emphasized the 'oneness' of the belief system and of the realm and which supported the monarchy, not unlike the *Satisoma* of Java. Again, the throne of

[16] Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, 144 n. 270–1, 282–4, 316, 334, 351–2; Taylor, 'Voices Within and Without', 71–8; Taylor, 'Looking Behind the Vietnamese Annals: Lý Phật Mã and Lý Nhật Tôn in the *Việt Sử Lược* and the *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư*', *Vietnam Forum*, 7 (1986), 49–63; Wolters, 'Lê Văn Hưu's Treatment of Lý Thần Tôn's Reign (1127–1137)'; Wolters, 'Historians and Emperors in Vietnam and China: Comments Arising Out of Lê Văn Hưu's History, Presented to the Trần Court in 1272', in Anthony Reid and David Marr (eds.), *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia* (Singapore, 1979), 69–89; John K. Whitmore, 'The Vietnamese Scholar's Views of His Country's Early History', in Kenneth R. Hall and Whitmore (eds.), *Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History* (Ann Arbor, 1976), 194–7; Whitmore, 'The Rise of the Coast: Trade, State, and Culture in Early Đại Việt', *JSEAS*, 37:1 (2006), 114–19; and Yu Insun, 'Lê Văn Hưu and Ngô Sĩ Liên: A Comparison of Their Perception of Vietnamese History', in Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony Reid (eds.), *Việt Nam: Borderless Histories* (Madison, 2006), 45–71.

Đại Việt used a past that went back through time to India and the Buddha via master/disciple transmission.[17]

Even as the throne and the aristocracy of Đại Việt were striving to integrate their land through the focus of the Thiền Buddhism of the Trúc-lâm school, scholars from the coastal region, led by an esteemed teacher, Chu Văn An, advocated for classical Chinese learning and a deep past. In doing so, they rejected the timelessness and present orientation of the Trúc-lâm school. There was a need, in the increasingly dire circumstances, to hark back to antiquity, first Chinese, then Vietnamese, in order to reform their society. Emphasizing schools and the Chinese classics, these scholars urged the throne to make changes in the government along sinic lines. The throne responded, in Trần fashion, by stressing the separation of North and South, denigrating the ideas of the 'pale students'. Yet, increasingly in the growing turmoil of the fourteenth century, the court became open to the scholars. This was particularly the case as Champa dominated and almost destroyed Đại Việt over a twenty-year period (1370–90).

The resulting civilizational crisis led to a reformulation of Vietnamese myth and conception of the past. Simultaneously, a new political force arose, this from the South, in the form of the powerful minister Lê Quý Ly, also of Chinese descent. The political and historiographical forces would develop in tandem and create a new pattern of legitimacy for the ruler of Đại Việt. Now the historical pattern went way back before Triệu Đà and the second century BC to engage Chinese classical Antiquity thousands of years earlier. Linking itself directly to Chinese myth as an equal to the North, the new Vietnamese history, as seen in the *Lĩnh Nam Trích Quái* [Strange Tales From South of the Passes] and the chronicle *Việt Sử Lược* [Historical Annals of Viet], gained confirmation from the famed Chinese hero, the Duke of Zhou, and had a centuries long succession of the eighteen Hùng kings in the land of Văn-lang. When Lê Quý Ly seized the throne in 1400, he changed his family name to Hồ, linked his genealogy to Chinese antiquity, and took a new name for his land, Đại Ngu (in Chinese, Da Yu), from that distant age.[18]

The chronicles of Đại Việt were tightly intertwined with the claims of legitimacy of their dynasties, the Lý, the Trần, and the Hồ, and expressed important elements of their ideology, first Buddhism, then classical Chinese thought. They also reflected the geographical base of each dynasty, first upriver, then coastal. Each chose a particular starting point for the chronicle, and each pushed this

[17] O. W. Wolters, 'Minh-tông's Poetry of Sight, Light, and Country', in Wolters, *Two Essays on Đại-Việt in the Fourteenth Century* (New Haven, 1988), 54–164; Keith W. Taylor, 'Notes on the *Việt Điện U Linh Tập*', *Vietnam Forum*, 8 (1986), 26–59; Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, 352–54; Dror, *Cult, Culture, and Authority*, 14–30; and Cuong Tu Nguyen, *Zen in Medieval Vietnam*: *A Study and Translation of the* Thiên Uyển Tập Anh (Honolulu, 1997).

[18] Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* 351, 354–7; Taylor, 'Looking Behind the Vietnamese Annals'; Dror, *Cult, Culture, and Authority*, 21–9; and John K. Whitmore, *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming, 1371–1421* (New Haven, 1985).

point further back. There was also a changing relationship with the North (China) and its elements. The Buddhist kingship of the Lý saw an enmeshed local Sino-Vietnamese pattern. The Trần emphasized the differences between North and South and picked a figure, Triệu Đà, who embodied southern resistance to northern intrusion. Finally, the Hồ embraced the developing coastal literati tradition of a Vietnamese antiquity parallel, equal, and connected to China's.

UNIVERSAL BELIEFS AND LOCAL HISTORIES

As the court writings of Java and Vietnam developed through the fourteenth century, other patterns of historical composition were just beginning to emerge across Southeast Asia. These patterns grew out of the maritime commercial networks that had developed over the previous centuries and the ideological patterns these trade and communication routes helped to foster. Two of the routes were of particular significance in this regard. First, there was the major east–west route linking the China coast all the way to the Middle East and the Mediterranean.[19] This route had existed for over a thousand years and, with the rise of Islam, had increasingly seen Muslim merchants and others travel it. It mainly involved the island world of Southeast Asia, particularly around the Straits of Melaka. On the other hand, there was the more regional route across the Bay of Bengal that linked Sri Lanka and its Theravāda Buddhism with the mainland of Southeast Asia and especially the emerging Tai polities (*muang*) there.

These developments occurred as, in both the islands and the mainland, the great classical empires (Angkor, Pagan, Majapahit) weakened and came to an end. Across the island world, local ports emerged to contest the control of trade by Srivijaya on Sumatra and Majapahit on Java. Increasingly, beginning with Samudra/Pasai in northern Sumatra, these local and competing ports adopted Islam, both to further their commercial ambitions and to consolidate power over their growing realms. On the mainland, the rise of localities in place of the imperial control, especially the Tai principalities, adopted Theravāda Buddhism both as a link to the outside world and, as in the islands, to consolidate internal authority and legitimacy. In both cases, there slowly began to appear chronicles that told the local story within the universal context of the particular religion. This both enhanced the local authority and made it part of the greater world, indeed of the cosmos.

While we do not know of any such texts, in either tradition, extant before 1400, those that came just after reflected the roots of such thought developing in the earlier period. For the island world, there was the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* [Story of the Kings of Pasai] from the area of northern Sumatra where the first

[19] Stewart Gordon, *When Asia Was the World* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007).

known development of indigenous Islam appeared.[20] Though this chronicle of the region of Samudra/Pasai was completed in the fifteenth century (and is the earliest known Malay chronicle), it seems to reflect the historiographical origins in the previous century. The chronicle showed Samudra/Pasai emerging out of the broad context of Majapahit's farflung power and influence and within the competitive Straits region, among other local powers. The early theme of this text was the development of local indigenous authority by the ruler of the region based on his accumulation of status and magical capacity linked to genealogy and his ancestors. This capacity then led to the drawing power of his port and, with it, increased wealth and regional influence. This, in turn, brought the port and the ruler into the world of trade and Islam. With the magical conversion of the ruler, indigenous and foreign, internal and external blended to place Samudra/Pasai at once in a key position locally and within the dynamic temporal and spatial sweep of Muslim belief and power, solidly within the *umma*.

The purpose of the historiographical developments rising out of the fourteenth century was to create this sense of locality and community as a part, a focal point, of the powerful cosmic world religion. It brought together the local society in a formal hierarchy of status, sanctity, and power centred on the ruler, his court, and his ritual. Such tales and writing served to form the community ruled by the king. In like manner, in texts written in the highland valleys of the northern mainland, we again see the localization of a universal religion and the connection in time and space of the locality with the cosmic reach of that religion. Here, instead of Islam and Mecca, it was Theravāda Buddhism and Sri Lanka. In the localities and the Tai principalities of these northern mountain valleys, texts now referred to as *tamnan* (tales) sprang up to legitimize their existence and their rulers.[21]

As with the port text discussed above, these *muang* texts were specifically concerned with indigenous practice, universal religion, and lists of their rulers. The *muang* emerged locally, as their origin myths portrayed, but existed within the cosmic time and space of Theravāda Buddhism, being linked to the Shakyamuni Buddha (or even to earlier Buddhas) and to the South Asian subcontinent, birthplace of Buddhism. The immediate histories of the *muang* were seen in their succession of rulers (*chao muang*). The acts of these men joined the local and the universal, the *muang* and the Buddha. Chronicles from Chieng Mai/Lan Na (in

[20] Kenneth R. Hall, 'Upstream and Downstream Unification in Southeast Asia's First Islamic Polity: The Changing Sense of Community in the Fifteenth Century *Hikayat Raja Raja Pasai* Court Chronicle', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 44:2 (2001), 198–229; A. Teeuw, '*Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* and *Sejarah Melayu*', in John Bastin and R. Roolvink (eds.), *Malayan and Indonesian Studies* (Oxford, 1964), 222–34; and A. H. Hill, 'The Chronicles of the Kings of Pasai', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 33:2 (1960), 1–215.

[21] David K. Wyatt, 'Chronicle Traditions in Thai Historiography', in Wyatt, *Studies in Thai History* (1976; Bangkok, 1994), 3–16; Wyatt, 'Southeast Asia "Inside Out" 1300–1800: A Perspective From the Interior', in Victor Lieberman (ed.), *Beyond Binary Histories* (Ann Arbor, 1999), 246–54; and Charnvit Kasetsiri, 'Thai Historiography from Ancient Times to the Modern Period', in Reid and Marr (eds.), *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, 156–60, 170, 419.

present northern Thailand) early on showed this pattern coming out of the fourteenth century and reflecting the culture and values of that early age. In particular, the *Tamnan Phun Muang Chieng Mai* [Chieng Mai Chronicle] detailed the formation of that *muang* with its local spirit cults and its link to Indian concepts of kingship and legitimacy in competition with other *muang* in the immediate vicinity (as Semudra/Pasai was with other ports). Personal leadership and tactics were the initially important aspects of the rather level hierarchy of the time. All this became increasingly connected with the rising Theravāda Buddhism throughout the mountain *muang*. Linked strongly to Sri Lanka, this Buddhism came to form the broader temporal and spatial context of the locality in the chronicles.

All these patterns of writings on the past, from the genealogies of the inscriptions to the court compositions of eastern Java and northern Vietnam to the emerging local, yet universal, chronicles of the island ports and the mountain *muang*, would set the stage for the much greater historical compilations of the early modern age of Southeast Asia. As increasingly powerful states rose from the collapse of the classical empires, and as writing and literacy spread, the royal courts would need such interpretations and confirmations of their rule and their realms. The early beginnings briefly described here would grow into more detailed texts in a much greater variety of competing courts that would gradually merge into the dominant states of the region and their majestic historical traditions.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

6th–8th cent.	Capital of Champa based in north (Amaravati)
7th–10th cent.	Central Java (Mataram) is base of royal power
8th–9th cent.	Centre of Champa shifts to south (Pandaranga)
802	Jayavarman II shifts Khmer capital west to Angkor region
889	Yasovarman establishes Khmer capital at Angkor
9th–12th cent.	Centre of Champa returns north (Amaravati)
1002–50	Suryvarman I extends Khmer Empire to west
1010	Lý Thái-tổ establishes Đại Việt capital at Thăng Long (Hanoi)
1016	Airlangga unites Javanese royal power in the east of the island (divides it in 1045)
1044	Aniruddha establishes Pagan kingdom in Burma/Myanmar
1181–1218	Jayavarman VII extends Khmer Empire east
12th–15th cent.	Champa royal power based in centre (Vijaya)
1225	Coastal Trần family takes throne in Đại Việt
Late 13th cent.	Establishment in Chieng Mai/Lan Na of Theravāda Buddhist realm (northern Thailand); founding of Pasai, first Islamic polity of Southeast Asia in northern Sumatra
1293	Majapahit kingdom established in east Java
1400	Hồ family takes throne of Đại Việt

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Chapter 6

The Tradition of Historical Writing in Korea

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Korea, as a fertile and mountainous peninsula on the eastern end of Eurasia, was a peripheral country to China and adapted Chinese cultural, political, economic, and diplomatic models to fit the peculiarities of the peninsula. Many of these adaptations were passed on to the Japanese islands. Detailed records on people inhabiting the Korean peninsula appear in Chinese histories from the third century AD, and from the fourth century, these people were leaving their own records. Until the mid-fifteenth century, Koreans did not develop their own script but either wrote in Chinese or adopted individual Chinese characters to write Korean. Such mastery of a radically different language also brought with it a fluency in Sinitic civilizational codes that could be used or ignored to fit local circumstances. But there is a caveat: the use of Chinese does not mean that the content always or even sometimes obeyed Chinese historiographical and social norms. Purposeful violation of those norms offered the peoples on the Korean peninsula the room to develop their own identity, and this is our theme. Our historiographical survey ranges from the fourth century to the fifteenth century and spans the period of the Three Kingdoms (Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla, fourth century–668), Unified Silla (668–935), the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392), and the beginning of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910).

To offer an exhaustive survey would be impossible, primarily because we are unable to discuss the books and records we do not have but know existed. 'Old records' and other such titles litter the texts we discuss below, but war and time have deprived us of their existence. We have selected four, extant, famous texts—an epigraphy, two official histories, and one private history—that will illustrate the central theme of using the codes of a regionally hegemonic, Chinese culture to record the local history of the Korean peninsula. The first text, King Kwanggaet'o stele (AD 414), is one of the most famous epigraphic records composed by the peninsular peoples and describes international politics between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese islands. The second text, *Samguk sagi* [Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms] (1145/6), is the oldest, extant, official and comprehensive history from the peninsula; the third, *Samguk yusa* [Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms] (*c.* late thirteenth century), is the oldest,

extant, unofficial and comprehensive history from the peninsula; and the fourth text, *Koryŏsa* [History of the Koryŏ Dynasty], is an official history of the period 918 to 1392 produced in 1451 that offers a foil to these earlier texts and a point of departure for a new historical identity.

EPIGRAPHY: KING KWANGGAET'O STELE

The peninsula is rich in epigraphic records that range from the early fifth century through to the twentieth century. In a land that sits atop major outcroppings of granite, epigraphy was difficult, but practiced extensively and hewn in resilient stone. Extant examples include boundary stones for fields, biographies of individuals, both lay and ecclesiastical, inscribed on stone, and mobile inscriptions on bronze bells. Particularly famous pieces include the King Kwanggaet'o stele[1] of the Koguryŏ kingdom (traditionally 37 BC to final destruction in AD 668) in the north and the stele on Mount Pukhansan near modern-day Seoul erected by King Chinhŭng of Silla (traditionally 58 BC–AD 935) in the south around AD 555.[2] Other epigraphic pieces include a large number of bells that have been preserved in Japan and attest to the elaborate contact and trade that existed between the peninsula and the islands from antiquity.

The Kwanggaet'o stele stands over six metres tall with inscriptions carved on its four sides and is located just across the Yalu River in what is now China. From the early third century to the early fifth century, the site was the second capital of the kingdom of Koguryŏ and is today a UNESCO World Heritage site. From 427, the capital was moved to P'yŏngyang. At its height under King Kwanggaet'o (r. 391–413) and two of his heirs, the kingdom's boundaries stretched north to Harbin (perhaps as far as the Amur River), west to Liaotung, east to the sea, and south into the peninsula to beyond modern-day Seoul. The stele was erected in 414 by King Kwanggaet'o's son to commemorate his father. Its text has three parts and is perhaps the oldest extant biography composed by peninsular peoples. The first part relates the foundation myth of the royal line from the immaculate conception of a hero (King Ch'umo) in deep antiquity down to King Kwanggaet'o. A quasi-historical figure and one of the earliest rulers claimed in later centuries to be a 'founder' of a 'Korean' kingdom, King Ch'umo was known in textual sources as Chumong or Tongmyŏng. The most famous Korean piece of writing in this regard is the *Tongmyŏng'wang p'yŏn* [Lay of King

[1] Also known as the Hot'ae wangbi. The stele is a 30 ton rectangular slab of granite 6.4 metres tall, about 6.3 metres in girth, and is engraved on four sides in 1,802 classical Chinese characters. See Takeda Yukio (ed.), *Kōkaito ōhi genseki takubon* (Tokyo, 1988), for a collection of rubbings of the stele's characters.

[2] The stele is commonly known as the *Silla Chinhŭng-wang sunsubi* or the 'stele [recording] the inspection and hunting trip of King Chinhŭng of Silla'. The contents relate tax relief that the king distributed, but the stele is taken as an indicator of the extent of the kingdom to the north-west.

Tongmyŏng] (1193) by Yi Kyubo.[3] The immaculate conception and the hero's exploits also appear in a Chinese history, the *Hou Hanshu* [History of the Later Han], also fifth century.

The second part relates the military exploits of King Kwanggaet'o and describes campaigns to the north and the south. The first and most important incident that triggered the campaigns to the south was the invasion and reduction of formerly subordinate states in the south-east (Silla) and south-west (Paekche, traditionally 18 BC–AD 660) in AD 391 by aggressors (Wae) thought to originate from the Japanese islands. There follow a series of successful campaigns to repel these invaders. The third and final part is a list of land grants to the grave-keepers so that they will protect and tend the king's tomb, a large, stepped, pyramid tomb nearby.

The Koguryŏ kingdom, which reached its geographic height under King Kwanggaet'o and his sons in the early fifth century, was the first state of any significance in Northeast Asia constructed in part by peninsular peoples and holds pride of place as the earliest 'Korean' kingdom of any importance.[4] The significance of the text extends far beyond the peninsula. Late nineteenth-century Japanese historians assumed that the invaders of 391 were from the Japanese islands and that they had been sent by a central, political authority, having formed itself in the Kansai area with sufficient strength to launch foreign invasions and that this political authority was the ancestor of the modern-day Japanese imperial line. With the dates of the invasion specified by this independent source on the Korean peninsula, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japanese historians thought that they could establish a chronology for the formation of the nascent Japanese state.

Perhaps of greater significance for people on the Korean peninsula and in the Japanese islands developing concepts of kingship and legitimacy in the absence of Chinese-style, unified and bureaucratic states was the origin and style of kingship exhibited in the foundation myth recorded on the stone stele. King Ch'umo (Chumong or Tongmyŏng) was the product of a union of heaven and earth and possessed powers to control the natural world in addition to horsemanship and skill with the bow. This theme of semi-divine or divine origin characterizes all

[3] See Richard Rutt (trans.), 'The Lay of King Tongmyŏng', *Korea Journal*, 13:7 (1973), 48–54.

[4] Although the peninsula was not yet unified and no 'Korea' existed—the term 'Korea' derives from the name of the Koryŏ kingdom, which derived its name from the Koguryŏ kingdom—peninsular histories from the twelfth century onwards have included Koguryŏ with other peninsular kingdoms. From 2003–4, a controversy erupted in the South Korean press over allegations that Chinese state-employed historians were claiming Koguryŏ as an ancient 'Chinese' state. Public outcry in South Korea resulted in the establishment of state-financed institutes to establish the 'Koreanness' of Koguryŏ, and the issue reached diplomatic circles, where it occasionally still arises in summit meetings between the South Korean president and Chinese leaders. See Mark Byington, 'The War of Words between South Korea and China Over an Ancient Kingdom: Why Both Sides Are Misguided', *History News Network*, 6 Sept. 2004, http://hnn.us/articles/7077.html (accessed on 14 Feb. 2011).

other foundation myths on the peninsula and is the central theme of the Japanese foundation myth as well. Although transcendence and mediation had characterized ancient Chinese kingship,[5] from the establishment of the Zhou dynasty (traditionally 1134–250 BC) onwards, rulers were theoretically held accountable for their rule and Chinese political legitimacy came to rely increasingly on the concept of Heaven extending recognition through the Mandate of Heaven. Not until medieval times in Korea's Koryŏ period, when Confucian philosophy was actively deployed by the state to legitimize rule, did more secular notions of kingship displace the semi-divine nature of kingship on the peninsula. In the multiple foundation myths on the peninsula and the central foundation myth in the islands, the leader was a 'great man', with qualities beyond the mortal realm. That vision of kingship came down through oral transmission among the peoples of Northeast Asia, and its earliest recording is in the descent myth on the Kwanggaet'o stele.

While the Kwanggaet'o stele holds an extraordinary position in Korean epigraphy, it was lost from as early as perhaps the seventh century to the late nineteenth century, and while it played no direct role in the development of Korean historical consciousness until modern times, the vision of semi-divine kingship expressed on the stele permeated the region from antiquity. In modern times, the stele figured prominently in scholarly justifications for Japanese imperialism on the Korean peninsula. In the 1880s, it was rediscovered by a Japanese military spy operating in southern Manchuria who bought a rubbing from a local Chinese man catering to the antiquities market. The rubbing was brought back to Tokyo, where the 391 invasion was used to help Japanese historians establish a chronology of the earliest Japanese state, as mentioned above. More significantly, the 391 invasion was used by jingoistic Japanese imperialists as 'proof' of ancient Japanese control of large parts of the Korean peninsula, an ancient Japanese control that should be re-established. Japan did seize Korea and possessed it as a colony from 1910 to 1945. After 1945, postcolonial Korean historiography felt the necessity to take the pre-war jingoistic claims seriously and tried to counter them, even to the extent of alleging that the stele was forged by the Japanese military. No evidence has been provided to demonstrate wilful tampering and scholars in Japan and Korea have rejected the allegation.[6]

[5] For a discussion of the shamanic origins of Chinese kingship see Julia Ching, *Mysticism and Kingship in China: The Heart of Chinese Wisdom* (Cambridge, 1997); and Ching, *Chinese Religions* (Basingstoke, 1993).

[6] For views that represent the consensus among Japanese and Korean scholars see the online publications by the Japan-Korea Cultural Foundation, http://www.jkcf.or.jp/history/first/report1.html for papers by Hamada Kōsaku and Kim T'aeshik (accessed on 14 Feb. 2011). For a broad discussion of the issues of ancient Korean history within twentieth-century Japanese imperial and Korean nationalist discourses see Hyung Il Pai, *Constructing 'Korean' Origins: A Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theories* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000).

SAMGUK SAGI

The *Samguk sagi* (1145 or 1146) or 'Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms', is the oldest extant formal history from the Korean peninsula.[7] Earlier epigraphic records such as the Kwanggaet'o stele can offer a royal biography and a glimpse of international relations from the point of view of one state, but the *Samguk sagi* succeeds in setting out a comprehensive history of the entire peninsula from the multiple viewpoints of the three earliest Korean kingdoms. The records begin from their mythical founding dates (Silla 58 BC, Koguryŏ 37 BC, Paekche 18 BC) through the peninsular unification by Silla in the 660s and 670s,[8] to the end of Silla in 936. The *Samguk sagi*'s fourteen or so compilers were literate, cosmopolitan men of the twelfth century, officials of the Koryŏ dynasty, steeped in Chinese historiographic principles, and led by a great statesman who served three kings, Kim Pusik. Their model was the *Shiji* [Records of the Scribe] (109–91 BC) by Sima Qian, which established the standard historiographical template for all of East Asia. By employing the *Shiji*, they sought to record peninsular views and define a peninsular identity in a historical format that would be universally understandable to anyone operating within the Sinic culture sphere. The *Samguk sagi* is laid out in fifty fascicles that include the standard components of a Chinese history: twenty-eight fascicles are devoted to annals that record events by year for each of the three kingdoms (*pon'gi*), three fascicles of chronological tables list royal events, nine fascicles of treatises describe government offices, sumptuary regulations on transport and housing, rituals, and gazetteers, and ten fascicles record biographies of important political figures.[9]

Classical Chinese historiographical imperatives eschew overt ideological arguments in favour of recording political events that allow a moral analytical dissection of motivations, decisions, actions, and results. Analysis and occasional commentary (thirty-one instances in the *Samguk sagi*) are devoted to explicating moral lessons, which can provide political leaders with exemplary and condemnatory acts. Praise-and-blame offered guides and advice to the king, his ministers, and his government.

The characteristic trait of the *Samguk sagi* is its multiplicity of narratives (three narratives of three kingdoms) that promote historical contingency, ambiguities, and contradictions over ideological unity. The same event can occasionally be followed in all three narratives, although sometimes the paucity of extant material

[7] The oldest, complete, extant texts are woodblock prints that date from 1512 and are the possession of Mr Yi Pyŏng'ik and the Oksan sŏwŏn (Oksan Academy).

[8] For a study of the wars of unification see John C. Jamieson, 'The *Samguk Sagi* and the Unification Wars', Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1969.

[9] Edward J. Shultz, 'An Introduction to the *Samguk Sagi*', *Korean Studies*, 28 (2005), 1–13. See also 'The *Samguk Sagi* Translation Project', ongoing at the University of Hawai'i (http://www2.hawaii.edu/~dkane/Samguk.htm).

seems to have forced the compilers to do no more than reverse the perspective of a single narrative. Later ideologues from the beginning of the fifteenth century and the early twentieth century criticize the *Samguk sagi* for its multiplicities and ambiguities presented in a pragmatic and classically Confucian framework. Kwŏn Kŭn attacks it from a neo-Confucian perspective for its assumption that contingencies shape reality. Neo-Confucian ideologues in Korea around 1400 were attempting to construct a new, utopian reality based on a condemnation of Buddhism. They sought to unify political and ritual life around the monism of neo-Confucianism. Whereas classical Confucianism focused on behaviour, neo-Confucianism apotheosized purity of individual thought, because individual thought was linked to metaphysical reality and thereby carried enormous responsibility for the welfare of society and even the wider world. They wanted to deny contingency and establish ideological will as the key shaper of reality. Unity and purity were violated by the *Samguk sagi*'s comprehensive plural vision and the text became the target of critical attack.[10]

Similarly, Sin Ch'aeho, in the twentieth century, laboured to purge Japanese colonial, indeed all foreign, influence and to achieve a purity of Korean identity, in part, by denouncing the *Samguk sagi* for its Sino-centrism. Shin argued that the *Samguk sagi* robs Koreans of their identity, because the compilers relied too much on Chinese sources and adopted Sino-centric views. Sino-centrism is clear in the rational, Confucian concern with domestic and international political history at the expense of native myths, ancient oral stories and poetry, and tales of Buddhist piety that characterize the more 'authentic' *Samguk yusa*. By producing a Chinese history *manqué*, Kim Pusik and his colleagues sacrificed native traditions to subservience to China and its cultural norms. Ironically, neo-Confucian critics such as Kwŏn Kŭn had criticized the *Samguk sagi* centuries earlier for its *lèse majesté* in using terms for Korean kings that were reserved for the Chinese emperor. The valency in the twentieth century of Sin's charge that the *Samguk sagi* toadied to Chinese norms derives from the Korean loss of sovereignty to Japan from 1905 or 1910 to 1945. This blow to national pride drove Shin's crusade to retrieve and purify an ideal Korean identity. The nationalist concern with a pure Korean identity is understandable given the cultural genocide perpetrated on Koreans under Japanese colonial rule, but the nationalist concern obfuscates what is really there in the *Samguk sagi*.

In truth, the *Samguk sagi* does not purge all mythology, and the text repeatedly emphasizes the need to record and consider multiple histories produced on the Korean peninsula. Despite the inclusionary approach, the text is almost entirely concerned with the political and institutional lives of ruling elites. There are few peasants and little mention of the lower classes. Women do appear when they are

[10] See Remco E. Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918–1170* (Leiden, 2010), 317–49; and Breuker, 'Writing History in Koryŏ: Some Early Koryŏ Works Reconsidered', *Korean Histories*, 2:1 (2010), 57–84 (www.koreanhistories.org).

political actors or the wives and mothers of political actors. Heritages and traditions with unique peninsular origins figure prominently in an attempt to fulfil that age-old role of political history—provide political legitimacy to the ruling house—and to provide members of the Koryŏ elite with models of how to maintain and strengthen themselves and how to defend the kingdom against outside pressure.[11] This is history as political and social guide. Its multiplicity of origins and views reflected the Koryŏ-era complexity of the twelfth century.

SAMGUK YUSA

Commonly translated as 'Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms',[12] the *Samguk yusa* is a compilation of records and accounts that collectively present wide-ranging information broadly related to secular and Buddhist history focusing on the Korean Three Kingdoms period. The work's authorship has been attributed to the Sŏn (Zen) Buddhist master, Iryŏn, and the date of compilation has been widely associated with the time of King Ch'ungnyŏl's reign (r. 1274–1308) in the Koryŏ period. The authorship and date of production were not firmly established until the early twentieth century when Korean scholars such as Ch'oe Namsŏn designated Iryŏn as the main compiler. Ch'oe's argument was largely based on the fact that Iryŏn's full official title and name as the 'author' is indicated at the head of fascicle five.[13] Given this indication and the inclusion of a great number of Buddhist-related materials in the *Samguk yusa*, Ch'oe's conjecture has appeared reasonable, and has remained the firmly accepted view among modern-day Korean academic circles.

There are a number of different surviving editions of the *Samguk yusa* in xylographic or typographic formats: old woodblock print, Imshin (1512) type, facsimile, and modern typeset editions.[14] Among the woodblock prints, the

[11] Shultz, 'An Introduction to the *Samguk Sagi*', 8–9.

[12] While this is the translation most widely used, there have been some alternative suggestions including 'Additional Material on the Three Kingdoms'. See Keith Pratt and Richard Rutt, with additional material by James Hoare, *Korea: A Historical and Cultural Dictionary* (Richmond, 1999), 400–1; and 'Remnants of the Three Kingdoms', in David McCann, *Early Korean Literature* (New York, 2000), 15.

[13] By way of making sense as to why Iryŏn's name only appears in this section and not others, Ch'oe speculates that the author's name was probably indicated at the beginning of each and every fascicle or section but then omitted later for unknown reasons. Without questioning otherwise, he then provides Iryŏn's biographical information based on his epitaph, the original content of which is included (in Ch'oe's modern typeset version) just after his introduction. See the section on 'the author' (*ch'anja*) in Ch'oe Namsŏn, 'Samguk yusa haeje', in *Chŭngbo Samguk yusa* (1954; repr. edn, Seoul, 1990), 4–7.

[14] For lists of different editions see Chungang Sŭngga Taehak Pulgyosahak Yŏn'guso, *Chŭngbo Samguk yusa yŏn'gu nonjŏ mongnok* (Seoul, 1995), 13–16; and Ha Chŏngnyong, *Samguk yusa saryo pip'an* (Seoul, 2005), 38–60. For details related to each edition and a close comparative study of the language and content between different editions see the first chapter of ibid., 33–150.

Table 6.1. Ch'oe Namsŏn's fascicle and section division of the *Samguk yusa*

Fascicle I	1. Wangnyŏk	王曆	Royal chronology	tables
	2. Ki'i	紀異	Records and anomalies or	36 accounts
Fascicle II	Ki'i [continued]		Recording anomalies	23 accounts
Fascicle III	3. Hŭngbŏp	興法	Rise of Buddhism	6 accounts
	4. T'apsang	塔像	Pagodas and Buddhist relics	31 accounts
Fascicle IV	5. Ŭihae	義解	Hagiographies	14 accounts
Fascicle V	6. Shinju	神呪	Divine incantations	3 accounts
	7. Kamt'ong	感通	Spiritual response and communion	10 accounts
	8. P'iŭn	避隱	Seclusion/Reclusive monks	10 accounts
	9. Hyosŏn	孝善	Filial piety and virtue	5 accounts

Imshin type editions are the earliest extant 'complete' versions, on which the majority of facsimile reprints and modern typeset varieties produced and distributed in the twentieth century have been based. While there are some inconsistent features in the surviving 'complete' edition, the work consists of a dynastic chronology (Wangnyŏk) followed by 138 topical accounts grouped together under eight (out of nine total) sections, which are divided over five fascicles. Rectifying the inconsistent elements,[15] Ch'oe Namsŏn offered a model of fascicle and section division, which has come to be widely accepted and applied as the 'standard' format in modern times (see Table 6.1).[16] The fascicles are broadly thematic, and each section embodies particular themes that are represented by numerous accounts.

The collection begins with Wangnyŏk (Royal chronology), which is an annotated chronological table that outlines by reigning year the names of rulers of early Chinese kingdoms, the Korean Three Kingdoms of Paekche, Koguryŏ, and Silla, the Kingdom of Karak, unified Silla, and the Later Three Kingdoms (Silla, Later Koguryŏ, and Later Paekche, 892–936). The remaining sections consist of narrative accounts. The first fascicle includes the first part of Ki'i (Recording anomalies), which begins with the mythical account of Tan'gun[17]—the legendary progenitor of the Korean people—and his founding of Old Chosŏn. There follow narratives that bring the reader up to the period before

[15] The incongruous features are: (1) Missing indicator for Fascicle I; (2) Fascicle II is indicated but with no topical heading for the items in this section; the items appear to be a continuation from, and hence, fall under *ki'i*; (3) *t'apsang* is indicated but without a numeral marker to confirm it formally as a topical heading.

[16] See Ch'oe Namsŏn, 'Samguk yusa haeje', 2–4.

[17] Although Tan'gun has been popularly regarded as the legendary progenitor of the entire Korean people from at least the mid-Koryŏ period, whether he was a historical or mythical figure has often been taken as a question. Nevertheless, state-commissioned histories such as the *Tongguk t'onggam* (1485) have identified the period of Tan'gun based on earlier records such as the *Tan'gun ki* (no longer extant) as the year of wuzhen, or the twenty-fifth year of the legendary emperor Yao, which translates into 2333 BC, and this has usually been taken in the twentieth century as the founding year of the 'Korean nation'.

King Munmu (d. 681) and Unified Silla. Fascicle two is a continuation of Ki'i, beginning with King Munmu's rise to the throne (661) leading up to the period of the Later Three Kingdoms and concluding with an account on the small, southern principality of Karak. Fascicles three and four recount events concerning relics, monks, and other matters related to Buddhism, which was introduced to the Three Kingdoms around the fourth century and came to be established as the prevalent religion by the eighth century. Although fascicles three and four do not include doctrinal teachings, each and every section deals with topics related to Buddhism. Fascicle five is an assortment of tales with underlying religious and moral themes.

The work contains records pertaining to secular and Buddhist history as well as myths, legends, hagiographies, spiritual tales, anecdotes, and local folklore. There are many entries that recount 'fantastic' stories of supernatural and unnatural events in addition to conventional historical narratives and anecdotes. The *Samguk yusa* also transmits numerous lyrical pieces including fourteen *hyangga*—songs transcribed in the obsolete language system known as *hyanggch'al*[18]—and encomiums. From the references made to Korean and Chinese sources in some accounts, we can conclude that the compiler consulted documents that were extant in his time. Where there is no reference to sources, we are left to assume that these stories were the result of the compiler's transcription of oral narratives or orally transmitted accounts.

When set against comparable texts produced in the Koryŏ and early Chosŏn periods, the organization and form of the *Samguk yusa* are relatively inconsistent, even somewhat erratic and unique.[19] There were a number of textual examples on which the compilers of the *Samguk yusa* could have drawn and there are similar miscellanies. The *Samguk sagi* follows the style and structure of Chinese standard histories, with annals, tables of royal chronologies, treatises, and biographies. The *Samguk sagi*'s overall content is focused on political or secular history; and the entries are based on pre-existing sources (Korean and foreign) on the Korean

[18] *Hyangch'al*, similar to *idu*, is a writing system that uses Chinese characters for transcription purposes to write out Korean words or sentences. The system was used, if not created, in ancient Silla. Examples of *hyangch'al* from the Three Kingdoms period are preserved only in *hyangga* poems. *Hyangch'al* is a complex system in that Chinese characters are used to represent either Sino-Korean sounds or the sounds of Korean words that have the same meaning as the characters but without any consistent rule with regard to when to use which sound (Sino-Korean or Korean). The limited number of extant examples has frustrated modern scholars in their attempts to establish consistent rules of usage. For a brief description on *hyangch'al* and *idu* see Pratt and Rutt, *Korea: A Historical and Cultural Dictionary*, 180.

[19] The Japanese text known as the *Konjaku-monogatari shū* (*c.*1120, author unknown) is one of the most comparable works to the *Samguk yusa* as it engages with both Buddhist and secular history. But unlike the *Samguk yusa*, the *Konjaku-monogatari* follows a systematic format, thereby clearly presenting and emphasizing a central theme—the impact, importance, and assimilation of the Buddhist religion to secular life. See Marian Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past: Konjaku-monogatari* (Berkeley, 1979); and Bernard Frank (trans. and intro.), *Histoires qui sont maintenant du passé (Konjaku-monogatari shū)* (Paris, 1968).

Three Kingdoms period.[20] Although only extant in part, the *Haedong Kosŭng chŏn* [Lives of Eminent Korean Monks] (*c.*1215) is comparable to other traditions of Chinese Buddhist hagiographies, and the surviving sections (the first two chapters) are arranged methodically with a focus on Buddhist monks and traditions.[21] Yi Sŭnghyu's *Chewang un'gi* [Rhymed Chronicles of Emperors and Kings] (1287) is a chronicle of emperors and kings entirely composed in verse form, beginning with Chinese rulers but mainly dealing with Korean rulers and traditions in chronological order. It is comparable to other works of narrative verse, including Yi Kyubo's *Tongmyŏng'wang p'yŏn* [Lay of King Tongmyŏng] (1193).[22] Works that have come to be known as 'miscellanies' such as Yi Illo's *P'ahan chip* [Collection of Writings to Relieve Idleness] (1214), Ch'oe Cha's *Pohan chip* [Collection of Supplementary Writings to Relieve Idleness] (1254), and Yi Chehyŏn's *Ikchae chip* [Collected Works of Ikchae] (*c.*1342) may not be orderly in form and content, but they all equally consist of anecdotal accounts and personal ruminations based on various personal episodes and matters contemporaneous to the author—the very titles of these works suggest that they were written by the authors for their own amusement or as expressions of 'rambling' thoughts.

Compared to these contemporaneous works, the *Samguk yusa* stands out as a unique text that brings together the various different forms and themes usually treated exclusively or separately in other works. For example, 'Ko Chosŏn' (Ancient Chosŏn), the very first narrative entry of the *Samguk yusa*, combines different styles of narrative (mythical and historiographical) and involves the fusion of the heavenly and the worldly, or spiritual and human realities. As we read on, the interweaving of rational Confucian historiographical discourse with mythical narratives or anomaly accounts are detectable throughout the text. Moreover, Buddhist material and elements appear in increasing numbers and gradually replace secular history accounts; political figures are gradually replaced by religious ones; and commoners begin to emerge as principal actors in an increasing number of entries. The pattern of displacement, however, is not necessarily consistent or schematic as such. Historiographical discourse is more commonly found in the first sections (Ki'i or Recording anomalies) than in other

[20] See Shultz, 'An Introduction to the *Samguk Sagi*', 1–13; Kenneth Gardiner, '*Samguk Sagi* and its Sources', *Papers on Far Eastern History*, 2 (1970), 1–41; and Jonathan W. Best, *A History of the Early Korean Kingdom of Paekche* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006).

[21] The first chapter consists of a brief introductory narrative ('subordinate biography') on the founding of Buddhism and its transmission in Korea followed by hagiographical accounts of eight eminent monks in Korea (three Koguryŏ, two Silla, and three of foreign origin); and the second chapter is on Silla monks who went abroad (China or India). For a concise discussion on textual history and how the *Haedong Kosŭng chŏn* compares with similar Chinese textual traditions see Peter H. Lee, *Lives of Eminent Korean Monks: The* Haedong Kosŭng Chŏn (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 1–7.

[22] For further information on the *Chewang un'gi*, the *Tongmyŏng'wang p'yŏn*, and other historical narrative verse forms produced in the Koryŏ period see Kim Kŏn'gon *et al.*, *Koryŏ sidae yŏksasi yŏn'gu* (Sŏngnam, 1999).

sections, but even then it appears sporadically; and while increasingly less visible in later sections, it still reappears on occasion.

In spite of the work's irregular structural scheme as a text, there are some major themes that are consistently identifiable. The general themes can be designated as socio-political or secular history, Buddhist history, and popular history.[23] The *Samguk yusa* begins with a depiction of secular history that encompasses a wide range of details pertaining to the court, society, and culture. Subsequently, it illustrates Buddhist history that conveys the role of Buddhism as a state religion and its characteristics as an esoteric belief system. Finally, the book concludes with sections that collectively portray popular history or common worldviews and the ways in which they affected people's lives. By treating the political, religious, and social realms, the book provides a comprehensive view of the past that includes wide-ranging aspects of human life.

However, the *Samguk yusa* does not conform to the established conventions of 'historiography' accepted at the time of its writing. It was not a court-decreed compilation; its chapter division and organization do not correspond to forms customary around the time of its production; and while many sections of the work were based on earlier sources, some of the sources used have been regarded as questionable, especially those that were written by people other than members of a legitimate political establishment. Moreover, the work lacks a preface and its authorship and original date of production have been (and to some extent still are) open to different interpretations. Criteria for valuation can differ by period; but given the unswerving appreciation of 'facts' by Korean historians of both traditional and modern schools, the *Samguk yusa*'s inclusion of numerous fantastic stories has often rendered the work unacceptable as a history. In the Chosŏn period, the anomaly accounts that constitute a large proportion of the work's content were deemed to deviate from neo-Confucianist notions of 'truth' and moral imperatives, for which the *Samguk yusa* was criticized. It was often omitted from official bibliographies and regarded by the literati readership as an unorthodox text full of fallacious narratives.[24]

In the twentieth century, the fact that the work is one of only two surviving works (the other being the *Samguk sagi*) that contain records and historical information related to the Three Kingdoms period has meant that the *Samguk yusa* attracts considerable attention and has been used as a historical source. Though received with much interest and even considered a national treasure of sorts, the *Samguk yusa*'s anomalous accounts have presented problems for historians. Some historians have disregarded these narratives altogether while others

[23] The term 'history' is used loosely to refer to all events that are recorded *as having occurred* rather than in relation to 'historicity' that would involve the question of whether or not these events *actually occurred in real life*.

[24] Examples can be found in a number of prominent official compilations including the *Samguksa chŏryo* (1476), *Tongguk t'onggam*, *Sinjŭng Togguk yŏji sŭngnam* (1530), and *Tongsa kangmok* (1778).

have re-evaluated their function as *a historical method intended by the author*, thereby legitimating them as a historical method for persuasive ends.[25] But the text offers much for those in search of authentic Koreana.

Modern scholars often take for granted that the *Samguk yusa* is an important historical as well as literary text of sorts, but what is often overlooked is the phenomenon of the work's re-emergence in modern times as a Korean 'foundational text'—placed at the centre of the national imaginary. Since its first dissemination, the *Samguk yusa* has exercised a continuous and almost uninterrupted appeal. Many Koreans over centuries have consulted it as a repository of the historical imaginary of Korean history. How it has been used to construct historical imaginaries can reveal the ideological constructs behind its varying interpretations over different periods. Both pre-modern and modern studies on the *Samguk yusa* reveal not only the readers' interpretations of the internal features and authorial strategies of the text, but also the external conventions and ideologies of their community, which inspire and motivate ideologically driven interpretative acts achieved through certain principles of selection and explanation. It is these principles of selection and explanation that create and assign meaning and significance to a text. These principles raise the question of historical method, which essentially predetermine or prioritize or dismiss the value of the work as a historical document.

At this juncture, we should consider the idea that the boundaries between 'orthodox' and 'unorthodox', or between 'fact' and 'fiction' are often determined by cultural conventions rather than by anything intrinsic to these categories. The *Samguk yusa* was criticized by historians of the succeeding Chosŏn period and not recognized as an orthodox history, but modern scholars of the twentieth century and later view the text as exemplifying a certain historical 'truth' that encompasses many different levels of human experience. Its inclusion of historical narratives and accounts, annotations that intimate at objectivity and documentation of historical references all indicate that the compiler(s) intended to write history. But the text does not merely recount 'what happened'—it explores and interprets common perceptions, inclinations, and beliefs of people in earlier times. Moreover, it helps us see how these were experienced and how they were manifest in past human existence. Instead of following conventional interpretations and forms, the work combines different historical and literary discourses to represent the different layers of unformulated ascriptions and provenances that dictate human life. For example, aetiological tales and stories relating customs provide us with information on cultural aspects of a society. Or, while the book does not

[25] Some examples include Yi Kibaek, *Han'guk kojŏn yŏn'gu—Samguk yusa wa Koryŏsa pyŏngji* (Seoul, 2004); Kim Sanghyŏn, 'Samguk yusa e nat'anan Iryŏn ŭi pulgyo sagwan', *Han'guksa yŏn'gu*, 20 (1978), 244–5; Kim T'aeyŏng, 'Samguk yusa e poi'nŭn Iryŏn ŭi yŏksa insik e taehayŏ', in Yi Usŏng and Kang Man'gil (eds.), *Han'guk ŭi yŏksa insik (sang)* (Seoul, 1976), 175–95; and Pak Chint'ae *et al.*, *Samguk yusa ŭi chonghapchŏk yŏn'gu* (Seoul, 2002).

represent a singular literary genre, it includes many of the categorical groups of literary writing including songs and poetry, encomiums, and treatises. Its portrayal of the prominent force of Buddhism and the intervention of the spiritual world exemplifies the spirit of a society that was heavily influenced by religious beliefs and accepted extraordinary feats as a normal part of human experience. With its integration of various thematic elements and different literary narrative forms in a single volume, it could be said that the *Samguk yusa* demonstrates a perception of the past that is supported by legendary accounts and religious beliefs, working through a conviction of the interrelatedness among human, spiritual, and cultural realities. The diverse genres and narrative forms allude to the existence of multiple realities, and the integration of 'fact' and 'fiction' exemplifies the coexistence and interconnectedness of these realities or multiple 'worlds'—this, it can be suggested, is the basis of the historical vision as exemplified by the text known as the *Samguk yusa*.

KORYŎSA

The Koryŏ period covered almost five-hundred years (918–1392), but the number of extant primary sources is extremely limited. The *Koryŏsa* or 'History of the Koryŏ Dynasty' is generally considered to be the main source for the entire period, but it is, in fact, a historical work finished in 1451 by the Chosŏn government. It is the main source of information on the Koryŏ period, because the compilers demonstrably used Koryŏ-era documents that are no longer extant. The *Koryŏsa* presents a many-faceted picture of the history of Koryŏ, focusing on the day-to-day affairs of the court and the capital, supported in later fascicles by biographies of persons of importance and separate treatises on several important themes. The *Koryŏsa* consists of forty-six fascicles of 'Hereditary houses' or records of vassal states of China (*sega*), fifty fascicles of biographies, thirty-nine fascicles of treatises, two fascicles of chronologies, and two fascicles of contents (*mongnok*) for a total of 139 fascicles.[26] It was compiled following the classical 'biographical style' format (*kijŏnch'e*) that formally centres on the ruler and his ministers as the focus of written history.

There is no complete edition extant, but by combining the extant partial editions (both in movable type and woodblock prints) a complete version has been reconstructed. Despite its important position in pre-modern Korean

[26] The edition mainly used nowadays, the best edition available, was published by Asea Munhwasa in 1972 and based on the *Ŭrhae chabon* preserved in the Kyujanggak Archives of Seoul National University (formerly the royal library of the Chosŏn state). Even so, in reconstructing the entire version, this edition did not make use of the best partial editions available and at certain places in the text the printing quality is extremely poor. See No Myŏngho, 'Kyujanggak sojang *Koryŏsa*, *Koryŏsa chŏryo*, *Koryŏ sidae munjip*', *Kyujanggak*, 25 (2002), 1–47.

historiography, a complete critical edition based on a critically reconstructed Ur-version has not yet been made.[27]

This compilation of an official history of the preceding dynasty (an imperative in East Asian political thought to establish legitimation) took unusually long—almost six decades. The delay was mainly caused by the extreme differences in culture and ideology between Koryŏ (in particular until the thirteenth century) and early Chosŏn. These differences were exacerbated by the political and ideological quarrelling of the compilers.[28] A first attempt at the compilation of a Koryŏ history was undertaken immediately after the establishment of the Chosŏn dynasty by Chŏng Tojŏn, the new state's main ideologue and philosopher. His *Koryŏ kuksa* [National History of Koryŏ] (1395) was widely criticized on several points: its removal of the terms the Koryŏ state had traditionally used to refer to itself, but which were now considered to be sacrilegious towards 'the greater state' in China; for its unashamed rewriting of generally accepted historical facts; and for the poverty of its contents. King Sejong (r. 1418–50), under whose reign the bulk of the compilation of the *Koryŏsa* was achieved, commented that 'only having nothing at all would have been worse than having this history'.[29] Sejong got his way, because the *Koryŏ kuksa* is no longer extant. The *Koryŏsa* was conceived as an official history of the preceding dynasty but without the serious flaws of its predecessor. Kim Chŏngsŏ (whose name was later struck from the record of compilers due to political complications) and Chŏng Inji led a team of assistants who compiled information, abbreviated long texts, retrieved original source materials, and wrote the historical commentaries attached to the end of each reign. Nevertheless, the *Koryŏsa* was not altogether successful in escaping the influence of the *Koryŏ kuksa*; it quoted its foreword and the historical vision of the compilers was similar.[30] In many ways, it is probably a more sophisticated, larger edition of the late fourteenth-century *Koryŏ kuksa*.

In keeping with this heritage, the *Koryŏsa* clearly shows the political and ideological preoccupations of the early Chosŏn period—more so than most other contemporaneous historical writings. To a large extent, the ideological choices made in the compilation of the *Koryŏsa* were conscious. After a long and heated debate, for instance, it was formally decided that, despite the clear incorrectness of Koryŏ's customs (and in particular the terms in which it conceived itself vis-à-vis China), they should nonetheless be recorded unaltered, adhering to the time-honoured, Confucian historiographical principle of *pujak isul* ('writing down without inventing').[31] This principle was explicitly stated in the introductory remarks to the *Koryŏsa*, but by the time the advocates of this position had

[27] No Myŏngho, 'Kyujanggak sojang *Koryŏsa*, *Koryŏsa chŏr'yo, Koryŏ sidae munjip*', 3.

[28] Pyŏn T'aesŏp, Koryŏsa *ŭi yŏn'gu* (Seoul, 1982); and No Myŏngho, '*Koryŏsa*, *Koryŏsa chŏryo*', in *Han'guk yŏksaga-wa yŏksahak*, ed. Cho Tonggŏl, Han Yŏngu, and Pak Ch'ansŭng (Seoul, 1995), 123–37.

[29] Ibid, 124.

[30] Pyŏn T'aesŏp, Koryŏsa *ŭi yŏn'gu*, 7–18.

[31] Ibid., 42–58.

won the debate, most of the references to Koryŏ as an empire and to the Koryŏ ruler as an emperor and Son of Heaven, had been removed. Cross-examination with extant epigraphic sources bears this out. For example, one obvious problem for the Chosŏn-era neo-Confucian compilers was the way the day-to-day events in Koryŏ (mainly having to do with the ruler, the capital, and the elite) were structured in the *Koryŏsa*. The compilers were keen to emphazie Chosŏn's subservience to Ming China, but Koryŏ-period historical works, such as the *Samguk sagi*, presented problems. It used the term 'basic annals' or *pon'gi* to refer to the events recorded for Silla, Paekche, and Koguryŏ or the Three Kingdoms, but the term *pon'gi* was used in Chinese histories to record the events associated with the Son of Heaven. The neo-Confucian compilers of the *Koryŏsa* could not follow this usage and record the events associated with the Koryŏ king under the category of *pon'gi*. For ideological reasons (the Chosŏn kingdom was subordinate to the Chinese emperor and the same must have been true for Koryŏ), the Chosŏn compilers were forced to give these events a place under the 'hereditary houses' or *sega*, which was the proper term for subordinate kingdoms but which instantly created a completely different impression of Koryŏ history. In this way, the text lost many of the indications that Koryŏ had been a qualitatively different society from Chosŏn and had occupied a qualitatively different position vis-à-vis China and Manchuria.[32]

A related problem was the passage of time. Koryŏ had been established five centuries before and understanding original Koryŏ source materials and condensing them into readable passages that would fit into a neo-Confucian framework proved to be a daunting task. The compilers were challenged in part by the ideological difficulty of representing Koryŏ source materials in a neo-Confucian framework, but they were also challenged by the practical difficulties of recovering a view of matters stretching back half a millennium and placing Koryŏ-period materials into their own historical context.[33]

The *Koryŏsa* includes separate treatises on astronomy, calendars, the Five Phases (fire, earth, metal, water, wood), geography, rituals, music, clothes and costumes, state examinations, the bureaucracy, the military, and the legal code, but amazingly it lacks a separate treatise on Buddhism. Buddhism's importance in the Koryŏ period and the *Koryŏsa*'s formal structure would have dictated the inclusion of a treatise on Buddhism. The omission of Buddhism is not easily explained. Even in a neo-Confucian environment such as in Chosŏn, Buddhism had continued to play an important role in social life, although it was no longer an ideology favoured by the state. The omission also offers a stark contrast with the *Yuanshi* [History of the Yuan] (1370), the official history of the Yuan dynasty, compiled by the historians of the Chinese Ming state. The compilers of the

[32] No Myŏngho, '*Koryŏsa*, *Koryŏsa chŏryo*', 123–37; and Pyŏn T'aesŏp, Koryŏsa *ŭi yŏn'gu*, 46–9.
[33] Ibid.

Koryŏsa took the *Yuanshi* as an example in many respects, but not with regard to the inclusion of a treatise on Buddhism.

The same neo-Confucian worldview that presumably precluded the compilers from including Buddhism, also rewrote Koryŏ history with regard to its state rituals. The section on rituals in the *Koryŏsa* is, in effect, an idealized version (from a neo-Confucian point of view) of Koryŏ ritual life. Although an attentive reader may still extract Koryŏ's peculiar worldview from the descriptions of state rituals in this history, the descriptions have been forced into a rigid neo-Confucian framework, which leaves little or no room for the once important Daoist state rituals. These were demoted in status and only summarily recorded.[34] Of course, the importance and the frequency of Buddhist state rituals are downplayed, and the many and varied rituals for famous landmarks such as mountains and rivers have been obfuscated.[35]

Another element that clearly exemplifies the neo-Confucian historical vision enshrined in the *Koryŏsa* is the presence of historical commentaries attached to the reign of each ruler. Parts of these commentaries were taken from the works of late Koryŏ scholars and statesmen such as Yi Chehyŏn, while others were anonymously written by the compilers. The notion of praise-and-blame historiography is strongly present in these commentaries, which reduce the entirety of events from the reigning period of a Koryŏ king to the personal qualities of that king and distribute praise and blame according to neo-Confucian political ethics.

Despite these problems, we are fortunate that the Chosŏn dynasts saw that their responsibility lay in compiling a history of the period from 918 to 1392. Due to the paucity of Koryŏ-period sources, the historiographical significance of the *Koryŏsa* can hardly be overestimated. And, despite the complications occasioned by the distortion of many original source materials, a significant amount of original source materials have survived in the *Koryŏsa*—or can be reconstructed by comparison with other (epigraphic) sources. In the end, the *Koryŏsa* is the history of the period.

Any discussion of the *Koryŏsa* should also make mention of the *Koryŏsa chŏryo* [Essentials of Koryŏ History] (1451), a contemporaneously produced official history of Koryŏ, compiled according to the 'annalistic style' in thirty-five fascicles (which consists only of annals and no biographies or treatises). Compiled by some of the same historians who had worked on the *Koryŏsa*, the *Koryŏsa chŏryo* contains a significant amount of historical information not found in the *Koryŏsa*. It was meant to function as the counterpart to the *Koryŏsa*, not only because of the complementary information it contained, but more importantly, because it was written from the point of view of the ministers and

[34] Kim Ch'ŏrung, 'Koryŏ kukka chesa ŭi ch'eje wa kŭ t'ŭkching', *Han'guksa yŏn'gu*, 118 (2002), 135–60.

[35] Hŏ Hŭngsik, '*Koryŏsa* chiriji e shillin myŏngso wa sanch'ŏn tanmyo wa ŭi kwan'gye', *Han'guksa yŏn'gu*, 117 (2002), 63–90.

bureaucrats and not the ruler.[36] Taken together the two historical works offer a vision of the Koryŏ period (and of the historiographical climate of the early Chosŏn period) unrivalled by other works. In sum, the *Koryŏsa* and the *Koryŏsa chŏryo* occupy a central place in pre-modern Korean historiography.

CONCLUSION

The four records all illustrate the development of peninsular identity vis-à-vis the regional Chinese hegemon. The Kwanggaet'o stele shows a Koguryŏ kingdom as an authority unto itself. It traced its ancestry to heaven, used its own reign names, and openly attacked Chinese states, eventually succumbing to an allied army of Chinese and Sillan soldiers in 668. The *Samguk sagi*, although clothed in the vestments of a Sinitic official history, shows a Koryŏ kingdom that considers its own heritage in the Three Kingdoms to have been nearly on a par with Imperial China. Although the compilers were happy to maintain good relations with Chinese powers, their use of language was quite unorthodox and even arrogant from a Chinese perspective. This vision of a plural and multi-polar world for the Three Kingdoms was, in part, retrospective and indicates the Koryŏ kingdom's self conception. The *Samguk yusa* takes a multi-polar vision beyond the natural world. Clearly it is a broad collection of nativist traditions and secular history and demonstrates that the Three Kingdoms and Koryŏ itself were societies steeped in Buddhism. More importantly, though, the *Samguk yusa*'s expansive view of what constitutes a record of the past spilled into aetiological, soteriological, even supernatural accounts and joined heaven and earth to present a vivid, almost unlimited imaginary space where human, spiritual, and cultural worlds all interpenetrate. Although denounced in the following Chosŏn period for its unorthodox proclivities, the *Samguk yusa* has re-emerged in the twentieth century as the fountainhead of Koreana. Finally, we looked at the *Koryŏsa*, a history prepared by neo-Confucian ideologues who attempted to contain the multiplicities, pluralities, and sheer unorthodoxies of the previous Koryŏ period by outright denial of many of its traits. The *Koryŏsa* illustrates the radical shift from open-ended tolerance to singular, monist, doctrinal conformity. To be fair, the neo-Confucians of the fifteenth century had their own vision of a proper society and state, and they were nearly confounded by the irregularities of the previous kingdom, until they realized that they could simply rewrite the past retrospectively and eliminate or obfuscate some of the more embarrassing parts. In truth, the period from 400 to the fifteenth century was an important and formative period for Korean historiography. The histories that were written from the fifteenth century onwards were previewed in the *Koryŏsa*, and they came to create a new Korea with new worldviews.

[36] Pyŏn T'aesŏp, '*Koryŏsa*, *Koryŏsa chŏryo* ŭi ch'ansu pŏmnye', *Hanguksa yŏn'gu*, 46 (1984), 49–59.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

2333–1122 BC	Tan'gun Chosŏn (legendary)
1122–194 BC	Kija Chosŏn (legendary)
194–108 BC	Wiman Chosŏn
57 BC–AD 668	Three Kingdoms period
57 BC–AD 668	Silla
37 BC–AD 668	Koguryŏ
18 BC–AD 660	Paekche
668–935	Unified Silla period
698–926	Parhae
918–1392	Koryŏ dynasty
1270–1351	Mongol rule over Korea
1392–1910	Chosŏn dynasty
1592–98	Japanese invasions
1627–37	Manchu invasions

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Chapter 7

Coptic and Ethiopic Historical Writing

Witold Witakowski

For nearly 1,700 years the Christians of Egypt and Ethiopia were closely connected by ecclesiastical bonds. The connection lasted from the time when Ethiopia's first bishop was consecrated by the Patriarch of Alexandria in the 340s, until the dependence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on the Coptic Orthodox Church ended formally in 1951. As a consequence of this long allegiance of the former Church to the latter, contacts in the cultural sphere, especially literary, developed strongly. It is consequently expedient to deal with these two historiographic traditions jointly.[1]

The term 'Coptic literature' (including historiography) does not just mean 'literature written in the Coptic language', as might be expected, but rather 'literature written by Copts'. Understood in this manner Coptic literature was written in two languages: in Coptic itself, in what was the last phase of the ancient Egyptian language, written in an original alphabet that was based on the Greek, but expanded with seven letters borrowed from the Demotic writing system to represent sounds that did not exist in Greek; and in Arabic, as after about AD 700 Coptic began to lose its position as the language of the Egyptians, who, pressed by the Arab authorities, began to use the language of the new masters of their country. The process of complete replacement of Coptic by Arabic took a couple of centuries, but in any case after about 1100 no new composition in Coptic came into being. As a spoken language it was used up until the seventeenth century. Consequently, the literature that the Copts wrote can be further subdivided into 'Coptic' *sensu strictiore* and 'Copto-Arabic'.

COPTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY IN COPTIC[2]

Historical writing does not seem to be particularly developed in Coptic literature. One might object to this by pointing to the state of preservation of Coptic

[1] No historiographic records were left by the Christian kingdoms of Nobadia, Makuria, and Alodia, which lay between the Coptic Egypt and Ethiopia.

[2] In the Saidic dialect, i.e. that of Upper Egypt.

literature that has left us with only a fraction of what was once composed, but even so, what has survived and what was subsequently written in, or translated into, Arabic, does not preserve quotations, references, or hints to compositions that might have been lost.[3] What is extant of historiography in Coptic is, moreover, rather badly preserved, so that if it were not for translations into Arabic, we would know very little of it.

Only two works can be identified: an ecclesiastical history and a universal chronicle. However, one has to bear in mind that before the origins of historical writing in Coptic, there already existed in Egypt historiography written in Greek. One work is known to have been extant, even though it has not survived except for quotations in later works of various character, historiographic (Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History*), hagiographic, and so on. The work is sometimes referred to as the *History of the Episcopacy of Alexandria*[4] or *Alexandrian (Ecclesiastical) History*.[5]

Coptic historiography in general, and the genre of ecclesiastical history in particular, began, it seems, with a translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea. It is not certain whether it was translated in full, but if that was the case, it has not survived. The only fragments of Eusebius's work that are extant (bk. 6, chs. 30, 32) are reworked, sometimes heavily,[6] and incorporated into a Coptic *Ecclesiastical History* (*EH*),[7] of which they seem to be the oldest sections. The whole, including the non-Eusebian second section, was compiled by Menas the Scribe of the White Monastery of Sohag in the fifth century.[8] Contrary to Eusebius's, the subject of the Coptic *EH* was mainly local, Alexandrian, church history, and in this respect it may have been influenced by the Greek *Alexandrian*

[3] Contrary to what is the case, for instance, in Syriac historiography, where there is relatively much information about the historiographic works that have been lost.

[4] Alberto Camplani, 'L'*Historia ecclesiastica* en copte et l'historiographie du siège épiscopal d'Alexandrie: à propos d'un passage sur Mélitios de Lycopolis', in Nathalie Bosson and Anne Boud'hors (eds.), *Actes du huitième Congrès International d'Études Coptes, Paris, 28 juin–3 juillet 2004*, vol. 2 (Leuven, 2007), 417: *Histoire d'Épiscopat d'Alexandrie*.

[5] Tito Orlandi, 'Ricerche su una storia ecclesiastica alessandrina del IV sec.', *Vetera Christianorum*, 11 (1974), 268: *storia ecclesiastica alessandrina*; and Alessandro Bausi, 'La *Collezione aksumita* canonico-liturgica', *Adamantius*, 12 (2002), 55: *Storia alessandrina*.

[6] As shown by Johannes Den Heijer, 'À propos de la traduction copte de l'*Histoire ecclésiastique* d'Eusèbe de Césarée: nouvelles remarques sur les parties perdues', in Marguerite Rassart-Debergh and Julien Ries (eds.), *Actes du IVe Congrés Copte, Louvain-la-Neuve, 5–10 septembre 1988*, vol. 2: *De la linguistique au gnosticisme* (Louvain, 1992), 185–93, on the example of the section dealing with Origenes.

[7] First published in an English translation (the Coptic text remains still unpublished) by W. E. Crum, 'Eusebius and Coptic Church Histories', *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 24 (1902), 68–84; other manuscripts were discovered and published as *Storia della chiesa di Alessandria*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Tito Orlandi (Milan, 1968–70); and Orlandi, 'Nuovi frammenti della *Historia ecclesiastica* copta', in S. F. Bondi (ed.), *Studi in onore di Edda Bresciani* (Pisa, 1985), 363–83.

[8] David W. Johnson, 'Further Remarks on the Arabic History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria', *Oriens Christianus*, 61 (1977), 114–15; the earliest manuscript fragment, preserved in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, is from the seventh century: Theofried Baumeister, 'Koptische Kirchengeschichte: zum Stand der Forschung', in Rassart-Debergh and Ries (eds.), *Actes du IVe Congrès Copte*, 117.

History, which moreover seems to have been used as a source.[9] Yet, inevitably, some sections of the Coptic deal with persons and events outside Egypt. The extant parts cover the period from Patriarch Peter (300–11) to Timothy II Ailouros (457–77).[10] The work was continued even after the fifth century (up to the 1050s) by later historians, whose names are known from various redactional notes.[11] These later parts, however, are not preserved in Coptic, but only in the Arabic translation (see below). Thus the tendency was established of continuously chronicling the history of the see of Alexandria, first in Greek, then in Coptic, and eventually in Arabic, until the modern period.

The other historiographical work in Coptic was the *Chronicle* by John, bishop of Nikiu.[12] John was the bishop of the otherwise little known see in the Delta, an island on the western main arm of the Nile. He was involved in the patriarchal election in 689, and was later, in the years 693–700, a supervisor of the monasteries of the region. He was deposed from this function for having beaten to death a monk who had raped a virgin.[13] It seems that he began to write the *Chronicle* after his forced retirement. He died probably around 700, as the *Chronicle* ends just before that date.

The work, however, has not been preserved in the original language, but only in an Ethiopic translation. Hermann Zotenberg, who published it, thought that it had been composed partly in Greek, partly in Coptic. However, Theodor Nöldeke noted vacillation between 't' and 'd' in the personal names that occur in the Ethiopic text. As such vacillation is characteristic of the Coptic language, but not of Greek, Arabic, or Ethiopic, it follows that the original must have been composed in Coptic.[14] In the thirteenth century it was translated into Arabic, in which it has not been preserved either, and later, in 1602, from Arabic into Ethiopic.

John of Nikiu's work is a universal chronicle, an account of the history of the world from the Creation up to the seventh century, covering also the Islamic conquest of Egypt. In form and style it can be associated with John Malalas's work, rather than with Eusebius's *Chronicle*: it does not have annalistic entries,

[9] Alberto Camplani, 'L'*Historia ecclesiastica* en copte et l'historiographie du siège épiscopal d'Alexandrie', 420–3.

[10] *Storia della chiesa di Alessandria*, trans. Orlandi; Orlandi, 'Nuovi frammenti della *Historia ecclesiastica* copta'; and David W. Johnson, 'Further Fragments of a Coptic History of the Church: Cambridge OR. 1699 R', *Enchoria: Zeitschrift für Demotistik und Koptologie*, 6 (1976), 7–17. There is, however, still not published material belonging to the Coptic *EH*, preserved in Cambridge University Library, and in Institut français d'archéologie orientale in Cairo: Baumeister, 'Koptische Kirchengeschichte', 117.

[11] See the list in Johannes Den Heijer, 'Coptic Historiography in the Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid and Early Mamlūk Periods', *Medieval Encounters*, 2 (1996), 74.

[12] John, Bishop of Nikiu, *Chronique de Jean évêque de Nikiou, texte éthiopien*, trans. Hermann Zotenberg (Paris, 1883); trans. R. H. Charles as *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu* (London, 1916).

[13] R. Aubert, '695. Jean, évêque monophysite de Nikiou, auteur d'une Histoire universelle (fin du VIIe siècle)', *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques*, 27 (2000), 379.

[14] Theodor Nöldeke, Review of John, Bishop of Nikiu, *Chronique*, ed. Zotenberg, *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* (1883), 1367.

nor the column structure (that are characteristic of the chronicles of Eusebian type); in fact, it hardly provides any dates. The period of primordial history is dealt with rather quickly, and then John goes on to narrate the history of Greece and Rome, showing more interest in those emperors who persecuted Christians. The sources John used were Diodore of Sicily,[15] John Malalas, John of Antioch, the *Chronicon Paschale*, Agathias, and Socrates Scholasticus for ecclesiastical affairs.[16] The most important part from the historical point of view, the famous account of the Muslim-Arab conquest of Egypt (640s), which takes up a quarter of the text, is John's original contribution.

COPTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY IN ARABIC

In Coptic historiography written in Arabic the largest and most important work is *Siyar al-biʿah al-muqaddasah* [Biographies of the Holy Church], which, however, is often referred to by the conventional title *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* (*HPA*). As was already mentioned, the Coptic *EH* was translated into Arabic, edited, and incorporated into this work. Also other sources were used by the compiler of the *HPA*, historiographic and hagiographic. Among the former the *Chronicle* of Julius Africanus and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Sozomen can be identified.[17]

According to views that held until the 1970s, based mainly on the information from the thirteenth-century author Abu'l Barakat ibn Kabar, *HPA* was begun by Sawirus (Severus) ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, bishop of Ashmunayn (tenth century), and later continued by various authors up until the modern period. However, thanks to research by David Johnson and especially Johannes den Heijer, it is now clear that this attribution was wrong, and the first compiler of the material for the history of the see of Alexandria was a deacon from that city and a high official in Muslim administration of Egypt, Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mufarrij.[18] He had collected materials from the libraries of several monasteries of Egypt, but being unfamiliar with the Coptic language, he had the Coptic sources translated by an associate, a deacon Abu Habib Mikha'il ibn Badir al-Damanhuri. Since 1088 they

[15] Jean-Michel Carrié, 'Jean de Nikiou et sa Chronique: une écriture "égyptienne" de l'histoire ?' in Nicolas Grimal and Michel Baud (eds.), *Événement, récit, histoire officielle: L'écriture de l'histoire dans les monarchies antiques: Colloque du Collège de France… 2002* (Paris, 2003), 155–72, on 161.

[16] Anotonio Carile, 'Giovanni di Nikius, cronista bizantino-copto del VII secolo', *Felix Ravenna*, 4:1–2 (1981), 113–14; and P. M. Fraser, 'John of Nikiou', in Aziz S. Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (New York, 1991), 1367.

[17] Johannes Den Heijer, 'À propos de la traduction copte de l'*Histoire ecclésiastique* d'Eusèbe de Césarée: nouvelles remarques sur les parties perdues', in Rassart-Debergh and Ries (eds.), *Actes du IVe Congrès Copte*, 109.

[18] David Johnson, 'Further Fragments of a Coptic History of the Church'; and Johannes den Heijer, *Mawhūb ibn Manṣūr ibn Mufarriǧ et l'historiographie copto-arabe: Étude sur la composition de l'*Histoire des Patriarches d'Alexandrie (Louvain, 1989).

managed together to collect, translate, and edit the first 65 lives. Mawhub himself also composed lives 66 and 67 (of Christodoulos and Cyril II). It appears that from various notes extant in the Arabic text of the *HPA*, a more or less complete list of the authors of the Coptic *EH* can be established.

The source value of the *HPA* can hardly be exaggerated. In addition to information on the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church, and the Church itself, it also provides information on the non-ecclesistical history of Egypt, as well as on neighbouring regions, including Nubia (still Christian) and Ethiopia.

Another historiographic work, actually earlier than the *HPA*, was the *Annals* of Saʿid ibn Batriq. He was a Melkite (i.e. a Chalcedonian), in fact the patriarch of Alexandria for his community (933–40), known by the name of Eutychios. Before his election he had been a physician and the author of some medical works. Although commenced earlier, the *Annals* were finished after his patriarchal election. The work's proper title is *Nazim al-Jawhar* [The String of Pearls]. It is a universal chronicle covering the period from the Creation until the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Radi (934–40). The original work, represented by the manuscript of Sinai (Arabic 580) and known as the Alexandrian version, was expanded by later copyists-cum-editors with various additional notes. It is the latter version, called the Antiochene, that was first published.[19] According to Michel Breydy, who published the Alexandrian version, it was a mere compilation of previously known material, much of which in the pre-Islamic part is legendary.[20] Also there is little that is original in the history of the Muslim epoch, based on Muslim sources. As far as Eutychios's non-historiographical intention is concerned, it was pointed out that the *Annals* were compiled with an apologetic purpose, in the epoch when every religious group had to defend its identity and harking back on its past was a way to achieve it.[21]

In the expanded version the work is valuable for information on the political, social, and economic history of Egypt, as well as for the Christian Nubia and Ethiopia, as it contains information otherwise unknown. It was quite popular to which the numerous manuscripts in which it is preserved testify. It was frequently used by later Arabic-writing historians, both Christian (see below) and Muslim, for example, al-Maqrizi (fourteenth century), and even by the Latin Crusader historian William of Tyre (twelfth century). The *Annals* were continued by a

[19] Eutychios, *Eutychii patriarchae Alexandrini Annales,* ed. L. Cheikho, B. Carra de Vaux, and H. Zayyat, 2 vols. (Paris, 1906–9).

[20] Michel Breydy, *Études sur Saʿid ibn Batriq et ses sources* (Louvain, 1983); and Eutychios, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien: Ausgewählte Geschichten und Legenden kompiliert von Saʿid ibn Batriq um 935 A.D.*, trans. Michael Breydy (Louvain, 1985).

[21] Sidney H. Griffith, 'Apologetics and Historiography in the Annals of Eutychios of Alexandria: Christian Self-Definition in the World of Islam', in Rifaat Ebied and Herman Teule (eds.), *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage in Honour of Father Prof. Dr Samir Khalil Samir S. I. at the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Leuven, 2004), 65–89.

Melkite historian, Yahya b. Saʿid al-Antaki (i.e. of Antioch) in the eleventh century.[22]

Although the result of recent research denies Sawirus (Severus) Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ the authorship of the *HPA*, he remains an important author and historian, in fact the first major Copto-Arabic writer. He lived in the tenth century and was thus a contemporary of Eutychios with whom he polemized. He had been a scribe in the state administration, but after some time he gave up this carreer and became a monk. His fame as an intellectual—he often defended his faith against non-Christian and other Christian (including Saʿid ibn Batriq) polemicists in disputes in front of Muslim officials—earned him the bishopric of Ashmunayn (*c.*950). He is the author of several theological books, of which only a few have survived.

But the *Kitab al-majami* [Book of Councils], written in 950, did. It is an answer to an anti-miaphysite treatise of Eutychios, in two parts. While the first is more polemical,[23] the second, although not without polemical sections, has a more historiographical character. It chiefly concerns the Council of Nicaea, and more seldom the other councils. Severus discusses *inter alia* the date and the number of the bishops who participated in the council. He reports the excommunication of Arius to whom he imputes the doctrine of three gods, of which two would be 'created',[24] as well as his infamous way of death.

An interesting import into Copto-Arabic historiography is the work of Jewish origin, known as *Yosippon* (or *Yosephon*), because of its erroneous attribution to Yosef Ben Gorion (i.e. Josephus Flavius), evident also in its Arabic title: *Kitab Yusuf ibn Kuryun* [The Book of Yusuf ibn Kuryun].[25] Nevertheless, *Yosippon*, written in Hebrew in 953 in Southern Italy, is a reworking of Josephus's *Antiquitates Judaicae*.[26] In the eleventh century it was translated into Arabic by a Yemenite Jew, Zakariya ibn Saʿid, and circulated among the Jewish communities of the Near East. Over time it found its way into Egyptian-Christian circles, where it reached an almost canonical status, as evidenced by the fact that it was often copied in biblical manuscripts. Its popularity depended most probably on the fact that it was the only historiographical work that covered the Jewish history of the Second Temple period, despite its partly legendary contents (such as the Jewish origin of the dynasty of the ancient kings of Rome). It was used as a source by later Coptic historians, to whom we shall

[22] Eutychios, *Eutychii patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, vol. 2, on whom see ch. 8 by Muriel Debié and David Taylor in the present volume.

[23] Sawirus (Severus) ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Réfutation de Saʿid Ibn-Batriq (Eutychius), (Le livre des Conciles)*, ed. and trans. P. Chébli (Paris, 1905).

[24] Sawirus (Severus) ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Histoire des conciles (seconde livre)*, ed. and trans. L. Leroy; a study of the Eth. version S. Grébaut (Paris, 1911), 28.

[25] While the Hebrew original is published, *Sēpher Yosiphon (Yosippon)*, ed. D. Flusser, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1978–80), the Arabic translation is not; for the Ethiopic version see below.

[26] On Josephus see Jonathan J. Price, 'Josephus', in Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 1: *Beginnings to AD 600* (Oxford, 2011), 219–43.

return. The Arabic version crossed religious borders twice as it was also read by Muslims.[27]

Ta'rikh al-kana'is wa-l-adyurah [History of the Churches and Monasteries (of Egypt)], is an example of antiquarian historiography, a sort of topographical survey, with much historical information, arranged in chapters dealing with specific churches and monasteries. For a long time it was regarded to be the work of an Armenian by the name Abu Salih,[28] and only recently, after the publication of the whole text in 1984 by Samu'il al-Suryani,[29] did it become clear that the Armenian was the owner of just one of the manuscripts (containing only the second of a three-part work), whereas the real author was a priest, Abu al-Makarim Sa'dallah ibn Jirjis ibn Mas'ud. The question of authorship is, however, more complicated. Johannes den Heijer found that four layers of material can be discerned in it, that stretch over two centuries, from the mid-twelfth century to the mid-fourteenth, and consequently the *Ta'rikh al-kana'is wa-l-adyurah* cannot be the work of just one person. Abu al-Makarim is only one of the authors, better known than the others, and we are even unable to determine when he lived.

The *Ta'rikh al-kana'is wa-l-adyurah* was composed on the basis of several sources: the *HPA*, the *History* of Eutychios, the *Chronicle* of another Arabic writing Melkite, Agapius (Mahbub) of Mabbog in Syria, and even the Muslim historian al-Tabari.

Yusab, the bishop of Fuwa (thirteenth century), and his work *Ta'rikh al-aba' al-batarika* [The History of the Patriarchs] were hardly known until the 1980s, when the manuscripts of the work were found and published.[30] His work repeats the subject of the *HPA*, presenting its 103 lives, as it seems, in a more succinct form than the latter collection. One has to wait for a more thorough analysis of Yusab's work to be able to say something more about it.

With the next two historiographical works we approach the genre of chronicles. The first is the *Kitab al-tawarih* [Book of Chronologies] by Abu Shakir. He was a deacon in the Mu'allaqa church in Old Cairo but worked at the same time in the Egyptian civil administration. He is the author of at least two theological works as well as of a grammar and vocabulary of Coptic,[31] but is principally

[27] Ibn Khaldun, the famous Arab historian, knew Yusuf ibn Kuryun's composition and excerpted much of it into his voluminous universal history *Kitab al-'Ibar* for the period of the Second Temple, for which he had no other sources. Walter J. Fischel, 'Ibn Khaldūn and Josippon', in *Homenaje a Millás-Vallicrosa*, vol. I (Barcelona, 1954), 587–98.

[28] *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries Attributed to Abu Salih the Armenian*, ed. and trans. B. T. A. Evetts (Oxford, 1895).

[29] Abu al-Makarim, *Tarih al-kana'is wa-l-adyurah fi al-qarn al-thani 'ashar al-miladi*, ed. Samu'il al-Suryani, 4 vols. (Dayr al-Suryan, 1984); trans. of vol. I: Abu al-Makarem, *History of the Churches and Monasteries in Lower Egypt in the 13th Century*, trans. Anba Samuel, Bishop of Shibin al-Qanatir (Cairo, 1992).

[30] Yusab, usquf [bishop] Fuwa, *Tarih al-aba' al-batarika*, ed. Samu'il al-Suryani and Nabih Kamil (Cairo, *c.*1987) (according to den Heijer, 'Coptic Historiography in the Fatimid', 81, n. 61).

[31] Adel Y. Sidarus, *Ibn ar-Rāhibs Leben und Werk: ein koptisch-arabischer Enzyklopädist des 7./13. Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1975), 63–182.

known for his *Kitab al-tawarih*.[32] It is divided into fifty-one chapters of which forty-seven (chs. 1–47) contain a study of astronomy, chronology, calendrical (computistic), and related subjects, and only four, albeit lengthy, chapters (48–51) are historiographical. They provide an account of universal history that starts with Creation and follows the Old Testament exposition of history of the early patriarchs and of the Jewish people, combined with that of the ancient Near Eastern peoples (Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, etc.), and subsequently with that of the Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines, all according to the pattern of Eusebius's *Chronicle* and, ultimately, based on his material. Chapter 49 contains the history of the Muslims in the form of successive lives of the Caliphs and other rulers, with particular interest in those of Egypt. The next chapter (50) contains a history of the patriarchs of Alexandria, whereas Chapter 51 provides a history of the councils of the Church.

The author provides information on his sources,[33] both otherwise known and unknown. Among the known ones we find the *HPA*, *Kitab Yusuf ibn Kuryun* (i.e. *Yosippon*), the *Annals* of Eutychios, and the *Chronicle* of Agapios. On the other hand references can be found to unknown works such as the *Tarih* [Chronicle] of Yuhanna Fam al-Dhahab (i.e. [Pseudo-]John Chrysostomos), or the *Tarih Abfaniyus* [Chronicle of (Pseudo-)Epiphanius]. As neither Chrysostom nor Epiphanius wrote any chronicle, the attributions are false.[34] Still in the thirteenth century, soon after its composition, an anonymous epitomizer made an abbreviated version, under the same title but known in Europe since 1653 as the *Chronicon Orientale*.[35] It has the form of the chronicles of the Eusebian type (i.e. the material is presented in parallel columns). Although for a long time many scholars regarded it as Abu Shakir's original *Kitab al-tawarih*, this opinion is now abandoned.

The other historiographic text of the genre is the *Al-majmuʿ al-mubarak* [The Blessed Collection] or *Universal Chronicle* of Jirjis ibn al-Amid al-Makin.[36] Following in the footsteps of his father he became a scribe at the military office (*dīwān al-jayš*) in Cairo. He experienced some setbacks in his career, and was even twice imprisoned for unknown reasons. Having retired, he moved to Damascus where he died.

It was probably there, in the late 1260s, that he wrote his *Al-majmuʿ al-mubarak*. The work can be divided into two parts covering the pre-Islamic and

[32] The word *tārīḫ* (sg. of *tawārīḫ*) has a wide range of meanings: 'era, epoch, date, chronology, chronicle, history, history book'.

[33] Only sources of the historiographical part are of interest to us here. For sources of the computus part see Sidarus, *Ibn ar-Rāhibs Leben und Werk*, 33–4; and Den Heijer, 'Coptic Historiography in the Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid and Early Mamlūk Periods', 85–6.

[34] For further, unknown, sources see ibid., 85–6; and Witold Witakowski, 'Ethiopic Universal Chronography', in Martin Wallraff (ed.), *Julius Africanus und die christliche Welchronistik* (Berlin, 2006), 291–2.

[35] Petrus Ibn ar-Rahib, *Chroncon orientale*, ed. and trans. L. Cheikho (Louvain, 1903).

[36] Aziz S. Atiya, 'Makin, ibn Al-ʿAmid, Al-', in Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, 1513.

Islamic periods respectively. The first begins with the Creation and Adam and continues up to the eleventh year of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610–41). The second starts with Muhammad and comes up to the year 1260 and the accession of the Mamluk sultan Baybars (1260–77). Although a source analysis remains to be done, there clearly was some use of earlier Christian Arabic chronicles, of which the most important is Abu Shakir's work. Other recognizable sources are *Yosippon*, the *HPA*, the *Kitab al-majami* of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, the *Chronicle* of Agapios, the *Annals* of Eutychios, Ps.-Epiphanius, Ps.-John Chrysostom. Since all of these are known from Abu Shakir, it is not certain if al-Makin used them directly or rather through the intermediary of his predecessor, but more research is required to elucidate this point.[37] An unknown source (probably not used by Abu Shakir) is the *Tarih li-baʿd al-Saʿdiyyin* [History of Upper Egyptians].[38]

The Islamic part up to 920 is, according to Claude Cahen, an abbreviation of the monumental work of al-Tabari, although Jirjis probably did not produce it himself, but rather used an already existing abbreviation, also known from the *Tarih salihi* [Useful History] of Ibn al-Wasil (which ends in 1238, not published), unless both historians used yet another, otherwise unknown, source.[39] The section on the Ayyubids (1168–1250) and Mamluks is Jirjis's own contribution, valuable for its information on the administrative and military matters of Muslim Egypt.[40] The chronicle was continued by al-Mufaddal ibn Abi 'l-Fada'il, possibly al-Makin's great nephew, up to about 1300.

ETHIOPIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Unlike most of the countries of so-called Black Africa, Ethiopia can boast a very long literary tradition. The country, which at the time was called Aksum, was Christianized in the middle of the fourth century and was thereby brought into the sphere of Mediterranean civilization. Ethiopic historiographical literature of the period in question was written in the Classical Ethiopic language, or Geʿez, 'the Latin of Ethiopia'. It ceased to be spoken about AD 1000, but was thereafter used as the literary language (until the nineteenth century), and it still remains the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Church.

[37] Sidarus, *Ibn ar-Rāhibs Leben und Werk*, 45, found direct quotations from Eutychios and Agapios; Den Heijer, 'Coptic Historiography in the Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid and Early Mamlūk Periods', 91, found such quotations from the *HPA*.

[38] Ibid., 85. In Ethiopic version (see below): *wa-laʿlay Gəbṣ yəbelu*, 'The Upper Egyptians say… (that Diocletian reigned for nineteen years)'.

[39] Claude Cahen, 'Al-Makin Ibn al-ʿAmid et l'historiographie musulmane: un cas d'interpénétration confessionelle', in J. M. Barral (ed.), *Orientalia Hispanica sive studia F. M. Pareja octogenario dicata*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1974), 158–67.

[40] Claude Cahen and R. G. Coquin, 'Al-Makin b. al-ʿAmid Djirdjis', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edn, vol. 6 (Leiden, 1991), 144.

Ethiopic literature is not entirely original, and in fact a substantial part of it consists of translations. The originals of the translated texts come most often from the texts extant in Egypt, yet, remarkably, none of them can with certainty be regarded as direct translation from Coptic. The early translations, of the Aksumite period (roughly the first millennium AD), were made from Greek, whereas the medieval ones were made from Arabic. As far as historiography is concerned the translations, with the exception of one Greek work, are from Arabic. Some of them were made after the epoch dealt with in this volume.

The historiographic tradition started with royal inscriptions, some of which come from the period before Aksum accepted Christianity. Both these and those of the Christian epoch glorify achievements, particularly the military ones, of Aksumite kings. The most famous inscriptions are those of King Ezana (ʿEzana, *c.*330–*c.*370), during whose reign Ethiopia became officially Christian: Ezana's early inscriptions contain invocations to heathen gods, whereas the later ones are Christian.[41] They tell about Ezana's campaigns against various peoples, such as the Bedja tribes (Northern Eritrea and south-eastern Sudan) in the pagan period, or Noba (i.e. Nubians) in the Christian.

Until recently no traces of any other kind of historical writing from the Aksumite period were known. However, in the 1990s a manuscript of the fourteenth century was discovered that contains what has been termed the *Aksumite Canonico-Liturgical Collection*. According to Alessandro Bausi who signalled the existence of the collection, one fragment preserved in it, dealing with the Melitian schism (320s–330s, from Melitus of Lycopolis) within the Church of Egypt, is of historiographical character.[42] In fact it was translated from the Greek *Alexandrian Ecclesiastical History*, mentioned above. According to Alberto Camplani there is one more fragment in Ethiopic literature that comes from the same source, that is quoted in the *Martyrdom of Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria*.[43] This does not necessarily suggest that the whole of the *Alexandrian Ecclesiastical History* was once translated from Greek into Ethiopic, although such inference cannot be discarded. However, as it apparently was not a unified narrative (such as, for instance, Eusebius's work), but rather a collection of narrative fragments and copies of documents, it could have easily been dismembered with the resulting pieces transmitted to Ethiopia separately, and there included into independent compositions, hagiographic, and others.[44]

[41] E. Bernand, A. J. Drewes, and R. Schneider, *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1991), nr. 185, 187 (heathen gods), 189 (Christian).

[42] Bausi, 'La *Collezione aksumita* canonico-liturgica', 54–6.

[43] Camplani, 'L'*Historia ecclesiastica* en copte et l'historiographie du siège épiscopal d'Alexandrie', 419–20; and Getatchew Haile, 'The Martyrdom of St Peter Archbishop of Alexandria', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 98 (1980), 85–92.

[44] The situation similar to what happened to the material of this compilation in the Western transmission, both in Greek and Latin; Orlandi, 'Ricerche su una storia ecclesiastica alessandrina del IV sec.', and Camplani, 'L'*Historia ecclesiastica* en copte et l'historiographie du siège épiscopal d'Alexandrie'.

The inscriptions can be regarded as a precursor of the historiographic genre of royal chronicles, which evolved into a full text historiography in the fourteenth century, but then recorded in manuscript codices. The first royal chronicle that is known is that of the king Amda Seyon (ʿAmdä Ṣəyon, 1314–44), entitled by an English translator *The Glorious Victories of Amda Seyon*.[45] It does not provide a full account of the king's reign, but is limited to a description of his military achievements (as was the case with many inscriptions) in the war against the onslaught of the Muslim Sultanate of Ifat that had grown strong to the south and east of Christian Ethiopia. Chronicles of the immediate successors of Amda Seyon are not known, but the genre was continued later. Since, however, the next preserved chronicle is that of Zara Yaqob (Zärʾa Yaʿəqob, 1434–68), its full development belongs to the epoch beyond the chronological limits of the present volume.

As can be inferred from the above, there is a substantial lacuna in the historiographic evidence (and in other sources), between the epoch of Aksum and the one that began with the *The Glorious Victories of Amda Seyon*. The intermittent period, the 'dark ages' of Ethiopia, is very little known. Later historiographers tried to compose king lists that would cover the whole of Ethiopia's history. Carlo Conti Rossini classified those lists (eighty-six were known to him) in eight groups differing in both the names of the kings and their number.[46] He found, however, that there is certain uniformity among them after the reign of Yekuno Amlak (Yəkuno ʾAmlak, 1270–85) and therefore assumed that the lists were composed after this king's reign. It is, of course, impossible to say what historical value for the preceding period they have, but from the point of view of history of historiography this is not an important issue. The lists of rulers, that can be called the most primitive form of historiography, have the function of filling the gaps in documented history of any *politeia*, thus providing proof that the *politeia* continued to exist, even though no other facts from such otherwise 'empty' period(s) are known.

King Amda Seyon belonged to a relatively new dynasty in Ethiopia's history, which gained power in 1270. It is traditionally called 'Solomonid', since according to legend it was established by King Menelik (Mənəlik), the alleged son of King Solomon and the Queen 'of the South', who is equated with the Queen of Sheba. Menelik's descendants were believed to have ruled the country until they were ousted from power by the 'usurper' dynasty of Zagwe (tenth/eleventh century), but in 1270 the Solomonid dynasty 'regained' power. The legend was codified in a composition entitled *Kebra Nagast* (*Kəbrä Nägäśt*) [Glory of the Kings], which was composed on the basis of numerous sources, Christian Arabic, Syriac, and Jewish, in the beginning of the fourteenth century by a prelate of the city of Aksum, Isaac (Yəsḥaq). The purpose of composing what became the national

[45] *The Glorious Victories of Amda Seyon*, trans. G. W. B. Huntingford (Oxford, 1965); and ed. and trans. Manfred Kropp as *Die siegreiche Feldzug des Königs 'Amda-Seyon gegen die Muslime in Adal im Jahre 1332 n. Chr.* (Louvain, 1994).

[46] Carlo Conti Rossini, 'Les listes des rois d'Aksoum', *Journal Asiatique*, 10:14 (1909), 263–320.

epos of Ethiopia was to provide a legitimization for this new dynasty after the ousting of the Zagwe in 1270. The first king of the 'restored Solomonid' dynasty was the above mentioned Yekuno Amlak.

Notwithstanding its obvious legendary character, the *Kebra Nagast* must be regarded as a work of historiography. Given what was most probably a Jewish substrate of Ethiopian Christianity,[47] one may not be totally surprised by the popularity of the *Kebra Nagast* in the country. The veracity of the legend was never questioned there: on the contrary, it became part of the Ethiopians' national identity. No matter whether the premises were false or not, Ethiopia did regard itself as belonging to the sphere of Judeo-Christian civilization, and in this way found a place in the universal history, as a direct heir of the ancient kingdom of Israel. This phenomenon is not very different from the national myths of the pre-modern epoch that we know from many European countries, such as the idea that the Britons were descendants of Brutus.

It also had consequences for historiography, as it seems that it prompted translating (in the fourteenth century) into Ethiopic the *Kitab Yusuf ibn Kuryun* (*Yosippon*). In Ethiopic it is entitled *Zena Ayhud* [The History of the Jews]. According to a preliminary investigation the Ethiopic translation shows some variants as compared to the Hebrew original text, especially as far as toponyms are concerned.[48] The first chapter of *Yosippon* is a list of the Adamites and contains an account of the 'Division of the earth between the sons of Noah' originating in the *Chronicle* of Hippolytus (third century, in Greek). Here it is limited to the sons of Japhet. In the Hebrew text many toponyms and ethnonyms occur which the Ethiopic translator would not have a chance of identifying, such as Danes, Croatians, Lechites (i.e. Poles). These are not to be found in the Ethiopic text, and since its editor, Murad Kamil asserted that it was an almost literary translation from Arabic, it appears that the latter was different from the Hebrew.[49] The Ethiopic version includes the 'Story of Alexander', which is omitted in some Hebrew manuscripts.

Once awoken, the need of the Ethiopians to anchor their history in that of the surrounding world apparently demanded further material. As it could hardly be satisfied by Ethiopian historians themselves, it had to be imported, most easily from Christian Egypt, as *Zena Ayhud* shows. Four more works, already dealt with above, were translated.

The religious historiography came first, and therefore the first translation was Severus ibn al-Muqaffa's *Kitab al-majami*. The earliest manuscript known comes from the fourteenth century (Collegeville, Minnesota, HMML 1833). The translations of the remaining three works were made after the period covered by the present volume. As was mentioned above, the Ethiopic translation (in 1602) of

[47] The theory not accepted by all the scholars.
[48] Witakowski, 'Ethiopic Universal Chronography', 287–8.
[49] *Des* Josef ben Gorion (Josippon) *Geschichte der Juden*…, ed. Murad Kamil (New York, 1938).

the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu is the only form in which it is known. John is called Yohannes Mädäbbər, a garbled transcription of the Arabic *mudabbir*, 'overseer', that reminds of John's occupation before his retirement. Finally, there are extant (but unpublished) translations of the two late Copto-Arabic universal chronicles.

Abu Shakir's name in Ethiopic is Abušakər Wäldä (= son of) Abi Ǝlkəräm Peṭros Mänäkos Ǝbnəlmähaddəb. His work was translated during the reign of King Sarsa Dengel (Särṣä Dəngəl, 1563–97) by Archimandrite Enbaqom (ʿƎnbaqom), the famous author and translator from Arabic, himself an Arab from Yemen who converted to Christianity. The *Kitab al-tawarih* is known in Ethiopia as simply *Abushakir* (*Abušakər*). The historiographic chapters are those numbered 48–53. Although neither the Arabic text nor the Ethiopic are published, Adel Sidarus established that chapters 51–2 must have been added in Ethiopia because the Arabic original has only fifty-one chapters and ends with the history of the councils, which in Ethiopic is the fifty-third.[50] The additional chapters contain: (51) a list of the Melkite patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, and (52) a chronology of the patriarchs from Adam to Moses.

Abushakir was quite popular in Ethiopia, although it may be due to the *computus* (calendar) part, rather than the historiographic. There are many manuscripts known, the oldest (British Library Or. 809) dates back to the first half of the seventeenth century, and the most recent known to the year 1911/12 (Collegeville, MN, HMML 192). The manuscripts do not seem always to have the same text, some of them, for example, Ms. Brit. Libr. Or 809, omit chapter 49 (i.e. the Islamic history). The lists of patriarchs in later manuscripts are updated. The historiographical chapters include tabular presentation of the material.[51]

The *Chronicle* of Giyorgis Walda Amid (Giyorgis Wäldä ʿAmid, i.e. Jirjis ibn al-ʿAmid), was translated into Ethiopic during the reign of Lebna Dengel (Ləbnä Dəngəl) (1508–40), entitled in this version *Tarikä Wäldä ʿAmid* [The History (or Chronicle) of Wäldä Amid]. It became popular in Ethiopia, being preserved in quite a few manuscripts (approx. ten known), from the seventeenth century up until the year 1921/2. Also it was often used in composing other texts, for instance for the prefaces to Ethiopian royal chronicles, and for compilations, such as the *Life of Cyril of Alexandria*, the *Life of John Chrysostom*, and that *of Epiphanius*.[52]

[50] Sidarus, *Ibn ar-Rāhibs Leben und Werk*, 30. See as well chs. 54–9, but these contain additional treatises on various problems of chronology.

[51] See a folio published and translated in Witakowski, 'Ethiopic Universal Chronography', 299–301.

[52] Ibid., 297.

CONCLUSION

One may conclude by pointing to two circumstances that made the historiographic traditions of the Copts and Ethiopians different, notwithstanding the fact that some works are extant in both of them.

The Copts never lived in a state of their own and therefore their historiography did not develop the genre of royal chronicles, which in many other historiographic traditions were stimulated by the institution of the monarchy and its propagandistic, legal, and other needs. Over time, however, the Copts had to include much of 'civil', also Muslim, history into their ecclesiastical historical writing, as the latter could not be written in total isolation from some sort of account of state affairs. It did not, however, change the historiographic intention, which remained ecclesiastical. The Church was practically the only mainstay institution the Copts had as opposed to the Muslim inhabitants of Egypt. In this respect they share some characteristics of historiography with the Syrians.

In Ethiopia, on the other hand, civil historiography was always strong, even though not well documented in the epoch in question. Here the genre of ecclesiastical historiography was almost non-existent. It can probably be explained by the fact that the Ethiopian Church was not independent. The translation of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Kitab al-majami* was caused less by interest in history, than by an interest in religious dogmatics, which *nolens volens* had to rely on historical argumentation. One may see here a certain parallel to Byzantine historiography that after the period of religious conflicts up until the sixth century did not produce strictly ecclesiastical historical writing but information on Church events were put in civil historiographic works.

Yet it is remarkable that although hundreds of compositions were translated from Copto-Arabic literature, including three universal chronicles, the *Tarih al-aba' al-batarika* was not. It seems that the Ethiopians' interests in religious affairs were satisfied by the large number of hagiographical accounts (the historiographic intention of which is limited) many of which are the lives of monks, who belonged to the Ethiopian soil.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

1st millennium AD	The Kingdom of Aksum (Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia)
*c.*330–*c.*370	Ezana, king of Aksum
340s	Christianization of Ethiopia
641	Muslim Arab conquest of Egypt
*c.*700	The beginning of the demise of Coptic as a spoken language
933–40	Saʿid ibn Batriq (Eutychios), Melkite Patriarch of Alexandria
969–1171	The dynasty of Fatimids rules in Egypt

*c.*1000	Ge'ez, the Classical Ethiopic language no longer spoken but remains a literary and liturgical language
1050s	Coptic stops being the literary language of the Copts
1168–1250	The dynasty of Ayyubids rules in Egypt
1250–1517	Mamluks rule in Egypt
1270	End of the Zagwe dynasty's rule in Ethiopia; Yekuno Amlak's *coup d'état* brings the 'Solomonid' dynasty to power
1314–44	Amda Seyon, king of Ethiopia
1332	Campaign against the Sultanate of Ifat
1508–40	Reign of Lebna Dengel, King of Ethiopia

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Chapter 8

Syriac and Syro-Arabic Historical Writing, *c.*500–*c.*1400

Muriel Debié and David Taylor

Since the late nineteenth century and the production of the first critical editions of Syriac historical texts, these have been regularly exploited for the information that they provide about periods, regions, and communities which were otherwise poorly attested in extant sources, and there have also been some very useful surveys of available texts. There have, however, been very few overviews of Syriac historiography as such, and none which look at the whole tradition. This is the objective of this chapter.

For those unfamiliar with this field some introductory comments may be useful. Syriac is a literary dialect of Aramaic (and thus a cousin to Hebrew and Arabic) which was developed as the language of government in the pre-Christian civic administration of Edessa (modern Urfa in south-east Turkey), and which early on was adopted by the local churches for their liturgies, biblical translations, and other literary production. Members of the local social elites also received a traditional Greek education through private tutors, and this appears to have continued for some time after the Islamic conquests, and so scholars and historians within the churches potentially had access to Greek texts for most of the period covered by this chapter. As missionaries from Edessa spread out through Mesopotamia, and east into Iran and Central Asia and China (reached by the 630s), north into Armenia, south to Arabia and India (reached within the first few centuries AD), and west into what is now Lebanon and Syria (where Greek was the dominant ecclesiastical language), they took Syriac with them, and taught it to converts, who nevertheless continued to speak their native languages and dialects in non-religious contexts. Its role was thus similar to that played by Latin in the late antique churches of North Africa and Western Europe, or Hebrew in the Jewish diaspora. However, for a variety of reasons, very little historical writing has survived in Syriac from regions other than the Near East and Iran. From the eighth century on scholars of these churches increasingly started to use Arabic for history-writing, and from the ninth century on—with

one known exception—only the Syrian Orthodox (see below) continued to use Syriac for this particular genre.[1]

The main concentrations of Syriac-using Christians were in North Mesopotamia, on either side of the frontier between the Roman (later Byzantine) Empire and the Persian (Parthian and then Sasanian) Empire, a tectonic fault line in pre-Islamic Near Eastern imperial rivalry, and it was in the great cities of the region—Edessa, Nisibis (modern Nusaybin), Amid (Diyarbakır), Karka (Kirkuk), Arbela (Erbil)—with their civic and church records that much Syriac history-writing was produced. The Arab conquests of the seventh century removed this Mesopotamian frontier (creating a new Byzantine-Islamic frontier to the north-west, bisecting Anatolia) and united the Syriac churches under a single political rule, although after the tenth-century Byzantine reconquest of Melitene (modern Malatya), Syriac Christians were invited to settle there,[2] and this initiated a new period of Syriac–Greek literary contact and exchange. Asceticism and later monasticism were dominant features of Syriac Christianity throughout the region, and monasteries—especially those endowed with major libraries—were an important location of history-writing.

Syriac historiography is a rare example of non-étatist, non-imperial, history-writing. It was produced, copied, and preserved entirely within Christian church structures. The Syriac-using Christians, however, were divided into numerous rival denominations and communities as a consequence both of the fifth-century theological controversies and of geopolitical boundaries, and since both of these factors strongly influenced both the motivations which underpinned the production of history-writing and the forms it took, historians need to have some knowledge of these rival Syriac denominations. Because of internal Christian debates about the relationship of the divinity and humanity within Christ during the fifth century, the Syriac-using churches fragmented. All accepted that Christ was perfect God and perfect man, but differed fiercely about how to articulate this. Those who held to the teachings of the late fourth- and early fifth-century theologians of Antioch were,[3] after the council of Ephesus of AD 431, increasingly condemned by their opponents in the Roman Empire as 'Nestorians',[4] a term that is now avoided since it is both theologically inaccurate and pejorative. Modern scholars tend to use 'East Syrians' for the ancient members of the church, and 'Assyrians' for their modern descendants.[5] In the Persian Empire, where

[1] The exception is the eleventh-century Elijah of Nisibis from the Church of the East who wrote a bilingual Syriac-Arabic history.

[2] Cf. Gilbert Dagron, 'Minorités ethniques et religieuses dans l'Orient byzantin à la fin du Xe et au XIe siècle: l'immigration syrienne', *Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation byzantines*, 6 (1976), 177–216; reprinted in Dagron, *La romanité chrétienne en Orient: héritages et mutations* (London, 1984), ch. 10.

[3] Notably the fourth-century Diodore of Tarsus and his student Theodore of Mopsuestia.

[4] After Nestorius, a student of Theodore, and Archbishop of Constantinople from 428 until 431, when he was deposed.

[5] 'Assyrian' is the self-description used by contemporary members of the Church of the East, and so is used by scholars for the modern period, but it is usually considered to be too anachronistic to be

Christianity had spread during the first two centuries AD and was now well established, adherents to the teachings of the Antiochenes formed the dominant Syriac group, and so after the death in 457 of their last western champion, Bishop Hiba of Edessa, and again after the imperially sanctioned closure of the Persian School of Edessa in 489, many of their teachers and church leaders took refuge across the frontier in cities such as Nisibis, and founded an extensive network of schools.[6] It was this independent 'Church of the East', which spread through Iran and Asia, although as a consequence of repeated waves of invasion, the location of monasteries and libraries in regions outside central government control, and local ethnic rivalries, relatively few of its ancient manuscripts have survived.

The second major Syriac-using church was that which rejected the imperial church council of Chalcedon of AD 451 (along with many Greek-users in the Near East, the Copts in Egypt, the Ethiopians, and many Armenians) and emphasized the unity of Christ's divine and human nature after the incarnation. This church, now called the Syrian Orthodox Church, is referred to in modern scholarship as the non-Chalcedonian or West Syriac Church, and its members as Monophysites or (increasingly) Miaphysites.[7] It was largely confined to the Roman Empire, where it was subjected to regular persecution which led to the steady disappearance of Greek-speaking Miaphysite communities, and with them the various Miaphysite histories written in Greek. Only in Mesopotamia, and the Syriac-using heartlands, did the church manage to survive the persecution and even expand, since from the sixth century on its missionaries began to spread into Sasanian Mesopotamia. The Syrian Orthodox also possessed a monastery in the Egyptian desert, endowed in the ninth century with a magnificent library, which remained untouched by war or natural disaster until the modern period.[8] As a consequence the extant anti-Chalcedonian Syriac historical texts significantly outnumber those produced in the other churches, whose main libraries and academic centres were all situated in the vulnerable Fertile Crescent or the Kurdish mountains.

A third church group is that which accepted the council of Chalcedon, and remained part of the imperial church (the modern Byzantine Orthodox churches), and so its adherents are known as Chalcedonians or Melkites (from the Syriac

applied to the late antique and medieval church. When talking of their Christology, the term 'Antiochene Dyophysite' ('two natures') is increasingly used. That part of the Assyrian population which united with the Roman Catholic Church since the sixteenth century adopted the name 'Chaldeans'.

[6] Cf. Adam H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia, 2006).

[7] The term 'Miaphysite' ('one nature', and taken from a key christological formula of Cyril of Alexandria) is steadily replacing 'Monophysite' (also 'one nature', but previously used pejoratively, without differentiation, of both extreme Eutychians and moderate anti-Chalcedonians) in scholarly literature. The term Jacobite (after Jacob Burdono or Baradaeus, a key sixth-century revivalist of the Church) is no longer used.

[8] Cf. Sebastian Brock, 'Without Mushe of Nisibis Where Would We Be? Some Reflections on the Transmission of Syriac Literature', in Rifaat Ebied and Herman Teule (eds.), *VIIIth Symposium Syriacum, Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 56 (2004), 15–24.

malkā, 'emperor', or 'king').[9] In this church Arabic and Greek came to replace the liturgical and theological use of Syriac. The fourth and final group of importance for Syriac historiography in our period are the Maronites, a West Syriac group from North Syria, whose origins and early history are disputed,[10] although by the seventh-century they were well-established on mount Lebanon.

Although some Greek historical texts were translated into Syriac as early as the fifth century AD, native Syriac chronicles and histories were produced continuously from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries, and do not show the same historiographic gap as their Greek counterparts (*c.*630–*c.*720). Among the West Syrians notable works were produced in the sixth (John of Ephesus, Pseudo-Zachariah, and Pseudo-Joshua), the eighth (Jacob of Edessa, Zuqnin), and ninth centuries (Dionysios, *Chronicle to 819*). East Syrian writers were also continuously productive throughout these centuries, but only a small part of their output has reached us: Barhadbeshabba, the histories of Karka d-Bet Slok and of Arbela in the sixth century, and from the seventh century John of Phenek and the famous *Khuzistan Chronicle* are preserved but at least seven ecclesiastical histories are now lost and are known only from later witnesses. The monastic histories of Thomas of Marga, the *History of the Convent of Sabrisho*, and the *Book of Founders* were produced in the mid-tenth century and were preceded by six texts now lost. The celebrated chronicle of Elijah of Nisibis is the last East Syrian text produced in Syriac (although it was partially written in Arabic). In the tenth century a gap is noticeable in Syrian-Orthodox history-writing, and it is only in the eleventh century that it resumed and later blossomed with the twelfth-century *Chronicle of Michael the Great*, the *Chronicle to 1234*, and the thirteenth-century chronicles of Barhebraeus. The earliest surviving chronicles written (partially) in Arabic by authors belonging to the Syriac tradition are dated to the early tenth century.[11] These Arabic works (*Séert Chronicle*, Agapius of Menbij, ʿAmr ibn Matta, Elijah of Nisibis) were based on (now often lost) Syriac sources, although in one instance Barhebraeus produced an independent Arabic adaptation of his own Syriac chronicle (and both survive). After the fourteenth-century work of Saliba ibn Yuhanna, there were few major Syriac or Syro-Arabic chroniclers of renown. It is notable that with the exception of Barhebraeus's *Historia dynastiarum*, which is said to have been produced at the request of Muslim friends in Maragha and so included more material from Islamic sources than his original Syriac work,[12] all

[9] Cf. Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton, 2008), 137–9.

[10] Maronite historians claim descent from a fifth-century monk named Maron, and argue that they were always Chalcedonian. Non-Maronites tend to draw attention to the fact that from the seventh century they were notable adherents to the imperially promulgated monothelete ('one will') doctrine, even after the imperial Church abandoned this. Since 1182 the Maronites have been in formal communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

[11] Christian Arabic historiography produced by Coptic historians, which is almost entirely independent of the Syro-Arabic texts, is addressed in ch. 7 by Witold Witakowski in this volume.

[12] Cf. Lawrence I. Conrad, 'On the Arabic Chronicle of Barhebraeus: His Aims and His Audience', *PdO*, 19 (1994), 319–78; François Micheau, 'Biographies de savants dans le Mukhtasar de

Table 8.1. Major examples of history-writing in the Syriac tradition. In this table, texts now lost are in italics;[13] texts in Arabic are in bold.[14]

Date	Chalcedonian	Miaphysite	East Syriac
6th cent.	History of Edessa and Amid of 506 (Pseudo-Joshua)	Extracts about Amid, (502 and 560)	History of the Fathers of Barhadbeshabba of Bet ʿArabaye
	Chronicle of Edessa of 540	Extract on Amid (505/6)	History of Arbela
		Ecclesiastical History of Pseudo-Zacariah (569)	
		Ecclesiastical History of John of Ephesus (589)	History of Karka d-Bet Slok (end of 6th cent.)
7th cent.	Melkite Chronicle of 641	Composite Mesopotamian chronicle of 636	
	Maronite Chronicle of 664		Khuzistan Chronicle [or 'Anonymous Chronicle of Guidi'] (*c.*660?)
			John of Phenek, Ktaba d-Rish Mellé
8th cent.	*History of Theophilus of Edessa (695–780), maronite*	Chronicle of Jacob of Edessa (710)	*Church Histories of Bar Sahde of Karka d-Bet Slok*
		List of the caliphs of 715	*Gregory of Shushter*
		Chronicle of the disasters of 716	*Simeon of Kashkar*
		Extract on the year 763/4	*Mar Atqen*
		Zuqnin Chronicle of 775 (Pseudo-Dionysios)	*Theodore bar Koni*
9th cent.		Chronicle of Tur ʿAbdin of 813	Monastic History of Mar Sabrisho of Bet Qoqa (pre-850)
		Chronicle of Qartmin of 819	Monastic History of Thomas of Marga (850)
		Chronicle of Dionysios of Tel-Mahré (818–45)	Ishoʿdnah of Basra (850?)
			Book of the Founders, and Ecclesiastical History
		Chronicle of 846	***Hunayn b. Ishaq (808–73?)***

(*continued*)

Bar Hebraeus', in Marie-Thérèse Urvoy and Geneviève Gobillot (eds.), *L'Orient chrétien dans l'empire musulman* (Paris, 2005), 251–80; and Samir K. Samir, 'L'utilisation d'al-Qifṭī par la chronique arabe d'Ibn al-ʿIbrī (†1286)', *PdO*, 28 (2003), 551–98.

[13] Many texts known to have existed but now lost are excluded from the table for reasons of space. A full list can be found in Muriel Debié, *L'Écriture de l'histoire en syriaque: transmission interculturelle et construction identitaire entre hellénisme et islam* (Leiden, forthcoming).

[14] The Chronicle of Elijah of Nisibis was written partly in Syriac and partly in Arabic, and this is reflected in the mixture of bold and plain type. Similarly, Barhebraeus wrote his world chronicle in Syriac, but also produced an Arabic adaptation of it.

Table 8.1 Continued

Date	Chalcedonian	Miaphysite	East Syriac
10th cent.	**Agapius of Menbij, melkite** ***Qays al-Maruni***	*Chronicle of Simeon of Nisibis (c.950?)*	***Ya'qub b. Zakariyya al-Kashkari*** **Abridged History of the Church** (*c.*10th–11th cent.)
11th cent.		*Chronicle of Ignatios of Melitene (d.1094)*	**Nestorian History, or Chronicle of Séert** (11 cent.?) **'Amr b. Matta, Kitab al-Majdal** **Chronicle** of Elijah of Nisibis (1008–46)
12th cent.		*History of Basil Bar Shumana of Edessa (d. 1169)* *History of Dionysios bar Salibi of Amid (d. 1171)* Chronicle of Michael the Syrian (patr. 1166–99)	
13th cent.		Chronicle of Edessa of 1234 **Chronicles** of Barhebraeus (1225/6–86)	
14th cent.			**Saliba ibn Yuhanna, Asfar al-Asrar**

of the Syro-Arabic historical texts were produced by members of churches other than the Syrian Orthodox, who maintained a particularly strong attachment to the continued use of Syriac.

As the literary output of minorities within the Byzantine, Sasanian, and then Islamic empires, Syriac (and Syro-Arabic) accounts of secular history were always those of subjects—often maltreated subjects—rather than rulers, and although frequently involved in world events and occasionally welcomed at the courts of contemporary emperors and caliphs (see below), they were rarely admitted to the innermost circles of political power and decision making. It may be going too far to claim that they wrote subaltern history, but it was certainly not étatist. The West Syrian Qartmin *Chronicle of 819* and the *Chronicle of 846* may be useful sources for understanding Umayyad policy in the reign of Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik (723–43), and the *Zuqnin Chronicle* of 775 is a rich source of information about Abbasid policies in Syria, but they were not written to justify or explain these policies, or to enhance the reputation of the rulers, rather they report the consequences of these decisions and actions on the ruled. As religious minorities, their historians sought not only to provide historical accounts of their distinctive experiences, and the internal and external events which affected them as a community, but also to justify their continued independent existence, and to demonstrate their faithful continuity

with the pre-fifth-century Church and its great theologians. West Syrian non-Chalcedonians and East Syrians alike always refer to themselves as 'the orthodox', and their historiography is the empirical evidence advanced in support of their claims. Ecclesiastical historiography continued in Syriac, because for the Syrians the doctrinal issues of the fifth century remained—and remain—live issues, and because in the late antique and medieval Near East these religious debates of the past—as for Jews in modern Europe—continued to have practical consequences that affected their daily living conditions and even their chances of physical survival. For the Syrian Orthodox in particular, the process of writing the history of the formation of their identity in Syriac may also have helped to forge the link between the Syriac language and that identity, which still remains unbroken.

LITERARY GENRE AND SYRIAC HISTORICAL WRITING

The great majority of extant Syriac historiography consists of prose chronicles and histories, and these will be the main focus of this study. However, not only are there several sub-varieties or genres of prose historiography, but there are also examples of historiography in verse and in the form of inscriptions. History-writing in verse is rare in Syriac, and never achieved the length of the twelfth-century Greek *Metrical History* of Constantine Manasses. The examples which survive concern the lives of saints (to which can be linked the lives of semi-secular heroes, such as the Christianized Alexander the Great),[15] the histories of monasteries, and accounts of certain disasters of natural or human origin (for example, earthquakes, eclipses, plagues, and massacres and the capture of cities).[16] Whilst the former two poetic varieties were clearly intended for public recital on the occasion of saints' feast days, or patronal days of monasteries, the liturgical context for the poems about disasters may be less obvious. And yet their liturgical use is strongly supported by the late fourth-century cycles of poems by Ephrem the Syrian on the earthquake in Nicomedia or on the Emperor Julian, as well as by their inclusion in collections of liturgical hymns. In later periods it seems more likely that poetry on historical subjects was composed for communal recitation outside the liturgy, or for private reading. Poetry was a commonly used literary form for theology within the Syriac churches, and it remains today (2012) a popular and emotive form for oral history in the region.[17]

[15] As we shall see, there is a very close relationship between hagiography, the lives of saints, and historiography in the Syriac tradition.

[16] Cf. David Bundy, 'Interpreter of the Acts of God and Humans: George Warda, Historian and Theologian of the 13th Century', *The Harp*, 6:1 (1993), 7–20; and Alessandro Mengozzi, 'A Syriac Hymn on the Crusades from a Warda Collection', *Egitto e Vicino Oriente*, 33 (2010), 187–203.

[17] Cf. Alessandro Mengozzi, 'Suraye wa-Phrangaye: Late East-Syriac Poetry on Historical Events in Classical Syriac and Sureth', *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, 22:1 (2008), 3–14; and Yulius Y. Çiçek (ed.), *Seyfe: Das Christen-Massaker in der Turkei, 1714–1914* (Glane, 1981), a collection of classical Syriac poems on times of persecution from 1714 until 1964.

As for epigraphy as a means of history-writing, as opposed to inscriptions as the conveyors of historical data, the best known example produced by members of the Syrian churches is the stele of Xi'an (which as Chang'an was the Chinese Tang dynasty capital city, and is now the capital of Shaanxi province), which was erected in 781.[18] Written in Chinese, with the carved Syriac 'signatures' of the witnesses, it recounts the history of the foundation and expansion of the Chinese mission of the Church of the East beginning in 635. It also includes a version of the East Syriac Christian creed that has been reformulated using terminology borrowed from Daoism and Buddhism. This openness to the local intellectual context is important, because of course this fascinating inscription itself belongs to the Chinese historiographical tradition, in which it finds many comparata. It is often said or implied that intellectually the Syriac churches were highly conservative, but this is further evidence that points in the opposite direction, and instead reveals a remarkable capacity for adopting useful or practical innovations.

Within the native Syriac tradition, the main published example of epigraphic history-writing is the far shorter late eighth-century text carved on the walls of the Syrian Orthodox Church of St Sergius at Ehnesh on the Euphrates,[19] which provides dates for the birth (or conception) and death of Christ, the year in which the Arabs entered Euphratesia, the beginning of the Arab civil war, a famine and an eclipse, the Byzantine reconquest and enslavement of local Syrian Orthodox, and the anti-Christian actions of the caliph al-Mahdi, including the forced conversion of a Christian Arab tribe. The only other known example is an unpublished inscription of the nineteenth century, describing the life of Patriarch George of Mosul (d. 1705/6),[20] although this is more biographic than historiographic.

The dominant form of Syriac historiography consists of prose chronicles and histories. These include world chronicles (particularly in the West Syrian, or Syrian Orthodox tradition), incorporating both secular and ecclesiastical history from the creation of the world, and histories of more restricted periods. They also include institutional histories, such as the East Syrian monastic histories and the histories of schools; and there is also a small number of local histories. To understand their particularities, it is necessary first of all to understand their origins.

MODELS FOR SYRIAC HISTORICAL WRITING

As part of the Christianization of the Roman Empire, the new religion was incorporated into the traditional forms of history-writing received from the Greeks

[18] Cf. Peter Yoshiro Saeki, *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China* (Tokyo, 1937); Max Deeg, 'Towards a New Translation of the Chinese Nestorian Document from the Tang Dynasty', in Roman Malek (ed.), *Jingjiao: The Church of the East in China and Central Asia* (Sankt Augustin, 2006), 115–31.

[19] Andrew Palmer, 'The Messiah and the Mahdi: History Presented as the Writing on the Wall', in Hero Hokwerda, Edmé R. Smits, and Marinus M. Westhuis (eds.), *Polyphonia Byzantina: Studies in Honour of Willem J. Aerts* (Groningen, 1993), 45–84.

[20] Ibid., 74.

and Romans. By the fourth century, thanks primarily to Julius Africanus and Eusebius of Caesarea, the history of the Jewish people had been assimilated into a Christian past,[21] using as its primary sources that part of the Bible known to the Christians as the Old Testament, as well as certain apocryphal and pseudepigraphical texts, and the writings of hellenistic Jewish historians.[22] World history thus had its beginning in the Creation (although formally time, and so history, only began with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise), from which, via the biblical genealogies and the accounts of the succession of the patriarchs, judges, and other Jewish kings and rulers, a relative chronology could be established. Syriac historians, however, never actively used the World Era, the 'Anno Mundi' dating system adopted by the Byzantine Greeks, although it was known to them. Instead they used the pre-Christian Seleucid era, dated from the start of the Seleucid Empire which was reckoned to be the return of Seleucus I Nicator to Babylon in 311 BC, with its new year beginning (as at the Macedonian court) at the start of October. This dating system continues to be used in Syriac texts and publications until the present (although Hijra dates are also very rarely found, and, since the nineteenth century, it is often used in parallel with dates given according to the Christian era). Arguably, this strong adherence to the Seleucid era, in opposition to later national and imperial dating systems, reflects an awareness of the distinct cultural origins of Syriac-users, the strong Syro-Hellenistic influence on their history and literature, and a continuing sense of their antiquity and rootedness in their homelands.

One consequence of this assimilation of the biblical past is that most Syriac authors—with the exception of Michael the Syrian—seem to have been little interested in nations without direct relevance to the biblical accounts of the chosen people, Israel, nor in periods of, for example, Egyptian and Mesopotamian history that were not linked to biblical accounts. Some local histories, like local hagiographical accounts—for example, the Life of Bishop Maruta of Maipherkat (d. *c.*420), later used by an Islamic history of the city[23]—do, however, contain garbled accounts of the Assyrian foundation of towns, or of the Assyrian ancestry of social elites (as in the History of Karka d-Bet Slok). The corrupted forms in which the names of Assyrian kings are preserved may also suggest that this information was drawn from oral traditions rather than from written sources.

[21] Cf. William Adler, *Time Immemorial: Archaic History and its Sources in Christian Chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus* (Washington, DC, 1989); and Adler, 'Jacob of Edessa and the Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Syriac Chronography', in John C. Reeves (ed.), *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (Atlanta, 1994), 143–71.

[22] Western historians, who have their own clear ideas about what constitutes, or should constitute, history, have not always been at ease with this. Thus every translation of the chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah into a modern European language has omitted, or summarized, the beginning of the text that is largely based on such apocryphal and pseudepigraphical sources.

[23] Cf. Harry Munt, 'Ibn al-Azraq, Saint Marūthā, and the Foundation of Mayyāfāriqān (Martyropolist.)', in Arietta Papaconstantinou, Muriel Debié, and Hugh Kennedy (eds.), *Writing 'True Stories': Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East* (Turnhout, 2010), 149–74.

Eusebius's historiographical vision was of divine providence preparing the world for the coming of Christ and the gospel. This Christian, and Mediterranean, worldview was thus interested in earlier kingdoms and empires largely as a means of explaining and Christianizing the vision of the prophet Daniel (Dan. 2:31–45), in which Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the destruction of a great statue—with a head of gold, upper torso and arms of silver, lower torso and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay mixed—is interpreted by Daniel as referring to a series of empires which would succeed the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar. Although details of the exegesis varied, most Christian writers, including Eusebius, argued that the later empires referred to were those of the Medio-Persians, then Alexander and the Greeks, and then the Romans. Thus one empire was succeeded by another until the perfect vehicle for the expansion of Christianity was produced, namely the Roman Empire which, with the eventual conversion of its leaders to Christianity, replaced Israel as the chosen nation. This was, of course, at one level just part of the supercessionism which permeated the Christian appropriation of earlier Jewish institutions, texts, and ideologies (the Miaphysite Syriac historians were especially interested in showing how their priestly orders were in direct descent from those of the Jewish patriarchs and priests, perhaps in response to Chalcedonian attacks on their validity), but it had profound consequences for Syriac history-writing.

Such a system had no place for those East Syrian Christians living outside of the oikumene, loyal citizens of the Sasanian Empire of Iran, the ancient enemy of the Romans. The Persian Empire, according to all Western Christian interpretations of Daniel, was just a stepping stone in God's providential design to that of the Greeks and then that of the Romans, and yet for those in the East it was a continuing reality, a mighty empire that had not only never succumbed to Rome, but had frequently humbled the Roman Empire by sacking its eastern provinces with impunity. It was also the home to various flourishing varieties of Christianity, and so it was no accident that when Shah Khusrau II Parvez (590–628) launched his devastating attack on the Roman Empire in 603 he was accompanied by the Patriarch of the East, Sabrisho I, who daily beseeched Christ for a Persian victory over the Romans. Thus the Danielic and Eusebian model of the succession of empires had no role to play in the main East Syriac historiographical tradition. As with any such sweeping statement, however, a few qualifications need to be added. Around 690 or 692, in response to the turmoil of the second Islamic civil war and possibly also ʿAbd al-Malik's imposition of greatly increased taxes on the non-Muslims of Mesopotamia, an anonymous West Syriac author wrote an apocalyptic text which he ascribed to the fourth-century bishop Methodius of Olympus,[24] and which interprets the Muslims as the heralds of the end time, marked by the coming of the Antichrist, his defeat by the last emperor of the Romans, and the

[24] It is uncertain whether the anonymous author was a Syriac Chalcedonian or an anti-Chalcedonian Miaphysite.

final rendering of the imperial crown back to heaven.[25] This apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, which clearly belongs to the Eusebian historiographical tradition, was hugely influential in the West (where it was translated into Greek and thence into many other languages) and also in the East (where it was copied and studied by East Syriac writers), although its influence on East Syriac historiography was minimal. Another exception is the East Syriac writer Elijah of Nisibis, who in the eleventh century wrote a universal chronicle that drew upon many West Syriac sources, and so is influenced by the Eusebian model.

The anti-Chalcedonian Miaphysites within the Roman Empire had a different historiographic problem. They too, like the Chalcedonians, believed in the Danielic model of the succession of empires culminating in that of the Romans, and these Syriac Christians who belonged to the history of the Roman Empire in its *Pars Orientis* thus partook of its double Greek and Roman identity.[26] But they found themselves in the awkward position of not only no longer accepting the theological teachings of the Imperial Church and of the emperor himself, but of being persecuted by the empire as 'heretics'. Their writing of history up to the council of Chalcedon of 451 is thus all but indistinguishable from that of Greek Chalcedonians, but thereafter it is primarily their own denominational history that they write, with incidental references to members of other churches—an exercise intended to demonstrate, as in their theological writings, that they, and not the illegitimate leaders of the Imperial Church, were the true heirs to the early church. This, of course, was a delicate exercise, because public criticism of the emperors was a treacherous and punishable activity (although this did not prevent the Greek writer Prokopios from producing his scandalous *Secret History*). But this, and the fact that writing, copying, and reading Miaphysite texts in Greek were officially banned in the sixth century, may help to explain why anti-Chalcedonian historians—even, or perhaps especially, those such as John of Ephesus who was based at the imperial court in Constantinople—chose to write in Syriac rather than in Greek, the language of the capital city and of the civil service, and it may also help to explain why they produced so much historical writing (although factors influencing the preservation of Syriac Miaphysite manuscripts may also need to be taken into consideration here). It is no chance coincidence, however, that the Syriac-speaking communities, on both sides of the Roman/Sasanian frontier, started writing history in the sixth century when the christological controversies reached a peak, and acquired profound political consequences.

Finally, the Danielic model of history was very problematic for all Near Eastern Christians following the Arab conquests and the rise of Islam. This seemed to

[25] Cf. Gerrit J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (CSCO 540–1; Louvain, 1993); and Reinink, 'Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam', in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 1: *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton NJ, 1992), 149–87.

[26] Cf. Muriel Debié, 'Syriac Historiography and Identity Formation', in Bas ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *Religious Origins of Nations? The Christian Communities of the Middle East* (Leiden, 2009), 93–114.

have no place in the earlier exegesis of Daniel, unless it were to be interpreted as being part of the events which preceded the Apocalypse—and so indeed it was interpreted by a number of Syriac writers, especially in the late seventh century, when there was a proliferation of apocalyptic texts which looked to a future restoration of the Christian Roman Empire in the region. When it became clear that the end of the world was not imminent, many Syriac historians continued with the pre-Islamic models of history-writing that they had inherited. These seem to have been all intended for internal consumption within their own church communities—with the sole example of the Arabic version which Barhebraeus produced of his own world history—not only because they were frequently written in Syriac (which was rarely studied by Muslims),[27] or were not modified for non-Christian readers, but also because the new Muslim rulers mostly refused to get involved in intra-Christian disputes over which was the legitimate branch of Christianity (with the frequently attendant questions of local property ownership). Syriac traditions did make their way into Islamic historiography (see last section, below), but nearly always by means of Syro-Arabic history-writing, which, by contrast, is quite regularly found cited by Islamic authors, who were more than capable of extracting the data that interested them from its Christian theological context.

The different response of East and West Syriac Christians to the Danielic model of God's divine plan for humanity was only one way in which their history-writing differed. Another appears to derive from the different Greek historiographical models that they adopted. The dominant figure for all Christian historians was, of course, Eusebius of Caesarea, and both his *Ecclesiastical History* and his *Chronicle* were translated from Greek into Syriac, the former as early as the fifth century and the latter in the seventh century at the latest, although his historiographical influence preceded these translations by means of Syriac contact with Greek scholarship and texts. (Fragments of Syriac translations of other Greek historical writings, such as Socrates and Theodoret, are also preserved, as well as evidence of occasional direct influence, Malalas for example, but these provided historical data, rather than historiographical models.) Both of Eusebius's historical works were to exercise a great influence on Syriac historiography, although for reasons just discussed this influence was not the same among East and West Syriac writers. In the East, Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* was used just as a source of historical information and the *Chronicle* exercised no influence until the time of Elijah of Nisibis (whose use remained exceptional). Among the West Syriac historians, however, the *Ecclesiastical History* was not only a source but also a widely used historiographic model. In these circles the *Chronicle* too provided a highly influential model, with its much copied and mined lists of

[27] Thus the above mentioned Syriac Life of Bishop Maruta of Maipherkat was translated orally into Arabic for Ibn al-Azraq by the local priest, and this led to some confusion, as Munt explains in 'Ibn al-Azraq, Saint Marūthā, and the Foundation of Mayyāfāriqān (Martyropolis)'.

kings and rulers and their regnal years, its use of chronological canons—whose influence is particularly strong in the seventh-century work of Jacob of Edessa and the twelfth-century chronicle of Michael the Syrian, and which stands in contrast to the Latin and other Western traditions that knew the canons but ignored the first part of the *Chronicle*, the 'chronographia'—and above all its separation of civil and church history. Jacob of Edessa explicitly produced a continuation of Eusebius's *Chronicle*, and it in turn had an influence on later authors, although the original is now lost and it only survives in abridged extracts. Jacob's work, following that of Eusebius, had a central column containing the dates of the chronological canons, and attached to these dates on either side—like ribs off the spinal column—were short statements containing historical data, those relating to secular history on the left and those relating to ecclesiastical history on the right. This gave rise (beginning with the ninth-century chronicle of Dionysios of Tel-Mahré) to a distinctive and unique feature of the Syrian Orthodox history-writing tradition, namely a model of double chronicles with a separation between ecclesiastical and civil history. Sometimes the columnar structure was preserved, as in the large twelfth-century chronicle of Michael the Syrian which is divided into two or three columns—secular history, ecclesiastical history, and a third column reserved for other contemporary events of interest. Other texts, such as the *Chronicle to 1234*, separated (after Constantine) the civil and church histories into two sections, with the ecclesiastical history section (which was written first) following the secular history, and the slightly later Barhebraeus confined them to two separate volumes.

By contrast East Syriac historiography shows no interest in the writing of civil history—the closest equivalents to this are to be found in the atypical Elijah of Nisibis, and the seventh-century anonymous *Khuzistan Chronicle*, although even here the organizing principle is not the reign of the Persian shahs but that of the catholicoi, the 'patriarchs' of the Church of the East. Nor is there any obvious trace of the influence of Iranian historiography on East Syriac historiography, despite the fact that in the Sasanian period a number of the Church's senior bishops and scholars were educated high-status converts from Zoroastrianism, and that many flourishing monasteries and Christian communities used Iranian translations of Syriac liturgies and other religious texts, and that both legal codes and popular literary texts were translated from Iranian languages into Syriac. In many histories, such as the *Khuzistan Chronicle*, there is constant use of historical information of Iranian, non-ecclesiastical, origin—which makes these texts so important for modern historians of the Sasanian Empire and the Islamic conquests—but this seems to have been acquired from oral rather than written sources.

The distinctive feature of East Syriac history-writing—at all periods, even once it began to be produced in Arabic—is that it largely consists of the biographies of saints and martyrs, bishops, monastic founders, and teachers. East Syriac histories are thus structured as a chain of biographies which are linked together by the interrelationship of the figures described, whether as teachers and pupils, for

example, or as successors to earlier bishops or abbots. Remarkably, and perhaps counterintuitively for readers used to other historiographic traditions, these texts include almost no fixed dates (some have none, few have more than a dozen) and there are only very rare references to reigning shahs, kings, or caliphs. They were clearly not written to enable comparison or chronological co-ordination with other historical texts, but rather to establish the sanctity and wisdom of the individuals who contributed to the creation of a venerable institution—whether a city, church, monastery, or school—and thereby bestowed some of these virtues upon their successors and upon the institution itself. They also act as a means of guaranteeing the authenticity and validity not only of the institution being described, but also of the history-writing itself, since they are essentially a living chain of witnesses to this truth, whereas in the West Syriac tradition it is usually the identification and citation of earlier authoritative sources which confers this authentication.[28] Usually only selected details are given of the lives recited—those relating to their origins, teachers, religious training, and subsequent careers—but they remain more full than mere prosopography, with the exception of such texts as Ishoʿdnah's *Book of Founders* (also known as the *Book of Chastity*), with its lists of monastic founders. It is quite possible that such history-writing grew naturally out of local Syriac hagiography which flourished in the Iranian world in response to the frequent waves of Sasanian persecution, from the late third century on, and which was the basis of local cults of the saints, the source of local church and civic pride and status, but it has also been suggested that a Greek model might be found in the histories of the hellenistic philosophical schools, in which the ability to establish a chain of authoritative teachers stretching back to the original founder was considered to be of the greatest importance. Since this model was also taken up by early Christian heresiologists, such as the fourth-century Epiphanius of Salamis, with their genealogical approach to Christian heresy—the source of all heresies being identified as Simon Magus[29]—it is possible that there is also an underlying apologetic motivation for this East Syriac historiography.

VARIETIES OF SYRIAC HISTORICAL WRITING

What is striking with late antique and medieval historiography, in Syriac as in Latin and Greek, is the melting down of a multitude of earlier traditional historical genres into 'chronicles', with events simply compiled from extant sources, ordered by date, and described at shorter or greater length, often with minimal authorial reflection upon, or analysis of, these events. Indeed, it should be remembered that in the periods covered by this chapter, there was no such profession as

[28] In some East Syriac texts, such as the monastic history of Thomas of Marga, the authorship or source of these biographies is also given.

[29] Cf. Acts of the Apostles 8:9–24.

'historian'—nor in Syriac is there any specific word to designate one, just a 'writer down of the times'[30]—since historical writing was a temporary activity, carried out by all the Syriac writers here mentioned alongside their ecclesiastical duties and other scholarly writing, whether theological, exegetical, legal, or grammatical. The West Syrian history of Pseudo-Joshua (506)—with its detailed accounts of the recent Persian invasion of northern Mesopotamia, the military successes and failures of both sides, and their difficulties in controlling the behaviour of Arab, Hun, and Gothic auxiliaries—is not only the nearest the Syriac tradition has to the Greek model of political history—with close attention paid to human and natural causes and effects (as opposed to divine intervention), and the introduction of fictitious dialogues and digressions—it is also the only example of the kind. In the Syriac tradition, then, where there are no civil histories in the Greek tradition—which there too came to an end around 630 with Theophylact Simocatta—the absorption of histories by the chronicle genre is most clearly seen in the case of church histories. John of Ephesus, writing in the second half of the sixth century, was the last Syriac writer to produce an ecclesiastical history modelled closely on that of Eusebius, from whom he also received a tradition of *Kaiserkritik* (itself based on biblical treatment of Israelite kings), in which emperors who favoured his Miaphysite cause are shown to have prospered, whereas opponents face adversity and a miserable death. The history of Pseudo-Zachariah (569)—although it translated and adapted the Greek *Ecclesiastical History* of Zachariah Scholasticus—is mixed in its genre, and is in fact closer in form and style to the universal chronicles which start with the Creation. Indeed, this became one of the most popular ways of writing history for West Syrian chroniclers. Even short chronicles, that is chronicles with short text entries, could be presented as universal chronicles, starting with Creation and dealing briefly with the history of mankind until the more recent periods of the past when their interests narrowed and focused on their own region and church, as for example the *Chronicle of 846*, the *Maronite Chronicle* (664), and the longer *Zuqnin Chronicle* (775).

East Syrians, however, with the exception of the late seventh-century John of Phenek and his *Ktaba d-Rish Mellé* [Book of the Main Points of the History of this World], who like Pseudo-Methodius seems to have been driven by the second Islamic civil war to speculate about the coming of the end of time, and thus also its beginning—started history with Christ or Constantine, the first Christian emperor. East Syrians wrote 'ecclesiastical histories' dealing with the history of the Church since its beginning until their own time, that is, a history of the 'catholic' or universal Church and then that of the Church of the East, its legitimate heir. The scope of these latter sections then becomes quite narrow, without any universal perspective. A tradition of 'scholastic' historiography also developed in the Church of the East with great attention paid to the schools, their

[30] *Makteb zabnē*, or *maktbānā d-zabnē*, no doubt modelled on the Greek *chronographos*, 'chronographer'.

founders, and their teachers, such as the well-known *History of the School of Nisibis* (late sixth century).[31] But all East Syrian texts, including the sixth-century *History of Barhadbeshabba* and the ninth-century monastic histories of Thomas of Marga, the *History of the Convent of Sabrisho* and the *Book of Founders* by Ishoʿdnah deal with the histories of the schools in the Church of the East and the succession of masters and disciples. This suggests that the East Syrian theology of divine Paideia may have had considerable influence both on their understanding of history and on their writing of it.[32] The monastic histories, as for example that of Thomas of Marga—which is in part a Mesopotamian companion volume to the tales of the Egyptian monks contained in the seventh-century *Paradise of the Holy Fathers*, compiled in Syriac by Ananisho from Palladius's *Lausiac History* and various other collections—also consist largely of linked biographies, but they are also rich sources of information about inter-Christian and inter-monastic rivalries, and of contemporary local life.[33] By contrast they make virtually no mention of larger political events and movements, and so the casual reader of Thomas of Marga might never guess that there had been an Arab conquest of his region and the introduction of a new religion, although among the miracles and wonders attributed to Mar Cyriacus and Rabban Gabriel, for example, are the revelation of the coming, and eventual death, of a tyrannical figure named ʿAmran ibn Muhammad of the family of al-Azd from Taiman (and indeed the fate of his children, for five generations), and the more practical success in resisting his attempts to seize their monastic estates.

A small number of local histories celebrating the memory of a city and its first inhabitants and its heroes (martyrs and holy bishops) were produced in Syriac in the sixth century. The history of Karka d-Bet Slok is the only one that recalls its Assyrian origins, albeit with some rather garbled information, as well as the forced settling within it of various population groups by successive empires, and the construction of its citadel and walls.[34] A shorter similar account can be found in the third part of John of Ephesus's *Ecclesiastical History* with the tale of the foundation of the city of Dara on the border between the Persian and Roman empires. The history of Arbela, after some years of suspicion about its authenticity,[35] is

[31] English translation in Adam H. Becker, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis* (TTH 50; Liverpool, 2008).

[32] Cf. Richard A. Norris, *Manhood and Christ: A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Oxford, 1963), 173–89; Gerrit J. Reinink, 'Paideia: God's Design in World History According to the East Syrian Monk John bar Penkaye', in Erik Kooper (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 2: *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle. Driebergen/Utrecht 16–21 July 1999* (Amsterdam and New York, 2002), 190–8.

[33] Cf. Cynthia Jan Villagomez, 'The Fields, Flocks, and Finances of Monks: Economic Life at Nestorian Monasteries, 500–850', Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1998.

[34] Cf. Jean Maurice Fiey, 'Vers la réhabilitation de l'histoire de Karka D'Bét Slok', *AnBoll*, 82 (1964), 189–222.

[35] Cf. Christelle Jullien and Florence Jullien, 'La Chronique d'Arbèles: Propositions pour la fin d'une controverse', *OC*, 85 (2001), 41–83.

now generally accepted by historians and should be added to this group. Individual saints' lives often contain significant information about local history, and the building of churches, mills, and fortresses,[36] and other histories concentrate on events linked to the region in which they were produced, such as Edessa, but the East Syrian local histories mentioned above seem particularly concerned to establish their ancient origins, their early Christianization, and the glory of their martyrs and holy men, partly for reasons of civic pride but also, it appears, in order to press their claims for their cities to be raised up the hierarchy of metropolitan sees in the Church of the East, their position in which had important consequences for the power and status of the local church.

THE SYRIAC WRITERS OF HISTORY

It is often implied, and occasionally stated explicitly, that Syriac historiography—like much of that in the West at the same period—was the work of gullible and uncultivated monks, cut off from the world, scribbling in their cells. Even the most rapid examination of the biographical details of those Syriac historians whose names have been preserved indicates that this was far from being the case. Instead a picture emerges of Syriac history-writing being produced by authors, albeit monks, who were born into the contemporary Christian social and political elites. Elite origins do not of course guarantee flawless history-writing, but the education that went with wealth permitted the use of sources in multiple languages, and high social status procured privileged access to official archives and documents, and the histories of leading families, as well as personal contact with ecclesiastical and civil rulers. Coming from such families, it is perhaps not surprising that they often achieved high ecclesiastical office. So among the Syriac historians we have abbots, such as the author of the history of the monastery of Bet Qoqa (pre-850), and Thomas of Marga (*fl.* 850); bishops and metropolitans such as John of Ephesus (d. 589), Barhadbeshabba (*fl.* 600), Jacob of Edessa (d. 709), Elijah of Nisibis (d. 1046), Ignatios of Melitene (d. 1094), Basil of Edessa (d. 1169), Dionysios bar Salibi (d. 1171), Iwannis of Kaishum (d. 1171), and probably the authors of the histories of Karka d-Bet Slok and of Arbela (sixth century); maphrians (originally the autonomous sub-patriarch for the Syrian Orthodox in the Sasanian Empire, and later the assistant patriarch for the eastern Islamic provinces of Iraq and beyond), such as Barhebraeus (d. 1286) and his brother Barsauma; and even two patriarchs, Dionysios of Tel-Mahré (d. 845) and Michael the Syrian (d. 1199). Among these writers some also served for a while as secretaries to more powerful men—for example Thomas of Marga had served as secretary to the East Syriac catholicos (or patriarch) Abraham II (837–50)—which gave them access to official correspondence and allowed

[36] As for example the (as yet unpublished) Syrian Orthodox *Life of Simeon of the Olives*.

attendance at important meetings. Other bishops were included in the official retinue that accompanied church dignitaries on their travels, as was the case with the author of the *Chronicle of 1234* who was included in the retinue of the maphrian George (nephew of Michael the Syrian) during his visit to Tagrit and the eastern dioceses in 1189. Unlike history-writing in many other languages and regions, Syriac history was almost never written by laypeople, civil servants, courtiers, or soldiers. One notable exception to this is the eighth-century Chalcedonian layman Theophilus of Edessa, who served the caliph al-Mahdi (*c.*744–85) as his court astrologer (with a particular responsibility for military astrology), and produced a now lost chronicle.[37]

These senior figures were thus not only transcribers of ancient history, and witnesses to their own times, but also frequently actors within the events of their day. Their status meant that many of them were in close contact with the civil authorities, although this was in general more true of those Syrians in the Islamic realms than in Byzantium, where their status as 'heretics' often acted as a barrier. One early exception to this was the sixth-century Miaphysite John of Ephesus,[38] who despite being driven from his monastery near Amida (modern Diyarbakir) by Chalcedonian persecution, ended up in Constantinople as a favoured member of the court. Appointed by the Emperor Justinian as the leader of a mission to convert pagans in Asia Minor, he is a key witness to contemporary pagan survivals, and also had access through the court to Greek historical sources, to eyewitness accounts of military campaigns against Persians, Goths, and Avars, and also spoke to ambassadors returning from Iran and the east. Close contact with the Miaphysite patriarch Theodosius of Alexandria, in exile in Constantinople since 536, and with his own Syrian hierarchy, gave him a unique insight into the formation of the new Miaphysite churches, and access to their key letters, edicts, and synodical acts.

Another interesting example is the ninth-century Dionysios of Tel-Mahré who came from a wealthy family—and so is called by the region of their estates, rather than by his episcopal see—and was educated, along with his brother Theodosios, at the monastery of Qenneshré, a contemporary powerhouse of Syrian Orthodox scholarship, where they acquired knowledge of Syriac, Greek, and Arabic.[39] In 818 he was elected as the Miaphysite patriarch of Antioch, and wrote a chronicle that, although now lost, was quoted at great length by subsequent writers. Dionysios mentions that his brother was much sought after for his learning by the emir ʿAbd Allah Ibn Tahir (*c.*798–844/5), and adds that he too was considered a friend by the caliph al-Maʾmun (d. 833). He travelled regularly to Damascus, Baghdad,

[37] For a maximalist reconstruction see Robert G. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Material in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (TTH 57; Liverpool, 2011).

[38] Cf. Jan J. van Ginkel, 'John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Groningen, 1995.

[39] Cf. Rudolf Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre, jakobitischer Patriarch von 818–845: zur Geschichte der Kirche unter dem Islam* (Leipzig, 1940).

and Fustat (in present-day southern Cairo) in order to solicit the support and aid of the Muslim rulers against rival factions within his church, and to ask for unfavourable edicts of other Muslim rulers to be countermanded. And this relationship could be of mutual benefit, for in 832 he was sent by the caliph to the south of Egypt to calm a Coptic Christian revolt that had broken out there, far from his own official jurisdiction. Dionysios's education and social standing not only gave him access to the Muslim elites, and direct acquaintance with international affairs, they also allowed him to make use of private family histories of the rich and influential Christian elites, such as the interrelated Resaphoyé, Tel-Mahré, and Gumoyé clans of Edessa.[40] These family histories provide precious details about local rivalries (often with tragic outcomes), the transfer of property, stories of hidden treasure which is eventually found but dissipated on fine horses and hunting dogs, but also accounts of their continued service to new political masters, such as Athanasios bar Gumoyé, for example, who became immensely rich as tax collector for ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Ibn Marwan, the governor of Egypt (685–704) and so incurred the jealousy of rival Christian elites, such as the Chalcedonian Mansur family of Damascus (to which John of Damascus belonged), who collected the taxes for the caliph in Syria. Such material, almost entirely unexploited by modern historians, reveals much about the active involvement of the Christian elites both in civil and church government, and also about the interests and concerns of their historians.

Perhaps the best known of the Syriac historians to Western scholars is the thirteenth-century Barhebraeus, and he too came from a well-known family.[41] His father was a doctor who had treated the Mongol Yasaʾur during the siege of Melitene in 1243/4, and his mother was of noble origin. Educated in Syriac, Arabic, medicine, and philosophy, in Melitene, Antioch, Damascus, and Tripoli, under Syrian Orthodox, Church of the East, and Muslim teachers, he was consecrated bishop at only twenty. Imprisoned after the Mongol capture of Aleppo, where he had attempted to negotiate with Hulagu (the founder of the Persian Ilkhanate), he survived to become maphrian in 1264. Thereafter his base was Maragha in Azerbaijan, the capital of the Ilkhanate, and a great intellectual centre, where he became close to key figures in the administration and such scholars as Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, and met with scholars who travelled from across the Mongol Empire to make use of the great libraries established there. For Barhebraeus historical writing was just one part of his scholarly activity which embraced all areas of contemporary science, but it stemmed directly from his elite education and his ecclesiastical position at the heart of contemporary world events.

[40] Muriel Debié, 'The Christians in the Service of the Caliph: Through the Looking Glass of Communal Identities', in Fred Donner and Antoine Borrut (eds.), *Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians in the Umayyad State* (forthcoming).

[41] Cf. Hidemi Takahashi, *Barhebraeus: A Bio-Bibliography* (Piscataway, 2005).

SOURCES FOR SYRIAC HISTORICAL WRITING

The earliest historical source for Christian as well as Jewish writers is the Bible; the Pentateuch was considered by Syriac historians to be a work of history, written by Moses. The Old and New Testaments were thus read as reliable sources of information about distant and immemorial times. Since many Syriac historians were also theologians they employed their exegetical skills to extract information from the biblical texts, and this also involved a comparative source-critical approach to the different biblical versions (the Hebrew, Samaritan, Greek Septuagint, and Syriac Peshitta, each of which provided a different chronology for Old Testament events) either directly, or through the work of their predecessors.

It is often possible to identify the sources of their sources: Jewish hellenistic authors such as Eupolemus, or Manetho on Egyptian history, and Berossus on the Assyrian period were known to Michael the Syrian only through Eusebius's works, as well as Alexander Polyhistor and Abydenos. Josephus as well as Julius Africanus were probably known directly and indirectly. Eusebius's successors in the fields of chronicles (the Alexandrian Annianos and the mysterious Andronicos) and of ecclesiastical history (Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, Theodore Lector, and Evagrius Scholasticus) were known and used by the Syrian historians. The *Ecclesiastical History* of Zachariah Scholasticus was summarized and adapted by the so-called Pseudo-Zachariah in his own history in the sixth century. The sixth-century Greek chronicle of Malalas, especially those sections dealing with Antioch, was used by his contemporary John of Ephesus, writing in Constantinople, and so traces can be found in those works that in turn relied upon him, such as Michael the Syrian, the *Chronicle of 1234*, and Barhebraeus. Syriac histories and chronicles were also used as sources by their successors, as notably the chronicle of Dionysios of Tel-Mahré which was extensively copied and adapted by Michael the Syrian and the *Chronicle of 1234*, and the *History of Edessa and Amid* by the so-called Pseudo-Joshua which is now preserved only within the larger *Zuqnin Chronicle*.

East Syriac historiography was constructed upon the hagiographical substructure of a network of saints' lives, most of which have now completely disappeared. Syrian Orthodox histories are much less dependent on hagiography but a confessional identity was partially shaped through the lives of the early martyrs and saints of the Miaphysite cause. (Curiously, there is very little Syriac hagiography dealing with 'neo-martyrs' under Islam, unlike in the Greek and Arabic traditions.) East Syrian writers also made frequent use of such apocryphal texts as the *Legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus*, or the *History of the Twelve Magi*, and legends such as the *History of Alexander the Great*.

Syriac historical writing produced in cities such as Edessa occasionally refers to documents to be found in the city archives, but more commonly reference is made to letters dealing with ecclesiastical policy that were probably preserved in

church archives. Very rarely a historian will cite civil letters, as for example Barhebraeus who quotes the Mongol correspondence of Hulagu.

Some Muslim sources were used by Syrian Christian authors: Elijah of Nisibis made use of Musa al-Khwarizmi's now lost history; al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-muluk* [History of Prophets and Kings]; al-Suli; and Thabit b. Sinan, to cite only some of his ninth- and tenth-century sources. Most chronicles used lists of the caliphs or other Muslim sources that they do not otherwise identify and simply call 'books of the Arabs'. Barhebraeus in his own adaptation in Arabic of his world history uses a number of Muslim historians, such as the eleventh-century Saʿid al-Andalusi, and the twelfth- to thirteenth-century writers al-Qifti, Ibn al-Athir, ʿAtaʾ Malik al-Ghuvayni, Nasir al-Din Tusi. As might be expected, Muslim historians also cited Syro-Arabic texts, and so the tenth-century Melkite Agapius of Menbij, for example, is cited by his contemporary Masʿudi and by the thirteenth-century Ibn Shaddad. Indeed the existence of some of these histories is now only known from these citations, as is the case with the tenth-century historians Qays al-Maruni and Yaʿqub b. Zakariyya al-Kashkari who are cited with approval by Masʿudi. This should serve as a reminder that whilst modern academic specializations and university faculty structures often result in the Syrian Christians and their historical writing being regarded as exotic outsiders to the Byzantine and Islamic empires and their historiography, the reality was quite different. Syriac historical writing is an internal source for the history of these realms, as was recognized by their non-Syriac contemporaries, albeit one with its own concerns and agendas.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

431	Council of Ephesus, Byzantine condemnation of Nestorius
451	Council of Chalcedon, Byzantine condemnation of Miaphysites
489	Closure of Persian School in Edessa, on orders of Emperor Zeno
502–6	Persian invasions of northern Mesopotamia under Shah Kavadh
602–28	Byzantine–Sasanian War
634–8	Arab conquest of Syria and Mesopotamia
638	Emperor Tang Taizong decrees toleration of Church of the East in China
640s	Arab conquest of Persia
651	Death of Yazdegerd II and end of Sasanian dynasty of Persia
*c.*680–92	Second Islamic Civil War (Fitna)
750	Defeat of the Umayyad caliphate by the Abbasid caliphate
934	Byzantine reconquest of Melitene
1098–1150	Crusader County of Edessa
1170s	Ayyubids under Saladin replace Fatimids and Seljuks in Egypt and Syria

1187–92	Third Crusade, fighting Saladin
1204	Sack of Constantinople by Fourth Crusade
1220s	Formation of the Mongol Chaghatay Empire in Central Asia
1250s	Mamluks replace Ayyubids in Egypt and Syria
1258	Mongols conquer Baghdad, formation of Ilkhanate Empire in Persia and Iraq
1370s	Formation of the Timurid Empire in Iran and Central Asia

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Chapter 9

From Reciting to Writing and Interpretation: Tendencies, Themes, and Demarcations of Armenian Historical Writing

Theo Maarten van Lint

> Originally the Armenians were not so much permeated by Iranian culture as examples of it. In the Sasanian period they developed a self-awareness as Christian Armenians specifically against the background of their earlier Iranian links. . . . And despite the attention given to Armenia's Christianization by the recent celebrations of the 1700th anniversary of its proclamation, the process of sloughing off their real patrimonial culture has not been studied in detail.[1]
>
> Robert W. Thomson

Emerging towards the mid-fifth century, after the invention of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Maštoc' around AD 405, Armenian historiography was closely tied to the spread and defence of Christianity in Armenia, which had been declared the state religion by King Trdat, around 314.[2] Because Armenia had been within the Iranian cultural and religious orbit from Achaemenid times onwards, the emergence of a Western orientation promoted by the Armenian Church meant a categorical change in outlook, which would dominate its historiography. Often contested between powerful eastern and western neighbours, various royal dynasties reigned over Armenia, of which the last one, the Aršakuni (Arsacid) was of Parthian origin and acceded to power in the first century AD.

[1] Robert W. Thomson, 'Armenian Ideology and the Persians', in *La Persia e Bisanzio: Atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, 14–18 ottobre 2002* (Rome, 2004), 373–89, at 373–4.

[2] A succinct survey of early Armenian history, historical geography, and literature is Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. I: *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century* (Basingstoke and London, 1997), in particular the contributions by Robert H. Hewsen, James Russell, Nina Garsoïan, Robert Thomson, and Peter Cowe. Excellent maps and surveys can be found in Robert H. Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago and London, 2001). The Armenian Apostolic Church sets the date of the conversion of Armenia at 301 and different dates have been proposed as well, cf. Jean-Pierre Mahé, 'Il Primo secolo dell'Armenia cristiana (298–387): dalla letteratura alla storia', in Claude Mutafian (ed.), *Roma-Armenia* (Rome, 1999), 64–72.

When the Sasanians overthrew the Parthians in Iran around 224, this caused a rift between the royal houses of the two realms, exacerbated less than a century later by Armenia's adoption of Christianity. In Armenia the Aršakunis continued to reign until 428, when the Armenian *naxarars* (nobles) requested the Sasanian King of Kings to abolish the monarchy. Armenia was henceforth ruled by a *marzpan* (governor), appointed by the Sasanian ruler. In about 387 Armenia had been partitioned, leaving the areas west of the Euphrates under Roman suzerainty, and without successor after the death of King Aršak III, *circa* 390. The far larger area east of the Euphrates fell to the Sasanian Empire. The Sasanians adhered to Mazdeism, a form of Zoroastrianism, which they sought to re-impose on the young Christian nation in several attempts, not without support from some of the Armenian *naxarars*. The most serious of these culminated in the Battle of Avarayr in 451, after which resistance continued until in 484 religious freedom was granted. This religious struggle has left a deep imprint on Armenian historiography, and has long prevented it from acknowledging the Iranian elements in the wider Armenian social and cultural spheres.[3] The political landscape changed dramatically when Arab invasions destroyed the Sasanian Empire, and Armenia came under Arab control in approximately 650. With the coming of Islam the formative period of Armenian historiography came to an end.

A DUAL TRADITION

The written histories were not the first or only means by which Armenians remembered their high deeds. Vestiges of epic tales, songs, and legends have been preserved, and these point to a well-established tradition of memory transmission by *gusans*, poet-performers, and to Iranian models in its central concerns. These representations of an ancient culture did not disappear with the introduction of Christianity. Indeed, those writing Armenian history from a Christian perspective had to rely on external written sources or on this orally transmitted information about Armenia's pre-Christian past. A highly interesting intermediate period occurred when Armenia had officially adopted Christianity *circa* 314, but had not yet developed an alphabet through which Armenian could be written, which occurred in 405, while the first original Armenian work, Koriwn's *Vark' Maštoc'i* [Life of Maštoc']was composed between 443 and 450. The beginnings of history written in Armenian thus post-date the conversion to Christianity by one and a half centuries. The situation in the fourth century and its description in

[3] Cf. Nina G. Garsoïan, 'Reality and Myth in Armenian History', in *The East and the Meaning of History* (Rome, 1994), 117–45; and Garsoïan, 'The Two Voices of Armenian Mediaeval Historiography: The Iranian Index', *Studia Iranica*, 25 (1996), 7–43; both reprinted in Garsoïan, *Church and Culture in Early Medieval Armenia* (Aldershot, 1999), XII and XI.

fifth-century texts provide a fascinating insight into the beginnings of the long process of the Christianization of Armenian life in its manifold aspects.[4] They chronicle the vicissitudes of a recently converted Christian state whose administrative languages had for centuries been Aramaic and Greek, and whose liturgy was celebrated in Greek and Syriac, the Edessene dialect of Aramaic. Lacking the means to write in their native language, the Armenians continued to rely on ancient models of memory preservation, the epic tales now woven to relate the lives of Christian kings and nobles, while hagiographic material developed to hold up saints' lives for emulation.

This set of circumstances introduces a range of oppositions between a written and an oral tradition, a Christian and a Zoroastrian one, and one built by members of the clergy versus one carried by *gusans*. Existing modes of memory and tradition underwent a profound change: orally transmitted epics of valorous kings carrying divine glory were replaced with a written history of salvation, Iranian models replaced with Greek ones, cyclic time with chronology.

THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF HISTORICAL WRITING

The position now generally accepted as a convincing description of the formation and development of the tradition of historical writing in Armenia is set out in a 1992 article by Jean-Pierre Mahé.[5] Here the initial phase of the Armenian historiographical tradition as it developed before the Arab invasions is characterized as biblical, national, unitary, and Mamikonean, that is, centred around the leading noble family in the realm after the Arsacid kingdom had been abolished. A further characteristic is the paradigm of martyrdom in defence of the faith. Each one of these deserves brief elucidation.

'The historical calling of Armenian literature', writes Mahé, 'can largely be explained by the way the first historian, Koriwn, read the Bible when he wrote his *Life of Maštoc'*, around 443.' He did so from an Antiochene perspective, emphasizing the historical aspect of the biblical text, in conformity with the spirit in which the early Armenian translators of the Bible had worked, considering Scripture as a book of history relating God's work in creating the world and in providing salvation for mankind. The choice for an Antiochene interpretation was made in combination with the principles of translation set out in Eusebius of Emesa's *Octateuch*, which was translated into Armenian early in the fifth century, and advocates a translation *ad sensum*, preferring a supple and clear translation over a literal but obscure word-by-word rendering.[6] Koriwn considered himself a Christian

[4] Cf. Mahé, 'Il Primo secolo dell'Armenia cristiana'.

[5] Jean-Pierre Mahé, 'Entre Moïse et Mahomed: réflexions sur l'historiographie arménienne', *Revue des Etudes Arméniennes*, 23 (1992), 121–53.

[6] Ibid., 124–5, 144.

historian continuing in the vein of the biblical one by offering fresh examples of divine grace, now spreading over all of mankind.[7] Mahé concludes: 'Thus, as testimony rendered to God, the history of the Armenians, after they have been baptised has exactly the same value and legitimacy as the Holy Scriptures.'[8]

The national aspect of early Armenian historiography resides in its encompassing character. Through its adoption of the Bible as its predecessor (and literary model) it signals a radical reorientation: a complete break with the heroic oral epics that carried the memory of the nation, and the grafting of a new past upon this memory instead, containing the history of God's redeeming plan for the world. Koriwn expresses the latter by pointing out that through the translation of the Bible, Moses, the prophets, and the apostles now all spoke Armenian; what had lain beyond the horizon of Armenian consciousness before the adoption of Christianity and up to the invention of the alphabet with the ensuing translation of Scripture, was now familiar and one's own. Koriwn's description has to be considered as a programmatic view rather than as one of the situation in place around the middle of the fifth century. It was reiterated by later historians such as the (probably) sixth-century Ełišē, in his *Vasn Vardanay ew Hayocʻ paterazmin* [History of Vardan and the Armenian War]. The author purports to be a contemporary of the battle of Avarayr (451), when he calls Christianity the ancestral religion, a qualification in fact better fit for Zoroastrianism. However, it was this view that was decisive for the image the Armenians developed of themselves, and Christianity did become a core element of Armenian identity.

The unitary character of early Armenian historiography emerges from the chain-like continuity with which the first historians start off where their predecessors had stopped, without providing alternative interpretations of the period covered by those. The author of the fifth-century *Buzandaran patmutʻiwnkʻ* [Epic Histories] describes his work as a brick in the wall of the edifice of Armenian historiography, probably building on works he does not explicitly mention, such as the hagiographic cycle of St Thaddeus, one of Christ's apostles who would have preached and been buried in Armenia, and Agathangelos's *Patmutʻiwn: Varkʻ ew patmutʻiwn srboyn Grigori* [History of the Armenians: The Life and History of Saint Gregory], describing the conversion by St Gregory the Illuminator of King Trdat and the whole of Armenia. The *Buzandaran* continues where Agathangelos broke off, describing the years between 330 and 387, around the time the activities of Mesrop Maštocʻ began, which culminated in the invention of the alphabet and the translation of the Bible, as described by Koriwn.[9] Likewise, Łazar Pʻarpecʻi

[7] Ibid., 125. Parallels for this view can be found e.g. in Latin hagiography and historiography: Mahé adduces J. Fontaine, *Sulpice Sevère, Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1967).

[8] Mahé, 'Entre Moïse et Mahomed', 125.

[9] Nina G. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories* (*Buzandaran Patmutʻiwnkʻ*) (Cambridge, Mass., 1989); Robert W. Thomson, *Agathangelos: History of the Armenians* (Albany 1976); and Thomson, *The Lives of Saint Gregory: The Armenian, Greek, Arabic, and Syriac Versions of the History Attributed to Agathangelos* (Ann Arbor, 2010). The early authors did not consider Koriwn's *Life of Maštocʻ* a history.

considers his *Patmut'iwn hayoc'* [History of the Armenians], taking matters to about 485, a continuation of the *Buzandaran*.[10] However, he strongly disapproves of its style and the lack of learning, unbecoming for its presumed author, a certain P'awstos Biwzandac'i, or Pawstos from Byzantium, an ascription that can no longer be maintained.

Connecting early Armenian historiography with the name of the Mamikoneans, Mahé stresses the central role these *naxarars* (nobles) played in Armenia: politically, as regents and king-makers, and militarily as commanders in chief, both hereditary functions within that family. Their position is reflected in historiography, which facilitated the writing of a national, and possibly of a unitary history.

Moreover, the Mamikoneans embody perseverance and martyrdom in defence of the faith as well, which would prove to be a guiding principle throughout Armenian history. It was perceived through the paradigm set by the Maccabees in their defence against the Seleucids. First mentioned in the *Buzandaran patmut'iwnk'*, it is best known from Ełišē's *Vasn Vardanay ew Hayoc' paterazmin*, which places the *sparapet* or commander-in-chief of the army, Vardan Mamikonean, his stance and death in the battle of Avarayr in this light. For Ełišē moral conduct and martyrdom were connected with the survival of the nation. The 'Vardanank'', Vardan and his companions, celebrated as saints, occupy an important place in the calendar of the Armenian Church as well.[11] Martyrdom had been present in Armenian historiography from its hagiographical beginnings in a core text, not itself preserved in Armenian, and conveniently entitled *Life of St Gregory*, out of which Agathangelos's *Patmut'iwn* developed, and where the perseverance in his faith under torture and years of imprisonment in the *Xor Virap* [Deep Pit] eventually yielded the rich harvest of the king's and the people's conversion.[12]

The above-mentioned aspects provide a partial description of the early period's historiographical record. Grafting a new past upon an existing one and thereby replacing it in order to unite the nation in Christ and make it part of the commonwealth of Christianity, was an audacious aspect of the Christian conquest of Armenia. Whether on parchment or in society, this conquest was a drawn out process, not limited to the campaign conducted by Saint Gregory and King Trdat purportedly encompassing the whole of Armenia and all its inhabitants, despite the picture presented in Agathangelos's *Patmut'iwn*.[13] Koriwn is realistic

[10] Mahé, 'Entre Moïse et Mahomed', 128–9.

[11] Robert W. Thomson, 'The Maccabees in Early Armenian Historiography', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 26 (1975), 329–41; with reference at 336 n. 1 to H. Delahaye, *Les Passions des Martyrs et les genres littéraires*, 2nd edn (Bruxelles 1966), 134–5, 163–5; repr. in Thomson, *Studies in Armenian Literature and Christianity* (Aldershot, 1994), VII; Thomson, *Ełishē: History of Vardan and the Armenian War* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 11–14.

[12] Thomson, *The Lives of Saint Gregory*.

[13] Thomson, *Agathangelos*, §757–866; and Thomson, *The Lives of Saint Gregory*, §757–866.

in presenting the superficial Christianization of the land with its remaining pagan districts as a direct motive for the development of the alphabet, but he deliberately sets oral traditions aside in his proclamation of a new beginning and a 'new past'.[14]

The *Buzandaran patmut'iwnk'*, our best source for the period, describes events between 330 and 387, that is about half of the period in which Christianity as Armenia's official religion and the absence of a written Armenian tradition coincide. It brings together three separate strands of narrative, a royal history, a Mamikonean history, and an ecclesiastical history. While the latter is based on hagiographic sources, the former two derive from epic material that might be called an *Aršakuni Geste* and a *Mamikonean Geste*.[15] Written probably in the 470s, it relates events of 140 to 80 years earlier. Nina Garsoïan describes its sources and place within Armenian historical literature as follows:

> Oral transmission . . . is the fundamental key to the problem of the sources in the *Epic Histories* [*Buzandaran patmut'iwnk'*], whatever their ultimate origin. . . . [T]heir author does not seem to have been in any sense a learned man or to have searched for written evidence on which to base his account. His main source of information, as indicated in the very title of the work, was the living, oral tradition of Armenia's immediate past and the tales and songs still related by bards (*gusans*) in his own time. As a result he is our main source for the evidently vast oral literature of Early Christian Armenia, to which we have almost no other access.[16]

Whoever, unlike Koriwn, wanted to describe Armenia's history from its beginnings and include the long centuries of Armenian monarchy and statehood before the coming of Christianity had to take into account older traditions, presented from quite a different perspective.[17] Our knowledge of Armenian society up to its early Christian period is the richer for it, as this picture, painted in terms of stern rejection emerging from the *Buzandaran* will bear out:[18]

> For from antiquity when they had taken on the name of Christians, it was merely as (though it were) some human religion; and they did not receive it with ardent faith, but as some human folly (and) under duress. (They did not receive it) with understanding as is fitting, with hope and faith, but only those who were to some degree acquainted with Greek or Syriac learning (were able) to achieve some partial inkling of it. As for those who were without skill in learning

[14] Jean-Pierre Mahé, 'Koriwn, La *Vie de Maštoc'*, traduction annotée', *Revue des Etudes Arméniennes*, 30 (2005–7), 59–97, at 68 (V.3) with n. 78; cf. Gabrielle Winkler, *Koriwns Biographie des Mesrop Maštoc': Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Rome, 1994), 122 (Koriwn II, §28).

[15] Garsoïan, *Epic Histories*, 30–5.

[16] Ibid., 30, 30–1 n. 138; on *Buzandaran*, a compositum containing *buzand-* meaning 'reciter of epic poems, bard', see ibid., 14, quoting Anahid Perikhanian, 'Sur arm. *buzand*', in Dickran Kouymjian (ed.), *Armenian Studies in Memoriam Haïg Berbérian* (Lisbon, 1986), 653–8.

[17] Mahé, 'Entre Moïse et Mahomed', 144 points out that folklore and oral tradition entered historiography, followed by biblical exegesis and other forms of knowledge, making it into an extremely rich genre.

[18] Garsoïan, *Epic Histories*, 84–5 (III.13).

and who were the great mass of the people—the *naxarars* as well as the peasantry—even had spiritual-teachers sat night and day pouring the abundance of their teaching over (their heads) like a torrent of rain from the clouds, not one of them could keep in mind a single thing of what he heard: not a word, not half a word, not a minimal record, not a trace! For they devoted their minds exclusively to vain and useless things, just like small boys who give themselves up to games in childhood and youth paying no attention to useful and important matters. So they too, having savage, barbarous minds, consumed themselves with vile thoughts in perverse practices, (and) in ancient pagan customs. They cherished with assiduous care their songs (*erg*), legends (*aṙaspel*), and epics (*vipasanut'iwn*),[19] believed in them and persevered in the same way, in hatred and in malignant envy toward one another, in vengeful enmity; to revile one another, and to deceive (both) companion and brother. Friend laid traps against friend, relation against relation, family against family, kinsman against kinsman, in-law against in-law.[20] Men were found there thirsting to drink the blood of their companions, willingly seeking to do harm because of their incorrigible ways and senseless minds. And they performed in darkness like obscene acts the rites of the old pagan gods and some even fulfilled on themselves the desire of lustful pollution. Therefore, they did not listen to the counsel of wisdom, nor submit to the Commandments of God spoken by their spiritual-leaders, but hated, persecuted, and killed them because of their rebukes.

This quotation shows both elements of orality present in the work. The author alludes to texts from the book of Isaiah, probably quoting from memory. Moreover he uses formulae that betray an oral mode of composition, for example in: 'not one of them could keep in mind a single thing of what he heard: not a word, not half a word, not a minimal record, not a trace!'[21] The section moreover mentions the songs, legends, and epic tales, which the majority of the population preferred over Christian instruction.

The *Buzandaran patmut'iwnk'* provide further examples of non-Christian customs, such as idol worship, the casting of lots for the purpose of divination, funeral mourning practices mocking the 'hope in the renewal of the resurrection', and the expectation that the *Aṙalezk'*, supernatural dogs, would restore to life the murdered *sparapet* Mušeł Mamikonean.[22] Non-Christian beliefs and practices were very real occurrences in the fourth century, and continued to be extant in the fifth, and even later.[23]

Early Armenian historio-'graphy' is thus twofold: written and oral, and only indirectly transmitted flashes of its oral component have come down to us.[24] This

[19] Garsoïan, *Epic Histories*, 30–5, 310–11 nn. 4–19.
[20] Cf. Isa. 3:5, 19:2.
[21] Garsoïan, *Epic Histories*, 590–1.
[22] Ibid., 51 nn. 239–40.
[23] Cf. James R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia* (Cambridge, 1987); and Russell, *Armenian and Iranian Studies* (Cambridge and Boston, 2004).
[24] The written sources' aptitude for oral delivery underlines their competitive role with traditional, oral forms of commemoration of worthy deeds and persons. '[E]specially with some of the *Histories* one sometimes has the feeling that they would sound to best advantage if declaimed.' Robert W. Thomson, 'Armenian Literary Culture through the Eleventh Century', in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1 (London, 1997), 207.

means that the flourishing genre of historical writing may well have been perceived as incomplete, and quite likely to a degree biased, depending on time and place, by at least part of the population contemporary with their composition.

The violent opposition to Christianity described by Agathangelos occurred later as well, when some *naxarars* willingly executed the orders of the Mazdean Sasanians. Many continued to look for entertainment, for preservation of the memory of the heroic valour (*kaĵut'iwn*) and supernatural glory of the king (*paŕk'*), to the *gusans* and their songs, legends, and epics.[25] Before the invention of the alphabet the exploits of the now Christian kings and *naxarars* were recorded in this way, as well. This opened the way for a process of Christianization of the *gusans* and their forms of composition, which would take several centuries to develop fully, without entirely effacing the traditional oral composition and transmission of non-Christian material.

The tension this necessary reliance on oral tradition evoked is felt acutely in Movsēs Xorenac'i's *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'* [History of the Armenians].[26] His preference for chronology and the reliability of written sources would be defining for Armenian historiography over the remainder of the medieval period. It stemmed from education received in the Greek schools, first pagan, then Christian, throughout the eastern Mediterranean world, permitting Armenians to develop an extensive translated and original literature of high quality immediately upon the invention of the alphabet. However, the insufficiency of this ideal becomes strikingly evident when Xorenac'i chides his patron, Smbat Bagratuni, for his interest in other types of stories: 'But what then is your delight in the obscene and ridiculous fables of Biurasp Azhdahak; and why do you trouble us for those absurd and incoherent Persian stories, notorious for their imbecility? . . . Surely they are not Greek fables, noble and polished and meaningful, which have hidden in themselves allegorically the meaning of the events?' Movsēs devises an extraordinary intermezzo between the first and second of his three books, setting apart the Persian fables and explaining them to his patron, whose curiosity he diplomatically ascribes to his youth.[27]

One observes in Movsēs a varied attitude towards orally transmitted sources. Those pertaining to the pre-Christian Armenian past are unfortunately sometimes to be taken as the basis for his account in the absence of more trustworthy material, but this is not the case with the Iranian material. Smbat and other laypersons may not have made the distinction. Movsēs does cite fragments of

[25] On the Iranian background and supernatural connotations of *kaĵut'iwn* and *paŕk'* see Garsoïan, *Epic Histories*, 534–5, 552.

[26] Robert W. Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i: History of the Armenians* (Ann Arbor, 2006). The traditional fifth-century dating of this masterpiece of Armenian literature has elicited much discussion. A recent, plausible proposal places the final version after 775; Nina G. Garsoïan, 'L'*Histoire* attribuée à Movsēs Xorenac'i: que reste-t'il à en dire?' *Revue des Etudes Arméniennes*, 29 (2003–4), 29–48.

[27] Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i*, 123–5 at 123. Cf. Edward Gulbekian, 'Movses Xorenac'i's Remarks to His Patron', *Le Muséon*, 97 (1984), 59–79.

non-Christian songs and epic tales that he heard himself and, together with the *Buzandaran patmut'iwnk'*, is our most important, albeit reluctant, witness for them.[28] Interest in them did not disappear for many centuries to come: pre-Christian funeral rites continued to be condemned by clerical authors well into the tenth century, and banquets where *gusans* entertained the nobility, and even the king, are known to have taken place in the same period.

One wonders to what extent the non-Christian contents of the transmitted songs, legends, and epic tales remained dominant in the *gusans*' repertoire. The gradual Christianization of Armenian culture and its institutions affected these carriers of memory of heroic valour and divinely bestowed royal glory, as it did their patrons. The negative attitude towards *gusans* we find in some of the historians and in the Church canons may lead us to overlook such a development. The outcome of such a gradual transformation is possibly reflected in Movsēs Dasxuranc'i's *Patmut'iwn Ałuanic' aškarhi* [History of the Caucasian Albanians], a composite work of the late seventh and tenth centuries.[29] It describes the vicissitudes of the north-eastern neighbours of the Armenians, who from the first to the sixth century AD were ruled by a branch of the Parthian Arsacids, and who are said to have been converted to Christianity by Armenian missionaries. Their alphabet is claimed to have been devised by Mesrop Maštoc', while the clerical hierarchy was subordinate to the Armenian one.[30] The part of Book 2 describing the exploits of the seventh-century Prince Ĵuanšēr, comprising the abecedarian elegy pronounced after his murder, is considered by some scholars to be a composition ('*vēp*', 'romance') by a 'bard'. Some parts contain transcripts of correspondence, or phrases carrying patristic overtones, and a hagiographic section focusing on the find of a piece of the true cross.[31] The section relates the pious Ĵuanšēr's life, his election to the highest military command of Caucasian Albania at an early age, his military prowess and diplomatic wisdom in dealing with the Greeks, Persians, and Arabs. He was pious and humble for the greater part of his life: 'the fortunate Ĵuanšēr ruled the land in this unstable life in accordance with God's will'.[32] In this state he 'set out for the mountain regions for the recreations of the whole annual festivities, which he spent happily in land-surveying in the

[28] Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i*, 9–11, 116–20 (I.30–1).

[29] C. J. F. Dowsett, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* (London, 1961).

[30] Hewsen, *Armenia*, 40. For a recent study of the language and its literary monuments, see e.g. Jost Gippert, Wolfgang Schulze, Zaza Aleksidze, and Jean-Pierre Mahé (eds.), *The Caucasian Albanian Palimpsests of Mount Sinai* (Turnhout, 2008).

[31] Dowsett, *Caucasian Albanians*, 107–49 (II.17–35); *vēp* ('romance'), at p. 109 n. 3, quoting H. N. Akinean, 'Movsēs Dasxuranc'i (called Kałankatuac'i) and his History of the Albanians', *Handēs Amsoreay*, 67 (1953), 169. Dowsett, *Caucasian Albanians*, 109 n. 3, tends to the opinion that 'the chapters concerning Ĵevanšēr . . . consist of episodes that clearly owe more to the lyricism of the bards than to the veracity of the chroniclers', a description close to those invoked to characterize epic tales. The phrase, 'Now what shall I relate, now what shall I recount?' at p. 129, echoes a turn of phrase found, for example, in John Chrysostome's homilies.

[32] Dowsett, *Caucasian Albanians*, 137 (II.32).

company of skilled minstrels'.[33] This casual remark about the presence of 'skilled minstrels' in the God-fearing ruler of the land's retinue leads one to assume this was a normal occurrence. They will have entertained the prince with song and epic tales, and may have composed panegyrics or epic tales of his life themselves.

Returning to the capital Partaw to celebrate the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross he prayed in his own richly decorated chapel. However,

> the much lauded and beloved Ĵuanšēr, the coveted general who in his versatile wisdom subjected all men to his authority, being blessed with all the good things of this world, was proud of his intellectual prowess. Afterwards, however, the beloved and glorious man became vain and empty and was stripped of these glories by the snares of vice, for he transgressed the commandments of the Lord. All became a spider's web [cf. Job 8, 14], and the wonderful splendour swiftly vanished.[34]
>
> …The treacherous Varazoy…contemplated his death and thought evil thoughts, enticing him into lascivious behaviour and persuading him with deceitful words to abandon himself to obscene pleasures. When the prince emerged from his palace along the path through the flowerbeds of the garden in the first hour of the night, armed only with a sabre and without a shield, the troop of fully-armed guards stood at the gates of the palace, unconcerned, fearing nothing and sunk in sleep.

Varazoy strikes, and the prince fights back. 'But the power of the Most High had abandoned him, and delivered him into the hands of the favourite he had himself reared.'[35] Varazoy leaves the prince mortally wounded. Ĵuanšēr's being abandoned by God when he departed from God's ways finds a parallel in biblical models as well as in cases in the *Buzandaran patmut'iwnk'*, where the king, due to unworthy behaviour, loses his divinely bestowed *park'* or glory.

The section on Ĵuanšēr's exploits concludes with the earliest piece of secular Armenian poetry since the adoption of Christianity to have reached us, in the form of an abecedarian elegy extolling the prince and bewailing his passing. Immediately preceding the elegy Dasxuranc'i provides a description of its composer:

> The great *naxarars* and the whole country assembled, and with much lamentation, mourned the prince with plaintive and sorrowful voices. An orator called Dawt'ak arose, a man skilled in the artist's craft, expert in imaginative exercises, advanced in declamatory poetry, a man who spoke excellently well with rich and eloquent oratory and whose tongue was like the pen of a ready writer. He had spent a long time at the royal court after his arrival there, and when the dire news of the sudden assassination of the great general spread throughout our eastern land, he began to sing this elegy in acrostic form upon the worthy Ĵuanšēr.[36]

Dawt'ak performs the function of a court poet, as a *gusan* would have done. He was a travelling poet, a Christian—or at least delivering a Christian poem, and

[33] Ibid., 142 (II.34). The critical edition places the *gusans* at the beginning of the next sentence.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 144 (II.34).
[36] Ibid., 145 (II.34).

educated in written forms of composition. He may be considered an example of a Christian *gusan*, performing for Christian nobles. Charles Dowsett considers it a distinct possibility that many of the passages concerning Ĵuanšēr formed 'part of a public address to the prince, perhaps by the same Dawt'ak'.[37] In the Ĵuanšēr cycle we witness, in my view, a merger of the setting and some of the narrative techniques of the oral tradition with that of the written one. We are presented with one instance of the result of the Christianization of Armenian culture, having 'sloughed off' its 'patrimonial culture'.[38]

Early Armenian historical writing is thus less representative of the whole of the spectrum of opinion and attitude than it pretends to be. Latent tensions caused by adherence to the ancient religion of Zoroastrianism or to a preference of cultural transmission of memory through *gusans* and their compositions at banquets as well as at occasions of particular significance can be discovered in these texts, that have to rely upon the vestiges of a mode of memory preservation that they all but, however not quite achieve to, obliterate.

HISTORICAL WRITING AND THEOLOGICAL ALLEGIANCES

In the seemingly unified historiography of the early period a further opposition may be detected, between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Christianity, which has consequences for the tensions that underlie and motivate some of the works composed in the period after the coming of Islam. With the exception of Eznik's fifth-century *Ełc ałandoc'* [Confutation of the Sects], which apart from the Greek philosophers and the Mazdeans also considered the Marcionites, early antagonistic writing was directed at the remnants of the pre-Christian faith of Armenia.[39] This changed after the decisions of the council of Chalcedon (AD 451) opened up rifts among confessional persuasions in Armenia. While sixth-century Armenian councils touched on various matters implicating the Chalcedonian decisions over the dual nature of Christ, it was the split between the Georgian and Armenian churches in the early seventh century that forced the Armenian Church explicitly to reject Chalcedon.[40] However, only after the council of Manazkert in 726 Catholicos Yovhannēs III Ōjnec'i (717–28) put the Church's theology on a definitive footing.

Seventh-century Armenian historical writing is important for the unexpected light it throws on the country's confessional oscillations. While the *Girk' t'łt'oc'*

[37] Dowsett, *Caucasian Albanians*, 129 n. 4.

[38] This is not a comment on the character of Caucasian Albanian reality, but on its presentation in an Armenian source.

[39] Remnants of Zoroastrianism as faith persisted; In the twelfth century Nersēs Šnorhali advises concerning the Children of the Sun. See Russell, *Zoroastrianism*, 515–39. Cf. Louis Maries and Charles Mercier, *Eznik de Kołb: De Deo* (PO, XXVIII, 3–4; Paris 1959).

[40] See Nina Garsoïan, *L'église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient* (Louvain, 1999).

[Book of Letters], containing the official correspondence of the Armenian Church between the fifth and thirteenth centuries, represents the theological views upheld by its leaders, it omits any correspondence between 618 and 703, a period during which the non-Chalcedonian theology of the Armenian Church was in serious doubt. However, there exists an Armenian historic account, datable to the end of the seventh century, which is written from a Chalcedonian perspective and preserved only in a later Greek translation. The *Narratio de Rebus Armeniae* thus presents a highly valuable theological viewpoint that did not become mainstream in Armenia, despite continued presence over the centuries of Armenian adherents to it both inside Armenian territory, which varied over the centuries, and outside of it.[41] Moreover, Photius, Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church (858–67, 877–86), made use of it in his rapprochement to the Armenian Church when Arab power was waning. It was a source as well for Arseni Sapareli's Georgian treatise *Ganqopisatvis kartvelta da somexta* [On the Separation of the Georgians and the Armenians], datable not before 1004. This presents a more confrontational point of view, denouncing the Armenian Church's anti-Chalcedonian stance.[42] As an example of the voice of an Armenian minority expressed by this non-Armenian source may serve the interpretation given by Arseni of the vision and prophecy of Saint Gregory the Illuminator recounted by Agathangelos, stating that some will fall away from the faith, while others persevere. The former are represented by those whose snow-white wool has turned black, with the latter remaining untainted. Sapareli casts the central figure of the Armenian Church as a Chalcedonian before the event, describing the non-Chalcedonian inheritors of Gregory's legacy, the mainstream Armenian Church, as those gone astray.[43]

Uxtanēs's tenth-century *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'* [History of Armenia] defends a diametrically opposite view in his re-interpretation of the section of the *Girk' t'łt'oc'* containing the correspondence concerning the rift between these two churches. Uxtanēs staunchly sides with the Armenian Church's decisions. These three works—the Greek *Narratio*, Sapareli's in Georgian, and Uxtanēs's in Armenian—provide valuable examples of the re-interpretation of the Christian past, which developed into an important theme in Armenian historiography.

Another reworking, also concerning relations between Armenians and Georgians, is the possibly early thirteenth-century Armenian adaptation of the

[41] See e.g. V. A. Arutjunova-Fidanjan, 'The Ethno-Confessonial Self-Awareness of Armenian Chalcedonians', *REArm*, 21 (1988–9), 345–63.

[42] Zaza Aleksidze and Jean-Pierre Mahé, 'Arsen Sapareli: Sur la separation des Géorgiens et des Arméniens', *REArm*, 32 (2010), 59–132, 63–83 (for Aleksidze's discussion of the work's dating). Despite the chronological difficulties a combination of Aleksidze's dating and an ascription to 'Arseni Sapareli' creates, the work remains conventionally ascribed to a person carrying this name.

[43] See Thomson, *Agathangelos*, 281, 291–3; Thomson, *Lives of St Gregory*, 342–3, 350–1 (§§740, 753–4); and Aleksidze and Mahé, *Arsen Sapareli*, 90, 109 (§VII,1). Agathangelos favours the influence in Armenia of Greek Christianity over that of the earlier Syrian one; cf. Garsoïan, *Epic Histories*, 46–7.

Georgian Chronicles (*K'art'lis C'xovreba*).[44] The Armenian text is considerably abbreviated but contains some expansions that introduce concerns articulated more widely in Armenian historiography, or aim at placing the Armenians in a favourable light at a time when Georgia held sway over large parts of Armenia. One example must suffice. While the Georgian text states that King Mirian agreed to worship both Persian and traditional gods, the Armenian excises the former, claiming that the Georgians declared, 'It is better for us to die than to be separated from the rites of our fathers', thus repeating a central notion in Ełišē on the defence of ancestral custom.[45]

Theological controversies receive further relief in the miaphysite *Ananun Žamanakagrut'iwn* [Anonymous Chronicle], plausibly ascribed by Tim Greenwood to P'ilon Tirakac'i and datable between September 686 and September 689/90. It consists of two parts, both translated from Greek: an epitomized universal chronicle close to the missing *Chronography* of Annianus of Alexandria, and a synoptic ecclesiastical history. The study shows that previous scholarship underestimated the role monotheletism played in Armenia.[46]

PROPHECY, APOCALYPSE, AND LAMENT AS CONSTITUENTS OF HISTORICAL WRITING AFTER THE COMING OF ISLAM

When considering Armenian historical writing of the period since the coming of Islam, several characteristics stand out, including apocalyptic notions, prophecy, visions, and laments. Not all of these are equally present throughout the corpus, and some can be found in earlier works as well, whether as parts of what can be discerned as original compositions, later interpolations, or translated works. Their scope often widens to include events outside of Armenia.

The coming of Islam posed the difficult question why the Arabs, now Muslims, had suddenly disturbed the ordered nature of things. The issue was first addressed in the seventh-century *Patmut'iwn Sebēosi* [History of Sebēos]. The unidentified author applied two methods of explanation, both biblical: quoting various verses referring to a danger coming from the south, and turning to Daniel's prophecy of four beasts representing four kingdoms. 'Sebēos' interprets them as the Greeks, the Persians, the people of the North, and the Muslims.[47] He expected the end of

[44] Robert W. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History: The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles. The Original Georgian Texts and the Armenian Adaptation* (Oxford, 1996).

[45] Ibid., pp. xlviii, 76–7.

[46] Tim Greenwood, '"New Light from the East": Chronography and Ecclesiastical History through a Late Seventh-Century Armenian Source', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 16:2 (2008), 197–254.

[47] Robert W. Thomson, 'Christian Perception of History: The Armenian Perspective', in J. J. van Ginkel, H. L. Murre-van den Berg, and T. M. van Lint (eds.), *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam* (Leuven, 2005), 38.

time to be truly imminent, and believed that the Antichrist already dwelled on earth. 'Sebēos' was the first to sound an apocalyptic note, but may not have been alone in the Armenian orbit, as the early part of Movses Dasxuranc'i's *Patmut'iwn Ałuanic' aškarhi* contains comparable material, tentatively datable to the 630s.[48] 'Sebēos' explains the Muslim conquest of the Holy Land as a consequence of the Christians' sinfulness, who thus forfeited their position, just as the Jews had by their opposition to Christ. The Arabs were chaste and modest, which is why God temporarily entrusted them with the possession of the Holy Land.

Given the Muslim persecution of Christians, Łewond (late eighth century) cannot maintain 'Sebēos's position and predicts liberation from Muslim rule for Armenia. This general interpretive framework was confirmed when two new kingdoms were formed, that of the Bagratid dynasty around Ani and Kars in the north (870s), and the Arcruni kingdom of Vaspurakan around lake Van in the south (908). These were annexed by Byzantium in the early and mid-eleventh century, immediately followed by the Seljuk invasions, which are the subject of Aristakēs Lastivertc'i's *Patmut'iwn* [History] (*c.*1080). He relies heavily on Old Testament examples for his description of the woes befallen the Armenians, whose renewed impiety duly exacted divine punishment through foreign races. Aristakēs does not predict salvation by an apocalyptic world-emperor; his view of history is moral, one can regain divine favour by turning away from sin.[49]

The late seventh-century Syriac apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius was influential in Armenia. It is quoted in Step'anos Ōrbelean's late thirteenth-century *Patmut'iwn nahangin Sisakan* [History of the Province of Siwnik'] in an appendix to the chapter devoted to the eighth-century scholar Step'anos Siwnec'i, and states that the Romans (Byzantines) will bring peace having overcome the Ismaelites (Muslims). Then Gog and Magog will devastate the world, followed by the appearance of the 'son of perdition' paving the way for the second coming of Christ, the extermination of the impious, and the ascension of the righteous like luminous stars.[50]

Elaboration of prophecies from earlier historians was a further way of shaping an explanatory model. In the *Buzandaran patmut'iwnk'* (IV.13) patriarch Nersēs says: 'For I have seen a vision that perdition and destruction are advancing on this doomed realm of Armenia', predicting the division in 387 of Armenia between Romans and Sasanians. The tenth-century *Patmut'iwn S. Nersisi Part'ewi Hayoc'*

[48] Tim W. Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes and Apocalyptic Expectations: A Re-evaluation of the Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos', *Le Muséon*, 115 (2002), 323–97, esp. 375–88. James Howard Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010), 70–137 appraises 'Sebeos', and Dasxuranc'i's works as historical sources.

[49] Robert W. Thomson, 'The Concept of "History" in Medieval Armenian Historians', in Anthony Eastmond (ed.), *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2001), 95–6; and Thomson, 'Aristakes of Lastivert and Armenian Reactions to Invasion', in R. G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Karin/Erzurum* (Costa Mesa, 2003), 73–88.

[50] Thomson, 'Christian Perception of History', 42; cf. Greenwood, 'Sasanian Echoes', 383.

hayrapeti [Life of St Nersēs] (with subsequent revisions), expands this into a prophecy on the fall of the Arsacid kingdom (428), the conquest of Jerusalem and the Cross by the Persians 150 years later (actually in 614); when the cross will be rendered to the Greeks the Ismaelites will replace them as rulers over the Holy City. The Greeks will remain subject to them until the coming of the Romans, called Franks, who will capture Jerusalem. Armenia will be sorely afflicted over the centuries and the nation of the archers will invade. This usually referred to the Mongols, but was also used for the Seljuks.[51]

The crux is the liberation by the Romans/Franks, which was elaborated in the twelfth-century *Žamanakagrut'iwn* [Chronicle] of Matthew of Edessa, which runs from 951 to 1136. It is organized in four periods based on two visions granted *vardapet* Yovhannēs Kozeŕn in 1029/30 and 1036/7.[52] Kozeŕn's visions as related by Matthew are indebted to Pseudo-Methodius through the promise of eventual prosperity under the king of the Romans, a reference to Methodius's last world emperor. Like Sebēos, Matthew employs Daniel's vision of the four kingdoms. The immediate past is difficult for Matthew to characterize within the scheme the visions prescribe: it is neither a period of continued punishment for sins, nor one which unequivocally heralds divine redemption.[53]

In classical fashion, T'ovma Arcruni's tenth-century *Patmut'iwn Tann Arcruneac'* [History of the House of the Arcrunik'] is devoted to one particular region and the promotion of its ruling family in Vaspurakan. He is the first to mention and quote from Movsēs Xorenac'i's work. T'ovma traces the Arcruni's ancestry back to Assyria, paralleling Movsēs's Jewish pedigree for his Bagratuni patron. T'ovma adapts imagery from earlier historians to describe later events: Ełišē had used the model of the Book of the Maccabees to describe the Sasanian adversary, which T'ovma in his turn applies to the Muslim foe. His purpose of writing history is close to that of Movsēs, in seeking worldly fame, while the method should include 'veracity, reliability, strict chronology, and elegance', all championed by Movsēs, who was steeped in Hellenistic and Late Antique learning and rhetoric himself.[54]

Movsēs's concern with precise chronography is reflected in the *Patmut'iwn tiezerakan* [Universal History] (*c.*1004) of Step'anos Taronec'i, also known as Asołik, 'singer, teller, reciter'. Movsēs had used not only Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, but was influenced by his *Chronology* as well. Asołik's work consists of three books, like that of Movsēs, the first two of which largely comprise lists, gradually expanded upon in the second book, and abandoned in the third, which

[51] Thomson, 'Christian Perception of History', 42–3.

[52] Matthew's approach to historiography is set out in Tara L. Andrews, *Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa, with a Discussion of Computer-Aided Methods Used to Edit the Text*, D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 2009, 51–87; cf. Thomson, 'The Concept of "History" in Medieval Armenian Historians', 96–7.

[53] Andrews, *Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, 59–65.

[54] Thomson, 'The Concept of "History" in Medieval Armenian Historians', 92.

describes the Bagratids. The purpose of his work is to leave to future generations a source of information to assist them walking in truth until the end of time. He builds on previous Armenian historians, whom he lists, following Łazar P'arpec'i's example.[55]

Samuel of Ani's *Žamanakagrut'iwn* [Chronicle] reaches 1182, with various later updates. It is divided in two parts, the period before and after Christ. The second part is entirely chronological, laid out in parallel columns, following Eusebius's *Chronicle*.[56] His comparative method seeks to achieve consistency despite the varying dates in the sources. Such comparison is found as well in the thirteenth-century *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean* [Historical Compilation] of Vardan Arevelc'i, which points to his application of the method used in composing biblical commentaries, where successive commentators are quoted in order to provide a fullness of interpretative insight.[57]

Agathangelos's account of the visit of King Trdat and Gregory the Illuminator to Emperor Constantine and Pope Eusebius (later Silvester) in Rome and their alliance was expanded throughout the centuries. Any factual basis for the story is unclear, although the earlier King Trdat I did visit Nero. It became particularly important in the altered political circumstances following the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem. The Church of Rome became more central to Armenian concerns. In the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia a pro-Latin faction was important, while in Greater Armenia opposition against Latinization remained strong. Two documents stem from late twelfth-century Cilicia: a homily ascribed to Epihanius of Salamis, adding to the core of the story a visit to Jerusalem during which they divided the holy places among themselves.[58] In the *Dašanc' t'ułt'* [Letter of Love and Concord] the pact between Constantine and Trdat is linked with Pseudo-Methodius's notion of salvation through the king of Rome. Several thirteenth-century historians take up the story. Kirakos Ganjakec'i introduces an important theme: 'They say that Saint Gregory hung a lamp over the grave of Christ and asked God in prayer that it might be lit without perceptible light on the holy feast of Easter, which is a sign up to this day.'[59] Kirakos had personal knowledge of the

[55] Ibid, 93–4.

[56] See Karen Mat'evosyan, *Samuel Anec'i: The Manuscripts of his Chronology and the Newly Found Additions* (Erevan, 2009, in Armenian). Cf. Robert W. Thomson, 'Medieval Chroniclers of Ani: Hovhannes, Samvel, and Mkhitar', in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Kars and Ani* (Costa Mesa, 2011), 65–80.

[57] Thomson, 'The Concept of "History" in Medieval Armenian Historians', 94–5, 98–9.

[58] Thomson, 'Christian Perception of History', 43–4. Cf. Thomson, 'Constantine and Trdat in Armenian Tradition', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 50 (1997), 277–89; and Thomson, *Lives of Saint Gregory*, 79–87.

[59] Thomson, 'The Concept of "History" in Medieval Armenian Historians', 98; Thomson, 'The Crusaders through Armenian Eyes', in Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy P. Motaheddeh (eds.), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington, DC, 2001), 71–82; K. A. Melik'-Ōhanjanyan, *Kirakos Ganjakec'i: History of the Armenians* (Erevan, 1961, in Armenian), 11; and Zaroui Pogossian, *The Letter of Love and Concord: A Revised Diplomatic Edition with Historical and Textual Comments and English Translation* (Leiden, 2010).

Mongols in Greater Armenia. His *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'* [History of the Armenians] reaches 1266 and uses apocalyptic material concerning the end of the world to understand their role in history.[60] The variously interpreted Mongol presence is further treated, among others, in Step'anos Ōrbelean's *Patmut'iwn nahangin Sisakan* (1299) and in the *Taregirk'* [Chronicle] by Smbat Sparapet, brother of King Hethum I of Cilicia and commander-in-chief of the army.[61]

CONCLUSION

At the end of this survey, each of the three main themes may be reiterated. The formative phase after the adoption of Christianity saw a radical reorientation of the purpose and mode of memorializing and interpreting history, entailing the initial exclusion and gradual Christianization of the *gusans*. A dichotomy between the Christian historians and the only gradually Christianized Armenians can be detected in the early texts. The Armenian Church's eventual choice for a non-Chalcedonian position cannot obscure the continued presence of Chalcedonian Armenians, with their own scantily transmitted historiography. The coming of Islam required new ways of approaching history, found in apocalypses, visions, and prophecies that came to play an important role in the shaping and interpretation of historical writing.

Armenian historiography is usually considered the realm of prose narratives of a certain length, capable of absorbing a variety of modes of expression. This overlooks the presence of longer poems that were composed on the model of Grigor Magistros Pahlawuni's *Magnalia Dei* [The Mighty Acts of God] (*c.*1045), which in 1,000 lines summarizes biblical salvation history, from Adam to the conversion of Armenia by Gregory the Parthian, from whom Magistros's family claimed descent.[62] Nersēs Šnorhali's *Vipasanut'iwn* [Epic Tale] entirely follows the pattern of the early historians placing his family history in the continuation of unfolding salvation. The formal characteristics of these poems with usually eight syllable lines and mono-rhyme, often *–in*, are applied in large laments written shortly after the events, such as Nersēs Šnorhali's *Oł Edesioy* [Lament on the Fall of Edessa] (1145) and Grigor Tłay's *Ban ołbergakan vasn aṙman Erusałemi* [Elegy on the Capture of Jerusalem] (1189) and Aṙak'el Bałišec'i's lament on the fall of

[60] Cf. Zaroui Pogossian, 'Armenians, Mongols and the End of Times: An Overview of 13th-Century Sources', in Sophia Vashalomidze, Manfred Zimmer, and Jürgen Tubach (eds.), *Representation of the Mongols in the Caucasus: Armenia and Georgia* (Wiesbaden, 2012). I thank Dr Pogossian for kindly putting her article at my disposal before publication.

[61] Cf. Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220–1335)* (Leiden, 2011).

[62] Abraham Terian, *Magnalia Dei: Biblical History in Epic Verse by Grigor Magistros. The First Literary Epic in Medieval Armenian. Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Louvain, 2012). I thank Professor Terian for making the manuscript of his work available to me.

Constantinople, which also contains apocalyptic material.[63] Like many of the prose histories, these laments not only describe events, but place them in an interpretative framework of God's punishment for sin through external powers, and the extension of hope for salvation, often preceded by political liberation. Šnorhali places his hope in the Franks, while Grigor Tłay hails Prince Levon II, the future monarch, as a liberator for Armenians and other Christians. These works thus fit well within the philosophy of history evinced in the 'classical' histories of the Armenians.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

*c.*52–428	Dynasty of the Arsacids
301–14	Conversion of King Trdat and the Armenians to Christianity by Grigor Lusaworič' (the Illuminator)
353–73	Catholicossate of Nersēs the Great
384–9	Partition of Armenia between the Roman and Sasanian Empires
405–6	Invention of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Maštoc'
428–654	Persian and Byzantine domination
654–884	Arab domination
717–28	Catholicossate of Hovhannēs Ōjnec'i
885–1064	Armenian Bagratuni Kingdoms
908–1022	Armenian Arcruni Kingdom
1012–18	First Turkic incursions in Armenia
1064–1236	Seljuk domination
1073–1375	Armenian state of Cilicia
1102–73	Nersēs Šnorhali, Catholicos 1166–73
1198	Prince Levon II crowned King Levon I of Armenian Cilicia
1236–1317	Mongol domination
1254	King Het'um I travels to Karakorum, concludes pact with Mongols
1387–1403	Timur Lenk (Tamerlane) invades Armenia three times.

KEY HISTORICAL SOURCES[64]

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[63] A. K. Sanjian, 'Two Contemporary Armenian Elegies on the Fall of Constantinople, 1453', *Viator*, 1 (1970), 223–61.

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Chapter 10

Byzantine Historical Writing, 500–920

Anthony Kaldellis

The centuries covered in this chapter can be divided into three 140-year periods: (a) AD 500–640, the end of late antiquity, when historiography flourished in many genres;[1] (b) 640–780, when Byzantium struggled to resist Arab conquest, and few surviving texts were produced; and (c) 780–920, an age of recovery for the state and literature, when older traditions were resynthesized and the foundations for new developments were laid.

By AD 500, after the fall of the West, the society of the Eastern Empire was mostly Greek-speaking, Christian, and specifically Roman in its political or national consciousness.[2] The 'usable past' available to historians was therefore complex, consisting of incommensurate components that defined different sites of the culture. Even as Christians the Byzantines had two historical traditions with a different significance: a symbolic national history in the Old Testament that was known textually and had reached closure, and Church history, which was directly lived. As Romans they traced their state and secular society back to the early empire and Republic, and from there to the kings and ultimately Troy. This was a different past and it was not clear how the two could be integrated (they never were). Moreover, being Romans, they did not include Greece in this history, but as their language and literary modes were Greek they necessarily engaged with Greek history even when writing about themselves as Romans or Christians. It was the interplay among these different pasts (religious or political; symbolic or lived; finished or ended), and the effect of literary form on historical content, that shaped the evolution of historiography in early Byzantium.

Broadly speaking, the literary forms used for writing history (whether Roman, Christian, or in combination) were, in descending order of scope, the universal

[1] More historians are attested for this period than can be discussed here; emphasis will be on works that survive, at least partially. For others the interested reader should consult the surveys cited in the bibliography. Also, the footnotes will be reserved for specific points: the editions, translations, and surveys in the bibliography contain standardized discussions of each author.

[2] Fergus Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II, 408–450* (Berkeley, 2006); and Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007), ch. 2.

chronicle, from the beginning (however defined) to the present, which synchronized the traditions of different nations; narratives focusing on a specific period, war, or reign; and biography.

It was also toward the beginning of the sixth century that the last histories with an openly pagan outlook were produced. Hesychios of Miletos's *Roman and General History* began with Belos, king of Assyria, and ended with the death of the emperor Anastasios in 518. Its book-divisions coincided with major breaks in Roman history: Troy; the founding of Rome; the Republic down to Caesar; the empire. The work is interesting for the Roman slant it imparts to the format of the universal chronicle. It seems to have contained no Christian material. Only brief fragments survive and a long passage on the history of Byzantion before its refoundation as Constantinople. They are of low value, mostly legends, fanciful aetiologies, and pagan miracles, and they flout chronology. But they are pointed. In the passage on Byzantion, Hesychios gave the city a history parallel to that of Rome, leading to its refoundation as Constantinople (New Rome). By rewriting its topography in terms of pagan mythology, Hesychios cast Constantinople as a pagan city, erasing Christianity even from his account of Constantine. So while it is a history in form, the work is closer in content and intent to pagan antiquarian works such as Macrobius's *Saturnalia* and Ioannes Lydos's *On the Months*.[3]

In Hesychios we have a positive pagan view of Constantine. We find the opposite in the polemically pagan *New History* of Zosimos, an official of the fisc in late fifth- and early sixth-century Constantinople. This work covers Roman history from Augustus to 410 in six books, of which the last is unfinished. In the ninth century, Photios claimed that Zosimos followed the anti-Christian history of Eunapios (now lost). Eunapios had covered the years 270–404 in continuation of Dexippos, who had begun in mythological times and ended in 270. Zosimos covers the period from Augustus to 235 in a few pages; he relies on Dexippos for 235–70, making his history the most important extant narrative of those troubled years; on Eunapios for 270–404; and on Olympiodoros for 404–10. He does not enjoy a high reputation as a historian, being a rather uncritical epitomator. His narrative detail, chronological system, and even his view of individuals change as he switches between them. But the choice of years to be covered was his and indicates that he knew what he wanted to prove. His preface offers an interesting view of Roman history. Invoking Polybius, who recounted how the Romans had conquered the world in under fifty-three years, Zosimos explains that it was the gods who had made this possible. And 'whereas Polybius tells how the Romans won their empire in a short time, I intend to show how they lost it in an equally short time by their own crimes' (1.57), thus the need for a *new* history.[4] Zosimos believed that Rome fell because it abandoned its gods. He blames Constantine

[3] Anthony Kaldellis, 'The Works and Days of Hesychios the Illoustrios of Miletos', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 45 (2005), 381–403.

[4] Warren Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York, 2007), 111.

for this as well as for his personal and military flaws. Zosimos, then, was the first historian of 'the fall of the Roman Empire', for which he blamed Christianity, an idea that has echoed in modern times.[5] Military historians also still wrestle with his hostile account of Constantine's frontier policy.

The second curious component of Zosimos's preface is its denunciation of the monarchy as an ineffective and potentially corrupt form of rule, presumably compared to the victorious Republic (yet Zosimos did have at least one imperial hero, Julian, who briefly restored the cults).[6] For all his faults, then, Zosimos was the last Roman historian who held an openly pagan and implicitly Republican viewpoint.

Finally, it is worth noting in connection with late pagan historiography the *Philosophical History* (formerly known as the *Life of Isidoros*) written in 517–26 by Damaskios, the last head of the Platonic Academy when Justinian closed the schools. It survives in fragments. It was a prosopographical and topographical gazetteer of late Platonism, albeit in narrative. It was not hagiographic in tone. In the ninth century, Photios noted that Damaskios did 'not leave a single one of those on whom he has lavished praise without some deficiency'. The most recent editor of the text called him 'the social historian of late antique Platonism who uses the prosopographical technique in order to set in relief social and spiritual change' and the *Philosophical History* 'really a satire on the current educational system judged by its results'.[7] It merits mention due to the prominent political and social role played by Damaskios's colleagues at the end of the fifth century. 'And indeed', he wrote, 'politics offers great possibilities for doing what is good . . . also for courage'.[8]

The Christian historical tradition has been discussed more fully by Michael Whitby.[9] It is worth commenting, however, on how dynamic it was in the sixth century. The *Ecclesiastical History* of Zacharias (later bishop of Mytilene), which covered the years 450–91, was translated into Syriac and extended down to 569. At the end of the century, Euagrios of Antioch wrote another *Ecclesiastical History* covering the years 428–594, which survives in the original. Annalistic chronicles were updated, for example Marcellinus Comes continued in Latin the chronicle of Eusebios-Jerome from 378–518 and then to 534. Ioannes Malalas of Antioch wrote in more popular Greek a massive chronicle from the Creation to 527 (expanded to 565), which is full of odd information and cites otherwise unknown

[5] Cf. Walter Goffart, 'Zosimus, The First Historian of Rome's Fall', *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), 412–41, somewhat exaggerated.

[6] François Paschoud, 'La digression antimonarchique de préambule de l' "Histoire nouvelle" ', in Paschoud, *Cinq études sur Zosime* (Paris, 1975), 1–23.

[7] Polymnia Athanassiadi, *Damascius: The Philosophical History* (Athens, 1999), 41–2; and Photios, *Bibliotheke* cod. 181 (here T 3, pp. 334–41).

[8] Fr. 124; cf. Polymnia Athanassiadi, 'Persecution and Response in Late Paganism: The Evidence of Damascius', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 113 (1993), 1–29.

[9] Michael Whitby, 'Imperial Christian Historiography', in Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 1: *Beginnings to* AD 600 (Oxford, 2011), 346–71.

sources; it survives only in epitome. Despite considerable attention paid to this work and the trust that some have placed in him as representing sixth-century mentality, Malalas has recently been exposed as a forger, plagiarist, and inventor.[10] In the seventh century, the *Paschal Chronicle* covered the entire period from Adam to 630, providing particularly useful information for the later years.

By far the most important historical sources from the years 550–640 were the military and diplomatic narratives written in imitation of ancient historians such as Thucydides. Prokopios, secretary of the general Belisarios and one of the best ancient and medieval historians, wrote on the wars of Justinian against the Persians, Vandals, and Goths, including the Balkan raids of the Huns and Slavs, focusing on the years 527–51. His work was continued to 559 by the lawyer and poet Agathias, who wrote around 580. He in turn was continued by Menandros, writing under the emperor Maurikios (582–602) and covering the years 558–82 (his work survives only in fragments, albeit many and long ones). The last in the series was Theophylaktos, covering the reign of Maurikios but writing under Herakleios (610–41), after the latter's defeat of Persia in 628 and possibly while the Arabs were conquering the East in the late 630s.[11] This historiographical relay would continue, with no major gaps though with occasional delays, divergent traditions, and different literary formats, down to the end of the empire in 1453. What made it possible was the continuity of the Roman state and the cohesion of its society. 'Romans' appear on almost every page of these works, 'Christians' almost never, even though these Romans were also Christians.

The classicizing historians focused on warfare, providing detailed and dramatic accounts of campaigns, sieges, and battles. Professionally, they were secretaries and lawyers in the capital though most were provincials.[12] Only Prokopios had first-hand experience of war. Being posted with Belisarios in the East, Africa, and Italy gave him the impetus and access to write the *Wars*, though his ability to do so was premised on his classical education. In their presentation, organization of material, and language they follow the ancient historians. As in Thucydides, narratives are annalistic and divided into military fronts (e.g. Italy or the Balkans). Prokopios took this to the extreme of bundling each theatre into a separate composition. His successors alternated among them, year-by-year or until the action in one place had reached a recognizable conclusion. The military narrative was complemented by diplomacy on the one hand and ethnography on the other.

[10] Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, 246–56.

[11] For Prokopios see Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London and New York, 1996); Anthony Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 2004); Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970); Kaldellis, 'The Historical and Religious Views of Agathias: A Reinterpretation', *Byzantion*, 69 (1999), 206–52; and Michael Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and His Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford, 1988).

[12] Geoffrey Greatrex, 'Lawyers and Historians in Late Antiquity', in Ralph W. Mathisen (ed.), *Law, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2001), 148–61.

Based in the capital, historians could consult diplomats and records. For example, Justinian's foreign minister Petros Patrikios appears often in these histories; he also left memoranda possibly used by Menandros when he quoted the treaty of 562 with Persia (fr. 6.1), a crucial document.[13] It will be remembered that Thucydides likewise quoted the treaties between Athens and Sparta (in Book 5). Prokopios, a general's secretary, had first-hand knowledge of the workings of imperial diplomacy and had probably drafted some of the documents he would later quote (in more literary versions) in his *Wars*.

The tradition of ethnography derived from Herodotus rather than Thucydides. Contact with new peoples in late antiquity, often hostile, enabled historians to imitate and rival their peers in writing about foreign customs and exotic distant places. Agathias's informant at the Persian court gave him extensive knowledge about Sasanid customs and history.[14] Ethnography became *de rigueur* even when it was not strictly relevant. Theophylaktos digresses about China (7.7–9).[15] The expansion of ethnography reflected the intense diplomacy between the increasingly centralized states of this age and the fact that historians had access to such sources. Therefore, in these histories we learn more about the frontiers and what lay beyond them than we do about life inside the empire, excepting the palace, and even then only from the diplomatic standpoint or when there was a conspiracy or riot. Otherwise domestic reporting concerns natural disasters such as plagues and earthquakes, again following classical models.[16]

We rely on these histories for their factual content but must realize that they were also literary compositions. They were not written in the spoken Greek of the sixth century but in the Attic dialect, often a denser version of it than was used by ancient writers. This meant that contemporary realities were described in a formal idiom and often assimilated to classical parallels, though historical reality was not necessarily distorted in the drawing of parallels.[17] This manner of writing created distance, which was good for thinking critically, but it also drew the composition into the ideological orbit of the classics. We must remember, for example, that what was called a *polis* in the sixth century AD was not like its BC counterpart. Moreover, narratives had to be dramatic, with suspense, reversals, irony, and touches of Herodotean fatalism. History was meant to be both useful

[13] Panagiotos Antonopoulos, *Πέτρος Πατρίκιος: Ὁ βυζαντινός διπλωμάτης, ἀξιωματοῦχος καί συγγραφέας* (Athens, 1990).

[14] Averil Cameron, 'Agathias on the Sassanians', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 23–4 (1969–70), 67–183; and C. Questa, 'Il morto e la madre: Romei e Persiani nelle "Storie" de Agatia', *Lares*, 55 (1989), 375–405.

[15] Zhang Xu-shan, *Η Κίνα και το Βυζάντιο* (Ioannina, 1998).

[16] Anthony Kaldellis, 'The Literature of Plague and the Anxieties of Piety in Sixth-Century Byzantium', in Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester (eds.), *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque* (Kirksville, Miss., 2007), 1–22.

[17] e.g. G. Soyter, 'Die Glaubwürdigkeit des Geschichtschreibers Prokopios von Kaisareia', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 44 (1951), 541–5; and Jakov Ljubarskij, 'New Trends in the Study of Byzantine Historiography', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 47 (1993), 131–8, at 132.

and pleasant.[18] Yet whereas Prokopios probably wrote to be read, Agathias and Theophylaktos intended their works also for performance in the capital.[19] So the speeches they gave their characters (especially generals before battle) and the *pro-contra* legal debates practically constituted rhetorical displays by the authors themselves, who thereby advertised their learning and skill as orators before the court. This performative context may have shaped the texts in other ways too, especially in the case of Agathias, a leading literary figure of the capital. There are passages where he turns factual narration subtly into mythology and legend, baiting readers to follow the trail of learned allusions.[20] It is also likely that he wrote at length about earthquakes partly because Prokopios had already 'taken' plagues. Writing a history added to one's literary and rhetorical portfolio; it was not a profession.

This socio-literary analysis, however, gives a limited impression of these historians' goals, which went beyond entertainment and affectation. They chose their words carefully: pre-battle speeches, to give one example, resonate with the overall narrative and help readers understand motives and strategy; anecdotes known to have been unhistorical nevertheless carry symbolic significance; and past events are code for talking indirectly and tactfully about the present.[21] On a deeper level, scholars are increasingly regarding these historians as thoughtful commentators on the events of their times, who identified key themes relating to policy, religion, and social values, upon which they developed subtle reflections throughout the course of their narratives. Prokopios was the most brilliant here. He was the only one who wrote about a living emperor and his purpose was to expose the corruption, incompetence, and criminality of Justinian's regime. He did so covertly in the *Wars*, through a variety of literary devices including the use of speeches and through subtle allusions to ancient texts that 'filled out' the point he was hinting at, and openly in the *Secret History*, a unique reportage that lists the regime's crimes and depravity, supplementing the *Wars*. Prokopios also insinuates that history is governed partly by human effort but mostly by chance, not providence, and in the *Persian War* he seems to connect the decline of Roman warfare and the loss of political freedom to religious servility.[22]

The deeper themes of Agathias's *Histories* are not as deeply embedded into his narrative but they are more overtly philosophical. In the preface he presents history as the handmaiden of philosophy whose purpose is to inculcate political and

[18] Anthony Kaldellis, 'Agathias on History and Poetry', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 38 (1997), 295–305.

[19] Joseph D. C. Frendo, 'History and Panegyric in the Age of Heraclius: The Literary Background to the Composition of the Histories of Theophylact Simocatta', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 42 (1988), 143–56.

[20] Anthony Kaldellis, 'Things Are Not What They Are: Agathias *Mythistoricus* and the Last Laugh of Classical Culture', *Classical Quarterly*, 53 (2003), 295–300.

[21] Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea*; and Frendo, 'History and Panegyric', 151–3.

[22] Anthony Kaldellis, 'Prokopios' *Persian War*: A Thematic and Literary Analysis', in Ruth Macrides (ed.), *History as Literature in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2010), 253–72.

moral virtue. In Book 5, however, he reveals that this can be accomplished by *falsely* representing misfortunes as divine punishment (5.4). This, we now realize, has already shaped his coverage of earthquakes: have we been taken in all along?[23] Theophylaktos prefaced his work with a dialogue between queen Philosophy and her daughter History. What this means in terms of his narrative has yet to be worked out; however, where he was once accused of being verbose and obscure, it is now argued that, writing about the reign of a good but flawed ruler who suffered a horrible end, and writing when the world was falling apart, Theophylaktos infused his narrative with tragic qualities and sad resonances.[24]

These historians were independent authors. They did not take orders from the court and their views were nuanced. In his preface, Agathias recognized that it was easier to write about those who had died. Prokopios was braver and rarer in writing about the present regime, which he loathed. As for religion, only Theophylaktos was certainly a Christian. He was the first to include a sermon in his narrative (4.16), creating interesting performative opportunities for himself. Prokopios and Agathias discuss religion as if they were neutral outsiders, which I believe they were. All were sophisticated writers and drew on the classics, each in his own way, to fashion tragic or philosophical histories. They deserve closer readings.

Greek was not the only language of historiography in this period, though it was dominant. The first surviving Syriac history is the so-called *Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite*, an account of the plagues and wars that struck Edessa and its environs in 494–506, especially the Persian war of 502–6. It is a local chronicle that combines pietism (war and plague are divine punishments) with extraordinarily detailed information about administration and local society. The annalistic format is superficial; in reality it is a continuous narrative, a political history uninterested in doctrinal controversy, influenced by the Greek tradition, and as Roman in outlook as any other Byzantine work of this period ('Syriac' was not a competing identity in the empire despite it being a separate academic discipline today).[25]

After the Persian and Arab conquests of the early seventh century, the Syriac tradition continued outside the empire. The Latin tradition, by contrast, dwindled internally during the sixth century, as even imperial administration and law began to be conducted in Greek. Still, Latin remained viable for history until mid-century. The chronicle of Marcellinus Comes was mentioned above; its author was a courtier of Justinian.[26] Official patronage also accounts for the epic poem by Flavius Cresconius Corippus on the North African campaigns of the

[23] Kaldellis, 'The Historical and Religious Views of Agathias'.

[24] Stephanos Efthymiades, 'A Historian and his Tragic Hero: A Literary Reading of Theophylaktos Simokattes' *Ecumenical History*', in Macrides (ed.), *History as Literature in Byzantium,* 169–86.

[25] Frank R. Trombley and John W. Watt, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* (Liverpool, 2000), pp. xi–lv.

[26] For the linguistic background see Brian Croke, *Count Marcellinus and his Chronicle* (Oxford, 2001), 86–8.

Byzantine general Ioannes Troglita in 549 (modelled on Virgil) and another on the accession of Justin II in 565, both underutilized but important narrative sources for warfare and diplomacy respectively (see especially the reception of the Avars by Justin in Book 3).[27] A bizarre production of this period is the *Getica* [Gothic History] by Jordanes, a Roman official of Gothic descent active in Constantinople around 551, which endorses Justinian's war against the Goths but also eulogizes Gothic history. For long Jordanes was believed to have only copied Cassiodorus's *History of the Goths* and not to deserve serious attention as an historian. He traces the history of the Goths back thousands of years, fusing their history with that of the Skyths and Getae and recounting their battles with Amazons and such. But, as with Hesychios, this fancy had a point, which was to draw the Goths into the orbit of classical history and literature and confer literary legitimacy on them as a people. There has been much debate on the literary and ideological aspects of the *Getica*.[28]

A mixture of Greek and Latin learning is represented by Ioannes Lydos's antiquarian work *On the Magistracies of the Roman State*. Lydos was a professor of Latin in Constantinople and a civil official of the praetorian prefecture. He wrote in Greek but relied heavily on Latin scholarship and terminology. Despite hailing from Asia Minor, he was committed to the Latinity of the empire and resisted the use of Greek in the administration. *On the Magistracies* traces many contemporary institutions of the state, including offices, insignia, and titles, and in particular of the prefecture, back to the Republic and even to the kings. It is a mine for ancient Latin antiquarianism, almost all of which is lost, but what is most interesting is Lydos's historical argument that the Roman kings and, later, the emperors were all tyrants, while the only period of freedom in Roman history was the Republic. This argument seems to have been aimed indirectly at Justinian, whose reforms were abolishing many of the traditions Lydos cherished, such as the consulship. As an antiquarian, Lydos was in step with other Justinianic projects such as the compilation of Roman law and the rhetorical respect for Roman tradition, but in his religion and Republicanism he was closer to Zosimos.[29]

The sixth century was unusually rich in literary production, for reasons that have yet to be explained. Most of the genres of antiquity were represented, along with some new experiments. Historical writing in particular ran the gamut of genres from universal chronicles (Roman or Christian), classicizing histories,

[27] Yves Moderan, 'Corippe et l'occupation byzantine de l'Afrique: Pour une nouvelle lecture de la *Johannide*', *Antiquités africaines*, 22 (1986), 195–212; and Averil Cameron, *Flavius Cresconius Corippus in laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* (London, 1976).

[28] Brian Croke, 'Jordanes and the Immediate Past', *Historia*, 54 (2005), 473–94, with references in n. 2.

[29] Anthony Kaldellis, 'Republican Theory and Political Dissidence in Ioannes Lydos', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 29 (2005), 1–16; Kaldellis, 'The Religion of Ioannes Lydos', *Phoenix*, 57 (2003), 300–16; and, in general, Michael Maas, *John Lydos and the Roman Past: Antiquarianism and Politics in the Age of Justinian* (London, 1992).

biography, historical epic poetry, ethnography, and antiquarian research. Syriac and Latin were also used, and some authors were pagans (though only on the Greek side). Much historical thought was influenced by ancient philosophy, especially Plato.

All this came to a crashing halt in the mid-seventh century. We must wait until 780 for the tradition to restart in the extant corpus. The destructive wars, permanent loss of three-fifths of Roman territory, militarization of the state and society, disappearance of the provincial elites that had produced the literati, and lack of funding for high culture, all contributed to a sudden decline. Also, 'no urban chronicler would have been attracted by the litany of military failures on the contracting eastern frontier. . . . [P]atrons were not interested in commissioning embarrassing narratives of defeats.'[30]

Certainly some record of events was kept, including the sources used by Nikephoros and Theophanes for the period after 630 (the terminus of the *Paschal Chronicle*). Attempts to define those lost sources are complex and conjectural;[31] it is best to bypass them here. While many texts from this period have historical value, few constitute what we may call historical writing. One exception is the collection of the miracles of St Demetrios of Thessalonike.[32] The first collection is attributed to Ioannes, bishop of the city in the early seventh century, and while it does refer to the barbarian threats against the city in the late sixth century, those events form a backdrop to conventional healing tales and rhetorical praise of the saint's virtues. The second collection, by contrast, compiled anonymously in the late seventh century, is basically a military narrative of the sieges of the city by the Avars and Slavs, with detailed accounts of the enemy's machines. While this collection's purpose also is to praise Demetrios and persuade the reader that the city's salvation was due to him and not the citizens' efforts, it is also a kind of local chronicle and a key source for Balkan history. In the preface the author even invokes Josephus's account of the siege of Jerusalem as a model. It is certainly a different kind of history than was usual in Byzantium; for example, in contrast to Prokopios and the rest, there are almost no 'Romans' in here, only 'Christians', even though they were also Romans. This text is rarely included in surveys of Byzantine historiography, largely because the latter is defined narrowly in terms of genre.

There is a fine line between a historical source and historical writing. The author of the second collection certainly imagined himself a historian and was versed in military narrative. There was precedent. In the late fifth century, the

[30] Michael Whitby, 'Greek Historical Writing after Procopius: Variety and Vitality', in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. I: *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1992), 25–79.

[31] Cyril Mango and Roger Scott in *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD* 284–813, trans. Mango and Scott (Oxford, 1997), pp. lxxxii–xci.

[32] Paul Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans le Balkans*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1979–81), i. 168–9; cf. James C. Skedros, *Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki: Civic Patron and Divine Protector, 4th–7th Centuries CE* (Harrisburg, Penn., 1999), ch. 4.

collector of the miracles of St Thekla cast himself in the Herodotean tradition.[33] Though his focus was less on warfare, he tells many stories, including personal narratives, that illuminate the society of late-antique Seleukeia. The *Miracles of St Artemios* does the same for seventh-century Constantinople.[34] If historical texts proper had not survived from Byzantium, a chapter of this volume would have been devoted to these. The same is true of many saints' 'Lives', especially of saints who were active at the court or were involved in ecclesiastical controversies that inevitably became political affairs. In the *Life of St Stephanos the Younger* we may glimpse the capital, court, and politics of Constantinople under Konstantinos V (mid-eighth century); the *Life of Patriarch Euthymios* is a form of court chronicle from the early tenth century.[35] More attention should be given to them as forms of historical writing; after all, the historians of the tenth century believed them to be just that and relied on such sources extensively for their narratives.[36]

The historiographical tradition proper would eventually be revived, but some of its elements were delayed or lost. In the period covered by this chapter, there were to be no more classicizing histories written in the high Attic style that considered a single reign or a few years of warfare; no more antiquarianism; and no ethnography. The latter is oddly absent or rare in later Byzantine historiography altogether, a lapse that has received little attention (and no explanation). Middle Byzantine writers had little to say, for example about Arab culture (by contrast we know the layout of Attila's tent; what Huns ate; etc.).

Another development was the gradual fusion of political and ecclesiastical history. In late antiquity, the two were generally separate. Eusebius had defined Church history in opposition to the military and political interests of the ancient historians (Book 5, preface). His successors, however, especially Sokrates in the early fifth century (Book 5, preface), had to admit that the two spheres could not be separated, especially in a Christian empire. By the late sixth century, Euagrios was copying sections of Prokopios's *Wars* into his *Ecclesiastical History*, while even Theophylaktos, the last classicizing historian, included a sermon in his narrative. By the time of Nikephoros and Theophanes (so around 800), the two disciplines were slowly melding.

The *Short History* of Nikephoros (an imperial secretary at the time, in his twenties, later patriarch of Constantinople: 806–15) covers the years 602–769 in sixty-five pages. It is a continuation of Theophylaktos only in picking up where he left off and in aiming at the high style (but with few speeches and no

[33] Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla: A Literary Study* (Washington, DC, 2006), 113–20.

[34] Virgil S. Crisafulli and John W. Nesbit, *The Miracles of St. Artemios: A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium* (Leiden, 1997).

[35] Apostolos Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοὶ ἱστορικοί καὶ χρονογράφοι*, 2 vols. (Athens, 1997–2002), ii. 170–82; and Alexander Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature*, 2 vols. (Athens, 1999–2006), i. 183–98; ii. 103–11.

[36] Anthony Kaldellis, *Genesios: On the Reigns of the Emperors* (Canberra, 1998), pp. xxiii–xxiv.

ethnography). Phokas (602–10) and Konstas II (641–68) receive only a sentence each. 'What Nikephoros did, to all intents and purposes, was to paraphrase into ancient Greek a small number of chronicle sources written in "vulgar" Greek. . . . In the first part, he went to some trouble to camouflage the "chronicle element" and even suppressed (to our great regret) nearly all the dates.'[37] His account of the Herakleian dynasty (610–711) is largely secular, except for a notice on the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680–1). It is not much by way of religious history, but still more than Prokopios would allow. He notes the origin of Iconoclasm under Leon III (60) and its first stages (62), a heresy he would resist as patriarch when Leon V reintroduced it later. Nikephoros's view of Konstantinos V, a successful emperor, is coloured by an intense hatred of Iconoclasm. We have here the first history of the Roman state written from a partisan doctrinal standpoint.

The great historiographical monuments of this period are the chronicles of Georgios Synkellos (from the Creation to 284) and Theophanes the Confessor (284–813). Little is known of Georgios's life, except that he was the secretary of the patriarch Tarasios (*synkellos*). His *Chronographical Selection*, over five hundred pages long and finished around 810, was the largest, most ambitious such project to date, and was the labour of many years. Its principal goal is to reduce the history of the Old Testament and the Church to an ordered timeline with precise dates. So biblical chronology is its backbone, to which Egyptian, Babylonian, and later Greek and Roman timelines are subsequently integrated. Georgios polemically dates the Incarnation to 5.500 *anno mundi* and rejects the idea, found in Berossos, that Babylon existed before the Flood (14–16): he and Egyptian writers (Manetho) must have copied the Bible when their stories seem similar to it (23–4). Events are accordingly dated from the Creation, but there is an attempt to synchronize all available traditions, for example the Flood is computed in the Hebrew, Egyptian, and Roman calendar (even though Rome had not yet been founded: 22–3). Georgios's Hellenistic section also focuses on the East, tracking the history of the Jews rather than the Romans. Its account of imperial history includes AD dates and focuses on the Jews and the Church (Acts; the siege of Jerusalem; Christian writers and bishops; and the persecutions).

Georgios relied heavily on past chronographers, even if he criticized them on some points. In fact, the works of some are known largely from his quotations (e.g. Julius Africanus; Annianos), though there is controversy regarding whether he knew them first-hand and whether he had personally travelled in the East and used Syriac intermediary scholarship.[38] But there are other ways of gauging the significance of his work. First, it meant that only in Byzantium and after the start of the

[37] *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 6.

[38] William Adler, *Time Immemorial: Archaic History and its Sources in Christian Chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus* (Washington, DC, 1990), ch. 5; and Adler and Paul Tuffin in *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation*, trans. Adler and Tuffin (Oxford, 2002), pp. lx–lxxxiii.

ninth century could anyone gain a synoptic and synchronic view of ancient history including Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome, which was impossible in the West until modern times. 'Ancient history' for some Byzantines was not just Greece and Rome but the entire Near East. And, second, despite imposing a biblical framework on non-biblical peoples, the chronicle conversely historicized sacred history, chopping the Bible up and forcing the pieces into narrative modes and historiographical concerns and computations that ultimately were of Greek origin.

Georgios apparently intended to continue his chronicle to the present but was prevented by illness. According to his friend Theophanes, 'he bequeathed to me the book he had written and provided materials with a view to completing what was missing. . . . I did not set down anything of my own composition but have made a selection from the ancient historians . . . and consigned to their proper places the events of every year, arranged without confusion' (3–4). The extent of the materials bequeathed to Theophanes is controversial, but it does not affect how we should read and evaluate the work. The chronicle of Theophanes (to use the conventional name) extends from Diocletian (284) to Michael I (813) in five hundred pages. Each year is dated from the Creation, Incarnation, the regnal year of the Roman emperor, Persian or Arab ruler, and each of the five patriarchs of the Church. 'In this manner the readers may be able to know in which year of each emperor what event took place, be it military or ecclesiastical or civic or popular or of any other kind' (4). The work, then, represents the first attempt to integrate the Roman and ecclesiastical traditions of history, more so than in Nikephoros, only in Theophanes the two histories are side-by-side in each annual entry, taken from different sources, rather than integrated into one organic conception. The tenth-century imperial biographies would come closer to that.

Theophanes is the major source for the seventh- and eighth-century gap, and many studies have attempted to identify his sources (which he rarely does) and determine the accuracy of his dates. There is also concern over whether his chronicle is more than the sum of its parts. Comparing his text with that of his sources (where they can be identified, so mostly for before 630), it seems that he did edit the disparate material that he had, but only up to a point.[39] As a result, his text is linguistically mixed, following his sources. Sometimes he preserves different spellings of the same name. The use of conflicting sources also created a degree of incoherence. Thus the Iconoclast emperor Leon III is pious at 396 and impious at 399. Some entries relate the events of many years, when Theophanes was copying a continuous narrative such as Prokopios (for the sixth century). He tended to judge the eighth-century emperors by their position on icons rather than their success as rulers, which was often substantial in the case of Leon III and Konstantinos V. It is therefore ironic that he praises Leon V as pious at the very end of the narrative (502), alluding to his accession after Michael I, as Leon

[39] Ilse Rochow, 'Malalas bei Theophanes', *Klio*, 65 (1983), 459–74; and Jakov Ljubarskij, 'Concerning the Literary Technique of Theophanes the Confessor', *Byzantinoslavica*, 56 (1995), 317–22.

would soon revive Iconoclasm and persecute Theophanes himself (making him a Confessor). For 809–13 the entries are slightly longer and viciously denounce the emperor Nikephoros I, who, however, was not a heretic. The hatred against him was motivated by his tax hikes. Whether Theophanes wrote these pages or his source (Georgios?), we have at least a contemporary view of recent events, the last extant example of which was Prokopios's *Wars*.

The last of the world chronicles written in a monastic milieu during this period was by another Georgios, also known as the Monk (*Monachos*) or the Sinner (*Hamartolos*, a conventional appellation; Theophanes also calls himself a Sinner). This chronicle was written between 843 and 872 (opinions differ) and survives in many manuscripts. Different versions may have been produced by the author and certainly by copyists, and the work was later continued down to the mid-tenth century, though in a completely different style. Georgios covers history from the Creation to 842 in eight hundred pages largely by compiling other sources. The Euhemerized figures of myth and Near Eastern kings enter the narrative early on in the synoptic Book 1. Books 2–5 retell biblical history; 6–7 cover the Near East from Nebuchadnezzar to the Seleucid kings; 8 from Caesar to Constantine's father; and 9 the emperors from Constantine to Michael III (later books become progressively longer).

Georgios was not concerned to synchronize national traditions in the early books and over half his chronicle is devoted to Roman history. The organization is curious, being a series of chronologically arranged entries on individuals, such as the biblical patriarchs and Roman emperors, which, without being biographical, offer Georgios the opportunity to digress on various matters. These digressions (mostly extended quotations from the Fathers) are rarely relevant to the figure in whose entry they are placed. Georgios's presentation is rambling, aptly called a 'stream-of-consciousness' historiography.[40] Within each entry, one thing will lead to another, from Pharaoh to Phoenix in a few lines (16). The entry on Alexander digresses on the attire of Jewish priests and the Brahmans of India and Amazons (25–39). A digression on paganism-atheism from Athanasios and Theodoretos is placed randomly in the entry on Serouch, a minor Old Testament figure (57–92). The entry on Claudius I is really an anthology on false (Jewish and Greek) and true (Christian) forms of monasticism. This plan is vaguely explained in Georgios's preface, which rejects Hellenic subtlety—whether scholarly, stylistic, or philosophical—and promises stories that benefit the soul. However, 'he is not averse to relating sexual adventures. . . . He was not a historian and should not be read as such. His audience was in search of entertainment, and they got it in the form of anecdotes, miraculous phenomena, and atrocities committed by evil personages. . . . Georgios was a pious entertainer.'[41]

[40] S. Efthymiades, pers. comm.

[41] Kazhdan, *Byzantine Literature*, ii. 43–52; cf. H.-A. Théologitis, '*La forza del destino*: Lorsque l'histoire devient littérature', in Paolo Odorico, Panagiotis A. Agapitos, and Martin

The writing of contemporary history intensified during the ninth century, only none of its products survive directly or complete. Among them were the sources for ninth-century history used in the tenth by Genesios, the continuators of Theophanes, and the versions of the chronicle of 'Symeon'.[42] For example, the long rebellion against Michael II by Thomas the Slav (821–3) was narrated in a history, a poem by Ignatios the Deacon, and an 'official' account by Michael II sent to Louis the Pious. These can be glimpsed but not adequately reconstructed from the surviving (tenth-century) record.[43] Two fragments of historical writing survive from the ninth century that were once believed to have come from the same source but which many now believe were separate in provenance, purpose, and style. The first, *About the Emperor Nikephoros and How He Leaves His Bones in Bulgaria* (called by scholars the *Chronicle of* 811) narrates Nikephoros I's defeat in 811. It is hostile to that emperor but treats his fallen soldiers hagiographically. The narrative was possibly written after 865, as it refers to the conversion of the Bulgarians (unless this is an interpolation). The second fragment, the *Scriptor Incertus de Leone* [Chronicle of Leon the Armenian], treats the reigns of Michael I and Leon V (811–20). It too focuses on relations and warfare with Bulgaria.[44]

Our period ends with a unique narrative of *The Capture of Thessalonike* (by the Arabs, 904) written by Ioannes Kaminiates, a cleric captured in the fall and taken with the other prisoners to Syria where he was eventually ransomed. His book (in the form of a letter and a plea) is innovative in being a detailed narrative of a recent event in the provinces by an eye-witness and also in that much of it is written in the first-person. It begins with a rhetorical description of Thessalonike and its lands (an *ekphrasis*); recounts the siege and sack of the city; and concludes with a personal account of captivity in the enemy fleet as it crossed the Aegean. Kaminiates knew the miracles of St Demetrios, but on this occasion the saint did not heed the citizen's prayers on account of the magnitude of their sins (10, 22).[45]

There is little in the historical writing of this period to prepare us for *The Capture of Thessalonike*, with its rhetorical and novelistic features. The principles and even axes along which historiography evolved are not well understood and were certainly not linear. It is unclear why Georgios Synkellos and Theophanes wrote what they did when they did; there was little to prepare us

Hinterberger (eds.), *L'écriture de la mémoire: La littérarité de l'historiographie* (Paris, 2006), 181–219, at 196–219.

[42] See ch. 11 by Paul Magdalino in this volume.

[43] Paul Lemerle, 'Thomas le Slave', *Travaux et Mémoires*, 1 (1965), 255–97.

[44] Paul Stephenson, '"About the Emperor Nikephoros and How He Leaves His Bones in Bulgaria": A Context for the Controversial *Chronicle of* 811', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 60 (2006), 87–109, reviews the scholarship.

[45] Joseph D. C. Frendo, 'The *Miracles of St. Demetrius* and the Capture of Thessaloniki', *Byzantinoslavica*, 58 (1997), 205–24.

for them either. Moreover, their scholarship was not imitated by posterity (e.g. the concordances, the annalistic format). Theophanes did not lead 'logically' to Georgios Monachos who, in turn, did not 'lead' to Kaminiates. We must remember that Byzantine writers were not necessarily responding to their immediate predecessors but to the ancient tradition, which meant, to exaggerate slightly, that any kind of text could spring up at any moment, depending on the models one chose to imitate: they could be near or far. We gain a glimpse of this reception in the reviews that the future patriarch Photios wrote in the mid-ninth century of many ancient and recent historians. He judged them on stylistic and scholarly grounds and made it seem as though one could pick and choose among them for models (even if only partial models).[46] On the other hand, it *is* possible, if one takes a broad view (e.g. 800–1150), to see evolution in key literary aspects of historiography where change was gradual and built upon successive accomplishments.[47] We are now starting to appreciate the literary aspects of these texts.[48] If research continues, the claim that Byzantine historical writing maintained and even improved the standards set by antiquity will be vindicated on many new levels.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

527	Accession of Justinian
532	Nika Riots in Constantinople
533–53	Wars of Byzantine reconquest in the West (North Africa, Italy)
541	First outbreak of the Justinianic plague
602	Phokas topples Maurikios in a rebellion and takes the throne
610	Herakleios topples Phokas in a rebellion and founds Herakleian dynasty
636	Arabs defeat Byzantines at the battle at the Yarmuk, take Palestine and Syria
641	Arabs capture Alexandria
698	Final Arab capture of Carthage
730–87	Period of Byzantine First Iconoclasm
815–43	Period of Byzantine Second Iconoclasm
867	Basileios I murders Michael III and founds the Macedonian dynasty
904	Arab raiders briefly capture Thessalonike

[46] S. Efthymiades, *Φώτιος Πατριάρχης Κωνσταντινουπόλεως: Βιβλιοθήκη, ὅσα τῆς ἱστορίας (Ἀνθολογία)* (Athens, 2000).

[47] e.g. Jakov Ljubarskij, 'Man in Byzantine Historiography from John Malalas to Michael Psellos', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 46 (1992), 177–86.

[48] Jakov Ljubarskij *et al.*, '*Quellenforschung* and/or Literary Criticism: Narrative Structures in Byzantine Historical Writings', *Symbolae Osloenses*, 73 (1998), 5–73.

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Chapter 11

Byzantine Historical Writing, 900–1400

Paul Magdalino

The dates 900 and 1400 are not entirely arbitrary divisions in the history of Byzantine historical writing. The tenth and the fourteenth centuries mark the beginning and the end of a continuous tradition of recording history on a large scale. It was not until the mid-tenth century that a serious attempt was made, by no less than three writers, to continue the narrative of imperial history that Theophanes had concluded with the accession of Leo V in 813 and that only the chronicler George the Monk had taken rather sketchily down to the end of iconoclasm in 843. At the other end, it was more than a century after 1354, when Nikephoros Gregoras and John Kantakouzenos chose to end their histories of their own times, that other historians felt moved to record the subsequent events that culminated in the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Between these bookends, there is a connected series of historians writing, on average, at twenty-year intervals.

Approximately thirty-one pieces of Greek historical writing produced in the Byzantine world (excluding Latin-occupied areas) survive from the period 900–1400. The number is approximate because it includes chronicles whose different manuscript versions might be listed separately, or which almost entirely overlap with other chronicles, or are embedded one within the other. It also includes a work whose author, Niketas Choniates, 'published' more than one version,[1] as well as works that might not be considered strictly historical because they record limited episodes in a speech or letter format, and in a rhetorical context of apology, request, panegyric, or denunciation. Other works in this border zone, however, have not been included despite the rich historical information they contain: such are the tenth-century hagiographies of the patriarchs Ignatios and Euthymios, and the self-canonizing autobiography of Nikephoros Blemmydes.[2] A significant

[1] Alicia J. Simpson, 'Before and After 1204: The Versions of Niketas Choniates' *Historia*', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 60 (2006), 189–222.

[2] Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Nicephori Blemmydae autobiographia*, ed. Joseph Munitiz (CC, Series graeca 13; Turnhout, 1984); Blemmydes, *A Partial Account*, trans. Munitiz (Louvain, 1988); Life of Euthymios: *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. and trans. Patricia Karlin-Hayter (Brussels, 1970); Life of Ignatios: *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 105, cols. 488–573; cf. Symeon A. Paschalides, 'From Hagiography to Historiography: The Case of the *Vita Ignatii* by Nicetas David the

number of other works are known to have existed, either because surviving works refer to them, or because two or more surviving works can be shown to go back to a common lost and unacknowledged source. The boundaries of this lost literature are vague, because it is not clear to what extent the literary sources used by history-writers themselves would qualify as works of historical writing according to Byzantine criteria.

What were those criteria, and what distinguished good history from bad history in medieval Byzantine eyes? Nearly all the works surveyed here label themselves as historical in their titles. Apart from the word *historia* itself, other specific terms were 'composition' (*syngraphe*), 'chronicle' (*chronikon, chronographia*), 'narration' (*diegesis, aphegesis*), 'exposé' (*ekthesis*), or simply 'book' (*biblos*). Although not synonymous, these terms were rarely used with precise distinction, and often occur in combination, or with other words that qualify the work as being 'brief' (*syntomos*), a 'summary' (*epitome, synopsis*), a 'selection' (*ekloge*), or, in the case of Nikephoros Bryennios, simply the 'matter of history' (*hyle historias*). Variation is the norm. Works of history also identify themselves as such by their explicit or *de facto* relationship to other histories—whether by summarizing their contents, or beginning where the others leave off, or presenting an alternative view of events.

Most importantly, historical literature was defined by its purpose and method, as set out in the prefaces with which Byzantine historians commonly introduce their works.[3] History is useful and beneficial, because it rescues the deeds of past people from oblivion, and preserves them as a lesson for future generations, who will learn from these examples to imitate the good and avoid the bad. The historian's task is to record the truth clearly and informatively. Some maintain that he should adopt the middle way between excessive brevity and excessive prolixity, but most emphasize the need for concision and simplicity in recording the essentials. Literary ornament in the form of high-flown language, elaborate speeches, and descriptions not only obscures the facts, but risks distorting them with positive or negative value judgements. The historian should avoid personally motivated praise or blame, and therefore the rhetoric of persuasion has no place in his prose. As Michael Attaleiates puts it, 'the discourse is not polemical, and therefore in need of rhetorical method, but historical'.[4] Finally, Byzantine historians like to emphasize their own reliability: if they are writing the history of ancient times, they have done a lot of research, collated their sources, keeping the essential and discarding the superfluous; if writing about recent and

Paphlagonian', in Paolo Odorico and Panagiotis Agapitos (eds.), *Les* Vies des saints *à Byzance: Genre littéraire ou biographie historique?* (Dossiers byzantins 4; Paris, 2004), 161–73.

[3] See in general Iordanis Grigoriadis, 'A Study of the *prooimion* of Zonaras' Chronicle in Relation to other 12th-Century Historical *prooimia*', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 91 (1998), 327–44.

[4] *Miguel Ataliates, Historia*, ed. and trans. Inmaculada Pérez Martin (Nueva Roma 15; Madrid, 2002), 5–6.

contemporary history, they have either witnessed the events themselves, or got their information from trustworthy observers.

These prescriptions, repeated with minor variations from preface to preface, were inherited commonplaces, and as such cannot be taken as infallible guides to the contents of the texts they precede. Byzantine historians were notoriously prone to the rhetoric of praise (*epainos*) and blame (*psogos*). John Skylitzes, writing in the late eleventh century, lamented that history-writing had gone downhill since the ninth-century chronicles of George the Synkellos and Theophanes. On the one hand, some historians had given little more than lists of emperors, 'passing over most of the essential matters'. On the other hand, if others had mentioned some deeds,

> they wrote about them without proper focus, and harmed rather than benefited their readers. For the Constantinopolitans Theodore Daphnopates, Niketas the Paphlagonian, Joseph Genesios and Manuel; Nikephoros the Deacon from Phrygia, Leo from [Western] Asia Minor, Theodore the bishop of Side his namesake who headed the church of Sebasteia; in addition Demetrios bishop of Kyzikos and the monk John: each one of these put his own agenda to the fore, one the praise of an emperor, another the denunciation of a patriarch, another an encomium of a friend. Fulfilling their own aim under the cover of history-writing, they fell wide of the mark of the aforementioned God-bearing men [George Synkellos and Theophanes]. They wrote histories at length of the things that had happened during their times and shortly before: one sympathetically, another with hostility, another to please, another as he had been ordered. Each composing their own history, and differing from each other in their narration of the same things, they filled their listeners with dizziness and confusion.[5]

None of the histories mentioned by Skylitzes can be identified with certainty, but the tendencies he describes can easily be recognized in existing texts. To take the most extreme examples, the *Life of Basil I* dictated in the mid-tenth century by his grandson Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, and the *Alexiad*, the biography of Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118), written by his daughter Anna: these works are almost hagiographical in their one-sided portrayal of their subjects. Yet both authors, in their prefaces, go out of their way to advertise their work as history: the biographer of Basil I by placing his work in the context of a project to record the deeds of all the Byzantine emperors, and Anna by insisting on her impartiality towards her father and her commitment to the truth. They are also clearly conscious of the historicity of the information they provide. The author of the *Life of Basil I* is concerned to get his chronology right, and justifies his brief account of Basil's eastern campaigns, first on the grounds that it truly reflects the rapid sequence of events, and second, by saying that he will not invent tactical details of which no reliable record survives.[6] The implication is that a good history

[5] John Skylitzes, *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn (CFHB 5; Berlin and New York, 1973), 3–4; my translation diverges slightly from that by Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)* (Oxford 2005), 123–4.

[6] *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1838), 279–80.

should go into such details, and that observers should record them for this purpose. Interestingly, nearly all subsequent histories do provide detailed descriptions of expeditions and battles, not least the *Alexiad* of the palace-bound, intellectual princess Anna Comnena.

If the authors of this kind of history did take themselves seriously as historians, how does one explain the apparent discrepancy between their dispassionate theory and their partisan practice? The simplest explanation is that the difference between theory and practice was just that: the label, the prescriptions, and the narrative mode of history-writing were all a guise and a cover that gave spurious dignity to the voicing of likes and dislikes and the pursuit of a personal and political agenda. This is the explanation given by Skylitzes, and it can be made to fit all known Byzantine historians. But Skylitzes had his own agenda, and one may question whether a tendency that was even more widespread than he describes can adequately be characterized in terms of a crude dichotomy between medium and message and a cynical manipulation of the historical genre. Several qualifications should be made.

First, the tension between subjective motivation and objective vision is fundamental to all historical writing, so from this point of view Byzantine writers were perhaps exceptionally transparent rather than exceptionally dishonest. Second, the openness and the consistency with which they pursued their personal agenda suggests that they were not being consciously deceptive, but had a different conception of historical truth from either the ancient or the modern ideal. As Roger Scott has observed, Byzantine historiography 'is a branch of propaganda or advertisement (even if it is honest advertisement)',[7] based on the Christian view of history as the providential unfolding of God's plan. The good and successful deeds of past rulers were true because they were right, because they both manifested God's favour and attracted it. This was the main lesson that history had to teach, and it was a lesson that did not speak for itself, but had to be taught with charm and persuasion. As Leo the Deacon wrote in his preface, history had to make the past live again.[8] Thus, third, history-writing could not avoid the rhetoric of praise and blame and other literary techniques that were needed to delineate character, dramatize a plot, and explain the causes of events. For, except where it was concerned with exact chronology, history was literature rather than science, and history-writers were not just historians. They wrote history because they were educated to write many other things, and there is evidence that most of them did.

Indeed, historiography became less and less of a self-contained, impermeable genre in the middle Byzantine period. Apart from its obvious affinities with official orations and saints' lives, and its quotations from the Bible and the classics, especially Homer, it borrowed from the ancient novel and even from technical

[7] Roger Scott, 'The Classical Tradition in Byzantine Historiography', in Margaret Mullett and Scott (eds.), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition* (Birmingham, 1991), 71.

[8] Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. C. B. Hase (CSHB; Bonn, 1828), 4.

literature. The detailed descriptions of campaigns and battles, which, as we have seen, became a regular feature of history-writing from the mid-tenth century, surely have something to do with the vogue for military manuals at that time.[9] The Christian worldview opened historiography to almost any religious theme. George the Monk, the ninth-century chronicler of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, is very thin on historical detail, but quotes copiously from homilies and biblical commentaries. More than two thirds of the twelfth-century history of Michael Glykas is a commentary on biblical history, with a special emphasis on the Creation arising from his scientific interests. Nikephoros Gregoras in the fourteenth century, who was an astronomer as well as a historian, also thought that the workings of the natural world were an integral part of history.[10]

The fourth and final qualification to make about Skylitzes's critique is that it is directed entirely against one genre of history-writing. All the writers he criticizes for writing propaganda in the guise of history wrote literary histories of a short recent period. The two writers he praises as models of concise and balanced factual reporting, George the Synkellos and Theophanes, were both chroniclers who between them narrated the history of the world from the Creation to the ninth century. Fundamental to the Byzantine idea of history, and the place of historiography in Byzantine literature, is the fact that Byzantine history-writing consisted of two distinct traditions, the chronicle and the history. Ecclesiastical history, the third historical genre of the early Byzantine period, had come to an end with Evagrius in the late sixth century, and despite an isolated revival around 1320 by Nikephoros Xanthopoulos, it never again came to form a continuous independent tradition.

However, the distinction between the Christian chronicle and the secular history, roughly equivalent to that between 'annalists and historians' in the Latin West, continued. Epitomized in the age of Justinian by the contrasting works of Prokopios and Malalas, it re-surfaced at the turn of the ninth century in the *Short History* of Nikephoros and the chronicle of George the Synkellos continued by Theophanes;[11] it then persisted until the end of Byzantium and beyond. Some scholars have recently questioned whether the distinction is meaningful or helpful, particularly in the medieval period, and advocate looking at individual approaches rather than generic categories.[12] There was certainly considerable innovation and variation, with every author stretching the chronicle or history mould. But for all their flexibility, the moulds remained basically unbroken; they did not fuse, and they never became exactly alike. Their distinguishing features may be caricatured as follows.

[9] For recent editions and translations see the introduction to *The* History *of Leo the Deacon*, trans. Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis Sullivan (Washington, DC, 2005), 4–7.

[10] Armin Hohlweg, 'Astronomie und Geschichtsbetrachtung bei Nikephoros Gregoras', in Werner Seibt (ed.), *Geschichte und Kultur der Palaiologenzeit* (Vienna, 1996), 51–63.

[11] See ch. 10 by Anthony Kaldellis in this volume.

[12] See, notably, Jakov Ljubarskij *et al.*, '*Quellenforschung* and/or Literary Criticism: Narrative Structures in Byzantine Historical Writings', *Symbolae Osloenses*, 73 (1998), 5–73; and Alexander Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850–1000)*, ed. Christine Angelidi (Athens, 2006).

1. *History*	2. *Chronicle*
Survives in few manuscripts, often no more than one.	Rich manuscript tradition, with many variations introduced by successive scribes/compilers.
Elitist/erudite readership.	Popular readership.
Atticizing language, long periods, complex syntax.	Simple, middling to low language, short periods.
Frequent classical quotes and allusions, authorial interjections, passages in direct speech, descriptions and characterizations.	Concise, compressed, matter-of-fact reporting.
Developed, connected, thematic narrative.	Sequential reporting of unrelated and unconnected pieces of information.
Biographical structure; imperial reigns the main units of division.	Chronological structure; information grouped in annual entries.
Chronological indications uneven and narrative sequence often thematic to rather than chronological.	Exact and sometimes obsessive attention vague; chronology.
Focus on 'deeds' (*praxeis*).	Focus on events, including natural phenomena.
Covers recent Byzantine history, from about a generation prior to the author's lifetime.	Covers the history of the world from the Creation (normally dated to 5,500 years before the birth of Christ), with Byzantine history as a continuation of Roman history.
Classical inspiration and conventions.	Christian inspiration and conventions.
Written from the author's own experience and the oral evidence of other eye-witnesses; occasionally also from contemporary writings.	Information taken mainly from older histories and chronicles, which are collated, excerpted, summarized, or incorporated with minor editing.
Intrusion of the author into the narrative.	Narrative almost entirely impersonal.

A distinct number of works unmistakably belong in the first list. They include almost all the main narrative sources that form an unbroken if overlapping sequence from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries: Genesios, Theophanes Continuatus, Leo the Deacon, the *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos, Michael Attaleiates, Anna Komnene, John Kinnamos, Niketas Choniates, George Akropolites, George Pachymeres, Nikephoros Gregoras, John Kantakouzenos.

They also include the three accounts of the sieges of Thessalonica in 902, 1185, and 1430, written by John Kameniates, Eustathios, and John Anagnostes.[13] The main 'deviant' in the list is *Theophanes Continuatus*, which is anonymous and a compilation of at least four texts, one of them largely borrowed from the Chronicle of Symeon the Logothete; the greater part of the work also concerns a period well before the authors' lifetime. Otherwise, one should note that the criterion of manuscript transmission works better for the earlier texts than for those written from the late twelfth century, mainly because manuscripts copied after the crusader sack of Constantinople in 1204 had a better chance of survival.

Three works defy easy classification. One is the *Concise History* preserved in a single manuscript (Sinaiticus graecus 1117) and attributed to Psellos.[14] On the one hand, this resembles a chronicle in its coverage of a long period (from the foundation of Rome to the reign of Basil II), its reliance on older histories, its lack of interest in 'deeds', and its brief recording of information without narrative progression. On the other hand, its strictly biographical structure, lack of chronology, largely secular content, and, above all, its complete omission of biblical history set it apart from the chronicle tradition. It also treats the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963–9) in a way that suggests the influence of a biographical history celebrating the Phokas family. If the text is by Psellos, its peculiarities may be explained by the fact that it fits exactly the chronological gap between the author's two other historical compositions: a very brief chronicle of world history from the Creation to the Incarnation,[15] and his history of his own times (the *Chronographia*).

Another work that falls between the categories is the *Historical Summary* of John Skylitzes, covering the period 813–1057, with a later supplement, possibly by the same author, taking the narrative down to 1078. The *Summary* is a chronicle in the sense that it models itself on George Synkellos and Theophanes, and, as we have seen, advertises itself as the proper continuation of their work, because it summarizes according to their method the writings of their successors who did not live up to their standards. It is generally concise, and, in its eleventh-century section, contains annual entries in pure chronicle style. Like the 'typical' chronicle, it survives in several manuscripts, it was subject to interpolation, and it was adopted verbatim by another chronicler, the slightly later George Kedrenos, into

[13] John Anagnostes, *Ἰωάννου Ἀναγννώστου, Διήγησις περὶ τῆς τελευτάιας ἁλώσεως τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης*, ed. D. Tsaras (Thessaloniki, 1958); Eustathios, *La espugnazione di Tessalonica*, ed. St. Kyriakides, trans. V. Rotolo (Palermo, 1961); English trans. (with Greek text) J. R. Melville Jones, *Eustathios of Thessaloniki* (Byzantina Australiensia 8; Canberra 1988); and John Kameniates, *Ioannis Caminiatae de expugnatione Thessalonicae*, ed. Gertrud Böhlig (CFHB 4; Berlin and New York 1973); trans. D. Frendo and A. Fotiou, *The Capture of Thessaloniki* (Byzantina Australiensia 12; Canberra 2000).

[14] John Duffy and Efstratios Papaioannou, 'Michael Psellos and the Authorship of the *Historia Syntomos*: Final Considerations', in Anna Avramea, Angeliki Laiou, and Evangelos Chrysos (eds.), *Byzantium, State and Society* (Athens, 2003), 219–29.

[15] *Michaelis Pselli Theologica*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Gautier (Leipzig, 1989), 445–7.

his narrative of history from the Creation. Yet the works it summarizes are histories, and it is largely concerned with 'deeds', particularly those of war. Finally, in the fourteenth century, the *Chronicle History* by Ephraim of Ainos, in some 9,600 lines of twelve-syllable verse, summarises Roman and Byzantine imperial history to 1261 on the basis of three sources, the untypical chronicle of Zonaras, and the histories of Choniates and Akropolites.[16]

All the other historical works produced from the tenth to the fourteenth century may be classified as chronicles, either because their framework is the history of the world from the Creation and they are built on an anonymous mass of earlier historiography, or because they consist of classic chronological entries, which is largely the case with the provincial chronicles of Monemvasia,[17] Trebizond,[18] and Ioannina.[19] Yet there is not one that combines all the criteria in the 'chronicle' checklist, while nearly all of them show certain characteristics of the 'history' type. As in earlier periods, a number of chronicles effectively become histories in their final sections, when they deal with recent history on the basis of autopsy, oral reports, and contemporary writings. Such is famously the case with the Chronicle of Symeon Magistros and Logothete, a major primary source for the period 813–948, and the History of John Zonaras, dating from the mid- to late twelfth century, which ends with an original account of the reign of Alexios I Komnenos.

Already in the Chronicle of Theophanes, we can see a division by reign becoming superimposed on the chronological grid. The grid becomes less consistent in the otherwise classic tenth-century chronicles of Symeon the Logothete (transmitted in two versions), Pseudo-Symeon, and the mainly identical text to which George Kedrenos added Skylitzes in the compilation he made around 1100.[20] It then disappears completely in the three twelfth-century works that fill the narrative framework of world history in strikingly individual ways, reflecting the other literary interests of their authors. Constantine Manasses produced, in just over 6,600 lines of fifteen-syllable verse, an entertaining, moralizing, anecdotal survey of events from the Creation to 1081, with much descriptive characterization, emotive commentary, and reference to the power of Envy (*phthonos*) and Fortune

[16] *Ἐφραὶμ τοῦ Αἴνου χρονογραφία*, ed. Odysseus Lampsidis, 2 vols. (Athens, 1984–5).

[17] *Cronaca di Monemvasia: Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e note,* ed. and trans. Ivan Duičev (Palermo, 1976).

[18] Michael Panaretos, *On the Emperors of Trebizond, the Grand Komnenoi*, ed. Odysseus Lampsidis, *Μιχαὴλ τοῦ Παναρέτου, Περὶ τῶν Μεγάλων Κομνηνῶν* (Athens, 1958).

[19] Anonymous, *Chronicle of Ioannina*, ed. S. Cirac-Estopañán, *Bizancio y España: el legado de la basilissa María y de los déspotas Thomas y Esaú de Ioannina*, 2 vols. (Barcelona, 1943), ii., also ed. Leandros I. Vranousis, in *Ἐπετηρὶς τοῦ Μεσαιωνικοῦ Ἀρχείου* 12, Academy of Athens (Athens, 1965), 57–115.

[20] *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannae Scylitzae ope*, ed. I Bekker, 2 vols. (CSHB; Bonn, 1838); cf. Luigi Tartaglia, 'Meccanismi di compilazione nella *Cronaca* di Giorgio Cedreno', in F. Conca and G. Fiaccadori (eds.), *Bisanzio nell'età dei Macedoni: Forme della produzione letteraria e artistica* (Milan, 2007), 239–55.

(*tyche*). The history of the canon lawyer John Zonaras, by contrast, is an unpretentious but stylish and critical résumé of high-quality sources that include, for the Roman Empire, the *Roman History* of Dio Cassius; it is remarkable for its close attention to the constitutional development of the Roman state, and its critique of 'tyrannical' emperors who abuse the public nature of their office that is inherent in the republican origins of the imperial monarchy. It ends with an equivocal assessment of Alexios I as a competent and approachable emperor who nevertheless violated the constitution with his family-based system of rewards and honours. The slightly later chronicle by Michael Glykas is, in its narrative of imperial history, mainly an unremarkable re-hash of earlier histories, including Zonaras, but prior to that it is a series of solutions to problems posed by the Bible, especially Genesis. The author frequently addresses the 'dear reader' in a didactic way, and indeed many of his solutions are also to be found in his collection of responses to questions he had received from a number of named individuals.

Later chronicles do not follow these innovative leads. They are represented mainly by three closely related texts dating from the late thirteenth century, of which the best known, the *Summary Chronicle*, is the least securely attributed to Theodore Skoutariotes, bishop of Kyzikos.[21] Although the narrative of the *Summary Chronicle* from the end of the eleventh century down to 1261 is largely a rendition of the main literary histories, the period from the Creation to 1081 is covered in typical chronicle style. The author appears to have taken his information from chronicles that were similar to, if not identical with, those used by Zonaras, Manasses, and Glykas, but unlike the twelfth-century authors he remained close to the format of his sources. In this, his work may mark a deliberate, conservative reversion to traditional practice. The chronicle genre was indeed inherently conservative in the sense that it set human achievements and imperial politics in the perspective of the *longue durée* and the act of God; its format left little room for glamorizing or analysing the exercise of power, or privileging individuals. It is thus not coincidental that Symeon the Logothete and John Zonaras, the two historians who consciously deflated the imperial image of the two major dynastic founders of the Middle-Byzantine period, Basil I the Macedonian and Alexios I Komnenos, both chose to write in chronicle form. The author of the *Summary Chronicle* does a similar job with respect to Michael VIII Palaiologos, the founder of the last Byzantine imperial dynasty. While incorporating George Akropolites's *History* of the period 1204–61, the chronicler transforms the text, by cutting and interpolating, from a celebration of Michael Palaiologos into a tribute

[21] Ed. Konstantinos Sathas in *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, VII (Paris, 1894; repr. Athens, 1972). For the other texts see *Theodori Scutariotae Chronica,* ed. Raimondo Tocci (CFHB 46; Berlin and New York, 2009); and Konstantinos Zafeiris, 'A Reappraisal of the *Chronicle* of Theodore of Kyzikos', *Byzantinis che Zeitschrift*, 103 (2010), 772–90.

to the Laskarid dynasty that Michael ousted and to the patriarch Arsenios who censured this action.[22]

'Historians', no less than 'chroniclers', generally assumed that the success and failure of their protagonists were divinely ordained, and they dutifully recorded earthquakes, storms, and freaks of nature, sometimes investing them with providential significance. Mainly, however, their focus was on individuals, and their purpose was to make coherent narrative sense of choices and actions as causes and effects. This gave them greater scope and incentive to vary and innovate, despite the 'imitation' (*mimesis*) of ancient models, starting with Thucydides, to which they were committed. The court historiography commissioned by Constantine VII in the works of Genesios and the anonymous continuator of Theophanes (*Theophanes Continuatus*) innovated in the very fact of reviving the biographical, high-style narration of secular deeds after a hiatus of three centuries. It compounded the innovation by not simply producing an imitation of one ancient historian, or a pastiche of several ancient historians, but by blending the techniques of 'propagandistic' media—saints' lives, the rhetoric of praise and blame, and literature on the ideal ruler—with romantic tales about famous figures of the early ninth century. The original purpose of both works was to provide a sequel to the Chronicle of Theophanes, which ended in 813, that would give a suitably lurid account of the follies and failures of the predecessors of Basil I as a prelude to celebrating, and justifying, Basil's takeover of power through the murder of Michael III. Genesios went further and included a short account of Basil's reign. Constantine VII, however, clearly not satisfied with this, organized the composition of a separate 'Life' of his grandfather to follow *Theophanes Continuatus* in a compilation that was later taken down to 963 by the addition of chapters on Basil's successors, including a glowing account of Constantine VII.

As already noted, the extended edition of *Theophanes Continuatus* became the first link in a chain of biographically structured histories that continues unbroken until the fourteenth century. If, as seems increasingly likely, the authors were conscious of working in a tradition, there is no sign that they felt constrained by precedent; rather it seems that they all chose the structure, style, content, and level of comment that suited their individual approach to the common task of recording imperial deeds.

Although the heroic biography remained the 'default' structural unit, all authors who used it developed it beyond the rather iconic models of imperial virtue that we find in the portraits of Basil I and Constantine VII. They created more dramatic, unfolding narratives, which they enriched with greater detail, particularly in reporting dialogues and military campaigns. The model of perfection increasingly owed more to Homer and Plutarch and less to hagiography. This is most obvious in the biographies of Alexios I Komnenos, the emperor who

[22] See Ruth Macrides, *George Akropolites: The History* (Oxford, 2007), 65–71.

revived the Byzantine state after its precipitous decline in the 1070s: the *Historical Materials* by his son-in-law Nikephoros Bryennios, which recounted his early exploits before coming to the throne, and the suggestively named *Alexiad* by Anna Comnena, which told the whole story of his life in fifteen long books. But the epic portrayal of the magnanimous, daring, inspirational leader reached its high point in John Kinnamos's history of Alexios's grandson Manuel I, and it had begun in the tenth century with Leo the Deacon's portraits of the great conquering soldier emperors Nikephoros II Phokas and John I Tzimiskes. Despite the fact that the latter murdered the former, both are the heroes of Leo's history that takes up the sequence of imperial biographies from *Theophanes Continuatus*. Leo also draws a heroic portrait of Tzimiskes's great adversary, the Russian prince Sviatoslav, that anticipates the anti-hero figures of the *Alexiad*, the Norman father and son Robert Guiscard and Bohemond, who serve as foils for Alexios's triumphant persistence.

Epic portrayal makes a brief reappearance in George Akropolites's history of the Empire of Nicaea, the Byzantine state that was established in Western Asia Minor after the Latin conquest of Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade. Akropolites presents the last ruler in exile, Michael Palaiologos, as a noble hero born to be king who, through his own native wit and courage, foiled all the jealous intrigues against him and went on to recover Constantinople in 1261. After that, the sorry state of the rapidly dwindling empire of the Palaiologoi hardly favoured epic or even encomiastic treatment of the rulers who presided over one disaster after another. The only exception was the ex-emperor John VI Kantakouzenos who wrote his own apologia for his ultimately catastrophic intervention in imperial politics. His memoirs begin with the civil wars between Andronikos II and his grandson Andronikos III (1321–8); they then cover the reign of Andronikos III as sole emperor (1328–41), when Kantakouzenos was the power behind the throne, followed by the period of civil conflict and foreign invasion that was ushered in by Kantakouzenos's usurpation of imperial power (1341) and ended with his abdication in 1354. This autobiographical history, written in the third person, is unique in Byzantine literature. Its relentlessly self-serving and self-justifying agenda is redeemed by its high level of classical erudition and by the fact that the contemporary historian Nikephoros Gregoras largely endorsed Kantakouzenos's view of events—at least up to the point where they fell out over the emperor's backing for the Hesychast party in the church. But Gregoras, unlike Akropolites, was not out to write encomiastic biography.

Akropolites resembles Genesios and *Theophanes Continuatus* in that his succinct and negative or neutral portraits of the earlier rulers of Nicaea serve to highlight his hero, the reigning emperor, and justify his rise to the throne. A similar pattern is superficially discernible in the two earlier historians who were the first to cover the period of the empire's political and military crisis in the third quarter of the eleventh century. Michael Psellos and Michael Attaleiates both end their histories with extravagant paeans of praise for the last emperors in their

series, Michael VII Doukas and Nikephoros III Botaneiates respectively. But it has been doubted whether these over-the-top, too good to be true portraits, which contrast with the incisive and more nuanced treatments of earlier reigns, were entirely serious or sincere, or represent the real interests of the writers.[23] The deeper concern of Psellos and Attaleiates was to explain the decline of the empire from the power, prestige, and expanded frontiers it had enjoyed under the great Basil II (976–1025). Their biographical surveys, while reflecting their likes and dislikes, expose the fragile power base of recent rulers and the flawed psychology of power that led them and their advisers to make the wrong decisions.

Psellos originally ended his *Chronographia* at the death of Isaac I (1059), but extended it to justify his own role under the Doukas emperors, Constantine X (1059–68) and Michael VII (1068–78). He idealizes men of action who prioritize the financial and military interests of the state. His ideal hero is Basil II, after whom all is downhill; his flawed heroes are Michael IV, progressively paralyzed by illness and guilt-ridden piety, the rebel commander George Maniakes, and Isaac I, too impetuous in his otherwise admirable programme of financial reform. His anti-hero is the affable, spendthrift, pleasure-loving, and popularity-seeking Constantine IX Monomachos (1042–55) who weathered the crises of his reign more by luck than good management. Piety and impiety play no part in imperial success and failure, and Psellos all but excludes divine providence as a cause. He treats errors of judgement as psychological rather than moral weaknesses, and he analyses the corruption of the state in terms of health, not justice. In the metaphorical language of ancient political thought, he conceives of the state as an organic body-politic, sustained by a sound financial and patronage system, and composed of an equitable balance between army and bureaucracy. Yet while he enunciates the principles of government more clearly and philosophically than any other Byzantine historian, he does not clutter his philosophical analysis and his psychological pen-portraits with details of names, dates, places, and events. He reduces the narrative of wars to a bare minimum. This makes him both a brilliant commentator and an unsatisfactory informant from the modern perspective; the facts and the logistics of eleventh-century history have largely to be culled from the more traditional narratives of Attaleiates and Skylitzes.

Attaleiates explains political failure in traditional religious terms, as divine punishment for disobedience to God, just as he explains earthquakes and monstrous prodigies as manifestations of divine wrath. Yet his conception of God's providential justice is not purely Christian or biblical. He points out that when the Turkish invasions penetrated deep into the imperial heartland, this disproved the idea that they represented God's judgement on the predominantly heretical populations of the eastern frontier areas. His divine providence is, rather, a non-confessional, natural justice, which rewards people of all religions, notably the

[23] Dimitris Krallis, 'Attaleiates as a Reader of Psellos', in Charles Barber and David Jenkins (eds.), *Reading Michael Psellos* (The Medieval Mediterranean 61; Leiden, 2006), 167–91.

pagan Romans in the past and the infidel Turks in the present day, with success in war because they root out injustice in their own societies. Indeed, he more than once refers to this divine retribution as *nemesis*, implying that what provoked it was not so much a lack of piety as an overconfidence in the exercise of power that violates natural law—including the rules of war. Thus his main protagonist, the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes, is a tragic hero who fails in his well-meaning, energetic initiatives and leads the imperial army to disaster at the battle of Manzikert, because he overreacts with hasty presumption. Nevertheless, Romanos is also portrayed as the victim of jealous intrigues and betrayals. His tragic flaws are the excesses of his virtues, which Attaleiates basically admires. Far from advocating passive resignation to God's will, he applauds bold, vigorous action, for which he particularly commends the 'Frankish' soldiers in the imperial army.

Two later authors are to be classified as historians of decline: Niketas Choniates, covering the period 1118–1207, and George Pachymeres, whose history begins with the Empire of Nicaea and breaks off in 1307. They open with portraits of ideal figures, John II Komnenos (1118–43) and John III Vatatzes (1221–54) respectively, who represent the state of grace and virtue from which the empire goes downhill, despite the relative stability that it initially enjoys due to the exceptional abilities and foresight of a great but morally flawed successor—respectively Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80) and Michael VIII Palaiologos (1258–82). On the whole, the later historians of decline can be said to combine the moralizing aetiology of Attaleiates with the psychological anatomy of power produced by Psellos. Choniates explains the slide towards the collapse of the empire in 1204 by the sins of successive Byzantine rulers, who not only personify the moral corruption of society in general but also become intoxicated with the absolute power of their office, appropriating public and sacred resources, assuming infallible wisdom, destroying the brightest and best of their subjects on unfounded suspicions, and consulting soothsayers and astrologers instead of trusting in God's providence. This explanation picks up Zonaras's constitutional concern for the public good as well as Attaleiates's concept of divine *nemesis* as retribution for judicial injustice. Choniates also develops the principle that 'God helps those who help themselves' to the point of emphasizing that what undid the emperors and the empire of the late twelfth century (for which he is the only Byzantine historical source) was not the cruel tyranny of Andronikos I (1182–5), but the hedonistic indolence with which he and his successors, Isaac II (1185–95) and Alexios III (1195–1203), confronted rebellions and invasions.

The only heroic figures in Choniates's narrative after John II have minor roles: a general, Andronikos Kontostephanos, and the German crusading kings Conrad III and Frederick Barbarossa. His other portraits are in varying shades of grey, coloured with tragic-comic irony and anecdote. Yet for all the sophistication and nuance of his portraiture, he delivers his message with the vehemence of an Old Testament prophet, in emotional tirades against Byzantine vice and barbarian brutality that reach a crescendo as he narrates the events of 1204. In contrast, George Pachymeres, writing a century later, does not openly moralize and preach,

despite his ecclesiastical viewpoint and the tragic state of the empire, but conveys his comment through his closely observed narration of intentions and outcomes. He surpasses even Psellos in his cool analysis of political situations and structural causes. His account of Michael Palaiologos's rise to power is a masterpiece study of Machiavellian ambition and statecraft. The historian of the next generation, Nikephoros Gregoras, who took the story of disaster down to 1354 in a grand narrative starting in 1204, was indebted to Pachymeres for much of his account of the reigns of Michael VIII and Andronikos II. More explicitly and insistently than any previous historian, Gregoras attributes events to God's providence, which he sees not only as a force of divine judgement, but also as a kind of Fortune, whose inscrutable workings are explicable only to herself.

It would be wrong, however, to read Byzantine histories solely as relentless searches for causation in narratives of epic or decline, or combinations of the two. As works of literature, they are full of incidental descriptions, anecdotes, curiosities, and longer digressions that are clearly meant to divert or entertain. They frequently highlight issues and events whose interest to the author is more obvious than their relevance to political causation: such are Attaleiates's account of the grain trade at Raidestos, Anna Comnena's digressions on learning and education, Pachymeres's long accounts of ecclesiastical affairs, and Gregoras's even longer diatribes against his opponents in the Hesychast controversy. The authors also not infrequently highlight themselves. Authorial self-representation has been identified as one of the distinguishing features of Byzantine literature in this period, and history-writing was no exception to the trend. Indeed, it provides two of the most notorious examples of Byzantine literary egoism: the *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos, who places his education and career at the centre of his fourteen imperial biographies, and the political memoirs in which John Kantakouzenos reviews the history of the empire from 1321 to 1354 through the lens of his own career. Both authors are extreme cases, and yet the motives that drive them to foreground themselves can be seen at work, to a greater or lesser extent, in other historians: to underline their intimacy with former 'good' emperors, and to distance themselves from discredited regimes; to advertise the learning, which, in their view, qualified them for political influence; and to establish their credentials as impeccable witnesses, with inside information, of the events they recorded.

It remains to situate middle Byzantine history-writing more precisely in terms of the three parameters that have become apparent in the course of this survey: the literary transmission of information, the interests of the author, and the political fortunes of the state. Let us briefly consider the sources of our historians, their social position and relationship to political authority, and the status, official or otherwise, of their work.

Sources were of two kinds: sources of information, and sources of inspiration and style. Sources of information ranged from the older histories, themselves often highly derivative, incorporated by chroniclers writing about much earlier periods, to the personal experiences and observations of historians writing about

their own times. Between these extremes lay a variety of oral and written documentation that the writers themselves rarely identify. A notable exception is Anna Komnene, who states that she drew on a mixture of eyewitness reports, overheard conversations of her father, and the honest but artless memoirs of certain old soldiers. But this was clearly not all. She quotes verbatim from imperial documents that must have been obtained from state archives; she and the Norman poet William of Apulia appear to have used a common, Italian source for her father's wars with Robert Guiscard;[24] and it has plausibly been suggested that she inherited a dossier of material assembled, and perhaps partly composed, by her husband Nikephoros Bryennios, from whom she took over the task of writing Alexios's biography. Anna is unusual in her direct citation of administrative documents (although citation of peace treaties was an ancient tradition), but all historians, herself included, reflect familiarity with other kinds of official literature produced to celebrate and publicize imperial events. In particular, one should mention the newsletters that reported on imperial victories.[25] While autobiographical war memoirs of the kind that Anna mentions are not otherwise attested, admiring biographies of prominent military commanders are discernible among the sources of tenth- and eleventh-century historians.[26]

The most obvious sources of inspiration for historical narrative were the ancient writers, not only historians, whom educated Byzantines looked to as models of language, style, and narrative technique. The least obvious are the historian's own Byzantine predecessors, ranging from the fairly remote, such as Prokopios, to the very recent or the contemporary recorder of the same events. The almost complete lack of cross-referencing and the fact that so many histories survive in a single manuscript give the initial impression that Byzantine historians ignored each other. Yet the more the texts are studied, the more echoes are picked up, and the more it becomes apparent that the very dissonance between parallel accounts can reflect a conscious response of one to the other. Thus Attaleiates makes extra sense when we postulate that he had read Psellos; Choniates picks up and develops phraseology from Leo the Deacon and Psellos, as well as giving a novel twist to the reporting of events that he had probably first encountered in Kinnamos.[27] Further research will surely reveal more connections than lack of them.

[24] Graham A. Loud, 'Anna Komnena and her Sources for the Normans of Southern Italy', in Loud and Ian Wood (eds.), *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to John Taylor* (London, 1991), 41–57.

[25] Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180* (Cambridge, 1993), 313–14; and Macrides, *George Akropolites*, 37, 232, 235.

[26] Athanasios Markopoulos, 'Byzantine History Writing at the End of the First Millennium', in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden, 2003), 192–6; and Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire*, 111, 268–98.

[27] Stephanos Efthymiadis, 'Niketas Choniates and Ioannes Kinnamos: The Poisoning of Stephen IV of Hungary (13 April 1165)', *BZ*, 101 (2008), 21–8. Compare e.g. Choniates, *Nicetae Choniatae historia*, ed. Jan-Louis van Dieten (CFHB 11; Berlin and New York, 1975), 209; Psellos, *Chronographie*,

The impression of a close, intertextual tradition is reinforced when we consider the social, cultural, and professional milieu to which the historians belonged. With the clear but minor exception of the provincial chronicles and the eyewitness reports of the sieges of Thessalonica, all the histories of this period were written in or near Constantinople, by authors who had long and close association with the imperial court and administration. Genesios and the original author of *Theophanes Continuatus* were clearly in the Palace entourage of Constantine VII. The two ordained churchmen, Leo the Deacon and Pachymeres, belonged respectively to the palatine clergy and the clergy of the patriarchal church. Anna Komnene was an emperor's daughter and John Kantakouzenos was a member of the extended imperial family who then became emperor. Manasses and Gregoras depended on imperial and aristocratic patronage. All the others about whom anything is known were career bureaucrats, including the two, John Zonaras and Michael Glykas, who were monks at the time of writing. Particularly striking is the series of historians from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries who held high judicial offices: Psellos, Attaleiates, Skylitzes, Zonaras, Choniates, and Akropolites.

Thus Byzantine historians were writing the history of the Byzantine state, more or less from the inside, and in a connected series. Were they then writing official history, or court history? Kantakouzenos, at the end of the series, was exceptional in producing an ex-emperor's view of his career. Only Genesios and the first author of *Theophanes Continuatus* say explicitly that they were writing on the instructions of the reigning emperor, though Akropolites's history was clearly a work of propaganda for Michael VIII, and Attaleiates and Psellos end their narratives of decline on notes of superlative if empty praise for the emperors whom they presumably wanted to please. It has also been ingeniously argued that Skylitzes was producing a subtle form of propaganda for Alexios I, by depicting the military aristocracy under Basil II in ways that would encourage loyal service in their contemporary descendants.[28] But no other historian wrote to commend the regime under which he or she was writing; indeed, their idealization of deceased emperors implies criticism of present reality, and the difference between them lies essentially in how far back they situate the fall from grace. Their history was written in the orbit of the court, but not much of it was court history. It drew on the kind of administrative and propagandistic discourse that its authors had processed in their official capacities, but it was not *the* official record. It was, rather, the individual record of the court and office-holding elite's collective memory, which recalled a shared and lost political experience with personal, literary poignancy.

ed. Emile Renauld, 2 vols. (Paris, 1928; repr., 1967), i. 153, 445; and Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, 83–4. On Attaleiates see Krallis, 'Attaleiates as a Reader of Psellos'.

[28] Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire*, ch. 4.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

945–59	Personal reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, whose cultural patronage and compilation projects mark the height of the 'Macedonian Renaissance'
961–1025	Expansion of the imperial frontiers under the soldier emperors Nikephoros II Phokas, John I Tzimiskes, and Basil II; conquest and elimination of the 'First Bulgarian Empire'
1025–81	Short reigns of emperors with mainly civilian priorities; the frontiers threatened and penetrated by new enemies: Normans in Italy, Pechenegs in the Balkans, Seljuk Turks in the East
1071	Defeat and capture of Romanos IV at the battle of Mantzikert, leading to civil war, foreign invasion, and the Turkish occupation of Asia Minor
1081–1180	Internal unity restored and frontiers stabilized under the Komnenos emperors Alexios I (d. 1118), John II (1118–43), and Manuel I (1143–80)
1095–6	Preaching of the First Crusade, which takes Jerusalem in 1099
1180–1204	The minority of Alexios II leads to a new cycle of usurpations and foreign invasions; establishment of the Second Bulgarian Empire
1198–9	Preaching of the Fourth Crusade, which diverts to Constantinople in 1203, and captures and sacks the city in 1204
1204–61	Latin Empire of Constantinople; the Byzantine heritage contested by Byzantine 'governments in exile' in Western Asia Minor, the Pontus, and Northern Greece, as well as the 'Second Bulgarian Empire'
1261	Constantinople taken from the Latins by the Emperor of Nicaea, Michael Palaiologos
1261–82	Limited revival of the Byzantine Empire under Michael VIII Palaiologos (d. 1282), followed by decline, collapse, and extinction under his dynastic successors
1282–1328	Disastrous reign of Andronikos II; Serbian expansion in the Balkans; almost total loss of Asia Minor; beginnings of the Ottoman state
1321–62	Cycle of civil wars and foreign invasions, relieved only by the brief reign of Andronikos III (1328–41), which reduce the empire to Constantinople and a few other isolated towns and islands

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Chapter 12

Islamic Historical Writing, Eighth through the Tenth Centuries

Chase F. Robinson

In about 870, a young scholar named Abu Jaʿfar al-Tabari settled in the Shammasiyya district of northern Baghdad, where he would remain, apparently living in the same house, for over fifty years, a life-long, bookish bachelor.[1] Then about thirty years old, al-Tabari was a native of the southern Caspian town of Amul, where he had come from a land-owning family that was wealthy enough to invest in a son's education: as a child he studied under the town's leading scholars, and according to his own words, as recorded by later biographers, he had memorized the Qurʾan by the age of seven; a year later he had the honour of leading fellow Muslims in prayer. His talent outstripped his town: Amul possessed no reputation for serious learning, nor, for that matter, did the mountainous and inaccessible province that surrounded it, Tabaristan (hence 'Tabari'). In fact, the people of Tabaristan had spent much of the first two centuries of Islam resisting the rule of caliphs of Syria and Iraq, their determination to secure some autonomy giving rise to a local form of Zaydi Islam, a branch of Shiʿism. (Al-Tabari himself was sometimes accused of Shiite sympathies, for which there appears to be no good evidence.) In the absence of local learning, al-Tabari left to find some, and during the study tours that he took between about 855 and 870, he travelled widely, studying under prominent Persians, Iraqis, Syrians, and Egyptians. Travelling widely to acquire knowledge was one of the many ways that scholarship benefited from empire.[2]

[1] For details see Claude Gilliot, 'La formation intellectuelle de Ṭabarī (224/5–310/839–923)', *Journal Asiatique*, 276 (1988), 201–44; Gilliot, 'Les oeuvres de Ṭabarī (mort en 310/923)', *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales du Caire*, 19 (1989), 49–90; Franz Rosenthal, *General Introduction, and From the Creation to the Flood*, vol. 1 of *The History of al-Tabari* (Albany, 1988); Hugh Kennedy (ed.), *Al-Tabari: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work* (Princeton, 2008); and Chase F. Robinson, 'al-Tabari', in Michael Cooperson and Shawkat M. Toorawa (eds.), *Arabic Literary Culture, 500–925* (Dictionary of Literary Biography, 311; Detroit, 2005), 332–43, from which I draw liberally.

[2] For some examples see M. Bernards, '*Ṭalab al-ʿilm* Amongst the Linguists of Arabic during the ʿAbbasid Period', in James E. Montgomery (ed.), *ʿAbbasid Studies: Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies, Cambridge 6–10 July, July 2002* (Leuven, 2004), 33–46.

Settling in Baghdad meant the end of these tours and an uninterrupted life of scholarship. According to some accounts, al-Tabari tutored the son of a vizier, but independent means drawn from rents on properties in his native Amul may have insulated him from financial pressures such that he needed to take up any long-term employment, be it by the state or otherwise: he seems to have spent virtually all of his time in research, writing, and unpaid teaching. There was plenty to learn. In 870 Baghdad counted as one of the world's leading and most literate cities: it seems that there were no fewer than one hundred bookshops in the eastern part of the city alone, and one can only imagine how many libraries, salons, and teaching circles were then operating. In these informal but cosmopolitan circles, al-Tabari must have initially appeared in Baghdad as something of a naive provincial: since its founding in 762–3 as the Abbasids' world-bestriding capital, the city had attracted opportunistic and ambitious men of skill and knowledge from virtually all over the Mediterranean, Middle East, and much of Central Asia. Here, it seems, was another. But by the time of his death in 923, al-Tabari had proven himself exceptional amongst the city's burgeoning establishment of scholars, producing a corpus of work that established him as the leading scholar of his day. Within two or three generations of his death, he was remembered as a polymath, a paragon of orthodoxy, and the last of the greats of early Islamic scholarship.

It is said that al-Tabari spent forty years writing forty folios per day: the resulting sum begs belief, but there is no doubting his enormous industry, acuity, and influence. A conservative count puts the number of authentic works at twenty-seven, and these ranged in subject matter from jurisprudence, Prophetic Traditions (hadith; see below), theology, exegesis, and dream interpretation to history—and much more besides. Much of his work is lost, especially an enormous corpus of legal scholarship, and this even though it was as a jurist that he seems to have gained his initial fame; one law book of his is said to have been 2,500 folios in length. But much of his scholarship does survive, and this includes the two monumental works upon which his fame now rests.

The first is his Qur'anic exegesis, *Tafsir*, the standard edition of which runs to thirty volumes and records something like 38,000 Traditions; it is conventionally celebrated as the greatest work of its kind. The second is his *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk* [History of Prophets and Kings], which al-Tabari had begun to assemble already as a teenager, but which he only finished in his seventies; published (inclusive of relatively brief continuators and indices) in fifteen volumes of Arabic text (8,054 densely printed pages), it has now been translated in forty volumes of English.[3] A universal history that begins with Creation and ends in 914 or 915, the *Ta'rikh* seems to have gained virtually instant fame as the *ne plus*

[3] *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk*, 15 vols. (Leiden, 1889–1901); English trans. as *The History of al-Tabari*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, 40 vols. (Albany, 1985–2007); on the history of the edition see Franz-Chistoph Muth, *Die Annalen von aṭ-Ṭabarī im Spiegel der europäischen Bearbeitungen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983).

ultra of Islamic historical writing—the last and most complete word on pre-Islamic and Islamic history, drawn from the most authoritative and trusted sources by an author of unimpeachable religious credentials. By the middle of the tenth century it was being widely praised by fellow historians and bibliographers, and by the end of that century, it had been serially epitomized, continued, and rendered into Persian. In subsequent centuries, universal historians would draw regularly and copiously upon al-Tabari's work for material on early Islam; and even historians writing on a much smaller scale—the history of their native or adopted cities, for example—were inspired by al-Tabari's model.[4] Needless to say, Islamic historiography carried on, eventually producing half a millennium later the likes of Ibn Khaldun, who, as it happens, drew upon al-Tabari's book both indirectly (through his most well-known epitomizer, Ibn al-Athir) and directly. But the definitive record of the first three centuries of Islam had been written. In several respects, al-Tabari can be said to mark the end of the beginning of Islamic historiography.[5]

Al-Tabari's remarkable achievement says something about both his exceptional abilities and energies and the context in which he wrote. He was born a generation after a civil war between 809–13, and his primary education took place against the backdrop of what our sources call the *miḥna*, a period of over twenty years when a succession of caliphs attempted to impose a measure of theological uniformity through persuasion and coercion. The attempt failed, and what emerged from the *miḥna* was a more assertive Sunni establishment of scholars whose theological and legal views the caliphs were increasingly forced to follow. Al-Tabari also witnessed first-hand the tumultuous decades of the 860s and 870s, when the capital, having moved north along the Tigris to the city of Samarra in 836, put the caliphs under the direct and brutal control of military elites; the result was another civil war, in the 860s. Meanwhile, political and social turbulence at the centre of the polity resulted in the splintering off of provinces that had earlier paid regular tribute to the capitals in Syria (661–750) and Iraq (from 750): for example, by 905, Egypt had experienced over twenty years of fiscal and political independence from Samarra and Baghdad.

What this means is that when al-Tabari was completing a draft of his history (at least one section was made public in 906–7), he was surveying two interrelated processes. The first, well under way by his death in 923, was the emergence of a Sunni scholarly elite that anchored its religious authority in its command and guardianship of Prophetic Traditions, and championed traditionalist culture against the views of rationalists, who, to lesser or greater degrees, subordinated

[4] See Chase F. Robinson, 'A Local Historian's Debt to al-Ṭabarī: The Case of al-Azdī's *Ta'rīkh al-Mawṣil*', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 126 (2006), 521–36.

[5] On the very loose 'translations' into Persian see now A. C. S. Peacock, *Medieval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Bal'amī's Tārīkhnāma* (London, 2007); and Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999), 23–36. The work was later translated into Ottoman Turkish.

Traditions to a hermeneutics of reason;[6] al-Tabari himself was an important figure in this process—the articulation of traditionalist Islam in the post-*miḥna* period. As it happens, al-Tabari was just setting up house in Baghdad when the first and most authoritative of the six most celebrated collectors of Prophetic Traditions, al-Bukhari, died in 870. More about this will be said below; suffice it to say here, the principal method al-Tabari followed in compiling his massive *Ta'rikh*—the collecting, editing, and assembling of discrete, overlapping, or sometimes even conflicting accounts by a mute or reticent authorial voice into a chronological framework that documents God's salvific promise—can reasonably be called traditionalist historiography at its most ambitious and subtle.

The second process, still incipient, was the dissolution of an imperial order—a unitary state, held together by language, coinage, military power, and a powerfully centripetal political theory—that had first been put in place during the late seventh and early eighth century. Of this he was merely an observer, of course, but a very keen observer all the same, and it is in large measure because he chose to record those observations in his *Ta'rikh* that we know what we know of much early Islamic history. Although recent work has begun to read the *Ta'rikh* with some of the literary sensibility that contemporaneous readers would have possessed,[7] precisely how his narratives of contemporary decline relate to his narratives of Islamic origins remains unclear; his was certainly a time of radical contraction of caliphal power, which was signified most catastrophically by the civil war of the 860s that left many of Baghdad's quarters in ruin. It can be suggested that the political chaos that characterized the 860s, perhaps especially against the backdrop of religious and political anxieties caused by the eclipse of Abbasid absolutism, inclined al-Tabari towards a project of massive and detailed documentation: *après lui, le déluge*. What is clearer is that the shift of economic dynamism and political power to Egypt and Iranian Khurasan and Transoxiana during the ninth and tenth centuries redirected the surplus resources and ambitions that had underpinned Iraqi history-writing towards those new centres of patronage and consumption: by any reasonable standard, al-Tabari had been a spectacular one-off, but Baghdad after his death would produce only lesser historians in reduced numbers. In the Arabic-speaking world, the future of historiography lay mainly in Syria and Egypt.

What cannot be doubted is the foundational role played by al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh* in reconstructing early Islam. The long and difficult labour of editing the work, which was scattered across European and Middle Eastern libraries, began in 1879 and ended in 1901: although one reads that hundreds of copies were held in tenth-, eleventh-, and twelfth-century libraries, not a single complete one

[6] For more on Traditions and traditionalism see below.

[7] See, for example, Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the Abbasid Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1999); and El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs* (New York, 2010).

survived to the nineteenth. It is no coincidence that the following year saw the publication of the standard account of the Umayyad caliphate (661–750), Julius Wellhausen's *Das arabische Reich und sein Sturz* [The Arab Kingdom and its Fall], which drew copiously upon al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh*.[8] Much as the work upon it is based, as a synthesis of the religio-political history narrated by our early sources, Wellhausen's *Das arabische Reich und sein Sturz* has still not been surpassed, for all that it represents a nineteenth-century Orientalist re-casting of ninth-century historiography.[9]

What explains al-Tabari's great productivity and authority? In what respects does he exemplify the early Islamic historiographical tradition? In what senses does he mark the end of a beginning? In what follows I shall try to answer these and related questions by outlining the emergence of the tradition from its origins until the end of the tenth century.

ORIGINS—ONE VIEW[10]

At the turn of the seventh century, Arabic was a minor language in the Near East, largely restricted to oral expression by nomads and semi-nomads living in the Arabian Peninsula and adjacent Syrian steppe. A poor cousin to Aramaic, which had been the Near East's *lingua franca* for about a millennium, Arabic had no scripture to claim or real learning to record, and could hardly compare with Greek, Hebrew, or Latin.

The rocky sands of sixth- and seventh-century Arabia were not completely barren. Practices of writing certainly took place, as thousands of lines, doodles, and graffiti, which are inscribed on stones and rocks, attest; simple contracts, pacts, and treaties were also apparently written down. One recently discovered scribble may even refer to none other than the second caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khattab (r. 634–44). One of the earliest surviving documentary examples comes from the time of Muhammad, the so-called 'Constitution of Medina', a series of clauses that he dictated soon after arriving in Medina in 622, and which survives in citations in much later works of history and Traditions.[11] The survival of this docu-

[8] Julius Wellhausen, *Das arabische Reich und sein Sturz* (Berlin, 1902); trans. Margaret Graham Weir as *The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall* (Calcutta, 1927).

[9] On Wellhausen, who credited Muhammad for a 'Bismark-like unification of the Arabs', see now Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, 2009), 188 and *passim*.

[10] For recent discussions of the early tradition see Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, 1998); and Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003); see also R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton, 1991), 69–90. More traditional accounts can be found in Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994); and Abd al-Aziz Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs* (Princeton, 1983).

[11] The most recent detailed instalment in the literature belongs to Michael Lecker, *The 'Constitution of Medina': Muhammad's First Legal Document* (Princeton, 2004).

mentary material is a spectacular exception to the seventh-century rule. The earliest Arabic book we possess is the Qur'an itself, the verses of which are said to have been first set down on stones, bones, and bark. Although it speaks of other 'books', by this it usually means what we would commonly understand as 'written scripture'. Of more mundane books we hear virtually nothing in west Arabia because book knowledge—that is, religious, philosophical, or historical learning, or literature for that matter—appears to have enjoyed nothing of poetry's social prestige. Western Arabia's tribal culture, both nomadic and semi-nomadic, was modest in material terms, and featured relatively little social differentiation: such surplus wealth as there was did not go to authors, copyists, books, or libraries. Moreover, the history that mattered was tribal history—or, one should say, contending tribal histories—and these, being transmitted orally by tribal spokesmen, were by their very character plastic, retained only insofar as they were useful, forgotten, or transformed when circumstances dictated. There being virtually no documentary or literary culture, there is no control for that oral history, with the result that much of the time all we really have is uncorroborated tales.[12] All this, in combination with the lamentable fact that we have no serious archaeology, goes some way towards explaining why we possess precious little reliable information about Mecca and Medina on the eve of Islam. What we do know comes principally from non-Muslim sources written outside of it, or from Muslim antiquarians of the ninth and tenth centuries, who collected a fair amount of dubious material, much of which was related to poetry.[13]

Things are often said to have changed dramatically with the events of the first decades of the seventh century: the historical vacuum is filled, as relatively vague impressions of tribal customs and dateless accounts of tribal warring are replaced by sharply drawn accounts of Muhammad's life and those who came into contact with him, by quotations that purport to preserve words that he spoke and letters that he dictated to scribes—in sum, by a more or less full and detailed set of accounts of the events that constitute his religious and political mission in west Arabia between about 610 and 632, the year of his death. We are given to know most everything imaginable, from the public utterance and battle, to the private and personal—what he liked and disliked in the way of food, the very sounds that he made when he cleaned his teeth. And things don't end there: the record of early Islamic politics from the poignant moments of his death, particularly the conquests, civil war, and succession, are narrated in impressive detail; al-Tabari himself devotes hundreds of pages to conquest accounts of Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Northern Mesopotamia, and Iran. In the *Futuh al-buldan* [Conquest of the Lands] by Ahmad b. Yahya al-Baladhuri we have an entire monograph, perhaps

[12] For an illuminating modern parallel see Andrew Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Jordan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1997).

[13] See G. R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge, 1999).

intended as an administrator's handbook, given over to the conquests, the treaties, and settlements that obtained, and the administrative and bureaucratic traditions that the conquests are held to determine.[14] In short, the origins of Islam as both religious tradition and political order were set down.

An explanation for the stark contrast between the quality and quantity of coverage of the sixth and the seventh centuries, it has been proposed, can be found in the revolution in attitudes and practices that was triggered by the faith inaugurated by Muhammad and the 'book of God'—that compilation of his revelations that was assembled after this death and is now known as the Qur'an.[15] Prophecy had not only reformed pre-Islamic paganism, but it had created historical consciousness by situating Muhammad and his Arabian community of believers into a temporal schema punctuated by Creation, Prophecy, and End; Qur'anic 'time', both universal and moral, thus replaces the a-temporality of polytheistic pre-Islamic narrative. In fact, the Qur'an teaches that 'men of understanding' can learn lessons from the past.[16] More strictly religious scruples certainly played a part as well, particularly since Muhammad was understood from the start as an exemplar of right conduct, with the result that his exemplary words and deeds were preserved, initially word of mouth, but soon enough by disciplined memorization and written record. So, too, did the emergence of Arabo-Islamic learning, tied directly and indirectly to state patronage. The seventh-century conquerors being Arabs who believed in an Arabic-speaking God and recited from an Arabic Qur'an, they established a theocratic order so heavily imprinted by Arabism that Wellhausen was hardly rash in calling it an 'Arab empire': by the end of the seventh century, the language of the empire's bureaucracy was increasingly Arabic, and its coinage nearly uniformly so. Within a century, Arabo-Islamic scholarship was producing copious amounts of sophisticated learning in a wide variety of fields, including history.

On this reading, there is a more or less continuous transmission of historical material from early seventh-century witness to late eighth- and ninth-century 'historian', much as there is a more or less continuous development of historical thinking and literary form. By the end of the eighth century, historiography could be said to have matured, many of its principal genres crystallized. Ibn Ishaq, who is credited with composing one of the earliest Prophetic biographies (Arabic sing. *sīra*), had died, as had Abu Mikhnaf and Sayf b. 'Umar, the latter

[14] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* (Leiden, 1866); for a glimpse at all the details see D. R. Hill, *The Termination of Hostilities in the Early Arab Conquests* (London, 1971), which is relatively uncritical; for a very different view on the same corpus of material, Albrecht Noth, 'Futūḥ-History and Futūḥ Historiography: The Muslim Conquest of Damascus', *al-Qanṭara*, 10 (1989), 453–62.

[15] The conventional and prevailing view has it that the text was assembled, closed, and authorized within a generation of the Prophet's death, but there is plenty of evidence to show that it remained fluid for some time; a relatively recent discussion see Alfred-Louis de Prémare, *Aux origines du Coran* (Paris, 2004).

[16] Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 8–10.

two amongst the most oft-cited authorities for seventh-century history. Abu Mikhnaf, a native of Kufa who is widely respected by modern scholars, is credited with about forty titles on a range of events of the very early caliphate, such as *Kitab al-Ridda* [The Book on the Wars of Apostasy] (which broke out in Arabia upon the Prophet's death in 632) and the *Kitab Maqtal Husayn* [Killing of Husayn] (the Prophet's grandson and third Shi'ite imam). Sayf b. 'Umar, who is often harshly criticized as overly partisan of the Shi'ite cause, is credited with about thirty such titles. There are many similar examples. In the year 800, Abu al-Hasan al-Mada'ini was over forty years old, and he is said to have written no fewer than 400 titles on a variety of historical topics, such as the Prophet's life, the conquests, and the First and Second Civil Wars. It was books such as these that filled the shops of al-Tabari's Baghdad, some apparently multi-volume, others single-topic monographs or pamphlets.[17]

The principal centres of learning in general and nascent historiography in particular were the Iraqi cities of Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad. The Abbasid 'revolution' had taken place 749–50, and it removed Syrian-based Umayyad rule with caliphs drawn of the Abbasid line of Arabs from the tribe of Quraysh, who relied largely upon non-Arab soldiers from eastern Iran, along with administrators and bureaucrats who were versed in Sasanian traditions of imperialism and rulership. Syria and its small peripatetic courts were thus abandoned for the Iraqi heartlands of the Sasanian Empire, and although Kufa and Basra had been founded in the conquest period, Iraqi urbanism, benefiting from both Indian Ocean trade *and* caliphal patronage, now exploded. Ibn Ishaq, that single most important source for al-Tabari on Muhammad, seems to have lectured in very early Abbasid Kufa. (The prospect of reading Ibn Ishaq's reconstruction of the Prophet's life against a late Umayyad early Abbasid milieu, assuming for the moment that one should privilege one recension of his work over another, is bedevilled by circularity: what we know of that milieu comes from much the same corpus of sources that preserve Ibn Ishaq.)[18] Baghdad itself was merely the first and most spectacular of several Abbasid foundations in Iraq. Historians, philologists, jurists, grammarians, and many others besides were naturally drawn to the opportunities for learning, teaching, reading, and copying that Iraq's cities promised. But the empire was vast, and Muslims were busy reading, lecturing, disputing, copying, and composing narrative across the breadth of the Islamic world—from Andalusia and North Africa (especially in Cordoba and Qayrawan, these centres developing later because the conquests came two and three generations later), Egypt, Palestine, and Syria (in Fustat, the predecessor of Cairo, and Jerusalem, Damascus and Hims), Iran (in Isfahan, Rayy [south of present-day Teheran], and Qazwin) to the Islamic east, such as in Marv, Bukhara, and Samarqand. Early Islamic

[17] For a longer discussion see Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 30–8.

[18] On the influence of revolutionary politics upon revolutionary memory see Jacob Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory* (New Haven, 1986).

Syria, it seems, possessed a reasonably robust tradition of historical writing during the eighth century, but much of this was drowned out by the rising din of Iraqi historiography during the late eighth and ninth centuries.

In part because of the sheer volume of material, in part because of its reassuring details, the frequent assertions of veracity and (apparently) careful preservation of alternative, complementary, and sometimes contradictory accounts, in part because authorities occasionally throw unflattering light on protagonists who are in the main revered by the tradition (including Muhammad himself), and, lastly and perhaps most fundamentally, because of the stubborn positivism that underlay Orientalism in general and the study of early Islam in particular, many scholars have been inclined to accept not only the bulk of the traditional accounts, filtering out obviously legendary or miraculous material, but also some version of the evolutionary schema that I have sketched out. What can result is highly detailed Prophetic biography, which draws liberally upon the surviving ninth- and tenth-century tradition, and, more generally, detailed reconstructions of seventh-century history.[19] How did the Prophet clean his teeth? The tradition has an answer—by chewing a twig.[20]

But about all of this industry, development, and prolixity, especially insofar as they give rise to the impression that seventh-century history was transmitted continuously into the late eighth and ninth, reservations and qualifications must be expressed. And so I shall express them below. Here we should turn to the principal genres of historical writing that had developed by the middle of the ninth century.

NARRATIVE AND TRADITIONALISM

Readers unfamiliar with early Islamic historiography may be struck by many things, but aside from the linguistic, onomastic, and geographical obscurities presented by Arabic texts recounting seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-century history that took place in the (usually) obscure Middle East, surely the most striking

[19] The classics are W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, 1953); and Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956). Progress in our understanding of early Islam has meant a reduction in what many scholars would claim as reliable data, the result being accounts that are schematic by the standards of those classics; the most recent—and controversial—example is Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010). For a recent account of early Islamic history that proceeds along the lines that one hundred years of source criticism have not taken place see Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Crisis of Muslim History* (Oxford, 2005). For an even more recent attempt that re-opens the question and proposes a detailed reconstruction based on a close reading of the Qur'an and Tradition in a Christianised Hijaz see Tilman Nagel, *Mohammed: Leben und Legende* (Oldenbourg, 2008).

[20] For a discussion see Wim Raven, 'The Chew Stick of the Prophet in *Sīra* and *Ḥadīth*', in Anna Akasoy and Raven (eds.), *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation in Honour of Hans Daiber* (Leiden, 2008), 593–611.

feature of the tradition is what might be called the atomistic and compound quality of narrative.

Accustomed to a single authorial voice (such as one typically finds in the classical tradition) or, perhaps, choruses of more or less evenly layered sources (such as one finds in the contemporaneous Syriac historical tradition), both of which may be punctuated by frequent or infrequent quotations (typically speeches, letters, dispatches, and the like), readers of Islamic historiography are often surprised by what they typically encounter in an early Islamic historical source: a stringing together of discrete accounts (*akhbār*, sing. *khabar*), each usually credited to eye-witnesses or those reporting on their authority in a prefacing 'chain of transmission' (*isnād*), which posits the handing down, through oral, aural, or aural/written dictation or copying, of the account in question. 'I heard so-and-so, who said, on the authority on so-and-so, who said…'—so reads a typical *isnād*, although the 'collective *isnād*' (which adduces an unidentified 'they said') was often used as well. Even when historians were using written material, as they very frequently did, the terminology usually remained one designed to describe oral transmission. In part this was because oral transmission enjoyed great prestige, and, in no small part due to that prestige, because written transmission was often mediated by orality. For example, many of the materials that al-Tabari assembled in his *Ta'rikh* he had *heard* years earlier as a student, when he copied them down in his notebooks from dictations, lectures, and classes; a scholar's notebooks, much like a laptop nowadays, was typically his prized possession. In fact, books were often 'published' by their authors through dictation, and they were typically reproduced by dictations that were then 'read back' by the student-copyist to ensure accuracy. Here it should be noted that the early historical and legal tradition is unapologetic about this orality, which, more precisely, can be described as a set of hybrid aural-oral-writerly practices, many scholars holding a deep mistrust of the un-mediated written word.[21] The evidence is exiguous, but whatever the practicalities and shortcuts taken by booksellers to satisfy the urban market, scholars staked their claim to authority by collecting titles that they could claim to have learned at their authors' or authors' authorized transmitters' feet. The oral character of book transmission thus mirrored the oral character of the *isnād*.

So while contemporaneous historians writing in Syriac or Greek were generally reluctant to cite their sources, with the *isnād*, Muslim historians can be said to have elevated source-citation into a principle of narrative composition: the *khabar-isnād* unit is the essential building block of the early historical tradition as we have it preserved in the extant sources from the ninth and tenth centuries. Although there were exceptions, the prestige form of historical narrative—exemplified by al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh*—was the large-scale compilation of these accounts, thousands in number, corroborative or conflicting in character, all selected by the

[21] On interweaved practices of orality and textuality see Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl and ed. James E. Montgomery (London, 2006).

tireless and yet discriminating author-compiler, who expressed his own views less often by speaking in his own voice than by arranging and occasionally commenting upon the *akhbār* that he had chosen: for every instance of explicit endorsement, there is usually an implicit one (or two), made through sequence, repetition, or omission. These author-compilers, especially those writing chronography and biography (see below) can thus be said to have 'authored' books in which they composed anew perhaps less than they reproduced, edited, and re-arranged pre-existing accounts into one of several schemes. Put another way, 'authorship' turned less on the quality of one's prose, originality of one's vision, or depth of forensic research, than it did upon the judiciousness or comprehensiveness of one's material and the narrative organization in which all the accounts were placed. The operating principles of authorship thus lie somewhere between what we would regard as 'writing'—that is, 'composing'—and 'editing' or 'redacting'.

What explains the distinctive features of the early tradition—this enthusiasm for collection and reproduction (sometimes on a very large scale), and the correspondingly unobtrusive, even timid authorial voice?

The short answer to this very complicated question is traditionalism—a cluster of powerfully interlocking ideas that held that since time distanced one from correct and full understanding (be it of God's will, as revealed in the Qur'an, or of human history), knowledge was to be preserved, rather than discovered.[22] (Such was naturally not the view held by those more fully committed to rationalist inquiry, such as the philosophers and dialectical theologians, neither of whom wrote much historiography.) Of course this is stated simplistically, since facts and truths could be discovered within texts through the application of specific hermeneutical procedures. And of course there is nothing particularly early Islamic about the view that past practice and preserved documents preserve truths subsequently lost, or, for that matter, about deep nostalgia. Nor is the idea of an oral law, which is transmitted by teaching sages and sits alongside a written scripture, unique to Islam, as Rabbinic Judaism obviously attests. (The extent to which early Muslims were influenced by Jews, Rabbinic and otherwise, remains an open question; the traffic of influence seems to have been bi-directional.) What is distinctly Islamic is not that the past was revered or transmitted by learned men with long memories and carefully honed techniques of oral-aural transmission; it is the scale and creativity with which the past was engaged in traditionalist historiography.

Traditionalism in the Islamic context meant that the scholar was to transmit, as scrupulously as was possible, views of the past on the authority of trustworthy authorities, the earlier and more correct in their belief and higher their scholarly reputation, the better, and the greater the number and more trustworthy the authorities and accounts cited, the better. The Islamic tradition being the dominant political tradition, Muslim traditionalist-historians had two things that their

[22] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 83–97.

Jewish counterparts lacked: a powerful motive—the legitimizing imperative that came with political power—and the cultural resources that came with belonging to the political elite: al-Tabari was far from a court sycophant, but his intellectual and social universe was an Abbasid creation.

The traditionalist conventions of this world were set by 'Traditionists' (*muḥaddithūn*, lit. 'those who transmitted hadiths'); the historians, some of whom collected and transmitted hadith as well, followed those standards, albeit to a lower standard, when they could. (There were logical and practical limits to applying *isnād* methodology to pre- and non-Islamic history, not the least of which being that non-Muslims could hardly be expected to achieve the probity and trustworthiness of Muslims.) In both size (well over 7,000 densely printed pages, as we have seen) and character (a quilt-like assembly of thousands of *akhbār*), al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh* thus reflects the training and temperament of its author. Thoroughly imbued by traditionalist ideals, he viewed his task principally as one of careful preservation, documentation, selection, and arrangement. In the ninth and tenth centuries especially, those historians most revered, cited, and emulated by the tradition were those who possessed enormous industry and who exercised orthodox judiciousness; to judge by the manuscript record and other measures of reception, those who departed from these practices, such as those who dispensed with *isnād*s—those 'chains of transmission' that purported to preserve transmission from one trustworthy transmitter to the next, generation by generation—were obscure. A good case in point is an early tenth-century historian and geographer named al-Yaʿqubi, whose *Ta'rikh*, a compendious world history in two volumes, eschewed *isnād*s for a prefacing bibliography. The books left scarcely a trace upon the tradition.[23]

Here it bears emphasizing that Islamic historiography *became* traditionalist during the late eighth and ninth centuries.[24] It almost goes without saying that many very early Muslims revered the Prophet and took pride in the glorious history of the early community. In fact, the first century of Islam can hardly be understood unless one posits the operation of Prophetic inspiration and charisma at least at some level: after all, aside from ethnicity and language-use, what distinguished Muslims from non-Muslim monotheists was principally that they extended the line of prophecy to a spokesman of God named Muhammad, who preached a faith that not only rejected paganism, but corrected and perfected the wayward monotheisms of the day. This said, in the sense of a *disciplined* and *programmatic* nostalgia, one which provided a model for correct belief and preferable conduct through either the actual transmission of legal dicta and historical data, or the representation (typically through back-projection and pseudo-epigraphical ascription, be it deliberate, such as the forging of *isnād*s, or inadvertent)

[23] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Ta'rīkh* (Leiden, 1883).

[24] The statement betrays my position on controversies about the nature of the early Islamic tradition; for more details see below.

of secondary views as transmitted wisdom, traditionalism was a creature of the late Umayyad and early Abbasid period. As noted earlier, the great compilations of Prophetic Traditions date from the late ninth and early tenth centuries, but the practice of attaching 'chains of transmission' seems to have become increasingly systematic and rigorous from the middle of the eighth. Insofar as a pre-traditionalist phase of historiography can be discerned, in at least some instances it featured longer and more coherent accounts, some reflecting precisely the kind of colourful narrative that one would expect of oral history, than those that usually survive in extant, traditionalist sources.[25]

What, more specifically, distinguishes our author-compilers as historians, especially from those who collected Prophetic and non-Prophetic Traditions? Generally speaking, Traditionists collected Traditions because they possessed legal and moral significance: alongside the Qur'an, the Prophet's *sunna* came to function as the other (and in some respects, more important) source for the moral-legal discourse of shari'a, a discourse that is commonly understood as 'Islamic law'. Historians (usually *akhbārī*s, lit. 'purveyors of reports') collected accounts of the past, especially concerning the religio-political and military events of the past, because these, too, had lessons to teach, morals to deliver, models to exemplify, precedents to set, and entertainment to provide. More than that, the past was a record worth keeping, be it of God's providential direction of human affairs (such as was the case in universal history), the kerygma of the Prophet's mission (such as in Prophetic biography), the glorious conquests undertaken by the Prophet's companions (such as in conquest monographs), or the filiations of scholarly communities across the empire (such as in prosopography, as we shall see). Some historians did have what one might call forensic interests; and many had at least an implicit epistemology that underlay their attitudes towards corroboration and contradiction: Ibn Khaldun was exceptional, but he looked back upon, and learned from, a historiographical tradition that featured tenth-century outliers to the traditionalist establishment whose literary and philosophical ambitions were considerable, such as al-Mas'udi and Ibn Miskawayh. Perhaps more important, this tradition had broken its traditionalist moorings during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[26] By Ibn Khaldun's time, the writing of contemporary history had grown more secure and confident, especially as practiced by biographers and autobiographers, a development that bears some relationship to the framing of historiography as a discrete discipline in its own right, one practiced by self-described 'historians'.[27] All this said, throughout early Islam historiographical standards remained low by early modern or modern

[25] For criticisms of the form-critical assumption that the earliest layers of the tradition were fragmentary see Chase F. Robinson, 'The Study of Islamic Historiography: A Progress Report', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, series 3, 7:2 (1997), 199–227.

[26] As shown in ch. 13 by Konrad Hirschler in this volume.

[27] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, esp. 166–70.

standards, for all that they compare favourably to contemporaneous European and Byzantine ones.

Now at the earliest discernible stages of the tradition, Muslim historians wrote, collected, assembled, edited, and arranged their material in a variety of ways, including what amounted to single-topic monographs; an especially popular topic was conquest history, sometimes narrowly conceived (e.g. the campaigning that led to the capitulation of a single province), sometimes much more capaciously. An example of the former that happens to survive is the *Futuh Misr* [Conquests of Egypt] by an Egyptian named Ibn ʿAbd al-Hakam;[28] an example of the latter has already been mentioned: the *Futuh al-buldan* [Conquests of the Lands] by the genealogist-historian al-Baladhuri. Single-topic monographs would survive the formative period of the tradition, but it is one of the striking features of the later eighth and ninth centuries that three forms, each sufficiently plastic so as to accommodate a wide variety of material, emerged as the prestige forms of historical writing. These may usefully be identified as biography, prosopography, and chronography.

By *biography* here I mean single-subject, stand-alone monographs that invariably treat an elite male, often the Prophet himself, sometimes others, such as scholars and rulers; the Arabic term is usually *sīra* ('way'), which expresses the paradigmatic or exemplary nature of the subject's conduct. By *prosopography*, I mean compilations—sometimes huge, multi-volume compilations—of formulaic biographies of men (and, infrequently, women) who constitute a group or category of one kind or another, such as a legal school, an academic skill, or a profession, such as judges or hadith transmitters. Here the terminology is looser: the Arabic term for generation is *ṭabaqa*, for biographical entry it is *tarjama*, and for compilations of learned men often *rijāl* (literally 'men', always said of those men who transmitted Traditions); any of these can be used to describe these compilations, which are typically organized either chronologically (especially generation by generation) or alphabetically. By *chronography*, I mean works more or less explicitly organized by time, and this, also typically, in one of two ways: either annalistically—that is, by annual entries—or according to caliphal reigns. The Arabic term is *ta'rikh* ('dating'), a term that also gives its name to historiography in general. Since biography appeared first, we may profitably start there.[29]

Like prosopography and chronography, biography has its origins in the mid- to late eighth century, although its earliest phases cannot be fully reconstructed. Important early figures were ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr, who may have been the first to take a special interest in the campaigns of the Prophet, and al-Zuhri, a fellow townsman of Medina who is sometimes credited with having authored a work on

[28] Ibn Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-akhbāruhā* (New Haven, 1922); partial trans. Albert Gateau, *Conquête de l'Afrique du nord et de l'Espagne*, 2nd edn (Algiers, 1948).

[29] In what follows, I draw chiefly upon Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 61–6.

the Prophet; his words survive only as quoted by subsequent authors, however.[30] The earliest extant biography belongs to Ibn Hisham, but this book is more accurately understood as a redaction, expurgation, and recasting of what is conventionally championed as the first large-scale Prophetic biography, which belonged to Ibn Ishaq, whom we met earlier. Ibn Ishaq was certainly an authority on the campaigns of the Prophet, the nascent genre at this point being called *maghāzī* ('raids'—that is, the raids Muhammad led against non-Muslim Arabians) or sometimes *sīra-maghāzī*. An example of a stand-alone *maghāzī* work survives in the *Kitab al-maghazi* [Book of Raids] of al-Waqidi. Whether Ibn Ishaq authored what we would conventionally understand to be a 'book'—that is, a composition with fixed and closed contents that was made public by or on behalf of its author in an authorized version—remains unclear; if he did, it was apparently by dictation to his students. Ibn Hisham's version of Ibn Ishaq's book (if we assume there was such a thing) was transmitted to him by a scholar named al-Bakka'i, but the *sīra* is known to have been transmitted according to many different recensions, one of which al-Tabari used. The scale and coverage of Ibn Ishaq's putative book are also unclear, and there are indications that his biographical material was merely one section of a much larger-scale work, perhaps one of universal history. If Ibn Ishaq's achievement is therefore hard to measure, we still possess Ibn Hisham's: it is a substantial and ambitious work, four parts bound in two volumes in the standard Egyptian edition, which provides a collection of (mostly) rich and textured accounts of Muhammad's life. It also has the virtue of an English translation.[31]

In the short term—that is, the ninth and tenth centuries—it appears that Prophetic biography functioned to inhibit the development and reproduction of most other forms of biography, which we know to have been produced during the late eighth and ninth centuries; lives of the first caliphs, in addition to Umayyad and Abbasid ones, seem to have been especially popular early on. Somewhat less obscure and, at least during the ninth and tenth centuries, is a tradition of biographical writing of learned men, especially the eponyms of the schools of law, which crystallized at the end of the ninth and the early tenth century. The single best example is the biography of Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 855), the eponym of the Hanbali school of law, which was written by his son Abu Fadl Salih; there is also a cluster of biographies of Abu Hanifa (d. 767), the eponym of the Hanafi school. Altogether slimmer and, it appears, much more seldom copied than Ibn Hisham's biography, these works were of relatively narrow interest. From the twelfth century onwards, biography would grow very considerably in significance and

[30] On ʿUrwa and al-Zuhri see Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, rev. and trans. S. Toorawa (Edinburgh, 2009), 40–5.

[31] Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, ed. Mustafa al-Saqqa, Ibrahim al-Ibyari, and Abdel Hafiz Shalabi (Cairo, numerous editions); trans. Alfred Guillaume as *The Life of Muhammad* (London, 1955).

sophistication, the most important development coming when biographers wrote about living men; a case in point is none other than Saladin (d. 1193), for whom (Baha' al-Din) Ibn Shaddad, a well-placed administrator and litterateur, wrote a biography.[32]

Like examples of late antique biography in other traditions, Islamic biography is selective rather than comprehensive; it is also nearly as prescriptive as it is descriptive, and was read as much to inspire and instruct as it was to preserve or memorialize. The subject is an ideal character, an inspiration, exemplar, and guide. A non-Prophetic example is the biography of Ahmad b. Hanbal: it may begin with his birth and end with his death, but some nine-tenths of the work is devoted to an extended, detailed, and highly controversial discussion of a single event in Ahmad's life: the so-called *miḥna*, which, as we saw above, was an attempt, made initially on the part of the caliph al-Mamun (r. 813–33) to impose a theological doctrine—the createdness of the Qur'an. In the eyes of the members of the Hanbali school of law, their eponymous hero had heroically resisted the caliph's 'inquisition', suffering all manner of torture at the hands of the caliph's agents. The biography is therefore much less about Ahmad as a person than it is Ahmad as ascetic and traditionist hero. Constructions such as this were necessarily tendentious: other sources tell us that Ahmad may have capitulated to the caliph's men.[33]

What I call here prosopographies are compilations of more or less formulaic biographical notices that are typically organized in one of two ways. The first and perhaps most striking mode of organization is chronological—that is, by generation (loosely understood), the first consisting of contemporaries (or near contemporaries) of Muhammad. The operative Arabic term is *ṭabaqa* (pl. *ṭabaqāt*): 'class; stratum; generation'. Naturally these accumulated over time: one ninth-century *ṭabaqāt* work has three *ṭabaqa*s, while one fifteenth-century work has twenty-eight. The second and less striking mode of organization is alphabetical (though one typically began with Muhammad, for obvious reasons); the operative term here is *muʿjam*. These works amount to biographical dictionaries. They appear secondarily, and since they are historiographic only in the loosest sense of the word, I leave them aside here.

The origins of the *ṭabaqāt* also lie in the late eighth and ninth centuries.[34] The earliest examples are lost, the earliest surviving belonging to Ibn Saʿd, by which time the genre was clearly well developed: depending on the edition, Ibn Saʿd's *Kitab al-Tabaqat al-kabir* [The Book of the Major Classes] appears in eight or

[32] The *Sīrat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn* (Cairo, 1962); trans. D. S. Richards as *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin* (Aldershot, 2001).

[33] Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma'mūn* (Cambridge, 2000); and Christopher Melchert, *Ahmad ibn Hanbal* (Oxford, 2006).

[34] Wadad al-Qadi, 'Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance', in George N. Atiyeh (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (Albany, 1995), 93–122; and Chase F. Robinson, 'Al-Muʿāfa b. ʿImrān and the Beginnings of the *Ṭabaqāt* Literature', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 115 (1996), 114–20.

ten volumes, but in either case, it is a highly accomplished work that draws upon numerous sources and assembles biographies in a schema that is both chronological and geographic.[35] Precisely what gave rise to the genre remains unclear: had the first (now lost) examples been exclusively devoted to Traditionists, one would credit the rise of traditionalism, but they appear to have tackled non-Traditionists too, and it therefore seems likely that the genre reflects the more diffuse emergence of literary and cultural professionalization, especially in the cities of early Islamic Iraq. Ibn Saʿd's prosopography assembles biographies—some tens of pages in length, others one or two lines—of men of learning, especially men of hadith learning who belonged to the first two centuries of Islam. But other ninth- and tenth-century examples assemble biographies of singers, poets, and jurists—and this is only to name the most common categories. Some are relatively modest, single-volume works; still, unlike biography, here size seems to have mattered. Al-Bukhari's ninth-century *al-Taʾrikh al-kabir* [The Large History] includes entries on about 12,000 Traditionists. It is for this reason—their great size and relative ease of use—that prosopographies, both of the *ṭabaqāt* and biographical dictionary varieties, have been frequently mined by social historians of Islamic learning.[36]

Biographies of the Prophet, especially those attributed to Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Hisham, have been invaluable for the reconstruction of the Prophet's life and early community. But it has been chronographical works, which typically preserve a wide variety of sources and material, upon which scholars have relied to write the political and religio-political history of Islam.

Early Islamic chronography admits two principal genres. The first is annalistic history, years naturally being reckoned according to a lunar calendar, which began in 622, with Muhammad's 'Emigration' (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina; pre-Islamic history is handled in a variety of ways, including through the use of non-Muslim calendars. The second might be called regnal chronography, what the tradition calls 'dating according to the caliphs' (*taʾrīkh al-khulafāʾ*), although other schemes are occasionally used, such as vizieral tenures. (There is overlap here—some works combine annalistic with regnal organization; mention might be made as well that starting in the thirteenth century chronography would blend with prosopography.) Both genres could accommodate universal history of an enormously ambitious variety, as well as the more parochial local history of cities. Arguably the most sophisticated local chronography of the early period was written by a scholar named al-Azdi about his native town of Mosul, in present-day northern Iraq. Of its three parts only the second, covering the second and the

[35] Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, 9 vols. (Leiden, 1904–40; Beirut, 1957–68); partial trans. Aisha Bewley as *The Women of Madina* (London, 1995).

[36] For some examples see Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 189–94; and Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 71 n. 22. The Estudios Onomástico-biográficos de al-Andalus (Madrid), currently numbering fifteen volumes, shows how much can be made of this literature.

early third Islamic century, survives.[37] Local history-writing more commonly took the form of prosopography.

Once again, the origins lie in the early eighth century. There is some reason to think that of the two narrative modes, regnal chronography appeared first, its caliph-centred scheme reflecting the calipho-centrism of early Islamic political and legal thought. Whatever the case, the largest and most accomplished example from the earliest period belongs to al-Yaʿqubi, whose two-volume *Taʾrikh* eschews *isnād*-equipped *akhbār* and presents a remarkably catholic, universal history;[38] apparently beginning with Creation (the surviving manuscripts are acephalous), it narrates swathes of pre-Islamic Eurasian history before turning, in the second of its two edited volumes, to the history of the religio-political movement that most perfectly reflects God's order—the caliphate. The earliest extant annalistic history belongs to Khalifa b. Khayyat (also the author of an early *ṭabaqāt* work), who is exceptionally obscure even by contemporaneous standards; the slim work, not unlike others of its kind, only barely survived, in this case in a single, North African manuscript. The terseness of its prose and the density of its administrative material betray the use of lists of governors, commanders, judges, and the like.

In the early period, the greatest example of annalistic history is al-Tabari's universal history, which peters out in about 910 in most manuscripts. The prestige and influence of the work were so great that few in the tenth and eleventh centuries had the temerity to imitate it: we have a series of continuations and epitomes, all piggy-backing onto a text that had become a near instant classic. Along with the *Muruj al-dhahab* [Meadows of Gold] by the cosmopolitan rationalist al-Masʿudi, it can reasonably be called one of the greatest monuments of premodern historiography in any language, and it is our best single source for the rise and disintegration of the unified state during the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. He handled his sources in a number of ways: sometimes he faithfully transcribes in full, while other times he excerpts, summarizes, and reshapes. He does not forge or invent, although he shared with other scholars the practice of drawing upon a repertoire of *topoi*, stereotypes, and clichés. This said, he does occasionally suppress embarrassing or controversial matters, as good an example as any being some of the most brutal violence that brought the Abbasid caliphs to power. Indeed, because the early history that it narrates was both deeply controversial and monumentally significant—what could be of greater moment than Muhammad's prophecy and the political events it set into motion?—it freely

[37] Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh al-Mawṣil* (Cairo, 1967); Chase F. Robinson, 'A Local Historian's Debt to al-Ṭabarī: The Case of al-Azdī's *Taʾrīkh al-Mawṣil*', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 126 (2006), 521–36; on local history more generally see Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 138–42; and Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd edn (Leiden, 1968), 139–48.

[38] On universal history in the early Islamic tradition see Bernd Radtke, *Weltgeschichte und Weltbeschreibung im mittelalterlichen Islam* (Beirut and Stuttgart, 1992); and Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, esp. 134–8.

mixes prescription and description, polemics and facts, myth, legend, and stereotype.[39]

PROBLEMS AND CONCLUSIONS

If these, then, are the principal genres of historical writing in the ninth century, how did they become so? What of the earliest phases of the tradition can we describe with certainty? I have already noted that the evolutionary reconstruction summarized above is subject to criticism and qualification.

Here it must be emphasized that for the earliest layers we are dealing in guesswork, for all that the odd late eighth- or early ninth-century work survives, invariably in a manuscript that post-dates its apparent author by centuries. For example, not a single work of Sayf b. ʿUmar's was known until the chance discovery of two fragments in a long neglected trunk of manuscripts in Saudi Arabia.[40] (Such discoveries happen too infrequently to imagine that many more are on their way.) This copy is a unicum, with all of the difficulties that the term suggests. In other cases, we have a plethora of manuscripts and versions—and all the challenges that they pose to our understanding of the practices of recording, transmission, composition, and authorship. Ibn Ishaq's biography of Muhammad survives in several ninth-century recensions, the most celebrated of which belongs to al-Bakkaʾi and is recorded in Ibn Hisham's *Sīra*, as we have already seen. How, exactly, are we to tell where the work of Ibn Ishaq ends and that of his 'transmitters' begins? Given all the divergences in these recensions, to what extent does it make sense to speak of 'transmitters'?[41] Patient and painstaking work can be done to disentangle editors' and copyists' work,[42] but we remain very distant from a body of work that would allow us to reconstruct the sociology of history-writing in the eighth century (much less pin down seventh-century details). We have none of the early manuscript attestation that could take us behind the curtain of editing, expurgating, and modifying that the surviving versions preserve.

[39] The only ambitious full-length treatment of al-Ṭabarī is Boaz Shoshan, *The Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Tabari's History* (Leiden, 2005).

[40] Sayf b. ʿUmar, *Kitāb al-ridda wa'l-futūḥ: A Facsimile Edition of the Fragments Preserved in the University Library of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saʿud Library in Riyadh* (Leiden, 1995).

[41] For Ibn Ishaq and his 'transmitters' see, for example, Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam*, 71–3.

[42] And so it takes an eighty-page article to demonstrate that the thirty-five accounts attributed to al-Zuhri on a single set of events probably descend from a common source—him; see Nicolet Boekhoff van der Voort, 'The Raid of the Hudhayl: Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri's Version of the Event', in Harald Motzki (ed.), *Analysing Muslim Traditions: Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghazi Hadith* (Leiden, 2010), 305–84. Similar methods can be applied to the conquest tradition, but in large measure because the *isnād* method was more spottily applied, the results are less sure; for a balanced view see Jens J. Scheiner, *Die Eroberung von Damaskus: Quellenkritische Untersuchung zur Historiographie in klassisch-islamischer Zeit* (Leiden, 2010).

What all this means is that describing these eighth- and early ninth-century titles is largely a matter of inference: what we know of eighth-century historiographic genres comes largely from citations and attributions made in the ninth and tenth. The inferring comes in part from biographical dictionaries and other bio-bibliographical works, a crucial source in this respect being a long, annotated book-list that was composed by a Baghdadi book-dealer and author named Ibn al-Nadim (or al-Nadim, *tout court*);[43] without his work and a handful of other bio-bibliographies, our understanding of pre-Tabari historiography would be considerably poorer. In larger part it also comes from the very generous use that subsequent historians made of now-lost work; the best case is al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh* itself, which, for much of its coverage until the middle of the ninth century, is that quilt-like stitching together of now-lost compositions. Modern scholars have sometimes reconstructed now-lost works on the basis of these quotations, but judging their original size and organization remains guesswork precisely because we know relatively little about the principles of authorship, citation, and deletion that underpinned the later works in which they appear.[44] It is frequently assumed that al-Tabari fashioned his quilt merely by stitching together narratives that he had copied or taken down from lectures or readings; although this certainly did happen, it is also the case that he edited, spliced, re-ordered, and epitomized for a variety of narrative effects and political purposes. And the biographical material credited to Ibn Ishaq that survives in multiple recensions differs one recension from the next; al-Tabari's Ibn Ishaq, for example, is notably different from the recension of Ibn Ishaq that was expurgated by Ibn Hisham. In the current state of our knowledge, it is probably safe to assume that there may never have been a single, authorized version of Ibn Ishaq's biography, the cultural attitudes that anchored value and status in 'authorship' only developing after his death.

Insofar as it suggests the essential accuracy of the eighth- and ninth-century tradition, the evolutionary model that was outlined at the beginning of this contribution is less than persuasive. As much as its shape was once taken to suggest that we know much more about the seventh century than we do the sixth, sustained criticism of that tradition, particularly over the last thirty years,[45] has taught us that we actually know much less about Muhammad and primitive Islam than many of those writing in the 1950s and 1960s had thought.[46] For the oral foundations upon which written transmission was based are demonstrably

[43] The editions and translation of the *Fihrist* can be improved upon; the beginner can nonetheless make profitable use of Bayard Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadim*, 2 vols. (New York, 1970).

[44] Ella Landau-Tasseron, 'On the Reconstruction of Lost Sources', *al-Qantara*, 25 (2004), 45–91.

[45] John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford, 1978); Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies* (Oxford, 1977); Albrecht Noth and Lawrence I. Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study* (Princeton, 1994); Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1977); and Crone, *Slaves on Horses*: *The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980).

[46] For a survey of non-Islamic sources see Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997).

shaky, and those practices of transmission evolved over time. The criticisms of the early tradition are so plentiful and so penetrating that whereas the authenticity and accuracy of the tradition were once generally assumed by most scholars, now even those most determined to argue on their behalf must do so by careful collation of traditions.[47] Here it should be noted that the criticism being made is historical, rather than sociological: given the significance of orality and oral culture in late antique west Arabia, it should hardly surprise that earliest Muslims—virtually all of whom were Arabian participants in tribal culture, including its high-prestige orality—would preserve cultural practices that made them distinctive: after all, it was not merely one of the ways that values were transmitted, but also a value that the Arabs could retain amongst the literate communities that surrounded them in the post-conquest provinces. The criticisms are old-fashioned in the sense that they address veracity.

The earlier—and so the more distant and paradigmatic—the history, the greater the disagreements there are between scholars who can usefully be called 'maximalists' or 'minimalists'. The former generally incline towards accepting the framework, along with some of the details, of the extraordinary rich historiographic legacy of the late eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, increasingly through careful analysis of both the accounts and the 'chains of transmission'; the latter generally incline towards mistrusting that framework and reject many or nearly all of those details. The sharpest debates have centred on Prophetic biography[48] and conquest history.[49] These debates are rooted as much in model and temperament as they are in the exiguous evidence, and there is no sign of consensus. Whereas a 'maximalist' typically draws material and comfort from rich biographical sources that describe in impressive detail Muhammad's preaching, policies

[47] See, for example, Harald Motzki, 'The Murder of Ibn Abi 'l-Huqayq: On the Origins and Reliability of Some *Maghazi* Reports', in Motzki (ed.), *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Sources* (Leiden, 2000), 170–239; see also below.

[48] For an overview see Francis Edwards Peters, 'The Quest for the Historical Muhammad', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 23 (1991), 291–315, now growing outdated, but still useful; in more detail: Ibn Warraq (ed.), *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad* (Amherst, NY, 2000), which takes a severely 'minimalist' position; cf. Gregor Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin, 1996), trans. Uwe Vagelpohl as *The Biography of Muḥammad* (London, 2011), which counters with a 'maximalist' view; see also Robert Hoyland, 'Writing the Biography of the Prophet Muhammad: Problems and Solutions', *History Compass*, 5 (2007), 581–602.

[49] Further examples of what I call 'minimalists' are Lawrence I. Conrad, 'The Conquest of Arwād: A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East', in Averil Cameron and Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. I: *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1992), 317–401; for some mixed results that confirm and contest the Islamic tradition see Chase F. Robinson, 'The Conquest of Khūzistān: A Historiographic Reassessment', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 67 (2004), 14–39, repr. in Fred M. Donner (ed.), *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State* (Aldershot, 2008) (with same pagination); for a survey of non-Islamic sources and an argument for the reliability of the Islamic tradition, James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010).

towards the Jews, and campaigns against polytheists, a 'minimalist' can hold that of Muhammad's birth, childhood, and early adulthood we know almost nothing that can properly be called historical knowledge,[50] rather than legend, myth, or polemic. Whereas a 'maximalist' emphasizes the conservative character of the tradition, especially the tradition's procedures of textual and oral transmission that anchor eighth- and ninth-century accounts in the seventh or at least early eighth century, 'minimalists' respond with scepticism: the sources internal to the tradition purport to preserve a great deal of detailed history, but the form in which we have this history is not merely late, but so riddled with inconsistencies, contradictions, implausibilities, and absurdities that identifying a purported 'kernel' of truth is itself absurd. Meanwhile, the sources external to the tradition are in many instances much earlier, but they know so little of what was happening in Arabia and Iraq that they are inadequate for detailed reconstruction, and in any case so polemical in their (usually monotheist) commitments as to provide a Muhammad no less problematic than that of the Islamic tradition. In sum, 'minimalists' hold that what is abundant is in general unreliable, and what is relatively reliable is invariably too little. And the painstaking work required to identify and isolate reliable accounts has only recently begun in earnest.

This is not the place to describe the criticism of the early Islamic historical tradition in detail. Suffice it to say here, it is partly built upon earlier source-critical work on early Islamic law, which had shown how the doctrine of Prophetic *sunna* (Muhammad's paradigmatic conduct) emerged only during the second Islamic century (the early eighth to early ninth centuries AD). The tradition would have it that contemporaries and followers of the Muhammad transmitted Prophetic Traditions from the very start, and although modern scholarship in some cases is able to trace some traditions back to the late seventh century, there is no question of locating the mature doctrine of Prophetic *sunna* in earliest Islam: the construction of Muhammad as legal exemplar post-dates his death by about a century. These and other insights about how the Prophetic Traditions constituting the law were retrofitted into the seventh century were extended during the 1970s and 1980s to our understanding of historiography. The criticism also drew upon source-critical research on Prophetic biography and conquest history, which had shown, *inter alia*, how second- and third-century controversies, doctrines, and literary forms had shaped the historical memory of the first. Details that were unavailable to eighth-century Muslim authorities were somehow known to ninth-century ones: the increased biographical precision, it has been argued, was the product of secondary developments—serial attempts to extract sense out of a morass of details—rather than the residues of authentic memory. What is retailed as event remembered in genres whose literary features imply historical sophistication, such as chronography and biography, are recycled and repackaged stories.

[50] See Michael Cook, *Muhammad* (Oxford, 1983).

The literary fashioning of Muhammad exemplifies the problem at its most severe. It can be shown that much of what is commonly understood as Prophetic 'history' in the *sīra* was generated during the eighth and ninth centuries by exegetes, who, drawing upon stories and accounts circulating by word-of-mouth, attempted to make sense of Qur'anic terms and passages that had become opaque to them through the passing of time. This—generating 'history' by assigning historical circumstances to verses, these circumstances being drawn from the stock of stories that had circulated orally—is the exegetical version of a more widespread historicization of primitive Islam that took place in the eighth and ninth centuries, as historians, almost certainly in contact with non-Islamic historical writing of late antiquity, raised the standard of their work by generating narrative details and inferring chronologies.[51] Meanwhile, monotheist templates of prophecy were in operation, fashioning a role for Muhammad that, though rooted in his historical experience in west Arabia, brought that experience into line with biblical precedents; a case in point is the legendary material that determined the conventional dating for his birth.[52] Finally, sectarian and tribal commitments influenced the shape of early history, Prophetic and otherwise. While names cannot always be attached to those doing the reshaping, and historical 'schools' cannot easily be identified, in some cases they can: Sayf b. ʿUmar, whom I have already mentioned, is a notorious advocate of Kufan tribal interests; others had discernibly Shiʿite, Umayyad, or Abbasid precommitments.

In throwing into doubt the origins of Islam as traditionally described, the revisionism has provoked a sometimes rancorous debate, but source-critical approaches are hardly new, and have proven their utility in biblical studies for over 150 years. No serious historian of the Hebrew Bible doubts the enormous power of the Documentary Hypothesis, just as no serious historian of the New Testament doubts the joint authorship of Luke and Acts. The fuss in early Islamic studies seems to be politico-academic: on the one hand, the 'maximalist' and 'minimalist' positions represent little more than different shadings of a shared, positivist commitment to reconstruct origins; on the other, the debate has also been inflected by a more fundamental epistemological criticism, especially since the publication of the most provocative revisionist works in the mid-1970s more

[51] Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, 1987), 203–30; cf. Marco Schöller, *Exegetisches Denken und Prophetenbiographie: Ein quellenkritische Analyse der Sīra-Überlieferung zu Muḥammads Konflikt mit den Juden* (Wiesbaden, 1998); and Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 18–24. On the late antique context for the crystallization of the Qurʾan see Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Eine europäischer Zugang* (Berlin, 2010).

[52] On Muhammad's birth see Lawrence I. Conrad, 'Abraha and Muḥammad: Some Observations Apropos of Chronology and Literary Topoi in the Early Arabic Historical Tradition', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,* 50 (1987), 225–40; for much more of biblical patterning see Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by Early Muslims* (Princeton 1994); and Rubin, *Between Bible and Qur'an: The Children of Israel and the Islamic Self-Image* (Princeton, 1999).

or less coincided with the critique of Orientalism made famous by Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which appeared in 1978.

To what extent is the Islamic tradition less reliable than sister traditions in the Near East? Of course late antique historians writing in Latin, Syriac, and Greek provided something other than purely disinterested accounts of the past; they, too, were given to exaggeration, polemic, bias, and literary invention. Embedded rhetoric is a case in point: speeches, addresses, and letters appear regularly across these traditions, and for all that they can preserve originals, their function can be manifestly literary in that they allow the narrator to ascribe motive, describe character, lend colour to monochromatic narrative, or introduce texture, such as by changing voice. In the Islamic milieu, what appears to be genuine documentary material issuing from caliphal courts can be traced back to the middle of the eighth century, but apparently no earlier;[53] it is certainly the case that from the late ninth century onwards, the sources preserve so many documents that their project seems at least in part to have been archival.

There remains a contrast, however, between early Islam and its sister traditions: whereas the 'writerly' authorities of early Abbasid Kufa and Basra had to rely so heavily upon orally circulating stories,[54] lists, and other scraps of material, authors such as Ammianus Marcellinus, Prokopios, or 'Joshua the Stylite'—to mention only three—could draw upon deep historiographic traditions that guided their practices and conditioned their reception. Many were men of the Church or men in the employment of the Roman or Byzantine state, and it is in no small measure because many of these authors were participants in or witnesses to the events that they describe that their accounts are so useful to modern historians; they may not be disinterested, but at least they were informed and contemporaneous. Byzantinists may disagree about whether the emperor Maurice actually wrote the *Strategikon*, but all are likely to agree that an emperor might very well have done so. But Muslim historians were starting from scratch: their practices and traditions of history-writing crystallized a good century after the events that these practices and traditions came to 'record', and those who put them in place were professionalizing scholars, rather than caliphs, commanders, or governors' commanders. It is unthinkable that an early caliph would compose a military manual, much less write a history of the campaigns that he undertook. (One may have commissioned a manual in the early ninth century, but that is something else.) The makers of seventh-century history, be they caliphs, commanders, or governors, did not set down in print what they or others had done; instead, they told stories, and if they failed to tell stories (or if their stories were not remembered and refashioned through serial re-telling), stories were told about them.

[53] See now Andrew Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh, 2009).

[54] See S. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture: A Ninth-Century Bookman in Baghdad* (London and New York, 2005).

What, in sum, can the minimalist say he knows about Muhammad? The Prophet may have been born two centuries after Augustine, bishop of Hippo, but our command of the entirety of his lifetime (about sixty years) pales in comparison to our command of merely the third decade of the life of Augustine's, when he oscillated between Christianity and Manichaeism. Why this is so should now be obvious. Biographies of Augustine can all rely upon an almost undisputed set of facts about his upbringing—where he lived, travelled, studied, whom he met, and what he thought and wrote—and this because we have his *Confessions*, which was merely one amongst many, many books that were being composed in late fourth- and early fifth-century Roman Africa. By contrast, Muhammad seems to have been illiterate: tradition has it that he received the revelations that would be assembled after his death into the Qur'an through the aural agency of the angel Gabriel, and Muhammad, in turn, is often said to have dictated them to scribes. In any case, there was no question of his writing an autobiography, of anyone else writing his biography or even recording his conduct or words in a diary, since neither biography nor diary existed as literary practices or genres in seventh-century western Arabia. These genres *did* eventually appear, but by the time that they did, the memory of those Arabians who had made or witnessed Arabian history had been eclipsed by the stories and tales told by those, now generally living outside of Arabia, who had not.[55] It fell to them, and to historians of this secondary period, to make sense of what had become a remote and confusing past. What purports to be seventh-century history more clearly reflects their industry, ingenuity, and ambition than it does the long-lost reality of that history.

And that was an impressive achievement. The first three centuries of Islam constitute one of the most creative phases of human history, when political, linguistic, intellectual, religious, and cultural traditions were generated, transformed, and transmitted on a grand scale. In the space of eight or ten generations, a religion (Islam), an empire (the caliphate), a language (Arabic), and, it can reasonably be said, even a people (the Arabs) were created. It almost goes without saying that change was often modest or minimal at local levels—conversion to Islam, for example, was a process that in most places must be measured in centuries rather than decades—but there is no arguing that both the political and cultural landscape shifted decisively between the seventh and tenth centuries AD. No one born in the first or second decade of the seventh century could have known that long-established religious and political patterns, the most obvious of which was a Near East divided by Roman and Persian empires, would soon dissolve; that the agents of that dissolution would be Arabians, whom history had long consigned to the margins of the civilized word; or that these Arabians would claim to have

[55] On biography and autobiography see Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, esp. 61–6, 95–6; on autobiography, Dwight F. Reynolds (ed.), *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2001).

roduced a prophet, in whose name they would rule much of that civilized world. What does one make of the extraordinary changes?

The way that early Muslims made sense of it was to write what has been called 'salvation history'—a set of narratives, originally set down during the eighth and ninth centuries, that posit what amounts to a foundation myth of God's providential direction of human affairs.[56] The myth is set in western Arabia, and its principal ingredients are beliefs that are narrated as events taking place in time and space—that is, history. The principal events are Muhammad's calling as God's final prophet, the serial revelations he received in Mecca and Medina, which were subsequently assembled and fixed in the Qur'an, and his construction of a religio-political movement that, through direct and indirect delivery of divine aid, established his authority across Arabia and, after it, spread Islamic rule, now represented by caliphs, over North Africa, the Middle East, and part of Central Asia. To those Muslims who would write the state's seventh- and eighth-century history during the ninth and tenth, the early polity, like the conquests that had preceded it, was thus nothing less than the most recent phase in a divine plan that had started with Creation, passed through Prophecy, and would end with the End.[57] Muslims were God's creation and also His instruments, individually responsible to Him for their own salvation, and collectively to each other for constructing and maintaining an earthly order that could guide all believers to their salvation, initially through the charismatic office of the caliph, later by maintaining a social order in conformity with God's will as set out in the *sharīʿa*. In sum, the framework of historical understanding was thoroughly religious, much as the constitutional framework of the state was thoroughly religious—facts that say something about Muhammad's charisma and success, as well as about the late antique context in which the events unfolded.

To call these narratives 'salvation history' or 'myth' is not to say that they necessarily fail to preserve passages, be it in the form of eye-witness or contemporary accounts or documents, that are genuine—that is, that they are what they purport to be.[58] Nor is it to suggest that elements cannot be historically accurate, in the sense that they present events in ways that inspire confidence because they are subject to implicit or explicit corroboration and conform more generally to appropriate models. Given the progress that has taken place over the last generation or so, one can scarcely disagree with Gregor Schoeler that the 'main outlines' of the Prophet's life are discernible.[59] No reasonable historian

[56] For a detailed and elliptical discussion see Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu*.

[57] For early and classical Muslim views on the state see Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh, 2004).

[58] An admirable overview can be found in Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*; for a broader, less conclusive and more theoretical discussion see Chase F. Robinson, 'Reconstructing Early Islam: Truth and Consequences', in Herbert Berg (ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden, 2003), 101–34.

[59] Schoeler, *The Biography of Muhammad*, 2.

familiar with all of the evidence doubts that Muhammad existed, that many Arabs acknowledged him as a prophet in a line of monotheist prophets, that he was genuine in his belief in receiving revelations that would be recorded in the Qur'an, or that Arab armies defeated the Byzantines and Sasanians in a series of battles that established Islamic rule across much of the Mediterranean and Middle East. With the exception of a hyper-sceptical fringe,[60] all of that is beyond controversy. But that, of course, still tells us relatively little, which is why one should interrogate the sources for more than just their alleged 'facticity': Prophetic biography can be mined for rich veins of material that reflects how early Muslims built upon biblical precedents in constructing Muhammad's prophetic career,[61] conquest history can be handled in such a way as to throw light upon the social and fiscal history of the Umayyad caliphate (661–750),[62] and the *Kaiserkritik* of court and caliphal history has much to teach us about strains of political thought.[63] In sum, the sources can tell us much, but one must listen carefully.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

c.610	Muhammad delivers first revelations in Mecca in Medina
632–4	Reign of first caliph, Abu Bakr; the 'wars of Apostasy' break out
634–44	Reign of second caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khattab: conquest of north-east Africa, the Fertile Crescent, and the Iranian Plateau
644–56	Reign of ʿUthman, which ends with his assassination
656	First Civil War begins, triggered by the assassination of ʿUthman; Battle of the Camel
656–61	Reign of ʿAli b. Abi Talib, which ends with his assassination
680	Killing of Husayn, the Prophet's grandson, at Karbala' by Umayyad forces
744–50	Third Civil War, which ends with the collapse of the Umayyad caliphate as a result of the Abbasid Revolution

[60] See Yehuda D. Nevo and Judith Koren, *Crossroads to Islam* (Amherst, 2003), where the inspiration is archaeology; for some criticisms see Chase F. Robinson, 'Early Islamic History: Parallels and Problems', in H. G. M. Williamson (ed.), *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 2007), 87–102. For another, more text-based hypercriticism, see Karl-Heinz Ohlig and Gerd-R. Puin, (eds.), *Die dunklen Anfänge: Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam* (Berlin, 2005).

[61] So Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*; and Rubin, *Between Bible and Qur'ān*.

[62] See Chase F. Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest* (Cambridge, 2000), ch. 1; for more see Noth and Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*; Werner Schmucker, *Untersuchungen zu einigen wichtigen bodenrechtlichen Konsequenzen der islamischen Eroberungsbewegung* (Bonn, 1972); and, very recently, Fred Astren, 'Re-reading the Arabic Sources: Jewish History and the Muslim Conquests', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 36 (2009), 83–130.

[63] So El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*.

754–75	Reign of al-Mansur; construction of the 'Round City' of Baghdad complete by 766
767	Death of Ibn Iṣhaq, biographer of the Prophet Muhammad
786–809	Reign of Harun al-Rashid
809–13	Civil war between Harun al-Rashid's sons, al-Amin and al-Maʾmun; Baghdad besieged in 812
820	Death of al-Shafiʿi, systematizer of Islamic law and eponym of the Shafiʿi law school
833–52	The Mihna: the caliphs impose the doctrine of the 'createdness' of the Qurʾan
833–42	Reign of al-Muʾtasim; caliphal court is moved to Samarra, where it remained until 892
855	Death of Ahmad b. Hanbal, eponym of the Hanbali law school and compiler of the *Musnad* (which collected 28,000 Prophetic traditions in fifty volumes)
870	Death of al-Bukhari, first of the six 'canonical' hadith collectors
923	Death of jurist, exegete, and historian, al-Tabari (b. 839)

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Chapter 13

Islam: The Arabic and Persian Traditions, Eleventh–Fifteenth Centuries

Konrad Hirschler

Islamic historical writing of the Middle Period developed directly from the early Islamic tradition, and its legacy remained deeply inscribed into the ways history was written and represented between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries. However, historians also started to develop new styles and new genres, they turned to previously neglected aspects of the past, their social profile changed, and the writing of history became a more self-conscious, and to some degree self-confident, cultural practice. Most importantly, those issues that had motivated earlier historians, such as the legitimacy of the Abbasid Caliphate, declined in significance and historians of the Middle Period turned to new and more diverse subjects. These developments have been appropriately described as 'a sea change in the ways in which the past was imagined and constructed'.[1] Furthermore, the questions with which modern scholarship has approached the Middle Period (*c.*1000 to 1500) over the last decades have been of a distinctively different nature than those used for analysing the early Islamic period. For instance, the reliability of the source material and the impact of salvation history on historical narratives have not been of central significance for studying the Middle Period. Rather, issues such as the relationship between scholarly historical writing and other more popular realms of cultural practice have been in the focus of analysis. Finally, it has to be underlined that compared to the early and modern Islamic periods, we lack even the most fundamental studies of many historians of the Middle Period, a field of research that will surely gain pace.[2]

[1] R. Stephen Humphreys *et al.*, 'Ta'rīkh', in P. J. Bearman *et al.* (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn (Leiden, 2000, online version: http://brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-1184).

[2] This is especially relevant for historians in the Arabic-writing lands. Although al-Maqrizi, for instance, belongs to the better-studied authors (cf. for instance the articles in *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 7:2 [2003]), even he still awaits a monograph. An outstanding historian such as Ibn ʿAsakir has been discussed in James E. Lindsay (ed.), *Ibn ʿAsakir and Early Islamic History* (Princeton, 2001), but significantly this focuses on his contribution to the study of the early period, not his own.

ARABIC AND PERSIAN HISTORICAL WRITING

The most salient element of the sea change during the Middle Period was the increasing linguistic division between the eastern Persian- and the western Arabic-writing worlds. While Arabic retained its predominance in the Maghreb and the central Islamic lands (Egypt, Greater Syria, Mesopotamia, and the Arabian Peninsula), Persian gradually replaced it as the preferred language for historical writing in Iran and further to the east. This ascent of Persian was a slow process that took place over several centuries, starting in the mid-tenth century when centralized Abbasid rule came to an end. The consequent regionalization of political authority led to the formation of a number of Persian and Iranian dynasties, such as the Samanids in Transoxania and Khurasan, the Buyids in Iran and Iraq, and the Ghaznavids whose lands stretched from northern India to Iran. In parallel to these political changes and under the patronage of these new rulers, the Persian literary 'renaissance' initiated the gradual demise of Arabic as the lingua franca for historical writing. This divide was not a mere linguistic technicality; rather it initiated the development of two distinct, though initially still closely connected, traditions of historical writing that came to differ in genre and style.[3]

Most importantly, the bifurcation of Arabic and Persian historical writing led to different narrative structures: while the former tended to retain the exact chronology and the annalistic structure of earlier works for organizing the historical narrative, Persian-writing historians often displayed less interest in precise chronologies of events. Concomitantly this disregard for the exact chronological sequence opened the way for more continuous and more unified narratives in Persian, whereas many Arabic texts remained to some extent chronologically ordered lists of discrete and often very disparate events.[4] A comparison of Jovayni's famous Persian chronicle with the work of one of the outstanding Arabic chroniclers of the Middle Period, al-Maqrizi, clearly shows the difference. The former avoids a rigid chronological order and repeatedly uses 'flashbacks' and other literary means to introduce material that would not fit into a sequential flow of

[3] The best overview of the period's historiography is Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003). On Persian historiography cf. Julie Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999); Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn, *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods* (Wiesbaden, 2006); Charles Melville (ed.), *Persian Historiography* (London, 2012); and Elton Daniel *et al.*, 'Historiography', in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London and New York, 2003, online version: http://www.iranica.com/articles/historiography), especially sections 'iv. Mongol period' (Charles Melville) and 'v. Timurid period' (Maria Szuppe). On Arabic historiography cf. Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994); and Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd edn (Leiden, 1968).

[4] On narrativity in Persian chronicles cf. Marilyn R. Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography* (Columbus, 1980).

events.[5] Al-Maqrizi's chronicle, on the contrary, has the events in a strict chronological order according to years, months, and occasionally even days that produces a fractured narrative.[6] The second major difference between the two traditions was that Persian historical texts came to display more ambitious literary qualities. Taking up the preceding example, it can be argued that Jovayni produced with his chronicle one of the masterpieces of Persian prose literature, while the same cannot be stated of al-Maqrizi's work that is with regard to its literary qualities rather pedestrian. This was to some degree linked to the social background of historians in the Persian tradition who, compared to their Arabic-writing counterparts, were more often employed as court officials. These 'courtier-historians' used a common grand style in both official documents and chronicles so that especially those authors who held high secretarial positions tended to display their literary abilities in their works of history.

Examples of this latter tendency can also be found among Arabic-writing authors, such as the twelfth-century ʿImad al-Din who composed his *Al-Barq al-Shami* [The Syrian Bolt] in rhymed prose and employed a highly ornate language that showed the writer's concern to prove his literary ambitions. Nevertheless, while ʿImad al-Din was certainly not an isolated example, most learned authors of Arabic historical works, such as Ibn al-Athir, al-Maqrizi, and Ibn Taghribirdi, tended to use a plain and easily accessible language.[7] In the Persian tradition, in contrast, the use of a highly literary language was the standard, not the exception. The prime example for this tendency is the fourteenth-century history *Tajziyat al-amsar wa-tazjiyat al-aʿsar* [The Allocation of Cities and the Propulsion of Epochs] by Shehab-al-Din Wassaf that was highly popular and, in contrast to ʿImad al-Din's work, widely influential for future generations of historians.[8] The increased 'literary' qualities of historical narrative in the eastern lands were not only evident in stylistic developments, but also in the considerable importance that the genre of historical epic poems gained as exemplified by ʿAbd-Allah Hatefi's influential work that extolled the deeds of Timur (d. 1405) as the ruler of Central Asia and eastern Iran.[9]

However, the Arabic and Persian traditions of historical writing remained connected, in part because they both developed out of the same practice of historical

[5] Jovayni, *Tarikh-e jahan-goshay*, ed. Mirza Qazvini, 3 vols. (Leiden, 1911–37); trans. John A. Boyle as *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, 2nd edn (Manchester, 1997).

[6] Al-Maqrizi, *Kitab al-suluk li-maʿrifat duwal al-muluk*, ed. Muhammad M. al-Ziyada *et al.*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1934–73).

[7] Ibn al-Athir, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, trans. Donald S. Richards, 3 vols. (Aldershot, 2006–8); al-Maqrizi, *Kitab al-suluk li-maʿrifat duwal al-muluk*; and Ibn Taghribirdi, *Al-Nujum al-zahira fi muluk Misr wa-al-Qahira*, ed. Fahim Shaltut *et al.*, 16 vols. (Cairo, 1929–72).

[8] ʿImad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Al-Barq al-Shami*, ed. Falih Husayn (Amman, 1987) (on this work cf. Lutz Richter-Bernburg, *Der syrische Blitz: Saladins Sekretär zwischen Selbstdarstellung und Geschichtsschreibung* [Stuttgart, 1998]); Wassaf, *Tarikh-e Wassaf*, lith. edn (Bombay, 1853).

[9] ʿAbd-Allah Hatefi, *Timur-name-ye Hatefi*, ed. Abu Hashim H.Yushaʿ (Madras, 1958).

writing in the early period. This close connection is exemplified by the first major historical work in Persian, a translation of al-Tabari's Arabic universal chronicle. However, this book was not just a translation, but its author, the Samanid wazir Balʿami, reworked and restructured the Arabic account into a characteristically more continuous Persian narrative by omitting chains of narrators and reducing the number of alternative versions of the same event.[10] The main feature shared by both traditions was that they employed similar Islamic narratives that placed history into the framework of the genesis and subsequent development of the Muslim community. These narratives stood in contrast, or at least fitted uncomfortably, with Iranian historical narratives and the initial tendency of Persian-language writers to draw on neo-Sasanid themes for rhetorical embellishment and exemplary tale-telling. Ferdowsi's Persian *Shah-nama* [Book of Kings] is not only the monumental example in its employment of such an Iranian historical model, but it was also the last historical work that adopted this outlook in the early stages of the Middle Period. Persian-writing historians now ceased (at least temporarily until the Mongol period) to write history with reference to the tradition of pre-Islamic Iranian rulers, adopting Islamic narratives instead as the dominant model.

Both traditions came to share a further characteristic, namely an increasingly local outlook of historians who started to focus on one specific town or region. This regionalization of historical writing was to some extent initiated by the regionalization of political authority, i.e. one of the causes that had furthered in the first place the linguistic division between the Arabic and Persian traditions.[11] The heyday of local chronicles in Persian, for instance, occurred in the pre-Mongol period within a highly regionalized political structure of small principalities. Local and regional histories were certainly no new phenomenon in the eleventh century—the classical period had already produced several histories of specific towns, such as Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur's *Ta'rikh Baghdad* [History of Baghdad] and al-Azdi's *Ta'rikh al-Mawsil* [History of Mosul].[12] However, historians of the Middle Period did not only start to write local and regional histories in larger numbers, but these works were also more voluminous. Taking the example of Damascus, we now have the *Dhayl Ta'rikh Dimashq* [Continuation of the History of Damascus] by Ibn al-Qalanisi and in the following century a similar work by Abu Shama.[13] In the eastern lands similar local chronicles were written, for instance in the Caspian provinces. Here we find a local tradition that stretches

[10] Balʿami, *Tarikhnamah-i Tabari*, ed. Muhammad Rawshan, 2 vols. (Tehran, 2001). On this work cf. Andrew C. S. Peacock, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Balʿamī's Tārīkhnāma* (London, 2007).

[11] On local historical writing see ch. 22 by John Hudson in this volume.

[12] Of both works only parts have survived: See Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur, *Baghdad fi ta'rikh al-khilafa al-ʿabbasiya*, ed. ʿIzzat Husayni (Cairo, 1949); and al-Azdi, *Ta'rikh al-Mawsil*, ed. ʿAli Habiba (Cairo, 1967).

[13] Abu Shama, *Al-Dhayl ʿala al-rawdatayn*, ed. Muhammad al-Kawthari (Cairo, 1947).

from the pre-Mongol period, with Ebn Esfandiyar's early thirteenth-century *Tarikh-e Bayhaq* [History of Bayhaq] to Zahir-al-Din al-Marʿashi's chronicle in the second half of the fifteenth century.[14] All of these Arabic and Persian local chronicles displayed some interest in the wider political field of their region, but their authors' main contribution was to offer the most detailed accounts of the politics and the cultural life of their respective hometown as was possible.

Persian historical writing only took on a clearly distinct character from that of Arabic with the incorporation of the Persian-writing lands into the Mongol Empire in the mid-thirteenth century. At this point Persian moved from being an important language for writing history to being the dominant language in the eastern lands, and the Mongol conquests left major traces in the themes and style of historical works of the Middle Period. The particularly close connection between historians and political elites ensured that authors had excellent knowledge of Mongol politics beyond the traditional geographical boundaries of Persian history. The prime example of this is the governor and historian Jovayni, who could draw in his influential chronicle on his own experience of travelling to Mongolia.[15] Similarly, Rashid-al-Din's high position in the Ilkhanate put him into an excellent position to deal in his universal chronicle not only with the Ilkhanate, but with the entire Mongol Empire.[16]

With the rise of the Mongols, some historians also started to redeploy Iranian historical narratives. The best early example for this trend is the universal history of al-Mostawfi, another statesman and historian, who integrated the Mongols into the interpretive framework of pre-Islamic and Islamic Persian history. Al-Mostawfi's vision was not isolated and references to the glorious Sasanid past became current in the Mongol period.[17] Such Persian allusions became, besides the well-established Islamic and the newly introduced Turko-Mongol elements, crucial components in ascribing political legitimacy to the new Mongol rulers. The return of these references led furthermore to a renewed interest in Ferdowsi's *Shah-nama*, which was not only a crucial point of reference in Jovayni's chronicle but in many other Persian works of the period. This reorientation of history from the Mongol period onwards was also evident in the clearer sense of Iran as a

[14] Charles Melville, 'The Turco-Mongol Period', in Melville (ed.), *Persian Historiography* (London, 2012); Melville, 'Persian Local Histories: Views from the Wings', *Iranian Studies*, 33:1 (2000), 7–14 and the other articles in this special issue on regional histories; and Beatrice F. Manz, 'Local Histories of Southern Iran', in Pfeiffer and Quinn (eds.), *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East*, 267–81. Al-Marʿashi, *Tarikh-e Tabaristan u Ruyan u Mazandaran*, ed. ʿAbbas Shayan (Tehran, 1954–5); and *Tarikh-e Gilan u Daylamistan*, ed. Manuchihr Sutudah (Tehran, 1969).

[15] Jovayni, *Tarikh-e jahan-goshay*.

[16] Rashid-al-Din, *Jameʿ al-tawarikh* (on editions cf. Charles Melville, 'Jāmeʿ al-tawārik̲', in Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, http://www.iranica.com/articles/jame-al-tawarik).

[17] Al-Mostawfi, *Tarikh-e gozida*, ed. ʿA. Navaʾi (Tehran, 1960); and Assadullah S. Melikian-Chirvani, 'Conscience du passé et résistance culturelle dans l'Iran Mongol', in Denise Aigle (ed.), *L'Iran face à la domination Mongole* (Paris, 1997), 135–77.

geographical entity that historians started to develop. The most striking example is that of Naser-al-Din Bayzawi who displayed in his thirteenth-century Mongol universal history (the only work that he composed in Persian), a clear concept of the land of Iran.[18]

HISTORY AS BIOGRAPHY

Historians in the Islamic tradition considered biographical dictionaries, the premodern equivalent to the modern 'Who's Who', to be works of history (*ta'rīkh*) no less than they did chronicles. That the term *ta'rīkh* encompassed a wide variety of genres into which chronography and prosopography comfortably fitted is evident from considering the titles of works: while Ibn ʿAsakir's *Ta'rikh madinat Dimashq* [History of Damascus] is a pure biographical dictionary, Ibn al-Qalanisi chose exactly the same title for his chronicle. These biographical dictionaries adopted, as much as the chronicles, increasingly local and regional outlooks. Returning to the example of Damascus, Ibn ʿAsakir's *Ta'rikh madinat Dimashq* had obviously a distinctively regional outlook on the town's scholars and notables. This regional focus is also evident in al-Dhahabi's *Ta'rikh al-Islam wa-wafayat al-mashahir wa-al-aʿlam* [History of Islam and Obituaries of the Famous and Learned] that consists mostly of biographies. Despite the title's claim to be a universal history, the biographies clearly show the Syrian- and even Damascus-focused profile of the work. Similar biographical works appeared for most other towns and regions, such as Syrian Aleppo (*Zubdat al-halab fi ta'rikh Halab* [The Cream of the History of Aleppo] by Ibn al-ʿAdim), Egypt (*Al-Nujum al-zahira fi muluk Misr wa-al-Qahira* [The Shining Stars Concerning the Kings of Egypt and Cairo] by Ibn Taghribirdi), and Khurasanian Bayhaq (*Tarikh-e Bayhaq* [The History of Bayhaq] by Ebn Fondoq).[19] This detailed and rich material in chronicles and biographical dictionaries expressed the authors' increasingly regionalized geo-political outlook and displayed their intimacy with many of the events and persons they were describing.

Among the various historical genres during the Middle Period, the biographical dictionary experienced the most remarkable transformation. In addition to the rise of local and regional biographical dictionaries, the second trend was that

[18] Melville, 'The Turco-Mongol Period', Naser-al-Din Bayzawi, *Nezam al-tawarikh*, ed. Mir H. Mohaddeth (Tehran, 2003).

[19] Ibn ʿAsakir, *Ta'rikh madinat Dimashq*, ed. Salah al-Din al-Munajjid and Sukayna al-Shihabi, 68 vols. (Damascus, 1951–). On Ibn al-ʿAdim cf. David Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable and his World* (Leiden, 1994). On biographical dictionaries cf. Paul Auchterlonie, 'Historians and the Arabic Biographical Dictionary: Some New Approaches', in Robert G. Hoyland and Philip F. Kennedy (eds.), *Islamic Reflections, Arabic Musings: Studies in Honour of Professor Alan Jones* (Cambridge, 2004), 186–200; and R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (London, 1995), 187–208.

their number increased on an unprecedented level and that the works became considerably more voluminous. The eleventh-century *Ta'rikh Baghdad aw madinat al-salam* [History of Baghdad] by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi encompassed some 7,800 entries, Ibn ʿAsakir's *Ta'rikh madinat Dimashq* exceeds 10,000 entries, and al-Dhahabi's fourteenth-century *Ta'rikh al-Islam* includes tens of thousands of biographies that cover the most obscure 'scholars' of his hometown.[20] Even for a second-rank city such as Aleppo, the author Ibn al-ʿAdim could easily bring together over 8,000 persons.[21] This quantitative growth was accompanied by a diversification of topics: for example, more specialized dictionaries appeared, such as al-Safadi's work on blind scholars.[22] The third main development was that biographical dictionaries began to move beyond their traditional remit, which had been to compile the biographies of religious scholars. An example is Ibn Khallikan, who included in his dictionary, in addition to the usual jurisprudents, judges, exegetes, etc., as a matter of course individuals from a wider variety of backgrounds, such as poets, court officials, mathematicians, and physicians.[23] This led to the appearance of biographical dictionaries devoted to professional groups who had hitherto not been systematically covered, such as Ibn Abi Usaybiʿa's work on physicians.[24] The trend that historians casted a wider net led also to the increasing inclusion of women: in the fifteenth century, al-Sakhawi wrote a separate volume on women in his *Al-Daw' al-lamiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tasiʿ* [The Shining Light on the People of the Ninth Century], an Egypt-focused dictionary.[25]

The existence of such a rich and varied tradition of biographical dictionaries was arguably the most distinctive feature of Islamic historical writing in Arabic. While historical writing in Latin Europe, South Asia, and China knew comparable genres, it is only in Arabic historical writing of this period that biographical dictionaries came to play such a dominant role. Traditionally, this development has been ascribed to issues such as the importance of hadith-studies and the resulting interest in the life of transmitters, tied as it was to assessing the reliability of Prophetic traditions. However, in the Middle Period the transmission of hadiths had turned into a largely written practice and scholars had started to consult written collections rather than relying on lines of oral transmission. Consequently, the biographies of individual transmitters that had been crucial

[20] Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Ta'rikh Baghdad aw madinat al-salam*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1931). The final ten volumes of al-Dhahabi's seventy-volume work alone contain some 6,300 entries.

[21] Morray, *An Ayyubid Notable and his World*, 146. The number for Ibn al-ʿAdim is estimated as only one quarter of his work has survived.

[22] Al-Safadi, *Nakt al-himyan fi nukat al-ʿumyan*, ed. Tariq Tantawi (Cairo, 1997).

[23] Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat al-aʿyan wa-abnaʾ al-zaman*, ed. Ihsan ʿAbbas, 8 vols. (Beirut, 1968–72). On Ibn Khallikan cf. Hartmut Fähndrich, 'The Wafayat al-Aʿyan of Ibn Khallikan: A New Approach', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 93:4 (1973), 432–45.

[24] Ibn Abi Usaybiʿa, *'Uyun al-anba' fi tabaqat al-atibba'*, 3 vols. (Beirut, 1998).

[25] On women and biographical dictionaries cf. Ruth Roded, *Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Sa'd to Who's Who* (Boulder, 1994).

for assessing the reliability of lines of oral transmission became less important and hadith-studies ceased to be a major driving force behind the production of biographical dictionaries on this scale. The continuous growth and the increasing diversity of biographical dictionaries has been more profitably explained by other factors, such as local pride (in the case of local biographical dictionaries), attempts to advance an alternative to the rulers' history as registered in the (universal) chronicles, and the social utility of this material.[26] The argument on the social utility focuses on the social function that biographical dictionaries performed, which was comparable to the role of documentary sources in other traditions. As much as deeds and charters were crucial in securing the transmission of elite status over generations in Latin Europe and China, biographical dictionaries bore testimony to those informal relationships between individuals that secured the stability of Middle Eastern societies. The role of these informal relationships—and thus of the biographical dictionaries—was crucial in societies that were characterized by the limited role of formal and inheritable ascriptions of status, where there was consequently a relatively weak tendency to preserve documents, such as deeds, charters, and the like. It is in the biographical dictionaries that the civilian elites remembered their—often very recent—past with the intention of securing their future.[27]

Although biographical dictionaries were particularly significant in Arabic historical writing, they played only a relatively marginal role in the eastern world. This marginal position in the Persian tradition was reflected to some extent in a linguistic bifurcation that appeared within the eastern lands themselves. Although we have biographical dictionaries on towns in the Persian-writing lands such as Bukhara, Nishapur, and Isfahan, these were, in contrast to the chronicles, often written in Arabic.[28] The Khurasanian historian Ebn Fondoq, for instance, wrote his local chronicle in Persian, but turned to Arabic for writing his continuation of a biographical dictionary. Furthermore, it is striking that biographical dictionaries on the eastern lands were often not transmitted and only a relatively small number of them are extant, showing that they did not enjoy the same central position as in the Arabic-writing lands. Finally, dictionaries written in the eastern lands developed with hagiographical works a genre that had a distinctively

[26] On political history cf. Wadad al-Qadi, 'Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars' Alternative History of the Muslim Community', in Gerhard Endress (ed.), *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Islamic World* (Leiden, 2006), 23–75.

[27] On the issue of documentary sources see Andreas Görke and Konrad Hirschler (eds.), *Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources* (Beirut, 2011). Cf. also Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge, 1994), 1–26; and for a criticism of Chamberlain's position see Marina Rustow, 'A Petition to a Woman at the Fatimid Court (413–414 a.h./1022–23 c.e.)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 73 (2010), 1–27.

[28] Translations into Persian were often only produced at a later stage such as al-Mafarrukhi's eleventh-century work on Isfahan that was translated into Persian in the fourteenth century. See Jürgen Paul, 'The Histories of Isfahan: Mafarrukhi's Kitab Mahasin Isfahan', *Iranian Studies*, 33:1 (2000), 117–32.

different social outlook. In these hagiographical works the civilian elites are hardly visible, but it is the shaykhs and their followers, often drawn from among the commoners, who play the central role.

From the twelfth century onwards, history in the form of biographical dictionaries arguably furthered a new historical genre, namely biographies of living men. These works were 'monographs' that focused on one specific individual, typically a ruler. One of the first to be celebrated by his contemporaries in such works was the Ayyubid ruler Salah al-Din/Saladin (d. 1193). The authors of such biographies were high-ranking officials of his entourage, such as the Syrian Ibn Shaddad, who composed his *Al-nawadir al-Sultaniya wa-al-mahasin al-Yusufiyya* [Rare and Excellent History of Saladin], and ʿImad al-Din, the author of the above-mentioned *Al-Barq al-Shami*. The appearance of this genre was also closely connected to the rise of pseudo-historical popular narratives, as we shall see, with their epic hero at centre stage. Both genres, historical biography and popular epic, celebrated the feats of the individual in a wider historical setting. The connection between the two genres is best exemplified by the early Mamluk ruler Baybars (d. 1277) who was the hero of popular epics and also the subject of the scholarly biography *Al-Rawd al-zahir fi sirat al-Malik al-Zahir* [The Flowering Garden] by Ibn ʿAbd al-Zahir. Such biographies of rulers did not only exist as monographs, but were occasionally closely intertwined with annalistic chronicles, for instance in the work by al-ʿAyni, another high-ranking Egyptian administrator, who wrote a chronicle-cum-biography of the Mamluk Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (d. 1421).[29] In the eastern lands biographies on individuals only started to appear in larger numbers during the late fifteenth century under the Timurid dynasty, such as Khvandamir's glorification of his patron, the Timurid poet and statesman Mir-ʿAli Shir Nava'i (d. 1501).[30]

HISTORIANS AND THE RULING ELITES

The trend that had high-ranking officials producing an increasing number of Arabic biographies points to a further development in the Middle Period, namely that authors of historical works became closer to political and military elites. Political authority in the central Arabic-writing lands of this period rested in the hands of what has been called 'military patronage states'. Dynasties such as the Seljuks, the Ayyubids, and the Mamluks were warrior elites who originated from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Common to their rule was the sophisticated use

[29] Al-ʿAyni, *Al-Sayf al-muhannad fi sirat al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad*, ed. Fahim Shaltut (Cairo, 1967). On biographies in the Mamluk period cf. Peter M. Holt, 'Literary Offerings: A Genre of Courtly Literature', in Thomas Philipp (ed.), *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1998), 3–16.

[30] Ghiyath-al-Din Khvandamir, *Makarem al-akhlaq*, ed. Muhammad A. ʿAshiq (Tehran, 1999).

of distributing *iqṭāʿāt* (a temporary and revocable assignment of a specific tax income) and distributing employment opportunities in *awqāf* (endowments) so as to establish patronage relationships with powerful military and civilian households.[31] Within this socio-political framework, historians, the majority of whom belonged to the civilian elite, were drawn closer to the political-military leadership; many were now positioned on the frontier between the two groups. In the Mamluk period numerous authors who were 'sons of the people' (*awlād al-nās*)—that is, the offspring of the Mamluk military elite—reinforced this trend. Barred from military service, they embarked on careers in the civilian elites and often authored historical works. Due to their background and their knowledge of Turkic languages, they were not only in a unique position to report on the politics of the Mamluk state, but also felt a close affinity to the ruling elite's outlook.[32]

This liminal position of many historians is first and foremost evident in a new orientation of Arabic historical writing during the Middle Period, one that has been described as the *siyāsa* outlook, with a characteristic focus on rule or governance. Due to their new social position, historians had a nuanced understanding of politics that they proudly displayed in their chronicles.[33] In the genre of biographical dictionaries this *siyāsa* outlook was expressed by the larger number of court officials who started to appear besides the religious scholars. For instance, in the Egypt-focused dictionary *Al-Manhal al-safi wa-al-mustawfa baʿda al-wafi* [The Pure Spring] by Ibn Taghribirdi, who belonged to the *awlād al-nās*, court officials are at centre stage.[34] The pattern was different for Persian-writing historians, as history had been traditionally written in closer proximity to courts, and religious scholars had played a less prominent role in the production of historical knowledge. The salient role of the courtier-historian was further enhanced throughout the Middle Period as a result of the linguistic division that arose within the eastern lands themselves. Those experts in the religious sciences, such as Qur'an interpretation, law, and hadith, continued to compose in Arabic. Persian, in contrast, was used for those fields that were not part of the religious sciences in a narrow sense, particularly for those genres that were popular at courts, such as history. Consequently, historians in the east, especially during the Mongol and Timurid periods, were less and less drawn from the world of religious scholarship, but were more directly attached to the courts as secretaries,

[31] Michael Chamberlain, 'Military Patronage States and the Political Economy of the Frontier, 1000–1250', in Youssef M. Choueiri (ed.), *A Companion to the History of the Middle East* (Malden, Mass., 2005), 135–53.

[32] Ulrich Haarmann, 'Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt and Syria', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 33 (1988), 81–114.

[33] Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, 182–231.

[34] *Al-Manhal al-safi wa-al-mustawfa baʿda al-wafi,* ed. Muhammad Amin *et al.*, 9 vols. (Cairo, 1984–90).

administrators, and in other functions. Authors of historical works who were firmly embedded in the religious sciences (such as the above-mentioned Bayzawi, the thirteenth-century Shafiʿite jurist and Ashʿarite theologian who produced only a single chronicle) remained in the minority.

However, the proximity between historians and ruling elites in both traditions did not mean that historical writing turned into a mere exercise in legitimizing the powerful, nor that historians lost their authorial agency.[35] Even dynastic histories that paraded as 'panegyric' works often expressed ideas that ran against the expectations of the rulers. To move between different ruling houses enabled authors to retain room for manoeuvre, as in the case of Ibn Khaldun, who artfully served at most political centres in North Africa and Muslim Spain in the course of his career. While holding paid positions of patronage, it seems that scholars were not in any close way controlled by the military and political elites, maintaining a considerable degree of independence.[36] At the same time, the system of patronage was not all-encompassing and those authors who were excluded from patronage could continue to produce, often quite critical, historical narratives, as in the case of the Egyptian al-Maqrizi.[37] The popularization of historical writing contributed to the production of quite independent works and we repeatedly encounter historians of rather modest background, such as the Damascene Ibn Tawq, who operated at a distance from the networks of the political and military elites.

The integration of many historians into the political and military elites contributed from the fourteenth century onwards to a new development that is best labelled as the 'encyclopedic age' and that affected works in many fields of knowledge. Historians started to write comprehensive works with titles that reflected their position and that frequently included verbs such as 'to survey, to comprehend, to control, to consummate'.[38] While universal chronicles had been well established and large-scale works had been a standard feature of Islamic historical writing, the sheer number of encyclopedic works indicated a new trend in the later Middle Period as evidenced by chronicles such as Ibn Taghribirdi's *Al-Nujum al-zahira fi muluk Misr wa-al-Qahira* and al-Maqrizi's *Kitab al-suluk li-maʿrifat duwal al-muluk* [Guide to the Knowledge of the Ruling Dynasties]. This encyclopedic tendency contributed also to the above-mentioned quantitative growth in the genre of biographical dictionaries with massive works such as the *Taʾrikh al-Islam* and the *Siyar al-aʿlam al-nubalaʾ* [Lives of the Nobles] by al-Dhahabi as well as al-Safadi's *Al-Wafi bi-al-wafayat* [Comprehensive (Book) of

[35] On this cf. Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (London, 2006).

[36] Carl F. Petry, 'Scholastic Stasis in Medieval Islam Reconsidered: Mamluk Patronage in Cairo', *Poetics Today*, 14 (1993), 323–48.

[37] Konrad Hirschler, 'The Pharaoh-Anecdote in Premodern Arabic Historiography', *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 10 (2010), 45–74.

[38] Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, 184.

Obituaries] and al-Sakhawi's *Al-Daw' al-lami' li-ahl al-qarn al-tasi'*. The authors intended these works, be they chronicles or dictionaries, as reference books that provided not only the scholar, but also the lay reader with summaries of the past. The best example of such works is the monumental encyclopedia *Nihayat al-arab fi funun al-adab* [The Highest Aspiration on the Branches of Knowledge] by the Egyptian author al-Nuwayri who concluded this work with a universal history.[39]

The *siyāsa*-orientation of many historians intensified furthermore a theme that had been well-established in Islamic chronography, be it Arabic or Persian, namely the centrality of the concept of *dawla* in the sense of 'dynasty' and 'rule of a dynasty'. *Dawla* was central to Ibn Khaldun's writing: there it constitutes the ultimate aim of political acts and is closely connected to two other crucial concepts of his, group-solidarity (*'aṣabīya*) and civilization (*'umrān*).[40] The term *dawla* was also crucial in less theoretical reflections, and historians were routinely engaged in writing their present dynasty into a line of legitimate Muslim rulers. Dynasties that came to power by conquest from the outside, such as the Mongols and the Mamluks, both posed in this regard considerable challenges for the authors of historical works. However, by invoking the antonym of *dawla*, *fitna* or 'civil strive', and concepts of divine predestination, authors could frequently present their respective dynasty as the best of all possible alternatives. This salience of the theme of *dawla* was reflected in the titles of many historical works where the term *dawla* made a frequent appearance, such as in Abu Shama's *Kitab al-rawdatayn fi akhbar al-dawlatayn* [Book of the Two Gardens on the Rule of the Two Dynasties]. This prominent position of dynastic history influenced also the organization of chronicles. Ibn Taghribirdi, for example, divided his chronicle into the rules of the Mamluk Sultans, subordinating annalistic organization as a secondary element.

In contrast to the modern significance ascribed to this topic, a theme that was of less importance than *dawla* was the Crusades.[41] No Arabic work was written specifically on these events with the exception of *Sirat al-Afranj al-kharijin ila bilad al-Sham fi hadhihi sinin* [The Way of the Franks who Went out to Syria in Those Years] by the twelfth-century Syrian author Hamdan b. 'Abd al-Rahim. This work is lost, however, and it appears to have remained marginal since it was not quoted in other Arabic texts of the period. Historians of the Middle Period

[39] Al-Dhahabi, *Siyar al-a'lam al-nubala'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut *et al.*, 25 vols. (Beirut, 1981–8); and al-Nuwayri, *Nihayat al-arab fi funun al-adab*, 33 vols. (Cairo, 1923–98).

[40] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton, 1967).

[41] Translations of Arabic chronicles into European languages often focus on this one single aspect and wrongly evoke the impression that the texts centred on events linked with the Crusades. The most striking example is certainly Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes* (London, 2006), but scholarly works fall also into this category such as Hamilton Gibb's translation of Ibn al-Qalanisi's local Damascus chronicle, which he entitled *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades* (London, 1932).

did not coin a term for 'Crusades' or 'Crusaders' who were identified instead by the standard ethnic term for Latin Europeans, 'Franks'. The chroniclers referred to the Crusades only insofar as they were relevant for political developments in the region. The project of setting the Crusades into a wider framework of European expansion that also affected Spain and Sicily was developed only by a few authors, such as al-Sulami and Ibn al-Athir, and never struck a chord in the period's chronicles. Even those historians who spent extensive time at European courts, such as the Syrian Ibn Wasil (at the Stauffer court in Apulia), hardly had anything to report on European history or the background to the Crusades.[42] If an outside invasion was of relevance for these historians, it was the Mongol invasion in the east. Ibn al-Athir, for instance, has an extensive passage on their advance to the west. In this passage he reports—with considerable hyperbole—the supposed cruelty of the new conquerors. Significantly, he compares the invasions with events from salvation history but omits any comparison or link with the Crusades.[43] It was only in the late nineteenth century that the Crusades developed into a central subject of remembrance in the Middle East and that Arabic histories on the Crusades came to be written.[44]

POPULAR HISTORY AND HISTORY'S POPULARITY

The prominent position of dynastic history, and consequently political history, was—especially in Arabic historical writing—accompanied by an opposed development. During the Middle Period some authors started to show an increased interest in themes linked to everyday life events; texts accordingly started to include information on considerably wider sections of the population.[45] In the above-mentioned works by Abu Shama, Ibn Tawq, and al-Maqrizi but also in chronicles such as Ibn Iyas's *Bada'i' al-zuhur fi waqa'i' al-duhur* [The Unique Shining Concerning Past Events], the horizon is considerably broader than in chronicles of previous centuries—a development that reflects the wider spectrum of individuals included in biographical dictionaries.[46] Popular protest and

[42] On al-Sulami cf. Niall Christie, 'Motivating Listeners in the Kitab al-Jihad of ʿAli ibn Tahir al-Sulami (d. 1106)', *Crusades*, 6 (2007), 1–14; and on Ibn Wasil cf. Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*.

[43] Ibn al-Athir, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi 'l-ta'rikh*, trans. Donald S. Richards, 3 vols. (Aldershot, 2006–8), iii. 202–4.

[44] On the development of the modern historiography of the Crusades cf. Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999), 589–616.

[45] The classical studies on the basis of this material are for political history Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass., 1984); and for cultural history Boaz Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* (Cambridge, 1993).

[46] Abu Shama, *Al-Dhayl ʿala al-rawdatayn*; Ibn Tawq, *Al-Taʿliq: yawmiyat Shihab al-Din Ahmad ibn Tawq, 834–915/1430–1509*, ed. Jaʿfar al-Muhajir, 2 vols. (Damascus, 2000–2); al-Maqrizi, *Kitab al-suluk li-maʿrifat duwal al-muluk*; and Ibn Iyas, *Bada'iʿ al-zuhur f ī waqa'iʿ al-duhur*, ed. Muhammad Mustafa, 9 vols. (Cairo, 1960–75).

discontent had now their place in the narratives, popular culture became worthy of commentary, and 'minor' politics below the level of the highest military and political elites made its appearance. To some extent, this popularization of history was linked to the above-described rise of local historical writing that allowed more scope for information of this kind, and that was produced by authors who were more inclined to report events from their hometown's everyday life. However, this trend has also to be seen within a wider transformation of cultural practices and mentalities in the Middle Period, namely the convergence of scholarly historical writing and popular epic. Epics on fictive or part-fictive heroes such as Dhat al-Himma, ʿAntar, Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan, and Baybars paraded as historical narratives and enjoyed remarkable popularity. These popular histories were characterized by a simple language where colloquialisms are more prevalent than in historical writings by members of the elite.[47] This popularization of history was a two-way development where popular epics became more historical (and recorded in written form) while chronicles became more interested in the popular sections of the urban centres and adopted some of the language of popular epics.[48]

Such popular histories had a rather unstable textual transmission in which the narrators and scribes constantly reworked and re-caste the texts. Scholarly works, in contrast, had already started to emerge in the Early Period as relatively fixed books with reasonably stable titles and contents although the transmission of these scholarly works, especially of those linked to the early Muslim community's sacred history, was largely based on oral and aural practices.[49] Typically, these works had been transmitted by way of reading sessions in which a given book was read aloud by the author or a scholar who had acquired the authorization to teach this book. All those present acquired after the completion of the session the authorization to transmit the book themselves. During the Early Period it had already been evident that some of the participants were actually engaged in written practices. Some would follow the reading in their own copies that they had brought along, while others wrote out their own copies during the reading session. In the Middle Period this trend continued and Islamic historical

[47] On this genre cf. Stefan Leder, 'Religion, Gesellschaft, Identität—Ideologie und Subversion in der Mythenbildung des arabischen, Volksepos', in Christine Schmitz (ed.), *Mensch—Heros—Gott: Weltentwürfe und Lebensmodelle im Mythos der Vormoderne* (Stuttgart, 2007), 167–80; Udo Steinbach, *Ḏāt al-Himma: Kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum arabischen Volksroman* (Wiesbaden, 1972); Peter Heath, *The Thirsty Sword: Sīrat ʿAntar and the Arabic Popular Epic* (Salt Lake City, 1996); Driss Cherkaoui, *Le roman de ʿAntar: une perspective littéraire et historique* (Paris, 2001); Lena Jayyusi, *The Adventures of Sayf ben Dhi Yazan: An Arabic Folk Epic* (Bloomington, 1997); Thomas Herzog, *Geschichte und Imaginaire: Entstehung, Überlieferung und Bedeutung der Sīrat Baibars in ihrem sozio-politischen Kontext* (Wiesbaden, 2006); and Marina Pyrovolaki, 'Futuh al-Sham and Other Futuh Texts: A Study of the Perception of Marginal Conquest Narratives in Arabic in Medieval and Modern Times', D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 2008.

[48] For the issue of the popularization of Mamluk historiography cf. the discussion started by Ulrich Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg, 1969).

[49] For the Early Period cf. Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read* (Edinburgh, 2009); and ch. 12 by Chase F. Robinson in this volume.

writing in the scholarly realm turned into an emphatically written culture, such that aspects of orality and aurality dwindled away and survived mainly as ossified remnants of past practices. Beyond doubt, reading sessions were still held for some historical works, especially for those that contained material pertinent to the genesis of the Muslim community. Nevertheless, it was evident that the transmission of knowledge in the field of history had by and large become based on written practices. This change ran parallel to the introduction of paper to the Middle East from the eighth century onwards and the subsequent spread of this relatively cheap and easy-to-produce writing material. Paper was available in all regions by the year 1000 and had replaced at this point other writings material, such as parchment, even for writing the Qur'an.[50]

The increasingly written transmission of historical works in the form of stable books was also reflected in library collections where such works were well-represented. We have only indirect evidence from narrative sources on libraries in the Early Period such as the Abbasid Dar al-Hikma in Baghdad, the Umayyad library in Cordoba, and the Fatimid collection in Cairo.[51] This evidence points already to the wide circulation and popularity of historical works, such as al-Tabari's universal chronicle, but the quantitative information inspires little confidence. While an early eleventh-century report refers for example to twenty copies of this work in the Cairene library, an early thirteenth-century source gives for the same period a number of 1,220 copies for this collection.[52] With the spread of smaller, but more numerous, endowment libraries we are better informed for the Middle Period as documentary evidence starts to be available. For instance, the mid-thirteenth-century catalogue of a minor local library in a Damascene mausoleum shows that among the collection's some 2,000 works, eighty were historical titles. These include classical books such as al-Tabari's chronicle and the chronicles of the early Islamic conquests by al-Azdi, Sayf b. ʿUmar, Ibn Aʿtham, and al-Baladhuri, as well as books that were authored in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries such as those by Ibn al-Athir, ʿImad al-Din, and Ibn Shaddad.[53] The popularity of historical works is also evident from other sources such as endowment records where an early sixteenth-century document for a small collection in the Cairene Azhar mosque has for instance some twenty-five titles of history among its 250 books.[54]

[50] Jonathan Bloom, *Paper before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* (New Haven, 2001).

[51] For an overview of medieval libraries cf. Anke von Kügelgen, 'Bücher und Bibliotheken in der islamischen Welt des "Mittelalters"', in Michael Stolz and Adrian Mettauer (eds.), *Buchkultur im Mittelalter: Schrift, Bild, Kommunikation* (Berlin and New York, 2005), 147–76.

[52] Al-Muasabbihi, 'Nusus daʾiʿa min akhbar misr', ed. Ayman F. Sayyid, *Annales Islamologiques*, 17 (1981), 1–54, at 17; and Abu Shama, *Kitab al-rawdatayn fi akhbar al-dawlatayn al-Nuriya wa-al-Salahiya*, ed. Ibrahim al-Zaybaq, 5 vols. (Beirut, 1997), ii. 210.

[53] On this cf. Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh, 2012).

[54] Endowment record ʿAli al-Abshadi al-Azhari, 919/1513: ʿAbd al-Latif Ibrahim, *Dirasat fi al-kutub wa-al-maktabat al-islamiya* (Cairo, 1962).

The spread of historical books and the popularity of history took place in parallel with a gradual, but distinctive, change in the self-view of historians in the Middle Period. Authors of historical works became not only increasingly self-conscious, as expressed in the rise of historiographical reflections, but also more self-confident in the pursuit of their learned endeavours. Introductions to historical works, for instance, show that the authors proudly referred to themselves more regularly as historians (*mu'arrikh*) and an Ibn Khallikan could confidently declare in the introduction to his biographical dictionary his long-standing interest in history: 'Since my youth I have been avid for the reports of the ancients and their dates of birth and death. . . . So I read the books in this discipline and learned from the transmissions of the great masters.'[55] References to scholars as historians not only appear in self-descriptions, but they are also increasingly used in biographical entries for profiling scholars. 'Historian' started to appear side by side and on the same level with those terms that had a long pedigree in scholars' biographies such as 'exegete', 'jurisprudent', and 'grammarian'. This enhanced status of the practice of history was also expressed in the Islamic canons of disciplines where history gained from the tenth century onwards a new position. Early philosophical classifications of the sciences, such as those by al-Farabi (lat. Avennasar) and al-Tawhidi, had not yet referred to history as an independent field of knowledge.[56] However, from the eleventh century onwards we see a shift as educational classifications of sciences started to include history more regularly as a discipline in its own right.

This new self-confidence and self-consciousness led ultimately to the first substantial historiographical reflections on the craft of history from the fourteenth century onwards. Introductions to historical works or short discourses within the narrative, such as in Abu al-Fazl Bayhaqi's *Ta'rikh-e Bayhaqi* [The History by Bayhaqi], had already previously included statements on how to write history and to what end. However, it was only the publication of two historiographical works within some four years in the fourteenth century that firmly placed the field of history among those disciplines that require theoretical discussion. The first of these was the famous *Muqaddimah* [Introduction] by Ibn Khaldun who developed in the work's introduction the outlines of a theory of political history. More importantly, he synthesized the works of preceding generations on issues such as why history should be studied and what mistakes were to be avoided.[57] At the same time that Ibn Khaldun was putting his historiographical thoughts to paper in North Africa, further to the east an obscure scholar set out on the same task. In 1381–2 al-Iji published his *Al-Tuhfah* [The Gem], a work that was, in

[55] Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat al-a'yan wa-abna' al-zaman*, i. 19–20.

[56] Osman Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam: A Study in Islamic Philosophies of Science* (Cambridge, 1998); and Marc Bergé, 'Épitre sue les sciences d'Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi', in *Bulletin d'études orientales*, 18 (1963–4), 241–98.

[57] Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldun: An Essay in Reinterpretation* (London, 1990).

contrast to Ibn Khaldun, less concerned with the practicalities of writing history, but rather with the author's philosophy of history. These two historiographical reflections were not an isolated phenomenon and the fifteenth century brought forth a number of successors to Ibn Khaldun and al-Iji, such as al-Kafiyaji with his *Al-Mukhtasar fi 'ilm al-ta'rikh* [Brief Compendium on Historiography] in 1463—the first historiographical monograph in the proper sense—and al-Sakhawi with his *Al-I'lan bi-al-tawbikh li-man dhamma al-ta'rikh* [Open Denounciation of the Critics of History].[58]

This self-confidence found its expression in a gradual change of style in historical writings. Most importantly, the Arabic chronicles started to abandon the organization of texts on the basis of discrete *khabar-isnād* units in favour of more coherent narratives. The strict chronological system that prevailed in these works certainly curtailed the possibilities of crafting continuous narratives. Nevertheless, the authorial voice in historical works became more distinct and less timid not only in the introductions, but also in the main texts. This rise of the authorial voice included the authorial decision of how to organize the events and of how to endow the events with new meanings. The increased textual room for manoeuvre allowed the authors to craft texts more individually and a comparison of works that report the same events in the Middle Period is suffice to show how these authors used this room.[59] Beyond the organization of historical works, the distinctive authorial presence became also evident in the increased use of 'I' and the intrusion of autobiographical elements into the texts. While Ibn al-Jawzi chronicled in his universal history his rise to fame in Baghdad, Abu Shama described in his local chronicle-cum-biographical dictionary in detail his personal life in Damascus, and Abu al-Fida' detailed his efforts to regain rule in his northern Syrian hometown of Hama.[60] This development culminated in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in histories that are diary-like accounts with the author at centre-stage, such as Ibn Tawq's and Ibn Tulun's chronicles.[61]

The latter work ends the Middle Period and leads to the Ottoman tradition of historical writing. As much as this chapter started with the linguistic transformation in the early Middle Period, the shift to the Ottoman, Safavid, and other traditions was characterized by similar changes. In the east new languages entered

[58] On these historiographical works cf. Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1968).

[59] On this issue for the Middle Period cf. Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography*. The main studies in this regard for the Early Period are: Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, 1998); Tayeb el-Hibri, *Medieval Arabic Historiography* (Cambridge, 1999); and Boaz Shoshan, *The Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Tabari's History* (Leiden, 2005).

[60] Ibn al-Jawzi, *Al-Muntazam fi tawarikh al-muluk wa-al-umam*, ed. Suhayl Zakkar, 13 vols. (Beirut, 1995–6); Abu Shama, *Al-Dhayl 'ala al-rawdatayn*; and Abu al-Fida', *The Memoirs of a Syrian Prince: Abu 'l-Fida, Sultan of Hamah*, trans. Peter M. Holt (Wiesbaden, 1983).

[61] Ibn Tawq, *Ta'liq*; and Ibn Tulun, *Mufakahat al-khillan fi hawadith al-zaman*, ed. Muhammad Mostafa, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1962–4).

the historical canon, for instance with the spread of Chaghatay as a literary language under the Timurids in the fifteenth century, and the *Sejarah Melayu* [Malay Annals], one of the early examples of Southeast Asian Muslim historical writing, that was composed around 1500. In the western lands Ottoman Turkish continued its ascendance with the Ottoman conquest of the Arabic-writing lands and had already produced in the fifteenth century the first chronicles. The emerging historical traditions in these new languages but also in Persian and Arabic remained deeply influenced by the practice and theory of historical writing as it had emerged by the end of the Middle Period, but they were soon to take new directions.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

970s	Ghaznavids replace Samanids in Khurasan and Afghanistan
1050s	Seljuks replace Buyids in Iraq and western Iran
1071	Seljuks defeat the Byzantine Empire at Manzikert
1090s	Regionalization of the Seljuk Empire (from Syria to Khurasan)
1090s	Almoravid conquest of al-Andalus
1099	First Crusade conquers Jerusalem
1170s	Ayyubids under Saladin replace Fatimids and Seljuks in Egypt and Syria
1212	Defeat of Almohads at Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa
1220s	Formation of the Mongol Chaghatay Empire in Central Asia
1250s	Mamluks replace Ayyubids in Egypt and Syria
1258	Mongols conquer Baghdad, formation of Ilkhanate Empire in Persia and Iraq
1291	Fall of Frankish Acre
1350s	Regionalization of the Ilkhanate Empire
1370s	Formation of the Timurid Empire in Iran and Central Asia
1405	Death of Timur, partial regionalization
1453	Ottoman conquest of Constantinople
1492	Capitulation of Granada
1501	Rise of the Safavid dynasty in Iran
1517	Ottoman conquest of Arab Middle East

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Chapter 14

The Shaping of Past and Present, and Historical Writing in Rus', *c.*900–*c.*1400

Jonathan Shepard

More or less recent deeds of princes, town assemblies, invaders, and reverend men and (exceptionally) women were recorded in Rus' chronicles from the late eleventh century onwards. These chronicles make up the bulk of the 'historical writing' available for the entire period. Compiled in a few urban centres, they focus on their respective regions and only fitfully offer panoramas of goings-on throughout 'the land of Rus''. They neither formulate nor imply a philosophy of historical development, issuing forth streams of factual data. The one outstanding exception is the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* [Tale of Bygone Years, i.e. Rus' Primary Chronicle], at once a compilation and a historical composition looking beyond recorded time to answer fundamental questions. Its compilers also had injunctions for the ruling elite. The *Povest' Vremennykh Let* is incomparable and significant: incomparable, in that no subsequent work articulated quite such a vision of Rus' as a polity to be held together; significant, in that its text was incorporated into subsequent Rus' chronicles until the sixteenth century. Accordingly, the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* deserves closer attention, as do other records of achievements, spiritual and physical, and glances back at origins composed roughly in the same era. Few of the shoots put out by writers of the eleventh and early twelfth century took root, and later chronicle-writing can be treated more briefly. Other forms of historical writing beside chronicles are discussed for the period following the Mongol invasions, notably commemorations of disasters, hagiography, and works with eschatological overtones.

PRE-MONGOL RUS'

The *Povest' Vremennykh Let* and Ilarion's *Slovo o Zakone i Blagodati*

The *Povest' Vremennykh Let* gained something like its present form early in the twelfth century, though at least one previous version is detectable.[1] Some have

[1] Vladimir Iakolevich Petrukhin, 'Kak nachinalas' Nachal'naia Letopis'?' *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoi Literatury* (hereafter *TODRL*), 57 (2006), 33–41.

argued that a stock-taking of past events, hinging on Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich's adoption of Byzantine Christianity around 988, was sponsored by the princely and church leadership in the mid-eleventh century and later found a place in the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*.[2] Incontrovertibly, the metropolitan of Kiev, Ilarion, composed his *Slovo o Zakone i Blagodati* [Sermon on Law and Grace] in about 1050, setting the conversion of 'the apostle among rulers' and his imposition of Christianity in a broader context. Acknowledging the tardiness of Christianity's spread to the northern lands, Ilarion drew on scriptural history and theology, invoking the imagery of new wineskins for new wine—Christ's new teaching was for new nations like the Rus'.[3] He presents the princes' advancement of the faith as both the defeat of idol-worship and the triumph of Christian 'grace' over 'the law' of the Old Testament, rounding off God's plans for mankind: the present-day ruler, Iaroslav, is completing the work of his father Vladimir, playing Solomon to his David.[4] The *Povest' Vremennykh Let* is less theologically accomplished or rhetorically polished; yet it does try to place the origin of Rus' not only geographically and chronologically but also culturally, in God's grand design. The Rus', qua people, are listed among the peoples occupying the portion of Japheth named in the Old Testament,[5] and, as Slavic-speakers, their links with other groups of Slavs are placed in more recent historical time. A lengthy passage recounts the creation of a Slavic alphabet and religious literature for the Moravians by Byzantine missionaries in the later ninth century. And in recounting Vladimir's conversion in about 988, the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* claims that the Rus' are 'a new Christian people'. For this orientation and a few historical episodes, the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* draws on the universal chronicle of George the Monk alongside collections of excerpts from other Byzantine narratives and from supposedly sacred (sometimes apocryphal) texts. The notion of a 'chosen people' on a God-given assignment resembles those in Byzantine and other narratives inspired by the Old Testament. Motifs from the Bible and world history are tacked onto episodes having some historical basis: Princess Olga's baptism in Constantinople is compared to the queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon and, perhaps following Ilarion's lead, the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* states that she was christened Helena, 'just like the ancient empress, mother of Constantine the Great'.[6] Thus the baptism of the ruling family of Rus' is no less momentous than the first Christian emperor's. However, in comparison with Ilarion's sermon, the motif of Rus' conver-

[2] Dimitri Sergeievich Likhachev, *The Great Heritage: The Classical Literature of Old Rus* (Moscow, 1981), 81–90.

[3] Ilarion, *Slovo o Zakone i Blagodati*, in *Biblioteka Literatury Drevnei Rusi*, ed. Dimitri Sergeievich Likhachev, 15 vols. (St Petersburg, 1997–), i. 38.

[4] Ibid., i. 50.

[5] *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, ed. Dimitri Sergeievich Likhachev and Varvara Pavlovna Adrianova-Peretts, 2nd edn rev. Mikhail Borisovich Sverdlov (St Petersburg, 1996) (hereafter *PVL*), 7–8.

[6] *PVL*, 29.

sion as the prolongation of sacred time does not pervade the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, even if Vladimir's conversion was a turning-point. The compilers of the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* show interest in matters of facts, striving to answer fundamental questions.

'Whence came the Rus' land, which prince first reigned in Kiev, and how did the Rus' land come to be?'

These questions, posed at the beginning, are what the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* purports to answer. Geographical and ethnographical bearings are provided in the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*'s opening pages, and its main part is devoted to the deeds of one family, the descendants of the Rus' 'prince' Riurik. The working assumption is that they alone may rightfully rule, although for the pre-Christian period a few individuals *not* of Riurik's seed feature in positions of legitimate—'princely'—authority. Although the compilers of the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* tapped Byzantine sources in their bid to graft Rus' onto world history, these yielded few details about the Rus' past. Indigenous texts were virtually non-existent, leaving the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*'s compilers ill-equipped to elucidate the origins of the present-day people and 'land' of Rus', or how they had come beneath the authority of Riurik and his descendants. The compilers adopt two strategies. First, concentrating on the region of the Middle Dnieper, the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* emphasizes that the location of the main town, Kiev, and the Slav tribe dwelling there, the Poliane, had been advantaged from time immemorial. The Poliane are compared favourably with neighbouring Slavs and also with the Khazars, who had exacted tribute from them. Providence has favoured the Poliane: much as the ancient Egyptians were laid low by their former Israelite slaves, so now the Khazars are subject to the Rus'. Here and elsewhere the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* effectively identifies the Poliane with the Rus'. But second, in offering a legitimate basis for Riurik's rule, the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* makes much of the external origins of Riurik and his 'people': they had been 'Varangian [i.e. Scandinavian] Rus' ', cognate with the Swedes, English, Gotlanders, and others 'beyond the sea'; they had been invited by the indigenous peoples, Slavs and Finns, to come and provide rulership and 'order'.[7] This variant on tales of a social contract found in other cultures serves to justify the authority exercised by the Riurikids and their Rus' 'people', arriving as an exogenous group. These two accounts address the questions about geography and princely legitimacy which the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* poses, but they beg the question why exactly the Slav Poliane 'are now called Rus' '. Aware that they belonged to the same language-group as the Moravians, Czechs, and Poles, the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*'s compilers assert that they are now called Rus' 'because

[7] *PVL*, 13.

of the Varangians', 'though originally they were Slavs'; 'the Slavs and the Rus' are one people'.[8]

These rather clumsy bids to meld together Middle Dnieper regionalism, the ruling dynasty's Scandinavian origins, and Slavonic linguistic ties fuel modern controversies as to the ethnic origins of the Rus'. The key point for our purposes is the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*'s doggedness in answering the questions it posed. The compilers sought to trace back the ancestry and ascendancy of the princely house of their own time, charting how other peoples and rivals had been subsumed. Yet they were particularly interested in the Middle Dnieper region and its inhabitants, a locus of authority with inherent merits even in the pre-Christian epoch. A Byzantine text about St Andrew's travels around the Black Sea was reworked to have him journey up the Dnieper and bless the hills where the city of Kiev would arise, setting up a cross; in contrast, the bathing practices and self-flagellation of the Slavs occupying the future site of Novgorod struck him as bizarre.[9] Kiev's superior credentials are thus neatly established.

The perspectives of the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*—and views from the Kievan Cave Monastery

The *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, as it stands, does not fit neatly into mainstream categories of Byzantine or Latin Christian historical writing. A loose analogy might be the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.[10] Princely authority is taken to be indispensable and, accordingly, the imposition of tribute on additional Slav and Finnic tribes in the tenth century is recounted positively. So are expeditions against the 'Greeks', allegedly overawed into paying tribute. The implication is that wherever the princes gain dominion becomes part of 'the land of Rus' '. Yet the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* amounts to more than a 'dynastic history'. Besides attempting to 'place' Rus', the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* avowedly tries to put on record 'the truth',[11] conscientiously recounting what it takes to be facts. The lustfulness, treachery, and military disappointments of Vladimir on the eve of his conversion are not so much a hagiographical topos (of a pagan's ways before seeing the light) as an attempt at full coverage, even if Vladimir the Christian ruler is portrayed with overtones of Solomonic kingship. Equally, the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* cannot be dubbed 'church history', Bede-style. Coverage of the first metropolitans is fleeting, and even for the second half of the eleventh century they feature mainly in passing. In so far as there is an abiding perspective, it is that of the Kievan Cave Monastery, one of whose brethren, Nestor, is termed a 'chronicler' (*letopisets*) in

[8] *PVL*, 15, 16; and Anatolii Pavlovich Tolochko, 'The *Primary Chronicle*'s "Ethnography" Revisited…', in Ildar H. Garipzanov *et al.* (eds.), *Franks, Northmen and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe* (Turnhout, 2008), 169–88, at 180–3.

[9] *PVL*, 9.

[10] See ch. 17 by Sarah Foot in this volume.

[11] *PVL*, 50.

another text emanating from the monastery.[12] Whether or not Nestor composed the extant *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, some process of compiling and editing went on there, monks and patrons providing information. This colours the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*'s viewpoint, which presupposes familiarity with Kiev's topography and even the monastery's layout. The Cave Monastery's brethren, 'shining like beacons in Rus' ', feature in passages recounting the monastery's origins, the asceticism of individual monks, and the tone-setting abbacy of Theodosius. First-person accounts are given of, *inter alia*, the translation of Theodosius's remains to a church, and the nomadic Polovtsy's sack of the monastery on 20 May 1096.[13]

The first two-thirds or so of the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* relates how Rus' became a political entity, then a 'Christian people', under the direction of one dynasty. The sense that Rus' constituted one people under God predominates, despite the intimations of pre-Christian princes who were *not* Riurikids. The *Povest' Vremennykh Let* also acknowledges that some Slavic-speaking and Finnish tribes are still, at the time of writing, recalcitrant towards princely authority and Christian observance. The fiercest opponents of the Rus' are, however, the steppe-nomads—'godless Ishmaelites'—and the internal wrangling and warfare between princes over precedence and territorial possessions has opened the door to the nomads in the 1090s. Since the princely family embodies Rus', their internecine strife is the more deplorable. The sack of the Cave Monastery is recounted in the context of the refusal of one prince, Oleg Sviatoslavich, to help his cousins against 'the pagans'. The Polovtsy, 'sent to chastise the Christians', rank among the peoples in the prophecy of Pseudo-Methodios of Patara; after them will follow, 'at the world's end', the 'unclean peoples' of Gog and Magog whom Alexander of Macedon had immured.[14] To an extent, then, the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* serves as a tract for the times, recalling eras of internal peace—especially the generation following Vladimir's baptism and the heyday of his son, Iaroslav: the repercussions of current princely disunity could prove apocalyptic.[15]

Past princely conduct as model for present-day behaviour: Vladimir Monomakh's *Pouchenie*, and the cult of Boris and Gleb

The lack of a generally agreed order of princely succession or ecclesiastically directed inauguration-ritual in Rus' fostered the concoction of role-models for

[12] *Kyjevo-Pecherskii Pateryk*, ed. Dmitrii Ivanovich Abramovich (Kiev, 1931), partial repr. with introd. Dmitrij Tschižewskij (Munich, 1964), 126.

[13] *PVL*, 89–90, 97–8.

[14] *PVL*, 98, 107–8; and Leonid S. Chekin, 'The Godless Ishmaelites: the Image of the Steppe in Eleventh–Thirteenth-Century Rus' ', *Russian History*, 19 (1992), 9–28, at 12–15.

[15] On eschatological themes in the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, whose name (*vremennykh let*) probably carries intimations of the 'times and seasons' of Christ's address to the apostles (Acts, 1:7) see Igor Nikolaevich Danilevsky, *Povest' Vremennykh Let: Germenevticheskie Osnovy Izucheniia Letopisnykh Tekstov* (Moscow, 2004), 235–40, 257–8 and nn. 43–4 on 372.

princely conduct. A sense of the princely family standing between God and His people is conveyed in Abbot Daniel's account of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1106–8. After listing the foremost princes, whose names had been inscribed at the Holy Sepulchre, Daniel records the fifty masses he had said 'for the Rus' princes and all Christians, and the forty masses for the dead'.[16] The problem was how to orchestrate the burgeoning ranks of princes. Two solutions involved versions of the past: one, composed by a self-aggrandizing prince, put on record his achievements by way of edifying his sons; the other held up a hagiographic ideal of inter-princely relations for all to follow.

The text of Vladimir Monomakh's *Pouchenie* [Instruction], addressed to 'my sons or anyone else who happens to hear this screed',[17] is sometimes called Monomakh's 'Autobiography', because it includes his deeds and journeying. Muscular Christianity is combined with excerpts from a Byzantine florilegium: almsgiving, church-going, and prayerfulness are enjoined alongside survival-tips for campaigning and early rising; breaking oaths made on the cross to one's fellow princes or others destroys the soul. Hard work, fearing, and glorifying God, will deliver success: Monomakh recounts 'the fatigue I have endured on journeys and hunts since the age of thirteen',[18] listing gory wounds and detailing expeditions against the 'pagan' Polovtsy. These episodes' prime addressees were his sons, and his purpose was to assure them that, with God's help, they too could achieve much. Associating quasi-monastic discipline and personal probity with divine aid and victory, the *Pouchenie* portrays Monomakh as respectively exemplifying and experiencing each. It was composed in two, probably, three stages, the earlier ones about 1100, when Monomakh was still prince of Pereiaslavl' but had positioned himself to succeed to the Kievan throne. His harping upon oaths on the cross owed something to the order of succession sworn between leading princes at Liubech in 1097: this was likely to yield him Kiev upon the death of his genealogically senior first cousin, Sviatopolk. Monomakh had also conceded to another cousin, Oleg Sviatoslavich, the venerable throne-city of Chernigov. Varnishing realpolitik with high moral tone and cataloguing his personal exploits, Monomakh's *Pouchenie* makes a virtue of his waiting his turn for Kiev's throne. Likewise with his rebuffing of Sviatopolk's invitation to join in attacking two junior princes, in breach of the agreement at Liubech: the *Pouchenie*'s second draft was perhaps triggered by this episode, which it sanctimoniously highlights.[19] The final version, now interspersed with excerpts from a Lenten service-book and other religious texts, was apparently penned in 1117, soon after Monomakh

[16] Abbot Daniel, *Khozhdenie*, in *Biblioteka Literatury Drevnei Rusi*, ed. Dimitri Sergeievich Likhachev, 15 vols. (St Petersburg, 1997), iv. 116.

[17] Text in *PVL*, 98.

[18] Text in *PVL*, 102.

[19] Text in *PVL*, 98; and see A. A. Gippius, 'Sochineniia Vladimira Monomakha: Opyt Tekstologicheskoi Rekonstruktsii', *Russkii Iazyk v Nauchnom Osveshchenii*, 2:6 (2003), 60–99, at 91–2.

reneged upon an agreement that Sviatopolk's eldest son should inherit Kiev upon his own death.[20] Virtually a manifesto, Monomakh's *Pouchenie* put instances of war-leadership and political self-restraint on record, complementing his more general 'mirror for princes'—and enshrining moral superiority over all his cousins.

Two sons of Vladimir Sviatoslavich, Boris and Gleb, were murdered soon after his death, falling victim to the dynastic strife that continued intermittently for some ten years. The facts beyond that are murky, but the likely instigator was their half-brother Sviatopolk, who was eventually ousted—and himself liquidated—by Iaroslav. By the later eleventh century an elaborate cult had formed around Boris and Gleb, venerating them as 'martyrs', imitators of Christ's non-violence, yet also as warrior-princes now protecting all Rus'. The *Povest' Vremennykh Let* purports to recount what befell them in 1015 and places the formalization of their cult later in the century, including their relics' translation to a new church in 1072.[21] Other texts were composed soon after the translation: the *Chtenie o Zhitii i o Pogublenii Blazhennuiu Strastoterptsa Borisa i Gleba* [Reading Concerning the Life and Murder of the Blessed Martyrs Boris and Gleb], an account of the 'martyrdom' which Nestor the *letopisets* composed, drawing on Byzantine literary models; and a rougher-hewn *Skazanie i Strast' i Pokhvala Sviatuiu Mucheniku Borisa i Gleba* [Account and the Passion and the Encomium of the Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb], including tales of posthumous miracles up to the time of writing. Scholars disagree over exactly when a cult was instituted, and by whom: while our earliest extant evidence dates mostly from the later eleventh century, the *Chtenie o Zhitii i o Pogublenii Blazhennuiu Strastoterptsa Borisa i Gleba* represents miracles as occurring during the reign of Iaroslav and has this prince and a certain Metropolitan John instituting a cult not long after their murder; moreover, manuscripts of the earliest Office attribute its composition to John himself.[22] The controversy defies neat resolution and, conceivably, both sides are correct: Iaroslav could have promoted the cult while strife with a powerful brother-prince remained on the cards, only for active devotions to lapse during Iaroslav's lengthy spell of sole rule (1036–54); then, after tensions arose between Iaroslav's descendants, the cult gained new relevance and the translation of the relics in 1072 prompted a hagiographical surge. What is certain is that Boris and Gleb became revered as saints across the land of Rus', with the monks of the Cave Monastery showing devotion alongside princes. Accounts of their

[20] Alesandr Vasil'evich Nazarenko, 'Vladimir Monomakh i Kievskoe Stolonasledie: Traditsiia i Popytka Reformy', *Drevneishie Gosudarstva Vostochnoi Evropy* (hereafter *DGVE*) *2004 god* (Moscow, 2006), 279–90, at 284–5, 288–9; and Gippius, 'Sochineniia Vladimira', 86–7, 90, 92.

[21] *PVL*, 78.

[22] Ludolf Müller, 'O Vremeni Kanonizatsii sviatykh Borisa i Gleba', *Russia Mediaevalis*, 8 (1995), 5–20, at 5–7, 18–20; and Andrzej Poppe, 'Losers on Earth, Winners from Heaven: The Assassinations of Boris and Gleb in the Making of Eleventh-Century Rus' ', *Quaestiones Medii Aevii Novae*, 8 (2003), 133–68, at 136, 160–4.

end were incorporated into collections of liturgical readings drawn otherwise from the Old Testament.[23] In contrast, attempts to get Olga and Vladimir widely recognized as 'saints' through Lives or other hagiographical texts made little headway before the thirteenth century.[24] The tales of Boris and Gleb offering no resistance to their killers, their half-brother's defeat at Iaroslav's hands, and the first wonders at their graves, linked happenings in Rus' with scenes from scripture, extending sacred time. Striking iconography of the brothers as idealized yet distinctively Rus' princes wrapped religious devotions around the ruling family more tightly than Ilarion's polished version of Vladimir's conversion ever could.[25] The villain of the piece was Sviatopolk, called 'the Accursed' like Cain, and princes aiming for sole rule were sometimes denounced as second Sviatopolks. But Boris and Gleb also set saintly examples of meekness and deference towards their elder brother. To that extent the cult could amplify the call of a senior prince for obedience from junior ones. The hagiographies depict the brothers as innocents like Abel, their non-resistance being Christ-like.

Exactly who posed the questions opening the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, or when, is uncertain. But they meet the broad contours of its text, which probably emerged in the opening years of the twelfth century. The 'baptism of the land of Rus'', remembered by the Cave Monastery's Jeremy in the mid-eleventh century, now lay beyond recall, and southern cities like Kiev suffered nomads' incursions while princes wrangled. Widespread curiosity about Rus' origins and relevant writings might seem to have prompted the kind of overview which the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* offers. Yet what survives shows unmistakable fingerprints of Vladimir Monomakh. Although only succeeding to the Kievan throne in 1113, he had for over a decade virtually co-ruled with his elder cousin Sviatopolk, who lacked political or military flair. Monomakh was a conspicuous patron of the cult of Boris and Gleb, seeing to their relics' translation to a newly built church in 1115. 'A glorious miracle' marked the occasion, according to a contemporary collection of tales which casts Monomakh in a favourable light and which he probably commissioned.[26] The Cave Monastery's traditions of record-keeping also served his cause. Editing of the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* into something like its present form probably went on there under his aegis. Monomakh comes out well from its eyewitness account of the skulduggery leading to the blinding of a junior prince, Vasil'ko, in 1097: the prince of Kiev at the time, Cousin Sviatopolk, appears

[23] Boris Andreevich Uspensky, *Boris i Gleb: Vospriatie Istorii v Drevnei Rusi* (Moscow, 2000), 6–10, 22–39.

[24] Evidence for their veneration is discussed, from differing angles, by Gerhard Podskal'sky, *Khristianstvo i Bogoslovskaia Literatura v Kievskoi Rusi (988–1237gg.)* (St Petersburg, 1996), 198–207, 380–1; and Boris Andreevich Uspensky, 'Kogda byl kanonizirovan kniaz' Vladimir Sviatoslavich?' *Palaeoslavica*, 10:2 (2002), 271–81.

[25] Monica Morrison White, 'Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus', 900–1200', Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 2004.

[26] *Uspenskii Sbornik XI–XIIIvv.*, ed. Sergei Ivanovich Kotkov *et al.* (Moscow, 1971), 70.

timid, gullible, and treacherous, and the blinding is recounted as virtual martyrdom, the horror compounded by Sviatopolk's breach of his oath taken on the cross. Monomakh, for his part, laments: 'Verily, our fathers and grandfathers cared for the land of Rus', but we are out to destroy it.'[27] Appeals to princely unity are put into Monomakh's mouth in other entries for this period: he both maintains the ancestral tradition of combating the nomads and, in 1103, proposes a new strategy of spring offensives to catch them off-guard. It can hardly be coincidental that the 'autobiographical' section of Monomakh's *Pouchenie* conveys kindred themes. In fact the *Pouchenie* has been inserted in the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*'s entry for 1096, together with a letter written the same year to his cousin Oleg and a prayer, a sort of 'dossier' bearing on events around that time. Monomakh wrote the letter after his son perished fighting Oleg's forces. He recalled 'the days of our wise grandfathers' and proposed reconciliation despite all that had happened, invoking the holy cross,[28] sentiments akin to the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*'s.

The *Povest' Vremennykh Let* is not, as it stands, simply a mouthpiece for Monomakh: it gives some credit to Sviatopolk, noting his visits to the Cave Monastery and reverence for Theodosius's tomb. But that its framing of the history of the past generation or so, and of current events, resembles Monomakh's is self-evident. The text, most likely drawing on an earlier version of about 1091 and on annals maintained since that time in the Cave Monastery, was probably completed there around 1115. A copy was made and signed in 1116 by Silvester, abbot of the Vydubichi monastery, a foundation of Monomakh's father. Apparently, Silvester's copy soon received additions, and it is the ancestor of the Laurentian version of the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, which also relays the inserted 'dossier' of Monomakh's writings. The additions, made perhaps by Silvester himself, were seemingly taken from a revised version of the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* which Prince Mstislav had commissioned in 1117 upon being transferred by his father, Monomakh, from Novgorod to Belgorod, near Kiev.[29]

Thus a flurry of writing and revisions, 'framing' the Rus' past, occurred soon after Monomakh mounted Kiev's throne. The great man's words, counsels, and deeds are set mostly in the period before 1113, while he was nominally deferring to Sviatopolk as an elder 'brother', thereby more or less reprising the role of Boris and Gleb while surpassing Sviatopolk in embellishment of their shrines. Such competitiveness vis-à-vis Monomakh's cousins was an important motivation for the memorializing of princely figures and deeds. Once on the throne of Kiev, and after repositioning Mstislav to be on the spot to succeed him there,[30] Monomakh

[27] *PVL*, 112. [28] *PVL*, 105–6.

[29] Reconstructing how the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*'s text neared final shape is unavoidably hypothetical: see e.g. *PVL*, 352, 359–66, 541, 584–5 (Commentary). We follow above the lines proposed by A. A. Gippius, 'K Probleme Redaktsii Povesti Vremennykh Let. I', *Slavianovedenie* (2007) no. 5 20–44; and Gippius, 'K Probleme Redaktsii Povesti Vremennykh Let. II', *Slavianovedenie* (2008) no. 2, 3–24.

[30] Nazarenko, 'Vladimir Monomakh', 284–5.

exercised effective hegemonial dominion. Recording Monomakh's deeds and dicta *after* he became prince of Kiev does not seem to have been top priority, for all his literary tastes and apparent vigour until his death in 1125. Placing princely ascendancy within a glorious historical tradition was problematic: Vladimir Sviatoslavich's apostolic feat was unrepeatable, and the cult of Boris and Gleb together with the leitmotifs entrenched in the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* offered few models for masterful wielders of 'sole rule'. Getting oneself written into the cult's story probably looked more promising, and the fore-mentioned miracle-collection suggests that this was Monomakh's course.[31]

The 'end of history'?

The *Povest' Vremennykh Let* was not the only conspectus on the Rus' past to take definitive shape in the earlier twelfth century. A few additions were made to the stock of miracle tales concerning Boris and Gleb, and liturgical texts were elaborated upon. But the holy princes' relics were expected to remain enshrined in Vyshgorod, near Kiev, without being translated elsewhere or otherwise disturbed: thus no more needed to be said—or written—about their earthly story. Meanwhile, life and liturgy went on at the Cave Monastery, but the stream of hagiographical writings seems to have dried up. This, at least, is the impression given by the extensive materials amassed by two alumni, Simon and Polycarp, in the early thirteenth century. Only a few tales are set in the mid-twelfth century or later: the collection essentially celebrates the monastery's beginnings and the opening generations' feats of asceticism and piety, recording many episodes from Theodosius's exemplary abbacy and his dealings with princes. The collection was eventually entitled the *Paterik*, evoking the Lives of the desert fathers and other hagiographical collections.[32] Coordinates presenting the political configuration of Rus', the manner of Christianity's arrival, and some home-raised guides to salvation were firmly in place by the mid-twelfth century. The magisterial exegesis of the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* could not readily be revised. And no painstaking presentation of the Rus' past could hope to be any more effective as 'tract for the times': branches of the princely family multiplied inexorably, lesser princes installing themselves in ever farther-flung seats, while Kiev and Novgorod became bones of contention between leading members of the dynasty. Few remained in command of the prize seats long enough to foster discursive narratives or commemorations of their reigns there. Stability, or dynastic continuity of a sort, gravitated towards political centres like Chernigov, long-established but lacking in the 'historical' connotations of primacy which invested Kiev—and which the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* itself helped to purvey. The land of Rus', with metropoli-

[31] *Uspenskii Sbornik XI–XIIIvv.*, 70.

[32] *The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery*, trans. Muriel Heppell (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), pp. xvii–xxii, xxix–xxxiii.

tans of its church resident in Kiev since the late tenth century, was hardly the kind of place for some radically 'alternative' history, glorifying Chernigov or other purportedly ancient centres, to be written.

Political culture was no less lively for this state of affairs at the top. But the past was now invoked most tellingly through poetic evocations, if one may judge by the *Slovo o Polku Igoreve* [The Lay of Igor]. This recounts in terms of heroic failure the expedition of 1185 led by Igor Sviatoslavich, a lesser prince ensconced in Novgorod-Seversk, against the Polovtsy. Purporting to address Igor's contemporaries, the bard praises the courage of Igor and his warriors, but criticizes the vainglory which had led Igor into the steppes to 'grasp the glory of old' alone, rather than joining forces with other princes. All the Rus' princes should now close ranks behind the prince of Kiev to fight the 'pagan hosts'; they should abhor the example of Oleg Sviatoslavich, who had 'forged feuds with his sword' and eschewed joint-action against the Polovtsy.[33] A sense of place as well as a call to recover past unity is expressed—Kiev's overlordship over a Rus' encompassing Novgorod, Vladimir-in-Volynia, and reaching to the borders of the (Muslim) Volga Bulgars in the north-east; even maidens 'on the Danube' celebrate Igor's return to Kiev! In its way, the *Slovo o Polku Igoreve* places Rus' in space and time as ambitiously as the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, and partly for the same reason. Doubts as to an early date for the *Slovo o Polku Igoreve*'s original composition have eased, since its terminology matches that of unimpeachably authentic birch-bark letters excavated in Novgorod and some other towns. These letters burgeoned across the urban network in the twelfth century and show concern for issues of ownership and indebtedness, and flashes of emotion. Their handlers would have understood the message of the *Slovo o Polku Igoreve*, although the poet ostensibly addressed only the elite. The politico-ecclesiastical elite, for its part, accommodated persons of erudition and literary polish. One such was Klim Smoliatich, who conducted stylish exchanges at court with Thomas the priest, who had accused him of being a 'philosopher', with implications that he preferred classical Greek writings to the scriptures.[34] Such polish was appreciated: in 1147 the prince of Kiev, Iziaslav, had Klim installed as metropolitan of Rus', albeit abortively.

Princely courts replete with bishops and monasteries were now established in many other cities besides Kiev and this can be taken for a mark of Rus' political fragmentation. The accessions to power, internecine disputes, and depositions of princes are set down in our chronicles, consultations and campaigns being recounted blow-by-blow. In fact by the later twelfth century events were being

[33] *Slovo o Polku Igoreve*, ed. Lev Alexandrovich Dmitriev and Dimitri Sergeievich Likhachev, 2nd edn (Leningrad, 1967), 48, 51, 56; and Likhachev, *The Great Heritage*, 180–5.

[34] Simon Franklin, *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus'* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), pp. lviii–lxiii (Introduction); and Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c. 950–1300* (Cambridge, 2002), 225–7.

recorded in greater detail and at ever more places, with chronicles being kept at Kiev, Novgorod, Rostov, Vladimir-on-Kliazma, and, from the early thirteenth century, Galich.[35] These served practical purposes for princes and their immediate family, and sometimes also for the clergymen who maintained them: princely birthdates and death-days; demises of leading prelates; who started a dispute, founded a monastery, or was buried where. The presumed readers belonged to this milieu, and the dating of princely and ecclesiastical milestones provided useful points of reference. The death of a prince deemed praiseworthy could prompt lengthy excursuses on his Christian virtues, perhaps drawn from eulogies delivered at his funeral as well as from religious texts and, by the later twelfth century, being recycled from earlier chronicles.[36] In Novgorod no single prince or branch of a princely family managed unbroken spells of rule, and power was more diffuse. Chronicle-writing was, arguably, the more vibrant for this: dates of installations of city-governors and some lesser officials were recorded, as were the names of some instigators and victims of internal strife, and of 'traitors'. The churchmen maintaining the Novgorodian chronicles articulate a certain corporate consciousness, fairly free with their condemnations of princes as well as recording the services of leading local families, and occasionally passing moral verdicts on conduct.[37]

What did *not* get composed were rounded assessments of a prince's reign, or of father-to-son sequences of reigns. Nor were attempts made to rewrite the origins of Rus', or to present in positive colours the development of new political, cultural, and economic centres in what were, after all, widely scattered regions, some only now (in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries) becoming fully Christianized. The canonical past—history—was one of Kievan ascendancy and the blessings of harmonious cooperation among members of the princely family. This was also the perspective of the author of the *Slovo o Polku Igoreve*.

A potent prince eschewing Kiev's poisoned chalice to strike out on his own still found the ancient throne-city and its precursors worth evoking. The dominion of Andrei Bogoliubsky (d. 1174) over north-east Rus' was celebrated by contemporary churchmen—literally, in liturgical texts. Andrei instituted the festival of Pokrov, honouring a saint's vision of the Mother of God and her veil in a church in Blachernae: she, with her veil, protected Constantinople but now his seat of Vladimir-on-Kliazma, too. A collection of miracle-stories celebrating an icon at the centre of the festival (well-known as 'the Virgin of Vladimir') was composed, probably during Andrei's lifetime: Andrei had brought the icon from Kiev to his

[35] See e.g. Dimitri Sergeievich Likhachev, *Russkie Letopisi i ikh Kul'turnoe-Istoricheskoe Znachenie* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1947), 268–80; Iurii Aleksandrovich Limonov, *Letopisanie Vladimiro-Suzdal'skoi Rusi* (Leningrad, 1967), 185; and Mykola Fedorovych Kotliar, *Galitsko-Volynskaia Letopis': Tekst, Kommentarii, Issledovanie* (St Petersburg, 2005), 36–7 (Introduction).

[36] Anatolii Pavlovich Tolochko, 'Pokhvala ili Zhitie?' *Palaeoslavica*, 7 (1999), 26–38.

[37] Timofei Valentinovich Gimon, 'V kakikh sluchaiakh imena Novgorodtsev popadali na stranitsy Letopisi (XII–XIIIvv.)?' *DGVE 2004 god* (Moscow, 2006), 291–333.

city, installing it in the Assumption Church he dedicated to the Mother of God, where the sick were now healed. Another text, perhaps composed by Andrei himself, recounted the institution of a feast-day in commemoration of his victory over the Volga Bulgars on 1 August 1164, gained thanks to the icon. This was allegedly concelebrated at Constantinople in thanksgiving for a victory Manuel I Komnenos had won over 'Saracens' 'on the selfsame day'.[38] Thus Andrei refashioned elements of Byzantine political culture to try and legitimize a new power-base in north-east Rus'. Understandably, sponsoring a secular account of his rise to ascendancy—'history' in the antique or modern sense—was not on his agenda. Chronicle-writing carried on, though. Andrei had his own personal chronicler, and his brother Vsevolod 'Big-Nest' (d. 1212) sponsored a compilation which covered goings-on in the Kievan south.

THE MONGOLS AND AFTER

The Tatar takeover

The line of princes based in Vladimir-on-Kliazma maintained fairly effective overlordship in northern Rus' well into the thirteenth century, while the various princes based in Smolensk and farther south vied for control of Kiev, which had not lost all its glitter. A foretaste of things to come occurred in 1223, when the southern princes were defeated on the river Kalka by an army of Mongols which had appeared suddenly from the east. In 1237 the Mongols struck again, sacking Riazan' and then the emblematic city of Vladimir-on-Kliazma: its prince, Iuri Vsevolodovich, was decapitated. The southern cities were the next target. Kiev was assaulted with siege-guns and devastated in 1240, never again to be a substantial princely seat. Towns farther west such as Vladimir-in-Volynia succumbed soon afterwards. The Mongols demanded surrender and visits to their khan's headquarters from surviving princes and began systematically to exact tribute, imposing tax-collectors and censuses for this purpose. Even compliance with their demands brought no guarantee of security. Iuri's successor, Iaroslav, perished while heeding a second summons to the Golden Horde's headquarters in 1246. Periodic raiding and devastation persisted, even though the Mongols and their Turkic-speaking allies—known collectively as Tatars—had an interest in maintaining prosperity among their tributaries.

The subjugation of Rus' to infidels overturned the balance between settled zone and steppes, yet did not wholly upset the books. Chroniclers in the north-east and Novgorod had already interpreted the defeat on the Kalka as portending

[38] Ellen S. Hurwitz, *Prince Andrej Bogoljubskij: The Man and the Myth* (Florence, 1980), 54–84, 90–3; Dimitri Sergeievich Likhachev (ed.), *Slovar' Knizhnikov i Knizhnosti Drevnei Rusi*, 3 vols. (Leningrad, 1987–), i. 37–9, 416–18, 421–3; and Podskal'sky, *Khristianstvo*, 231.

the Last Things, and the Mongols' subsequent invasions rekindled interest in the prophecy of Pseudo-Methodios of Patara. Churchmen now had first-hand evidence of God's wrath to reinforce demands for general penitence, and wrote Lives of new martyrs for the faith. One such was Prince Mikhail of Chernigov, reportedly slain for refusing to walk between lines of sacral fires at the Horde in the manner required of visiting princes. Soon after 1237 the destruction of Riazan' was recorded by an eyewitness, who blamed inter-princely strife and 'lack of wisdom'. Chronicle-writing of a sort continued there, and writers at Novgorod, Rostov, and Vladimir-on-Kliazma recounted the Novgorodians' and Rus' princes' internecine squabbles, blow-by-blow. In the south-west, at the court of Daniel Romanovich (d. 1264), his struggle for mastery over Galicia-Volynia was recorded in detail, the chronicle serving to monumentalize his achievements. It does recount—unenthusiastically—his promise on bended knee before Khan Batu in 1250 to render tribute as his 'slave'. In reality, whoever the khan designated as prince of Vladimir-on-Kliazma received a patent (*iarlyk*) conferring this nominally senior throne; lesser princes were likewise confirmed in their seats. 'Raids' and extortionate tax-collectors are recorded in the chronicles as Tatar 'oppression' or as consequences of princely feuding, rather than set within a broader context of external domination.

The sketchiness of the coverage of the Tatars' overlordship owes something to their residence in the steppes. They were not interested in occupying the northern forest-zones, and preferred Rus' princes for proxies. But the chronicles' failure to address the fact of centuries-long Tatar domination is neither accidental nor a mark of ignorance. Closer reading of the later thirteenth- and fourteenth-century sources discloses not merely the frequency of princely visits to the Horde's headquarters, but familiarity with their itineraries and, more generally, with the customs, names, and roles of the Tatar elite.[39] The shadow cast by the khan is signalled by Rus' texts' designation of heads of the clan of Genghiz Khan as 'tsars', a term denoting legitimate supreme leadership and formerly more associated with the Byzantine emperor.[40] In contrast, a non-Chingissid noble was merely a 'prince' (*kniaz'*). The underlying rationale is presented in an account of a visit paid to Khan Batu by Alexander Nevsky: Batu is 'a powerful tsar in the eastern land, to whom God had subjected many peoples from the east to the west'.[41] Given the choice of performing obeisance to Batu or devastation for his land, Prince Alexander opts for obeisance. That the Tatars, like all other scourges, had been unleashed by God in His wisdom was virtually an article of faith. So collaboration with their ruling house was not simply a matter of realpolitik: its ascendancy was by God's will.

[39] Charles J. Halperin, '"Know Thy Enemy": Medieval Russian Familiarity with the Mongols of the Golden Horde', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 30 (1982), 163–75.

[40] Michael Cherniavsky, '*Khan* or *Basileus*', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20 (1959), 459–76.

[41] Iurii Konstantinovich Begunov, *Pamiatnik Russkoi Literatury XIII Veka 'Slovo o Pogibeli Russkoi Zemli'* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1965), 192.

Alexander's choice is recounted in the *Zhitie Aleksandra Nevskogo* [Life of Aleksandr Nevsky], written during the 1280s. The author was close to Alexander's son and to the head of the church in Rus', Metropolitan Kirill II (*c.*1250–81)—and was perhaps Kirill himself: he spent lengthy periods at Alexander's seat, Vladimir-on-Kliazma. The *Zhitie*'s representation of Alexander's dealings with the Tatars implies that resistance was worse than useless. Alexander's defiance of western invaders is also highlighted, his God-given victories over the Swedes on the Neva (1240) and over the Teutonic Knights at the Battle of the Ice (1242). Through works such as this, senior churchmen sought to rally the faithful against 'Latin' false-Christians and aggressors, while acknowledging Tatar overlordship as ineluctable. So long as religious doctrine and rites of worship were pure, with churchmen maintaining self-discipline and guiding the laity, true Christians would have their reward, in heaven if not necessarily on earth. Metropolitan Kirill took steps to clarify behavioural norms for churchmen and laity, adapting and disseminating a collection of church law in Slavonic translation—a 'Book of the Helmsman'—and issuing through a synod a 'Rule' on church discipline. From the ecclesiastical viewpoint, Tatar rule provided fresh opportunities for inculcating correct observance and debarring Latin deviationism. The *Zhitie* of Alexander Nevsky, offering norms for princely conduct drawn from the recent past, had its part to play in this.

Competing pasts beneath the Tatar shadow

The *pax mongolica* had its grim side, from the point of view of subject-populations having to stump up heavy tribute-payments and provide manpower for distant campaigns. The rulers of the Golden Horde were not immune from internal rivalries. Yet for the first sixty years or so of the fourteenth century sovereignty lay unquestionably with their headquarters, Sarai, on the Lower Volga. Patents went not only to deserving princes but also to church leaders: extensive jurisdictional rights along with tax-exemptions and military service for their dependants were theirs, in return for prayers for the khan and his family. While this situation looked immutable, manuscripts of the *Zhitie* of Alexander Nevsky went on being copied, and its style and contents coloured the Lives of subsequent princes. Some lesser principalities did not merely chronicle their rulers' deeds: they celebrated recovery. Thus the *Povest' o Razorenii Riazan' Batyem* [Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu'] embellished an earlier account to lament the losses and praise the restoration-work which Prince Ingvar Ingvarevich carried out.

The princes of Tver had loftier ambitions, and in 1305 Mikhail sponsored a chronicle compilation which incorporated the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* but ranged up to his own time. Mikhail had his reasons: past precedent for princely succession favoured his claim to the throne of Vladimir-on-Kliazma. Mikhail's father Iaroslav had reigned there once, and Mikhail was now the most senior prince of his generation. Literary life at Tver thrived, one writer even acclaim-

ing Mikhail 'a tsar within thine own land', and Mikhail presumed to condemn Metropolitan Peter for simony. Things came down to earth when the khan's *iarlyk* was withdrawn from Mikhail, and in 1318 he was tried and executed at the Horde. Immediately afterwards, a Tverian writer commemorated the event with his *Povest' o Mikhaile Tverskom* [Tale of Mikhail of Tver], depicting him as suffering for the faith; he drew on Ilarion's *Slovo o Zakone i Blagodati* and writings about Boris and Gleb.[42] Chronicle-writing continued, including an eyewitness account of the rebellion against Tatar officials' demands in 1327. But such overconfidence cost Tver its chances of a special relationship with metropolitans as well as khans, the ultimate beneficiary being a rival branch of cousins. Inferior in the genealogical pecking-order, and based in a city with finite natural advantages, Moscow's princes strove to surmount these handicaps, looking to the khan for the *iarlyk* to the topmost throne, Vladimir-on-Kliazma. The first Muscovite recipient subsequently lost his life while visiting the khan, but his brother Ivan finally acquired the title in 1331, and soon proved his uses: the quantities of tribute he raised earned him the nickname 'Moneybag' (Kalita).

In 1325 Ivan laid the foundations for the church of the Virgin's Assumption in his Kremlin, inviting her protection as Andrei Bogoliubsky had for his city on the Kliazma. At once insurance-policy and aspirational, the dedication invoked ages past. It would have been hazardous to elaborate Moscow's ambitions in writing, especially when its prince's titular seniority was at the khan's pleasure. Fortunately for Ivan, Metropolitan Peter had taken up residence in Moscow and urged him to build the church, constructing a burial-vault for himself there. A *Zhitie Sviatogo Petra Mitropolita* [Life of the Holy Metropolitan Peter] was composed soon after his death in 1326, recounting graveside miracles and presenting a distinctly Muscovite perspective.[43] Peter's sanctity was formally recognized at Constantinople in 1339, and his shrine became the object of pilgrimages.

One facet of changing Rus' settlement-patterns was the development of monastic communities in forests that were remote yet within range of cities like Moscow. Individual would-be holy men provided the inspiration, seeking to recreate the 'desert' of the Egyptian fathers by means of rigorous self-discipline and edifying texts. The most celebrated in fourteenth-century Rus' was Sergei (d. 1392). Seeking solitude, he and his brother went into the wilderness near Radonezh and built a wooden hut and chapel. Combining self-denial with zeal to instruct, Sergei attracted many disciples and later organized a strictly communal—coenobitic—form of withdrawal. The construction of Sergei's monastery, the Trinity, and its subsequent expansion is recounted in his *Zhitie Prepodobnogo Sergiia Radonezhskogo* [Life of Saint Sergei of Radonezh], written there by Epifanii

[42] Vladimir Andreevich Kuchkin, *Povesti o Mikhaile Tverskom* (Moscow, 1974), 224–34, 239–44.

[43] *Zhitie sviatogo Petra mitropolita*, in Makarii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, ed. Aleksandr Vasil'evich Nazarenko *et al.*, 9 vols. (Moscow, 1994–7), iii. 415–17, at 416–17.

'Premudryi' ('the Very Wise'), intent on venerating him as a saint.[44] The cycle of a saint's setting up a hermitage, gathering of disciples, and their subsequent diffusion to found new houses represents hagiographical stereotyping, yet also the reality of monasticism in northern Rus': Sergei's network spread far and wide. Meanwhile another holy man, Stephen, made for the region of Perm and set about converting its Finnic-speaking population to Christianity, translating key texts into their language, for which he devised an alphabet. Epifanii wrote up these feats in another 'Life', some years after Stephen's death in 1396 (*Zhitie Sviatogo Stefana Permskogo* [Life of St Stephen of Perm]), using written sources and his own recollections. He compared Stephen with the apostles and a more recent missionary, Constantine-Cyril.[45] Around the time Stephen died, Kirill was installing himself on the White Lake (Beloozero) north-east of Novgorod. His hermitage attracted local peasants as well as brethren from his former monastery and here, too, mounting numbers necessitated provision for coenobitic living. Kirill's objectives emerge from the holdings of the library of his monastery, the Kirillo-Beloozerskii. He made translated Byzantine textbooks more comprehensible to pupils by glossing them with historical notes. He also compiled an encyclopedia combining historical, medical, and astronomical data with doctrine and regulations, including a rule for 'sketes', small semi-eremitic establishments found in Egypt, Palestine, and Mount Athos.[46] Monastic leaders like Kirill were, literally, groundbreaking, bringing to remote forest regions ways of life which prized literacy next to godliness. Composing Lives of one's mentor and other near-contemporaries was in vogue among the self-consciously rigorist monks of Athos, Constantinople, and other orthodox bastions in the fourteenth century. Hagiographical and other texts circulated thence across the Greek- and Slavonic-speaking world. For the spiritually ambitious, the lifestyles and ascetic routines described in Saints' Lives complemented rule-books and other prescriptive texts; reliving the experiences of known holy men was a stairway to paradise. Following written examples from the distant and more recent past would spawn 'a Thebaid of the north',[47] a network of communities setting their standards by the early Fathers and Abbot Theodosius of the Cave Monastery.

Such preoccupation with purity, in ritual and accuracy of religious texts alongside chastity, was heightened by expectations of the End of the World (see below). Yet monastic leaders looked for parallels between the scenes described in their texts and the world around them, and anyway a structured community needed the cooperation of persons in authority. As abbot of the Trinity monastery, Sergei

[44] John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Cambridge, 1981), 133–4; and Likhachev (ed.), *Slovar' Knizhnikov*, ii.i. 330–1.

[45] Epifanii, *Zhitie sv. Stefana Episkopa Permskogo*, ed. Vasilii Grigor'evich Druzhinin (St Petersburg, 1897), 69.

[46] *Entsiklopediia Russkogo Igumena XIV–XVvv.*, ed. Gelian Mikhailovich Prokhorov (St Petersburg, 2003), 158–64 (text), 345–51 (commentary).

[47] George P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1946–66), ii. 257.

was in close contact with the prince of Moscow, becoming Dmitri's confessor and baptizing two of his sons. The proximity of holy men accessing higher powers was welcome to any prince hoping to make his city God-protected. At the same time, Sergei corresponded with the patriarch of Constantinople, who called to order monks objecting to the rigours of coenobitic life. There was thus a link between bolstering the abbot's authority in Rus' monasteries and the imperial-ecclesiastical complex in Byzantium. The deeds of Rus' princes were likewise appraisable in terms of the past. When Kiprian, the newly appointed 'metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus'', was debarred from Moscow by agents of Prince Dmitri (d. 1389), he wrote to Sergei and Theodore, abbot of the Simonov monastery in June 1378. Besides recounting his recent humiliations, he invoked 'the awesome ecclesiastical customs and laws' forbidding maltreatment of prelates and regulating appointments to the episcopate. Kiprian expected Sergei and other 'venerable elders and abbots' to be conversant with these: 'Is there nobody reading the divine canons?'[48] Implementing standards codified in very different societies was easier demanded than done, Sergei himself was apparently unmoved, and only in 1390 was Kiprian reinstalled incontestably in Moscow. Yet Dmitri continued to seek the Constantinopolitan patriarchate's approval of his candidates for the metropolitanate. Precedents and prescriptive rulings deriving from a remote world of holy councils, patriarchs, and emperors, constituted 'authorities' of a sort, even if a determined and wily Rus' prince could circumvent them.

Power-shifts, victory on the Don (1380), and impending doom

In the later fourteenth century the dynamics of power were shifting, but in contrary directions. Moscow's princes had prospered from being chief tribute-collectors on behalf of the khan-tsar, as had the city's markets and churches, and during the minority of Prince Dmitri, Metropolitan Alexei made an effective regent. Then, in 1367, Dmitri 'walled up the town of Moscow with stones and . . . those [princes] who did not submit to his will he began to afflict, Prince Mikhail of Tver among them', according to the latter's chronicle.[49] Mikhail vied with Dmitri for the *iarlyk* to Vladimir-on-Kliazma, paying repeated visits to the Golden Horde to receive it. These challenges Dmitri could withstand and in 1375 Mikhail acknowledged him as his 'elder brother'. Mikhail's restiveness, however, registered deeper change. To the west, the Lithuanians had taken over much of western Rus' since the earlier fourteenth century, extending their dominion towards the region of Kiev. Grand Duke Olgerd (d. 1377) subjugated local Rus' princelings, and offered military support to Mikhail of Tver, albeit inconclusively. To Moscow's south-east, from the early 1360s on, the Golden Horde was shaken by succession-

[48] Text in Gelian Mikhailovich Prokhorov, *Povest' o Mitiae: Rus' i Vizantiia v Epokhu Kulikovskoi bitvy* (Leningrad, 1978), 196, 201.

[49] *Rogozhskii Letopisets*, in *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisey* (hereafter *PSRL*), xv. col. 84.

disputes: rival courts of khans prompted enterprising princes like Mikhail of Tver to bid against Moscow for the *iarlyk*. Dmitri could generally out-bribe him, yet the 'Great Trouble' in the Horde posed problems, ideological and military.

In the late 1370s Prince Dmitri mustered an army to confront the warlord for whose favour he had been competing with Mikhail. Mamai, formerly the power behind the throne of one of the khans, was now under pressure from a mightier leader, the Chingissid khan Tokhtamysh, and sought outright submission from north-east Rus'. In 1380, Dmitri defeated Mamai at Kulikovo near the Don with the help of contingents from other principalities. Such concerted resistance to Tatar 'oppression' was unprecedented. But within a couple of years Tokhtamysh bore down on Moscow and sacked it after Dmitri had fled. He demanded massive tribute-payments and provision of military manpower. Dmitri complied, receiving the *iarlyk* to Vladimir-on-Kliazma in return. Thus his pre-eminence was still vested in the khan's sovereignty, gaining validation, tribute-collection rights, and, literally, currency thereby. After 1382, Dmitri and subsequently Basil I (d. 1425) acknowledged on their coins' inscriptions 'Sultan Tokhtamysh: long may he live!'[50] Dmitri's victory at Kulikovo would eventually be celebrated in triumphalist texts, known as the 'Kulikovo cycle'. But even the earliest of these may well have been composed over a generation later.[51] Chingissid imperial authority was too interwoven with the Rus' political fabric for outright literary challenge to be wise. Men of affairs still found it worthwhile affirming Rus' loyalty to, even membership of, 'the khan's portion'.[52]

For the same reason, valiant princes and saintly figures from early Rus' were cherished. In the mid-fourteenth century a luxury manuscript was produced, probably by Novgorodian craftsmen: the *Sil'vestrovskii Sbornik* [The Silvester Collection] assembles texts about Boris and Gleb, and it is our earliest surviving example of narratives about them interspersed with illustrations.[53] In Novgorod the copying of ancient chronicles went on, besides the recording of current events. Local pride was reinforced by defensiveness—the need to set Novgorod's autonomous customs in an undeniable continuum. Novgorod was under threat from the Lithuanians as well as Moscow's prince. Likewise Prince Dmitri Konstantinovich of Nizhnii Novgorod had his reasons for looking back. His

[50] Basil's coins also proclaimed him 'grand prince of all Rus' ', and they stopped mentioning Tokhtamysh in 1399. But from 1408 symbols acknowledging Tatar dominion reappeared: Thomas S. Noonan, 'Forging a National Identity: Monetary Politics during the Reign of Vasilii I', in Anna M. Kleimola and Gail D. Lenhoff (eds.), *Culture and Identity in Muscovy (1359–1584)* (Moscow, 1997), 495–529, at 495, 500–3.

[51] M. A. Salmina, 'K Voprosu o Datirovke "Skazaniia o Mamaevom Poboishche" ', *TODRL*, 29 (1974), 98–124. See also Likhachev (ed.), *Slovar' Knizhnikov*, ii.ii. 376–9.

[52] Charles J. Halperin, '*Tsarev Ulus*: Russia in the Golden Horde', *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, 23 (1982), 257–63.

[53] See the facsimile of the *Account* of the brothers' martyrdom and miracles in *Skazanie o Borise i Glebe: Faksimil'noe vosproizvedenie zhitiinykh povestei iz Sil'vestrovskogo sbornika (2-ia polovina XIV veka)*, ed. V. I. Siniukov *et al.*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1985), i.

principality had been drawn within Moscow's orbit, yet he remained exposed to Tatar raiding. In 1377, at Dmitri's behest, the monk Lavrenty copied the Tver chronicle-compilation of 1305 and his copy, the Laurentian, is our earliest surviving witness of the text of the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*.

Aggressively as Moscow behaved towards the lesser princes of northern Rus', it, too, was essentially on the defensive vis-à-vis both Lithuanians and Tatars. Still pagan together with most of the Lithuanian elite, Olgerd had presumed to assign sons to seats in the region of ancient Chernigov. This had ramifications, since the church head installed in Moscow was entitled 'metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus'' and counted the largely orthodox inhabitants of south-west Rus' among his flock. Olgerd's successor Jagiello accepted Catholicism at the time of his marriage to the heiress to the Polish crown in 1386. The hybrid resulting from the Union of Krewo, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, aligned Latin religious error with formidable military manpower. However, the death-knock seemed likeliest to come from the steppes. In 1395 Muscovites had to reckon with Tamerlane, who led a huge force northwards after vanquishing Tokhtamysh near the Caucasus. To protect Moscow, Basil I ordered Kiprian to fetch 'the Virgin of Vladimir', which had been in Vladimir-on-Kliazma since Andrei Bogoliubsky's day. A later chronicle would claim that Tamerlane turned back after a vision of the Mother of God defending Moscow with a heavenly host. Contemporary writings were less fulsome, but the icon's record nourished hopes.[54]

Invoking collective memory to legitimize hegemony, or simply for political survival, was of concern to princes. Basil I had painters decorate the church of the Assumption in Vladimir-on-Kliazma, rebuilt by his father, thereby solemnizing their 'inheritance' of this ancient seat. A lesser prince, Vladimir of Serpukhov, had Moscow itself painted on his palace wall by the Byzantine artist-'philosopher', Theophanes. A connection between monumental churches, cities, and God-given power is implied by the writer Epifanii: he persuaded Theophanes to draw him a picture of Justinian's St Sophia and passed it to 'the other icon-painters of Moscow' to copy.[55] Novgorodians and individuals from towns such as Smolensk set down in detail the relics, shrines, and wonders they witnessed during visits to Constantinople in the fourteenth century.[56] These wall-paintings and itineraries did not, however, attempt overviews of developments in Rus' since Vladimir's conversion.

It was a metropolitan, Kiprian, who orchestrated the past to propound correct order in writing. Bulgarian-born and thus at home with Slavonic, Kiprian had stayed on Mount Athos. Subsequently, he worked as a senior aide to the

[54] *Nikonovskaia Letopis'*, in *PSRL*, xi. 159–60, 250–3; and *Moskovskii Letopisnyi Svod*, in *PSRL*, xxv. 223–5.

[55] Epifanii, *Pis'mo k Kirillu tverskomu*, in *Biblioteka Literatury Drevnei Rusi*, ed. Likhachev, vi. 440–2, at 442.

[56] George P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, DC, 1984).

Constantinopolitan patriarch, carrying out diplomatic missions, and while sensitive to Rus' particular circumstances he envisioned an ideal worldwide Christian order, anchored in 'Emperor-town' (Tsargrad). In Rus' he put his learning to pastoral effect, and his goals included correctness of doctrine and aligning liturgical texts with those approved at Constantinople. Dmitri had been obstructive when Kiprian first tried to enter Moscow, provoking his letter to Sergei. One strategy Kiprian adopted was to recast the existing 'Life' of Metropolitan Peter (*Zhitie Sviatogo Petra Mitropolita*), refracting his own position through his sainted predecessor. The city of Moscow is 'glorious' and Prince Ivan pious, but Peter chose to live there of his own accord, and Ivan 'heeded him in every respect'. Peter had earlier overcome an uncanonical rival, and rebutted slanderous allegations made against him to the Constantinopolitan authorities. These episodes carry overtones of Kiprian's personal experiences, and the *Zhitie* ends by recounting how Peter helped him leave Constantinople (in 1380): after he had prayed for Peter's intercession, his ailments instantly lifted and he was able to depart, eventually reaching Moscow and 'thy throne', and venerating Peter's 'wonderworking grave'.[57]

Kiprian's invocation of the past and church canons failed to carry the day with Prince Dmitri, who preferred northerners of his acquaintance for metropolitans. However, upon final reinstallation in Moscow, Kiprian worked closely with Basil I. At the same time as eulogizing the 'high throne of the glorious metropolitanate of Rus' ' in Moscow, he took the 'all Rus' ' of his title literally. He tended the orthodox populations under Lithuanian rule, and maintained amicable relations with the Lithuanian and Polish leaders. The military prowess of Grand Duke Vitovt (d. 1430) revitalized the Lithuanian half of the Commonwealth, opening up prospects of further Lithuanian expansion. The marriage of Basil to Vitovt's daughter in 1391 sealed a *modus vivendi*, and for the rest of the decade Vitovt's ambitions focused on principalities like Smolensk, and on a 'crusade' against the Golden Horde, which came to grief on the Vorskla in 1399. Kiprian opposed the institution of a separate metropolitanate for the orthodox in Lithuanian-ruled territories, pressured though they were by Latin bishops there. In 1396 he proposed holding an ecumenical council somewhere 'in Rus' '—presumably Lithuania—to bring about reunion of the Latin and orthodox churches, a project bold in choice of venue yet harking back to when councils presided over by emperors issued universally binding canons.

Kiprian's self-identification with his predecessor, Peter, has already been noted. He was not the only student of recent Rus' history. Around the end of the fourteenth century someone saw fit to translate an assortment of the *iarlyki* issued for the church. And a chronicle-compilation was made, probably in Tver, early in the fifteenth century. But it was Kiprian who supervised the outstanding feat of historical writing. The *Povest' Vremennykh Let* and its continuation to 1305 were

[57] Text in Prokhorov, *Povest' o Mitiae*, 204–15, at 211–12, 215; Likhachev (ed.), *Slovar' Knizhnikov*, i. 164–5.

amplified, and the story carried up to 1408 (two years after Kiprian's death). This is generally known as the *Troitskaia Letopis'* [Trinity Chronicle]. Kiprian's vision of Rus' as one ecclesiastical province prompted coverage of all the land of Rus', from its beginnings. In recounting more recent events in Lithuanian-ruled regions, the *Troitskaia Letopis'* treats Rus' as one unit, Moscow's metropolitanate being the sacral centre. Its tone is didactic. Olgerd's abstemiousness is contrasted with Muscovites' drunkenness on campaign, and princely readers are urged to learn lessons from the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*. Events from 1390 on are recounted at length, including Kiprian's ministrations in Moscow and visits to Lithuania, where he made appointments to orthodox sees.[58] Itself a product of troubled times, Kiprian's *Troitskaia Letopis'* has much in common with the historical work that first delineated the land of Rus'. Moreover, the 'all-Rus'' scope matches Basil's coin-inscriptions around the time of the composition of the *Troitskaia Letopis'*.[59]

Fresh edge was given to meticulous chronology and the recording of unusual phenomena by expectations of the End of the World. That the End would come around the terminus of the seventh millennium since the Creation (= AD 1492) was expected amongst erudite clergymen throughout the orthodox world.[60] This apprehension was heightened for Rus' by recent upheavals in the steppes; Kiprian himself believed the Last Things to be near. Texts showing 'specifically apocalyptic concerns' were composed and circulated in Rus' from the late fourteenth century on, and the fifteenth century saw a burgeoning of eschatological works.[61] Chronicle-writing continued, an important, Rus'-wide, compilation being completed shortly before 1437 by the staff of the metropolitanate somewhere outside Moscow, perhaps in Novgorod. Current events were grafted onto the deeds of early princes and the examples of holy men, reinforcing belief in the land of Rus' as one. Besides, well-recorded portents might shed light on things to come.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

Mid-10th cent.	Baptism of Princess Olga in Constantinople
*c.*988	Baptism of Prince Vladimir and installation of Byzantine metropolitan in Kiev

[58] *Troitskaia Letopis'*, ed. Mikhail Dimitrievich Priselkov (Moscow and Leningrad, 1950), 402, 403, 439–41, 443–4, 446–9, 457–9; Likhachev, *Russkie Letopisi*, 295–305; and Iakov Solomonovich Lur'e, *Dve Istorii Rusi 15 veka* (Paris and St Petersburg, 1994), 57–62.

[59] Noonan, 'Forging a National Identity', 500–3.

[60] Dimitrii I. Polyviannyi, *Kul'turnoe Svoeobrazie Srednevekovoi Bolgarii v Kontekste Vizantiisko-Slavianskoi Obshchnosti IX–XV Vekov* (Ivanovo, 2000), 219–27; and Donald M. Nicol, *Church and Society in the Last Centuries of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 1979), 98–105.

[61] Andrei L'vovich Iurganov, *Kategorii Russkoi Srednevekovoi Kul'tury* (Moscow, 1998), 306–9, 320–1; and Michael S. Flier, 'Till the End of Time: The Apocalypse in Russian Historical Experience before 1500', in Valerie A. Kivelson and Robert H. Greene (eds.), *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice under the Tsars* (University Park, Penn., 2003), 127–58, at 132–5.

1015	Death of Vladimir, killing of two of his sons, Boris and Gleb, start of ten-year-long dynastic strife
1097	'Council' of Liubech
1113–25	Vladimir Monomakh prince at Kiev, predominant in Rus'
1157–74	Andrei Bogoliubsky prince at Vladimir-on-Kliazma, predominant in north-east Rus', potent across the land of Rus'
1185	Prince Igor's expedition against the Polovtsian steppe-nomads
1177–1212	Vsevolod 'Big-Nest' prince at Vladimir-on-Kliazma, predominant in north-east Rus'
1237–40	Mongols invade and subjugate Rus'
1246	Execution of Prince Mikhail of Chernigov during visit to Khan Batu
1252	Alexander Nevsky receives khan's *iarlyk* to principality of Vladimir-on-Kliazma
1304	Prince Mikhail Iaroslavich of Tver receives *iarlyk* to principality of Vladimir-on-Kliazma
1318	Prince Mikhail tried and executed during visit to Golden Horde
1326	Death in Moscow of Metropolitan Peter; *Zhitie* of Peter, recounting graveside miracles, composed soon afterwards
1331	Prince Ivan of Moscow—Ivan I 'Moneybag' (Kalita)—receives *iarlyk* to principality of Vladimir-on-Kliazma
1362	Prince Dmitri of Moscow—Dmitri of the Don—receives *iarlyk* to principality of Vladimir-on-Kliazma
1375	Kiprian appointed in Constantinople to be eventual successor to 'Metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus' Alexei, who dies in 1378
1380	Battle of Kulikovo
1389	Prince Dmitri dies, and is succeeded by his son Basil I (d. 1425)

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Chapter 15

Historical Writing in Central Europe (Bohemia, Hungary, Poland), *c.*950–1400

Nora Berend

In Central Europe, historical writing emerged in connection to intertwined political and religious change between the late tenth and twelfth centuries: the establishment of polities and Christianization introduced by rulers. An ecclesiastical organization and personnel and the rulers' patronage were the preconditions for local historiography. The correlation was not simply chronological; in its aims and themes, historical writing expressed and supported the power of Christian rulers and the new religion. Annals, *gesta*, chronicles (although most frequently hybrid forms incorporating elements from two or more), and saints' lives were produced, inspired by Western models, with Bohemian and Hungarian hagiography also incorporating Byzantine influences. The authors of almost all the texts were ecclesiastics, immigrants or locals, with laymen appearing exceptionally in the fourteenth century. Most of the texts were in Latin, but in Bohemia Old Church Slavonic in hagiography, and in the fourteenth-century vernacular Czech, played a significant role.

Between the late tenth and twelfth centuries the first historical texts in all the genres mentioned above appeared in the region. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the interests of the nobility, and in Poland regional interests, started to be expressed, and new genres, such as royal biographies, emerged. In all three countries, history-writing developed primarily or exclusively in correlation to rulers' courts during the entire period. Less varied and numerous works of history were produced compared to Western Europe. Finally, narratives of the history of the 'people' were predominant, with an emphasis on the history of the ruling dynasty.

Annals, the first historical genre to appear in Central Europe, consisted of short yearly entries on various events, in a chronological order. None of the first annals survive, but their existence has been more or less hypothetically established by scholars, based on later texts which incorporated them: in Bohemia at the end of the tenth century in the circle of the Břevnov monastery and the Bishop's Church in Prague; in Poland in Gniezno in the 970s and Cracow in

about 1040. In both Bohemia and Poland, annals continued to be written at a variety of monastic and episcopal as well as courtly centres throughout the period, although, as was typical in Europe in general, annals and chronicles became synonymous. Thus some of the later annals were in fact continuations of chronicles. The only surviving annals from medieval Hungary, the *Annales Posonienses* (from Pozsony, now Bratislava, Slovakia), cover the period 997–1203 although they are interpolated. Perhaps they incorporate the annals of the Benedictine abbey of Pannonhalma, 997–1060, but this first part may instead have been written at the collegiate chapter of Fehérvár, founded by the king; the annals would then be tied to a royal church and not a monastic institution.[1]

The first chronicles were produced by the early twelfth century. They were tightly linked to the royal court and presented the history of their own polity, with a focus on the dynasty. Their similarities have been analysed by Norbert Kersken: all are narrative histories, and although they start at the purported origins of either the people or the polity, there is a preponderance of events contemporary to the authors; they emphasize the history of the polity with its own periodization; they use local oral sources as well as works from antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The intended audience and aims have been deduced from the dedicatory texts and the works themselves. Writing about the history of the polity or dynasty was meant to influence the current political situation and buttress the ruler's power.

Cosmas, dean of Prague's cathedral chapter, member of the elite, studied in Liège, and travelled in diplomatic service to Italy, Germany, and Hungary. His *Chronica Boemorum* [Chronicle of the Czechs] (*c.*1119–22/25) survives in twelve twelfth- and thirteenth-century manuscripts. Its sources included oral testimonies, saints' lives, ecclesiastical privileges, and other historical texts produced locally (no longer extant annals) or elsewhere (Regino of Prüm's Chronicle and his continuation). His description of Bohemian origins blended oral traditions, the influence of classical literature, and the customs and political events of his own day. A narrative of Czech history written in elegant Latin style, the chronicle demonstrates a good knowledge and intensive use of classical works, and includes citations from, for example, Ovid, Vergil, Sallust, and the Bible, as well as Czech proverbs. Cosmas also put direct speeches in the mouths of historical actors. Of the early texts, his is closest to the chronicle form. It is divided into three books: the first covers the period from legendary origins to 1038, including the settling of the land under the leader Boemus; a pre-Přemyslid golden age; the dynasty's origin myth (the people's decision to have a ruler and Libuše's marriage to

[1] Gyula Kristó, *Magyar Historiográfia I: Történetírás a középkori Magyarországon* (Budapest, 2002), 28–29. Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der 'nationes': Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 1995), includes a comprehensive bibliography on Central European historiography; I signal only some of the more recent work in the notes.

Přemysl, legendary ancestor of the dynasty); and the early history of Bohemia. Although he portrayed the mythical (pre-Christian) past in a positive light, he did so by de-emphasizing its pagan nature. The second book covers the deeds of rulers 1038–92, and the third the civil wars and events to 1125. Cosmas combined a history of the people, land, and dynasty, although with an emphasis on the latter. Although Cosmas was not a court historian, and represented an ecclesiastical viewpoint (even siding with Bishop Jaromír against the ruler), his work, written in the context of internal dynastic conflict, was a manifesto for strong and just ducal power. It moulded Czech historical writing for almost two hundred years, and continued to be the main model for the depiction of the origins and early history of Bohemia even longer.

The Gallus Anonymous, probably a cleric at the court of Duke Bolesław III in Cracow, wrote the *Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum* [Chronicles and Deeds of the Dukes or Princes of the Poles] (*c.*1112/13–*c.*1117). The earliest of the three surviving manuscripts is from the end of the fourteenth century. The name Gallus originates from the sixteenth century, and may not be accurate. The internal evidence of the text provides the only information for both the dating and the author: he was a monk, and certainly not a Pole. The most commonly accepted view is that he was from northern France, and perhaps lived in a monastery in Hungary prior to his arrival in Poland. The work's conventionally used title is included before the introduction of Book I, and may be original or a later addition. The anonymous author wrote a history of the Polish polity from the beginnings to his own days, especially focusing on Bolesław III, in rhythmic prose, incorporating rhymed parts and poems. Usually called a *gesta*, the genre is fluid. It drew from written texts, perhaps including now lost annals, although few such texts existed, and from oral sources (dynastic legends and the testimony of eyewitnesses). The author also mentioned warrior and folk songs, and funeral chants. Some scholars, however, argue that the author himself composed the warrior song he supposedly recorded in a Latin translation.[2] The *gesta* uses classical biography, miracle stories, eyewitness accounts, and includes fictive speeches, 'letters' by rulers, and references to Sallust, Vergil, Ovid, Horace, Boethius, Sulpicius Severus, Einhard, Regino and other authors, and the Bible. According to some scholars, the work is unfinished, perhaps due to political changes and the fall of Gallus's patrons.

Divided into three books, the first covers the period to the conception of Bolesław III, the second the period from his birth to the defeat of Zbigniew, the third the rest of the deeds of Bolesław III until 1113. The first book, after a geographical introduction, relates the origin myth of the dynasty: how the ploughman Piast's son Siemowit took power from an evil prince, Popiel, due to divine

[2] Piotr Dymmel, 'Traces of Oral Tradition in the Oldest Polish Historiography: Gallus Anonymous and Wincenty Kadłubek', in Anna Adamska and Marco Mostert (eds.), *The Development of Literate Mentalities in East Central Europe* (Turnhout, 2004), 343–63, at 350.

intervention. The establishment of the dynasty is also the beginning of the history of Poland. Although Gallus's emphasis was on the divine legitimation of the dynasty, he also provided a narrative about the people, the Poloni. A list of Piast's descendants is followed by the description of the conversion to Christianity. The author almost completely eradicated the pagan past, equating the true beginnings of Polish history with Mieszko's conversion to Christianity. Significant sections cover relations with neighbours: the Holy Roman Empire, the Czechs, and the conquest of the Pomeranians. The *gesta* presents a very selective list of events, and emphasizes the loyalty owed by subjects to their 'natural lord' and divine help given to rulers. Dedicated to Polish bishops and the chancellor of Bolesław III, the work was probably commissioned by the ruler or someone at court, and written as a 'justificatory pamphlet' for Bolesław III; it was also among the earliest of a new type of commemorative texts.[3] After civil wars, Bolesław III ordered his half-brother Zbigniew's blinding in 1112. Bolesław's public penance and pilgrimage were insufficient. Hence the focus on the deeds of rulers, presenting the history of the country through the history of its ruling family. The author emphasized the martial virtues of hunting and military successes by members of the dynasty, and dedicated a disproportionately large section to the glory of Bolesław III, presented as a restorer of Poland, after Bolesław I's achievements had been undone. Effective rulership and overcoming challenges are tied to expansion and territorial lordship.

The first Hungarian *Gesta Hungarorum* [Deeds of the Hungarians] does not survive, but scholars have attempted to reconstruct this *Urgesta* hypothetically from the existing fourteenth-century versions, based mainly on the internal evidence of the text, and on rare fragments of earlier versions incorporated into other surviving narratives. Because of a lack of firm evidence, no certainties can be reached. The reigns of all the kings in the second half of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries have been suggested as the period when the first *gesta* was written: András (Andrew) I (1046–60), Solomon (1063–74), László (Ladislas) I (1077–95), and Kálmán (Coloman, 1095–1116). In each case, current political events would have influenced the writing: consolidation after civil wars, and the changing evaluation of a previous ruler's or dynastic branch's political role. Most scholars agree that a chronicle was written under King Kálmán; while some see in this the *Urgesta*, others see it as the first revision of the Hungarian chronicle. The foundational period of historiography (including saints' lives) is generally seen as the period covering the reigns of László and Kálmán, when, in the context of

[3] *Gesta principum Polonorum: The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, ed. and trans. Paul W. Knoll and Frank Schaer, 2nd rev. edn CBudapest and New York, 2007), p. xxxi; T. N. Bisson, 'On not Eating Polish Bread in Vain: Resonance and Conjuncture in the Deeds of the Princes of Poland (1109–1113)', *Viator*, 29 (1998), 275–89; Przemysław Wiszewski, *Domus Bolezlai: Values and Social Identity in Dynastic Traditions of Medieval Poland (c. 966–1138)* (Leiden and Boston, 2010); and *Gallus Anonymous and his Chronicle in the Context of Twelfth-Century Historiography from the Perspective of the Latest Research*, ed. Krzysztof Stopka (Cracow, 2010).

contemporary politics (relations to the emperor and pope, and internal rivalry), the historical memory of the realm and the dynasty was shaped. The original *gesta* probably started with István (Stephen) I and depicted the Christianization of the Hungarians, emphasizing the importance of the ruling dynasty, although its contents are debated.[4]

Hagiography was often at least partially a political statement, and often provided the first versions of the local past that historians subsequently used or reshaped. Connections between medieval history and hagiography have often been highlighted: their common religious viewpoint, ecclesiastical authorship, and textual borrowing from each other. A few key examples show the political importance of hagiography. In Bohemia, several lives were written of Sts Václav (Wenceslas) and Ludmila both in Old Slavonic and Latin that are important for the history of Bohemian Christianity.[5] Considerable controversy surrounds the dating of these texts, including the primacy of Old Slavonic or Latin legends, and the dating of Christian's *Vita et passio sancti Wenceslai et sancte Ludmile, ave eius* [Life and Martyrdom of St Wenceslas and St Ludmila, his Grandmother]. Christian's text is dated to 992–4, and the author, a monk, is thought to have been a member of the ruling Přemyslid dynasty. Some scholars, however, argue that the legend is a forgery from the late twelfth, thirteenth, or even fourteenth century. Current opinion tends towards the acceptance of the text as authentic, therefore its account of the establishment of Christianity and the polity predates Cosmas. It describes the use of the Slavonic liturgical language, and introduced the idea of Přemyslid Bohemia as a successor to Great Moravia, a connection that Cosmas later minimized. Christian attributes the conversion of Bořivoj to Methodius, thus making a political statement deriving the origins of the Christianization of Bohemia, and the polity from Moravia rather than Germany. Charles IV also wrote a Life of Wenceslas, promoting the cult of the dynasty's and Bohemia's protector. In Poland, where there was no dynastic cult, the *Vita Maior* [Major Life] (before 1261) of St Stanisław by the Dominican Wincenty of Kielcza suggested that as the dismembered body of the martyred bishop was miraculously made whole in death, so the fragmented Polish polity would be reconstituted. In Hungary, King László I for political legitimation arranged for a local synod (1083) to canonize the first king of Hungary, St István, his son Imre (Emeric), and several ecclesiastics. Especially the Lives of István served historical purposes, presenting him as founding the realm as well as Hungarian Christianity and the church; royal rights were derived from him. Three 'Lives' (*vitae*) were composed between the canonization and the early twelfth century, placing Hungary's conversion to

[4] Kristó, *Magyar Historiográfia*, 30–6; and László Veszprémy, 'The Invented 11th Century of Hungary', in Przemysław Urbańczyk (ed.), *The Neighbours of Poland in the 11th Century* (Warsaw, 2002), 137–54.

[5] Marie Bláhová, 'The Function of the Saints in Early Bohemian Historical Writing', in Lars Boje Mortensen (ed.), *The Making of Christian Myths in the Periphery of Latin Christendom (c.1000–1300)* (Copenhagen, 2006), 83–119, at 90.

Christianity and Hungarian history in the framework of the history of salvation. Notably, the author of the third *vita*, Hartvik, invented a papal authorization for István to rule according to both laws, and the papal sending of a crown to István to counteract German claims. He also included various stories to confirm Hungary's independent status from both pope and emperor.[6]

Chronicles continued to be written throughout the period. But whereas in Bohemia, Cosmas's view of Czech history remained dominant, in Hungary and Poland, radically different versions of the past were constructed. Formulations of a communal consciousness in twelfth- and thirteenth-century historical writing are sometimes misleadingly called expressions of 'national feeling'. Instead, such texts represent a concept of community developed from above, in the interests of those with political power. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were also characterized by new developments: the emergence of the interests of the nobility, and the appearance of new genres.

In Bohemia, historical narrative flourished, often written by well-informed clerics in courtly circles (although until the fourteenth century none of the works were commissioned by the ruler), who were eyewitnesses to many of the events. Continuators of Cosmas wrote annals (no longer distinct from chronicles) on their own period from the twelfth century on. The anonymous canon of Vyšehrad wrote a continuation until 1142, essentially a chronicle on Soběslav I's reign. The monk of Sázava in the 1170s combined writing a monastic chronicle from the foundation of his monastery with an account of events until 1162. These are the so-called first continuators. Another chronicle written in 1171–3 by Vincent, canon of Prague, covering the period 1140–67 of Vladislav II's reign, was continued to 1198 (including a large section of hagiographical legend on Gottschalk, abbot of Želiv) by Gerlach (Jarloch) a German abbot of the Praemonstratensian monastery of Milevsko, in the early thirteenth century. The so-called second continuation of Cosmas is a collection of annalistic work written at Prague's St Vitus cathedral covering the period 1196–1283, including the *Annales Otakariani* on Otakar II, and a work on the few years after his death. Several other monastic annals and chronicles were composed in the twelfth–thirteenth centuries. The most important work after Cosmas was the *Chronicon Aulae Regiae*, or *Zbraslavská kronika* [Chronicle of Zbraslav]. It was started by Abbot Otto of the Cistercian monastery of Zbraslav in 1305 as a monastic history and glorification of the founder, King Václav II, covering the period 1253–94. Peter of Zittau (Žitavský), monk and then abbot of Zbraslav, continued, but also transformed the work into a history of Bohemia covering the period to 1338. The work survives in five manuscripts. Written in elegant Latin, the chronicle was not merely a narrative account, but reflected the monastery's connections to the royal court, as an important

[6] Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge, 2002); and László Veszprémy, 'Royal Saints in Hungarian Chronicles, Legends and Liturgy', in Boje Mortensen (ed.), *The Making of Christian Myths*, 217–45.

ecclesiastical and political centre under Václav II and during the reign of John of Luxembourg.

New representations of the past were created in thirteenth-century Hungary and Poland, partly or entirely in connection to the rulers' aims and interests. Whenever the first *gesta* was composed in Hungary, it was subsequently continued and rewritten a number of times, hypothetically reconstructed from the same texts as the *Urgesta*. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century continuators did not simply add new sections on their own times, but drastically rewrote previous parts, motivated by current political needs. Scholars suppose various phases of addition and rewriting, one under Géza II (1141–62) or István III (1162–72), another under Béla III (1172–96) or András II (1205–35), and finally by probably Master Ákos (a member of the royal chapel, 1244 to his death, the queen's chancellor, 1248–61, and a member of the newly risen landed aristocracy) in the late thirteenth century. The first rewriting was necessitated by the ascension of a different branch of the dynasty to the throne: because they descended from Álmos's son Béla II who had been blinded by King Kálmán, the description of Kálmán's personality was modified to show him in a negative light. Motivated by the concern to legitimize the Álmos-branch of the dynasty, the author of this version upheld the primacy of *legitimitas* through inheritance and coronation over claims of idoneity. The next phase was linked to the need to emphasize idoneity as the basis of rulership rather than legitimacy: Béla III, against the usual custom, was crowned by the archbishop of Kalocsa, after the archbishop of Esztergom refused to crown him. The rewriting also turned the text stylistically from a chronicle into a *gesta* according to Kristó, 'the *gesta* of the Christian Hungarians'.[7] He also inferred the author's Western European schooling and knowledge of literature. There is disagreement over whether there was one or more continuator after this second rewriting. In any case, it was probably during the thirteenth century that a history of the pagan past was added to the *gesta*; that the image of Queen Gizella, István's wife, became negative as a veiled condemnation of Gertrude of Meran (András II's queen, murdered by discontented nobles); and a laudatory list of immigrant nobles was written. Modern historians have drawn a parallel between the style of the *gesta* and the style of charters written at the royal court. The authors of the *gesta* were all ecclesiastics, filling various functions at the court; several served as royal scribes.

The first surviving *Gesta Hungarorum* [Deeds of the Hungarians], of the so-called Hungarian Anonymous, represents a novelty: it is dedicated entirely to the pagan past of the Hungarians, especially to the conquest of the land of Hungary (*honfoglalás*).[8] According to the majority view the *gesta* was written around 1200,

[7] Gyula Kristó, *A történeti irodalom Magyarországon a kezdetektől 1241-ig* (Budapest, 1994), 99.

[8] *Anonymus and Master Roger. Anonymi Bele regis notarii Gesta Hungarorum. Anonymus, Notary of King Béla, The Deeds of the Hungarians*, ed. and trans. Martyn Rady and László Veszprémy; and *Magistri Rogerii Epistola in miserabile carmen super destructione Regni Hungarie per tartaros facta: Master Roger's Epistle to the Sorrowful Lament upon the Destruction of the Kingdom of Hungary by the Tatars*, ed. and trans. János M. Bak and Martyn Rady (Budapest and New York, 2010).

although according to some scholars in the mid-thirteenth century (the only surviving manuscript dates from that time, though it is a copy, not the original). Numerous speculations about the identity of the author failed to produce a definite identification. Only the fact that he was a notary of King Béla (according to most scholars, Béla III) is certain. He turned the Scythians, the alleged ancestors of the Hungarians, into fearsome warriors, whose bravery made them desirable ancestors, instead of the loathsome barbarians of Western sources. He also named Magog as the ancestor of both Attila the Hun and the Hungarians, which became the point of departure for the idea of Hun-Hungarian identity in the thirteenth century. His probably French and Italian schooling and his familiarity with the Trojan history of Dares Phrygius, the chronicle of Regino of Prüm, the Exordia Scythica, the legend of Alexander the Great, a model book for writing letters and knightly culture is attested by his *gesta*. Although explicitly belittling them, he also drew from oral stories, which included the histories of leading families. Other orally preserved myths of origin were recorded in later texts.

The so-called *Chronicon Hungarico-Polonicum* [Hungarian-Polish Chronicle] was written perhaps around 1230 at the court of Prince Kálmán, the younger brother of Béla IV, whose wife Salomea was the duke of Cracow's daughter. It is a mostly invented history of the Huns and Hungarians until the reign of László I, incorporating Polish history to some extent.[9] Thomas, of Italian origin, archdeacon of Spalato (Split) completed his *Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum* [History of the Bishops of Salona and Split] in 1266, about the archbishopric and city of Split from Roman times to his own days.[10]

Master Simon of Kéza's *Gesta Hungarorum*, written between 1282 and 1285, developed a full-fledged origin myth for the Hungarians.[11] A subsequently lost medieval manuscript served as the basis of the modern edition. Perhaps of unfree origin, educated at an Italian university, court cleric of László IV, Simon used and reworked earlier versions of the *gesta*. He reinterpreted a variety of Western written sources, including epics, and was influenced by canon and Roman law. Building on the idea of the Huns as the ancestors of the Hungarians, Simon found in Attila and his empire the type of prestigious ancestry for the Hungarians that everyone aspired to by this period, emulating the alleged Trojan ancestry of the Franks. The positive reincorporation of this invented pagan past became the standard view of Hungarian history. The first part of Simon's work concerned the history of the Huns; the Hungarian conquest therefore became the reclaiming of a land that was theirs by right of heritage. In the second part, narrating the

[9] Ryszard Grzesik, *Kronika węgiersko-polska: Z dziejów polsko-węgierskich kontaktów kulturalnych w średniowieczu* (Poznań, 1999).

[10] *Thomae archidiaconi Spalatensis, Historia Salonitanorum atque Spalatinorum pontificum: Archdeacon Thomas of Split, History of the Bishops of Salona and Split*, ed. and trans. Olga Perić, Damir Karbić, Mirjana Matijević Sokol, and James Ross Sweeney (Budapest and New York, 2006).

[11] *Simonis de Kéza, Gesta Hungarorum: Simon of Kéza, The Deeds of the Hungarians*, ed. and trans. László Veszprémy and Frank Schaer, with a study by Jenő Szűcs (Budapest, 1999).

history of the Hungarians, he focused on victorious battles, the history of kings, and the nobility, whom he divided according to descent from the conquerors or from immigrant nobles. He also invented an explanation for the existence of unfree Hungarians as descendants of those who committed a crime against the *communitas* and were therefore deprived of their liberty.

A new version of the past in Poland was written by Master Wincenty Kadłubek (d. 1223), the *Cronica de gestis (illustrium) principum ac regum Polonie* [Chronicle of the Deeds of the Illustrious Princes and Kings of Poland]. Educated probably in France, he moved in the inner circle of Duke Kazimierz (Casimir) II the Just, who commissioned the work. Bishop of Cracow from 1208, for the last years of his life he withdrew to a Cistercian monastery. His erudite history of Poland covers the period from mythic beginnings to 1202 in four books, of which the first three are in the form of a dialogue between Jan, archbishop of Gniezno (1146–66), and Mateusz, bishop of Cracow (1143–66), the latter portrayed as transmitting knowledge from previous generations. Traditionally, the first three books are dated to the 1190s, and the last after 1217/18, but more recently, the last book is also dated before 1208. Wincenty links Polish history to classical antiquity and the Bible through the use of analogies. Changing and embellishing it, he used Gallus's work without mentioning it explicitly. His other sources included written documents, oral accounts, many classical and ecclesiastical authors, and Roman and canon law. His focus on the history of the whole of Poland (although emphasizing Little Poland's traditions) in the age of fragmentation has been linked to Kazimierz's political ambitions. His work is a political-moral treatise on the history of Poland and the exercise of power. He emphasized the *res publica* constituted by all the Poles. He extolled the virtues of pre-Christian Poles and elevated the Poles through an invented prehistory. This included a series of pre-Piast rulers, the Poles as descendants of Wandalus, as well as fictitious victories by the Poles over Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. Thus he introduced a more positive pagan past into the history of Poland. He also eliminated Siemowit's divine election, substituting the idea of rising through merit to rulership. His work became very popular, unlike Gallus's: it survives in thirty-seven manuscripts, and was used by subsequent chroniclers, shaping the view of Polish early history until fairly recently. It also served as a handbook for teaching rhetoric and as a political treatise in the later Middle Ages.

The interests of the nobility were expressed in the Hungarian Anonymous's *Gesta Hungarorum*. In order to justify the acquisition of estates by the nobility of the author's own days, their right to the land was presented as their ancestors' conquest of the territory in a series of battles under the leadership of seven chieftains, confirmed by subsequent grant by the tribal confederation's overall chieftain. The interests of the nobility and the ruler were not in conflict; rather, relations between them were contractual, initiated by a blood oath in the period before the conquest. The anonymous author did not work from real data, but from oral traditions and folk etymologies of place-names; he invented most of his

stories based on the practices of his own period, and projected conditions of his own age into the tenth century. Master Ákos's version of the *Gesta Hungarorum* perhaps claimed that all aristocratic families played a crucial part in the conquest of the land. Simon of Kéza represented the viewpoint of the lower nobility, creating the theory of *communitas*: the whole nobility is one political body, so the lower nobility should share in the exercise of political power. This community would hold real power, and elect the king, which Simon projected onto the election of Attila. As Norbert Kersken demonstrated, Hungarian chronicles consecrated more space to pre-Christian history than most other European historical narratives, to the detriment of discussing more current history; yet their agenda was always contemporary.[12]

In Poland, Wincenty Kadłubek and subsequent authors offered a political programme for the nobility as the political actors in history. Political fragmentation also led to a new need for composing histories of Poland focusing on the given area and its ruling branch of the Piast dynasty. Syntheses of Polish history from various local perspectives and serving local interests continued to be written after the reunification. These incorporated material from and continued Wincenty Kadłubek's chronicle. The *Chronicon Polono-Silesiacum* [Polish-Silesian Chronicle] perhaps written in the 1280s and serving the interests of Duke Henryk (Henry) IV's court at Wrocław, focused on the history of the dynasty's Silesian branch. The *Chronica principum Polonie* [Chronicle of the Princes of Poland] (*c.*1385), attributed to Peter of Byczyna, depicts Polish history to 1382, including the history of various branches of the Piast dynasty, and scholars debate whether it was written to buttress the claim of Ludwik (Louis) I, duke of Lower Silesia, to the Polish throne. A 'chronicle-cartulary' of a Silesian Cistercian monastery also included narratives about Silesian dukes.[13] A focus on the history of the people characterized two other works. The *Chronica Polonorum* or '*Chronicle of Dzierzwa*' was compiled in Little Poland in the early fourteenth century, perhaps by a Franciscan in Cracow. It may have served Władysław I Łokietek's (Ladislaus the Short) aim to obtain the royal crown. This was the first Polish chronicle to designate the Poles as descendants of Japhet, and it also depicted the descendants of Wandalus as settling all the Slavic lands, claiming a common Slavic origin. The so-called *Chronica Poloniae maioris* [Chronicle of Greater Poland], a description of Polish history that breaks off at 1272/3, survives in a late fourteenth-century compilation. It represented the ideology of a unified state. The thirteenth-century material is in annalistic style. Its authorship and dating are debated, one hypothesis favouring an author at the end of the thirteenth century, whose work was interpolated in the fourteenth, the other suggesting that there is one work, a compilation by Janko of Czarnków, archdeacon,

[12] Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 686–9, 764–73.

[13] Piotr Górecki, *A Local Society in Transition: The Henryków Book and Related Documents* (Toronto, 2007).

and previous vice-chancellor of the realm, from around 1370s–80s, at least partly reflecting Kazimierz III's eastern political expansion. It adopted the idea of a common descent for the Slavs, developing the brothers Lech, Čech (Czech), and Rus as eponymous ancestors.

The new Angevin dynasty's legitimacy was upheld through the next reworking of the Hungarian chronicle. Two fourteenth-century families of chronicles are known, one finished 1333–4 (the family of the Chronicle of Buda), the other written from 1358. As to the former, some scholars suppose several authors who continued the earlier *gesta* between 1272 and 1333/4. Others think it was the work of a single author, and according to one view this was John, Franciscan provincial of Hungary between 1323 and 1331. That one or more Franciscans from Buda participated in writing the text is the only certainty. Some of the text reflects an Angevin perspective, presenting their right to the throne of Hungary; it also paid particular attention to events affecting the Franciscans. The additions cover the period 1272–1332, but the events of the years between 1317 and 1332 are recorded in an annalistic style. Nemprot (Nimrod) descendant of Japhet is named as the ancestor of the Hungarians. Several versions exist of its continuation until 1342. According to some historians, another Franciscan, János (John) Kétyi, confessor at the royal court and ambassador to the pope, wrote a detailed history of events, of which the part concerning the period 1345–55 survives, perhaps a continuation of the family of the Buda chronicle. The other fourteenth-century chronicle (family of the Illuminated Chronicle) is also extant in several codices, of which one is the *Chronicon Pictum* [Illuminated Chronicle] (just after 1358). This is more detailed than the previous fourteenth-century chronicle composition, based on available previous versions of the *gesta*. It also corrected the list of ancestors, by leaving out Nemprot who descended from Cham, to preserve the more prestigious descent from Japhet. The author according to one hypothesis was Mark Kálti, who was active in the mid-fourteenth century in the queen's then the king's chapel. King Louis the Great had the chronicle copied into a lavishly illustrated codex (hence its name), to be sent as a present to the French king. Heinrich (Henry) of Mügeln, a poet associated with the courts of Hungary, Austria, and Bohemia, composed a German and Latin rhymed version of the Hungarian chronicle in the mid-fourteenth century.

Novelty and the representations of noble interests were intertwined in Bohemia, with the rise of vernacular history-writing in the fourteenth century. Economic and political considerations had led rulers to encourage German immigration and identify with German culture in competition with the German princes within the empire. In opposition, the nobility embraced Czech, leading to the flowering of vernacular literature, hagiography, and history. The Czech Life of St Procopius (*c.*1350) is an anti-German tract: Procopius posthumously returns to the monastery to evict the German monks who had ousted the Czechs. The so-called Dalimil Chronicle (*c.*1308–14, the attribution to a spurious 'Dalimil' comes from several centuries later) by an anonymous noble author was a vernacular

Czech verse rhymed chronicle on the history of Bohemia.[14] Events are presented in chronological order to the writer's own day, with an explicit resentment of German influences. The anti-German sentiment here is stronger than that expressed in some earlier Latin chronicles. Written from the perspective of the lower nobility, creating a Czech identity, it gave a direct message aimed at the new king John of Luxembourg: it upheld the privileges of the nobility, presenting them as the cornerstone of government, pressing the king to form an alliance with them. The work expresses the centrality of duty towards the community, and that Czechs constitute Bohemia. The chronicle is based on Cosmas and his continuators, but radically transforms Cosmas's stories on the legendary early history of Bohemia. It also introduced the idea of an original common Slavic homeland, and developed the concept of Bohemia as Great Moravia's heir. In the fourteenth century, it was translated into German and Latin.

Vernacular writing, however, was also encouraged at the court of Charles IV (r. 1347–78). Thus Přibík Pulkava of Radenín translated into Czech the sixth recension of his history of Bohemia (*c.*1374). It has even been suggested that Charles was the real author; at least he took an active part in the creation of the chronicle, providing information and documents for Přibík, and participating in the arrangement of the material. The chronicle reflected Charles's views of history. This was part of a great enterprise of history-writing at Charles's court, central to political ideology and legitimation, under the patronage and with the active participation of the ruler, partly linked to Bohemia becoming the centre of the empire. These works focused on the recent past and the present, and several attempted to include Bohemian history in the framework of world history. None of these historical works achieved popularity or a wider circulation. Charles commissioned Beneš Krabice of Weitmil (Weitmühl), a canon of Prague's St Vitus cathedral and archdeacon of Žatec to rework Francis of Prague's chronicle. The latter was a continuation of Cosmas, heavily dependent on Peter of Zittau's work, and existed in two recensions (1341/2 and 1353/4), the second dedicated to Charles. Beneš's *Cronica ecclesie Pragensis* [Chronicle of the Church of Prague], covering the period 1283–1374, probably drew on information provided by the ruler himself as well as on previous chronicles. Charles also commissioned his court chaplain, the Franciscan Giovanni da Marignolli (John of Marignola, better known for his account of his missionary journey in China and India), to write a history of Bohemia. Giovanni's *Cronica Boemorum* [Chronicle of the Czechs] aimed to incorporate Bohemian history into universal history, even creating a Trojan ancestry for Charles, but its Bohemian sections consisted of a compilation of earlier chronicles, and demonstrated Giovanni's lack of knowledge of Bohemian history.

[14] Marie Bláhová, *Staročeská kronika tak řečeného Dalimila v kontextu středověké historiografie latinského kulturního okruhu a její pramenná hodnota*, vol. 3: *Historický komentář. Rejstřík* (Prague, 1995).

Neplach, abbot of Opatovice, also tried to integrate imperial and Bohemian history in the *Summula chronicae tam Romanae quam Bohemicae* [The Brief Compendium of the Roman and Czech Chronicle] (ending in 1360). The last two works were rare examples of attempts to write universal chronicles in Central Europe.[15]

New genres of historical works were also created. Around 1243–4 Master Rogerius from Apulia, who arrived in Hungary in 1232 as the chaplain of the papal legate Jacob of Pecorara, and became archdeacon of Várad, wrote an eyewitness account of the Mongol invasion of Hungary in the form of a letter to Jacob, *Carmen miserabile* [Lamentation]. It is a mixture of events he witnessed and an analysis of the reasons for the enmity between the king and the nobles that led to the fall of Hungary to the Mongols.[16] In the late fourteenth century, János (John) Apród (also known as Küküllei, an erroneous rendering of his title as archdeacon of Küküllő into a family name) scribe at the court, vicar of the archbishop of Esztergom, chaplain of the king (1364–82), wrote a biography (but not saint's life) of King Louis the Great, the *Chronica Ludovici I regis Hungarorum*. He finished the first part probably in 1364, and the second part after the king's death. He focused on the deeds, especially military expeditions of the king, highlighting his glory. Finally, the autobiography of Charles IV is one of the rare medieval royal autobiographies focusing on his road to power, ending with his ascension to the throne. Several scholars have argued that the text is a composite of several parts, and it is often interpreted as a 'King's Mirror'. One opinion holds that it unites an autobiography, a sermon by Charles to his successors, and six chapters concerning the years after 1342 added later by someone else.[17] According to another opinion, the work is a unified whole (apart from the last six chapters), composed by Charles to show the righteous life to follow, opposing a religious model to the chivalrous and courtly one characteristic of his father and his contemporaries.[18] The work demonstrates Charles's legitimacy and divine protection.

The birth of history-writing in all three countries was linked to the introduction of Christianity and the rise of Christian polities. Foreign clerics, and clerics educated in foreign lands, played an important role in its creation, but they adapted rather than copied: Western models inspired the local production of historical works. History was also intimately linked to the rulers' courts, with the vast majority of works written by men with a close connection to the court or at the ruler's request. This is also shown by the contrast between the predominance

[15] Martin of Opava ('the Pole') worked at the papal court.

[16] 'Magistri Rogerii Epistola', in *Anonymus and Master Roger*, 132–227.

[17] Ferdinand Seibt, 'Foreword', in *Karoli IV Imperatoris Romanorum Vita Ab Eo Ipsa Conscripta: Autobiography of Emperor Charles IV*, ed. and trans. Balázs Nagy and Frank Schaer (Budapest, 2001), pp. xxix–xxxvi.

[18] Eva Schlotheuber, 'Die Autobiographie Karls IV. und die mittelalterlichen Vorstellungen vom Menschen am Scheideweg', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 281:3 (2005), 561–91.

of Prague in the production of historical works in Bohemia as opposed to the rise of new centres of history-writing in Poland, as these followed the shifting location of the court(s). Thus history predominantly meant the history of the country in a dynastic perspective, although the history of the people was then elaborated mostly from the thirteenth century. The origin of rulership itself, surrounded by supernatural signs, was part of dynastic history. In modern historiography, a search for the historic kernel of dynastic legends has been replaced with analyses of the mythic legitimation of rulership, going back to pre-Christian times. The focus, with very few late exceptions, was exclusively on the given realm. Often, historical works were written in response to crises or political change, expressing or reflecting contemporary objectives. Few genres existed (most markedly in Hungary); most notably universal chronicles were almost completely absent.

The extent of the influence of oral traditions (including pre-Christian ones) on the early written histories is difficult to establish, since no external sources provide information on indigenous oral traditions. Some chroniclers mentioned many such sources whereas others only expressed disdain for them. They may have used oral traditions without acknowledgement, but equally, could invent stories and pass them off as folk tradition. These works are certainly not the final writing down of centuries-old traditions, but rather are the products of active creative processes by Christian authors. This creative process characterized later works as well: many existing works were moulded by a series of rewritings, additions, interpolations; others are compilations. Many later sources incorporate (in ways that cannot always be reconstructed with any certainty) material that was originally written down earlier but does not survive separately.

A shift is detectable in the treatment of the past.[19] Most early texts omitted the pagan past or portrayed it in mostly negative light. Linked to this emphasis on the Christian history of the given polity, the use of saints' lives as political statements is not surprising. From the thirteenth century (earlier in Bohemia), by which time paganism was eradicated in religious practice, a pagan past was reincorporated for political purposes. This pagan past was portrayed as having positive and even divinely inspired actors and events. This shift was due to a search for prestigious ancestry through erudite constructions and eponymous heroes. The former mostly outside the Trojan ancestry (with a few fourteenth-century exceptions). In Hungary and Bohemia, the taking of the land was part of prehistory, whereas no such legend developed in Poland. At the end of the period, genres and authors diversified. This was particularly marked in fourteenth-century Bohemia, where vernacular history-writing and lay authors emerged, due to the political circumstances of the rulers' German-oriented policy.

[19] Dániel Bagi, 'Heidentum und Christentum in den Urgeschichtsdarstellungen der ersten historischen Synthesen Ostmitteleuropas im Mittelalter—Eine historische Region und zwei Modelle', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 54:2 (2005), 159–73.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

9th cent.–1306	Přemysl dynasty, rulers of Bohemia
Late 9th cent.–1301	Árpád dynasty, rulers of Hungary
10th cent.–1370	Piast dynasty, rulers of Poland
1030s	Pagan rebellion in Poland
1046	Pagan rebellion in Hungary
1091	Personal union of Hungary and Croatia
1138	Start of fragmentation of Poland into separate Principalities
1198	Bohemia became a kingdom
1222	Golden Bull of Hungary
1226	Conrad I of Masovia settles the Teutonic Knights
1241–2	Mongol invasion of Hungary, Poland, and Moravia
1278	Battle of Dürnkrut, Rudolf (Habsburg dynasty), king of the Romans and László IV of Hungary defeat Otakar II, king of Bohemia
1320	Coronation of Władysław Łokietek, reunification of Poland
1335	Visegrád meeting of Czech, Hungarian, and Polish rulers
1386	Marriage of Jadwiga and Jogaila, union of Poland and Lithuania
1415	Jan Hus burnt at the Council of Constance
1436	Peace agreement with King Sigismund, end of Hussite wars
1456	Defence of Belgrade by János (John) Hunyadi against the Ottomans
1466	Peace of Toruń between the Teutonic Order and Poland

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Chapter 16

Slavonic Historical Writing in South-Eastern Europe, 1200–1600

Petre Guran

Although this volume deals with the whole chronological range of medieval historical writing, the present chapter will consider the period from 1200 to 1600, because social and political realities of South-Eastern Europe delineate such a delayed chronology. The latter term, beginning of the seventeenth century, marks the end of those medieval societies who used Slavonic for their cultural expression. Balkan societies gradually pass through the nation-building process and adopt native languages for literary expression (Serbian, Bulgarian, and Romanian). This historical evolution allows the present chapter to take as upper limit of its analysis 1600. The other main reason for this chronology is the fact that most of the literary production of ninth- and tenth-century Bulgaria is known to us through Russian literary activity, which is covered by another chapter of this volume.[1] The starting point of this chapter is marked by the birth of new states using Slavonic as cultural language on the territory of Byzantium at the end of the twelfth century.[2] These states are at their origin small-scale autonomies headed by local lords and princes in the north-western part of the peninsula. Eventually, the emergence of Raška (named Rascia in Latin medieval historiography) as the most robust of them, under the command of Stefan Nemanja (1166–96), opened the way to the medieval Serbian kingdom. After Stefan Dušan's attempt to create a Greek and Serbian Empire (1345–55), its territory was again divided amongst his magnates, only to be conquered one after the other by the Ottomans. The fall of Smederevo (1459) and with it the despotate of George Brancović meant the end of medieval Serbian statehood. But the offspring of the dynasty continued to play a role in the region until the beginning of the sixteenth century and to foster literary production, including, most important, genuine annals. In parallel with this

[1] See ch. 14 by Jonathan Shepard in this volume.

[2] Nevertheless the so-called *Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea* must be excluded from the range of medieval South-Slav historiography as it was recently proven that it was produced by a Benedictine monk in the sixteenth century, Solange Bujan, 'La Chronique du prêtre de Dioclée: Un faux document historique', *Revue des études byzantines*, 66 (2008), 5–38.

development in the west and central Balkans on the Haemus-mountains and the Pontus shore, revolts of local chieftains generated by heavy Byzantine taxation led to the creation of a Vlacho-Bulgarian political entity, which by the middle of the thirteenth century had strongly embraced the pretention to be the continuator of the ninth-century Bulgarian Empire. Later in that century it split several times into competing political entities, of which the most important centres were to remain Tŭrnovo, Vidin, and the despotate of Dobrotić. All of them were conquered by the end of the fourteenth century or the beginning of the fifteenth.

The chronological closing term of this study is marked by the two Romanian principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia, where court culture continued to use a medieval Slavonic dialect up to the beginning of the seventeenth century. This literature shows in all aspects a 'typical' medieval mentality. When Romanian starts replacing Slavonic in court circles we are already at the dawn of modernity and our inquiry stops there. The unifying factor of this group of Balkan states is, besides the language, its allegiance to Byzantine Christianity.[3]

Thus, this chapter considers historical literature in the orthodox area of South-Eastern Europe, expressed in different dialects of Slavonic (Bulgarian, Serbian, and Romanian). Excluded are those regions which belonged to the Hungarian kingdom, where historical literature was written in Latin. Slavonic literature belongs to the sphere of Byzantine influence broadly and shares common features with contemporary Greek literature, the so-called short chronicles,[4] of which at least one was translated into Slavonic.

If the amount and quality of Slavonic chronicles and annals are poor when compared to contemporary Greek, Latin, and Arabic historiography, historical thought and facts may be found in other literary genres, such as hagiography, marginal notes on manuscripts, legends, admonitory works, and polemical writings. Works such as the *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih* [Lives of the Kings and Bishops of Serbia]; the *Synopsis Chronike* by Constantine Manasses translated into Slavonic at the court of the Bulgarian tsar; the various Slavonic accounts on the Ottoman conquest and on the fall of Constantinople; the *Admonitions of Neagoe Basarab to his Son Theodosius*, known by their Romanian translation in the seventeenth century as *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Teodosie*; the Slavonic Chronicles of Moldavia, and the reconstituted Slavonic Chronicles of Wallachia, extant only in Romanian translation, all these works are indicative of rich Slavonic historical thought in the medieval period. This study will assume the task of explaining their peculiarities.

[3] Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (New York, 1982); and John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor, 1987).

[4] Peter Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, vols. 1–3 (Viena, 1975, 1977, 1979).

HAGIOGRAPHY AS HISTORICAL THOUGHT: THE CASE OF SERBIA

Serbian historical writing begins with a series of four hagiographical works: *Žitije svetoga Simeona Nemanje* [The Life of Saint Simeon] written by Sava at the behest of his brother, grand župan of Serbia;[5] another *Žitije svetoga Simeona* [Life of Saint Simeon] written by his second born son, Stefan, at that moment grand župan of Serbia (1199–1217), later the first crowned king of Serbia (kral of Serbia, 1217–27).[6] The third hagiographical work is a *Žitije svetoga Save* [Life of Saint Sava], written by Sava's disciple Domentijan by the middle of the thirteenth century,[7] which also contains elements of Simeon's life. The section on Simeon was revised and republished around 1264 in a separate *Žitije svetoga Simeona* [Life of Saint Simeon], in which Domentijan fully develops the ideological content of the ruler's cult and the principle of diarchy, that is the joint direction of society by state and church. Pursuing this strategy, the fourth hagiographical production, a *Žitije svetoga Save* [Life of Saint Sava] written by Teodosije,[8] monk at the Hilandar monastery on Mount Athos at the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century, binds the lives of the two saints into one narrative.[9] This thirteenth-century genre of historical and political hagiography was continued in the fourteenth century in a collection of royal and episcopal saints' lives, the *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih* [Lives of the Serbian Kings and Archbishops], written by the archbishop Danilo II and his anonymous continuators.[10] The specificity of this particularly strong ruler's cult is that all the kings were praised for their monastic virtues, they all intended or indeed succeeded to dress the monastic garb at the end of their life, and their deaths are presented at length as the most notable of their accomplishments.[11] Most of these

[5] *Spisi Sveti Save*, ed. V. Ćorović, Zbornik IJKSN 17 (1928); and Sveti Sava, *Sabrani spisi*, ed. D. Bogdanović (Belgrade, 1986).

[6] *Žitije simeona Nemanje od Stefana Prvovenčanog*, ed. V. Ćorović, *Svetosavski Zbornik* II, (Belgrade, 1938).

[7] Domentijan, *Život svetoga Simeona i svetoga Save*, ed. Dj. Dančić (Belgrade, 1865).

[8] Teodosije Hilandarac, *Život svetoga Save—napisao Domentijan*, ed. Dj. Daničić (Belgrade, Državna Štamparia, 1860) (works of Teodosije erroneously identified by the editor with those of Domentijan); Teodosije, *Žitije svetog Save*, modern Serbian trans. Ljubomir Mirković, rev. Bogdanović (Belgrade, 1984).

[9] For a German translation of these texts see Stanislaus Hafner, *Serbisches Mittelalter: Altserbische Herrscherbiographien*, vol. 1 (Graz, 1962); and for a fundamental book on the Serbian case of princely sainthood see Boško Bojović, *L'idéologie monarchique dans les hagio-biographies dynastiques du Moyen Age serbe* (Rome, 1995).

[10] Arhiepiscop Danilo, *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih*, ed. Dj. Dančić (Belgrade and Zagreb, 1866) see Table 16.1 (below) for the content; German trans. St Hafner, *Serbisches Mittelalter: Altserbische Herrscherbiographien. Danilo II und sein Schüller: Die Königsbiographien* (Graz, Wien, and Köln, 1976).

[11] Petre Guran, 'Invention et translation de reliques—un cérémonial monarchique?' *Revue des études sud-est européennes* (hereafter as *RESEE*), 1–4 (1998), 195–229; Guran, 'Aspects et rôle du saint dans les nouveaux États du Commonwealth byzantin', in Laurenţiu Vlad (ed.), *Pouvoirs et mentalities: A la mémoire du professeur Alexandru Duţu* (Bucharest, 1999), 45–69; and I. R. Mircea, 'Les "vies de rois et archevêques serbes" et leur circulation en Moldavie: Une copie inconnue de 1567', *RESEE*, 4 (1966), 393–412.

hagiographies were written by contemporaries of the proclaimed saint and thus provide a wealth of historical facts. Nevertheless, differences are significant between such immediate eyewitnesses as Sava for his father Simeon and the standardized version of Teodosije. But the intent seems to be the same: to replace mere tribalism with a religious ideology. The strongest element of this thought was its deep rooting in mystical theology, where society as a whole is equated with a monastic community, and its strong defence of orthodoxy.[12] The numerous references to heresy—compared to 'darkness' and to 'wolves'—are not to be understood as pointing to Western Christianity, as Serbia repeatedly led a pro-Catholic policy and had a Latin bishopric (Bar) on its territory, but to the dualistic Bogomil heresy.[13] Sava's diarchic system is deemed the only way to fight the Bogomil heresy effectively, the previous Greek clergy having no missionary capacity to stop its spread. In the view of all these hagiographers, only the establishment of a strong Slavonic Church could meet this challenge: such was the mission of Saint Sava.

The end of this model was the starting point of Serbia's universal dream, at the moment when Stefan Dušan decided to proclaim his pretention of being emperor of a Serbian and Greek Empire (1345). At the same time Dušan established his Serbian Church as an independent institution with patriarchal rank, which produced the quiet dissent of the network of hesychast monks, the new ideological leaders of the Balkans. Thus, Dušan never enjoyed a cult and in the *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih* one of Danilo's continuators just inserted a notice, which did not lead to the establishment of a *synaxarion*. The end of the Nemanid dynasty (1371) coincided with the end of its ideology.

Based on political terminology, the question raised by contemporary historiography is whether or not Serbia had developed already by the thirteenth century an imperial idea on the Byzantine model.[14] But the question that should be asked is more largely whether or not the theory of the family of princes developed by Byzantine diplomacy was indeed acknowledged by Slavonic historiography. The foundation chart of Chilandar answers this in the affirmative. In this sense there is a certain 'Byzantine model' that was exported to power structures in the Byzantine Commonwealth, but it is not a 'copy' of Byzantium, rather a product *per se*, generated by the ecclesiastical milieu and transmitted through ecclesiastical channels. To this category belongs the principle of diarchy, which is the joint direction of society by state and church.

[12] A.-E. Tachiaos, 'Le monachisme serbe de saint Sava et la tradition hésychaste athonite', in *Hilandarski Sbornik*, 1 (1966), 83–9.

[13] Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge, 1947); and Dimitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948).

[14] Dumitru Năstase, 'L'idée impériale en Serbie avant le tsar Dušan', *Da Roma alla Terza Roma: Roma fuori da Roma: istituzioni e immagini*, 5 (1985), 169–88; and Leonidas Mavromatis, *La fondation de l'empire Serbe: Le kralj Milutin* (Thessaloniki, 1978).

The political and military tragedies in confrontation with the Ottoman Empire after the battle of Kosovo (1389) produced at the end of the fourteenth and throughout the fifteenth century a new heroic genre of hagiography where kings and princes were celebrated as martyrs. The model of this genre is provided by the canonization of Lazar Hrebeljanović, captured by the Ottomans during the battle of Kosovo (1389) and beheaded on the battlefield. In less than two decades after his death nine different writings appeared about and in honour of the saintly prince.[15]

The decline of the Serbian state in the fifteenth century coincided with several ongoing forms of princely hagiography: the *Žitije Stefana Dečanskog* [Life of Stefan Dečanski] by Grigorij Camblak;[16] the *Žitije Stefana Lazarevića* [Life of Stefan Lazarević] by Konstantin of Kostenec, surnamed the Philosopher;[17] the miscellaneous manuscript of Gorica—*Goričkí Zbornik*—composed by Nikon of Jerusalem;[18] and the short hagiographic notices of the last members of the Brancović family. All these writings vary in style and are collectively quite different from the older princely hagiographies. At the same time the first forms of historical recordings and chronographic writing tend to replace hagiography: the diptychs and the royal genealogies; *Žitija i žiteljstva kraljeva i careva srpskih* [The Lives and Deeds of the Serbian Kings and Emperors] by an anonymous author from Moravica (a part of Serbia, not to be confused with Moravia); the Serbian Chronicles of the fifteenth century,[19] in a wide range of variants from the *Studenički letopis* [Studenica Chronicle] to the *Četinjski letopis* [Četinje Chronicle] are all similar to the Romanian example discussed below. There is no surprise to find the oldest manuscript of *Žitija i žiteljstva kraljeva i careva srpskih* in Moldavia in the Sbornik copied by Isaia of Slatina.[20]

Most noteworthy among these writings is the *Žitije Stefana Lazarevića*, written by the Bulgarian scholar Konstantin of Kostenec. Although the work's purpose is to prepare the canonization of the prince and thus to connect him to a venerable tradition of princely sainthood, the style and approach are radically different from the *Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih* or from the so emphatically rhetorical *Žitije Stefana Dečanskog* by Grigorije Camblak. Konstantin has as his model the biographies of Plutarch; he tries to give as full information as possible and depicts the prince in a chivalric posture.[21]

[15] See Table 16.1 (below) for the editions of each text; B. Bojović, 'La littérature autochtone (hagiographique et historiographique) des pays yougoslaves au Moyen Âge', *Études balkaniques: Cahiers Pierre Belon*, 4 (1997), 58–60.

[16] Muriel Heppel, *The Ecclesiastical Career of Gregory Camblak* (London, 1979); and Bojović, *L'idéologie monarchique*, 613–35.

[17] Vatroslav Jagić, 'Konstantin Filosof i njegov život Stefana Lazarevića despota srpskoga', *Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva*, 42 (1875), 223–328, 372–7.

[18] B. Bojović, *L'idéologie monarchique*, 209–301.

[19] Ljubomir Stojanović, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopis* (Belgrade, 1927).

[20] Emil Turdeanu, *La littérature bulgare au XIVe siècle et sa diffusion dans les Pays Roumains* (Paris, 1947), 161.

[21] Bojović, *L'idéologie monarchique*, 639–63.

FROM DAWN TO DUSK: UNIVERSAL CHRONICLES AND ESCHATOLOGY IN BULGARIAN SLAVONIC HISTORIOGRAPHY

Besides the inscription on the wall of the church of the Forty Martyrs in Tŭrnovo, there is no surviving evidence of a chronographic activity at the court of the Bulgarian tsars in the thirteenth century. Neither have we found anything like that in Serbia, but in Bulgaria there are no princely hagiographies either. Instead, the event which promoted historical recording was the council of the Bulgarian Church of 1211, which attests to the same religious problem as that which dominated the creation of the Serbian Church: the threat of dualistic heresies, such as the Bogomils. The surviving manuscript of the *Synodik* [Collection of Synodal Decisions] of Tsar Boril (mandatory formulations and regulations of the true faith, the list of anathemas, and the lists of orthodox emperors and patriarchs), issued after the council of 1211, was developed in the fourteenth century, where we find appended a short ecclesiastical chronograph and lists of Bulgarian patriarchs and tsars.[22] An important heritage of the former Bulgarian Empire is the so-called *Elinskii Hronograf* [The Greek Chronography], a compilation of biblical excerpts and fragments of Byzantine chronicles based on Malalas and Hamartolos, probably produced in the tenth century.

The restoration of a new central power in Tŭrnovo was able to reunite most of the splits within the Bulgarian Empire of the previous century, under Tsar Ivan Alexander (1331–73); this new entity inaugurated an era of cultural flowering and an accompanying preoccupation with history. The most important creation is the Slavonic translation of the twelfth-century *Synopsis Chronike* written in verse by the Byzantine author Constantine Manasses.[23] The translation was produced at Ivan Alexander's court in the 1340s and the translator of the chronicle appended under the relevant years some information on the history of the First Bulgarian Empire, extracted basically from the Byzantine chronicle of John Zonaras. Two fourteenth-century copies survive, one in the former Synodal Library of Moscow, now State Library, the other in the Vatican Library; the Vatican copy is ornate with 69 miniatures (109 scenes total, 11 are full page). Nineteen scenes of this manuscript concern aspects of Bulgarian history. The Moscow manuscript contains in continuation of the Manasses Chronicle the Vision of Methodius of Patara about the reigns to come and the end of the world.[24] The historiographic concept covers the whole range of human existence, from the creation of man to the ultimate end of the material world. Thus, the sense of this historiography is

[22] Turdeanu, *La littérature bulgare*, 141–7; and Mihail G. Popruženko, *Sinodik Carja Borila* (Sofia, 1928).

[23] Turdeanu, *La littérature bulgare*, 17; and *Cronica lui Constatin Manasses*, ed. I. Bogdan (Bucharest, 1922).

[24] Petre Guran, 'Genesis and Function of the Last Emperor-Myth in Byzantium', *Bizantinistica: Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi*, 8 (2006), 273–303.

not to record facts, but to discover the metaphysical place of a given community within the larger context of God's creation. It is in the perspective of a community of salvation and not in that of a community of survival that we should understand this type of historiography. The two notions were forged intellectually by Western scholastic authors in the thirteenth century to distinguish religious and political communities, of which the community of survival is the ancestor of the modern nation-state.[25] These notions apply also to the political and religious context of the Balkans in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but not in a steady process of distinction and separation, rather on the contrary, in front of the Ottoman conquest, the community of salvation merged with the community of survival and superseded it. South-Slavonic historiography illustrates this process by its gradual integration of eschatological thought.

The intertwining of salvation and survival communities occurs also in fictional hagiography like the *Povest' o Varlaame i Ioasafe* [Legend of Barlaam and Ioasaph][26] and rhetorical production like the *Pohvalnoe slovo* [Eulogy] by Euthymius of Tŭrnovo of Constantine the Great and his mother Helena (last quarter of the fourteenth century).[27] The former must have been translated already in the twelfth–thirteenth centuries, as it played an important role in shaping monarchic ideology in Serbia and was circulated widely in Bulgaria in the fourteenth.

The end of the fourteenth century brought an awareness that the Ottoman Empire was growing as a fundamental actor in Balkan history. The earliest attempt to integrate this new fact is a short Slavonic chronicle discovered by the Romanian philologist Ioan Bogdan in a sixteenth-century Moldavian manuscript (the miscellaneous manuscript copied by Roman of Baia and Isaia of Slatina, initially kept in the monastery of Počaev, later at the theological Academy of Kiev).[28] He called it an anonymous Bulgarian chronicle, but it turned out to be the Slavonic translation of a Greek short chronicle written by the Byzantine scholar and clergyman John Chortasmenos. The author basically describes the growth of the Ottoman Empire and its gradual conquest of the Balkans, ascribing full responsibility to the Balkan rulers who were unwilling to support the Byzantine emperor, paying particular attention to John VI Kantakouzenos who

[25] Alain Boureau, *La religion de l'Etat: La construction de la République étatique dans le discours théologique de l'Occident médiéval (1250–1350)* (Paris, 2006).

[26] *Povest' o Varlaame i Ioasafe: pamjatnik drevnerusskoj perevodnoj literatury XI–XII vv.*, ed. I. N. Lebedeva (Leningrad, 1985); the Legend of Barlaam and Josaphat influenced the spiritual choices of Saint Sava and the literary representations of his life, Vojislav Djurić, 'Le nouveau Joasaph', *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 33 (1985), 99–109.

[27] Emil Kalužniacki, *Werke des Patriarchen von Bulgarien Euthymius (1375–1393), nach den besten Handschriften herausgegeben* (Vienna, 1901).

[28] Ion Bogdan, 'Ein Beitrag zur bulgarischen und serbischen Geschichtsschreibung', *Archiv für Slavische Philologie*, 13 (1891), 526–36; Ioan Bogdan, *Vechile cronice moldovenești până la Urechia* (Bucharest, 1891); Dumitru Năstase, 'Unité et continuité dans le contenue des manuscrits dits miscellanées', *Cyrillomethodianum*, 5 (1981), 22–48; and I. Dujčev, 'La conquête turque et la prise de Constantinople dans la littérature slave de l'époque', *Medioevo bizantino-slavo*, vol. 3 (Rome, 1971), 360–6.

called upon these rulers to help prevent the incursion of the Turks into Europe, giving a special emphasis to the first Ottoman siege of Constantinople (1394–1402). The chronicle must have been translated in the monastery of Tismana (Wallachia, where an important religious community had been founded by a member of the Balkan monastic network, Saint Nicodemos),[29] thus providing it with its new name, *Chronicle of Tismana*.[30]

The conquest of the Western Balkans and the development of the Romanian principalities determined the emigration of most of the bearers of knowledge towards the north of the Danube. As Emil Turdeanu has shown, a major part of the literary creation of medieval Bulgaria was preserved in the Wallachian and Moldavian monasteries.[31]

THE SLAVONIC ACCOUNTS OF THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Whatever historical information was available to the Slavonic narrators of the siege and final capture of Constantinople in 1453 was put together by them in order to bring the event into their own history and to be able to relate to it in a meaningful way. This process is best illustrated by the story of the ascension of the divine light from Saint Sophia, which is reported by Nestor Iskander in the *Povest' o Car'grade* [The Tale of Constantinople], a text which is the main source for the fall of Constantinople in sixteenth-century Slavonic historiography.[32] The publication of this *Povest'* (Tale) under the name of Ivan Semionovič Peresvetov,[33] together with three other texts, *Povest' o knigah* [The Tale of the Books], *Povest' o care sultane* [The Tale of Mehmet Sultan], and the *Velikaia Čelobitnaja* [Big Supplication], which reproduces the dialogue with Petru the Wallachian Voevod, uncovers the ideological significance of the whole reconstructed narrative and sheds a new light on the miraculous omen.

The Slavonic chronicle is ascribed to a certain Nestor Iskander, a Russian Christian captive, forcibly converted to Islam and serving in the Ottoman army

[29] Emil Lăzărescu, *Sf. Nicodim de la Tismana* (Bucharest, 1970).

[30] Dumitru Năstase, 'Une chronique byzantine perdue et sa version slavo-roumaine (la chronique de Tismana, 1411–1413)', *Cyrillomethodianum*, 4 (1977), 100–71; and Năstase, 'La chronique de Jean Chortasmenos et le dernier siècle de l'historiographie byzantine', *Summeikta*, 8 (1989), 389–404.

[31] Emil Turdeanu, *La littérature bulgare au XIVe siècle et sa diffusion dans les Pays Roumains* (Paris, 1947).

[32] *Povest' o Car'grade (ego osnovanii i vzjatii Turkami v 1453 g.) Nestora-Iskandera XV v.,* ed. Archimandrite Leonid (St Petersburg, 1886).

[33] D. S. Likhachev, *Sočinenija Ivana Peresvetova* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1956); A. A. Zimin, *I.S. Peresvetov in ego sovremenniki* (Moscow, 1958); and Werner Philipp, *Ivan Peresvetov und seine Schriften zur Erneuerung des Moskauer Reiches* (Königsberg, 1935), a fragmentary English translation of Ivan Peresvetov's recommendations in *A Source Book for Russian History*, vol. 1, ed. G. Vernadskii (London, 1972), 161–4.

Table 16.1. Overview of South-Slavonic Historical Literature in Chronological Order

Some of the sources cited here do not bear titles in the original manuscripts, either because the manuscript was mutilated or because the identified source figures as a fragment inside a longer text. Most of editors' titles in modern South-East European languages are a scientific convention given in the modern language of the editor (Serbian, Bulgarian, or Romanian), which could as well be cited directly in English translation.

The first bolded titles designate a category of sources or a generic subject of the sources. The bolded inset italic title designates the original or reconstituted title of the medieval text, followed between square brackets by my English translation and eventually by the medieval author of the text. The modern editions are quoted each in the editor's language. If the medieval text is itself a translation from Greek, the Greek title comes first with its edition, followed by the editions of the Slavonic translation. The quoted sources follow the chronological order which coincides with the order in which they appear in this chapter.

Translations of Greek Chronographs:

M. Weingart, *Byzantské kroniky v literatuře církevněslovanské*, vols. 1–2 (Bratislava, 1922–3).

Synopsis Chronike **by Constantine Manasses (twelfth-century Greek); fourteenth-century Slavonic translation:** *Premudrago Manasia letopisca Sobranie letno.*

Constantinou tou Manasse Sinopsis Hronike, Bekker (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae; Bonn, 1837).

Cronica lui Constatin Manasses, *traducere mediobulgară*, ed. I. Bogdan (Bucharest, 1922).

H. Boissin, *Le Manasses moyen-bulgare* (Paris, 1946).

Letopista na Konstantin Manasi, photographic reproduction of the Vatican manuscript, ed. Iv. Dujčev (Sofia, 1963).

Mihail Moxa, *Cronica universală*, ed. G. Mihăilă (Bucharest, 1989): early modern Romanian translation of Manasses and other historiographic sources.

Chronographikon syntomon **by patriarch Nicephorus. Slavonic translation under various titles:** ***Istorikii*** **in Constantine's of Preslav translation;** *Letopisec v kratce ot Avgusta daže do Konstantina i Zoia* **in Sviatoslav's** *Sbornic* (1073)**;** *Skazanie v' kratce s'ščim ot Adama do nnešnego vremene rodom* **or** *Hr'stianstii carie* **in Slavonic-Romanian manuscripts**

Nicephori Archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani Opuscula Historica, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1880; New York, 1975); ed. and trans. C. Mango as *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History: Text, Translation and Commentary* (CFHB 13; Washington, DC, 1990).

B. St. Angelov, *Iz starata bulgarska, ruska i srbska literatura*, vol. 2 (Sofia, 1967).

Ioan Bogdan, *Cronice inedite atingătoare de istoria românilor* (Bucureşti, 1895)

Chronikon syntomon **by Georgios Hamartolos**

(a) so-called Bulgarian Hamartolos, a Slavonic translation that circulated in Russia as ***Vremennik'*** or ***Vremennyia kniga***, ed. V. M. Istrin, *Knigy vremennyia i obraznyija Georgija Mniha* (Petrograd, 1920).

(b) so-called Serbian Hamartolos, circulated as ***Letovnik'***, in several Serbian-Slavonic and Slavo-Romanian manuscripts.

Alexandriada

Život Aleksandra Velikoga (izdac Vatroslav Jagić; Zagreb, 1871).

Povest' o Varlaame i Ioasafe **[Legend of Barlaam and Josaphat], translation of the Greek text traditionally ascribed to John Damascene, most probably written by Euthymius of Iviron**

Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos: VI/2 Historia animae utilis de Barlaam et Ioasaph (spuria). Text und zehn Appendices, ed. Robert Volk (Berlin and New York, 2006).

Edition of the Slavonic translation: *Povest' o Varlaame i Ioasafe: pamjatnik drevnerusskoj perevodnoj literatury XI–XII vv.*, ed. I. N. Lebedeva (Leningrad, 1985)

Sinodik Carja Borila **[Sinodik of Tsar Boril]**
Popruženko, Mihail G., *Sinodik Carja Borila* (B'lgarski Starini 8; Sofia, 1928).

Serbian Princely Hagiography:

Život svetoga Simeona i svetoga Save **[Life of Saint Simeon and Saint Sava]**
Spisi Sveti Save, ed. Vladimir Ćorović (Zbornik za istoriju, jezik i književnost srpskog naroda 17; Belgrade, 1928).
Sveti Sava, *Sabrani spisi*, ed. D. Bogdanović (Belgrade, 1986).
Žitije Simeona Nemanje od Stefana Prvovenčanog, ed. V. Ćorović, *Svetosavski Zbornik*, vol. 2 (Belgrade, 1938).
Domentijan, *Život svetoga Simeona i svetoga Save*, ed. Dj. Dančić (Belgrade, 1865).
Teodosie Hilandarac, *Život svetoga Save—napisao Domentijan*, ed. Dj. Dančić (Belgrade, 1860) (erroneous identification by the editor).
Teodosie, *Žitije svetog Save*, modern Serbian trans. L. Mirković, rev. D. Bogdanović (Belgrade, 1984).

Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih (frequently quoted by modern scholars with a Latin title ***Vitae regum et arhiepiscoporum Serbiae***)
Edition:
Životi kraljeva i arhiepiskopa srpskih: napisao arhiepiscop Danilo i drugi, ed. Dj. Dančić (Belgrade and Zagreb, 1866): *Life of the King Uroš the Great*, with an introduction containing short texts about kings Radoslav and Vladislav; *Life of King Dragutin*; *Life of Queen Helen* (of Anjou); and *Life of King Milutin*; Lives of the archbishops Arsenije, Sava II, Danilo I, Joanikie I, Jevstatie I; it is questionable whether the short notices about the lives of Jakov, Jevstatije II, Sava III are to be ascribed to Danilo. The first continuator of Danilo wrote the Lives of Stefan Dečanski, of Danilo himself, and of Stefan Dušan. The second continuator completed the collection with the *Lives of the Patriarchs Joanikije I, Sava, and Efrem*.

Žitije Stefana Dečanskog **by Grigorij Camblak [Life of Stefan Dečanski]**
Stare srpske biografije XV i XVII veka: Camblak, Konstantin, Pajsije, trans. L. Mirković (Srpska književna zadruga; Belgrade, 1936).
Grigorij Camblak, Književni rad u Srbiji, ed. Damian Petrović (Prosveta i Srpska književna zadruga, Beograd, 1989).

Žitije Svetoga Kneza Lazara **[Life of Lazar Hrebeljanović]**
Anon., *Prološko žitije kneza Lazara* (1390–3), in Dj. Radojičić, 'Pohvala knezu Lazaru sa stihovima', *Istorijski časopis*, 5 (1955), 251–3.
Patriarch Danilo III, *Slovo o knezu Lazaru* (1392–3), in V. Čorović, 'Siluan i Danilo II, srpski pisi XIV–XV veka', *Glas srpske kraljevske akademije*, 136 (1929), 83–103.
Anon., *Žitije kneza Lazara* (1392–8), in S. Novaković, 'Nešto o knezu Lazaru', *Glasnik srpskog učenog društva*, 21 (1867), 159–64.
Anon., *Slovo o knezu Lazaru* (1392–8), in A. Vukomanović, 'O knezu Lazaru', *Glasnik društva srbske slovesnosti*, 11 (1859), 108–18.
Jefimija monahinja, *Pohvala knezu Lazaru* (1402), in L. Mirković, 'Monahinja Jefimija', *Hrigčanski život*, 1:9–10 (1922), 539–40.
Anon., *Služba knezu Lazaru* (1402–4), in *Srbljak*, 2 (1970), 143–99.
Anon., *Pohvalno slovo knezu Lazaru* (1403–4), in Dj. Dančić, 'Pohvala knezu Lazaru', *Glasnik društva srbske slovesnosti*, 13 (1861), 358–68.
Anon. (or Stefan Lazarević), *Natpis na mramornom stubu na Kosovu* (1403–4), in Dj. Sp. Radojičić, 'Svetovna pohvala knezu Lazaru i kosovskom junacima', *Južnoslovenski filolog*, 20 (1953–4), 140–1.
Andonius Raphael of Lepanto, *Vrse mislni knezu Lazaru* (1420), in Lj. Stojanović, 'Stare srpski hrisovulji, akti, biografije, letopisi, tipici, pomenici, zapisi, i druge', *Spomenik*, 3 (1890), 81–8.
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Table 16.1 Continued

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Putna I [Anonymous Chronicle of Putna, First Version], Slavonic title: *Skazanie v kratce o moldavskih gospodareh*, in Panaitescu, 43–7
Putna II [Anonymous Chronicle of Putna, Second Version], Slavonic title: *Skazanie v kratce o moldavskih gospodareh*, in Panaitescu, 55–60
Cronica lui Macarie [Chronicle of Macarie], in Panaitescu, 77–90, without Slavonic title, appears in two manuscripts as a continuation of Putna I or Putna II. The text starts with a reference to ancient anonymous chroniclers, whom he aims to follow.
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Cronica lui Azarie [Chronicle of Azarie], in Panaitescu, 129–39, without Slavonic title, it is another continuation of the Chronicle of Macarie.
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during the siege. This information is provided by a few Russian copies of the chronicle, of which the earliest dates from about 1512. From this half-page autobiography we may infer also that he escaped the Ottoman camp, entered the city and fought on the Christian side, and then again escaped from Constantinople after 29 May, became a monk, and wrote his memoirs at the end of his life, the precise date of which is unknown. In fact this reconstruction serves one purpose, to turn the Iskander chronicle into an eyewitness document. The majority of modern scholarship on the fall treats Iskander as a more or less truthful account. Nevertheless the chronicle appears as an anonymous account in all the major Russian chronicles of the sixteenth century, as a work of Ivan Peresvetov in many mid-sixteenth-century and later manuscripts and as a still anonymous account of the fall in a seventeenth-century Romanian translation.[34] There is no strong reason to oppose the hypothesis that the Iskander autobiographical notice was appended to the anonymous account. The problems with Nestor Iskander's chronicle lie in its huge errors or confusions related to the siege. This so-called eyewitness sees in Constantinople in April and May 1453 what no other contemporary source could see: an orthodox patriarch of Constantinople surrounded by a synod of bishops and numerous clergy, an empress, wife of Constantine, their three daughters; and he calls Constantine son of John VIII. His chronology of events is in contradiction with Nicolo Barbaro and the basic Greek accounts, the days of the month do not correspond to the days of the week in his own account. But the biggest surprise is the apotheosis-entry of Mehmet II into Constantinople: wise, magnanimous, venerating the Greek emperor Constantine, the impression conveyed is that he has come to revenge the horrible assault on the city, restore it to its previous dignity, and offer his protection to the persecuted Christian community. With or without the long list of prophecies about the fall of Constantinople, appended to the account in several manuscripts, the text emphasizes the acceptance of the event by the Christians and its natural place in God's plan.

SLAVO-ROMANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY: WALLACHIA

Although there are no extant Slavonic chronicles of Wallachia, a critical analysis of the seventeenth-century Romanian chronicles demonstrated that these were translated from sixteenth-century Slavonic originals.[35] Nevertheless, there were several

[34] N. Iorga, 'Une source négligée de la prise de Constantinople', in *Contributions à l'histoire de Byzance et des pays post-byzantins* (Bucharest, 1927), 59–129; and I. Dujčev, *La conquête turque et la prise de Constantinople dans la littérature slave de l'époque, Medioevo bizantino-slavo*, vol. 3 (Rome, 1971), 333–487.

[35] Matei Cazacu, 'La littérature slavo-roumaine (XVe–XVIIe siècles)', *Etudes Balkaniques, Cahiers Pierre Belon*, 4 (1997), 100: Slavonic chronicles were produced throughout the sixteenth century, under the reign of Radu of Afumaţi, Alexandru Mircea, and Mihnea II. Starting with the reign of Michael the Brave (1593–1601) the court chronicle of Wallachia was composed directly in Romanian.

Slavonic texts, which circulated in Wallachia in the fifteenth century: the Slavonic translation of the chronicle of John Chortasmenos, discussed above, which was used as a source by Mihail Moxa in his *Cronograful* [Universal Chronicle] of 1620 written in Romanian;[36] another independent historical writing, the fifteenth-century *Skazanie o Dracule Voievode* [Tale of Dracula],[37] a text composed in Russian-Slavonic dialect by Feodor Kuricyn, ambassador of Moscow's grand-prince Ivan III, based on oral and written testimonies about the awe-inspiring deeds of Vlad the Impaler. In 1517, Neagoe Basarab, prince of Wallachia, commissioned the monk Gabriel, Protos of Mount Athos, to write the *Life of Nifon Patriarch of Constantinople*,[38] which contains important details about Wallachia in the period 1504–17 and the eulogy of Prince Neagoe. This text was used in the seventeenth century as a source for the Romanian chronicle of Wallachia. Among the most important monuments of Slavonic literature produced in Wallachia is the work ascribed to Prince Neagoe himself, *The Admonitions of Neagoe Basarab to his Son Theodosius*. The 'admonitions' that the prince writes for his son and other successors, some of religious content, others of political behaviour, are introduced by a selection of historical texts, which are meant to serve as an example for the ruler: the deeds of biblical kings, Euthimius's of Tŭrnovo *Pohvalnoe Slovo* [Eulogy of Constantine the Great], the *Povest' o Varlaame i Ioasafe* [Life of Barlaam and Josaphat] and other Christian rulers. It has the same function as Machiavelli's *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*: to derive rules for politics from the study of history. In Wallachia, however, it was done with the intellectual tools available in Slavonic translation.

SLAVO-ROMANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY: MOLDAVIA

By chance several redactions of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Moldavian court annals were preserved, allowing us to observe the evolution of Slavonic historiography in South-Eastern Europe. The oldest historiographic layer (in the second half of the fifteenth century) is represented by the anonymous *Chronicle of Moldavia*, which has two titles, *Sii leatopisec ot toli nača sen, proizvoleniem Božiem, Moldavskaa zemlja* and *Moldavstii carie*. Erroneously identified by its first editor Ioan Bogdan as annals of the monastery of Bistriţa, the *Chronicle* is in fact a redaction of the Court Annals of Suceava (residence of the prince of Moldavia), probably written in the last years of the reign of Stefan the Great (1457–1504).[39]

[36] Mihail Moxa, *Cronica universală*, ed. G. Mihăilă (Bucharest, 1989).

[37] P. P. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV–XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan* (Bucharest, 1959), 200-7; Matei Cazacu, *Dracula* (Paris, 2004).

[38] *Vie de saint Niphon patriarche de Constantinople*, ed. Tit Simedrea (Bucharest, 1937); new edn by G. Mihăilă and D. Zamfirescu, *Literatura română veche*, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1969); and Petre Ş. Năsturel, 'Recherches sur les redactions—greco-roumaines de la Vie de Saint Niphon II patriarche de Constantinople', *RESEE*, 5:1–2 (1967), 41–75.

[39] Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 1–14.

Furthermore, the Court Annals of Suceava were used by Hartman Schedel in his *Weltchronik* [Universal Chronicle], better known as the *Nuremburg Chronicle*. Slightly later (in the second and third decade of the sixteenth century) monastic annals, produced in the princely foundation of Putna (editor's identification: Putna I and Putna II), used the same source, a later Polish translation of Moldavian court annals at the end of the sixteenth century depends upon the same fifteenth-century Moldavian historical source (editor's identification: *Moldavian-Polish Chronicle of Moldavia*).[40] The focus of this material is on political and military events wherein the prince of Moldavia plays the crucial role, and on the relation of Moldavia with Central European powers.[41]

Another category of chronicles favours the integration of Moldavia in the South-East European context, which means late Byzantine and Ottoman, and stresses the origins of the Vlachs. Such is the *Skazanie vkratce o Moldavskyh Gosudareh* [Short History of the Moldavian Princes], often cited in modern historiography as the *Legend of Roman and Vlahata*, which traces the origins of the Moldavians. The text appears as an annexed chapter 13 to the Russian *Voskresenskaja Lietopis* [Chronicle Compiled in the Voskresenski Monastery],[42] where the Vlachs are presented as descendants of Rome, but having deserted Old Rome for the sake of Orthodoxy. Thus ethno-linguistic origin and religious allegiance become reconciled. Another short chronicle, with the incipit *Ot s'zdania že mirou do leta sih carie 6867 let* [From the Creation of the World to the Time of these Emperors 6867 Years], called by the editor *Cronica sârbo-moldovenească* [Moldo-Serbian Chronicle], covers the years 1359–1512 and narrates the suppression of Christian rule in the Balkans by the Ottoman sultans from the mid-fourteenth to the early sixteenth century.[43]

Three sixteenth-century Moldavian chronicles, all named after their authors, the chronicles of Macarie, Eftimie, and Azarie,[44] emphasize the continuity between universal history (i.e. Roman, Greek) and local history (i.e. Serbia, Moldavia). Their chronicles imitate the language and the style of the Slavonic translation of the Byzantine verse chronicle of Constantine Manasses. More important, all these chronicles are contained in miscellaneous manuscripts, where universal and sacred history plays a central role. The manuscript copied by the monk Isaia of Slatina in 1561 (Kiev Theological Academy Library nr. 116, olim Počaev monastery) consists of the following elements:

[40] Panaitescu, *Cronicle slavo-române,* 164–77.

[41] Ştefan Andreescu, 'Les débuts de l'historiographie en Moldavie', *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 12:6 (1973), 1017–35.

[42] *Polnoe Sobranie Russkih Letopisei*, vol. 7 (St Petersburg, 1856), 256–9; and Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 154–6.

[43] Ibid., 189–91.

[44] Ibid., 129–39 (Azarie), 109–16 (Eftimie), 77–90 (Macarie). On Macarie see also Sorin Ullea, 'O surprinzătoare personalitate a evului mediu românesc: cronicarul Macarie', *Studii şi cercetări de istoria artei*, 32 (1985), 14–48.

the *Paschalia*; the *Tale of the Separation of the Latin and Greek Churches*; several anti-Latin polemical writings; Nikephoros's *Short History*; a version of the *Mladji Letopis'* [Newer Serbian Chronicle] for the years 1355–1490; the *Chronicle of Tismana*, a Slavonic translation of a short chronicle by John Chortasmenos for the years 1296–1413; the monastic annals of Putna (Putna I) for fifteenth-century Moldavia; and the Chronicles of Macarie and Eftimie for the sixteenth century.

Similarly the manuscript O/XVII/13 of Petersburg State Library (olim Sankt Petersburg imperial Library), copied towards the end of the sixteenth century, contains Nikephoros's *Short History*, the monastic annals of Putna (Putna II) for fifteenth-century Moldavia, and the Chronicles of Macarie and Azarie for the sixteenth century. Twentieth-century scholars Petre Năsturel and Dumitru Năstase interpreted this historiographic construction of sixteenth-century monastic ideologists to be a sign of Moldavia's attempt to pose as the heir of the Byzantine Empire.[45] The manuscript found by Ion Bogdan in the library of the Old Believers Community in Tulcea (today BAR 649, Library of the Romanian Academy) also contains the *Synopsis Chronike*, a list of kings of Israel, and the anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia that bears the Slavonic title *Moldavstii carie*.

Hagiography and monastic foundation stories continued to be practiced, as in the earlier Serbian and Bulgarian cases, as a popular form of historical thought, and continued to play a role in court ideology.[46] A late sixteenth-century example is *Cuvântul pentru zidirea Sfintei Mănăstiri Pângăraţi* [The Tale of the Pângăraţi Monastery].[47]

Around 1600 Wallachia and Moldavia entered a new phase in their political and ideological development, which required the adoption of Romanian as the language of court historiography. Nevertheless there is still a debate as to whether Grigore Ureche's *Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei* [Chronicle of Moldavia] had been first written in Slavonic.[48] Romanian scholarship still considers it the first expression of a national historiographic consciousness, but this is a matter for exploration elsewhere.

[45] Petre Ş. Năsturel, 'Considérations sur l'idée impériale chez les Roumains', *Byzantina*, 5 (1973), 395–413; Dumitru Năstase, 'L'idée impériale dans les pays roumains et le "crypto-empire chrétien" sous la domination ottomane: Etat et importance du problème', *Summeikta*, 4 (1981), 201–50; Năstase, 'Imperial Claims in the Romanian Principalities, from the 14th to 17th Century: New Contributions', in Lowell Clucas (ed.), *The Byzantine Legacy in Eastern Europe* (New York, 1988), 185–224.

[46] Petre Guran and Bernard Flusin (eds.), *L'empereur hagiographe: Culte des saints et monarchie byzantine et post-byzantine* (Bucharest, 2001).

[47] Petre Ş. Năsturel, 'Le Dit du monastère de Pângăraţi', *Bulletin de la Bibliothèque Roumaine de Freiburg*, 10 (1983), 387–420.

[48] N. A. Ursu, 'Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei până la Aron Voda, opera lui Simion Dascalul', *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A.D. Xenopol*, 26:1 (1981), 363–79.

CONCLUSION

From this quick inquiry into Slavonic South-East European historiography a common feature appears which also explains the slow pace at which these local communities developed a historical consciousness: it is what we may call the 'nostalgia of the empire'. Byzantine Christianity in Slavonic, through its principal spokesperson, the monastic scholar, continued to express itself as a salvation community, which at times coincided with a survival community, running through history towards its eschatological goal. Thus local history had a meaning only in as much as it participated in the fulfillment of the scriptures.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

1198	Creation of the second Bulgarian Empire
1199	Death of Saint Simeon
1204	Fourth Crusade takes Constantinople and establishes here the capital of the Latin Empire
1236	Death of Saint Sava
1241	Tatar invasion in South-Eastern Europe
1259	Michael VIII conquers Constantinople and establishes here again the capital of the Byzantine Empire
1282	Milutin occupies the throne of Serbia
1345	Stefan Dušan proclames the Serbian Empire
1353	The Turks occupy Gallipoli
1371	Battle of Čirmen at the Marica river
1389	Battle of Kossovo
1396	Battle of Nicopolis; Bulgaria completely conquered by the Turks
1402	Unsuccessful siege of Constantinople by the Turks
1444	Battle of Varna
1453	Conquest of Constantinople; death of the last Byzantine emperor
1457–1504	Stefan the Great prince of Moldavia, principal opponent of the Sultan Mehmet II in Eastern Europe
1512–21	Neagoe Basarab, prince of Wallachia
1527–46	Petru Rareș, prince of Moldavia
1526	Battle of Mohacs
1529	Siege of Vienna
1538	Campaign of Süleiman the Magnificent in Eastern Europe; occupation of Moldavia
1571	Battle of Lepanto

KEY HISTORICAL SOURCES

For a list of South-Slavonic historical literature see Table 16.1 above.

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Chapter 17

Annals and Chronicles in Western Europe

Sarah Foot

> In the year 919 from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ a marvellous hailstone fell at Reims. It was larger than a hen's egg and was wider than half a person's palm. However, even larger hail was seen to have fallen in certain other places. This year there was no wine in the *pagus* [region] of Reims, or much too little. The Northmen ravaged, destroyed and annihilated all of Brittany in Cournouaille, which is located on the seashore. The Bretons were abducted and sold, while those who escaped were driven out. The Magyars raided Italy and part of Francia, that is, Lothar's kingdom.[1]
>
> Flodoard of Rheims

Laconic, stilted, and inconsequential this annal, describing events across Western Europe in the year AD 919, typifies the annalistic genre in form, style, and content. It fits well into what had, by the early tenth century, become an established mode of writing about the past in the Latin West. With other early medieval annalists, the author shares a preoccupation with extremes of weather and focus on the ills suffered by his people, the Franks, and their neighbours, especially those misfortunes which resulted from warfare. Although the compilers of many sets of annals remain anonymous, we can in this instance identify the author. Flodoard, a priest and canon of the cathedral church of Rheims in Western Frankia, began compiling a year-by-year account of his own times in or around 919, continuing the already established tradition of annal-writing at Rheims initiated by Archbishop Hincmar.[2] Flodoard's other hagiographical and historical works—a great poetic epic on the triumphs of Christ, and his *Historia Remensis ecclesiae* [History of the Church of Rheims] from the foundation of the city of Rheims up to his own day—adopted different literary forms. Those texts revealed him as a conscious stylist and rhetorician, yet his annals remained close to the

[1] *The Annals of Flodoard of Rheims*, 919 (1), ed. Phillipe Lauer as *Les annales de Flodoard, publiées d'après les manuscrits, avec une introduction et des notes* (Paris, 1906); trans. Bernard S. Bachrach and Stephen Fanning as *Annals of Flodoard* (Toronto and Plymouth, 2004), 3.

[2] Bachrach and Fanning, *Annals of Flodoard*, pp. viii–ix; and Janet L. Nelson, 'The Annals of St-Bertin', in Margaret T. Gibson and Nelson (eds.), *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom* (2nd rev. edn, London, 1990), 23–40.

stylistically more limited forms demanded by their genre. Beginning each year's entry at Christmas, Flodoard strove generally to record events in strict chronological order within each twelve-month period showing, in some of his extended accounts, an interest in explaining the final outcome of events and thus some concern with causation.[3] Time was for these, and for all sets of annals from our period, the central organizing principle within which to explain events. Counting the time in years that had elapsed since the incarnation of Christ, annalists sought to plot the deeds of their own day onto the larger map of God's plan for humanity. Implicitly, each compiler understood his schema to continue beyond his own present into a future of indeterminate length, which would culminate in the second coming.[4] Located within this eschatological understanding, Flodoard used his annals, as Bernard Bachrach and Stephen Fanning have argued, 'to show how God worked through human agency to affect the world in which Flodoard lived'.[5]

Flodoard's annals make an interesting case-study for they require us to challenge conventional understandings of the development of historical writing—and historical consciousness—in the early medieval West. As a genre annals have typically been deemed a primitive (to some minds, a non-literary, non-narrative) form of literature.[6] In an evolutionary narrative of the invention of Western historical writing, annals precede the chronicle—a more expansive account of events similarly arranged within a chronological framework—which itself preceded the emergence of 'proper' history.[7] Lacking both historical awareness and most of the characteristics of proper narratives, annals and chronicles are thus thought to adopt a temporal framework which determines the episodic nature of their literary form and the minimalism of their expression. In an inevitably paratactic style, they recount seemingly unconnected episodes in a relentless sequence: 'and then, and then, and then . . . '.[8] Some collections of annals have formal beginnings fixed at an obvious moment in the divine chronology such as the year of the incarnation itself, or in the past of the people who are their main subject, as in the case of the so-called *Annales regni Francorum* [Royal Frankish Annals].[9] Others—like Flodoard's—start at a moment chosen apparently by nothing more than their

[3] Bachrach and Fanning, *The Annals of Flodoard*, p. xi.

[4] Rosamond McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages', *TRHS*, 6th ser., 7 (1997), 101–29; and Sarah Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form: Narrative in Annals and Chronicles', in Nancy Partner (ed.), *Writing Medieval History* (London, 2005), 88–108 at 97.

[5] Fanning and Bachrach, *Annals of Flodoard*, p. xi; compare ch. 24 by Charles West in this volume.

[6] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550–c.1307* (London, 1974), 29.

[7] R. Lane Poole, *Chronicles and Annals: A Brief Outline of their Origin and Growth* (Oxford, 1926); C. W. Jones, *Saints Lives and Chronicles in Early England* (Ithaca, NY, 1947), 26, 34; and Michael McCormick, *Les annales du haut moyen âge* (Turnhout, 1975). For a critique of this view see Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form'.

[8] Compare Hayden White, *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore, Md. 1987), 5–11.

[9] Bernard Walter Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles* (Ann Arbor, Mich. 1972).

author's sudden desire to create a permanent written record of the occurrences of a given year. While many lack obvious beginnings, all sets of annals lack formal endings. Generations of fresh scribes continued some annals, while others were taken away from the ecclesiastical communities where they had first been compiled to new centres of production, as for example the *Annales regni Francorum*.[10] Some annalistic writings simply stop for no apparent reason beyond that no one chose to add any account of the events of a fresh calendar year. Whether such abrupt 'endings' were deliberate or coincidental must, of course, remain uncertain.

When Flodoard took up annal-writing at Rheims in 919, he did not attempt to fill in the blank years unrecorded since his predecessor at Hincmar had stopped compiling annals in 882. Flodoard's annals stand alone, compiled with more local preoccupations in mind, less concerned than the compilers of the *Annales regni Francorum* and their continuators with the deeds of the Carolingian royal family.[11] His geographical perspectives reflected a more fluid political environment in which other princely and ducal families had come to prominence filling the vacuum left by declining Carolingian royal power after the death of the last emperor in 888.[12] Through the various political changes of his lifetime, and the disruptions within the See of Rheims, Flodoard continued to compile his annals; they stop suddenly in the year 966 with an entry entirely typical of their author's interests and style: 'In the year 966, King Lothair married Emma, the daughter of the former Italian king. Archbishop Odelricus excommunicated Count Ragenoldus because he was obstinately holding *villae* of the church of Reims. This same count and his men raided some places of this diocese and plundered and burned them.'[13] Some manuscripts add the information that Flodoard died in spring of that year, aged seventy-three.[14]

The temporally universal perspective and relevance given to sets of Western annals by the fixing of their content within a divinely inspired time-frame are often belied by the narrow geographical focus and frequent parochialism of much of their content. While Flodoard's central preoccupation was with the affairs of the church of Rheims, the significance of his church and its archbishops (to whom Flodoard was close) in contemporary politics gave him a broader perspective than many churchmen of his day, and a capacity to set Rheims's own concerns into a wider picture. He readily condemned those who sought to thwart the church's interests, to despoil its lands or harm its clergy, whether they were local landowners or princes whose own territorial ambitions conflicted with the church's, or non-Christian outsiders (such as the Northmen or Vikings).

[10] For example, the *Annales regni Francorum* continued as the *Annals Bertiniani* and the *Annals of Fulda*; see below.

[11] Fanning and Bachrach, *Annals of Flodoard*, pp. xi–xiii.

[12] Ibid., pp. xvi–xxvi.

[13] *Annals of Flodoard*, 966 (48 AB), trans. Fanning and Bachrach, 68.

[14] Fanning and Bachrach, *Annals of Flodoard*, pp. x–xi.

No non-Christians found favour in Flodoard's eyes, whether Viking, Magyar, and Saracen, but he could also criticize the behaviour of Christians such as Theobald, 'the Trickster', Count of Tours, or leading ecclesiastics such as Hugh, archbishop of Rheims.[15] In common with many early medieval annalists, and indeed writers of other narratives about the past in this period, Flodoard took a particular interest in recording events of religious significance, the deeds of churchmen and miraculous happenings. His annals abound with examples of the miraculous and of the working of the hand of God in the lives of his contemporaries, and he frequently recorded unusual astronomical phenomena as well as abnormal occurrences in the natural environment, or odd behaviour among animals and plants. The former might well portend the latter: in 922 three suns appeared in the sky, a visual sign of the earthquake which occurred later the same year.[16]

As a snapshot of the preoccupations of the immediate circle of a canon of one of the more prominent cathedrals in the Western Frankish kingdom, Flodoard's annals prove revealing. Their year-by-year composition and lack of authorial voice gives them a veneer of dispassionate objectivity, offering an insight into how the affairs of the city, the kingdom, and the world beyond were perceived within the cathedral community, as well as some glimpses of the predominantly agricultural concerns of the surrounding population. How misleading that impression may be is only evident because we can read Flodoard's annals in the light of his other historical writing, particularly his *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae* [History of the Church of Rheims].[17] There he appears a far from neutral and impassive observer, more than capable of using evidence selectively to advance a particular cause and skilful in the rhetorical construction of an argumentative case. We would not necessarily assume that the same professional skills did not play an equal role in the compilation of his annals, were it not that annals have such a poor status within conventional understandings of the hierarchy of historical texts. Before turning to explore other examples of chronologically organized writing about the past from Western Christendom, we should begin with some issues of definition. Should annals and chronicles properly be included in discussion of medieval historiography, or must we treat them rather as imperfect forms of history, early attempts at representing the past in literary modes that did not quite achieve genuinely

[15] *Annals of Flodoard*, 946 (28E), 947 (29I), 948 (30A), trans. Fanning and Bachrach, 44–7.

[16] *Annals of Flodoard* 922 (4F, 4H), trans. Bachrach and Fanning, 7; compare the outbreak of plague in 956 (38B), 61–2. For further discussion of annalists' interests in natural phenomena see Sarah Foot, 'Plenty, Portents and Plague: Ecclesiastical Readings of the Natural World in Early Medieval Europe', in Peter Clarke and Tony Claydon (eds.), *God's Bounty? The Churches and the Natural World* (Woodbridge, 2010), 15–41.

[17] Flodoard, *Histoire de l'eglise de Reims*, ed. M. Lejeune (Reims, 1854–5; repr. *Revue du Moyen Âge* Latin, 37–8 [1981–2]); and Michel Sot, *Un historien et son église au Xe siècle: Flodoard de Reims* (Paris, 1993).

historical articulation? Further, did annals and chronicles represent discrete literary forms, or did medieval writers treat all writing about the past organized within a temporal framework as a single genre.[18]

DEFINITIONS AND MODELS

The word *historia* was not restricted in the medieval Latin West to historiography; literally the noun simply meant 'story' and referred to many sorts of texts ranging from narrative accounts, saints' lives, scriptural explication, to poetry. Although we might describe a writer such as Flodoard as a historian, and he used the word *historia* to describe his narrative about the church of Rheims, he could not have termed himself thus, for the notion of the professional historian did not exist in his period any more than it did in the contemporary Islamic world.[19] Nonetheless, medieval writers recognized that *historia* could represent a literary, narrative genre of a particular type, and they knew the conventional classical definitions of the form as encapsulated in Cicero's *On oratory*.[20] The distinction that the fourth-century Greek writer Eusebius made between his own writings as history and chronicle (translated into Latin as *historia* and *chronicon*) fitted clearly within this classical understanding: history, he said, denoted a continuous narrative while chronicle was a mode of writing organized by years.[21] Writing in Italy in the sixth century, Cassiodorus yet more helpfully encapsulated the central difference between Eusebius's two forms in his *Institutiones* (562), referring to chronicles as 'the mere shadows of history and very brief reminders of the times'.[22] In the first book of his *Etymologiae* [Etymologies] devoted to grammar, the seventh-century Spanish bishop Isidore of Seville distinguished fundamentally between two types of writing—*fabulae*, stories, fictional accounts, and *historiae*, accounts of things which really happened. He differentiated *historiae* from *annales* (annals) not on grounds of their form or narrative structure, but because of the subject matter with which each dealt: 'history is about those times which we have seen, but annals are about those years which our age does not

[18] As argued by Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, 29.

[19] D. M. Deliyannis, 'Introduction', in Deliyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2003), 2–3, 6.

[20] T. P. Wiseman, 'Practice and Theory in Roman Historiography', *History*, 66 (1981), 375–93 at 375–6. See also D. N. Dumville, 'What is a Chronicle?' in Erik Kooper (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle II* (Amsterdam and New York, 2002), 1–27 at 2 on classical Greek distinctions between the mere recording of events and philosophical narratives that explain how things happened.

[21] Bernard Guenée, 'Histoires, annales, chroniques: Essai sur les genres historiques au Moyen Age', *Annales: Economies, sociétés, civilisations*, 28 (1973), 997–1016; and Bert Roest, 'Medieval Historiography: About Generic Constraints and Scholarly Constructions', in Roest and Herman Vanstiphout (eds.), *Aspects of Genre and Type in Pre-Modern Literary Cultures* (Groningen, 1999), 47–61.

[22] Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, II. xvii. 2, trans. L.W. Jones as *An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings by Cassiodorus Senator* (New York, 1946), 116.

know'. In explaining the various sorts of historical genres he did not mention chronicles; chronicle he placed rather in his account of units of time (starting with an hour, a day, a week, a month, etc.), a chronicle being a means to describe and thus to explain the ages of the world.[23]

Despite the apparent clarity of these distinctions, medieval Latin writers about the past did not necessarily follow them closely, but often mixed separate genres within a single text to such an extent that some modern scholars have argued about whether clear-cut historiographical genres were really recognized in the early Middle Ages.[24] A decision to write exclusively about chronologically organized material from medieval Western Europe, may thus potentially impose a more fixed notion of genre onto the body of surviving literature about the past than its authors might have intended. This chapter deliberately ignores the more expansive histories written in the early medieval West by writers such as Bede, Gregory of Tours, and Jordanes which Felice Lifshitz addresses in the next chapter,[25] as well as the the later medieval histories of Otto of Freising or William of Malmesbury and the chronicles of France and of the Crusades which Charles Briggs examines.[26] Instead attention focuses here exclusively on texts for which the central organizing principle is the arrow of time.

Since the writing of chronologically organized accounts of the past extends back long before the period covered by this volume, compliers of medieval chronicles and sets of annals had numerous literary models on which to draw, among which the annals of the Roman period and universal or world chronicles seem particularly relevant to this discussion. The latter proved attractive to medieval churchmen seeking to locate events of long-distant and more-recent pasts within a single, overarching chronological structure. Medieval chronicle-writing can thus be traced back to the early fourth century, although it is conventionally argued that annals (a form which had a longer history, stretching farther back into antiquity), were not apparently first compiled in the Latin West before the seventh or eighth centuries.[27] Compiled in the early 300s, the *Chronicle* of Eusebius provided an important model for Western churchmen among whom it circulated in a translation by Jerome which extended the narrative which had begun with the birth of Abraham beyond AD 325 to 378. Jerome-Eusebius was itself continued in various places, for example in the so-called *Chronica Gallica*

[23] Isidore, *Etymologiae*, I. xliv. 4; ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1911); trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof as *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), 67; Deliyannis, 'Introduction', 3–4; Foot, 'Finding the Meaning', 89; and Faith Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool, 1999), pp. lxvii–lxix, 353–5.

[24] Felice Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre: "Hagiographical" Texts as Historical Narrative', *Viator*, 25 (1994), 95–113.

[25] See ch. 18 by Felice Lifshitz in this volume.

[26] See ch. 19 by Charles F. Briggs in this volume.

[27] McCormick, *Les Annales du haut moyen age*; and Rosamond McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2005), 7–33. See further below and compare also Muriel Debié and David Taylor's discussion of Syriac examples from late antiquity in ch. 8 of this volume.

[Gallic Chronicle] of 452, or the *Chronicon* of Prosper of Aquitaine (extending to 455).[28] The Hispanic writer Orosius also chose to begin his *Historiae adversus paganos* [Histories Against the Pagans] (*c.*417) with Creation; he set recent catastrophes in the Roman world—specifically the sack of Rome by the Goths in 410—in time-deep perspective by cataloguing other human catastrophes starting with the ejection of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden.[29]

A tradition of writing world or universal chronicles continued in medieval Christendom and in the Islamic world beyond the end of antiquity and may have had some influence on the growth of Western annals and chronicles. Although interesting as a discrete genre, universal or world chronicles stand apart from other medieval chronicles and deserve the more elaborate separate treatment that they receive elsewhere in this volume.[30] My concern here is with the recitation of events closer in space and time to their authors, organized on the temporal axis of elapsed time since the Incarnation. Since conventional orthodoxy defines annals both as a more primitive form than chronicles and as the precursor of the latter form, we should start with annals, although as has already been suggested, we might want to question the validity of a rigid division between the two genres of annal and chronicle.

THE ORIGINS OF ANNALISTIC WRITING IN THE MEDIEVAL WEST

Annals, notes of the significant (or memorable) events of a single year, are among the earliest forms of historical writing known in the Babylonian and ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds. Yet modern historians have argued that the first annals appeared in the Latin West only in the seventh or eighth centuries, after the circulation of the tables for calculating the date of Easter developed by Dionysiac Exiguus (d. *c.*544). R. Lane Poole argued:

> almost from the first moment that Easter Tables were drawn up with the Year of the Incarnation supplied, they were employed as a framework in which to enter notices of historical events. These [Dionysiac] Tables with their notices represent the earliest type of medieval Chronicle,

[28] M. I. Allen, 'Universal History 300–1000', in Deliyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, 20–4; Brian Croke, 'The Origins of the Christian World Chronicle', in Croke and A. M. Emmett (eds.), *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Sydney, 1987), 116–31; and Stephen Muhlberger, *The Fifth-Century Chroniclers: Prosper, Hydatius and the Gallic Chronicler of 452* (Leeds, 1990).

[29] Orosius, *Historiae aduersus paganos*, ed. and trans. Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet, 3 vols. (Paris, 1990–1); Allen, 'Universal History', 26–7; compare Michael Whitby, 'Imperial Christian Historiography', in Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 1: *Beginnings to AD 600* (Oxford, 2011), 346–70; and ch. 21 by Andrew Marsham in this volume.

[30] See ch. 21 by Andrew Marsham in this volume.

which it is convenient to distinguish from the more elaborate works into which they developed by the name of annals.[31]

Poole believed that the structure and form of annals emerged from their origin in the blank spaces left in (or in the margins of) tables that had originally been intended not to record events of the past but rather to set out a rhythm for the future by charting the fluctuations in the cyclical liturgical year.[32] Thus the characteristic features of paschal tables became the defining features of annals: every year that elapsed on the arrow of God's time was recorded; each year occupied a single line of the table; brevity was thus essential. Restricted by space on the manuscript page and the finite chronological horizons defined by lists of years in nineteen-year cycles, the contents of annals were highly circumscribed; only in the more developed form of the chronicle would it prove possible to offer more expansive narratives of a longer past.[33] According to Poole, and to those who have followed him, it was from the British Isles that the annalistic literary genre spread elsewhere in Europe, transmitted to the Frankish world by Anglo-Saxon missionaries in the eighth century.[34]

In recent years several scholars have challenged this narrative of the origin of annals to show how unlikely it is that the form first emerged in early medieval Britain. Paschal tables with historical notes survive from various places in late antiquity, extending back long before Dionysius Exiguus tied such tables to incarnational dating. They occur for example not just in copies of the cyclical tables drawn up by Victorius of Aquitaine in 457 which extend for 532 years, but also in earlier Easter tables that were not constructed on a fundamentally nineteen-year pattern.[35] Annals were written in the Gaelic world earlier than in England, and before the introduction of Dionysian Easter reckoning there; we may see substantial continuity in the compilation of annals from late antiquity into the early medieval period, associating the spread of the genre with the transmission of Christianity.[36] In origin, annals might best be associated conceptually with the early medieval passion for list-making, just as listing appears to have

[31] R. Lane Poole, *Chronicles and Annals: A Brief Outline of their Origin and Growth* (Oxford, 1926), 26; Poole's view was repeated by McCormick, *Les annales du haut moyen âge*.

[32] Poole, *Chronicles and Annals*, 28; and McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), 97.

[33] Poole, *Chronicles and Annals*, 48; and Dumville, 'What is a Chronicle?' 5.

[34] Poole, *Chronicles and Annals*, 27–41; Denis Hay, *Annalists and Historians: Western Historiography from the 8th to the 18th Centuries* (London, 1977), 4–45; and Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, 129–30.

[35] C. W. Jones, 'The Victorian and Dionysiac Paschal Tables in the West', *Speculum*, 9 (1934), 408–21. Also Kenneth Harrison, *The Framework of Anglo-Saxon History to AD 900* (Cambridge, 1976), 45.

[36] Dumville, 'What is a Chronicle?' 7. See also Daibhi O'Croinin, 'Early Irish Annals from Easter Tables: A Case Restated', *Peritia*, 2 (1983), 74–86, who argues for annalistic notes in pre-Dionysiac Easter tables in Ireland, while sustaining the conventional understanding that annals developed out of notes in Easter tables.

been one of the triggers for the emergence of Arabic chronography in the seventh and eighth centuries. In the same way that ecclesiastics made lists of the names of kings in succession, or of bishops and abbots, of the names of the dead (to be remembered in masses and with a community's prayers),[37] of landed donations, or of the rents due from their tenants, so the same clergy listed memorable events of the recent (or even the more distant past).[38] To see list-making as characteristic of an early medieval mindset does not, however, help to determine whether the form emerged out of notes in or beside Easter tables.

One weakness of the accepted narrative of the origins of annals as a development from notes in paschal tables lies in the nature of the manuscript evidence. For, as Rosamond McKitterick has shown, most manuscripts containing Easter tables with added historical notes postdate the earliest manuscripts preserving sets of sequential annals dissociated from paschal computation. She argued that the conventional view downgrades too far the eighth-century Frankish annals as a mode of historical writing and fails to recognize the critical link between the years of the Incarnation and the linear progression of Christian history with Frankish perceptions of their people's place within that divine schema. To her mind, 'Easter tables with annal entries are a legitimate adaptation of the idea of annals'; they represent another facet of regional response to the centralized, dynastic narrative of the court-produced record.[39] This 'chicken and egg' debate about which came first, marginal notes in Easter tables or free-standing annual records, preserves an evolutionary understanding of the development of modes of historical writing in the Latin West that now requires revision. Without adopting in its stead a 'big bang' theory of the emergence of Western medieval historical writing, we should recognize a more symbiotic relationship between the various early attempts to record information about the past in literary forms, and accept that paschal annals and short annalistic notes set against sequences of AD dates copied separately from Easter computus could serve different purposes. As Joanna Story has argued, the so-called minor annals written in late eighth- and ninth-century Frankia,

> provided a forum for the development of a nuanced, narrative account of Carolingian history; Easter tables provided a rigid structure that linked the Frankish present to the whole of the

[37] Consider for example the *Annales necrologici* of Fulda. Begun in 779, thirty years after the foundation of Fulda, these recorded under incarnational dates of successive years the monks who had died in that year. As Janneke Raaijmakers has argued, the monks thus 'embedded their own past in an order of time in which Christ was both the beginning and the end, making their history a part of salvation history'. The lists both formed and symbolized the identity of the living monastic community, preserved its collective memory and held out a hope that the whole *congregatio* would in the future be reunited: 'Memory and Identity: The *Annales necrologici* of Fulda', in Richard Corradini, Rob Meens, Christina Pössel, and Philip Shaw (eds.), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2006), 303–21 at 320–1.

[38] Dumville, 'What is a Chronicle?' 9; and Foot, 'Finding the Meaning', 94.

[39] McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 97–104, at 99; this represents an expanded account of the same argument made in her 'Constructing the Past', 110–14; see also Joanna Story, 'The Frankish Annals of Lindisfarne and Kent', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 34 (2005), 59–109 at 73.

Christian past, and provided systematic chronological stepping-stones back via the emperors of old to the birth (and death) of Christ himself. Uniquely, as a form of historical expression, the tables also provided a route to the future, since they contained not only the ghosts of Easters past but also those of Easters-yet-to-come.[40]

One can argue similarly about the origins of the so-called *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* where the accumulated English pasts that the first recension (the common stock) of those annals collects, prefigure what was to come in future generations; they were the shadow of a future in which the English nation would one day be glorious under its West Saxon kings.[41]

Historical writing in the Latin West thus appears to have developed through a process of literary growth markedly messier than the neat, sequential narrative that Poole devised. From the fourth century onwards in various parts of the late antique Roman world and at its margins, blank spaces in paschal tables clearly became repositories for notices of various sorts, whether randomly remembered and slotted into their chronological place or systematically inserted (perhaps retrospectively).[42] The suitability of Easter tables as repositories for the preservation of information about the past did not diminish after the celebration of the liturgical feasts for which their computistical material (that relating to calendrical and astronomical calculation) was originally assembled; they naturally continued to attract such data.[43] Yet it need not be on the basis of a paschal-record model that extended sets of annalistic records began to be compiled in the eighth and ninth centuries, as both Story and McKitterick have shown. The manuscript transmission of texts of different genres in historiographical compendia from the Carolingian world reveals a clear understanding of the value of annals as well as of more expansive historical narratives in helping to shape and define a sense of Frankish identity.[44] Nor must we any longer follow Poole and McCormick in thinking of short, laconic entries as earlier (and historiographically more primitive) than more expansive, quasi-narrative accounts. It is not only the latter that reveal any interest in the broad sweep of time since the Creation.[45] Easter tables attracted notices of memorable events precisely because of their connection with an eschatological chronology extending backwards before the calendar years noted in the table itself as far as the Incarnation (and thus potentially farther back to Creation), as well as forwards into an unknown future and the ultimate end of time. That fundamental association with the divine chronology represents the defining characteristic of chronicles and annals, which differ fundamentally only

[40] Story, 'The Frankish Annals of Lindisfarne and Kent', 74; and cf. McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past*, 68.

[41] Foot, 'Finding the Meaning', 101.

[42] O'Croinin, 'Early Irish Annals from Easter Tables'.

[43] Dumville, 'What is a Chronicle?' 9; and see also Story, 'The Frankish Annals', 84, 90.

[44] Helmut Reimitz, 'The Art of Truth: Historiography and Identity in the Frankish World', in Corradini *et al.* (eds.), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, 87–103.

[45] *Contra* McCormick, *Les annales du haut moyen âge*, 13.

in the quantity of prose devoted to each of the years they catalogue, not in their basic conceptual framework.

Not all annals fulfilled the same purposes. Those which attempted to summarize at the end of each year its major, or most memorable events read differently from the sets of annals whose compilers chose to define a particular year by reference to one or two remarkable happenings. Equally, contemporary or near-contemporary annalists had different motives from those who sought to construct (or reconstruct) yearly events in a distant past. Yet, one feature unites all medieval collections of annals: their outward form, self-consciously organized on a temporal framework. Annals plot carefully (deliberately and selectively), the moments at which the actions of people singly and collectively, or the forces of nature intersected with the forward-moving arrow of elapsed time. Their form may look simplistic but in their own way, annals can be highly rhetorical as well as fundamentally Christological texts. Are they significantly different from chronicles?

CHRONICLES AND ANNALS

Writing about 1200, Gervase of Canterbury tried in a much-quoted preface to his *Chronicon* [Chronicle] to differentiate chronicle from history but struggled because by the late twelfth century the two genres had come closely to resemble one another. The historian, he argued, proceeds diffusely and elegantly, whereas the chronicler proceeds simply, gradually, and briefly:

> The chronicler counts years of the incarnation of the Lord and months and days within years, and briefly recounts the deeds of kings or princes which took place in them, and also records events, portents, or miracles. There are, however, many authors writing chronicles or annals who exceed those limits . . . for while they want to compile a chronicle, they proceed in the manner of historians, and what they should say briefly, with a simple manner of writing, they try to swell with elaborate words.[46]

In expanding the chronicle form, authors exceeded their brief, which was not to entertain or divert, but to make a record of events worth remembering by recording them for posterity.[47] The blurring of the two genres of chronicle and annal so that each effectively achieved the same ends was not a novelty in Gervase's day; making meaningful distinctions between the two forms can prove equally difficult before his time. Michael McCormick observed this first in the *Chronicon* of Regino of Prüm (compiled shortly before 908); devised seemingly as a universal chronicle of a fairly conventional type, this integrated the *Annales regni Francorum*

[46] Gervase of Canterbury, *Chronicle*, prologue, ed. William Stubbs, 2 vols. (London, 1879–80), i. 87–8. See Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London and New York, 2004), 1, 21.

[47] Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge, 1992), 299.

into an account covering the years 818–906.[48] For McCormick, it was the eleventh-century Lampert of Hersfeld who stood at the crossroads between annal and chronicle as he tried to mould his account of the investiture crisis (written 1077–80) on an annalistic model, prefacing those annals with a universal history.[49] Does this, however, really represent a change from a pre-existing state of affairs? Were annal and chronicle ever fundamentally different?

Long recognized as a product of the court of Charlemagne, and continued at the court of his son Louis the Pious, the sequence of annals known as the *Annales regni Francorum* began abruptly in 741 with the death of Charles Martel, the eponymous forebear of the Carolingian kings, recorded, without preface in the bald, laconic statement: 'Charles, mayor of the palace died.'[50] Only from reading later entries—or from a prior knowledge of the subsequent development of Frankish history—could a reader know how the death of Charles Martel inaugurated a new era in the history of the Frankish people. The developing annals, written not year by year as events elapsed but rather in blocks of time by three separate authors together explore the Carolingian age from 741 until 829 when as suddenly as they had begun, they cease.[51] Belying their annalistic form, these are quite different from Easter-table notes; each entry offers a summary of all the events of the year in question, not just odd remarks designed to secure the remembrance of key events of momentous import. Since events did not naturally organize themselves within the span of a calendar year, nor did the narrative. That story frequently flowed syntactically across the start of a new year, with the artificial break occasioned by the change of AD date becoming little more than a punctuation mark. Read together as a coherent whole, rather than as a set of disparate historical notes, the *Annales regni Francorum* present a particular, and carefully crafted story that created the Franks as a people chosen by God and specifically linked their destiny with the Carolingian family, first as mayors of the palace and then as kings. The central subject of this story was the king and his deeds, performed 'in concert with, with the consent of, with the support of the Franks'.[52] When continued by scribes who were no longer members of the royal court, the annals started to assume different characteristics according to the interests and preoccupations of those responsible for their compilation.

[48] Simon MacLean, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg* (Manchester, 2009), 9–10.

[49] McCormick, *Les annales du haut moyen âge*, 19; and Lampert of Herzfeld, *Annales*, ed. Oswaldus Holder-Egger, *Lamperti Monachi Hersfeldensis Opera* (Hanover and Leipzig, 1894), 1–304.

[50] Royal Frankish Annals, *s.a.* 741; trans. Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 37.

[51] McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 101–11; Joaquín Martínez Pizzaro, 'Ethnic and National History ca. 500–1000', in Deliyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, 43–87 at 73; but see Roger Collins, 'The Reviser Revisited: Another Look at the Alternative Version of the Annales Regni Francorum', in A. C. Murray (ed.), *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History* (Toronto, 1998), 191–213, who argues for a less linear and uniform tradition behind the Royal Frankish Annals.

[52] McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past', 117, 126–7; and McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 113–16.

The *Annals Bertiniani* [Annals of St-Bertin] were first compiled by Prudentius, bishop of Troyes, who picked up the story exactly where the *Annales regni Francorum* had left off in 830; his opening annal thus continued to explain what the emperor Louis was doing without even seeing the need to identify the 'he' who was subject of his first sentence.[53] After his death in 861, Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims took over the account, which gradually came to reflect more of his own personality and his often far-from-complimentary view of the Carolingian rulers of his own day. As we have already observed, however, no one extended Hincmar's continuation after his death in 882. In the Eastern Frankish realm, a quite separate continuation of the *Annales regni Francorum* was made, now known as the *Annals of Fulda*; this annalistic sequence reflected not just the different geographical perspective of writers working east of the Rhine, whose concern was with different neighbours, but also an alternative reading of the rivalries within the Carolingian royal house, especially the tensions between the sons of Louis the Pious.[54] Other continuations such as the *Annals of Xanten*, compiled by a librarian of palace, Gerward, and the *Annals of St Vaast*, offer yet more localized and regional perspectives on the second half of the ninth century, shedding particularly valuable light on the local impact of Scandinavian raiding in the ninth century.[55]

All of these texts are known to modern historians as sets of annals. Yet how, fundamentally, do they differ from the different recensions of the collection of annalistic entries that scholars now know, confusingly as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*? First compiled in or close to the court circle of King Alfred of Wessex in the years leading up to 891, this sequence of annals ran from 60 BC (the date of Julius Caesar's conquest of Britain and thus the point at which the history of the island *Britannia* first intersected with the rest of the Roman world) in the first instance to 891. Manifestly, the original compiler (or compilers, for this was probably a team effort) had earlier collections of annalistic material on which to draw; that some early late fifth- and early sixth-century entries are repeated nineteen years apart suggests that some of that source material derived from notes in Dionysiac Easter tables, where the cycle recurs on a nineteen-year pattern.[56] We have already encountered evidence of early collection of carefully dated material in the annals of Lindisfarne and Frankia mentioned above.[57]

As we now know them, the collected annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, once of diverse origin, were assembled to tell a specific story, one that appears rather

[53] *The Annals of St-Bertin*, trans. J. L. Nelson (Manchester, 1991), 21.

[54] R. Corradini, 'Die Annales Fuldenses—Identitätskonstruktionen im ostfränkischen Raum am Ende der Karolingerzeit', in Corradini *et al.* (eds.), *Texts and Identities*, 121–36. The compilers of the Annals of Fulda took a particular interest in the miraculous and the supernatural: *The Annals of Fulda*, trans. Timothy Reuter (Manchester, 1992), 10.

[55] Paul Edward Dutton, *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, 2nd edn (Toronto, 2004), no. 74.

[56] Harrison, *The Framework of Anglo-Saxon History*, 127–8; the duplication covers the years 495–527; successive nineteen-year cycles ran from 494 to 512 and from 513 to 531.

[57] Story, 'The Frankish Annals', 94.

different from that of the *Annales regni Francorum*. For while the latter told of the rise and triumph of a dynasty, and focused on that family's imperial triumphs and steady expansion of the people of the Franks, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* arguably creates an origin legend for a people. The *Angelcynn*, only newly united under West Saxon rule in the aftermath of King Alfred's defeat of the Viking king, Guthrum, and the division of southern England between peoples subject to the Danish pagans in the east and the Christian English to the west, here acquires a history. The multiple beginnings of the English, and the separate and diverse histories of the individual peoples and kingdoms found across Anglo-Saxon England, were assembled to plot a story that led inexorably to the present unity that the chronicle celebrates (most overtly in the annal for 886, describing the general submission of the *Angelcynn* to Alfred); they thus point towards a yet more glorious future in which all might share a peaceful existence united under West Saxon rule.[58] In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the *Chronicle* appeared to acquire different voices which have usually been understood to reflect the regional or, increasingly in the eleventh century, political allegiances of the communities responsible for maintaining the record locally.[59] The continuations differ not just in content but in the manner in which the manuscripts acquired additional material. Some groups of annals were added to more or less on a yearly basis, whereas at other times a whole run of entries was composed retrospectively. The brief collection of entries for the years 902 to 924 formerly known as the *Mercian Register*, recently renamed the *Annals of Æthelflæd* may have been compiled by a priest in the circle of Æthelflæd's nephew, King Alfred's grandson, King Æthelstan. He spent his adolescence in Æthelflæd's circle and probably played a part in the military campaigns to conquer the Danelaw that this account celebrates.[60] Another set of entries for the years 983–1022 giving a uniformly depressing reading of the events of Æthelred's reign was manifestly compiled retrospectively, probably as Simon Keynes has argued, by someone writing (perhaps in London) around 1022. This version of events (preserved in essentially identical form in three separate manuscripts) would seem to have been re-composed on the basis of an original year-by-year account. The author thus rewrote history, deliberately reshaping a narrative in order to account for the eventual failure of the English and their conquest by Cnut in 1016.[61]

[58] Foot, 'Finding the Meaning', 99–102.

[59] As argued by Charles Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, 2 vols. (Oxford 1892–9); Michael Swanton (ed. and trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, 2nd edn (London, 2000); Pauline Stafford, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, Identity and the Making of England', *Haskins Society Journal*, 19 (2007), 28–50.

[60] Pauline Stafford, 'The Annals of Æthelflæd: Annals, History and Politics in Early Tenth-Century England', in Julia Barrow and Andrew Wareham (eds.), *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks* (Aldershot, 2008), 101–16.

[61] S. D. Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of King Æthelred the Unready', in David Hill (ed.), *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Military Conference* (Oxford, 1978), 157–70.

Within these 'Old English Royal Annals', as Nicholas Brooks has recently suggested we should term them, we find a fusion of different genres inside an outwardly homogeneous form.[62] Some entries offer little more than brief notes appended to a date calculated since the Incarnation, but even within the first recension running to 891 there are occasionally more extended and rhetorical passages of narrative such as the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard inserted into the annal for the year 755 (*recte* 757) but in fact incorporating information about events of more than one year.[63] Many of the annual records for Alfred's reign are also lengthy, for example that for the year 871, in which his brother King Æthelred died and Alfred acceded to the throne at one of the worst points of the Danish wars, when nine separate engagements were fought in a single year. In the tenth century, occasional entries were made not in prose but in verse. The first such poem marked the victory of Æthelstan and his brother Edmund, the sons of Edward, against a combined force of Norse and Scots at a place called *Brunanburh* (probably Bromborough in Cheshire). Stressing the magnitude of this triumph, the poet set the battle in the longest possible temporal context in a formal climax that described this as a greater victory than that won by any English force since the first Germanic migration to British shores: never before had an army 'been put to greater slaughter at the edge of the sword'.[64] This verse, and others incorporated into the *Chronicle* record serve to shape the success of the West Saxon dynasty with a 'nationalizing narrative', stressing the extent to which the fortunes of all the English peoples are tied in with that of this dynasty.[65]

Some annals preserve information of a quite different type, telling a narrative not about events but the making of dynasties; lineages for the separate royal lines of the individual English kingdoms appear variously through the annals of the common stock.[66] Most spectacularly, the A manuscript of the *Chronicle* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi college, MS 173) opens with a prospective genealogical regnal list. Beginning 'In the year when 494 years had passed from Christ's birth, Cerdic and his son Cynric landed', this text traces the rulers of Wessex from Cerdic to the accession of King Alfred 'when twenty three years of his life were passed and 396 years [were passed] from when his race first conquered the land of the West Saxons

[62] Nicholas Brooks, '"Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" or "Chronicles"? Time for a Change of Name and for a New Approach?' unpublished paper read to the ISAS conference in Newfoundland, 2009. I am grateful to Professor Brooks for allowing me to see a copy of this paper.

[63] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *s.a.* 755; and Stephen D. White, 'Kinship and Lordship in Early Medieval England: The Story of Sigeberht, Cynewulf and Cyneheard', *Viator*, 20 (1989), 1–18.

[64] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *s.a.* 937; and see Sarah Foot, *Æthelstan: The First King of England* (London and New Haven, 2011), 169–72.

[65] Thomas Bredehoft, *Textual Histories Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto, 2001), 102; Janet Thormann, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Poems and the Making of the English Nation', in Allen J. Frantzen and John D. Niles (eds.), *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity* (Gainesville, Fla., 1997), 60–85.

[66] For example, for Northumbria in 547, Mercia in 626, or Kent under the year 694.

from the Britons'.[67] This genealogy (which survives also in manuscripts separate from the *Chronicle*) records the length of each king's reign in years as well as his parentage and the nature of his relationship to Cerdic.

Genealogies embed within the annalistic form an alternative conception of time from the linear sequence against which annals are structured: biological or dynastic time. Genealogy, as Gabrielle Spiegel has argued, 'secularises time, it grounds time in biology and transforms the connection between past and present into a real one, seminally imparted from generation to generation'.[68] Biological time can also be conceived in a linear fashion, but if God's incarnational time appears to progress inexorably forwards on a horizontal plane, biological lines of dynastic descent more closely resemble descending verticals. These express distance, and the passage of time, in a different metaphor of procreative time in which the child of one generation sits on the knees of the one before.[69] Genealogies explain the social as much as the political realities of the present, human procreation functioning as a form of causal explanation;[70] the recording of generations legitimates and explains the present moment, while also implicitly pointing towards the future. Every man in a retrospective patrilineage is a king's father, but in a prospective genealogical regnal list such as the one that prefaces the A manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, each king is himself the progenitor of a new king. This royal genealogy (and the more conventionally organized one inserted into the composite annal for the years 855–8, tracing the lineage of Alfred's father Æthelwulf back not just to the mythical god-king Woden, but beyond him through Noah to 'Adam, the first man and our father, i.e. Christ') becomes, as Craig Davis has argued, 'the spine of an authorised West Saxon world view, a linear matrix on which the disparate cultural traditions can be co-ordinated'. It relates the royal line directly to God's creation of cosmic order in the world, providing a direct source of the political authority of the West Saxons not from a fallen pagan god, or a hero of the Germanic heroic age but a genetic, blood lineal descent from a divinity whose supremacy would never be challenged.[71] At its climax it fuses the two temporal conceits, God's eternal created time counted

[67] As Dorothy Whitelock points out, the figure 396 years is wrong. If we count from the foundation of the kingdom of Wessex, six years after Cerdic's landing, i.e. in AD 500 or from the *adventus Saxonum* reported under the year 449, we do not arrive at 871 the year of Alfred's accession: Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents I, c.500–1042*, 2nd edn (London and New York, 1979), 148 n. 1.

[68] Gabrielle Spiegel, 'Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative', *History and Theory*, 22 (1983), 43–53 at 49. Hugette Taviani-Carozzi has argued that genealogies help to fuse pagan and Christian pasts, linking myth and history: 'De l'histoire au mythe: la généalogie royale anglo-saxonne', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, Xe–XIIe siècles*, 36 (1993), 355–73.

[69] Compare Spiegel, 'Genealogy', 51, who expresses a similar notion rather differently, suggesting that it is the relationship between God and man that is vertical and that genealogical chronicles work (using examples from thirteenth-century vernacular French chronicles) by creating an alternative horizontal metaphor.

[70] Ibid., 50–1.

[71] Craig R. Davis, 'Cultural Assimilation in the Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 21 (1992), 23–36 at 35.

from the Incarnation of Christ, and man's biological time, the seed descending from generation to generation.

Other modes of representing time are also apparent in this set of annals; for example they sometimes use an episodic chronology, the reckoning of the number of years since a significant event such as the foundation of the city of Rome, the start of a dynasty's rule, or the creation of the world.[72] Many entries reflect a cyclical sense of time, a view of time as a *cursus*, a repeating cycle of liturgical and natural seasons, from winter to winter, from the celebration of the birth of Christ to his passion and resurrection, even if those liturgical moments are not delineated as clearly as in eighth- and ninth-century Carolingian annals.[73] More marked in the English *Chronicle* is the sense of the year from winter to winter, an agricultural and seasonally recurring *cursus* that fixes the passing of the years in an individual's relative chronology far more reliably than an abstract, absolute counting system. One might think, for example of the use of *wintra*, winters, as synecdoche for the passing of entire years, as at the opening of the preface to the A manuscript, 'in the year that was 494 winters after Christ's birth . . . '.[74] One might thus view these annals as plotting diagrammatically the coincidence of both liturgical and agricultural *cursus* with the linear arrow of incarnational time.[75]

On this reading, the 'Old English Royal Annals' do more than explain how the English have reached their present point on the line that runs inexorably from Creation through the Incarnation and on forwards to the Last Judgement, even beyond to Augustine's notion of eternal time. They also situate this people within a biological, procreative time-frame, one that encompasses—and legitimizes—the non-Christian periods of their past as much as those years after the way to salvation had been revealed. Incarnational time came to the Anglo-Saxons with their conversion; it introduced them to an absolute, forward moving arrow of time that was alien to their instinctive relative and cyclical notions of personal time, notions in which years were measured by the seasons and life-span counted in generational terms. By locating the English within a divine time-frame stretching far beyond human conception both backwards and forwards, these annals transfigure the political nation into a spiritual community, one exceptionally favoured by God. The 'Old English Royal Annals' thus represent the fusion of cyclical, linear, biological, and episodic reckonings of time; they plot discrete

[72] D. E. Greenway, 'Dates in History: Chronology and Memory', *Historical Research*, 72 (1999), 127–39.

[73] McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past', 114.

[74] A more common trope in poetry, compare David Klausner, 'Aspects of Time in the Battle Poetry of Early Britain', in Tom Scott and Pat Starkey (eds.), *The Middle Ages in the North West* (Oxford, 1995), 85–107.

[75] The Abingdon, C manuscript of the *Chronicle* is preceded by an Old English poem about church festivals, the *Menologium*, which may serve to strengthen this apparent relationship between different conceptions of time. André Crépin, 'Etude typologique de la *Chronique anglo-saxonne*', in Daniel Poirion (ed.), *La Chronique et l'histoire au Moyen Age: Colloque des 24 et 25 mai 1982* (Paris, 1984), 137–48 at 145.

events, like co-ordinates on a graph, moments when alternative temporal reckonings coincide. They give the English a history by locating them in time.

This analysis of the various conceits underpinning various collections of annalistic material from the early medieval West has done nothing to clarify a distinction between annals and chronicles; indeed it has served only to confuse the issue. Perhaps we should follow the lead offered by Gervase of Canterbury and differentiate fundamentally between texts organized on the arrow of time, and those which adopt rhetorical modes of discourse and show the sort of interest in causality and explanation that are usually deemed characteristic of history proper. Chronologically organized material could prove briefer than more ample and expansive histories, as Gervase noted, yet we have seen how long before his day that distinction had begun to break down. Charles Briggs's chapter in this volume explores the burgeoning of the writing of history in Western Europe which served to inaugurate a new historiographical era.[76] Annals still continued to be compiled, but the era witnessed a wider diversification in modes of representing the past and a further blurring of genres. Warren Brown's arguments about the motives that led scribes to compile cartularies, compendia volumes containing copies of texts recording grants of land and privilege to an individual abbey or cathedral church could as well be applied to chroniclers and historians in this period: 'each reflects a conscious or unconscious effort to select and organise information from the past for the needs of the present; each reflects an effort to select and organise information from the present for the possible needs of the future'.[77]

CONCLUSION

Medieval writers producing texts in different genres sought to preserve information in writing in order to ensure its survival for the benefit of future generations, mindful of the fallibility of human memory.[78] Regino of Prüm addressed his *Chronicon* to Adalbero, bishop of Augsburg, saying that it seemed to him unworthy that since the historians of the Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, and other peoples had transmitted knowledge of the deeds in their own times through writing, 'there should be such an unbroken silence concerning our own times, even though they are much more recent, as if in our days human activity had ceased, or perhaps people had done nothing worthy of memory', or no one had the ability to record those deeds in writ-

[76] Norbert Kersken, 'High and Late Medieval National Historiography', in Deliyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, 181–215 at 181–2; and see ch. 19 by Charles F. Briggs in this volume.

[77] Warren Brown, 'Charters as Weapons: On the Role Played by Early Medieval Dispute Records in the Disputes They Record', *Journal of Medieval History*, 28 (2002), 227–48 at 230.

[78] This example from a charter recording a grant of King Æthelred to Æthelwig, his *miles*; grant of land at Ardley, Oxfordshire; *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly, Anglo-Saxon Charters, VIII–IX (Oxford, 2000–1), no. 125 (S 883; AD 995).

ing.[79] Orderic Vitalis (the Anglo-Norman historian) declared that he wrote his *Historia ecclesiastica* [Ecclesiastical History] for the benefit of posterity, lest knowledge of current events 'pass away from the memory of modern men with the changing world, as hail or snow melt in the waters of a swift river, swept away by the current, never to return'.[80] Since most writers shared a fundamental view that what occurred on earth reflected the will of the Almighty, chronicles and histories essentially recorded the workings of God's will on earth; history was written so that 'the things that are done may show the invisible God'.[81] Nowhere was the invisible Almighty more apparent than through his manipulation of the natural world, a topic close to the hearts of most annalists and chroniclers.

Writers in the early Middle Ages believed that the hand and will of the Almighty governed all events and natural occurrences; they made no distinction between ordinary and extraordinary (miraculous) happenings, for the Creator and His creation were inseparable. Natural disasters and catastrophes occurred because God willed the earth or heavens to behave in a particular way, just as, if the earth proved particularly fruitful or the weather especially pleasant that, too, reflected the divine will.[82] Chroniclers' tendency to dwell much more on the former is thus easily explained: the forces of nature—storms, comets, plagues, or plentiful harvests—all reminded human observers of the inevitability of the judgement that awaited them all in the afterlife. Celestial signs and portents, part of the stock-in-trade of medieval chroniclers and annalists, were recorded not just for their astronomical interest (real though that frequently was[83]) but because observers believed these reflected God's future intentions for the earth. Bad news so pervaded these texts that they sometimes amount to little more than a litany of disasters: earthquakes, famines, floods, plagues of insects, and mortality of men and beasts, all bringing misery upon the general populace. Having recorded a series of accounts of people who had drowned during a hot summer, Orderic Vitalis hesitated to draw the theological message that might have seemed obvious:

> I am not able to unravel the divine plan by which all things are made and cannot explain the hidden causes of things; I am engaged merely in writing historical annals (*annalem historiam*) for the benefit of my fellow monks . . . I make a record of events as I have seen or heard of them for the benefit of future generations.[84]

[79] Regino of Prüm, *Chronicle*, book 1, preface, trans. MacLean, 61.

[80] *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1969–80), iii. 285; quoted by Carl Watkins, 'Memories of the Marvellous in the Anglo-Norman Realm', in *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700–1300*, ed. Elisabeth van Houts (London, 2001), 92–112 at 113.

[81] *The Historia pontificalis of John of Salisbury*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford 1986), 3; and Watkins, 'Memories of the Marvellous', 113.

[82] Robert Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2008), 7–12, 18–20, 23–9. See also my 'Plenty, Portents and Plague'.

[83] See ibid., 29–31 (for observation of Halley's comet in Lent 837); and compare Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural*, 51–9 (on eclipses).

[84] *History of Orderic Vitalis*, vi. 437; and Watkins, 'Memories of the Marvellous', 93–4.

But Orderic dissembled here, for there was moral import behind his text, and the same moral imperatives governed chronologically organized writing about the past in this period, too.

Medieval writers distinguished chronologically organized writings about the past as a separate genre from both *fabulae* (located in past time but not based on true accounts) and *historiae* (more developed, expansive, and rhetorical accounts which went beyond mere recitation of events to offer some interpretation or explanation of not just what had happened but why). Because they sought merely to describe, and were thought neither to explain nor to impart moral messages, chronicles were deemed not to deserve the label of history, although, as our quotation from Gervase of Canterbury showed, even that distinction was becoming blurred during our period. More obvious than the differences in content or purpose that separated histories and chronicles was their distinctive form. Chronicles and annals stood apart from other narrative writing about the past because of their mode of construction on the template recording the elapsing of time since the Incarnation; their inseparable fusion with the arrow of time is their defining characteristic. Yet that temporal arrow ran horizontally in two directions: it went backwards, of course, to AD 1, the year of Christ's birth, the fixed co-ordinate from which all else was calculated. More importantly, however, it also went forwards, on through the contemporary events to which the chronicler was himself witness and beyond his present into a future about which only one thing was known for certain: ultimately, time would end and be followed by Judgement. Bede and Orderic and others wrote their histories explicitly to encourage good men to follow the example of the just, and the wicked to mend their ways lest they fall into the fate of the damned;[85] yet we should not assume that the same moral focus was lacking from annalistic and chronicle accounts. Their constant and repetitious notation of the events of the heavens, the dark disasters blighting the earth such as the hailstones of Flodoard's account with which we began, all served the same purpose: to focus the mind of the reader or hearer on the imminence of Judgement. No less than the audience for history, that for chronologically organized texts was reminded constantly to be vigilant. 'Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour' (Matt. 25:13).

KEY HISTORICAL SOURCES

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[85] Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969), prologue, 2–3; and *History of Orderic Vitalis*, iii. 251.

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Chapter 18

The Vicissitudes of Political Identity: Historical Narrative in the Barbarian Successor States of Western Europe

Felice Lifshitz

INTRODUCTION: THE AMBIGUITIES OF IDENTITY IN POST-ROMAN WESTERN EUROPE

In *Narrators of Barbarian History*, a pathbreaking study of Jordanes's *Getica*, Gregory of Tours's *Historiae*, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, and Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*, Walter Goffart rejected the widespread idea that those narratives belonged to a homogeneous, ethnically inflected, genre of national history.[1] National histories, 'intended to explain at length the legitimacy of a present secular power', certainly abounded in Western Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[2] However, neither that eventual ubiquity, nor the mirage of genealogical continuity from the barbarian successor states in Western Europe to the modern nation-states of Western Europe should distort our view of the immediate post-Roman centuries.[3] There was a continuous tradition of universal histories (often in chronicle format) witnessing a 'perception of the past as springing from the beginning of the world, including all human time, painted on a worldwide canvas, and embracing one's own history',[4] but the perception of the past as the story of a single, barbarian-led, post-Roman state was a rarity. This chapter explores why.

[1] Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988; 2nd edn, Notre Dame, Ind., 2005).

[2] Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Stylistic Choice in a Reborn Genre: The National Histories of Widukind of Corvey and Dudo of St. Quentin', in Paolo Gatti and Antonella Degl'Innocenti (eds.), *Dudone di San Quintino* (Trento, 1995), 77–102, at 81.

[3] Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, 'Ethnic and National History ca. 500–1000', in Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2003), 43–88, at 43–7.

[4] Rosamond McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2005), 22.

The 'crisis of identity' that has been posited for fifth-century Gaul was neither unique to that former Roman province, nor confined to the fifth century.[5] It is no exaggeration to suggest that intellectuals were left, literally foundering, in a 'postcolonial void'.[6] The disintegration of the Western Roman imperial court after 476, combined with the fact that the Eastern Roman imperial court at Constantinople remained solidly in place, inaugurated a vexed relationship between the empire and its (former?) western provinces. Barbarian rulers throughout the fragmented West hesitated for centuries to adopt the trappings of sovereignty, for instance by refraining from issuing gold coinage stamped with their own names or images. Meanwhile, badges of Roman military command still served as symbols of political legitimacy in the sixth century on both sides of the former western imperial frontier.[7] Yet the practical absence of (Eastern) Roman armies and administrators introduced a strong dimension of constitutional vagueness into the situation. Potential historians could not be sure whether they were, or were not, writing within the political framework of the Roman Empire. In such circumstances, a secular political narrative history about the barbarian successor states of Western Europe was unthinkable.

Constitutional vagueness was a productive mechanism for mitigating the potential tensions of the situation of intra-frontier barbarian *regna*, but it hamstrung historians who found themselves unable to get a handle on a slippery political framework. What, for instance, was the relationship between the rulers of the Vandal kingdom and Constantinople after the 474 'Treaty of Eternal Friendship' wherein the latter recognized the former? Who could have articulated *to the satisfaction of both sides* whether the Vandal *regnum* was still part of the empire, and if so how? This constitutional murkiness goes a long way towards explaining why the Vandal kingdom did not find a historian, despite its thriving cities, rich villas, and continuities of Roman documentary practices.[8] Similarly slippery was the position of the Gothic *regnum* of Italy, founded in 489 by Theoderic, with support from Emperor Zeno. Theoderic ruled from Ravenna, until his death in 526, as an imperial viceroy in the West, receiving formal recognition as such from Emperor Anastasius in 497. From 511 he also effectively controlled both the Gothic kingdom in Iberia and much of southern Gaul. Theoderic's *regnum* flourished, but its ruling class had to wonder if they were 'servants of the Gothic king or officials in a Roman Empire that, in the West, was under temporary

[5] John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (eds.), *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* (Cambridge, 1992).

[6] Nicholas Howe, 'Anglo-Saxon England and the Postcolonial Void', in Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Deanne Williams (eds.), *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures* (Cambridge, 2005), 25–47.

[7] Matthew Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300–900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book* (London and New York, 2007), 63–137.

[8] Whereas the 'successor state' found no historian, Nicene-Arian doctrinal divides did, in bishop Victor of Vita's *History of the Vandal Persecution*, trans. John Moorhead (Liverpool, 1992).

Gothic management',[9] or were perhaps witnessing the beginnings of a revived western empire.[10]

The terrain soon became even less propitious for the emergence of a secular historiography of the barbarian *regna*, as Emperor Justinian's protracted attempt (launched in 535) to bring both Gothic Italy and Vandal Africa under direct imperial control ruined both flourishing polities. The author of a fragmentarily preserved chronicle composed in Ravenna during Justinian's heyday was 'acutely conscious of the unity of Empire and the connection of east and west', rather than of any Gothic *regnum*.[11] After the worst of the fighting ended (by 554), indeed throughout the seventh century, an Eastern Roman exarchate in Ravenna, plus other Byzantine toeholds in places such as Sicily, combined with frequent imperial interventions in doctrinal and ecclesiastical affairs on the peninsula, all suggested that Italy *might* be a province of an enduring imperial polity, but such an identity was belied by the very real power of Frankish kings in the north and, beginning with their 568 invasion, of dozens of Lombard kings, queens, and dukes.

In the 590s 'it was not clear whether the *regnum Langobardorum* was there to last, or whether it would fade like smoke',[12] but Lombard leaders laboured assiduously to achieve imperial recognition; this was granted by treaty in 680, indicating that—on some level—the (Eastern) Roman Empire was still the ultimate political framework for life (and historical writing) in Italy. Yet, imperial power had steadily shredded over the course of the seventh century, remaining just pretentious enough to keep the inhabitants of the peninsula in a permanent state of identity crisis. That situation was further exacerbated by the political ambitions of the bishops of Rome, by the kaleidoscopic mosaic of city-units ruled by at least thirty-five Lombard dukes in addition to the royal court at Pavia, by the Nicene/Arian doctrinal divide between many of the Lombards and the populations subject to them, and by the fact that the real holders of royal power from 589 through the 640s were women (Theudelinda and her daughter Gundperga).[13] Could one even discern the contours of a 'barbarian successor state' and write its history?

Turning to Merovingian Gaul, the foundation of the government of the Frankish king Clovis appears to have been his receipt of the consular office from Emperor Anastasius very early in the sixth century. Merovingian rulers

[9] Innes, *Introduction*, 151. Late in the reign of Theoderic, the Italo-Roman senator Cassiodorus wrote twelve books (of indeterminable length) concerning the Goths. See Brian Croke, 'Latin Historiography and the Barbarian Kingdoms', in Gabriele Marasco (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity: Fourth to Sixth Century A.D.* (Leiden, 2003), 349–89, at 358–67. However, Cassiodorus's work is lost, therefore I cannot assess the extent to which it constituted a history of the barbarian successor state.

[10] Brian Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford, 2005), 58.

[11] Croke, 'Latin Historiography', 357 (concerning the *Excerpta Valensiana*).

[12] Walter Pohl, 'Gregory of Tours and Contemporary Perceptions of Lombard Italy', in Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood (eds.), *The World of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2002), 131–43, at 142.

[13] Innes, *Introduction*, 246.

subsequently replaced Roman provincial governors in Gaul, always sourcing their authority from the East within a framework of strong Roman continuities, such that the only chronicler active in sixth-century Gaul, Marius of Avenches, gives the impression that the region was still fully subject to the Roman Empire, and Guntram Boso could plausibly arrest bishop Theodore of Marseilles on the charge of conspiring to subject the Frankish kingdoms fully to Justinian.[14] Yet, Clovis and his successors also exercised some *imperium* over other barbarian groups, paradoxically styling themselves 'augusti' without implying any declaration of independence from Constantinople.[15] How exactly did contemporaries understand the relationship between Childebert and Emperor Maurice, who paid the Frankish king 50,000 gold pieces to rid Italy of the Lombards? Childebert marched into Italy but withdrew when the Lombards promised to be *his* faithful subjects, causing Maurice to demand a refund.[16] Discerning a Frankish 'successor state' must have been extremely difficult for sixth-century observers of the political scene.

The constitutional ambiguity that haunted the continent never obtained in Britain, where the departure of Roman troops and administrators very early in the fifth century was followed by centuries of indifference on the part of Constantinople. But other factors led to a long drought in the production of written histories, most notably the stress placed on written culture in the wake of the collapse of city life, the disappearance of coinage, villas, and markets, and the decline in all the material conditions of life.[17] Elites no longer had the leisure to produce or patronize historical narrative, the crucial model for which—namely the Christian and Jewish scriptures—had been abandoned in any case with the triumph (into the seventh century) of non-monotheistic ('pagan') devotional forms. The new political order, based on plunder and tribute rather than civil society, had little need for historical narrative, which is hardly a potent weapon in such competitions. Historical narrative concerning successor states was no less absent in Ireland, an effectively stateless world where kings exercised personal rather than territorial power.[18]

[14] Ibid., 273–85; *The Chronicle of Marius of Avenches*, in *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader*, trans. Alexander Callander Murray (Peterborough, 2000), 100–8; Goffart, *Narrators*, 204; and Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks* (hereafter *HF*), trans. Lewis Thorpe (London, 1974), VI.24, p. 352.

[15] Pohl, 'Gregory of Tours', 142; and Steven Fanning, 'Clovis Augustus and Merovingian *Imitatio Imperii*', in Mitchell and Wood (eds.), *The World of Gregory of Tours*, 321–35.

[16] Gregory of Tours, *HF* VI.42, p. 375.

[17] Gildas, writing about 500, is the only author known to have put pen to parchment to produce a narrative during the fifth or sixth centuries in Britain; his moralizing tract *De excidio Britanniae* is fundamentally a sustained invective along the lines of the work of Victor of Vita, although in this case connected with controversies over the teachings of Pelagius rather than with Nicene-Arian conflicts. See *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Documents*, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom (London, 1978); Croke, 'Latin Historiography', 376–8; and Karen George, *Gildas's De Excidio Britonum and the Early British Church* (Woodbridge, 2009).

[18] Innes, *Introduction*, 338.

JORDANES AND THE EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE: THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL FRUITS OF POLITICAL CONTINUITY

In contrast to the former Roman provinces in Western Europe, the eastern portion of the empire enjoyed political continuity, along with a concomitantly continuous tradition of secular historical narrative focused on the state, except during a gap of approximately one century from around 630 to around 720.[19] During this gap, to which we shall return, the Roman (Byzantine) Empire suffered massive territorial losses to Arab armies, and almost collapsed. 'Almost' is key for, as Warren Treadgold noted, the problem for potential historians was uncertainty; once the empire recovered, the uncertainty evaporated, and the tradition of secular history-writing revived.[20]

This tradition of historical narrative had already included no fewer than seven 'new classical historians' before the accession of Justinian (527). To a man, these historians produced accounts of how emperors and imperial officials dealt with barbarian armies and barbarian generals both inside and outside the empire.[21] The most famous historian of Justinian's own reign (527–65) was Prokopios of Caesarea, who (during the 540s and 550s) wrote two important narrative histories, one (*Wars*) focused almost entirely on the (re)conquests of the Vandal and Gothic realms.[22] But Prokopios had many colleagues in Constantinople, all of whom narrated the continuing history of the empire, its rulers and its foreign affairs, including native Latin speakers who wrote in Latin for other Latin-speaking readers in the East.[23] The *Annales* [Chronicle] of one Latin speaker, Count Marcellinus, paid much attention to Western affairs, and climaxed with the conquest of Vandal Africa; it was continued, probably in the mid-550s, by an anonymous Latin speaker whose main subject was the Gothic War.[24]

Jordanes's work fits perfectly into the collective oeuvre of historians working in Constantinople in the middle of the sixth century. The *Getica* [Gothic History] is the third part of a tri-partite narrative, parts 1 and 2 of which form a history of Roman conquests, culminating with 'the victorious and triumphant Emperor' Justinian, in whose praise Jordanes explicitly wrote.[25] Jordanes's Latin narratives appear to have served Justinianic policy in Italy, informing Italo-Romans and Goths alike about the glorious empire they were about to rejoin *as conquered subjects*. The Italian version of the empire had long been superseded by the Greek

[19] Warren T. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York and London, 2007), 348–9.
[20] Ibid., 349.
[21] Ibid., 79–120.
[22] Ibid., 176–226.
[23] Ibid., 227–78.
[24] Ibid., 234.
[25] Jordanes, *The Gothic History of Jordanes in English Version*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow (Princeton, 1915), LX.315–16.

one, and the Goths were still, at the end of the day, barbarians from the frozen north.[26] But there is no reason to reduce Jordanes to a mouthpiece for Justinian. The emperor himself belonged to the Latin-speaking minority in the East, and might well have been influenced, not merely flattered, by reading Jordanes's Latin history. Jordanes completed his tripartite history either in or in the months following March 551.[27] At that point, it was clear that Justinian's increasingly vicious and oppressive tactics in the West were not succeeding. Instead of acquiescing to a fully subordinate status, Gothic resisters fought on (until June or July 552). Jordanes's narrative represented both an indictment of current strategies and an endorsement of alternative approaches. The *Getica* showed clearly how Gothic allies had made multiple and long-standing contributions to the Roman Empire, and were thus deserving of respect as partners (if junior ones), rather than of being crushed as enemies. It was not too late for the war to have a favourable outcome for all concerned, if the historical relationship between Romans and Goths could be respected rather than trampled upon.

There is no precedent in Jordanes's narrative for the approach to imperial–barbarian relations that Justinian and his leading general Narses were pushing during the 550s. Throughout the *Getica*, the Goths were auxiliaries, or allies, or friends of the empire, while following their own leaders. According to Jordanes, from the moment the Goths arrived in Scythia, they defeated every enemy they faced, frequently as Roman auxiliaries, until

> it had long been a hard matter for the Roman army to fight against any nations whatsoever without them. . . . [Indeed], it was the aid of the Goths that enabled [Constantine] to build the famous city that is named after him, the rival of Rome, inasmuch as they entered into a truce with the Emperor and furnished him forty thousand men to aid against various peoples.[28]

The relationship between Gothic kings and Roman emperors was not always a smooth one, but after each crisis they would 'return to their ancient alliance' or to their 'former state of friendship', most notably when they stood together against Attila's Huns.[29] Eventually, Emperor Zeno's adopted son-at-arms and imperial Consul, Theoderic, seized Italy under the arrangement that he would hold it 'as [Zeno's] grant and gift'.[30] On his deathbed, Theoderic had adjured the Goths 'to make sure of the peace and good will of the Emperor of the East, as next after God',[31] but within a very few years Justinian launched his attack. Anyone reading the *Getica* as Narses either prepared or began his renewed assault

[26] Goffart, *Narrators*, 101–4, 108; and Walter Goffart, 'Jordanes's *Getica* and the Disputed Authenticity of Gothic Origins from Scandinavia', *Speculum*, 80 (2005), 379–98, at 395–6.

[27] Brian Croke, 'Jordanes and the Immediate Past', *Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte*, 54 (2005), 473–93 (*in* March 551); and Goffart, 'Jordanes's *Getica*', 395 (just *after* March 551).

[28] Jordanes, *The Gothic History*, XXI.111–12.

[29] Ibid., XXXIV.177, XXXVI.184–XLIII.228, LII.271.

[30] Ibid., LVII.291.

[31] Ibid., LIX.304.

on Italy (April 551) would realize that contemporary policies represented a departure from the tried and true patterns depicted by Jordanes. There is, however, no evidence that Jordanes's views had any effect on Roman policy, as Justinian's armies forged ahead with iron fists in a ruinous policy of aggression.

NEITHER MALEVOLENT NOR ENVIOUS: GREGORY OF TOURS AND THE REFUSAL OF ALIGNMENT

Gregory, bishop of Tours from 573 till his death (probably) in 594, was the first major historian active in post-Roman Latin Europe. His ten-book masterpiece, simply entitled *Historiae* [Histories], was long known as the 'History of the Franks'.[32] However, Gregory resolutely did not compose a history of the Franks, either as a people, or as rulers of a successor state. He began neither with a *gens* nor a polity, but with a profession of his (Catholic) faith.[33] He refused to provide a coherent tale of Frankish beginnings and early Frankish kings, deliberately reporting conflicting traditions and marking as uncertain whatever he did report.[34] Unlike his contemporaries in the East, he was no 'new classicizing historian' writing from a position of alignment with a ruling state. Rather than identifying with a secular political unit, Gregory sought to reorient the moral compasses of his readers to match his own.

Gregory of Tours measured each Frankish king and queen against the yardstick of their 'Gottgefälligkeit', that is, the extent to which their actions were pleasing to God, whose judgements Gregory assumed mirrored his own; a key benchmark for Gregory was the relative smoothness of royal relations to God's servants, that is, priests like him.[35] Perhaps somewhat disingenuously, Gregory quoted Sallust on why being a historian is a difficult job: 'because if you permit yourself to criticize any wrongdoing, most of your readers think that you are being malevolent, or even envious'.[36] Gregory was neither, although he was given to sarcasm, and he took very seriously his right (following in the footsteps of biblical prophets) to speak truth to power—not incidentally an effective strategy for accumulating power in his own hands.[37] A senatorial aristocrat whose family had long been important in Gaul, Gregory's own debut in his *Historiae* is as a vocal opponent of King Chilperic who, in contrast to a gaggle of sycophantic, collaborationist bishops, announces to the assembled prelates at Rouen: 'You must not remain silent.

[32] Goffart, *Narrators*, 119–27.

[33] Gregory, *HF* I. preface, pp. 67–9.

[34] Ibid., II.9, pp. 120–5; and Helmut Reimitz, 'Die Konkurrenz der Ursprünge in der fränkischen Historiographie', in Walter Pohl (ed.), *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen: Von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters* (Vienna, 2004), 191–210.

[35] Martin Heinzelmann, *Gregor von Tours (538–594), 'Zehn Bücher Geschichte': Historiographie und Gesellschaftskonzept im 6. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, 1994), 80.

[36] Gregory, *HF* IV.13, pp. 208–9.

[37] Heinzelmann, *Gregor von Tours*, 81–3.

You must speak out and parade his sins before the King's eyes, lest some calamity should occur, in which case you will be responsible for his soul.'[38]

Gregory did not limit himself to parading royal sins, for (as he tells us in the opening words of the narrative) '[a] great many things keep happening, some of them good, some of them bad.'[39] It was, however, central to Gregory's purposes that the proportion of good to bad 'happenings' be far from equal. Horrors predominate, as Gregory plunges his readers into what threatens to become unrelieved gloom, amidst which a desire for some good 'happenings' is almost unavoidable. I began to long at least for the narration of a miracle, if not the experience of one, by the time the Roman patrician Aetius, 'after many disputes and wars . . . was beaten by his brothers, who had him garroted', and I was desperate for one by the time king Sigismund of Burgundy had his son throttled at lunch.[40] Potentially trapped in gloom, what reader would not welcome (and indeed desire) such events as the liberation of prisoners from their shackles by virtuous saints, among the few bright spots offering relief from a litany of assassinations and betrayals.[41] Having followed the bishop of Tours and his values thus far, it is a small step to questioning the very legitimacy of secular judicial authority.[42]

Gregory of Tours repeatedly thumbed his nose at the institutions and leaders of secular governments. The death of Emperor Valens at the Battle of Adrianople (378) had, for Gregory, no 'political' meaning; its sole significance was to demonstrate the effects of God's vengeance on a ruler who had shed the blood of saints.[43] Because neither the Roman Empire nor the 'barbarian successor states' mattered to him, he was able to write a masterful history in an era when the location of 'the state' was perplexing. For instance, the kings of his day ruled Francia through comital officials and courts with clear judicial as well as residential functions, benefited from treasuries and taxes, appointed bishops, called councils, confiscated property, and even accused their subjects of *lèse-majesté*, yet Gregory's political terminology differed little from that of Jordanes, for both assumed an imperial framework.[44] Gregory described Italy as 'under the rule of the Emperor', yet simultaneously wrote much about the activities of Lombard dukes and kings, and emphasized Frankish supremacy over Italy north of the River Po.[45] Such persistent

[38] Gregory, *HF* V.18, p. 277. For Gregory's background see Ian Wood, 'The Individuality of Gregory of Tours', in Mitchell and Wood (eds.), *The World of Gregory of Tours*, 29–46, at 32–4.

[39] Gregory, *HF* pref., p. 63.

[40] Ibid., II.7, III.5, pp. 118, 165.

[41] For instance, ibid., IV.19, X.6, pp. 215, 553.

[42] William S. Monroe, '*Via Iustitiae*: The Biblical Sources of Justice in Gregory of Tours', in Mitchell and Wood (eds.), *The World of Gregory of Tours*, 99–112, at 108–11.

[43] Gregory, *HF* I.41, p. 92.

[44] Matilde Conde Salazar and Cristina Martín Puente, 'La Denominación del gobernante en los Historiadores Latinos de la Antigüedad Tardía: Estudio Léxico', *Emerita: Revista de Lingüistica y Filología Clásica*, 72 (2004), 267–86, esp. 283–4.

[45] Gregory, *HF* I.9, p. 203; Pohl, 'Gregory of Tours', 132, 137–9.

constitutional ambiguities, features of the 'postcolonial void', prevented others in Francia (and elsewhere) from composing histories of the barbarian successor states in Western Europe, but they were irrelevant to Gregory.

Firm Merovingian control of Francia continued well into the next century, when King Dagobert (d. 639) could throw his weight around among Wends, Lombards, Avars, Bulgarians, Bavarians, Goths, and Saxons. Dagobert could hardly be mistaken for a subordinate of a reeling Constantinople-based empire whose own secular historical production had ground to a halt amidst massive territorial losses to Arab armies. Yet, historical writing in the *regnum Francorum* still did not break out of the conventional rut of the (unbroken) universal chronicle tradition. The compilation by 'Fredegar', a highly placed and presumably lay author active in Burgundy (then part of Neustria) in approximately 660, contains extracts from older chronicles (such as those by Jerome, Hydatius, and Isidore of Seville), and from the works of Gregory of Tours, covering the period from creation through 584, followed by an original discussion of many things, including Frankish affairs, initially through 642 and then up to about 660.[46] Fredegar modified the universal chronicle tradition only in so far as his oppositional stance vis-à-vis secular authorities was strikingly similar to that of Gregory of Tours, whose works may indeed have inspired him to include numerous horrific anecdotes about the Merovingians.[47] On the other hand, the 'refusal of alignment' of which Gregory was a leading exponent was hardly confined to him. For instance, Fredegar also knew and utilized Jonas of Bobbio's extensive account of Columbanus's struggles with Queen Brunhild, and thus participated in the development of the cult of a saint who symbolized the virtue of non-cooperation with wayward secular rulers.[48] Although Fredegar, like Gregory, was capable of occasional praise for a worthy king (such as Chlothar), the overall message of his *Chronicle* veered closer to instigating rebellion against secular rulers than to inspiring loyalty to them.[49]

Whatever the cause or origin of the orientation, historians in Francia cultivated a distinctly aloof stance in relation to their rulers. By the middle of the seventh century, the political framework in Francia should have been, both 'internally' and in terms of royal–imperial relations, conducive to the conceptualiza-

[46] The definitive study of the Fredegar Chronicles treats the author entirely as a compiler rather than as a narrative historian (albeit one who intervened unusually vigorously in the extracts), and treats the work as a chronicle or collection. See Roger Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken* (Hannover, 2007), 1–4, 24–6, 38–46, esp. 33.

[47] For instance, Fredegar reports that Theuderic of Burgundy, having finally conquered his brother's Austrasian *regnum*, commanded an unnamed person to take his little nephew by the foot and smash his head against a rock, while Fredegar's Merovingians even export their taste for intrafamilial murder, such as when the Frankish princess Theudelinda and her husband king Agilulf of the Lombards have her brother killed ('struck by an arrow when sitting on a stool defecating') out of jealousy over his popularity with the Lombards. See 'Fredegar on Frankish History, A: 584–642', in *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, 447–90, at 465, 459.

[48] Ibid., 460–3.

[49] For Chlothar see ibid., 467.

tion of a historical narrative about the barbarian successor state ruled by the Merovingians, yet Fredegar still clung to the universal chronicle format, refusing either to cheerlead for his own rulers, or to narrow his definition of what was worthy of attention to the history of a single political unit. No Frankish historians yet were willing to align their perspectives and identities with the secular state, in contrast to the 'new classicizing historians' such as Jordanes in the East, or the narrators who cropped up elsewhere in the West during the nadir of Eastern Roman affairs.[50] During this nadir, marked by a concomitant gap in Byzantine historiographical production (*c.*630–*c.*720), the crisis of identity which had so plagued potential historians in Western Europe resolved itself, such that Latin authors could, for the first time, easily imagine the histories of barbarian successor states. But a second step was needed, one not taken in Francia, namely the whole-hearted embrace of national alignment, including a narrowing of the narrative spotlight. Two historians, Isidore of Seville and Bede of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow, broke free from the accumulated weight of the Latin chronicle tradition, hitched their wagons to the barbarian successor states, and thus inaugurated a new approach to political historiography in Western Europe.

ISIDORE AND BEDE: ROYALIST ALIGNMENT AND NATIONAL FOCUS

Latin historical narrative concerning the barbarian successor states of Western Europe was a development of the Gothic *regnum* of Toledo. King Leovigild (569–86) nearly unified the Iberian Peninsula, asserting control over variegated regional elites, adopting Roman-style regalia, and minting gold coins in his own name, but he also promoted his ancestral Arian Christian traditions over the Nicene Christianity favoured by the majority of his subjects. Reccared's conversion to Catholic Christology (589) cleared the way for the *regnum gothorum* to become a fully institutionalized reality, including a capital (Toledo), an elective kingship (with selection by the bishops at Toledo), an ideology of kingship as a ministerial office granted by God, and a coronation ritual in which the new king was anointed by the archbishop of Toledo. Finally, during the 620s, as kings

[50] *Pace* Reimitz, who argues that the Fredegar Chronicle shifted the emphasis towards a history of the Frankish kings and their people. See Helmut Reimitz, 'The Art of Truth: Historiography and Identity in the Frankish World', in Richard Corradini, Rob Meens, Christina Pössel, and Philip Shaw (eds.), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2006), 87–104, at 91– 5. An abbreviated version of Gregory of Tours's *Historiae* compiled around mid-century by an anonymous editor was long judged to have transformed the bishop's moralizing tractate into a veritable *Gesta regum Francorum*, but in this case Reimitz showed that the short version did not mark a move towards a 'history of the Franks'. See Reimitz, 'Social Networks and Identities in Frankish Historiography: New Aspects of the Textual History of Gregory of Tours' *Historiae*', in Richard Corradini, Max Diesenberger, and Reimitz (eds.), *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources and Artefacts* (Leiden, 2003), 229–68, at 231–40.

Sisebut (612–21) and Suinthila (d. 631) were eliminating Eastern Roman political enclaves in Iberia, thus ending the constitutional ambiguities that had plagued barbarian rulers (and their potential historians), bishop Isidore of Seville wrote an *Historia Gothorum* [History of the Goths], effectively the 'declaration of independence' of the *regnum gothorum* from Byzantium.[51]

Isidore of Seville was the first major intellectual in the post-Roman West to work within a framework that permitted him to conceptualize the *regnum* in which he lived as a sovereign political unit, but a narrative history of the realm did not then flow inevitably from his pen.[52] He made a conscious decision to align himself with the interests of kings with whom he had 'a close working relationship'; indeed, he probably wrote at the behest of Suinthila.[53] Isidore's loyalty to the dynasty whose historiographical cheerleader he became derived from his experience as a refugee and a war orphan, a member of a family which had been displaced by Justinian's brutal invasions. The vibrant praise that Isidore lavished on Suinthila for chasing the Byzantines out of Spain in 625 had a very personal resonance. Isidore's hostility to the Eastern Romans also had a doctrinal aspect, for Greek Christians were (in his view) heretical on a number of counts. Thus, Isidore depicted Goths and Romans throughout his narrative as antagonists, whose ephemeral moments of alliance were immediately regretted by the former.[54]

Isidore produced both a long and a short version of his Gothic history.[55] Both versions described in appendices how the Goths forced the Vandals and the Suevi out of Spain, establishing their full rights of conquest in Iberia, and both versions were structured around the era of Spain, a unique dating system in use on the Iberian Peninsula.[56] However, only the longer (later) version provided a sustained, teleological history of the *regnum*, a 'systematic effort to project recent Gothic military and religious achievements back into the entire span of Gothic history' from the biblical origins of the Goths to the victories of Suinthila (for whom the bishop of Seville had

[51] J. N. Hillgarth, 'Historiography in Visigothic Spain', in *La storiografia altomedioevale, 10–16 aprile 1969*, vol. 1 (Spoleto, 1970), 261–311, at 296–7. The text is Isidore, 'History of the Goths' (hereafter *HG*), in *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, trans. Kenneth Baxter Wolf (Liverpool, 1990), 81–110. For Isidore, the *regnum* of Toledo, and for the short version of the history (Wolf translates and I discuss the long version), see Jacques Fontaine, *Isidore de Séville: Genèse et originalité de la culture hispanique au temps des Wisigoths* (Turnhout, 2000), 14, 101, 129–32, 134–5, 224–7, 229, 372–4, 376.

[52] In approximately 590, John of Biclaro had written a continuation of the universal chronicle of Eusebius-Jerome, and highlighted the reigns of Leovigild and Reccared, but he did not take the gothic kingdom as his main subject. See John of Biclaro, 'Chronicle', in *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 61–80).

[53] Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 14.

[54] For instance, after a brief moment of cooperation with the friendly emperor Theodosius in 381, immediately in 382 'the Goths rejected the protection of the Roman treaty and established Alaric as their king. They regarded it as demeaning to be subject to Roman power' (Isidore, *HG*, 87–8).

[55] Fontaine, *Isidore*, 224–7.

[56] Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, 21.

literally nothing but praise).[57] The long version also was preceded by a eulogy to Spain as 'queen of provinces… the pride and the ornament of the world',[58] and ended with a *Recapitulation* eulogizing the virtues and exploits of the Goths; the bulk of the text narrated the exploits of kings and other rulers. Isidore summarized the history of the 'barbarian successor state' of Spain in his punchy recapitulation:

> The Goths originated from Magog.… Driven from their territory by the attack of the Huns, they crossed the Danube and surrendered themselves to the Romans. But when they could no longer tolerate their unjust treatment, they took up arms… reached Spain, and there they established their homeland and dominion.… They waged such great wars… that Rome itself… submitted to the yoke of captivity and yielded to the Gothic triumphs: the mistress of all nations served them like a handmaid. All of the peoples of Europe feared them.… While most peoples are scarcely permitted to rule through entreaties and gifts, the liberty of the Goths has come about more through battle than petitions for peace.… In the arts of war they are quite spectacular.… They love to exercise themselves with weapons and compete in battle.… Subjected, the Roman soldier serves the Goths, whom he sees being served by many people and by Spain itself.[59]

Bishop Isidore's militaristic cheerleading, which brooked no hint that war could be wrong, put a divine imprimatur on such activities, in stark contrast to Gregory of Tours, who praised kings who avoided battles, sued for peace, and prevented carnage. In the event, Isidore's glorification of royal warfare, rather than Gregory's refusal of alignment, became crucial to the developing tradition of European historiography.

In the decades after Isidore's historiographical breakthrough, the situation in the British Isles was transformed such that that region also became hospitable to the production of historical narrative. Indeed, the *regnum* of Northumbria experienced, in the years around 700, an outright historiographical renaissance based, in the first instance, on the emergence there (as throughout Britain) of 'a clearly stratified social order', including stable, Christian, elites who could both patronize and benefit from the production of historical narrative.[60] But the Northumbrian historiographical renaissance was also powered by another traditional motor of historical writing: controversy. The first historical narrative written in England (at Lindisfarne) celebrated the career of the local Irish missionary saint Cuthbert (d. 687), while the second, composed soon after (at Whitby) glorified the career of Pope Gregory the Great, who sent Roman missionaries to England just before 600. These two divergent (albeit not incompatible) views of how Christianity came to England inaugurated a brief but intense spurt of historical writing on the topic.[61] The greatest scholar of the day, Bede of Wearmouth-Jarrow, made four

[57] Ibid., 15; Isidore, *HG* chs. 62–4, pp. 107–8.
[58] Ibid., 81–3.
[59] Ibid., selections from chs. 66–70, pp. 108–10.
[60] Innes, *Introduction*, 349–54.
[61] Goffart, *Narrators*, 256–7.

contributions to this historiographic spurt (half of the total output), culminating (in 731) in what he termed (in the autobiographical note appended to the work) his 'Ecclesiastical History of our island and people'.[62] In this narrative, Bede built up to stratospheric height the contributions of kings (and some queens) to the sacred history of the British Isles.

Like Isidore, Bede was close to the kings of his day; he wrote while 'based in a royal monastery, overlooking a royal harbour, and apparently within sight of a royal palace'.[63] Bede's vision of the body politic as a community in which 'kings play a major role, effectively personifying their peoples vis-à-vis the divine',[64] combined with his enthusiastic alignment with royalty, rendered his work a history of the kind produced by Jordanes and Isidore, while the monk of Jarrow's depiction of kings and other social elites as almost exclusively good, and frequently outright holy, went beyond even those two figures.[65] But the rose-coloured gel on Bede's royal spotlight was less important than the spotlight itself for, basking in its warm glow, the kinglets of so many Anglo-Saxon *regna*, in reality no more than tiny principalities that would soon prove vulnerable to small Viking war bands, looked on parchment like very mighty men who—in Bede's telling—could with little effort transform the traditional religious affiliation of their subjects, just one of the many feats of King Edwin of Northumbria (to take one example).[66] To Bede, however, the power of the kinglets was real enough, and was infinitely preferable to the chaos he knew had reigned on the island for centuries. The source of Bede's royalism was less his personal experience (in contrast to Isidore) than his knowledge of the difficulties faced by his homeland during the 'postcolonial void', which he believed had finally been bridged. 'Writing from what he thought to be the other or triumphalist side of the void, Bede could run a thread of continuity to connect the years following the withdrawal of Roman legions to the flourishing of Anglo-Saxon Christianity during his own lifetime.'[67]

The opening chapters of Book 1 narrated the halting attempt to create an orderly world in the wake of the Roman pullout, including the British king Vortigern's invitation to Angles, Saxons, and Jutes to exchange land grants in Britain for their aid in maintaining security.[68] When the latter overthrew their

[62] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (hereafter *HE*), trans. Leo Sherley-Price, rev. R. E. Latham, with an introd. by D. H. Farmer (London, 1990), 330.

[63] Richard Morris, *Journeys from Jarrow (Jarrow Lecture 2004)* (Jarrow, 2007), 6–8. There have been various efforts to pin down the particulars of Bede's royal politics, among which see most recently Eric J. Goldberg, 'Bede and the Ghost of King Ecgfrith', paper presented at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich., May 2008.

[64] N. J. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede: The* Ecclesiastical History *in Context* (London and New York, 2006), 148–69, at 71.

[65] King Edwin of Northumbria is a typical example of Bede's standard royal figure. See Bede, *HE* II.9, p. 12 and II.12, pp. 125–8.

[66] Ibid., II.16, pp. 134–5.

[67] Howe, 'Anglo-Saxon England', 28–30, at 28.

[68] Bede, *HE* I.15, pp. 62–3.

hosts, the dominion of the Chosen People—the English, 'a people with a Covenant, like Israel'—was established in Britain, along with a chance for order.[69] But the Divine Plan was not realized until that order had become Christian, to which process kings were indispensable. Always the first target of missionaries, Bede's kings called assemblies, built monasteries, endowed churches and churchmen, personally persuaded people to convert, and more. At the dramatic centre of the entire narrative, Bede placed King Oswy and the Synod of Whitby: the king opened the council with a spiritual address, commanded each ecclesiastic to speak in turn, and made the final decision concerning the proper date of Easter, a decision with which all immediately agreed.[70]

Bede's 'ecclesiastical history' was as much about the English *regna* as it was about the English Church, for the indispensable terrain in which that church could grow and thrive was provided by the royal *regna*. Even more importantly, Bede's 'church history' became a history of the barbarian successor state of England, projected as a unified whole, rather than as a multitude of tiny realms such as Northumbria, Mercia, and Kent. Bede ended his preface by calling on all who read or hear 'this history of our nation', and started the work (as Isidore had done) with a eulogy to the rich natural and human resources of Britain, unified by God's truth and the Latin language.[71] Although 52 per cent of the narrative concerned Northumbria,[72] Bede's paradigmatic genius lay in his ability to project the part as the whole, a strategy which (like Isidore's militarism) would become central to European historiography as a way to create coherent plot lines out of the chaos of the past. As Patrick Wormald noted, the 'English were . . . a singular "*gens*" or "*natio*" . . . and they had their singular Church' with a singular ecclesiastical history.[73] They also had their singular 'successor state' of England, an enduring political whole unified by a high kingship which stretched unbroken from the sixth century to Bede's own day.[74] The following selections from Bede's account of Northumbrian history (including the 'high kings' Edwin and Oswald) illustrate all the key features of his narrative:

At this time, the people of the Northumbrians . . . under Edwin their king received the Faith. . . . As a sign that he would come to the Faith and the heavenly kingdom, King Edwin received wide additions to his earthly realm, and brought under his sway all the territories

[69] Ibid., I. 14, pp. 62–3. Quotation from Patrick Wormald, 'The Venerable Bede and the "Church of the English"', in Wormald and Stephen Baxter (eds.), *The Times of Bede: Studies in Early Christian Society and its Historian* (Oxford, 2006), 207–28, at 216. The importance of the Divine Plan to Bede's conception of history is clear from his most important innovation: the use of the *Anno Domini* dating system.

[70] Bede, *HE* III.26, pp. 186–92.

[71] Ibid., quotes from preface, p. 43 and I.1, p. 45.

[72] Goffart, *Narrators*, 251–2.

[73] Patrick Wormald, 'Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the *Gens Anglorum*', in Wormald and Baxter (eds.), *The Times of Bede*, 106–34, at 118; see also Wormald, 'The Venerable Bede and the "Church of the English"', 225–6.

[74] Bede, *HE* II.5, p. 111.

inhabited either by English or by Britons. . . . The Northumbrian people's acceptance of the Faith of Christ came about through their king's alliance with the kings of Kent. . . . [Later, w]hen King Oswald was about to give battle to the heathen, he set up the sign of the holy cross and, kneeling down, asked God that He would grant his heavenly aid to those who trusted in Him in their dire need . . . . [T]here was no emblem of the Christian Faith, no church, and no altar in the whole of Bernicia until the new Christian leader Oswald, moved by his devotion to the Faith, set up this standard of the holy cross. . . . [Oswald] brought under his scepter all the peoples and provinces of Britain speaking the four languages, British, Pictish, Irish and English. Although he reached such a height of power, Oswald was always wonderfully humble, kindly, and generous to the poor and strangers. . . . [W]hen Oswald was killed in battle, his hand and arm were severed from his body, and they remain uncorrupted to this day. They are preserved as venerated relics in a silver casket at the church of Saint Peter . . . .[75]

Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* [Ecclesiastical History of Our Island and People] was, like Isidore of Seville's *Historia Gothorum*, a narrative celebration of a barbarian successor state. But it was much more besides. Bede was, above all, a biblical exegete, and the impulse to understand sacred scripture is in some ways the key to all his works.[76] The narrative is 'as complex and as multi-layered as Bede believed Scripture to be', functioning on multiple levels (historical/literal, anagogical, allegorical, and moral);[77] my discussion here has barely scratched the surface of the text. Isidore of Seville was the first 'narrator of barbarian history', but Bede's narrative history of the barbarian successor state of England was Latin Europe's first secular historical masterpiece.

THE CAROLINGIAN WORLD: AMBIGUITY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE REVIVED WESTERN EMPIRE

In the eighth century, as the Eastern Roman Empire continued to reel under the damage inflicted by Arab armies, and as the Merovingian dynasty entered its third consecutive century of rule, secular history arrived in Francia. The anonymous *Liber historiae Francorum* [The Book of the History of the Franks] (customarily dated to 727), which begins, 'Let us present the beginning of the kings of the Franks, the origins and deeds of the kings and those peoples',[78] constructs a linear, narrowly focused narrative history of Frankish kings, queens, and mayors of the palace (with particular emphasis on the line of succession to the kingship), at first based largely on Gregory of Tours (with numerous original interpolations)

[75] Bede, *HE* II.9, pp. 117–18; III.2, pp. 144–5; and III.6, p. 152.

[76] Scott DeGregorio, 'Introduction: The New Bede', in DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV, 2006), 1–10, esp. 5.

[77] Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 98.

[78] 'The Anonymous History of the Franks (LHF) 1–5', in *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, 595–6, at 595. Also see the selections in 'Kings and Mayors: The Anonymous *History of the Franks* (LHF) and the Frankish Kingdom, a. 639–727', in *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, 491–8.

and, from the reign of Dagobert (d. 629) onwards, in an entirely original way. In keeping with what had become a central feature of Frankish historical narrative, the author revealed the depravities, faults, and truculent deeds (including but not limited to fornication, murder, treachery, gluttony, drunkenness, the ever-popular intra-familial strife, and just plain lack of sense) of the Frankish high and mighty. Despite the pock-marked surface of the narrative, and the fact that the anonymous Soissons-based author of the *Liber historiae Francorum* drew most of her evidence from her immediate Neustrian surroundings, she managed to produce 'an uncompromising statement of the group identity of the Franks'.[79] One goal of the author of the *Liber historiae Francorum* was to 'reinforce the legitimacy of the Merovingian line at a time when their actual power was beginning to be overshadowed by that of the Carolingian mayors of the palace'.[80] But, to the Carolingians belonged the future for, in 751, Pippin, mayor of the palace, deposed the last Merovingian and took the royal title himself.

Pippin's coup was followed almost immediately by the production, under the patronage of his uncle count Childebrand, of a *Historia vel Gesta Francorum* [History and Deeds of the Franks], which was continued through 768 (the accession of Pippin's sons Charlemagne and Carloman) at the instigation of Childebrand's son Nibelung.[81] The narrative commissioned by Childebrand was, quite clearly, a history of the Franks, intended to celebrate and legitimate the inauguration of the new king, while suppressing any hint of the existence of opposition to the new dynasty.[82] Nibelung's continuator, on the other hand, may already have been suffering from the confusing ambiguities attendant upon Carolingian expansionism, which led him to halt the narrative in 768, possibly ten years or more before his own day.[83] King Pippin first marched into Italy, as the protector of the papacy against the Lombards, in 756; in 774, his son Charles seized the Lombard *regnum*, but one among several conquests leading to the transformation of the barbarian successor state of Francia into an empire, as Charles became (in 800) 'king of the Franks and the Lombards governing the Roman Empire'. It is difficult to imagine a more ambiguous formulation, and

[79] Rosamond McKitterick, '*Akkulturation* and the Writing of History in the Early Middle Ages', in Dieter Hägermann, Wolfgang Haubrichs, and Jörg Jarnut with Claudia Giefers (eds.), *Akkulturation: Probleme einer germanisch-romanischen Kultursynthese in Spätantike und frühem Mittelalter* (Berlin and New York, 2004), 381–95, at 393. For the place of composition (the leading candidate being the nunnery of Notre Dame of Soissons) see McKitterick, '*Akkulturation*', 385; John J. Contreni, 'Reading Gregory of Tours in the Middle Ages', in Mitchell and Wood (eds.), *The World of Gregory of Tours*, 419–34 (who suggests, at p. 423, that the author was an aristocratic laywoman); Janet L. Nelson, 'Gender and Genre in Women Historians of the Early Middle Ages', in Nelson, *The Frankish World, 750–900* (London, 1996), 183–97; and Richard A. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum* (Oxford, 1987), 150–9 (for Soissons, but denying female authorship).

[80] McKitterick, '*Akkulturation*', 387.

[81] Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 4–7, 82–3, and 89; also see pp. xiv–xv for the list of manuscripts of this work, long (mis)understood to be a 'continuation' of the *Chronicle* of Fredegar.

[82] Ibid., 91–3, 95.

[83] Ibid., 91–2, 95–6.

hardly surprising that no author attempted a sweeping narrative history of the Frankish realm for another two hundred years, when Aimoin of Fleury wrote—but failed to finish—a *Gesta Francorum* [Deeds of the Franks] (*c.*1000).[84] Instead, the ninth and tenth centuries witnessed a remarkable series of compendia, continuations, interpolations, abbreviations, expansions, and recombinations of (older) narratives, which never reflected 'a static reality of stable identities' but 'formed part of a process of negotiating conflicting and changing identities'.[85]

One final narrative, written from within the framework of the Frankish Empire, deserves our attention: Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* [History of the Lombards], which followed the Lombards and their rulers through centuries of migrations, battles, set-backs, and victories from their mythical origins in Scandinavia through the death of King Liutprand (712–44).[86] Paul signposted the Lombard trajectory between Scandinavia and Liutprand exactly as one would expect in the history of a barbarian successor state. He marked the moment of departure of the Lombards from Pannonia to take possession of Italy as particularly important through the utilization of the first AD date (568) in the entire work.[87] He lingered over Queen Theudelinda's palace at Monza, built on the site of a palace of Theoderic the Great and decorated with murals showing the achievements of the Lombards, and over King Rothari's Edict, the first written collection of the laws of the Lombards.[88] He described how the Lombards survived both co-ordinated and separated attacks by Roman and Frankish armies, for centuries indefatigable in their desire to 'pluck Italy out of the hand of the Langobards', and retained their 'freedom'.[89] He registered both the internal turmoil and the territorial losses to 'the nation of the Saracens' that together transformed the (Eastern) Roman Empire into little more than a pretentious 'Greek' polity whose bloodthirsty heretical rulers 'the Roman people' refused to acknowledge.[90] In the final book of the narrative, Paul recounted the anti-Saracen alliance between Liutprand and the Frankish ruler Charles Martel, celebrated Liutprand's conquests of imperial enclaves on the peninsula (pursued against a backdrop of Emperor Leo's vile attacks on images of the Saviour and his saints),

[84] Mortensen, 'Stylistic Choice', 83 and 86 (albeit with a different explanation for the phenomenon).

[85] Reimitz, 'The Art of Truth', 95.

[86] Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* (hereafter *HL*), trans. William Dudley Foulke (Philadelphia, 1907; repr. with an introd. by Edward Peters, 2003).

[87] Ibid., II.7, p. 64.

[88] Ibid., IV.21–2, IV.42, pp. 166–7, 195–8.

[89] Ibid., III.17, 22, 29, 31, V.5–V.11, pp. 117–18, 126, 136–7, 141–5, 216–23, at pp. 137, 217.

[90] Ibid., IV.46, p. 200; V.13, p. 226; VI.10–13, pp. 258–60; VI.34, p. 277. This was the period of the 'Byzantine historiographical gap', which did lead in Lombard Italy to the production of the *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, a sparse, chronologically ordered set of anecdotes about Lombard kings and queens, probably written during the reign of Grimoald (662–71). For the text see ibid., 315–21.

warmly praised Liutprand's many virtues (and lamented his passing), and warned against 'the evil of dissension'.[91]

Had Paul written during the reigns of Ratchis (744–9) or Desiderius (756–74), at whose courts in Pavia he lived and worked, or when Aistulf (749–56) was conquering the exarchate of Ravenna and closing in on papal Rome with a view to unifying Lombard Italy, we would immediately understand his narrative as a history of the Lombard successor state. However, the Lombard *regnum* of mid-century, mature, liberated from imperial oppression, and allied with Frankish peers in the landscape of the post-Roman Latin West, was no longer in existence when Paul wrote, sometime between 784 and 796, for it had become, in 781, a Frankish sub-kingdom ruled from Verona by Charlemagne's son Pippin.

Scholars have expressed quite divergent opinions concerning Paul's *Historia Langobardorum*. Goffart argued that he wrote in the late 780s or 790s in an attempt to persuade the Lombard duke Grimoald III of Benevento to cooperate with the Franks and avoid the Greeks, but never managed to finish the work.[92] This hyper-narrow view of Paul's goals contrasts with the omnibus approach of Rosamond McKitterick, who argued that Paul wrote a complete work, in the mid-780s, and possibly at the behest of Charlemagne, on behalf of the Lombards, to instruct the Franks (in Francia and at Pippin's court) about the Lombards, but in such a way as to justify Frankish rule to the Lombards.[93] Most recently, Walter Pohl has suggested solving the enigma that is Paul by permitting him to remain enigmatic, contending that the success and charm of the work lies largely in its ambivalence, and that Paul was above all a non-partisan thinker who saw good and bad on all sides.[94] None of these interpretations of Paul is incompatible with my sense of his place in the history of writing about the barbarian successor states of Western Europe.

Paul wrote from his own subject position, as all historians do, but his identity (on both the personal and the political levels) was more complex than the ones we have so far encountered. Himself of aristocratic Lombard background, Paul served as tutor to Adalperga, daughter of King Desiderius of the Lombards (756–74), and to Rotrud, daughter of Desiderius's conqueror, Charlemagne; in the latter's service, while resident at the Carolingian court (781–5), Paul wrote at least one overtly pro-Carolingian work, 'a book . . . concerning the bishops of'

[91] Ibid., VI.24, p. 270; VI.46–9, pp. 287–93; VI.53–4, pp. 296–8; VI.58, pp. 303–8.

[92] Goffart, *Narrators*, 332–46, 430.

[93] Rosamond McKitterick, 'Paul the Deacon and the Franks', *Early Medieval Europe*, 8 (1999), 319–39, esp. 327, 330, 334, 338.

[94] Walter Pohl, 'Geschlechterrollen und Frauenbilder bei Paulus Diaconus', in Robert Rollinger and Christoph Ulf with Kordula Schnegg (eds.), *Frauen und Geschlechter: Bilder-Rollen-Realitäten in den Texten antiker Autoren zwischen Antike und Mittelalter* (Vienna, 2006), 355–64, at 355; Walter Pohl, 'Heresy in Secundus and Paul the Deacon', in Celia Chazelle and Catherine Cubitt (eds.), *The Crisis of the 'Oikumene': The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean* (Turnhout, 2007), 243–64, at 244–5, 263.

Metz, which he does not fail to mention in the *Historia Langobardorum*.[95] The Carolingian dynasty's first appearance in the *Historia Langobardorum* leaves no doubt concerning their 'Gottgefälligkeit', for (according to Paul) 'it was ordained from heaven that the sovereignty of the Franks should be transferred to the race of these men'.[96] Paul wrote within the genre of national history pioneered by Isidore, Bede, and various anonymous Franks, but he did so in a place where the 'postcolonial void' had been filled in an unexpected way: through the incorporation of his barbarian *regnum* into a revived empire. As a historian, it fell to Paul to reinscribe the (former) Lombard successor state (now Pippin's kingdom of Italy) within an imperial structure. He negotiated the challenge with aplomb, and with a disarming consciousness of his own 'dual citizenship' in both kingdom and empire.

When Paul wrote (whether in the 780s or the 790s) the structure of a Lombard sub-kingdom of Italy within a Frankish (if not yet 'Roman') Empire had its opponents: Lombard independentists, the Beneventan south, popes who insisted on playing their own hands, and Byzantines (with local allies) still not ready to concede Italy.[97] Paul's narrative fit the bill of a national history for this particular political unit, 'intended to explain at length the legitimacy of a present secular power',[98] while avoiding the sycophantic cheerleading found in the works of other pro-Frankish Italian intellectuals such as Paulinus of Aquileia, whose Easter hymn *Regi regum* (*c.776*) strongly paralleled the salvific activities of the King of Heaven with those of the earthly King Charles, and expressed Italy's gratitude for its 'liberation' by Charlemagne.[99] Paul the Deacon steered clear of such overblown claims; Charles and Pippin were legitimate rulers, but they were not saviours.

Paul never hid the fact that political loyalty can be a complicated matter. He praised Duke Droctulft, a warrior born of Swabian/Alamannic stock who grew up among the Lombards but 'loved the standards of Rome and the emblems of the republic' enough to fight for imperial, and against Lombard, dominance on the peninsula.[100] And he made a mind-boggling assertion concerning the whereabouts of the relics of Benedict and Scholastica. According to Paul, some Franks came to Monte Cassino and stole the *bones* of the saints, but their mouths and eyes and other members—although decayed—remained 'with us'.[101] For centuries, there has been a debate as to the location of the relics of Scholastica and

[95] Goffart, *Narrators*, 334–5, 338; Peters, 'Introduction', in *History of the Lombards,* pp. xii–xiii; Paul the Deacon, *HL* VI.16, p. 263.

[96] Ibid., VI.16, p. 262.

[97] Goffart, *Narrators*, 345.

[98] Mortensen, 'Stylistic Choice', 81.

[99] Francesco Stella, 'Il ruolo di Paolino nell'evoluzione della poesia politica e religiosa dell'Europa carolingia alla luce delle recenti attribuzioni', in Paolo Chiesa (ed.), *Paulino d'Aquileia e il contributo italiano all'Europa carolingia: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Cividale del Friuli–Premariacco, 10–13 ottobre 2002* (Udine, 2003), 439–52, at 446.

[100] Paul the Deacon, *HL* III.18–19 pp. 118–20.

[101] Ibid., VI.2 p. 251.

Benedict, whether they resided in France together or apart (at a convent in Le Mans and Fleury respectively), or perhaps always remained at Monte Cassino.[102] Virtually in one breath, Paul endorsed the Frankish claim (a sign of divine grace on their side), undercut it by vindicating the holy mouths and eyes for Benevento, then undercut the undercutting through the image of decayed organs, yet—in the last analysis—gave the careful reader cause to reconsider which part of the saints s/he would rather have. Mouths and eyes, even decayed ones, have real staying power, for what else has remained of our historians but the products of their eyes and their mouths, that is, their visions and their articulations of the histories of the barbarian successor states of post-Roman Europe?

It would require a separate essay to explore whether the narrative products of (historians') eyes and mouths discussed in this chapter matched the historical 'realities' of post-Roman Europe, that is, whether the bones of the narrated bodies politic coincided with the discourses about them. It is unlikely that Anglo-Saxon royalty acted precisely as sketched by Bede, whose kings and queens were intended to function as exemplars of ideal behaviour for present and future rulers (as well as to help Bede construct royal authority as central to the historical process). At the other end of the spectrum, Frankish royalty can hardly have been so relentlessly bloodthirsty as they appear to be in the narratives produced by Gregory of Tours and his successors. Bede's royalist sympathies were best served by one approach, whereas Gregory's own ambitions required the polar opposite. Mutually oppositional exigencies of a similar sort led to a comparable contradiction between the emplotments of Isidore and Jordanes. Standing on opposite sides of the political chasm produced by the Justinian's Gothic Wars, Isidore's account of rocky, belligerent Gothic–Roman relations was diametrically opposed to the tale of love and amity told by Jordanes. All the narratives also contain their fair share of certifiable lies and myths. For instance, Jordanes's self-identification (above all as a Goth) may be mendacious, perhaps a manifestation of wise caution on the part of an author critical of a regime whose head of state (Justinian) has been compared to Stalin.[103] As for myths, the story of the reception of Jordanes's *Getica* is almost entirely a tale of how, from the mid-seventh century onwards, authors in Latin Europe drew on the opening—legendary—sections as evidence for the Scandinavian origins of barbarian peoples.[104] But I have chosen not to emphasize such issues in this chapter, and have instead kept the focus on the development of a tradition of historical narratives concerning the barbarian successor states in post-Roman Western Europe, a tradition which was rich, complex, and firmly in place by 800.

[102] Walter Goffart, 'Le Mans, St. Scholastica, and the Literary Tradition of the Translation of St. Benedict', *Revue Bénédictine*, 77 (1967), 107–41, esp. 107–8, 118–25.

[103] Goffart, *Narrators*, 46, 104–5; Goffart, 'Jordanes's *Getica*', 393–8; and Averil Cameron, 'History as Text: Coping with Procopius', in Christopher Holdsworth and T. P. Wiseman (eds.), *The Inheritance of Historiography, 350–900* (Exeter, 1986), 53–66, at 55.

[104] Goffart, 'Jordanes's *Getica*'.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

411	Vandals, Sueves, and Alans settled in Hispanic provinces; traditional date for Roman military and administrative pull-out from Britain
418	Goths settled as federates in southern Gaul, capital at Toulouse
429	Vandals and Alans under Gaiseric invited to Africa by Roman rebels
439	Vandals take Carthage, conquest of Africa complete
*c.*442	Vandal kingdom recognized by treaty
452	Goths defeat Sueves, begin domination of Spain
474	Constantinople makes 'eternal treaty' with Vandals
476	Military revolt over pay; Odaocer, master of soldiers, deposes Emperor Romulus Augustulus (last Western emperor)
489	Theoderic, king of the Goths, invades Italy at request of Eastern emperor
493–526	Theoderic ruler of Italy
496	Franks under Clovis defeat Alemans at Tolbiac; traditional date for conversion of Clovis to Christianity
507	Franks under Clovis defeat Goths at Vouillé, take much of southern Gaul
533–4	Byzantine armies led by Belisarius take Africa from Vandals
534	Frankish conquest of Burgundy
551	Byzantine occupation of cities of southeastern coast of Spain
535–54	'Gothic Wars': Byzantine armies campaigning in Italy
568	Lombard king Alboin leads invasion of northern Italy
624	Last Byzantine possessions in Spain conquered by Goths
636	Arab victory over Byzantines at Yarmuk; Syria evacuated
638	Arabs take Jerusalem
640–2	Arab conquest of Egypt
674–7	Arab naval blockade of Constantinople
680	Formal peace treaty between Lombards and Byzantine Empire
698	Fall of Carthage, capital of Byzantine Africa, to Islamic armies
751	Ravenna taken by Lombards; last Merovingian king sent to a monastery as Pippin, mayor of the palace, is crowned king of the Franks
774	Pippin's son Charles conquers Lombard kingdom
781	Charles appoints his son Pippin king in Italy
800	Charles is crowned 'king of the Franks and the Lombards governing the Roman Empire' by Pope Leo in Rome

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Chapter 19

History, Story, and Community: Representing the Past in Latin Christendom, 1050–1400

Charles F. Briggs

From the early eleventh century onwards, Latin Christendom's modest trickle of historical writing, which had issued forth from a few, mostly monastic, centres, began to swell into a substantial river fed by many and diverse tributaries. This expansionary trend in historiography was itself but one small manifestation of a protracted phase of accelerated growth in Europe, beginning in roughly the year 1000 and continuing until the early decades of the fourteenth century. The politically atomized, sparsely populated, overwhelmingly rural, and economically non-integrated society that had survived the inner turmoil attending the breakup of the Frankish Empire and the incursions of peoples from North Africa, the Eurasian Steppes, and Scandinavia during the ninth through early eleventh centuries, demonstrated a renewed vitality, spurred in part by the new political and economic conditions, as well as it seems a period of improved climate. Aggressive aristocratic lineages sought to expand their control over territories and populaces while simultaneously adopting strategies to legitimize their status and activities. They created bonds of material and spiritual kinship with local churches and monastic institutions and patronized new foundations, both within their patrimonies as well as in newly acquired lands and frontier zones. Bishops and abbots, who often played an active role in promoting these endeavours, also engaged in the movement of Church reform, spearheaded by the Benedictine monastic reform of Cluny in Burgundy, and soon taken up by the papacy, originally with the encouragement of the German 'Roman' emperors and then, starting with the pontificate of Gregory VII in 1073, in competition with them.

The ethos of reform inspired periodic spates of creative experimentation in monastic life, bringing into being ascetic orders like the Cistercians and Carthusians and the more pastorally orientated regular canons at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and then in the early thirteenth century the mendicant friars. A resurgent papacy, seeking to expand its influence and solidify its

power, built an increasingly complex administrative machine and defined and enforced common doctrine and religious practice. All this promoted the growth of schooling and educational institutions, from urban grammar schools, to monastic and cathedral schools, to universities dedicated to training bureaucrats, legal experts, theologians, and pastors. Similar needs for experts in law and administration on the part of governments of territorial and city-states also contributed to this trend, while a rapidly expanding commercial sector likewise called for greater literacy and numeracy. The historiographical corollary to the growth of literacy and the multiplication, growth, and articulation of communities—whether institutional, local, territorial, or vocational/professional—was a proliferation of the centres, opportunities, modes, and audiences of historical writing. So much and so rapid change, however, also stimulated a desire for narratives that legitimated lineages, institutions, and polities (all of which were often of recent creation), valorized territorial expansion and conquest, protected vested interests that felt threatened, and strengthened the bonds of communities through the recollection of common origins, the recitation of memorable deeds, the exemplification of appropriate behaviour, and the revelation of divine influence and future destiny.

History was an especially apt vehicle for these purposes, thanks to its essentially hybrid and polymorphous nature. *Historia* was witness and story, document and invention, teacher and entertainer. Not confined to the narrow academic rules of a disciplinary art or science but nonetheless an adjunct to grammar and rhetoric, historical narrative was at once profoundly literary yet governed by the rule of chronological sequence; and while historiography's literary parentage gave its practitioners plenty of creative license, the stories they related had the added force of being 'true', since they recounted past deeds as observed by the historian himself or relayed to him by trustworthy witnesses, documents, and authorities. This truth claim is what distinguished historical narrative from fables, romances, and legends, even when its contents were partially, mostly, or in some cases almost entirely fabricated.[1] The situation of the historian also contributed to his creation's slippery character, for even though he often worked to fulfil a duty or commission and, in the better instances, pursued his task with avidity and great seriousness of purpose, his role as historian was *not* that of a professional. Rather, in so far as their professions were concerned, the writers of history were often monks or clerics, sometimes merchants or soldiers, in some cases civil servants, entertainers, or heralds. It is partly owing to the extra-disciplinary and non-professional nature of medieval historiography that it has until recently fared so poorly in the judgement of modern 'scientific' professional historians who

[1] Antonia Gransden, 'Prologues in the Historiography of Twelfth-Century England', in Gransden, *Legends, Traditions and History in Medieval England* (London, 1992), 125–51, at 126–9; Monika Otter, 'Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing', in Nancy Partner (ed.), *Writing Medieval History* (London, 2005), 109–30, at 111–12.

faulted it for its tendentiousness, formlessness, anachronism, and lack of respect for factual truth, and expressed derision for its too gullible acceptance of the miraculous, fabulous, and legendary. When it came to recovering the medieval past, these modern professionals put their trust first in documents and records; when these were not to hand or insufficient the chroniclers could be read with a jaundiced eye in order to winkle out the wheat of factual truth from all the chaff of literary adornment and legend.

Over the past two generations, however, historians and literary scholars have traded in the expectations of nineteenth-century positivism for a perspective that foregrounds the 'work' these writers and their texts were doing. Greater sensitivity has therefore been accorded to such factors as the role of genre, the function of language and representation, the relationship between historians, patrons, and intended audience, the institutional, educational, and discursive conventions that governed historians' practice, and the conditions of textual production and reception. Instead, then, of trying to isolate historical writing from other narrative forms or of searching for the 'real' history in medieval chronicles, recent scholarship attempts to read medieval historiography on its own terms.

Just because history was neither an academic discipline nor a profession, it should not be assumed that historical writing did not conform to certain broad conventions. Learning these conventions began at school with the study of Latin grammar and rhetoric, in which students read, memorized, and annotated the classics, then tried their hand at imitating them. Several of the texts they read—for example, Vergil's *Aeneid*, Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* [Conspiracy of Catiline] and *Bellum Jugurthinum* [Jugurthan War], and the *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri IX* [Memorable Sayings and Deeds] of Valerius Maximus—were considered historical. Students also grew habituated to reading much of the Bible as history, especially the so-called *libri historici* of the Old Testament (Genesis through Esther) and New Testament (the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles), and the books of the Maccabees in the Apocrypha. In childhood and youth, then, historians (and their audiences) were imbued with the language and images of a classical and biblical past; and because their studies required them to consider the ethical import of what they read, they also developed a strong sense of the rhetorical, exemplary, and moral-didactic functions of historical narrative. This helps account for what we today regard as the anachronism of medieval historiography. We see the past as dead, gone, Other, hence our efforts to *re*-construct it; medieval writers and readers also knew the past was past—how could they not with their interest in chronology and periodization?—but there was also for them a powerful sense of the past as present, precisely because its examples and lessons were eminently useful in the here and now.[2]

[2] Janet Coleman, 'The Uses of the Past (14th–16th Centuries): The Invention of a Collective History and Its Implications for Cultural Participation', in Ann Rigney and Duowe Wessel Fokkema (eds.), *Cultural Participation: Trends since the Middle Ages* (Amsterdam, 1993), 21–37.

Perhaps most importantly of all, however, their studies and models implanted in them the sense of divine purpose in history and established a definition of historical truth as not only what we would call fact, although it certainly included this, but also as that which 'ought' to be true. So, according to this way of reasoning, the miracles of Exodus or of the Gospels must be true, just as the epic journey of Aeneas and the founding of Rome by Romulus must have happened.

Additionally, historians invariably wrote within a historiographical tradition, copying and compiling their sources for earlier history before adding their own material, as gained from direct experience and living witnesses. This sometimes wore an institutional or even familial face. Monasteries usually took care at least to keep annals,[3] a practice which in some cases grew into a tradition of historical writing, as, for example, at St Albans, where the monk Matthew Paris initially conceived of his *Chronica majora* [Greater Chronicle] (begun *c.*1240) as a continuation of his senior confrere Roger of Wendover's *Flores historiarum* [Flowers of Histories] (completed *c.*1234). After his death in 1259, Paris's fellow monks continued the tradition well into the fourteenth century, although none could equal his talents until late in the century, when Thomas Walsingham revived his abbey's reputation as a centre of historical writing.[4] More impressive still was the tradition of royal historiography at the monastery of Saint-Denis, just north of Paris. The tradition can be traced back to Suger, abbot of Saint-Denis, who wrote a royal biography of Louis VI, *Vita Ludovici Grossi regis* [Life of Louis the Fat] (*c.*1140), and started a Life of Louis VII; moreover one of Suger's protégés, the monk Odo of Deuil, accompanied Louis VII on the Second Crusade and wrote *De profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem* [Journey of Louis VII to the East] (1150s). It was the great triumphs of Louis VII's son Philip II Augustus, however, which inspired the monks of Saint-Denis to become what amounted to the official historiographers of France, an activity that spawned the vernacular *Grandes Chroniques de France* [The Great Chronicles of France], begun by Primat in the 1270s and continued well into the fifteenth century.[5]

Towns too developed traditions of historical writing. Genoa was the first to do this, building on the *Annales* of the aristocratic merchant, naval commander, and politician Caffaro, who chronicled the affairs of his city from 1099 to 1163. His chronicle became what amounted to an official history of the city, and was continued anonymously until Jacopo Doria took up the task for the years 1280–93.

[3] On annals see ch. 17 by Sarah Foot in this volume.

[4] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (Ithaca, 1974), 356–79; and Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II, c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca, 1982), 5, 118–56.

[5] Elisabeth Carpentier, 'Les historiens royaux et le pouvoir Capétien: d'Helgaud de Fleury à Guillaume le Breton', in Jean-Philippe Genet (ed.), *L'historiographie médiévale en Europe* (Paris, 1991), 129–39; Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1993); Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997), 83–137; and Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1980), 338–42.

During the twelfth century several Lombard and Tuscan cities began to compile annals, and in the thirteenth century both Bologna and Perugia instituted official notarial memorials of their cities.[6] The Villani of Florence turned historical writing into a family affair, begun by Giovanni in his *Nuova Cronica* [New Chronicles], who recounted the history of his city down to his death from plague in 1348, and continued by his brother Matteo (to 1363) and nephew Filippo (1364).[7]

Historians also worked within a genre tradition. For example, all medieval authors of universal histories worked within a tradition established in the early Church by the histories of Eusebius-Jerome and Orosius, as well as by Augustine in his *De civitate Dei* [City of God] and, in the seventh century, by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologiae* [Etymologies], that the history of the Church must take into account all history, pagan, biblical, and Christian, from the creation of the world, that this history be divided into six ages, the last of which began with the coming of Christ, and that within these six ages there had been four successive universal empires: Babylon (or Assyria), Persia, Greece, and Rome.[8] A medieval universal chronicler would begin with this package and then add material, from other textual authorities and from personal observations and word of mouth reports, up to his own times; his own work might then be taken up by later chroniclers.

So it happened with the universal chronicle compiled by Marianus Scotus at Mainz, which ended with his death in 1082/3 and then was continued for another three years, probably by a fellow monk at Mainz. This version of the chronicle then made its way to England by the agency of Robert, bishop of Hereford, himself a native of Lorraine. There, Robert's friend and episcopal colleague Wulfstan of Worcester procured a copy which provided the material for universal and continental history for the *Chronicon ex Chronicis* [Chronicle from the Chronicles], compiled at Worcester's cathedral priory in the first decades of the twelfth century, initially by a monk referred to as 'Florence', but completed by the monk John. To this base the Worcester monks added English material from several sources, including Bede, Asser's *Vita Ælfredi regis Angul Saxonum* [Life of Alfred the Great], numerous saints' lives, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, as well as for contemporary history the *Historia Novorum* (1121) of Eadmer, a monk of Canterbury. Meanwhile, back on the continent, Marianus's chronicle also formed the basis for the universal chronicle of Sigebert of Gembloux (1112), whose work

[6] Chris Wickham, 'The Sense of the Past in Italian Communal Narratives', in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe* (London, 1992), 173–89; Jacques Heers, 'Le notaire dans les villes italienes, témoin de son temps, mémorialiste et chroniquer', in Daniel Poirion (ed.), *La chronique et l'histoire au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1984), 73–84; and Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique*, 338–9.

[7] Christian Bec, 'Sur l'historiographie marchande à Florence au XIVe siècle', in Poirion (ed.), *La chronique et l'histoire*, 45–72; and Denys Hay, *Annalists and Historians: Western Historiography from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1977), 80.

[8] See ch. 21 by Andrew Marsham in this volume.

then became an important source for the Dominican Vincent of Beauvais's encyclopedic *Speculum historiale* [Mirror of History], compiled in Paris in 1244 and 1256/9. A century later, the Englishman Ranulf Higden, a monk of St Werburgh's, Chester built his own universal and encyclopedic *Polychronicon* (1352–63) on a foundation of texts that included Vincent of Beauvais as well as John of Worcester.[9]

In certain ways the writing of universal history can be regarded as a strategy for building or maintaining community. A desire to link the liturgical practices of Worcester to those of the universal Church has been seen behind the composition of John of Worcester's chronicle.[10] More ambitious still was the *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus* [History of the Two Cities] of Otto of Freising (1146). This aristocratic German bishop brought to bear the extensive knowledge he had acquired from years of study in the schools of Paris in order to make sense of the countless vicissitudes of the past and the troubled state of the present. Writing in the immediate wake of the Investiture Conflict between the German emperors and popes, which dragged on from the 1070s until 1122 and which aggravated the ongoing strife within the empire between the great princely families of the Welfs and Hohenstaufen, and conscious of seemingly intractable conflicts elsewhere in Christendom, Otto was looking for historical sense amidst seeming chaos. He found it, first, in his identification of the Roman Church with Augustine's City of God; but whereas the African bishop had distinguished this Heavenly City of the Elect from its visible manifestation on earth, Otto combined them, thereby including all Catholic Christians in the Communion of Saints. Another community that Otto believed encompassed all Christendom was the Roman Empire, ruled at the time he completed the *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus* by his half-brother, Conrad III of Hohenstaufen. Yet the recently troubled history of this empire and those that preceded it was for Otto evidence of an ineluctable process of the world's decline. To make sense of this process, he borrowed Orosius's concept of the four universal empires, and combined this with a process of westward movement, the *translatio imperii* (transfer of empire). According to this, universal monarchy, having begun in the east, moved westwards over time, and had now reached its final place. But since each empire went through a process of rise, apogee, and decline, and since evidently Otto himself was living in the days of the last empire's decline, then surely he was

[9] Martin Brett, 'John of Worcester and His Contemporaries', in R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern* (Oxford, 1981), 101–26; Brett, 'The Use of Universal Chronicle at Worcester', in Genet (ed.), *L'historiographie médiévale*, 277–85; Monique Paumier-Foucart, 'Ecrire l'histoire au XIIIe siècle: Vincent de Beauvais et Helinand de Froidmont', *Annales de l'Est*, ser. 5:33 (1981), 49–70; Paumier-Foucart, 'La compilation dans le *Speculum historiale* de Vincent de Beauvais: le cas de Hugues de Fleury', in Genet (ed.), *L'historiographie médiévale*, 51–66; and Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II*, 43–57.

[10] Brett, 'Use of Universal Chronicle', 281–5.

a witness of the imminent Last Days of the Book of Revelation: 'The world's misery is exhibited, therefore, even in the case of the chief power in the world, and Rome's fall foreshadows the dissolution of the whole structure'. To this transfer of political power, Otto added two others, that of learning (*translatio studii*), which 'was transferred from Egypt to the Greeks, then to the Romans, and finally to the Gauls and the Spaniards', and of religion, since Christian monasticism, which had its origins in the Egyptian desert, now flourished in the West.[11] Indeed, for Otto, religion was the one quality that had gained in strength and vitality, as the proliferation and popularity of monastic orders in his own day (Otto himself was a Cistercian) made clear.[12]

It was with evident relief that Otto saw signs of the Apocalypse forestalled in the successes of his nephew, the emperor Frederick I (r. 1152–90), a happy turn of events that inspired the once-gloomy bishop to take up his historian's pen once again and begin *Gesta Friderici imperatoris* [The Deeds of Frederick], a work completed by Otto's secretary, Rahewin, after the former's death in 1158. In the first two books, for which he was responsible, Otto takes pains, on the one hand, to obscure the sometimes bitter rivalries of popes and emperors and, on the other, to accentuate their amity and common purpose. Beginning his account in 1073, long before the succession of Frederick, he says little of the Investiture Conflict itself and instead focuses on relations between the emperors and other secular rulers. Once he gets to more recent history, he portrays the popes and emperors as always working in harmony, often in opposition to the people of the city of Rome, whom he depicts as rebels against the duly constituted and harmonious universal authorities of Church and empire.[13]

By 1300 the fiction of a universal community of all Christendom under the rule of one emperor could no longer be maintained. For despite its continued existence in name, true imperial power had disintegrated with the death of Frederick II in 1250 and the destruction of the Hohenstaufen line by an alliance of the papacy and a cadet branch of the Capetian family, the Angevins. And if the Florentine Dante continued to dream of the universal monarchy's restoration in his *Monarchia* (*c.*1318), the Parisian chronicler Jean de Saint-Victor, in his *Memoriale historiarum* (written between 1309 and 1322), employed an historical argument that privileged a diversity of autonomous kingdoms over the unity of

[11] Serge Lusignan, *Parler vulgairement: les intellectuels et la langue française aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1987), 159–60. The notion of *translatio studii* was first articulated at Paris by Hugh of St Victor (d. 1141) in *Didascalicon* bk. 3, ch. 2: 'Egypt is the mother of the arts, which from there went to Greece and then to Italy.' Otto's addition to Hugh's schema of a third transfer, to France and Spain, was likely inspired by his studies at Paris and his awareness of Toledo as a centre for the translation of learned treatises from Arabic into Latin.

[12] Otto of Freising, *The Two Cities: A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D. by Otto, Bishop of Freising*, trans. Charles C. Mierow, ed. Austin P. Evans and Charles Knapp (New York, 1956), 94–5, 445–9. See also Beryl Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London, 1974), 100–4.

[13] Otto of Freising, *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa by Otto of Freising and His Continuator, Rahewin*, trans. Charles C. Mierow (New York, 1952).

empire.[14] According to him, although the empire continued to exist at Constantinople after the fall of Rome in 476, the West nonetheless was divided up into several separate barbarian kingdoms, inhabited by peoples whose origins and independent political identities stretched back to some indeterminate date *before* the start of the Roman Empire (initiated, according to Jean, by Julius Caesar). The restored Western Roman Empire that came into being with the coronation of Charlemagne in 800, was very different from Caesar's, however. For now: (1) the empire was divided (since Charlemagne's coronation did not terminate the Byzantine Empire); (2) the imperial office was elective; and (3) the pope could legally depose the emperor. To drive home this last point, Jean, when recounting the imperial succession of Emperor Henry VI in 1191, includes this curious, and utterly spurious, description of the coronation ceremony:

> the emperor and empress having been led into the church by the pope, and a solemn mass having been celebrated therein, the pope himself first anoints the emperor with words instituted for this purpose and then anoints the empress. After this, sitting on the papal throne, [the pope] holds the imperial crown between his feet and the emperor, with head lowered, accepts the crown from his feet, after which the empress does the same; immediately thereafter the pope, striking the crown with his foot, knocks it off the head to the ground as a sign that he has the power to depose [the emperor], should his faults require it; finally, the cardinals who are in attendance pick up the crown and reverently place it on the emperor's head and likewise with the empress.[15]

Thus, for Jean, Innocent IV's legally sanctioned deposition of Frederick in 1245 put an end to the empire and returned the world to its original and natural political condition of separate, autonomous realms. The realm that really counted was of course France, whose monarch Philip IV 'the Fair' had from 1296 to 1303 clashed with Pope Boniface VIII over jurisdiction and sovereignty. Although Philip was the *de facto* winner in that conflict, Jean's case for France's existence prior to Charlemagne's now defunct empire supplied historical justification for France's independence from both imperial and papal lordship. A generation later, the Parisian intellectuals Jean Corbechon and Nicole Oresme went even further and used history to prove France's primacy among the nations of Christendom. They rested their case on Otto of Freising's schema of *translatio studii*, received via Vincent of Beauvais who had lifted his material directly from the earlier chronicle of Hélinand de Froidmont (d. 1215). Hélinand's version dropped Spain as a destination, specified Paris as the place in France to which learning had been transferred from Rome, and assigned this transfer to the time of Charlemagne, thereby tying *translatio studii* directly to *translatio imperii*. Corbechon, in the

[14] Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*, ed. and trans. Richard Kay (Toronto, 1998); and Mireille Schmidt-Chazan, 'L'idée d'empire dans le *Memoriale historiarum* de Jean de Saint-Victor', in Genet (ed.), *L'historiographie médiévale*, 301–19.

[15] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS latin 15011, fol. 404r: quoted in Schmidt-Chazan, 'L'idée d'empire', 312 (my translation).

preface to his French translation of Bartholomeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum* [On the Properties of Things] (1372) added that it was Charlemagne himself, 'the glorious king of France . . . who studied many sciences', who 'had learning transported and translated from Rome to Paris'.[16] Oresme in the preface to his French translation of Aristotle's *Ethics* (1370) identified *translatio studii* with language translation, thereby asserting that just as the Romans translated learning from Greek to their native Latin, so should the French now translate it from Latin into French, thus making French the new language of learned culture. Otto of Freising's universal community of Latin Christendom had thus, through the appropriation and redeployment of the historical *topoi* of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*, become the particular community of France.

At about the same time, in England, Ranulf Higden turned the tradition of universal history to the ends of national history in his *Polychronicon*. In Higden, Otto of Freising's master narrative of the four world empires is merely listed as one option within a chronological framework in a numerical sequence:

(1) The two *status rerum* (states of things), from Creation until Christ and after Christ till the end of the world.
(2) The three ages of the world, before the Law, under the Law, and in a state of Grace.
(3) The four world empires; or alternatively rule under the Fathers (Adam to Moses), the Judges (Moses to Saul), the Kings (Saul to Zorobabel), and the 'Bishops' (from Zorobabel to Christ).
(4) The five world religions (nature worship, idolatry, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam).
(5) The six ages of the world.[17]

Higden divided the *Polychronicon* into seven books, the first being devoted to geography and the remainder to history, in keeping with the six ages of the world. However, the first five ages, up to the time of Christ, took up only books two and three, leaving four books for Higden's principal interest, the history of Britain and England. Higden's universal history was thus only a medium connecting the history of the English people to its presumed biblical and classical roots.

In doing this, Higden was treading familiar ground. Universal histories invariably became more local the closer they got to the present, and the linking of a barbarian people to some point of origin in the mythic past had been going on at least

[16] Serge Lusignan, 'La Topique de la *translatio studii* et les traductions françaises de textes savants au XIVe siècle', in Geneviève Contamine (ed.), *Traduction et traducteurs au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1989), 303–15, at 309.

[17] Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern*, 2nd edn (Chicago, 1994), 148; and Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London, 2004), 116, 238.

since the time of Cassiodorus, who claimed the Goths were descendants of the biblical Magog and the ancient Scythians.[18] But it was Vergil's *Aeneid* that supplied the most potent framework for the myths of origins invented by the descendants of the barbarian inheritors of Rome. Already in the chronicle ascribed to 'Fredegar', compiled in the seventh century, the Franks had become the descendants of the Trojan Francio.[19] Some two centuries later the Welshman Nennius credited one Brutus, a descendant of Aeneas, with being the forefather of the Britons and Scota, daughter of the Pharaoh of Exodus, as progenitor of the Scots; for Widukind, author of the *Res gestae Saxonicae* [Deeds of the Saxons], his people's ancestors were to be found among the Greek soldiers of Alexander the Great's army.[20]

Over the next few centuries, historians ascribed Trojan ancestry not only to the Capetian dynasty but to many of the great noble lineages of northern France as well.[21] So common had these claims become by the middle of the thirteenth century, that Philippe Mouskès of Tournai in his *Chronique rimée* [Rhymed Chronicle] could say 'We are all Trojans'.[22] Scores of Italian towns also seized upon the Trojan myth of origins; the Paduan historian Albertino Mussato referred in 1325 to his city, saying 'this is that other Troy which was founded by exiled Antenor' and in Florence Giovanni Villani boasted of his and his fellow citizens' descent 'from noble ancestors and from folk of worth, such as were the ancient and worthy Trojans, and valiant and noble Romans'.[23] These myths clearly established the antiquity of a people, attaching them genealogically to characters from the most respected of Christian (since the classical progenitors were always themselves descended from the sons of Noah) and pagan textual authorities. Antiquity not only guaranteed the prestige of a people but also de-problematized their identity by positing their beginnings in the far-distant past.

In these myths of origins one also again discerns the theme of *translatio*, although now it is the movement, often westwards, of a people. Likewise the myths are stories of conquest, for in every case the legendary founder and his/her people seize land already occupied by another, sometimes giant, race. And yet,

[18] Hans-Werner Goetz, 'On the Universality of Universal History', in Genet (ed.), *L'historiographie médiévale*, 247–61.

[19] J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings* (Toronto, 1982), 79–82.

[20] Nennius, *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. John Morris (London, 1980), 20–1; and Leah Shopkow, *History and Community: Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Washington, DC, 1997), 112–13.

[21] Bernard Guenée, 'Les généalogies entre l'histoire et la politique: la fierté d'être Capétien, en France, au Moyen Age', *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 33 (1978), 450–77, at 452; Heather J. Tanner, *Families, Friends and Allies: Boulogne and Politics in Northern France and England, c. 879–1160* (Leiden, 2004), 267; Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nationhood in Late-Medieval France*, trans. Susan Ross Huston, ed. Frederic L. Cheyette (Berkeley, 1991), 236; and R. E. Asher, *National Myths in Renaissance France: Francus, Samothes and the Druids* (Edinburgh, 1993), 12–13.

[22] Beaune, *Birth of an Ideology*, 226.

[23] Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden, 2003), 148; and Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, 81. Villani and his nephew Filippo went so far as to push Florentine origins back to Atalante, the father of Dardanus, the founder of Troy: Hans Baron, *In Search of Florentine Humanism: Essays on the Transition from Medieval to Modern Thought*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1988), i. 54–5.

paradoxically, these myths also tell a tale of continuity and community, smoothing over the rupture of conquest by legitimating it and the violent dispossession and subjugation of indigenous inhabitants by assimilating them to the conquerors. Accounts of this kind must have been particularly compelling and appealing in an age of expansion and conquest, so perhaps it is not surprising that historical narratives of origins as well as historical writing in general proliferated in the wake of one of the greatest land-grabs of the central Middle Ages, the Norman Conquest.

Normandy itself was the product of a not-so-ancient conquest by Danish invaders in the early tenth century, and already many years before William of Normandy made his bid for the throne of England, a secular clerk in the entourage of Duke Richard I named Dudo of Saint-Quentin wrote a laudatory history of Richard and his ancestors.[24] Dudo's *Libri III de moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum* [Customs and Acts of the First Norman Dukes] (probably before 1015) makes sure to mention the Trojan origins of the Normans, whose own voyage to and adventures in northern France were prefigured in the wanderings of their ancient Trojan ancestors. William's own acquisitive adventure of 1066 swiftly spawned the laudatory and self-justificatory historical accounts of the monk William of Jumièges (*Gesta Normannorum ducum* [Deeds of the Norman Dukes], 1070–1) and the priest and former soldier William of Poitiers (*Gesta Guillelmi II ducis Normannorum* [Deeds of William] *c.*1077), as well as, perhaps, the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* [Song of the Battle of Hastings] and the pictorial history of the Bayeux Tapestry (probably between 1077 and 1082).[25] All are panegyrics of William and his companions. William's cause was just, as he was the lawfully designated heir of the last (to their minds) Anglo-Saxon king, Edward the Confessor. As for Harold, he was an oath-breaker and usurper. At Hastings the Normans bested their competitors thanks to a combination of bravery, prowess, and prudence, after which the English, with the exception of a band of 'rebels' at London, accepted their new king without too much fuss.[26]

Of course the replacement of virtually the entire lay and clerical native ruling elite by a Norman and northern French one, and the subsequent shift of England's primary cultural orbit from the north Atlantic and Scandinavia to Western Europe were bound to cause profound and unsettling changes. The breaking of old ties of spiritual kinship and patronage between monasteries and cathedrals on the one side and the Old English aristocracy on the other was accompanied over time by the Norman sponsored installation of abbots and bishops from the

[24] See ch. 24 by Charles West in this volume.

[25] For the dates see R. H. C. Davis, 'William of Poitiers and his *History of William the Conqueror*', in Davis and Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *Writing of History*, 71–100, at 74–5; and see also Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307*, 94–103.

[26] Stephen Morillo (ed.), *The Battle of Hastings: Sources and Interpretations* (Woodbridge, 1996), 17–27; and R. H. C. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall (eds.), *The 'Gesta Guillelmi' of William of Poitiers* (Oxford, 1998), 150–1.

continent. Old affective networks and repositories of living memory disappeared to be replaced by new leaders who were not necessarily aware of or sympathetic to long-established proprietary rights and customs.[27] For their part, the newcomers and their descendants had to come to terms with their relationship to their new multi-ethnic and linguistically mixed homeland (for the Anglo-Norman 'empire' included not only England and Normandy but parts of Wales as well) and to the rest of Christendom. It also so happens that the Conquest and the reigns of the Anglo-Norman kings (William I through Stephen, 1066–1153) coincided with the Church reform movement, the launching of the first and second crusades, and the beginnings of the efflorescence of education and culture known as the 'Twelfth-Century Renaissance'. Together, these developments inspired an era of prolific and innovative historical writing in England and Normandy, beginning just over a generation after the Conquest.

Monastic writers were among the first to employ the documentary and community-building functions of historiography to ameliorate and direct the currents of change.[28] This appears to have been the case at the cathedral church of Durham, repository of the relics of northern England's most important saint, Cuthbert, where the wrenching effects of the Conquest were compounded, first, by the Norman bishop William of St Calais's decision in 1083 to convert Durham from a cathedral of secular canons to a Benedictine monastery, and then by the predatory episcopate of Ranulf Flambard from 1099 to 1128. Driven by a 'practical impulse of self-protection', the ecclesiastical community of St Cuthbert called on its most talented historiographer, Symeon, to tell a story of continuity, unity, and saintly power in *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius, hoc est Dunhelmensis, ecclesie* [On the Origin and Progress of this the Church of Durham], a history of the community from its beginnings on the island of Lindisfarne in the 600s until the death of William of St Calais in 1096.[29] Similar motivations lay, in part, behind the contemporary historiographical endeavours at Worcester, Canterbury, and Malmesbury, the last of which had the good fortune to be able to call on the services of the man who was arguably the most methodologically sophisticated historian of the twelfth century, William of Malmesbury. William, whose mixed parentage of an English

[27] As Richard Southern put it, 'At the level of literate and aristocratic society, no country in Europe, between the rise of the barbarian kingdoms and the twentieth century, has undergone so radical a change in so short a time as England experienced after 1066': 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing, 4: The Sense of the Past', in Robert J. Bartlett (ed.), *History and Historians: Selected Papers of R. W. Southern* (Oxford, 2004), 66–83, at 69. For the effects of the Conquest on social memory and historical writing see Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900–1200* (Toronto, 1999), 123–42.

[28] Southern, 'Sense of the Past', 71–2.

[29] David W. Rollason, 'Symeon of Durham and the Community of Durham in the Eleventh Century', in Carolina Hicks (ed.), *England in the Eleventh Century* (Stamford, 1992), 183–98; and William M. Aird, 'The Political Context of the *Libellus de Exordio*', in David W. Rollason (ed.), *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North* (Stamford, 1998), 32–45. Quotation from Southern, 'Sense of the Past', 73.

mother and Norman father may have made him especially sensitive to the problems which the Conquest had posed to community and identity, devoted his life to reconstructing a continuous English past, from the semi-legendary arrival of the first Anglo-Saxons in 449 to the year 1142. Genealogical and spiritual continuity is stressed in his dedicatory letter of the *Gesta regum Anglorum* [Deeds of the English Kings], addressed to Matilda, Henry I's daughter, when he recalls her lineal descent from the Anglo-Saxon royal dynasty through her mother, Matilda, and their blood kinship with Malmesbury's English patron saint, Aldhelm. When it came to the Conquest itself, however, he could not conceal his dismay at its catastrophic results for the English: 'England has become a dwelling-place of foreigners and a playground for lords of alien blood. No Englishman today is an earl, a bishop, or an abbot; new faces everywhere enjoy England's riches and gnaw her vitals, nor is there any hope of ending this miserable state of affairs.'[30]

Other, broader and deeper historical interests are also apparent in William's work. A devoted student of the Latin classics and Roman history, he compiled an extensive florilegium of literary extracts, the *Polyhistor*, and assembled a volume of imperial Roman history which survives in the manuscript collection of the Bodleian Library.[31] The same antiquarian bent is evident in the way he carefully analysed charter evidence to prove the great age of Glastonbury Abbey in the *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis* [Antiquity of the Church of Glastonbury] (1129–35). Recent and contemporary events also drew his attention away from the history of his native land. He was especially drawn to the exploits of the First Crusade, and devoted roughly 12 per cent of the *Gesta regum Anglorum* to it.[32] A similar fascination with the wider world is also apparent in the *Historia ecclesiastica* [Ecclesiastical History] of William's contemporary Orderic Vitalis, who like William was the child of a cross-Channel union. Born in England and speaking only English, he was nonetheless sent by his French father to be a monk in Normandy. Forever conscious of being an exile from his native land and always sympathetic to the English people, Orderic nonetheless embraced fellowship in the community of his monastery, Saint-Evroul, as well as the broader community of Benedictine monasticism more generally, of the Anglo-Norman realm, and of all Latin Christendom, including the newly won Holy Land.[33]

Monk historians aimed their works primarily at a monastic audience, and so it comes as no surprise that their works circulated, when they circulated, mostly in

[30] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1998–9), i. 414–17.

[31] Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Arch. Seld. B. 16. On this and the *Polyhistor* see Rodney M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge, 1987), 7, 48–61, 66–7, 189–98.

[32] Ibid., 178–88; and William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, i. 592–707.

[33] Lucien Musset, 'L'horizon géographique, moral et intellectuel d'Orderic Vital, historien Anglo-Normand', in Poirion (ed.), *La chronique et l'histoire*, 101–22; and Marjorie Chibnall, 'A Twelfth-Century View of the Historical Church: Orderic Vitalis', in Chibnall, *Piety, Power and History in Medieval England and Normandy* (Aldershot, 2000), ch. 1.

a monastic milieu. But there were other historians, secular clerks for the most part, who sought a wider, more worldly audience. In the Anglo-Norman realm some of these writers experimented and innovated, blending the conventions of Latin historical discourse with those of vernacular epic to create 'romance history'. The first to do this was Geoffrey of Monmouth, a priest of either Welsh or Breton extraction resident in Oxford, who in about 1136 wrote a legendary history, in Latin, of the ancient Britons, the *Historia regum Britanniae* [History of the Kings of Britain]. Seeing a great dark shadow where the pre-Anglo-Saxon history of Britain should have been and responding to the same desire to resurrect a continuous history that motivated Symeon of Durham and William of Malmesbury, he took it upon himself to invent a copious heroic past for his people from the scraps of references found in Gildas and Nennius, as well as from Welsh oral traditions. To authenticate his creation, this master of rhetorical artifice claimed for himself only the role of humble translator. Geoffrey explained that while he was turning over in his mind how little he had been able to discover of 'the kings who lived here before the Incarnation of Christ, or indeed about Arthur and all the others who followed on after the Incarnation', but knowing that 'the deeds of these men were such that they deserve to be praised for all time', it just so happened that: 'Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, a man skilled in the art of public speaking . . . presented me with a certain very ancient book written in the British language. This book, attractively composed to form a consecutive and orderly narrative, set out all the deeds of these men, from Brutus, the first King of the Britons, down to Cadwallader.'[34]

Geoffrey meant his romance to be taken as history, and 'history it was taken to be: with only a few dissentient voices the Latin world immediately accepted it as genuine and gave it a tremendous reception'.[35] Inspired and influenced in part by this Latin romance, the secular clerk Geoffrey Gaimar set out shortly after its completion to write a history of the English in Anglo-Norman French verse, the *Estoire des Engleis* [History of the English] (*c.*1139). Although Gaimar's *Estoire* originally covered the history of Britain from Jason and the Golden Fleece (!) to the accession of Henry I in 1100, the version that comes down to us is missing the pre-Anglo-Saxon material. What remains is for the most part 'a Norman-French translation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle . . . filled out with legends, with the

[34] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Lewis Thorpe (London, 1966), 51.

[35] Christopher Brooke, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth as an Historian', in Brooke, David Luscombe, Geoffrey Martin, and Dorothy Owen (eds.), *Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to C. R. Cheney on his Seventieth Birthday* (Cambridge, 1976), 77–91, at 77–8; and Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307*, 202. At latest count, there are some 215 extant manuscripts, more copies than of any other medieval Latin history: Peter Damien-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge, 1999), 46. See the list of extant manuscripts of Latin historical writings in Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique*, 250–2.

obvious intention of entertaining the nobility'.[36] Gaimar made certain, however, to distinguish his romance history from mere fictional entertainment, lading his account with frequent truth assertions and claims to learned Latinate authority; his history, like its Latin counterparts, was also meant to memorialize past deeds and to instruct and morally improve his audience. This all suggests his audience of 'francophone social élite' wanted authentic and at some level 'scholarly' history; that the history's past deeds were performed by Anglo-Saxons tempts one to conclude that by the 1130s this audience self-identified as English 'despite the fact that they spoke French . . . and despite their French styles and manners'.[37]

During the remainder of the twelfth century several historians from England or with English connections followed Gaimar's example of writing vernacular verse history, the most notable of whom was Wace, a clerk of Caen with connections to the court of King Henry II of England.[38] Wace composed two histories, the *Roman de Brut* [Romance of the Brute] (1155), a retelling of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the *Roman de Rou* [Romance of Rollo] (1160–74), a history of the dukes of Normandy and Anglo-Norman kings based on several Latin histories, including those of Dudo of Saint-Quentin, William of Jumièges, and William of Malmesbury, as well as on a wealth of oral testimony. Although the latter work was better history, the former was the more successful, being the most copied, disseminated, and influential of all Anglo-Norman verse histories.[39] It, like the Latin history of Geoffrey of Monmouth which it followed, was so popular because its audience wanted to be told the deeds of ancient heroes of chivalry, and chiefly of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

Geoffrey, Gaimar, and Wace stand at the beginning of what might be called a 'Brut tradition' in England. All four surviving manuscript copies of Gaimar are prefaced by the British material of Wace.[40] The Brut story (Geoffrey/Wace only) was first retold, in Middle English, by Layamon in his *Brut* (first half of the thirteenth century) and then around 1300 by both Peter Langtoft in his Anglo-Norman verse chronicle and in the anonymous Anglo-Norman prose *Brut*. Langtoft's chronicle then served as the chief source for Robert Mannyng of Bourne's Middle English *Chronicle of England* (1338), while the prose *Brut* found a ready audience, with the original Anglo-Norman version, itself surviving in fifty

[36] Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307*, 210.

[37] Damien-Grint, *New Historians*, 143–71; John Gillingham, 'Gaimar, the Prose *Brut*, and the Making of English History', in Jean-Philippe Genet (ed.), *L'histoire et les nouveaux publics dans l'Europe médiévale (XIIIe–XVe siècles)* (Paris, 1997), 165–76, at 173.

[38] On Henry II as a patron of vernacular history and his connection to Wace see Jean-Guy Gouttebroze, 'Henry II Plantagenêt, patron des historiographes anglo-normands de langue d'oïl', in *La littérature angevine médiévale* (Angers, 1981), 91–105.

[39] On the *Roman de Rou* see: Matthew Bennett, 'Poetry as History? The *Roman de Rou* of Wace as a Source for the Norman Conquest', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 5 (1983), 21–39; and Elisabeth van Houts, 'Wace as Historian', in K. S. B. Keats-Rohan (ed.), *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics* (Woodbridge, 1997), 103–32.

[40] Gillingham, 'Gaimar', 167.

manuscript copies, being also translated into Latin (fifteen manuscript copies) and Middle English (168 manuscript copies, and at least thirteen printings between 1480 and 1528). History did not stand still in this tradition. Langtoft carried his history up into the reign of the contemporary ruler of England, Edward I, using it as a *pièce justificative* for the king's conquest of Wales and wars against Scotland, and the prose *Brut* took English history up to 1272. The *Brut* was then continued, repeatedly, well into the fifteenth century, becoming the closest thing England had to an 'official' history. Its version of England's and Britain's past certainly was the one English men and women of the later Middle Ages and Renaissance chiefly subscribed to.[41] In this history what we would call 'fact' and 'fiction' blended seamlessly, and despite the odd historian casting a jaundiced eye on what he regarded as the more fabulous aspects of the *Brut* story, the overwhelming majority of historians and readers accepted these useful fictions as absolutely true.[42]

The interplay of legendary history and the vernacular was not confined to England. An anonymous contemporary of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gaimar wrote a Latin history (*c.*1140) of the Charlemagne and Roland legend celebrated in *chansons de geste*. Often called the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle, since it claimed to be written by Roland's companion at Roncevaux Archbishop Turpin, the history's fabulous account of the crusading exploits of Charlemagne and his knights was almost as popular as Geoffrey's *Historia regum Britanniae*. Curiously, this Latin prose rendering of what half a century earlier had been the subject of French verse epics, re-entered French in the guise of at least six prose histories, all produced for members of the Franco-Flemish nobility in the first three decades of the thirteenth century. Each version of this earliest group of historiographical texts in French prose (or indeed prose of any European vernacular, with the exception of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) makes a point of denigrating verse histories and romances as being full of lies, since, as the earliest of these authors,

[41] On the 'Brut tradition', see Gillingham, 'Gaimar', 165–76; Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307*, 476–86; Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II*, 73, 220; Lesley Johnson, 'Robert Mannyng's History of Arthurian Literature', in Ian Wood and G. A. Loud (eds.), *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to John Taylor* (London, 1991), 129–47; John Taylor, *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1987), 110–32; and Lee W. Patterson, 'The Historiography of Romance and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 13 (1983), 1–32.

[42] In the late twelfth century the historians William of Newburgh and Gerald of Wales were alone in distrusting Geoffrey of Monmouth. The former, in his *History of English Matters* (1199), seems to have done so largely because he thought the Britons beneath contempt and undeserving of so noble a past, whereas Gerald in his *Journey through Wales* (1190s/1214), thought Geoffrey worthy of damnation but nonetheless used his history extensively: Nancy Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago, 1977), 62–5; and Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales and the Description of Wales*, ed. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1978), 117–18, 280. Ranulf Higden was the next historian to note problems with Geoffrey's account but, like Gerald of Wales, was quite happy to use him as a source. Later in the century, Higden's Middle English translator, the Cornishman John Trevisa, even went so far as to chide Higden for questioning Geoffrey: Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 4–5.

Nicolas de Senlis points out: 'Many people have heard [the history of Charlemagne] told and sung, but what these singers and jongleurs sing and tell is nothing but a lie. No rhymed tale is true. Everything they say is lies, for they know nothing about it except through hearsay.'[43]

A compelling argument has been made for these noble patrons—most of whom had chosen the losing side of the conflict between the kings of England and France that was decided at Bouvines in 1214—having opted for prose renderings of this particular text in an 'effort to *deproblematize* aristocratic culture in an age of anxiety' brought on by a 'radical challenge to aristocratic autonomy and prestige posed by the revival of monarchical authority' under the French king Philip Augustus.[44] Yet it could also well be that the shift to prose had more to do with the sensibilities of the writers than of their audience. Nicolas de Senlis makes it clear, after all, that it is not only rhyme that should not be trusted but the performers who recite it. He and his fellow translators may simply have believed that authentic history was the domain of learned, bookish clerks rather than of court entertainers.[45] The suspicion of verse might have been a by-product of current fashions in education that stressed a new, simplified rhetoric, in some quarters, and the primacy of logic over rhetoric, in others.[46] Finally, the turn to vernacular prose may point to a greater confidence in the authority of the vernacular as a language of erudition and as a medium for conveying information.

Whatever the motivations of these historians or their patrons may have been, there can be no doubt that historical writing in the vernacular, produced by and for the laity had become firmly established by the early years of the thirteenth century. In France, vernacular prose became the medium for classical and national history. The lively interest in classical antiquity that had been so evident in the scholarly humanism of the twelfth century and that the Trojan myth and *romans d'antiquité* had previously satisfied among aristocratic readers, now gave way to a new genre of vernacular prose adaptations of classical history. These texts, with titles like *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* [Ancient History until the Reign of Ceasar] (between 1211 and 1230) and *Faits des Romains* [Deeds of the Romans] (1213–14), projected the sensibilities of a chivalric present on the ancient Greek and Roman past, thereby endowing those sensibilities and the lifestyle and status of those animated by them 'with a faultlessly antique and highly evocative pedigree'.[47] They also billed themselves as a means to power. The Romans, after all,

[43] Quoted in Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, 55. [44] Ibid., 77.

[45] Damien-Grint, *New Historians*, 172–7; R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950–1250*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2007), 126–32, 166–9; and Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1978), 213–81.

[46] In 1200 Boncompagno da Signa said much the same thing as Nicolas about the superiority of prose over verse; in the schools of northern France of about 1200 logic reigned supreme in the arts curriculum: Peter F. Dembowski, 'Learned Latin Treatises in French: Inspiration, Plagiarism, and Translation', *Viator*, 17 (1986), 255–69, at 258; and Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1936), ii. 141–2.

[47] M. Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, 1984), 102.

had conquered the world; these histories explained how they did so and, more importantly, showed the qualities, the *virtues*, which made it possible. Thus these histories, although diverting, were much more than entertainment. They had practical value as agents of *translatio imperii*, fortifying contemporary chivalry with examples of the chivalry of old while at the same time stressing the genealogical continuity between Roman antiquity and current chivalry. Moreover, by introducing their audience to the historical literature of ancient Rome, they performed a kind of *translatio studii*. The *Faits des Romains*, for example, offered its readers material from Suetonius, Sallust, Caesar, and Lucan.[48]

Vernacular prose history also became an important instrument for royal propaganda. As mentioned above, from the first half of the twelfth century the monks of Saint-Denis had promoted the Capetian monarchy by writing pro-royal histories. Sometime between 1217 and 1237 an unidentified author working with texts housed at Saint-Denis and at the abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Près in Paris wrote a *Chronique des rois de France* [Chronicle of the Kings of France] beginning with the Trojans and ending with the reign of Philip Augustus. The work concludes with a panegyric of Philip's decisive victory over his rivals at Bouvines. This same history was employed a few decades later by the monk of Saint-Denis Primat in his *Grandes Chroniques de France*. Primat and his successors at the abbey, Guillaume de Nangis (d. 1300), Richard Lescot (mid-1300s), Michel Pintoin (early 1400s), and Jean Chartier (mid-1400s) identified the entire nation of France with the king of France, in whose breast beat the heart of the French people.[49] In an incipient nation where 'beliefs did more . . . to shore up the unsteady trusses of the state than any institutions', vernacular historiography played a key role in creating and popularizing a story of unity, continuity, and community centred on the monarchy.[50]

The kings of France were not alone in employing historical writing as a support for royal power. In Castile, Alfonso X 'the Wise' (r. 1252–84) made vernacular historiography a key element of his programme of language reform and government centralization. Castilian royal historiography began in a serious way during the reign of Alfonso's father, Ferdinand III (r. 1217–52), when chroniclers associated with the royal court wrote a universal and an Iberian history expressing the realm's new-found confidence after the great victory over the Muslim Almohads at Las Navas de Tolosa (1212).[51] During a time of reflection upon the nature of Castilian rule, these Latin works had each expressed different political agendas, one recommending a strong monarchy working closely with the Church and the other a more tempered rule in asso-

[48] Keen, *Chivalry*, 102–13; and Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, 99–213.
[49] Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, 195–212; and Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique*, 340–2.
[50] Beaune, *Birth of an Ideology*, 10.
[51] These are the *Cronicon mundi* (1236) of the canon regular Lucas de Túy and the *Historia de rebus Hispanie* (1243) of Rodrigo Ximénez de Rada, archbishop of Toledo.

ciation with the nobility.[52] Alfonso, for his part, approached historiography the way he did law and the sciences, as an administratively centralized, personally directed, and vernacular enterprise. Presiding over a workshop of scholars and scribes much like the one that had been organized some two decades earlier at Paris by Vincent of Beauvais, Alfonso oversaw the compilation of national (*Estoria de Espanna* [History of Spain], 1270–84) and universal (*General Historia*, 1270s–84) histories, and began also a history of the crusades (*Gran Conquista de Ultramar* [The Great Conquest of Lands Beyond the Seas]). Alfonso, recognizing the great propaganda potential of historiography, presented in these histories a justification of his own grand ambitions of absolutist rule in Castile, hegemony over all Iberia (not to mention the Mediterranean), and acquisition of the Roman imperial crown. Although his political ambitions came to nought, he did establish a tradition of vernacular historical writing in the Iberian Peninsula, as well as solidifying a Castilian myth of origins and continuity, stretching back to ancient Rome and continuing on through the Visigoths and Carolingians up to the acquisition of royal rule by his own lineage and their leadership in the Christian *reconquista* of Spain.[53]

The *reconquista* was but one front in the expansionist movement of Latin Christendom that brought it into (for the most part hostile) contact with its neighbours of Islam and the Byzantine Empire; this confrontation inspired a vast output of crusade historiography, beginning with the explosion of triumphalist and miracle-laced narratives of the First Crusade of, among others, Fulcher of Chartres, Guibert of Nogent, and Raymond of Aguilers.[54] After the first flush of victory, however, the less successful campaigns of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as well as the more mundane business of governing and living in the Crusader states compelled historians to be more circumspect and reflective about the relationship of these states to the rest of Christendom and of their role in universal, national, and ecclesiastical history. The most sensitive and intelligent of these histories was the work of William of Tyre.[55] William was born and raised in Jerusalem, acquired impeccable scholarly credentials during two decades of study in the schools of Paris, Orleans, and Bologna, then returned to the east to become first a canon of the cathedral church of Tyre and then, in 1175, its archbishop. His position in the Church and his political role as a

[52] Georges Martin, 'Alphonse X et le pouvoir historiographique', in Genet (ed.), *L'histoire et les nouveaux publics*, 229–40, at 232–3.

[53] Martin, 'Alphonse X', 229–40; Ludwig Vones, 'Historiographie et politique: l'historiographie castillane aux abords du XIVe siècle', in Genet (ed.), *L'historiographie médiévale*, 177–88; Raymond McCluskley, 'Malleable Accounts: Views of the Past in Twelfth-Century Iberia', in Magdalino (ed.), *Perception of the Past*, 211–25.

[54] Fulcher's chronicle and selections from several others are translated in *The First Crusade: The Chronicles of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, ed. Edward Peters, 2nd edn (Philadelphia, 1998).

[55] There is some dispute over the title of William's history, which is called either *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum* or *Historia Ierosolymitana*. On this and on William and his *History* see Peter W. Edbury and John Gordon Rowe, *William of Tyre: Historian of the Latin East* (Cambridge, 1988).

member of several diplomatic missions and as chancellor of the kingdom of Jerusalem made him especially well placed to observe and reflect upon the history of the Latin east.

For the most part, though, crusade chronicles were about great deeds of chivalry, and so it comes as no surprise that exploits in the Latin east became the subject of epic-histories written in the vernacular. The first of these were the Anglo-Norman verse histories, the *Estoire de la guerre sainte* [History of the Holy War] (1190–2) of Ambroise, an eyewitness to the glorious deeds of his hero Richard I of England, and the anonymous *Estoire d'Antioche* [History of Antioch] (late 1100s), an epic re-telling of the First Crusade; the prose chronicles of the Fourth Crusade and beginnings of the 'Latin Empire' by Geoffroi de Villehardouin, Robert de Clari, and Henri de Valenciennes soon followed (1206–9).[56]

Although production of crusade chronicles dropped off after the Mamluk conquest in 1291 of Acre, the last Latin stronghold in the east, the crusades of Louis IX of France were the core subject of the elderly nobleman Jean de Joinville's reminiscences of his royal friend's life, the *Vie de Saint Louis* (1309), and warfare against the Mamluks and the Ottoman Turks continued to attract the attention of the fourteenth century's greatest chronicler of chivalry, Jean Froissart. Still, it must be said that for Froissart and his predecessor, Jean le Bel, it was the wars between France and England that most occupied their minds. The Liègeois Le Bel and the Hainaulter Froissart, like their twelfth-century counterparts Gaimar and Wace, were secular priests whose sympathies lay with the kings of England; and like them their task was to celebrate 'honourable enterprises, noble adventures and deeds of arms' for the inspiration of 'those who want to read and hear . . . true history'.[57] But although their accounts are quite literary, there is nothing of the mythic related in the French prose of these later historians, who limit their accounts to contemporary history and to deeds that they have either witnessed themselves or that they have obtained from other, trustworthy, eyewitnesses.[58] Moreover, although neither Le Bel nor Froissart were professional historians in the sense we would accept today, they nonetheless devoted their lives to the task of being historians and were recognized as such by their contemporaries. Their idea of what constituted historical authenticity is not so very different from ours. They checked their sources and compared differing versions because in an

[56] Peter Noble, 'The Importance of Old French Chronicles as Historical Sources of the Fourth Crusade and the Early Latin Empire of Constantinople', *Journal of Medieval History*, 27 (2001), 399–416.

[57] Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey Brereton (Harmondsworth, 1968), 37; and Diana B. Tyson, 'Jean le Bel: Portrait of a Chronicler', *Journal of Medieval History*, 12 (1986), 315–32, at 328.

[58] Le Bel's *Chronique* covers the years 1326–61; the first part of Froissart's *Chroniques* borrows heavily from Le Bel, but from 1361 until the account ends in 1400, Froissart is an independent source.

era that had come to prefer documentary proof, the historians and the people whose deeds they recorded did not want to be caught in a lie.[59]

At the close of the fourteenth century, there was scarcely a community that did not produce and consume historical writing. Most of these histories recounted contemporary history and were written in Latin and the vernacular by monks (and, starting in the fourteenth century, nuns), secular priests, heralds, civil servants, and merchants.[60] Historians had much to write about in a century marked by the crises of war, famine, and plague, and the rapid political, social, and cultural change they brought about. Late medieval Europe had developed a surprisingly varied, flexible, and popular historiography which told the stories of individuals and communities, served as memory and record, and gave meaning to the past, present, and future. It had become a distinctly historical culture.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

1066	Battle of Hastings
1075–1122	Investiture Conflict
1095–9	First Crusade
1147–8	Second Crusade
1152–90	Reign of Emperor Frederick I
1154–89	Reign of King Henry II of England
1189–92	Third Crusade
1201–4	Fourth Crusade
1212	Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa
1214	Battle of Bouvines
1215	Fourth Lateran Council
1250	Death of Emperor Frederick II
1252–84	Reign of Alfonso X 'the Wise' of Castile
1282–3	King Edward I of England's conquest of Wales
1303	Attack on Pope Boniface VIII at Anagni
1309–72	Avignon Papacy
1337	Beginning of Hundred Years War
1347–51	Black Death
1358	Jacquerie
1378–1415	Great Schism
1381	English Peasants' Revolt

[59] Peter F. Ainsworth, *Jean Froissart and the Fabric of History: Truth, Myth, and Fiction in the 'Chroniques'* (Oxford, 1990), 23–50; and Christine Marchello-Nizia, 'L'historien et son prologue: forme littéraire et strategies discursives', in Poirion (ed.), *La chronique et l'histoire*, 13–25.

[60] In fourteenth-century Germany several houses of Dominican nuns produced 'Sister-Books'. Neither annals nor chronicles, the Sister-Books combined the history of the convent with hagiographical accounts of the lives of exemplary sisters: Gertrud Jaron Lewis, *By Women, for Women, about Women: The Sister-Books of Fourteenth-Century Germany* (Toronto, 1996), 32–57.

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Chapter 20

Scandinavian Historical Writing, 1100–1400

Sverre Bagge

Historical writing in Scandinavia began in the early twelfth century, clearly as the result of European influence through the conversion to Christianity; there is nothing to suggest that any such works or any longer texts were composed in the pre-Christian period, despite the existence of the runic alphabet. In the following period, a considerable number of works were produced in the three Scandinavian kingdoms plus Iceland, largely in connection with the formation of dynastic kingdoms. The conversion to Christianity was a stimulus to historical writing not only through the introduction of script but also because of the challenge the new religion represented to the traditional culture. Consequently, most of the new kingdoms that came into being as the result of the expansion of Western Christendom in the tenth and eleventh centuries developed their own national historiography in which the origin of the people or the dynasty was a crucial issue. This seems natural enough against the background of the radical changes that took place through the conversion to Christianity, the formation of a larger kingdom or principality, and the introduction of literacy, the Latin language, and a learned culture with a long tradition.

ORIGO GENTIS

The relationship to the Latin language and culture forms the starting-point for Saxo Grammaticus, the greatest Danish historian of the Middle Ages: the Danish people has a long and glorious past which remains unknown to the world because no one has written about it in the appropriate language, Latin. Despite his incompetence and unworthiness, Saxo finds it necessary to take upon himself this duty.[1] The result is *Gesta Danorum* [The Deeds of the Danes], a history of the Danish people until 1185, with a prehistory back to the eponymous founder Dan, dealing with altogether seventy-seven kings and containing numerous dramatic stories, including the famous one about Hamlet. Saxo's narrative shows many parallels to

[1] *Gesta Danorum*, Prologus 1.1.

Roman history but the Romans are never mentioned,[2] as the Danes were never part of the Roman Empire. Consequently, the contemporary Roman Empire, bordering Denmark to the south, has no claim on suzerainty. Saxo was not the first to write about the ancient history of his country; both the Chronicle of Lejre, probably from around 1170, and the slightly later work of Sven Aggesen contain information about this, but Saxo's work is by far the most extensive. His sources were to some extent ancient poetry and oral narrative—he explicitly mentions the Icelanders—but he clearly arranged them freely and may even have invented parts of his narrative. His extensive reading of Roman writers may have been a source of inspiration, as may also Geoffrey of Monmouth's slightly earlier account of early English history, *Historia regum Britanniae* [History of the Kings of Britain], a very popular work at the time.

Like Saxo, the anonymous author of *Historia Norwegie* [History of Norway], composed in Norway in the second half of the twelfth century, traces the history of the dynasty back to the distant past, linking it to the pagan gods whom he regards as kings who were worshipped as gods by later generations. The source for this genealogy is an extant poem, *Ynglingatal* [Tally of the Ynglings], probably composed in the Viking Age and preserved in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* [The Circle of the Earth] (*c.*1230), named after its opening word. The entire prehistoric genealogy comprises twenty-eight generations or 840 years (if we accept the general rule of one generation per thirty years), which brings the origin of the dynasty back to the time of the birth of Christ, although this is not stated explicitly. The stories of these early kings mainly deal with their deaths and are often bizarre, as many of them were killed in strange and often shameful ways. The genealogy is continued until Harald Finehair, the first ruler of the whole of Norway.

This long line of kings would seem to offer the opportunity to create links to ancient kings or dynasties, such as the Trojans and the Romans, as in many other national histories,[3] but the author does nothing of the sort. Later, Snorri Sturluson in his *Heimskringla* gives a more detailed but largely similar account of the early history of the dynasty with extensive quotations from *Ynglingatal.* Snorri depicts the god Odin as the founder of the dynasty: Odin was actually a king who after his death was regarded as a god by his people. He lived at a time when the Romans were conquering the Mediterranean and understood that he had to establish his own kingdom in the north. Thus, Snorri, like Saxo, succeeds in creating a parallel history to that of the Romans while securing his dynasty's independence from them. His reason for this was probably less political than Saxo's;

[2] Karsten Friis-Jensen, 'Saxo Grammaticus's Study of the Roman Historiographers and his Vision of History', in Carlo Santini (ed.), *Saxo Grammaticus: tra storiografia e letteratura: Bevagna, 27–29 settembre 1990* (Rome, 1992), 61–81.

[3] Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der 'nationes': Nationalgeschichte im Mittelalter* (Cologne, 1995), 797–9.

Norway was too distant for Germany to have been a real threat. Culturally, however, there may have been a wish to stress the indigenous tradition rather than seeking an origin in the Classical past.

While focusing on the specific Nordic tradition, these works also aim at connecting the national history to the universal history of salvation by tracing the dynasty back to the birth of Christ and, in the case of Saxo, by showing the parallels between Danish and Roman history. Theodoricus Monachus, the author of the other Latin history of Norway from around 1180, takes one step farther in this direction. Refraining from tracing the dynasty farther back than to Harald Finehair, as he finds no trustworthy evidence of this early period, he uses digressions to link the history of Norway typologically to the universal history of salvation.[4] Nearly half of them are clustered around the time of Norway's conversion in order to place this event in a cosmic perspective, as a stage in the great struggle between God and the forces of darkness. Most of the others point towards the end of the world, according to the biblical prophecy of the Gospel having been preached all over the world before the end. As Norway is situated at the utmost end of the earth, this prophecy will now seem to have been fulfilled.

The origin of the Icelandic people is quite different from that of the other Nordic countries but the need for a history would seem even greater. Already in the early twelfth century, the Icelanders wrote their own history as well as that of Norway. The work of Sæmundr has been lost, whereas his younger contemporary, Ari's *Islendingabók* [Book of the Icelanders], survives.[5] Ari describes the discovery and settlement of the island and its history until 1118. His main contribution to integrating the history of his own country into the general history of salvation consists in his chronology and his account of the conversion. Like the later saga writers, Ari mainly uses relative chronology, based on the reign of the first Norwegian king, Harald Finehair, and the first settlement of Iceland, but links these events to the 'absolute' chronology, the birth of Christ, on some strategic points: Iceland was settled by Norwegians during the reign of King Harald Finehair. It was discovered when Harald was sixteen years old, which was the year when the holy English King Edmund was killed, that is the year 870 after the birth of Christ. Thus, Icelandic history has its own chronology, on some points linked to that of Norway which in turn is linked to universal history, based on the birth of Christ. In this way, Ari emphasizes the internal coherence of Icelandic history while at the same time linking it to that of the world around him.

The conversion to Christianity represented an even greater challenge than the relationship to the Roman Empire. The conversion meant that the country

[4] Sverre Bagge, 'Theodoricus Monachus—Clerical Historiography in Twelfth-Century Norway', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 14 (1989), 113–33, on 116–19.

[5] Numerous references to Sæmund's and Ari's work in later histories make it clear that they had considerable influence but the exact nature of this influence is difficult to trace and has been subject to much discussion.

moved from darkness to light but also that the ancestors were shown to be wrong by representatives of a new faith who came from abroad. In the case of Denmark, the importance of foreign missionaries could hardly be denied; the decisive event in the history of the conversion was the German cleric Poppo's ordeal to prove the truth of Christianity.[6] Thus, Christianity was introduced not only by a foreigner but by a representative of the Roman emperor, now residing in Germany. However, in Saxo this event has a background in the Danes' own attempt to seek for the true God. At King Gorm's orders, Thorkel sets out on an expedition to the northern edge of the world, where, in great danger, he invokes the God of the universe and is saved, after which he goes to recently converted Germany and learns the basic elements of Christian doctrine.[7]

Saxo's Norwegian and Icelandic counterparts had an easier task. There seems to have been a tradition, probably with some basis in reality, that Norway was converted by indigenous kings. The historical writings mention two such kings, Olav Tryggvason (r. 995–1000) and St Olav Haraldsson (r. 1015–30), who converted the Norwegians by preaching, prayers, alliances with the leading men in the country, and by the use of force against the recalcitrant who could not be converted in other ways. The emphasis varies according to the general ideology of the historical works. Hagiographic features are attributed to both kings to a greater or lesser extent in the various sources.

Indigenous conversion is even more prominent in Iceland. According to Ari, the conversion was the result of a decision at the Allthing (all-Icelandic assembly) in the year 1000.[8] At the time, several leading men had converted to Christianity, whereas others were strongly opposed. When the two parties met at the Allthing to try to reach an agreement, they finally agreed to leave the decision to a highly respected man, Thorgeir Thorkellsson, who was a pagan. Having thought about the matter, Thorgeir concluded that the only way to avoid a deep division in society was to accept Christianity. However, some pagan customs, notably exposing newborn children, should still be allowed, and nobody should be punished for pagan sacrifices as long as they took place in secret. Changing religion was thus a pragmatic decision in which the main consideration was to maintain the unity of the people. Neither miracles nor religious discussions were involved. The Icelanders made the decision themselves and their way of doing so overcame division and strengthened the unity of the people.

Against this background, the absence of any account of early Swedish history is striking. The only such work preserved from this country is *Gutasagan* [History of the Goths] from the island of Gotland, off the eastern coast of the Swedish

[6] Saxo, X.11.3–4. [7] Saxo, VIII.14.2–15.10.
[8] Ari froði, *Islendingabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson (Reykjavík, 1968), ch. 7.

mainland. The saga is preserved as appendices to some law collections and dates from before 1285, possibly as early as 1220. *Gutasagan* presents a brief account of the history of the island from pagan times into the Christian period. The Gotlanders accept Christianity voluntarily and conclude an agreement with the king of Sweden for mutual benefit, after the king for a long time had tried in vain to conquer the island. The Gotlanders also have a distinguished past, as the ancient Goths are descended from them. *Gutasagan* thus shows largely the same features as the works discussed above, emphasizing the ancient history of the people of Gotland and their independence or relative independence from external powers. As Gotland was only loosely linked to Sweden at the time, this work does not tell us much about the general Swedish understanding of the past. There may have been other works, now lost, but, like *Gutasagan*, such works may well have had a regional rather than a national scope, as regional independence was quite strong in Sweden. A truly united kingdom probably did not emerge until around 1250.

LATIN AND VERNACULAR HISTORIOGRAPHY

Whereas Latin was the language of historical writing in Denmark until the later Middle Ages, the majority of writings in Norway and Iceland are in the vernacular. This difference is not confined to historiography; the same applies to administrative writing and most other genres, to an even greater extent than in the rest of Europe, where the vernacular also became increasingly important from the twelfth century onwards. Vernacular literature is normally associated with the laity. Although we find both clerics and laymen among the known authors of historical writings, the laity is likely to have formed a large part of the audience. The most important literary milieu in Norway was the royal court, and the household of the great lay chieftains seems to have played a similar role in Iceland. To some extent, this connection is expressed in the more secular outlook of the vernacular historiography. Although respecting Christian norms and doctrine and occasionally referring to God's intervention in history, its main focus is on human actions and conflicts; success or failure are largely explained by the skill or luck of the individuals involved. The difference between Latin and the vernacular is thus not only a question of different media for essentially the same message but of distinct historiographical traditions.

The difference between the two traditions can be illustrated by comparing the way in which their two greatest representatives, Saxo and Snorri, render the same story, that of St Olav punishing himself for inadvertently cutting slivers from a stick on a Sunday by burning the slivers in his hand. Snorri creates a scene out of this story. He describes Olav's deep thoughts which make him forget which day it is and then lets a servant remind him with the words: 'It is Monday tomorrow, Mylord.' Then the king asks for a candle and burns the

slivers in his hand. Snorri ends with a brief remark about Olav's willingness to do what was right.[9] Saxo has no scene. There is no servant and no exchange of words, just enough of the story to give its moral point which is then elaborated in considerably greater detail than in Snorri. Being convinced of the punishment of sinners in Hell, Olav wants to suffer temporarily on this earth rather than permanently in Hell. He also thought about the importance of setting a good example and refused to excuse his error by negligence. Finally, Saxo tells the story in his complicated rhetorical Latin in a manner that alludes both to the Roman hero Mucius Scaevola, who let his hand be burnt in the fire to show his enemies the Romans' virtue, and to the words in the Bible, about cutting off a hand if it represents a temptation to sin.[10]

Heimskringla's version represents a classical saga narrative. It is objective, in the sense that the author remains neutral and abstains from comment; visual, in its vivid description of persons and events; and dramatic, in letting the persons confront one another with brief, succinct, intensely meaningful sentences, delivered in a calm tone and often with understatement in a way that heightens the drama. The sagas generally prefer direct speech, in contrast to classical Latin prose, which prefers indirect. In this way, the actors in the drama are presented on the stage without interference from the author. The Latin tradition does the exact opposite. The author is constantly present, with comments and interpretation, in the form of direct characterization, as in Saxo, or typological interpretations in the form of digressions, as in Theodoricus, whereas there is usually less drama and fewer attempts at visualization.

The Latin historiography of Scandinavia forms part of the common European tradition. Stylistically, it shows considerable variation which is also to be found in the rest of Europe, from Saxo's highly complex and rhetorical Silver Age Latin, modelled on Valerius Maximus, to the *sermo humilis* in Theodoricus's narrative, with *Historia Norwegie* and Theodoricus's digressions in an intermediate position. It is more difficult to find parallels to the saga style. The *sermo humilis* of the gospels and some of the saints' lives may be a possible source of inspiration, but popular narrative is probably equally important or more so, although we are not dealing with oral narrative directly transmitted to writing, as can be shown by tracing the gradual development of the saga style, notably the retreat of the author, from the earlier to the later sagas.

However, the term 'saga' which has become conventional even in English, is likely to obscure the essential similarity between the Old Norse vernacular historiography and contemporary European histories or chronicles. Admittedly, the term in itself does not exclusively refer to historiography. Literally, it means what is said, and may thus refer to any story, written or oral, long or short. It is used in modern scholarship of the Icelandic family sagas as well as the kings' sagas, plus

[9] *Heimskringla: Olav's Saga*, ch. 190. [10] Saxo X.16.2.

of the many fantastic stories about events in distant times or places, mostly composed in the later Middle Ages (*fornaldarsögur*). It is not clear whether contemporaries made a distinction between 'historical' sagas, such as the kings' sagas, and fictional ones, but this is essentially the same problem as the one between 'historical' and 'literary' narrative in contemporary Europe. Despite many similarities, we may note some features that seem to be specific to the kings' sagas in contrast to the family sagas: they often have a prologue, to some extent discussing the trustworthiness of the information given, they have a more or less exact chronology, usually based on the kings' reigns, and they contain invented speeches in accordance with the European model. Thus, the kings' sagas are history to the same extent as other works discussed in this volume, and the term 'saga' might easily be replaced with 'history' or 'chronicle'.

Most importantly from this point of view, the retreat of the author and the focus on dramatic narrative do not make the sagas more 'popular' or less 'learned' than contemporary Latin works. Most of the sagas have a more exact chronology than Saxo's work. Both the Latin historians, notably Saxo and Theodoricus, make comments on their sources, but Snorri's discussion of this question in his prologues to *Heimskringla* and the *Saga Óláfs konungs hins Helga* [The Saga of King Olav the Saint or Separate Saga of St Olav] is by far the most sophisticated, in particular his comment on skaldic poetry, where he introduces the important principles of contemporaneity and the stability of tradition. The skalds performed their poems in the presence of the king and his men and, because of the metre, these poems are likely to have been transmitted unchanged from their original composition to the present. Although the skalds are no objective reporters—their profession was to praise their patrons—they are unlikely to attribute to these people deeds they had not performed, as this would have been blame and not praise. Consequently, their factual information should be accepted as truth, as opposed to their praise and embellishment. These conclusions are certainly open to discussion, and, in practice, Snorri's attitude to his sources differed radically from those of a modern historian. His observations are nevertheless remarkable against a medieval background.

Nor does the focus on dramatic narrative mean that the sagas are only concerned with individual episodes; a closer reading of them often show a very deliberate composition, aiming at creating a consistent plot. This is particularly characteristic of *Sverris saga* [The Saga of King Sverre Sigurdsson] (*c.*1220) and *Heimskringla*, whereas some others, notably the earlier ones, are more episodic. The best example of coherent composition is Snorri's aforementioned saga of St Olav, which was originally written as a separate work and later integrated in *Heimskringla.* Here Snorri organizes his extensive material—the saga fills around 250 pages in modern editions—derived from oral as well as written sources, in a coherent narrative, based on a strict chronology and a detailed account of Olav's movements. He then introduces an overall distinction between Olav's first ten years which were successful and the last five which were increasingly difficult,

leading up to his exile and death in the battle of Stiklestad (1030) at his return. Particularly in this latter part, Snorri manages to integrate the various episodes in a coherent plot, showing how Olav, largely through his own intransigence, fell out of favour with successive Norwegian chieftains, until it became impossible for him to remain in the country.[11]

The composition of the sagas seems to be closely connected to the narrative. Dramatic and important events get more space, and there is a tendency to link them together to explain success and failure. More abstract schemata, like the history of salvation or numerical symbolism, are less prominent, although there are some tendencies in this direction. By contrast, such schemata largely determine the composition of Saxo's work. There are sixteen books, seven dealing with the pagan period and seven with the Christian, while two deal with the transition from paganism to Christianity. Thus, the history of salvation is strongly present in the composition. The number twelve is of particular importance. The whole pagan period can be divided into sections of twelve kings, whereas the more recent Christian period lacks this regularity—here Saxo was restricted by common memory. The narrative itself seems to be less coherent than that of the sagas, not least because of the lack of precise chronology, although there are also examples of major conflicts running through the reign of particular kings, as in the case of St Cnut who suffered a similar fate as St Olav in Norway and whose fall Saxo describes in some detail, although, in contrast to Snorri, laying all the blame at the doors of Cnut's adversaries.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS: FROM THE SAGA OF HÅKON HÅKONSSON TO THE SWEDISH RHYME CHRONICLES

The works of Saxo and Snorri represent the peak of historical literature in medieval Scandinavia. The period from the mid-thirteenth century until around 1400 is usually considered a decline, quantitatively as well as qualitatively. A series of annals were composed in Denmark, plus an abbreviation of Saxo's work in the mid-fourteenth century, but nothing comparable to Saxo. In Norway and Iceland, the Icelander Sturla Thordarson, Snorri's nephew, was the author of two important works, *Hákonar saga* [The Saga of Håkon Håkonsson], composed in 1264–5, shortly after the king's death in 1263, and *Islendinga saga* [The Saga of the Icelanders], now preserved as part of the compilation *Sturlunga saga* [The Saga of the Sturlungs], on the internal struggles in Iceland in the thirteenth century, composed in the 1270s. Sturla also wrote the saga of King Magnus the Lawmender, King Håkon's son, of which only some fragments are preserved. This is the last of the kings' sagas. In the following period, several of the kings' sagas were

[11] Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla* (Berkeley, 1991), 34–43, 66–70.

rewritten—most manuscripts of them date from the later Middle Ages—and various compilations of and additions to the earlier sagas were made, but no new royal biographies were composed. However, several detailed biographies of Icelandic bishops were produced in the first half of the fourteenth century.

Of these works, *Islendinga saga* has most in common with the classical sagas, depicting power struggles between individual chieftains and containing a number of dramatic and memorable episodes. However, the sheer amount of information, partly in condensed form, often makes the narrative obscure and difficult to entangle. The other sagas can to some extent be characterized by Beryl Smalley's term 'civil service historiography', reflecting a more bureaucratic environment and greater focus on civil government.[12] Characteristically, these works contain a number of quotations of or references to written documents. This applies particularly to the early fourteenth-century saga of Arni Thorlaksson, bishop of Skálholt in Iceland (1268–98), but to some extent also to the saga of Håkon Håkonsson. This saga is a goldmine of detailed information for later historians but is often considered dull in comparison with the earlier sagas, as it mostly lacks the dramatic confrontations in which they excel. In particular, its protagonist, Håkon, seems a pale figure. He is depicted as a good Christian and a good ruler but he is rarely shown in action and in relations to other people. The explanation seems to be the greater prestige of the royal office in this period and the stronger influence of the Christian *rex iustus* ideology. In contrast to his predecessors, Håkon does not compete with other prominent men, nor does he use charm or eloquence to attract adherents; he rules in virtue of belonging to the dynasty and being elected by God as His representative on earth.

The great renewal of historiography in this period came from Sweden in the form of the rhymed chronicle. Whereas prose had earlier been the usual medium for historical and other narrative—even French verse romances were translated into Old Norse prose—most of the late medieval Swedish chronicles were composed in verse, a feature probably influenced by German models. The first and, according to most scholars, best work in this genre, from a literary point of view, is *Erikskrönikan* [Erik's Chronicle], composed between 1322 and 1332, but a series of other such chronicles were composed from the 1430s onwards, eventually forming a continuous history of Sweden from around 1250 until the 1520s.[13]

There seems to be some echo of the *origo gentis* tradition in the prologue to *Erikskrönikan.* Having praised God for his creation of the whole world, the author introduces the country of Sweden in the northern part of this world, a country of good knights where once Didrik of Bern lived. He then moves to the mid-thirteenth century, narrating the history of Sweden until 1319/20. Around

[12] Beryl Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London, 1974), 107–19.

[13] On the later Swedish rhymed chronicles see Karen Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Historical Writing in Scandinavia', in José Rabasa, Masayuki Sato, Edoardo Tortarolo, and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 3: *1400–1800* (Oxford, 2012), 450–73.

three quarters of the work deals with the reign of King Birger Magnusson (1290–1319), with the main emphasis on the conflict starting in 1304 between Birger and his two younger brothers, the dukes Erik and Valdemar. Two dramatic events mark the climax of the narrative. The first is the 'Håtuna game' in 1306, when the dukes took their brother captive at his manor Håtuna and forced him to divide his kingdom with them. The second is Birger's revenge eleven years later. Having invited his brothers to celebrate Christmas with him at his castle in Nyköping, Birger receives them with great friendliness and hospitality, and then, in the middle of the night, enters their room with armed men, addressing them with the ominous words: 'Minnes ider nakot aff Hatuna lek?' ['Do you remember anything of the Håtuna game?'], throws them into prison, and has them starved to death. The chronicler compares Birger's treachery to Judas's betrayal of Christ and ends his work by describing his downfall and replacement by Duke Erik's son Magnus, aged three: 'Wil Gud innan himmerike/han ma wel werda faders like' ['May God in heaven grant that he resembles his father'].[14]

Erikskrönikan differs markedly from the sagas through its aristocratic character. While the saga aristocracy essentially consists of popular leaders, its counterpart in the chronicle has become an exclusive class, whose ideology and values are expressed in the chronicle, particularly in its focus on pomp, magnificence, and chivalry. This conforms to the actual development of contemporary Sweden. On the other hand, the chronicle has even less in common with the bureaucratic elements of the later sagas, thus representing a return to the classical saga. War and dramatic events are represented directly and vividly, while the author is mostly in the background. And the dukes are not only chivalrous heroes but also astute politicians; the author delights in their cleverness in hiding their movements so as to take Birger by complete surprise at Håtuna.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY

The output of historical literature shows considerable differences over time. Danish historiography reached its peak in the twelfth century with Saxo's work, Norwegian-Icelandic historiography in the first half of the thirteenth century. Only Swedish historiography flourished in the later Middle Ages, with a whole series of chronicles composed in the fifteenth century. Despite the fact that many works may have been lost and that historical works may to some extent originate in individual initiatives, it is tempting to look for some general pattern behind this distribution.

The most obvious is the *origo gentis* motive, the need to trace the origins of one's own people after the conversion to Christianity, and to give the appropriate explanation of the latter. In addition to the earliest works, this motive is promi-

[14] *Erikskrönikan*, 157, 179.

nent in Saxo as well as Snorri. It is also important to note that Scandinavian historiography is mostly very dynastic; the longer works are normally organized according to the reigns of the kings.[15] Such dynastic historiography was very important during the early consolidation of the dynasty, but less so as it became more established. This happened in the late twelfth century in Denmark and around the middle of the thirteenth century in Norway. Saxo is a strong but not uncritical defender of the ruling dynasty and of Danish interests towards Germany and the Slavic peoples that were the object of Danish crusades in the second half of the twelfth century. He also had strong links to the ruling dynasty, partly through his kindred and partly through his patron, the archbishop of Lund.

Dynastic continuity is also an important feature in the sagas, but the authors' link to the dynasty is less strong. Admittedly, some works were directly commissioned by the Norwegian kings. The early part of *Sverris saga* was commissioned by Sverre himself and the rest of the saga is also strongly favourable to Sverre and his faction, although it should probably be regarded as a monument to a great hero rather than as royalist propaganda. Despite its more subdued and matter-of-fact form, *Hákonar saga* is more strongly ideological, representing Håkon as a model of good and just government. The longer sagas dealing with the kings of the past, *Heimskringla* and the slightly earlier *Morkinskinna* [Rotten Parchment] and *Fagrskinna* [Fair Parchment], all express Norwegian patriotism, but seem to differ in their attitude to the Norwegian monarchy. *Fagrskinna* may well have been commissioned by the Norwegian king and represents a view of the past similar to that of the contemporary monarchy, whereas the other two represent the attitude of the Icelandic chieftains who wanted to profit from alliances with the Norwegian king without losing their independence. This applies particularly to *Heimskringla* whose author was himself an Icelandic chieftain. Here it must be added that the Icelanders themselves were interested in celebrating the Norwegian dynasty. They were descended from Norway, they related their own history to that of Norway, as Ari's chronology demonstrates, and serving the Norwegian king for shorter or longer periods gave wealth and prestige to Icelandic chieftains. Whether commissioned by the king or not, Icelandic chieftains had good reasons for celebrating the Norwegian dynasty, but not uncritically. Their particular style, focusing on individual interests and competition in which the best man won, was more suited to the competitive society of the period before the mid-thirteenth century than to the ordered hierarchy of the following period. Moreover, periods of conflicts are more likely to stimulate historical writing than periods of peace.

Against this background, Sweden seems to be an exception. However, as the consolidation of the Swedish monarchy was late, *Erikskrönikan* shows some similarity with the early works in the other countries. The chronicle mainly deals with the dynasty descended from Earl Birger who became the real ruler of Sweden

[15] Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der 'nationes'*, 788–9.

around 1250 and whose descendants became kings after his death in 1266. In addition, of course, the dramatic events of the early fourteenth century were a great stimulus for historical writing, although it must be admitted that there were enough dramatic events in Scandinavia in the later Middle Ages that were not dealt with in this way. The chronicle is also the expression of the ideology of the rising aristocracy. The ideological aspect is equally prominent in the later Swedish chronicles which are the products of the troubled fifteenth century, with Swedish opposition against the Kalmar Union, entered in 1397 between the three Scandinavian kingdoms and dominated by Denmark. This is the clearest example in Scandinavia of historical writing as propaganda.

CONCLUSION

The historical literature of Scandinavia is not extensive but shows great variety and some works of very high quality. The Latin tradition includes religious as well as classicizing works, with Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* as the great example of the latter. The vernacular tradition that developed in Iceland and to some extent in Norway bears some resemblance to popular narrative but also contains learned elements, and above all a strict chronology. Its literary ideals are diametrically opposed to those of the Latin tradition, aiming at visualization and representation of dramatic scenes, whereas the authorial subject retreats into the background. Behind the stage, however, the author excels in skilful composition and links the episodes together in a consistent plot which highlights political interests and manoeuvring. Finally, a courtly, aristocratic historiography in vernacular verse developed in Sweden in the early fourteenth century, corresponding to the increasing exclusivity of the aristocracy and contacts with similar milieux abroad, particularly in Germany. The contrast between the early flourishing of historical writing in most of Scandinavia in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and its late arrival in Sweden is striking, but can be explained by the late consolidation of the Swedish monarchy. Thus, there seems to be a connection between historical writing and the formation of states and dynasties and the attempt to link the national past to universal history.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

870–930	Settlement of Iceland
965	Conversion of Denmark
995–1030	Conversion of Norway
1000	Conversion of Iceland
Early 11th cent.	Christianity introduced in Sweden, gradual conversion during the following period

1013–17	Danish Conquest of England
1030	Battle of Stiklestad, death of St Olav
1086	Death of St Cnut of Denmark
1104	Nordic Church province in Lund, Denmark
1152/3	Norwegian Church province in Nidaros
1160	Death of St Erik of Sweden
1164	Swedish Church province in Uppsala
1262–4	Icelands submits to the king of Norway
1304–19	Conflict between King Birger of Sweden and his brothers
1319	Union between Norway and Sweden
1380	Union between Norway and Denmark
1397	The Kalmar Union between Denmark, Norway, and Sweden

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PART II

MODES OF REPRESENTING THE PAST

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Chapter 21

Universal Histories in Christendom and the Islamic World, *c.*700–*c.*1400

Andrew Marsham[1]

INTRODUCTION: MONOTHEIST UNIVERSAL HISTORY

A 'universal history' or 'world chronicle' is a text that begins with Creation, or another primordial date, and encompasses subsequent world history in a linear narrative, often locating current monarchs and communities at the end of its providential scheme. The literary form had a consistent popularity in monotheist (i.e. Judaeo-Christian and Islamic) West Eurasia during the period covered by this volume—a period which can still usefully be characterised as the 'Middle Ages'.[2] The idea of a unique Creator God, Whose representatives ruled legitimately on earth, and Who had intervened directly in it and would continue to do so until a coming eschaton, lent itself to such totalizing accounts of the past. Indeed, the genre of universal history can be seen as a historiographic manifestation of the shared religious heritage of the monotheist world.

After the Islamic conquests of the seventh century, that part of the world ruled mainly by Christian or Muslim monotheists comprised three main overlapping zones of political, religious, and linguistic culture: first, the various western Christian kingdoms and their northern and eastern borders with the Scandinavian, Germanic, Turkic, and Slavic worlds; second, the Christian Byzantine Empire, centred on Constantinople, and its wider penumbra of satellites and commercial

[1] I would like to thank the editors for the invitation to contribute to this volume and for much helpful criticism and advice. For the three 'zones' in the period (*c.*700–*c.*1400) discussed below, I would like to acknowledge the organizers of the 'Political Culture in Three Spheres' project: Catherine Holmes, Jonathan Shepard, Jo Van Steenbergen, and Björn Weiler. I would also like to thank Björn Weiler for saving me from various errors concerning the Latin material. Participants in the St Andrews Institute of Middle East, Central Asia, and Caucasus Studies Seminar Series in September 2008 also provided advice and criticism, and I would like to thank them and Tim Greenwood for his invitation to speak in the series. I must emphasize that I take complete responsibility for all faults that remain.

[2] For the applicability of a similar term to Islamic history see Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols. (Chicago, 1974), ii. 3–4.

and diplomatic contacts, predominantly in Slavic and Turkic Eurasia; third, the vast Islamic Empire of the Caliphate and, after its accelerating fragmentation in the ninth and tenth centuries, the 'commonwealth' of Islamic 'successor states'. The literate elite in each of these regions used a *lingua franca*: Latin in the Christian West, Greek in Byzantium, and Arabic in the Islamic world. Vernacular literatures also developed in Western Europe and on the frontiers of Christendom. New Persian, which emerged as a written language in Iran in the tenth century, was in a sense a second Islamic *lingua franca*, but it was always confined to the Islamic East, and always co-existed with Arabic as a language of religion and scholarship.

This tripartite political and linguistic divide largely mirrors major doctrinal difference: an increasingly assertive bishop of Rome shaped Latin Roman Christianity in the West and a distinctive Greek Christian orthodoxy developed in Byzantium. However, by far the biggest religious and cultural divide ran through the Mediterranean and Asia Minor:[3] the Arabic-Islamic world adhered to a divergent, more purely monotheist religious tradition, with a very different scriptural basis in the Qur'an as opposed to the Bible (for all that the two texts shared much common heritage). Furthermore, in the various manifestations of 'classical' Islam (i.e. after the tenth century) religious authority resided neither with a monastic nor a sacerdotal hierarchy, but among various communities of religious scholars, whose status more resembled that of Jewish rabbis than Christian priests.

Islam was also an exception in that it was the religious tradition only of a ruling minority until well into the tenth century (and most probably for much longer outside the cities). This was both a consequence and a cause of the widespread tolerance of many non-Muslim religious communities as lower-status subjects of the Muslim elite, with a legitimate, divinely sanctioned place in society as 'People of the Book'. Of course, religious minorities also existed in the West and in Byzantium: both had significant Jewish populations and the ruling powers in both zones were incapable of imposing uniform Christian religious belief and practice. However, the religious diversity of parts of the Islamic world was on a very different scale and tended to be on a more secure cultural and legal footing: very large numbers of non-Chalcedonian Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and other religious groups lived under Muslim rule. From the perspective of the subject of this chapter, the important consequence of this cosmopolitanism was the existence of significant Christian historical traditions within Islam: notably that of Syriac and Arabic Christianity, and—in territory contested by Byzantium and Islam—that of the Armenian Christians. In contrast to the Syrian and Armenian Christians, who were confined to a relatively limited space in the Middle East,

[3] This is not to deny enormously important political, economic, and cultural exchange and interaction across this border, but merely to observe the importance of it *as a border* in linguistic, religious, and political culture, among other things.

the Jewish diaspora meant that there was a tradition of Jewish historiography in Hebrew in all three regions.

Each of the main traditions considered here had names for texts that might be placed in a genre of 'universal history' or 'world chronicle'. Examples include *Chronicon mundi* (Latin); *Chronographia* (Greek); *Makhtabhanuth Zabhne* (Syriac); *Ta'rikh sini al-'alam* (Arabic), and *Jami' al-tavarikh* (Persian).[4] However, not all works so named lived up to their titles and, more important, some works with very different titles were in fact universal in geographical and chronological scope. Thus, a 'universal history' is taken here to be not only a work that self-identifies as such (whatever its actual limitations), but also a work that fits the definition by virtue of its content, the primary defining feature of which is taken to be chronological: the work should start at Creation, or at least in the ancient past (e.g. with Abraham, or the Assyrians),[5] and attempt to survey most of past time. In addition, continuations of older universal histories were also a feature of historiography in all three regions throughout the Middle Ages; although these did not begin in the ancient past, they were consciously composed in the tradition of universal history-writing and can be treated as such. A secondary characteristic of universal history (with no necessary connection to the first) is an attempt to integrate a wide geographical range of material into a chronological structure. This is not a strict prerequisite, but it is a common feature of many of the texts, particularly those influenced by what might be described as the 'humanist traditions' of geography and ethnography.

As with all generic distinctions in literature, such definitions are far from precise.[6] Genre is a function of a set of overlapping characteristics, where some texts have only some of the required features and many texts that do share the basic

[4] For a list of universal histories in Greek see Paul Halsall, *Byzantine Historiography* (1997) at http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/byzantium/texts/byzhistorio.asp (accessed 26 April 2012). For Latin see Karl Heinz Krüger, *Die Universalchroniken* (Turnhout, 1976); Jean-Philippe Genet (ed.), *L'Historiographie médiévale en Europe* (Paris, 1991), section III, 235–340. For Islam see Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd edn (Leiden, 1968), 133–50; Bernd Radtke, *Weltgeschichte und Weltbeschreibung im mittelalterlichen Islam* (Beirut, 1992); Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999); Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), 134–8. On Syriac see Sebastian Brock, 'Syriac Historical Writing: A Survey of the Main Sources', in *Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature, and Theology* (Aldershot, 1992), I. For Jewish histories, Adolf Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles and Chronological Notes* (Oxford, 1887); Norman Roth, 'Chronicles, Jewish', in Roth (ed.), *Medieval Jewish Civilization: An Encyclopaedia* (London and New York, 2003), 157–62. On the Armenian tradition see Krikor H. Maksoudian, 'Historiography, Armenian', in Joseph R. Strayer (ed.), *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 13 vols. (hereafter *DMA*) (New York, 1985), vi. 238–42; and Jean-Pierre Mahé, 'Entre Moïse et Mahomet: Réflexions sur l'historiographie arménienne', *Revue des études arméniennes*, 23 (1992), 121–53.

[5] As do Eusebius and Hesychius of Miletus. The time of Christ is another starting-point for some Christian chronicles usually seen as 'universal' in scope (e.g. Hermann of Reichenau).

[6] On the problem of genre in the Latin West see Hans-Werner Goetz, 'On the Universality of Universal History', in Genet (ed.), *L'Historiographie médiévale en Europe*, 247–61. See Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 148, on 'truncated world histories' and 'sham world histories' in Islam.

structure are so different as to arguably belong to a different genre entirely. Works that reflect an interest in the questions addressed by universal history, but cannot themselves be characterized as works of universal history include chronographical texts such as Bede's *De temporibus ratione* [On the Reckoning of Time], the *Al-Athar al-baqiya* [Chronology of the Ancient Nations] of al-Biruni, or apocalyptic texts like the *Megillat ha-megalleh* [Scroll of the Revealer] by Abraham ben Hayya of Barcelona.[7] There are also texts that conform to the requirement for near-universal chronological scope but have a very narrow geographical focus on a single city, region, or people. Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* [Ecclesiastical History of the English People], al-Maqdisi's *Fada'il Bayt al-Maqdis* [Virtues of Jerusalem], or Hugh of Flavigny's *Chronicon* [Chronicle] are all relatively marginal to the discussion here on the basis of their very narrow geographical concerns.[8]

This question of geographical range raises an important source of confusion generated by the modern term 'universal history': almost none of the medieval chronicles and histories that are conventionally regarded as universal histories (and are often described as such by their authors) are truly universal in geographical scope.[9] This is partly a function of the sources available for their composition but more importantly of the rather parochial 'worldview' of their authors, in which a single divinely favoured people, kingdom, or empire was usually the main focus of the later part of the narrative. The form was a teleological one, in which the possibility that history might have taken a different path was rarely countenanced: history culminated in the divinely ordained present. Thus, there were arguably no 'true' universal histories written in this period; all historiography was to some extent local historiography.

However, a narrow view of what world history entails is entirely different from the absence of an idea of world history; there is no doubt at all that the *idea* of a chronologically universal history, which assembled all the known past into a single narrative, was very important in the Latin West, as it was in Byzantium and Islam. What follows is a comparative discussion of some of the most important aspects of universal historiography in Western, Byzantine, and Eastern Christendom and in the Islamic world. It begins with the immediate origins of all these traditions in the historiography of late antiquity and then turns to an examination of the three co-ordinates around which the texts were structured—space, time, and the divine. Then, having looked at the origins and form of our

[7] On whom see respectively: Calvin B. Kendall and Faith Wallis, *Bede: On the Nature of Things and On Times* (Liverpool, 2010); D. J. Boilot, 'al-Biruni', in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, 11 vols. (hereafter *EI*[2]) (Leiden, 1978), i. 1236–8; and Roth, 'Chronicles, Jewish'.

[8] Andrew H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2005), 234–5; Ofer Livne-Kafri, *Fada'il Bayt al-Maqdis wa-al-Khalil wa-Fada'il al-Sham* (Shfaram, 1995), pp. iv–v; and Goetz, 'On the Universality', 260–1 and n. 47.

[9] Ibid.; and R. S. Humphreys, 'Historiography, Islamic', in *DMA*, vi. 249–55.

texts, we can turn to questions of patronage and production. Here, the first question to address is the training and background of the authors of universal histories; the second and third are the related question of patronage and purpose. The argument of the second half of this chapter is that the idea of monotheist universal empire (like universal historiography, also rooted in the events of late antiquity) was central to the production of these texts for two main reasons. First, whatever the precise worldview of the author, the idea of a chosen people and their leadership on earth reflecting (or at least relating to) the divine order in Heaven was the underlying organizing principle in all universal history. Second, as one might expect, ruling elites sometimes patronized the production of such texts. However, more often than not universal historians wrote without direct royal or imperial patronage, either in order to critique the existing ruling regime or for theological or even 'humanist' purposes. Third, it is argued that empire—or rather the networks of trade and cultural exchange which it followed or generated—were crucial to the generation of a universal worldview: on the occasions where our medieval texts break out of their rather parochial understanding of world history into more truly universal interpretations, it is as a result of wider cultural and scientific horizons generated by conquest and trade.

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY

In all the Christian traditions, and to a great extent in Islam too, the forms taken by universal histories owed much to texts written in the era of the Christianization of the Roman Empire in the third to fifth centuries AD. These first monotheist universal histories drew upon the classical traditions of chronography, geography, and historiography, but reconciled them with a universalist, Christian worldview which tended to see the Bible as the pre-eminent and authoritative historical source.[10] Julius Africanus was probably the first Christian universal chronographer. His works influenced the *Chronicle* and *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. These histories, translated into Latin by Jerome, established the chronological parameters within which the history of the world was framed and were enormously influential models for providential Christian historiography.[11] In the West, the Latin works of Augustine and his world historian, Orosius, and their respective interpretations of a divine plan encompassing all human societies, both pagan and Christian, also exerted a continued

[10] 'Universal history' was of course, a pre-monotheist form, too. See, for example, the universal history of Diodorus of Sicily: Diodorus of Sicily, *Diodorus of Sicily*, ed. and trans. Charles H. Oldfather *et al.* (London, 1933–67).

[11] Brian Croke, 'The Origins of the Christian World Chronicle', in Croke and Alanna M. Emmett (eds.), *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Sydney, 1983), 116–31; and William Adler and Paul Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos* (Oxford, 2002), pp. xxx–xxxv.

influence for centuries.[12] The Eusebian form of the universal history was also very influential in the Syriac Christian literature of late antique Mesopotamia.[13] The same period also saw the emergence of the genre of the 'chronicle'—the annalistic historical form which formed the basis for much medieval universal historiography.

With the penetration of Judaeo-Christian ideas and culture into the Arabian Peninsula in late antiquity some of the same ideas about time and world history also spread there; the legacy of this can be seen in the seventh-century Qur'an's view of the monotheist past as a series of warning *exempla*, and in its emphasis on God as both universal monarch and judge at the end of time. However, a tradition of actual history-writing in Arabic only developed after the Arab-Muslim conquests of the Middle East in the seventh and eighth centuries. It is notable that Syriac historiography continued to be produced within the early Islamic world and it may have had a direct effect on some of the earliest Islamic historiography; the reconstructed historical work of Theophilus of Edessa is an early example of the exchange of ideas and material within the early Islamic Near East; the first extant 'encyclopedic' universal historian in Islam, al-Ya'qubi, appears to have derived much of his material from Syriac sources.[14]

However, thanks to the conquest of Sasanian Iran and the central place of the former territories of this empire in the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258), many early Islamic historiographers also had access to the Iranian historical tradition. Iranian historiography shared its linear progression from Creation towards an eschaton and anticipated Messiah (Sošyant) with the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but located this in a polytheistic theological scheme, in which a hierarchy of deities contested with evil demons.[15] (This struggle mirrored earthly events, where the Iranian kings claimed an authority delegated to them by the senior Zoroastrian deity, Ahura Mazda.) Although the religious dimension of Islamic historiography owes more to pre-Islamic Jewish and Christian ideas than Zoroastrian and Iranian ones, the structures and content of Iranian royal histories, which focus on the transfer of divinely sanctioned power between kings, and dynasties of kings, was incorporated into Islamic historical writing at a very early stage.[16] The ambivalent status of Alexander the Great in Islam—generally a hero in the Greek Christian

[12] Jocelyn Nigel Hillgarth, 'L'Influence de la Cité de Dieu de saint Augustin au Haut Moyen Âge', *Sacris Erudiri*, 28 (1985), 5–34. For Otto of Freising's use of Augustine see Charles Christopher Mierow *et al., The Two Cities: A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D.* (New York, 1966), 23–32, 61–72.

[13] Brock, 'Syriac Historical Writing'.

[14] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 49–50, where he cautions against simplistic notions of 'borrowing', suggesting rather a 'shared world of texts and scriptures'.

[15] Ehsan Yarshater, 'Iranian Common Beliefs and World-View', in Yarshater (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3(1): *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods* (Cambridge, 1983), 343–58; and Yarshater, 'Iranian National History', ibid., 359–477.

[16] Ibid., 359–63; and Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, trans. Azizeh Azodi (London, 1996), 158, 224–5.

tradition and an enemy in Iran—is one reflection of the Islamic fusion of two historical traditions.[17] It should also be noted that the orally transmitted Persian courtly tradition of heroic epic spanning all time since Creation re-emerged, only lightly Islamized, in the New Persian *shahnama*s (books of kings) produced at the royal courts of various dynasties that ruled Iran after the eleventh century.[18]

The other inheritance from the past in all three regions was the 'humanist tradition' of cosmological, geographical, and encyclopedic writing. This tradition was the basis for more comprehensive and truly universal historiography. In Western Christendom the inheritance of classical antiquity had been impoverished first by the Western Roman Empire's conversion and then by its collapse, which diminished the range of the classical tradition available (at least until the twelfth-century 'Humanist Renaissance'). Byzantium fared better, in that it retained direct access to the classical Greek tradition, at least as it had been preserved by Christian scholars.[19] Again, the Islamic world was the clear exception, having inherited Middle Persian (Pahlavi) learning via the conquest of Sasanian Iran, as well as many classical texts in Greek and in Syriac and Pahlavi translation.[20] Furthermore, the early Islamic world also included Afghanistan and the northern fringes of India, whose Sanskrit intellectual traditions were transmitted into Arabic in the mid- to late eighth century.[21] In the first centuries of Islam the process of the reconciliation of diverse philosophical and humanist traditions with one another and with monotheist belief was a live, on-going process pursued in a climate of intellectual endeavour unique in the late antique and early medieval monotheist world. This would have significant consequences for the scope and ambition of the Islamic texts.

THE CO-ORDINATES OF MEDIEVAL UNIVERSAL HISTORIOGRAPHY: CHRONOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY, AND THE DIVINE

The primary organizing principle of universal histories was the linear nature of time in both Judaeo-Christian and Islamic monotheism: the world moved from Creation towards the eschaton.[22] (Cyclical patterns might occur within the over-

[17] A. Abel, 'Iskandar Nama', in *EI*[2], iv. 127–8.

[18] Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 19–45.

[19] Paul Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism: The First Phase: Notes and Remarks on Education and Culture in Byzantium from its Origins to the 10th Century* (Canberra, 1986).

[20] Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th Centuries)* (London, 1998).

[21] Kevin van Bladel, 'The Bactrian Background of the Barmakids', in Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (eds.), *Islam and Tibet: Interactions along the Musk Routes* (London, 2010), 43–88.

[22] On time in early Islamic universal histories see Monika Springberg-Hinsen, *Die Zeit vor dem Islam in arabischen Universalgeschichten des 9. Bis 12. Jahrhunderts* (Würzburg, 1989).

all linear scheme, but they tend to be subordinated to greater movement from Beginning to End.[23]) The basis for this perspective was scriptural. The Pentateuch of the Hebrew Bible is itself in some senses a world chronicle, in that it begins with Creation, narrates the history of God's chosen people, and anticipates a messianic end. In the Christian Bible, which incorporates much of the Hebrew Bible in translation, the Messiah is understood to have arrived, and his appearance is the pivotal divine intervention in history. The Messiah's return, and the world's end, is also anticipated. The Qur'an differs from the Bible in that its structure is non-linear (the 114 *sura*s are arranged roughly longest to shortest, as in the Pauline epistles of the New Testament).[24] This is only a superficial structural difference, however: the Qur'an opens with an assertion of God's sovereignty over the universe and His role as judge at the eschaton and closes with a reassertion of His sovereignty over humanity (1.2–4, 114.1–3). Furthermore, the worldview presented by the Qur'an is historical, beginning with Creation and moving through a series of repetitious past divine interventions in the form of prophecy, of which the Qur'an itself—which warns repeatedly of an impending Day of Judgement—is the final example. Islamic tradition also retained the notion of the coming Saviour figure, the Mahdi. He is not mentioned in the Qur'an but he does appear in the other equally important source of revelation, the canonical reports (hadith) about the words and deeds of the Prophet, and he took an important place in Islamic political thought and eschatology, particularly in the Shi'ite tradition.[25]

Thus all three scriptural traditions raised questions about the age of the world and about how long it would last that universal historiography addressed directly. In both Judaism and Christianity, calculations that answered these questions were rooted in exegesis of Psalm 90:4 ('A thousand years to you are like one day') and Genesis 1 (on the six days of Creation). This had led to the widespread belief in late antiquity that the world would last 6,000 years and that it was in its final millennium.[26] The interpretation was carried into both Latin and Greek Christianity in the medieval period. However, the continued existence of the world made the 'six ages' increasingly redundant. In the East, the age of the world was sometimes reckoned at 7,000 or 8,000 years instead, which placed the end suitably far from the present for most of the period (after the early ninth century, the Incarnation was widely held to have taken place in the year 5,508).[27] By the

[23] As in Isma'ili thought: Paul E. Walker, 'Eternal Cosmos and the Womb of History: Time in Early Isma'ili Thought', *IJMES*, 9 (1978), 355–66.

[24] Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (London, 1996), 259–60.

[25] On Islamic eschatology see David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton, 2002); and Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Berkeley, 2011).

[26] Croke, 'The Origins of the Christian World Chronicle', 121 and n. 61 with references; cf. 2 Pet. 3:8.

[27] Alexander Kazhdan,'Chronology', in Kazhdan (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3 vols. (hereafter *ODB*) (Oxford, 1991), i. 448–9; and Kazhdan, 'Time', in *ODB*, iii. 2085–6.

medieval period, the year of Christ's Incarnation was widely used as the first year of chronologies in the West, with a concomitant depreciation in the value of the 'six ages' theory, which was viewed as making more sense of pre-Incarnation time than of the present, final age.[28]

Although the impulses behind Islamic assessments of the age of the world were similar, the results were much more varied—again, as a result of access to a wider range of traditions and less investment in the biblical narrative. The early adoption of the lunar, *hijri*, dating system, which began with the year of Muhammad's foundation of a Muslim community at Medina, reflects a break with Eastern Christian custom, as well as an early awareness of the importance of chronology to monotheist identity. However, the same equivalence between divine time and earthly time was widely accepted as having a scriptural basis. Al-Tabari presents a survey of the question towards the beginning of his *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-muluk* [History of Prophets and Kings], in which he examines the relative merits of the 6,000 and 7,000 year measurements and adduces Prophetic hadith in support of the 7,000 year theory.[29] Later, al-Biruni made an even more systematic comparison of divergent opinions about the age of the world and the chronologies of various dynasties, which included the Persian assessment of the world's age at 12,000 years, among others.[30]

Outside scripturally inspired chronologies and those deriving from Persian and Hellenistic tradition, some Muslim scholars noted scales for time of a completely different order. 'Direct observation of shells and other objects to be found in depressions and glens which are only found in seas' showed, after Aristotle, that the world was 'thousands of years' old and that great changes and calamities had occurred in the ancient past. Even more challenging to received wisdom were Indian astronomical ideas which suggested an age for the universe reckoned in billions of years.[31] However, these rival chronologies had no impact on the form and content of universal historiography, which remained tied to the reckoning of historical time within a framework suggested by the Qur'an and the other traditions of the Middle East. The inherent conservatism of medieval societies meant that the astronomical reckoning of time was occasionally noted and sometimes refuted, but had no more impact than that.[32]

After time, the second (though much less consistently deployed) organizational feature of universal history-writing was space. Although Eusebius and Jerome had included no separate geographical discussions in their universal histories, the

[28] Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, 2nd edn (Chicago, 1994), 91–3, 131–2.

[29] Michael Whitby, 'Al-Tabari: The Period before Jesus', in Hugh Kennedy (ed.), *Al-Tabari: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work* (Princeton, 2008), 17–18.

[30] Abu al-Rayhan Al-Biruni, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations: An English Version of the Arabic Text of the Athâr ul-bâkiya of Albîrûnî*, ed. and trans. C. Eduard Sachau (London, 1879), 16–42.

[31] Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994), 121, 160.

[32] Ibid., 121; and al-Biruni, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, 29–31.

use of parallel time-lines was a structural expression of the inextricable relationship between time and space in historical writing. Augustine had made the importance for Christians of the study of both time and space explicit.[33] Many of their successors in all three zones included substantial geographical material in their works, although they rarely used the term 'geography' (Gk. and Lat., *geographia*; Arab., *jughrāfiya*). Instead, authors used a variety of labels depending upon precisely what was under discussion: Latin names for geographical writing included *cosmographia*, *chorographia*, and lengthier titles like *totius orbis diversarumque regionis situs* ('the location of the whole world and its various regions');[34] Arabic terms included *'ilm al-ṭuruq* ('the science of routes'), *ṣūrat al-arḍ* (an early translation of the Greek geography), and *al-masālik* ('the science of topography').[35]

In the Latin West, the arguments of Augustine, given historical expression in the geographical introduction of Orosius's *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII* [Seven Books of History against the Pagans], influenced many subsequent universal histories, both directly and indirectly.[36] It has been calculated that well over a quarter of the Western chronicles composed between 450 and 1350 included a geographical description or a map. After the twelfth century, the horizons of Latin Christendom expanded, and it seems that the map assumed a new importance in historiography;[37] Matthew Paris provided a detailed map of the world in his history; at the end of the period, the *Polychronicon* of Ranulph Higden begins with a world map and a lengthy description of the world.[38] No maps survive from Byzantium, but it seems very likely that they existed; descriptive geography revived after the ninth century.[39]

In the Islamic tradition, the first part of al-Yaʿqubi's work is an unusually eclectic survey of pre-Islamic history; he also composed a geography which can be seen as a companion to the history.[40] Two generations later, al-Masʿudi extended this wide geographical scope by including the Franks and others in his history. Towards the end of the period, Rashid al-Din's *Jamiʿ al-tavarikh* [Compendium of Chronicles] was accompanied by a (now lost) geographical appendix, the *Suvar al-aqalim* [Configuration of the Climes], which set out the geography of

[33] Natalia Lozovsky, *'The Earth Is Our Book': Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West, ca. 400–1000* (Ann Arbor, 2000), 10–14.

[34] Ibid., 10.

[35] Fr. Taeschner, 'Djughrafiya', in *EI*[2], ii. 581.

[36] Merrills, *History and Geography*, 3.

[37] On the 'expansion' of Christendom see J. R. S. Phillips, *The Medieval Expansion of Europe*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1998), esp. 182–99.

[38] Patrick Gautier Dalché, 'L'Espace de l'Histoire: Le rôle de la géographie dans les chroniques universelles', in Genet (ed.), *L'Historiographie médiévale en Europe*, 287, 293–5.

[39] Alexander Kazhdan,'Cartography', in *ODB*, i. 385–8; and Kazhdan, 'Geography', in *ODB*, ii. 833–4.

[40] On a possible Qurʾanic basis for an interest in the history of all the world see Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 26; cf. Abd Al-Aziz Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, ed. and trans. Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton, 1983), 21.

the seven climes ('regions'), the longitude and latitude of important places, and the structure of the vast Mongol postal system;[41] Abu al-Fida composed both a universal history and a geography, the *Taqwin al-Buldan* [A Sketch of the Countries], which synthesized a tenth-century translation of Ptolemy, and the works of al-Biruni and Sa'id al-Maghribi, noting discrepancies.[42]

The third and most important organizing principle for all medieval historiographers was spiritual. As we have seen, the form and content of all universal historiography in this period depended upon the idea of a divine Creator and his intervention in the world. His choice of a chosen people determined the geographical centre of any universal survey of space. Ultimate causality, too, was attributed to God—to suggest otherwise was a dangerous heresy. Nonetheless, this left much scope for diverse approaches to the presentation of the relationship between humanity's affairs and the divine, with great potential for implicit or explicit interpretation both of the role of human agency and of the meaning of events. It was this that lent such great significance to the ancient past in all three traditions. Indeed, in a world ordered by divine will, time tended to collapse into a kind of eternal present; the prophets and kings of the Judaic tradition were important archetypes in both Christianity and Islam, and all universal history gave prominence to these figures as models relevant to the present world.

However, while the form of universal history emphasized continuities and patterns in the world since Creation, both Christianity and Islam were founded upon the idea of a decisive interruption in the flow of time: the life of Christ and the mission of Muhammad, respectively. In the Christian world, humankind lived in the era of Redemption and in anticipation of the eschaton. In the Christian West, historians increasingly counted their era from the Incarnation and Byzantine historians certainly saw it as the most important milestone in their chronology, alongside Creation itself: when the Byzantines sought to rationalize their chronological scheme in the ninth century, the two most important points were the Creation and the Incarnation.[43] The Islamic view of time and Revelation is—at least in theory—quite different from the Christian view, in that neither 'progress in Revelation' nor salvation through a person within time are present in Islam.[44] In practice, however, the place of Muhammad as the final Prophet of God was a pivotal moment almost on a par with the Christian Incarnation; Islamic universal histories tended to narrow their focus to the saved community after 622 in the same way that Christian ones shifted their focus after the time of Christ.

This understanding of the importance of Providence in history led to a spectrum of perspectives between a triumphalist celebration of God's chosen people

[41] Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2001), 103–7.
[42] H. A. R. Gibb, 'Abu al-Fida', in *EI*^{2}, i. 118.
[43] Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos*, pp. xxxi, xxxv–xlviii.
[44] Claude Gilliot, 'Al-Tabari and the "History of Salvation"', in Kennedy (ed.), *Al-Tabari*, 131.

and their ruler on earth, on the one hand, and an ironic comparison between the present and a better past on the other. In the Latin West, the legacy of Augustine's separation of the two cities of God and Man meant that a certain ambivalence about the relationship between God and empire was often present in universal histories; the true 'city of God'—the Church—did not necessarily have anything to do with the royal 'city of Man'. Nonetheless, kingship and empire remained the most prominent theme in Western universal history. In Byzantium the concept of *pronoia*, or 'providential care', underpinned the Byzantine conception of history. This idea of God's concern for his 'chosen people' and the notion that reversals of fortune were temporary punishments from God became less and less convincing as Byzantine power waned.[45]

The most important historical scheme in early Islamic historiography was that of the primordial covenant with humanity at Creation, reaffirmed and completed by the mission of Muhammad and then betrayed by impious rulers.[46] Where universal histories were patronized by Islamic rulers, they set the monarch and his dynasty in the long scheme of monarchs favoured by God; past kings serve as precursors, models, and warnings for the present. We may speculate that if Ibn Ishaq did compose a world history in the mid-eighth century, it likely followed a triumphalist model, in which the Abbasid revolution marked a redemptive victory after Umayyad betrayal; writing 150 years later, al-Tabari presents a more ironic story, in which the caliphate seems to be presented as having fallen away from the right path, and where ancient models like Cain and Abel prefigure the violent present.[47] A concern with the possibility of the coming eschaton is prominent in ninth- and tenth-century historiography; indeed, some of the Eastern Persian universal histories may have been written in part to refute millenarian ideas.[48] In later historiography, produced by scholars outside the court milieu, history remains the story of the working out of God's plan for the world, but the focus tends to shift to religiously significant locations and on to the history of the scholarly community of the 'ulama'.

However, it is worth noting that there are important exceptions to the prevailing understanding of divine causation. For example, the very late Byzantine historian, Chalcocondyles gave very little attention to it.[49] Some of the greatest universal historians in the Islamic world showed a concern with humanist and

[45] On divergent attitudes to providence in Byzantium see C. J. G. Turner, 'Pages from Late Byzantine Philosophy of History', *Byzantinische Zeitshrift*, 57 (1964), 346–73.

[46] R. S. Humphreys, 'Qur'anic Myth and Narrative Structure in Early Islamic Historiography', in Frank M. Clover and Humphreys (eds.), *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (Madison, 1989), 271–90.

[47] Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harun al-Rashid and the Narrative of the Abbasid Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1999), 173–4.

[48] Elton Daniel, 'The Samanid "Translations" of al-Tabari', in Kennedy (ed.), *Al-Tabari*, 294–6. But cf. Andrew Peacock, *Medieval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Bal'amī's Tārīkhnāma* (Abingdon and New York, 2007), 80–1, 153–4.

[49] Turner, 'Pages from Late Byzantine Philosophy of History', 358–61.

scientific interpretations of the past and human society which implied a subtle understanding of God's influence in the world. Indeed, a tradition of such thought can be traced from al-Yaʿqubi, through al-Masʿudi and al-Biruni in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries respectively before a hiatus which ends in the fourteenth with the unique comprehensive historical vision of Rashid al-Din and the innovative and sophisticated historical theories of Ibn Khaldun.

PRODUCTION: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

If time, place, and the transcendent monotheist God were the framing co-ordinates of universal history-writing, it remains to investigate in more detail who wrote these texts, and to what ends. Specific historical training did not exist in any of our three monotheist zones. Instead, the skills and conceptual framework for writing universal history were a by-product of religious or bureaucratic training and experience. There are important exceptions, of course, but the secular historian was largely a product of later times, and the professional historian certainly was. In all three zones, the resources for literacy and education were monopolized by clerical elites.

Western Christendom in the first two-thirds of our period was a predominantly rural society, in which monks and priests controlled literacy and thus historiography.[50] With the rise of the university and town schools after the twelfth century the patterns of cultural production underwent significant change; in historiography a consequence of this change has been seen as a shift from 'chronicle' narratives to more encyclopedic works that sought to present the 'knowledge explosion' of the period in an accessible format.[51] The authors of these texts were still for the most part members of a clerical elite of churchmen and scholars; however, they were now trained in a more professional curriculum and were working in a more urbanized and inter-connected world. In Byzantium, monasteries were an important source of elementary education; what little we know of the early career of George Synkellos, whose work began the revival of Byzantine universal history in the ninth century, shows that he was a well-travelled monk, perhaps associated with the monastery of St Chariton in Palestine.[52] However, schools and school-teachers were also important in a Byzantine world which, at least down to the twelfth century, was more literate than the Latin West.[53] From around the ninth century, higher education began to be sponsored by the emperor and the court at Constantinople became the centre of Byzantine learning and remained for some two hundred years before the Patriarchal School

[50] Goetz, 'On the Universality', 248.
[51] Breisach, *Historiography*, 144–9.
[52] Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos*, p. xxx.
[53] Athanasios Markopoulos, 'Education', and Michael Jeffreys, 'Literacy', in Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon, and Robin Cormack (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2008), 785–95, 796–802.

replaced it.[54] Many of the most important Byzantine chronicles of this period were produced by imperial courtiers.[55]

In a far more literate and, in many places, more urbanized Islamic world, historians had more varied educational backgrounds. Nonetheless, religious training was also a ubiquitous feature of education in Islam, as in Latin Christendom and Byzantium. Institutional centres of Islamic learning developed quite slowly and in the first two or three centuries of our period an informal network of religious scholars was the basis of Islamic religious education. Although the mosque and (after the eleventh century) the madrasa do feature in the training of most premodern Muslim historians, 'secular' trainings, usually after a religious education, were possible; the career structure of the *diwan* ('chancery') could also give access to court culture outside more purely 'religious' settings, as could aristocratic birthright. An influential world historian, whose works are now lost, Abu ʿIsa al-Munajjim, was one of a dynasty of Abbasid courtiers and scribes.[56]

The proliferation of Islamic royal courts that accompanied the fragmentation of Abbasid power generated a large number of centres of bureaucratic learning. The first of the more encyclopedic Muslim universal chronographers and geographers, al-Yaʿqubi, lived and wrote first at the court of the Tahirids—a Khurasani dynasty loyal to the Abbasid caliphs—and then, after their fall, in Egypt, under the Tulunids. It is notable that his works included a short historical essay on 'the adaptation of men to their time', which emphasizes the importance of ruling elites in setting the cultural tone in their dominions.[57] The later, tenth-century Persian adaptation of al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-muluk* was made by the Samanid wazir Balʿami.[58] Among later Arabic and Persian works, many of the most important were written with royal patronage: Ibn al-Athir wrote his *al-Kamil fi al-ta'rikh* [Complete History] while in the service of the Zangid dynasty of Mosul;[59] Rashid al-Din was at the court of Ghazan at Tabriz;[60] Abu al-Fida, a widely read continuator of Ibn al-Athir, was an Ayyubid aristocrat who served the Mamluks as a military commander and provincial governor.[61]

[54] R. Browning, 'Universities, Byzantine', in *DMA*, xii. 300.

[55] For criticism of the idea of the 'monastic chronicle' in Byzantium see Hans-Georg Beck, 'Zur byzantinischen "Mönchschronik" ', in *Ideen und Realitaeten in Byzanz* (London, 1972), XVI.

[56] S. M. Stern, 'Abu ʿIsa Ibn al-Munajjim's Chronography', in Stern, Albert Hourani, and Vivian Brown (eds.), *Islamic Philsopophy and the Classical Tradition: Essays Presented by his Friends and Pupils to Richard Walzer on his Seventieth Birthday* (Columbia, 1972), 437–66.

[57] William G. Millward, 'The Adaptation of Men to Their Time: An Historical Essay by al-Yaʿqūbī', *JAOS*, 83 (1964), 329–44.

[58] On which see Peacock, *Medieval Islamic Historiography*.

[59] Franz Rosenthal, 'Ibn al-Athir', in *EI*^{2}, iii. 273.

[60] D. O. Morgan, 'Rashid al-Din Tabib', in *EI*^{2}, viii. 443–4.

[61] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 148.

PATRONAGE AND PRODUCTION: THE LEGITIMIZATION OF IMPERIAL RULE

True to its Eusebian roots, the production of universal historiography throughout this period was closely associated with empire—that is, with the political endeavour to rule over more than one polity or ethnic group. The importance of empire to universal historiography is reflected by the absence of universal history-writing on the eve of our period, in the closing decades of the seventh century. In all but one of the major traditions the production of universal histories had either ceased completely or had not yet begun. This gap coincides with the hiatus before Carolingian attempts to revive the old Roman imperial structures in the West and the seventh-century crisis in Byzantium brought about by devastating losses of territory first to the Persians and then to the Arabs;[62] Hebrew historiography had ended centuries earlier with the end of the Jewish state;[63] history-writing in Arabic, of course, had yet to begin. Only the Syriac tradition continued during this 'world crisis'; perhaps because Syriac Christians were already used to occupying a fragile position between the great empires of Rome and Iran.[64] Just as the survival of universal historiography in Syriac through the seventh century seems to have played an important role at the beginning of universal history-writing in Arabic it also seeded the recovery of the universal history in Byzantium.[65]

Imperial collapse had led to a hiatus in the production of universal history in Latin and Greek. Its revival, and the emergence of the same genre in Arabic, coincided with the revival and formation of empire. The re-emergence of universal historiography in the Latin West is intimately connected to the rise of the Carolingian Empire: both the *Chronicon Universale—741* [Universal Chronicle of 741] and Freculf of Lisieux's *Chronicon* [Chronicle] were produced at the Carolingian court for the imperial elite.[66] Byzantine universal history re-emerged in the early ninth century with Theophanes and George Syncellus after the successful struggle for survival against Islam, although court patronage does not seem to have played the role it did in the Carolingian

[62] Michael Whitby, 'Greek Historical Writing after Procopius: Variety and Vitality', in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. I: *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1992), 66–74; Warren Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. xxx.

[63] Noth, 'Chronicles, Jewish'.

[64] For the term 'world crisis' see James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010).

[65] On this in Byzantium see Cyril A. Mango and Roger Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813* (Oxford, 1997), pp. liv–lv; and Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos*, pp. lxix, lxxxii–lxxxiii.

[66] Rosamond McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, 2006), 22–8; and Matthew Innes and McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', in McKitterick (ed.), *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation* (Cambridge, 1993) 212–13.

West. The beginning of another revival of universal historiography in the Latin West coincided with the era of the Salian German Empire in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the era of conquest and colonization on all the frontiers of Western Christendom—often in close association with the assertion and extension of papal power and authority.[67] Again, many universal histories were written without royal patronage, but some showed a real concern for empire; Sigeburt of Gembloux's main concern was the persistence of the Roman Empire in the age of the Salian emperors and the defence of these emperors against the claims of the pope;[68] in the thirteenth century, the encyclopedic works of Vincent of Beauvais were compiled with the patronage of the Capetian Louis IX.[69]

The Islamic tradition arguably had its roots in the universal and even imperialist aspirations of very early Islam, but it flowered after the conquest of the Greek, Syriac, and Middle Persian Middle East and the development of Arabic as a literary language among the imperial Muslim elite. There are eighth-century forerunners, such as Ibn Ishaq, who appears to have written a now lost universal history in order to legitimate the new Abbasid caliphs.[70] However, universal historiography is only extant in Arabic from the late ninth century, in the works of al-Dinawari and al-Yaʿqubi. It blossomed in the tenth century at the courts of the eastern 'successor states' that were nominally loyal to the caliph in Baghdad. Islamic universal historiography enjoyed a second era of success again (after its first flowering in the ninth and tenth centuries) in the fourteenth century, which was the era of the great Mongol and Timurid empires in the East and the era of the truly universal history in New Persian.

The idea of universal monarchy was especially important at moments of transition. The successful usurpation of imperial power by new dynasties generated universal historiography as a legitimatory device, as with the Carolingians and the Abbasids at the beginning of the period. Imperial conquest by an invader with aspirations to claim a legitimate place in an established lineage of rightful power could have a similar effect, as with the era of the initial formation of the Arabic-Islamic historical tradition after the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries and as with the great era of Persian historiography under the Mongols in the fourteenth century.[71] Indeed, both the Arab invasions and the Mongol conquests brought a new universalist worldview to an existing culture of universal historiography. Likewise, the *Mujmal al-tavarikh va-al-qisas* [Collection of Histories and Narratives] (probably written just after 1126) was composed for a

[67] Goetz, 'On the Universality', 248, 256, 259.

[68] Ibid., 255–6; and Breisach, *Historiography*, 124.

[69] Joseph M. McCarthy, *Humanistic Emphases in the Educational Thought of Vincent of Beauvais* (Leiden, 1976), 4–6.

[70] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 135. Other early compilers of 'world history' are said to have been Wahb b. Munabbih and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ—interestingly, both were of Iranian heritage.

[71] Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, 1998), 112–17; and Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 196–7.

Seljuk prince—a member of an elite that had taken power in Iran about eighty years earlier.[72] A third dynamic at least as important as imperial usurpation or foreign invasion and conquest was the formation of new polities and literary cultures on the periphery of an existing imperial world: thus the *Irish World Chronicle* and the Transoxianan world histories of al-Maqdisi and Balʿami at each end of tenth-century West Eurasia.[73] The East and West Slavic, Scandinavian, and vernacular West European traditions all also match this model to some extent.[74]

However, despite these identifiable peaks and troughs in the production of universal history (even accounting for the vagaries of survival and transmission) it should also be noted that, once the universal history had been firmly established or re-established as a genre, it rarely disappeared. Universal histories were produced at a fairly steady rate throughout the medieval period in Byzantium and the Eastern Christian world, where the 'continuation' of the work of earlier world chroniclers was a particularly well-established pattern for the production of such texts. In Islam and the West universal histories also continued to be produced in large numbers after the tenth and eleventh to twelfth centuries, respectively. Ironically, whereas the Mongol conquests generated a second, fourteenth-century efflorescence of Perso-Islamic historiography under the Ilkhans, they eventually destroyed these continuous traditions of Byzantine and Syriac history-writing; the Ottoman and Safavid Islamic states that eventually emerged from the post-Ilkhanid world overwhelmed the Byzantine Empire and brought both Greek and Syriac universal historiography to an end.[75]

PATRONAGE AND PRODUCTION: *KAISERKRITIK* AND OTHER USES OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY

The relationship between empire and the production of universal histories cannot simply be characterized as a straightforward causal relationship between

[72] Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 188–209.

[73] See, respectively: David N. Dumville, 'A Millennium of Gaelic Chronicling', in Erik Kooper (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 1: *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle* (Amsterdam, 1999), 108–9; ed., 'al-Mutahhar b. Tahir', *EI*[2], vii. 762; and Peacock, *Medieval Islamic Historiography*, 170.

[74] For Scandinvia see Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Saxo Grammaticus: A National Chronicler Making Use of the Genre *Chronica Universalis*', in Genet (ed.), *L'Historiographie médiévale en Europe*, 331–40. On Russia see Dimitri Obolensky, 'Early Russian Literature', in Robert Auty and Obolensky (eds.), *An Introduction to Russian Language and Literature* (Cambridge, 1977), esp. 60–1, 69–71. On Hungary see Lázló Veszprémy, 'Historical Past and Political Present in the Latin Chronicles of Hungary (12th and 13th Centuries)', in Kooper (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle*, 260–9.

[75] Barhebraeus is perhaps the last great universal historian to write in Syriac; he drew on early Ilkhanid historical material: Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 83–4. The last Armenian universal history was also composed by Vardan Vardapet, also in the thirteenth century: see Maksoudian, 'Historiography, Armenian'.

imperial power and the patronage of universal historiography. In all three regions we find many scholars working more or less independently of direct elite patronage. For these writers, it is the idea of universal empire that is often important, but not necessarily the glorification of any contemporary ruler. Indeed, outside court-sponsored historiography, one might have the impression that the motives for the composition of universal history were almost as diverse as the number of scholars writing it. However, some important patterns can be identified: the vast majority of the writers had predominantly clerical or religious concerns and these could manifest themselves in various ways—in exegetical or theological themes or in explicit or implicit criticism of royal power; others, for all that they wrote within this characteristically monotheist framework, show more 'encyclopedic' or 'humanist' interests.

That the authors of these texts had very often received a training as a Christian monk or Muslim religious scholar meant that in many cases their primary, religious, interests moved them to compose histories that recorded the history of their own religious community within the framework of God's Creation. In Islam, an independently wealthy religious scholar like al-Tabari may have sometimes been associated with the caliphal court, but he wrote his world history not as a client of the ruling elite but as an influential jurisprudent and exegete of the Qur'an.[76] As noted above, al-Tabari's vast compendium of events from Creation down to his own time reiterates the theme of the fulfilment and betrayal of the divine covenant—often deploying a richly ironic patterning of material that may amount to a *Kaiserkritik* of his own and recent times. Later Muslim historians like Ibn al-Jawzi and his grandson Sibt are similar in some respects; although both were in the orbits of the Abbasid and Ayyubid courts, their works of universal history show a close interest in the biographies of fellow religious scholars and preachers rather than any desire to glorify political power.[77]

The same broadly clerical motives among universal historians are also in evidence in the Christian world. This was particularly true in the post-Islamic Syriac milieu, where universal historiography was sustained by monks and priests in the absence of state patronage. In Western Christendom the vast majority of universal historians were monks. The Church provided an alternative focus for a writer's loyalties and many universal historians wrote as churchmen not courtiers: the eleventh-century polymath, Hermann of Reichenau was a monk of aristocratic background, who does not appear to have composed his *Chronicon* [Chronicle] for a specific patron;[78] Ekkehard of Aura, sided with the pope in the Investiture Controversy;[79] Hugh of St Victor wrote universal history in order to set out its

[76] Al-Tabari, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 1: *General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, introd. and trans. Franz Rosenthal (Albany, 1989), 21–2, 44–78, 80–134.

[77] H. Laoust, 'Ibn al-Djawzi, 'Abd al-Rahman', in *EI*^{2}, iii. 751–2; and Cl. Cahen, 'Ibn al-Djawzi, Shams al-Din', in *EI*^{2}, iii. 752–3.

[78] Breisach, *Historiography*, 122.

[79] Ibid., 123–4.

principles for systematic study by students of the arts and theology;[80] Otto of Freising, a relative of the ruling Salian imperial family, reveals very ambivalent views about the relationship between the city of Man and the city of God in his universal history;[81] Jean of St Victor's universal history asserts the victory of the Church over the empire, in the decades after 1245.[82]

As in the Latin West, there was no straightforward relationship between kingship and the production of universal histories in Byzantium. Universal chronicles were very often written by people in the orbit of the Byzantine imperial court. However, few historians actually wrote for the emperor or his family. Indeed, there was a strong tradition of criticism of the current ruling elite, often through ironic juxtaposition with idealized former rulers—especially with Constantine, who was remembered as the ideal Christian monarch. The other major concerns of the Byzantine historians were theological. Thus, the first universal historiographer of our period, George Syncellus, was a monk and *syncellus* ('private secretary') to Tarasios, patriarch of Constantinople. However, his world history ends with the reign of Diocletion (r. 284–305), so is not explicitly composed with the glory of the current emperor in mind; instead it shows a keen interest in denouncing heresy and in the problem of constructing a chronology based upon the evidence of the Greek Bible.[83] His continuator, Theophanes the Confessor, is said to have worked at George's behest rather than for a royal patron.[84] Much later, John Zonaras was commander of the imperial bodyguard and senior secretary in the chancery. However, the composition of his comprehensive *Epitome Historion* [Epitome of Histories] took place after he had become a monk and retreated from court politics; it is a history which is critical of the ruling dynasty and reflects Zonaras's Republican leanings.[85] His contemporary, Michael Glykas, lived and worked at the Byzantine court but he too was highly critical of the ruling dynasty and showed a theologian's interest in the story of Creation and in denouncing heresy and magic.[86]

There are also figures who fit neither the pattern of religious and clerical universal history-writing beyond (or on the margins of) elite patronage, nor the

[80] Beryl Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London, 1974), 97–8; R. W. Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing 2: Hugh of St Victor and the Idea of Historical Development', in R. J. Bartlett (ed.), *History and Historians: Selected Papers of R. W. Southern* (Oxford, 2004), 41–2.

[81] Ibid., 44.

[82] Mireille Schmidt-Chazan, 'L'Idée d'Empire dans le *Memoriale historiarum* de Jean Sain-Victor', in Genet (ed.), *L'Historiographie médiévale en Europe*, 301–19.

[83] Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos*, pp. xxx–lv.

[84] Mango and Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, pp. lv, 1–2.

[85] Paul Magdalino, 'Aspects of Twelfth-Century Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*', *Speculum*, 58 (1983), 326–46; and Zonaras, *The History of Zonaras: From Alexander Severus to the Death of Theodosius the Great*, trans. Thomas M. Banchich and Eugene N. Lane (Abingdon and New York, 2009), 2–7.

[86] Alexander Kazhdan, 'Glykas', in *ODB*, ii. 855–6.

model of court universal historiographer. Al-Masʿudi, a near-contemporary of al-Tabari, was an independently wealthy scholar on the margins of the Abbasid and, probably, the Ikhshidid courts. He was a well-travelled polymath, and arguably the most complete exponent of genuinely universal history before the last century of our period.[87] The framework of what he wrote was religious—indeed it is an explicitly Shiʿite history composed under rulers who officially sanctioned Sunnism. However, al-Masʿudi appears to have written without a patron and does not appear restricted by narrowly theological concerns; rather he wrote an elegant and entertaining work that appears to have been genuinely motivated by a humanist scholar's (*adīb*'s) interest in the past and ranges outside the world of Islam, notably in discussing the remote barbarian world of the Franks (i.e. Western Christendom), which is the first extant such discussion in Arabic. At the other end of our period, Ibn Khaldun served a series of different North African masters as a scribe and courtier while pursuing his interests as a scholar of history; he too wrote his *ʿIbar* as a universal history without a patron.

SCOPE AND HORIZONS

Beyond the individual motivation of the author and the pressures imposed by patronage what might be called 'connectivity' determined the geographical and intellectual scope of universal histories. This was the extent to which the author was able to access current knowledge of the size and nature of the world beyond his immediate locale. This could be achieved either through long-range communications, which were usually the networks of trade and empire, or through access to diverse sources, which was usually itself a product of effective communication networks in the present or the past. It is notable that medieval Jewish history-writing revived on the frontier between the Fatimid Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and the Latin Christian world; the first medieval Hebrew chronicle that might be characterized as a universal history was written in twelfth-century Toledo, some one hundred years after the Christians took the city from Islam.[88] However, the overwhelming focus of medieval Jewish historiography was on rabbinical succession and other religious subjects. Only where high levels of connectivity coincided with political and military success (and the two were causally related) were perfect conditions for the production of universal history created.

It is this that explains both the patterns in the production of Christian universal historiography and its relative poverty throughout this period. Three important phases can be identified in the development of universal historiography in

[87] Ahmad M. H. Shboul, *Al-Masʿudi and His World: A Muslim Humanist and His Interest in Non-Muslims* (London, 1979), 1–2, 17.

[88] Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles*, p. xiii; and Noth, 'Chronicles, Jewish'.

the Latin West: the 'Carolingian Renaissance' of the eighth and ninth centuries, the 'Twelfth-Century Renaissance', and the 'knowledge explosion' of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. However, although horizons expanded on each occasion, they remained restricted. The Carolingian histories were almost entirely concerned with northern Europe and focused on the history of the Roman and Germanic Christian *imperium*. Already in the mid-eleventh century Hermann of Reichenau took in a much wider range of historical material than his northern European predecessors. The works of Sigeburt of Gembloux and Otto of Freising are leading examples of the flowering of the universal chronicle during the twelfth century. However, the Roman past and the Germanic present is still their primary focus; what they know of the East is only a function of the Crusades.[89]

Signs of expanding horizons can once again be detected in the shift from the chronicle to the encyclopedic history which took place in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, exemplified in the work of Matthew Paris and Vincent of Beauvais. However, knowledge of Asia and Africa was still comparatively limited, and even later works, such as the *Polychronicon* of Ranulph Higden of Chester, retained a focus on the progression from the ancient past of Genesis through Roman history down to the history of their own kingdom in the Christian past and present. Likewise, Byzantine universal history also tended to be very far from universal in geographical scope: it almost always confined itself to territory under Byzantine control—that is, largely to the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, it was in some ways more closed than Western writing, perhaps partly as a consequence of the classicizing tradition, which made the 'barbarian' world beyond Byzantium a slightly distasteful subject.

In contrast to the worlds of Latin and Greek Christendom, Arabic and Persian historiography stands out for most of this period for its exceptional wide-ranging geographical and chronological scope. Although a truly united Muslim Empire lasted only comparatively fleetingly (*c.*700–*c.*800), it incorporated a great diversity of literate and scientific traditions into one linguistic and cultural zone, within which new intellectual syntheses were made possible. Furthermore, the Islamic world enjoyed extensive and varied long-range trade connections, enormous economic success, and thus a high level of urbanization and literacy. The great era of translation into Arabic was the 300 years between about 700 and about 1000. The finest products of this process are to be found in the works of al-Yaʿqubi, al-Masʿudi, and al-Maqdisi, working for the new ruling dynasties of the Abbasid and post-Abbasid East, at the crossroads of Asia. After then, material received into Arabic tended to circulate with only occasional additions drawn from other linguistic traditions. Nonetheless the enormous importance of long-distance trade and the custom of travel for scholarly exchange and improvement, as well as Islamic institutions that

[89] Goetz, 'On the Universality', 249–59.

transcended local boundaries, such as the annual hajj pilgrimage and the sophisticated postal networks of the ruling military elites, contributed to the wide geographical horizons of scholars.[90]

The second great efflorescence of Islamic universal history-writing, this time in Persian, was brought about by the incorporation of Islamic Iran into the vast Mongol Empire and the impulse for both legitimation and the preservation of their steppe past that conversion to Islam brought about among the Mongol rulers of the Islamic world, the Ilkhans.[91] This again resulted in the patronage of a sophisticated translation movement and the incorporation of the knowledge of remote regions into the cultural production of the court of an Islamic ruler. The pre-eminent example of this is the *Jamiʿ al-tavarikh* of Rashid al-Din, who is arguably the first truly universal historiographer anywhere in the medieval monotheist world. Indeed, Rashid al-Din noted the narrow perspective of the monotheist historical tradition. As he put it, although the Islamic tradition was 'the most authentic of all . . . one cannot rely on it for the history of others'. In contrast, he was able to take advantage of the new cosmopolitan world brought about by the Mongol conquests, in which native informants from across the known world could be consulted: 'I queried and interrogated the scholars and notables of the aforementioned peoples and made extracts from the contents of ancient books.' His book included ancient biblical history followed by Islamic history from the time of Muhammad, the history of the Turks and Mongols, the Chinese, Indians, Jews, and Franks.[92] It also seems likely that the systematic methods of Chinese court historiography were adopted by him—it is possible that a formal diary of events at the Ilkhanid court, modelled on Chinese royal practice, formed the basis for the latter part of the account of events in Iran.[93] The extraordinary historical vision of Ibn Khaldun, which he sets out in the famous *Muqaddimah* [Introduction] to his less remarkable world history,[94] is also perhaps in part a product of the new global reach of the great central Asian powers; the famous encounter between the Maghribi Ibn Khaldun and the great Transoxianan warlord Tamerlane at Damascus reflects the new scale of Islamic political culture in the fourteenth century.[95]

[90] On the post see Adam J. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2007). For other forms of connection and communication see Ian Richard Netton (ed.), *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Medieval and Modern Islam* (Richmond, 1995).

[91] On the need to preserve Mongol tradition see Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 85.

[92] Ibid., 83–102 (quotations on 84).

[93] Ibid., 100–1.

[94] Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundations of the Science of Culture* (London, 1957).

[95] On their encounter see Walter J. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldun and Tamerlane: Their Historic Meeting in Damascus, 1401 A.D. (803 A.H.)* (Berkeley, 1952).

CONCLUSIONS

Universal histories were a minority taste across medieval West Eurasia. The proof of this is the comparatively etiolated manuscript tradition from which our modern editions derive. The great literatures of monotheism were liturgical and exegetical. Nonetheless, a minority or elite taste is not necessarily unimportant; it may reflect key aspects of a culture. The universal history was a product of the distinctive political, cultural, and economic structures of the medieval world. Its immediate origins lie in the universalizing philosophical tendencies of late antiquity, which culminated in Roman imperial Christianity and the rise of Islam; the genre was transformed at the end of the Middle Ages first by the new Islamic world brought about by the Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century and then, much more decisively, after 1492, by the European discovery of the new world of the Americas. In between Constantine and Columbus, the genre of a history of the world from Creation down to the recent past retained a perennial popularity. In this period, the world was relatively easily contained within a single narrative: 'the end was in sight almost as clearly as the beginning'.[96] The infinite and transcendent was found only in the spiritual realm, the facts of which were the starting-point for almost all intellectual endeavour. Thus, scriptural exegesis gave the world's age a human scale, of only 200 or so generations in total, while the limits of trade and travel confined geographical knowledge to a single land mass ringed by sea. Disquieting rival assessments of the size or age of the universe were set aside in the margins of tradition.

Universal historical narratives located a people or place or person in this full historical perspective. Since God's will had been worked through human agency in the past it was accepted that it still did in some sense in the present. In the West and in Byzantium, the central place of the conversion of the Roman Empire in the spread of Christianity lent the idea of divinely sanctioned kingship a central place in historiography, although doubt about the relationship between the city of God and the city of Man meant that many universal histories, written without direct royal patronage, reflected an ambivalence about royal power. In Byzantium, the universal history was more closely tied to the permanence of the empire than in the West; nonetheless, criticism of the current rulers was a feature of many Byzantine texts. In the Islamic world more universal histories were sponsored by monarchs—religious elites tended to favour other genres. The Islamic world also benefited from its far more cosmopolitan and international character: the vast world of Islam, which expanded continuously in this period on all fronts except the far north-west, united diverse intellectual traditions in a way that could generate more genuinely universal writing. Nonetheless, the similarities between East and West outweigh the differences. In all three zones scriptural

[96] Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition', 31.

accounts of the events of the ancient historical past were models and patterns for the present and so the two were recounted together in narratives that saw God's will in both.

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Chapter 22

Local Histories

John Hudson

Just as local affairs dominated most lives in the Middle Ages so too is local historical writing prominent in medieval historiography. However, the term and category local history is a modern, not a medieval one. Furthermore, even as a modern analytic category, local history can be problematic. What should count as local? Should the category include significant and powerful duchies and counties but not small and weak kingdoms? Should analysis include national histories with local sections or brief local elements? In England, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was primarily concerned with national affairs, but also mentioned events in the particular monasteries where the various verison were written. This could provide curious juxtapositions, emphasizing the separate perception of the local and the national. Thus the Peterborough chronicler wrote of the political disruption of Stephen's reign that

> wherever cultivation was done, the ground produced no corn, because the land was all ruined by such doings, and they said openly that Christ and his saints were asleep. Such things, too much for us to describe, we suffered nineteen years for our sins. In all this evil time Abbot Martin held his abbacy [of Peterborough] for twenty years and a half, and eight days, with great energy, and provided for the monks and the guests everything they needed, and held great commemoration feasts in the house, and nevertheless worked at the church and appointed lands and income for it, and endowed it richly and had it roofed, and brought them into the new monastery on St Peter's day with great ceremony—that was AD 1140.[1]

There are also instances of local histories broadening beyond the events of their area, as when Dino Compagni's chronicle of Florence told of papal and imperial affairs, or the *Tarikh-i Bukhara* [History of Bukhara] dealt with al-Muqanna', a millenarian rebel against Abbasid rule.[2] The Anglo-Norman monk Orderic Vitalis

[1] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, version 'E', *s.a.* 1137, trans. in *English Historical Documents*, vol. 2: *1042–1189*, ed. D. C. Douglas and G. W. Greenaway, 2nd edn (London, 1981), 211. I would like to thank Liesbeth van Houts, Robert Hoyland, and Chris Given-Wilson for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

[2] Dino Compagni, *Chronica*, bk. iii. c. 23, ed. Davide Cappi (Rome, 2000), 119–20; *Dino Compagni's Chronicle of Florence*, trans. Daniel E. Bornstein (Philadelphia, 1986), 85–6; and *The History of Bukhara*, c. 27, trans. Richard N. Frye (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), 65–73. Persian and Arabic texts have only been consulted in translation.

set out to write a history of his monastery of Saint-Évroult, but ended up composing a wide-ranging *Historia ecclesiastica* [Ecclesiastical History], starting with the birth of Christ and extending to his own day.[3] There were also occasional completed or projected works formed of a collection of locally focused histories either by a single author, as in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta pontificum Anglorum* [Deeds of the English Bishops], or by several, as in Bernard Gui's proposed history of the Dominicans.[4]

Furthermore, writing on the local past was not the preserve of works that we would consider histories.[5] Much was contained within saints' 'Lives', just as there could be hagiographical elements within histories.[6] There was a strong element of local history within Guibert de Nogent's autobiography, his *Monodiae*.[7] Cartularies might be considered works of history in terms of their arrangement, or they might include narrative segments.[8] Individual charters, too, might contain elements of local historical writing. The earliest presentation of the abbey of Abingdon's version of its own history appears in charters of the late tenth century.[9] In the Islamic world, biographical dictionaries were the characteristic genre dealing with the local past.

Keeping in mind these problems, I shall proceed to look at the emergence of the different types of local historical writing; at their structures; at authors, and the authors' sources, language, and style; at purpose; and at the preservation and development of the texts. I distinguish three main categories of local history, that of an ecclesiastical institution, of an aristocratic family, and of a town. These categories are not entirely discrete. Church chronicles might overlap with family chronicles, as is shown for example by the title of the chronicle of Alnwick in the north of England: *The Genealogy of the Founders and Advocates of the Abbey of*

[3] *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1969–80); and Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford, 1984). For a universal chronicle becoming increasingly local, note the case of Sibt ibn al-Jawzi; R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, rev. edn (London, 1991), 240.

[4] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2007). For Bernard Gui see Elisabeth van Houts, *Local and Regional Chronicles* (Typologies des sources du Moyen Age occidental, 74; Turnhout, 1995), 20.

[5] In this essay I use the terms 'history' and 'chronicle' in a general way; for medieval distinctions between the two, and the limits of such distinctions, see e.g. van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 13–14.

[6] See e.g. Samantha Kahn Herrick, *Imagining the Sacred Past: Hagiography and Power in Early Normandy* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007); and William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum*.

[7] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. and trans. Edmond-René Labande (Paris, 1981).

[8] See e.g. Robert F. Berkhofer, *Day of Reckoning: Power and Accountability in Medieval France* (Philadelphia, 2004); and Jean-Philippe Genet, 'Cartulaires, registres et histoire: l'exemple Anglais', in Bernard Guenée (ed.), *Le métier d'historien au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1977), 95–138.

[9] *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. and trans. John Hudson, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2002, 2007), i. pp. lxxxi–lxxxiii. For overlap of document and narrative see also e.g. Marjorie Chibnall, 'Charter and Chronicle', in Christopher Brooke, David Luscombe, Geoffrey Martin, and Dorothy Owen (eds.), *Church and Government in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1976), 1–17.

Alnwick.[10] Or a church history, especially one concerned with an episcopal see, might have strong elements of a town history.[11] Likewise town and family history could be combined, as in the case of a chronicle written in Nuremberg by Ulman Strömer in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, which concentrated to a considerable degree upon the author's family: it was his 'Little Book of my family and of adventures'.[12]

Whilst examining a wide variety of texts, I explore local histories primarily through four works: a monastic charter-chronicle in Latin from twelfth-century England, the *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis* [History of the Church of Abingdon]; an aristocratic family chronicle from early thirteenth-century northern France, again in Latin, Lambert of Ardres's *Historia comitum Ghisnensium* [History of the Counts of Guines];[13] an urban history from early fourteenth-century Florence, in Italian, by Dino Compagni; and a twelfth-century Persian version of a tenth-century Arabic urban history, *Tarikh-i Bukhara*.

DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME AND SPACE

Isolated monastic histories appear from the early sixth century. From the monasteries of Condat and Agaune in the Jura come the *Vita patrum Iurensium* [Lives of the Fathers of Jura] and the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* [Lives of the Abbots of Agaune]. In early eighth-century Northumbria Bede wrote on the lives of the abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow. Then from the first half of the ninth century we have the *Gesta* [Deeds] of the abbots of Saint-Wandrille, and thereafter monastic histories grow more common. As for episcopal histories, in Rome the *Liber Pontificalis* [Book of the Popes] emerged in the second quarter of the sixth century. Later in that century Gregory of Tours included a section on the bishops of Tours at the end of his *Historia Francorum* [History of the Franks]. Late in the eighth century Paul the Deacon wrote on the deeds of the bishops of Metz, and thereafter works on bishops multiply.[14]

[10] 'Cronica monasterii de Alnewyke', ed. W. Dickson, *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 1st ser. 3 (1844), 33–44; discussed in Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles* (London, 2004), 83–4. Note also Given-Wilson, 'Chronicles of the Mortimer Family, *c.* 1250–1450', in Richard Eales and Shaun Tyas (eds.), *Family and Dynasty in Late Medieval England* (Donington, 2003), 81–101.

[11] See e.g. the comments of Michel Sot, *Gesta episcoporum, Gesta abbatum* (Typologies des sources du Moyen Age occidental, 37; Turnhout, 1981), 46, 52.

[12] See F. R. H. Du Boulay, 'The German Town Chroniclers', in R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays presented to Richard William Southern* (Oxford, 1981), 445–69, at 449–50. Note also Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd edn (Leiden, 1968), 157–8, on Salih ibn Yahya's *History of Beirut and the Family of Buhtur.*

[13] *Lamberti Ardensis historia comitum Ghisnensium*, ed. J. Heller (*MGH Scriptores*, 24; Hanover, 1879), 550–642; and Lambert of Ardres, *The History of the Counts of Guines and Lords of Ardres*, trans. Leah Shopkow (Philadelphia, 2001). On Lambert's sense of the past and of anachronism see Jean Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past for the French Aristocracy', in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *Perceptions of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe* (London, 1992), 1–14, at 13–14.

[14] On these developments see van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 17–20; and Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*, 13–14, 16, 32–3.

Songs amounting to oral histories of aristocratic families probably long existed, but the earliest aristocratic family history below the level of kings comes from early eleventh-century Normandy, Dudo of Saint-Quentin's *Libri III de moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum* [Customs and Acts of the First Norman Dukes]. Sometimes, and particularly in the later Middle Ages, such works came to be as much histories of an area as of the ruling family.[15]

As for historical writing concerning towns, this emerges certainly from around 900 in the Islamic world; earlier works, perhaps very brief ones, may be lost.[16] In Christendom, as we have seen, there was an element of town history to some *Gesta episcoporum*.[17] Chronicles specifically focused on the town rather than the bishop appear first in Italy. The earliest deliberately started as a town chronicle concerned Genoa. Its author, Caffaro di Rustico of Caschifellone, began it in the first half of the twelfth century, completed it in 1152, and presented it to the commune of Genoa. The consuls adopted it as the official town chronicle, continued first by Caffaro himself and then by others until the last decade of the thirteenth century.[18]

No one has undertaken a complete analysis of the geographical distribution of the different forms of local history. In the Islamic world local historical writing may have been particularly characteristic of Iran.[19] With regard to Christendom, it has been suggested that *Gesta episcoporum* was a genre specific to Carolingian society, its Ottonian restoration, and the lands of these imperial families.[20] It is possible that monastic compositions combining narrative and charter were peculiarly common in England, at least in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, possibly because of the exclusion of historical elements from the charters themselves.[21] Aristocratic family chronicles appeared from the thirteenth century and after in Germany, Italy, and Hungary.[22] They are notably absent in England; when English aristocratic families needed histories as genealogical proof in court, they used monastic chronicles.[23] As we have seen, historical writing was common in Islamic towns, and it also spread rapidly in Italy. In Germany, many towns had

[15] On these developments see van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 20–4; also Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 4, on the shifting interests of the Flanders chronicle, *Flandria Generosa*, in the twelfth century.

[16] Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 152–72; Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), 139–40. Note also *History of Bukhara*, trans. Frye, xi: 'It seems that every large city in the Muslim East had one or more local histories.' For pre-Islamic local history see Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 151–2.

[17] Note also the existence of poems in praise of towns, poems that might contain a historical element; van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 25.

[18] See Chris Wickham, 'The Sense of the Past in Italian Communal Narratives', in Magdalino (ed.), *Perceptions of the Past*, 173–89, at 173.

[19] See Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, esp. 160–2.

[20] Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*, 7, and also 33–41.

[21] *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, i. pp. xvii–xviii.

[22] Van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 23.

[23] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 79–85.

chronicles in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[24] Urban chronicles were less common elsewhere in Europe. In England, London appears to have been the only town to have produced chronicles, the first of which was the *Cronica maiorum et vicecomitum Londoniarum* [Chronicle of the Mayors and Sheriffs of London], written between 1258 and 1272, most likely by Arnold fitzThedmar, the alderman of Bridgeward.[25]

STRUCTURE

The author might choose to begin with a prologue. Of my four sample texts, Lambert of Ardres and the *Tarikh-i Bukhara* have quite extensive prefatory material, Dino Compagni a very short section, the Abingdon *Historia* no prologue, or at least none that survives. A geographical description might also appear at or very close to the start of the work.[26] Such a description might be lengthy, as in the first two chapters of Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* [Deeds of the Bishops of the Church of Hamburg],[27] or brief, as in the first surviving version of the Abingdon *Historia*: 'The hill of Abingdon is situated on the north side of the river Thames, where it passes by the bridge of the town of Oxford, and from the hill the same name is bestowed on the monastery positioned not far off.'[28]

Thereafter the arrangement is normally chronological. The author had to choose a starting-point. On occasion this might stretch back to a distant past unconnected with the locality,[29] or take the form of a world chronicle.[30] Alternatively, there might be an obvious starting-point, for example the foundation of the monastic house. Elsewhere, more of a decision might be needed. A writer might look back to a memorable event of local or wider significance. Thus Caffaro began his history: 'At the time of the expedition to Caesarea [i.e. the siege of Caesarea in 1099, part of the First Crusade], just before it, in the city of the Genoese a *compagna* of three years duration and of six consuls was begun. Their names were these:. . . .' The annals of Cremona also began with the First Crusade, whilst those of Pisa looked back to the sea campaigns of the early eleventh cen-

[24] See Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers'.

[25] *De antiquis legibus liber: Cronica maiorum et vicecomitum Londoniarum*, ed. T. Stapleton (Camden Society, 34; 1846). Note also Martin Brett, 'The Annals of Bermondsey, Southwark and Merton', in David Abulafia, Michael Franklin, and Miri Rubin (eds.), *Church and City 1000–1500: Essays in Honour of Christopher Brooke* (Cambridge, 1992), 279–310; and Mary-Rose McLaren, *The London Chronicles of the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2002).

[26] See also Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 166; and Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 238.

[27] Adam von Bremen, *Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte*, ed. B. Schmeidler (*MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, 2; Hanover, 1917), 4–5; and Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. Francis J. Tschan with a new introduction and bibliography by Timothy Reuter (New York, 2002), 6–7.

[28] *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, i. 2.

[29] See e.g. ibid., i. 232.

[30] See van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 15, 28–9; and Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers', 462.

tury.[31] In Italy, at least, in the thirteenth century, some found such beginnings unsatisfactory, and looked back to myths of Trojan or Roman origins. Thus at Genoa, Jacopo Doria, last of the city's official annalists, added such a section to make up for its absence in Caffaro.[32]

The chronological arrangement need not consist of a single strand. Lambert of Ardres told the history of the counts of Guines up to the early years of Arnold II. He then went back to the mid-eleventh century to tell of the lords of Ardres into the time of Arnold IV of Ardres (1148–76), before dealing with the remaining history of the now-combined county of Guines and lordship of Ardres.[33] At St Augustine's, Canterbury, at the end of the fourteenth century, William Thorne reworked the chronicle of Thomas Sprott, one of his aims being to 'cut off sundry superfluities'. Sprott's chronicle had been in two successive chronological series, dealing first with the deeds of the monastery's abbots, then with those of archbishops of Canterbury. Thorne reworked the material into a single chronological series.[34] In other cases, the basic chronological arrangement could be interrupted. In the *Gesta* of the bishops of Cambrai, Book 1 dealt with the deeds of the bishops in chronological fashion, Book 3 with the deeds of Bishop Gerard (1012–51), but Book 2 with monasteries on a house-by-house basis.[35]

Amongst my four texts, the most diffuse is the *Tarikh-i Bukhara*. The first half to two-thirds is concerned largely with important people, buildings, and estates, their characteristics and histories. Events such as the conversion to Islam are not given particular prominence.[36] The remainder of the work is more focused on military and political affairs and here the arrangement is basically chronological.

How did the historians structure their chronologies? Some monastic works might only be concerned with the foundation of the house.[37] Others were only concerned with events of the writer's own lifetime. This was true of autobiographical works, such as those of Suger of St Denis and Henry of Blois, abbot of Glastonbury, on their administration of their churches.[38] Almost all of Dino Compagni's *Chronica* was concerned with events of his own time, and he—like some other writers—allowed himself to feature as a participant in the events.[39]

[31] Wickham, 'Italian Communal Narratives', 173, 187.

[32] Ibid., 188–9. See also e.g. Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers', 464.

[33] Note the comments of Shopkow in Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 4.

[34] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 86–7.

[35] *Gesta pontificum Cameracensium*, ed. L. C. Bethmann (*MGH Scriptores*, 7; Hanover, 1846), 393–488. Note also the descriptive final Book 4 of Adam of Bremen's *History of the Church of Hamburg*, entitled 'A Description of the Islands of the North'.

[36] *History of Bukhara*, c. 20, trans. Frye, 48; cf. other Islamic texts, on which see Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 169–70.

[37] See e.g. Elizabeth Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order: Cistercian Historical Writing in England, 1150–1250* (Turnhout, 2002), esp. 125–68.

[38] *Oeuvres Complètes de Suger*, ed. A. Lecoy de la Marche (Paris, 1865), 151–209; and *English Episcopal Acta VIII: Winchester 1070–1204*, ed. M. J. Franklin (Oxford, 1993), 202–13.

[39] See e.g. Compagni, bk. ii. c. 7, ed. Cappi, 51–2, trans. Bornstein, 38. Note also e.g. Lambert, c. 149, ed. Heller, 638, trans. Shopkow, 186.

Other works, too, such as Galbert of Bruges on the murder of Charles the Good, can be considered contemporary local history.[40] Many more local histories, however, dealt with extended periods, covering at least three office holders or lords, and stretching back to the foundation or origin of the church, family, or town concerned, and then normally on to the time of writing. In general it appears that three 'generations', be it of a family or of ecclesiastical office holders, was the shortest period such works covered, perhaps for reasons linked to the limits of unwritten memory.[41]

Family chronicles would begin with the earliest known ancestor—real or fictitious—although some writers felt compelled then to leave a gap, professing ignorance of events before more recent times.[42] Histories of churches might stretch back to the foundation, the first land grants, the earliest buildings, or even further back, to the founder's genealogy. A miracle might mark the foundation, and if the founder were a saint, the early stages of the work could amount to a saint's life.[43]

Thereafter, the history could take various forms. Some were arranged annalistically, with entries under specific years. This was the form used in the tenth century by al-Azdi for his *Ta'rikh al-Mawsil* [History of Mosul] and by Gilbert of Mons in his *Chronicon Hanoniense* [Chronicle of Hainaut].[44] The Cremona annals consist mostly of short entries for specific years, and for other years there are no entries.[45] Local entries could also be added to the text or the margins of a non-local annalistically arranged chronicle, as happened in copies of John of Worcester at Abingdon and Bury St Edmunds.[46]

The alternative to the annalistic was arrangement by office-holder or lord. Historical writing in such form might amount to little more than lists with comments. In the Islamic world al-Haytham ibn ʿAdi, who died in 822, may have produced works that were basically annotated lists of governors, judges, and commanders of various cities or areas.[47] In Christendom, there were lists of bishops

[40] *Galbertus notarius Brugensis de multro, traditione, et occisione gloriosi Karoli comitis Flandriarum*, ed. Jeff Rider (Corpus Christianorum continuatio mediaevalis, 131; Turnhout, 1994); *The Murder of Charles the Good*, trans. James Bruce Ross (New York, 1959). Note also on contemporary history the comments of Wickham, 'Italian Communal Narratives', 183; and Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers', 453. For histories written in Egypt which centre on specific events see Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 155.

[41] See e.g. Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 3. See also van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 28, on church histories.

[42] Ibid., 35.

[43] Ibid., 28–9.

[44] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 140; and *La chronique de Gislebert de Mons*, ed. L. Vanderkindere (Brussels, 1904).

[45] *Annales Cremonenses*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, (*MGH Scriptores*, 31; Hanover, 1903), 1–21. Note also e.g. Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers', 454.

[46] John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, ed. R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1995, 1998). Monastic or diocesan histories preferred the *Gesta* to the annalistic format, although see *Annales Argentinenses fratrum Predicatorum*, ed. H. Bloch (*MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, 9; Hanover, 1907), 126–33.

[47] Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 162–3; and Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 140.

and abbots accompanied by brief entries, for example at Fulda.[48] Lay genealogies might likewise on occasion incorporate brief pieces of additional information on those listed.[49]

More extensive chronicles arranged in similar fashion are often referred to as the *Gesta* or 'Deeds' of the subjects. Even when this term does not appear in the title, it is a characteristic feature of works such as the Abingdon *Historia*. The structural significance of abbacies in the earlier version of that work is also illustrated by the division between its Book 1 and Book 2 occurring not at the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 but at the coming of the first abbot from Normandy in 1071.[50] The *Gesta* form is also used for bishops, for example in Heriger of Lobbes and Anselm of Liège's history of the bishops of Liège or Adam of Bremen's work on the archbishops of Hamburg.[51] Lay histories, such as that of Lambert of Ardres, were structured in similar fashion, dealing with the deeds of each lord, although necessarily sometimes also moving on to other matters.[52] The last stages of the *Tarikh-i Bukhara* are structured around the rule of particular *amirs*.[53] Secular office-holding could also be used to structure time even when the history was not presented as primarily the deeds of those office-holders. Thus Caffaro's history of Genoa used consulships as reference points for chronology.[54]

The biographical approach to local history is also clear in another genre in the Islamic world, that of the biographical dictionary. Such biographical dictionaries were compiled for various purposes, notably to authenticate the standing of those responsible for the transmission of traditions, particularly religious traditions. They could cover various types of group, including the city. Thus it has been estimated that the thirteenth-century history of Aleppo may have consisted of as many as 8,000 folios and included as many as 8,000 biographical

[48] *Catalogus abbatum Fuldensium*, ed. G. Waitz (*MGH Scriptores*, 13; Hanover, 1881), 272–4. See also Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*, 15, 23.

[49] See e.g. *Genealogiae comitum Flandriae*, ed. L. C. Bethmann (*MGH Scriptores*, 9; Hanover, 1851), 302–4. Note also Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 3–4. See generally L. Genicot, *Les Généalogies* (Typologies des sources du Moyen Age occidental, 15; Turnhout, 1975).

[50] *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, ii. 2. The revised version of the *Historia* placed the division between its Books 2 and 3 at 1066, although with some confusion; *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, i. pp. lxix, 370. Another Abingdon text from the twelfth century, commonly referred to as *De abbatibus*, also uses abbacies to provide its basic structure, at least from the time of Æthelwold; *Chronicon monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. J. Stevenson, 2 vols. (London, 1858), ii. 268–95. For histories in the form of *Gesta abbatum* elsewhere see e.g. Sigebert of Gembloux, *Gesta abbatum Gemblacensium*, ed. G. H. Pertz (*MGH Scriptores*, 8; Hanover, 1848), 523–42.

[51] For Liège see *Gesta episcoporum Tungrensium, Traiectensium et Leodiensium*, ed. R. Koepke (*MGH Scriptores*, 7; Hanover, 1846), 134–234. William of Malmesbury's *Gesta pontificum* was structured in this way within his treatment of each diocese.

[52] See also e.g. *Chronica de gestis consulum Andegavorum*, in *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou et des seigneurs d'Amboise*, ed. L. Halphen and R. Poupardin (Paris, 1913), 25–73; and van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 36.

[53] *History of Bukhara*, cc. 30–7, ed. Frye, 77–100.

[54] See Wickham, 'Italian Communal Narratives', 174–6, for Caffaro's history being peculiarly early in its use of consulships. Note also regular references to office-holders in the *Cronica maiorum et vicecomitum Londoniarum*, ed. Stapleton.

notices.[55] A particularly large and noteworthy example is Ibn ʿAsakir's compilation concerning Damascus.[56]

A further element in the construction of local histories, in particular those concerned with churches, was the inclusion of documents. Amongst my selected texts, the Abingdon *Historia* takes this form, and other examples can be found from England to Poland.[57] Such charter chronicles might be seen as forming a sub-genre of the *Gesta abbatum* and *Gesta episcoporum* tradition, although even within charter chronicles there was considerable variety, for example in the relative amount of document and narrative and also in the degree to which other elements, for example the miraculous, were included.[58]

AUTHORS

Authors of the works normally were resident in the places concerned. Many writers of church histories were anonymous, providing a record of the community of which they were members. The composer and the reviser of the Abingdon *Historia* are both anonymous, although the former can probably be identified as having had a connection to the sacristy.[59] Others, however, we know by name, including some who were or became head of the monasteries concerned.[60] These included the autobiographers, notably Suger and Henry of Blois, already mentioned. A few writers were women, for example Hrosvitha, who composed a verse chronicle concerning Gandersheim.[61] Occasionally we know of writers being brought in from elsewhere to compile a monastic history, as William of Malmesbury did for Glastonbury.[62]

Some dynastic histories were written by laymen, some by clerics or monks.[63] Amongst the works of the former, the chronicle of the counts of Anjou by Fulk le Réchin is notable for being by one of the lords themselves.[64] Lambert, author

[55] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 68, and, more generally, 68–72, 140; and Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 150–72.

[56] Humphrey, *Islamic History*, 238.

[57] For Poland see Piotr Górecki, *A Local Society in Transition: The Henryków Book and Related Documents* (Studies and Texts, 155; Toronto, 2007). See also e.g. *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Bertin*, ed. B. E. C. Guérard (Paris, 1841); and *Historia Compostellana*, ed. Emma Falque Rey (Corpus Christianorum continuatio mediaevalis 70; Turnhout, 1988). Note Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*, 20–1.

[58] See John Hudson, 'The Abbey of Abingdon, its *Chronicle* and the Norman Conquest', *Anglo-Norman Studies,* 19 (1997), 181–202, at 185–7.

[59] *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, i. pp. xv–xvii, xxxviii.

[60] e.g. for named authors of late medieval English monastic histories see Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 84. Adam of Bremen is an example of an author of a *Gesta episcoporum* whose name is known. See further van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 31.

[61] Ibid.

[62] John Scott, *The Early History of Glastonbury* (Woodbridge, 1981).

[63] See van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 39–40.

[64] See *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou*, ed. Halphen and Poupardin.

of the *Historia comitum Ghisnensium* [History of the Counts of Guines], was chaplain of Ardres, and may have had some sort of kinship to the lords of Ardres. The style of his work suggests that he was extensively educated in one of the major twelfth-century schools.[65] Town chroniclers too might be clerics or laymen. In twelfth-century Milan, for example, there was a shift from clerical to lay authorship.[66] Elsewhere, mendicant clergy, town scribes, and notaries feature amongst historical writers. A further group were leading urban laymen and officials, for example Arnold fitzThedmar in London, Caffaro in Genoa, and Dino Compagni in Florence. He was a prosperous merchant, who served several terms as consul and held other important posts in the city.[67]

It is difficult to tell what initiated the writing of a local history. It may, for example, be that in twelfth-century England the composition of charter-chronicles arose from one church copying another, with an awareness of the text's utility. It has also been suggested that large-scale political disruption may have inspired historical writing as a form of record keeping, although establishing strict chronological links is in fact difficult.[68] More important, indeed, may have been internal strife within churches. Elsewhere, production of a history may have been intended to commemorate or celebrate a special occasion or event, or at least may have been stimulated by such an event. Urban II's visit to Anjou and his call for a crusade seem to have led to Count Fulk writing his *Historia* [History].[69] The Berne chronicle was initiated by the town council following the victory of the Aargaus in 1418.[70]

SOURCES

Authors wrote from a variety of sources. All my four examples drew on their personal knowledge and experience. They also used what might be called archaeological and architectural sources that they themselves had seen, for example buildings and tombs. Writers also had oral information, from tradition, old men, travellers, and others. Some writers gave the names, or lists of names, of their informants, and made general justifications of oral testimony.[71] Others stressed the authority and standing of their informants. This is particularly emphasized by Lambert of Ardres, who presents the section of his *Historia* concerning the

[65] See the comments of Shopkow in Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 2–3.

[66] See the comments of Wickham, 'Italian Communal Narratives', 181. Note also Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers', 446.

[67] See van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 47–8; Compagni, trans. Bornstein, pp. xx–xxi.

[68] For the suggestion see Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (London, 1974), 269.

[69] *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou*, ed. Halphen and Poupardin, 237–8.

[70] Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers', 466.

[71] See Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*, 26–7; and van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 41.

lords of Ardres as being recounted to an audience by Walter of Le Clud: 'He put his right hand to his beard and combed and carded it with his fingers as old men often do; he opened his mouth in our midst, before me and all who were listening to this very thing, and said:…'.[72] Likewise Adam of Bremen supported his account of Sweden and Norway with the words 'About these kingdoms the very knowledgeable [*scientissimus*] king of the Danes [Swein Estrithson] told me that Norway can hardly be crossed in the course of a month, and Sweden is not easily traversed in two months. "I myself found this out," he said, "when a while ago I fought for twelve years in those regions under King James." '[73]

In addition, writers drew on written sources.[74] Often these were chronicles or other historical texts such as genealogies or lists concerning the same church, town, or family.[75] Thus at St Albans, for his *Gesta abbatum* Matthew Paris in the thirteenth century drew on and at least to some extent rewrote a now lost 'ancient roll', associated with the mid-twelfth-century cellarer named Adam. Matthew's work was continued into the early fourteenth century by another monk, and then taken up by Thomas Walsingham.[76] Modification of earlier sources is also indicated by the translator of the *Tarikh-i Bukhara* into Persian: 'Whenever unimportant items were mentioned in the Arabic manuscript, by the reading of which the temper became more fatigued, an account of such things was not made.'[77]

Other types of text were also used, to varying degrees by different writers. Urban chroniclers might employ town diaries and the German *Stadtbucher* ('town books').[78] Hagiographies might be used, as might literary texts and histories of areas beyond the locality.[79] Elements from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* [History of the Kings of Britain] were incorporated into the *Gesta* of the lords of Amboise,[80] and also into the revised version of the Abingdon *Historia*. Indeed, a comparison of the original and revised versions of the Abingdon *Historia* usefully shows the varying degree to which writers drew on diverse texts. The reviser, but not the original compiler, drew passages from, for example, Geoffrey, Bede, Wulfstan of Winchester's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* [Life of St Æthelwold], and a *Passio* and *Vita* of Edward the martyr.[81]

[72] Lambert, c. 96, ed. Heller, 607, trans. Shopkow, 130.

[73] Adam of Bremen, bk. iv. c. 21, ed. Schmeidler, 250, trans. Tschan, 202.

[74] See Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers', 468, on Sigmund Meisterlin travelling widely to conduct his researches.

[75] For lists and genealogies see e.g. Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 4.

[76] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 86. Some of the legal language used by Matthew regarding the twelfth century indicates his rewriting of the 'ancient roll'.

[77] *History of Bukhara*, c. 1, trans. Frye, 4. See also *History of Bukhara*, pp. xii–xiii for other sources used by Narshakhi. Note further Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 154, on al-Azdi's *Ta'rikh al-Mawsil* involving the collection of material from various books.

[78] See van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 49.

[79] See Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*, 18, 28–9.

[80] Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 9.

[81] *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, i. pp. xli–xlii.

The reviser of the Abingdon *Historia* also added yet more charters to the original version.[82] Such inclusion of documents, as previously mentioned, was not infrequent in ecclesiastical histories, which might also incorporate letters or the records of councils.[83] Other types of chronicle too could include documents. Lambert included two privileges for the church of Ardres,[84] whilst the *Tarikh-i Bukhara* used a boundary clause from a record.[85] Other histories mention documents in the possession of the writer, but do not include them in the text.[86] Writers might also conduct research into documents, and come up with their own historical conclusions. The Abingdon text known as *De abbatibus* [Concerning the Abbots] includes a certain Ealhhard amongst the ninth-century abbots of the house. No other source mentions this abbot, although an Abbot Ealhhard of an unspecified abbey witnesses a charter preserved at Abingdon. The author of *De abbatibus* may have drawn on the charter and thus invented an abbot of his own house.[87] Such interpretative research leads us to a final source for the local historical writers, their own imaginations.[88]

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Early medieval local histories were written in Latin, but from the twelfth century Latin and vernacular local historiography co-existed.[89] So too did Arabic and Persian historiography in the Islamic world. In the first chapter of the *Tarikh-i Bukhara*, it was stated that 'this book was written in Arabic in an elegant style during the months of the year 332/943. Since most people do not show a desire to read an Arabic book, friends of mine requested me to translate the book into Persian.'[90]

The degree of elaboration of style varied between writers. Lambert of Ardres's Latin could be highly sophisticated, both in its form and in its range of allusion.[91] Amongst English charter-chronicles, the complexity of the Latin of *Liber Eliensis*

[82] *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, i. pp. xliv–xlviii.

[83] See Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*, 49. On the inclusion of forged documents see ibid., 28, 49–50.

[84] Lambert, cc. 116, 137, ed. Heller, 617–18, 631, trans. Shopkow, 148–9, 173–4.

[85] *History of Bukhara*, c. 23, trans. Frye, 54.

[86] See e.g. Compagni, bk. ii. c. 7, ed. Cappi, 51–2, trans. Bornstein, 38. Note also the absence of texts of documents in the *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. and trans. Eleanor Searle (Oxford, 1980), compared with otherwise somewhat similar English monastic chronicles.

[87] *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, i. p. xciv; note also ibid., i. p. xci for the problem posed by another charter that has a boundary clause mentioning an 'Abbendun' not at the position of the present monastery.

[88] Note also van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 35–6.

[89] See ibid. The local elements of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* could be seen as a partial exception.

[90] *History of Bukhara*, c. 1, trans. Frye, 3.

[91] See the comments of Shopkow, Lambert of Ardres, *History*, 2–9; for an example see Lambert, Prologue, ed. Heller, 558. Note also the comments of Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 10, on the style of Thomas of Loches's *Gesta consulum Andegavorum*.

[Book of Ely] contrasts with the more straightforward style of the first version of the Abingdon *Historia*. Indeed, the reviser of the *Historia* clearly considered the style of the original too plain, and sought to elaborate it.[92]

Various narrative and other devices could be used to involve the reader or listener. All my examples used at least snippets of direct speech. Thus the *Tarikh-i Bukhara* writes of a village where the palace had been destroyed, 'Amir Ismā'īl Sāmānī convoked the people of that village and said, "I shall give 20,000 *dirhams* and wood, and shall take care of the rebuilding of it. Part of the building is standing. You make a grand mosque out of this palace." "[93] Longer speeches were also composed, sometimes with considerable classical allusion, as in Lambert of Ardres.[94] Authors might address one of the participants, as when Dino Compagni wrote: 'O messr Donato, how fortune turned against you! First they captured your son, whom you ransomed for three thousand lire, and then they decapitated you.'[95] Moral lessons could be drawn, and the order of the narrative manipulated, through other devices, such as the inclusion of dreams.[96]

PURPOSE

What, then, was the purpose of the local histories? We have only limited indications of the intended audience for them, or of how they were read.[97] One obvious intended audience was the patron. Lambert of Ardres wrote at least in part in order to 'recover the love and grace' of his patron, Arnold of Guines.[98] However, it is less clear how fully and with what attention patrons read or listened to the work. Certainly works could be read out in abridgement, as is explicitly stated at the start of the *Tarikh-i Bukhara*,[99] whilst histories written in Latin may have been adapted into vernacular oral versions for the laity.[100] Meanwhile we also know that al-Khatib al-Baghdadi lectured in Baghdad from his own written work.[101]

Titles may give some sense of the author's purpose. In late medieval England, Thomas of Burton entitled his work: 'The chronicle of the monastery of Meaux;

[92] *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E. O. Blake (Camden Society, 3rd ser., 92; 1962); *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, i. pp. xxxiii–xxxvii, liii–lv.

[93] *History of Bukhara*, c. 4, trans. Frye, 17.

[94] See e.g. Lambert, c. 18, ed. Heller, 571, trans. Shopkow, 66.

[95] Compagni, bk. ii. c. 31, ed. Cappi, 81, trans. Bornstein, 58.

[96] See e.g. *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, i. 358–60, ii. 328–30. On moral reflections and exemplary stories in Islamic local histories see e.g. Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 157, on Ibn Sasra's work based in Damascus.

[97] Note Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers', 461, on Jakob Twinger writing for educated laymen.

[98] Lambert, Prologue, c. 149, ed. Heller, 557, 638, trans. Shopkow, 43, 186.

[99] *History of Bukhara*, c. 1, trans. Frye, 4.

[100] See van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 51.

[101] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 109.

concerning its foundation and growth, the gains, losses and enfeoffments of tenements belonging to it, the pleas, proceedings, charges and other things relating to it; set out in accordance with the order and the times of each of the abbots who successively and in turn ruled over it.'[102] When examining titles, however, it must be remembered that they might vary between manuscripts, and need not have been the author's own. In contrast, the 'Prologue' or 'Preface' would be the author's and hence is significant, despite the tendency to include certain *topoi*. Lambert of Ardres makes various quite common points:

> I remember that all things under heaven are fleeting and transitory in time, unless they are set down in letters. . . . And I remember that the memorable names and deeds of noteworthy and illustrious men, namely of the counts of Guines and no less the lords of Ardres, are almost completely entirely effaced—for shame!—from common memory, because of the feeble envy (or perhaps negligence) of writers. And so I have undertaken, to the degree that I am able and am made knowledgeable by truthful narrative testimony, to commemorate and write what is glorious, honourable and necessary to the praise and glory of these noble men and their memorable successors, and no less our contemporaries, and above all else of you, most loving prince and lord, Arnold of Guines, for whom I labour.

He then closes by stating that 'I will insert in the proper place and time material concerning the foundation of the churches, both those of Guines and those of the surrounding region'.[103]

Further indications of the purpose of the texts come from their themes and contents. Part of the motivation of author and reader must have been simple local and what might be called antiquarian interest. This manifests itself, for example, in Lambert of Ardres in explanations of place names and in descriptions of buildings.[104] He described building at the castle of Ardres, concluding that

> I have reminded you, fathers and lords, of these things concerning this house which you see and in which you live, not so much for you as for those from elsewhere who stay here with us. It is no wonder that guests and outsiders do not know all the rooms of this house, since many who have been raised from infancy and brought to man's estate in this house cannot know and comprehend the number of doors, gates, little entries, and windows.[105]

Pride and the need to explain here combine to demand a description. In other contexts such details may have been recorded to preserve or provide information for pilgrims.[106]

[102] *Chronica monasterii de Melsa*, ed. E. A. Bond, 3 vols. (London, 1866–8), i. 1.

[103] Lambert, Preface, ed. Heller, 559, trans. Shopkow, 47–8. See also e.g. Compagni, Proemio, bk. i. c. 1, ed. Cappi, 3–4, trans. Bornstein, 3, 5.

[104] For place and building names see e.g. Lambert, cc. 57, 83, ed. Heller, 589–90, 599, trans. Shopkow, 98, 116. On chroniclers writing simply for their own satisfaction see also e.g. Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers', 459–61.

[105] Lambert, c. 127, ed. Heller, 624, trans. Shopkow, 161.

[106] Note e.g. Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 164–6.

In addition, like other forms of medieval historical writing, local chronicles show the workings and interventions of God.[107] Indications of divine favour can be one way of legitimizing and glorifying the subject of the history, and such legitimization and glorification are further key purposes of the texts. This is apparent, for example, in their descriptions of the origins of their subject, origins which may be described in supernatural or much more practical terms.[108] In the introduction to the *Ta'rikh Jurjan* [History of Jurjan], the author makes three vital points: the Prophet had settled in Jurjan; the etymology of the name went back to a descendant of Noah called Jurdan; Jurjan was conquered by the great caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khattab.[109] Italian towns might emphasize that they were older than Rome, for example by providing a link to Troy.[110] Some bishoprics sought apostolic origins, other bishoprics and monasteries royal ones.[111] Immediately after mentioning the geographical location, the first version of the Abingdon *Historia* states that

> we have learnt from a record of bygone events which man of old was the original founder of this monastery: that Cissa king of the West Saxons gave the site for the monastery to be built for the worship of almighty God to a certain Hæha, a man of the religious life and abbot, and also to his sister, named Cilla, and that very many endowments and possessions were conferred by royal gift for this purpose, for the necessities of life of those living therein.

Family histories sought prestigious ancestors, with Lambert emphasizing the importance of a Dane with the significant name 'Sifridus' or Siegfried.[112] Wagnerian resonances are also present in his mention of the forebear of the lords of Boulogne who was 'led to Boulogne in a heavenly manner by a real divine swan (not by some phantasmagorical one)'.[113]

Other aspects besides origins could be a matter of pride displayed in the histories.[114] The fourteenth-century Florentine banker and chronicler Giovanni Villani used statistics to illustrate his city's wealth.[115] More widespread were interests in buildings, both secular and religious. Lambert described the great earthwork with which Arnold of Guines enclosed Ardres, 'as strong as the earthwork at Saint-Omer, such as hands had never undertaken nor eyes seen before in Guines'.[116]

[107] See e.g. Compagni, bk iii. cc. 1, 12, 37, ed. Cappi, 87, 104, 142, trans. Bornstein, 63, 75, 98.
[108] For the latter see e.g. *History of Bukhara*, c. 2, trans. Frye, 6.
[109] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 141; Jurjan was an area and city in north-east Iran.
[110] See van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 45–6.
[111] See e.g. Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*, 16–17, 34–5.
[112] Lambert, cc. 7–11, ed. Heller, 566–8, trans. Shopkow, 58–61; note the comments of Shopkow, 26, Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 7.
[113] Lambert, c. 16, ed. Heller, 570, trans Shopkow, 65; see the comments of e.g. Shopkow, 217 n. 72, Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 12.
[114] Note also Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 150, on local pride.
[115] Van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 46.
[116] Lambert, c. 152, ed. Heller, 640, trans. Shopkow, 190–1. See also e.g. Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 8 on the *Gesta* of the lords of Amboise.

Lambert also mentioned the building of churches, the *Tarikh-i Bukhara* the building of Mosques.[117]

All writers emphasized distinguished men of the past. Family histories stressed exploits in war, monastic ones the piety of abbots. The *Tarikh-i Bukhara* records the glory arising from Khwaja Imam Abu Hafs, the great:

> There was no other person like him in the district. He was one of the honoured teachers of Bukhara. He was an ascetic as well as a man of knowledge. Because of him Bukhara became the 'Dome of Islam'. That was because the people of Bukhara were educated, knowledge was diffused there, and the imams and wise men were honoured.[118]

Local biographical dictionaries included distinguished scholars; the orthodoxy of their learning and the links of that learning to the Prophet could in turn help to legitimize the local regime.[119]

Such distinguished men provided moral *exempla* for those who read or heard histories.[120] The *Tarikh-i Bukhara*'s second chapter concerns judges in the town, and states of Sa'id ibn Khalaf al-Balkhi that 'he fulfilled the function of a judge in such a manner that he was set up as an example of impartiality, justice, and kindness to the people of God the Exalted. He established good laws with impartiality and justice, so that the strong could not tyrannise the weak.'[121] Ill times and evil people could also provide instruction, as is particularly clear in Dino Compagni's *Chronica*, with its condemnation of faction and ill faith.[122]

In church histories a further reason for the recording of men of earlier times was to help ensure their liturgical commemoration. One title given to the twelfth-century history from Ramsey Abbey in England was the *Liber benefactorum*, the 'Book of Patrons'.[123] The fifteenth-century Worksop Priory history took care to record where patrons were buried.[124] Meanwhile family chronicles preserved a mass of genealogical material partly as a matter of celebration, perhaps as a way of preventing marriages within the prohibited degrees, possibly to help advertise their attractiveness in potential marriage alliances.[125]

Histories, particularly monastic histories, could act as legal records. As we have seen, some chronicles included large numbers of documents concerning the rights of the house. Hariulf of Saint-Riquier, for example, said that he included

[117] See e.g. Lambert, c. 30, ed. Heller, 576–7, trans. Shopkow, 76; and *History of Bukhara*, cc. 4, 21, trans. Frye, 14–15, 48–52.

[118] *History of Bukhara*, c. 23, trans. Frye, 56. See also Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 166.

[119] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 141–2; and Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, 166.

[120] Note also Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 7, on the pedagogy of Thomas of Loches in his *Gesta* of the counts of Anjou. See e.g. *History of Bukhara*, c. 23, trans. Frye, 55, for a story with a clear moral.

[121] *History of Bukhara*, c. 2, trans. Frye, 5.

[122] For condemnation of bad men see also e.g. Lambert, c. 18, ed. Heller, 571, trans. Shopkow, 66.

[123] *Chronicon abbatiæ Rameseiensis*, ed. W. D. Macray (London, 1886), 3.

[124] See Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 81–2.

[125] See Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 3. For large amounts of genealogical material see e.g. Lambert, cc. 48, 133, ed. Heller, 584–5, 627–8, trans. Shopkow, 90, 167.

copies of documents in case the originals were destroyed.[126] Even a chronicle that did not include many documents but recounted disputes could be intended as a legal record on an issue such as exemption from episcopal jurisdiction.[127]

In all these ways histories sought to explain, strengthen, and legitimize their subjects. Problematic successions or changes in dynastic relations could be presented in particularly amicable fashion. Take Lambert on the establishment of good relations between the counts of Guines and the lords of Ardres:

> the lord count tempered the dignity of his lordship towards the man subject to him, and the man, not pursuing his old rebellion against the counts of Guines, did not disdain to show his lord, his prince and count, respect and the submissive service he owed everywhere and at all times. . . . Nor was there any difference in dignity between them in all of Guines, except that one was called count and the other lord. But although outside the territory the count was very frequently called simply a lord, through the integrity of his name and in honour of his dignity, he maintained that he had always been, was said to be, and truly was a count.[128]

As the last sentence of this passage hints, the historians may often have been writing to counter the claims of others.[129] At Abingdon it is even possible that competitive historical writing was taking place, with the *De abbatibus* taking a more abbatial point of view, the *Historia* a more conventual one.[130]

PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Because of their specific interest, local histories tend to be preserved in only a small number of manuscripts.[131] The earliest for Lambert's *Historia* comes from the fifteenth century and is the basis for all other copies. The Abingdon *Historia* may survive in the original fair copy, but only one further manuscript, of a revised version, survives.[132] Others, such as the *Gesta* of the counts of Anjou, were rather more frequently copied.[133]

[126] Hariulf, *Chronique de l'abbaye de Saint-Riquier*, ed. F. Lot (Paris, 1894), 2. See also Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*, 27–8.

[127] For the case of Battle Abbey and the bishops of Chichester see *Battle Chronicle*, ed. Searle, esp. 146–210; and Nicholas Vincent, 'King Henry II and the Monks of Battle: The Battle Chronicle Unmasked', in Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (eds.), *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting* (Oxford, 2001), 264–86.

[128] Lambert, c. 70, ed. Heller, 595, trans. Shopkow, 108. See also e.g. van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 23–4, on historians and the succession to the duchy of Bavaria.

[129] A point especially clear in e.g. Lambert, cc. 4, 15, 101, 139, ed. Heller, 565, 569, 610, 632, trans. Shopkow, 56, 63, 135–6, 176.

[130] See *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, ii. pp. xxii–xxiii. On internal conflict and historical writing see also e.g. Du Boulay, 'German Town Chroniclers', 456–8.

[131] See also van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 54–5. See ibid., 56, for the manuscript context in which the histories survive.

[132] Lambert, trans. Shopkow, 34; *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, i. pp. xv, xxxvii. See also Compagni, trans. Bornstein, p. xxvii, *History of Bukhara*, trans. Frye, pp. xi, xiv–xvii.

[133] Van Houts, *Local Chronicles*, 55–6.

Many local histories were continued or revised. Their subject matter made this desirable, their format—whether annals or *Gesta*—rendered it easy. Town and church chronicles were generally continued or revised at the same location, but for family chronicles this was not necessarily the case, in part because their geographical focus might be less specific.[134] Revision might occur for various reasons, for example to bring the text up to date, to modify its description of earlier events in the light of recent developments, or to improve the literary quality of the text. In addition, recomposition might be inspired by the acquisition of additional information. Thomas of Loches, reviser of the *Gesta* of the counts of Anjou, had a genealogy of the counts which Fulk le Réchin had not possessed.[135] And oral evidence brought to Abingdon caused reconsideration not only of the origin of the place name but also of the identity of the monastery's founder. The revised version of the *Historia* gives a new account of the foundation:

> At that time there was a devout monk named Abben, who came to Britain from Ireland and in accordance with the faith preached the word of God, as the Holy Spirit used to give him eloquence. After some time passed, moreover, this man came to the court of the most distinguished king of the Britons, where he was received in praiseworthy fashion and magnificently honoured by everyone, and he became so privileged in the king's love that the latter rejoiced that he had discovered in Abben another Joseph. Furthermore, in response to his prayers, that Abben obtained from the king of the Britons most of the region of Berkshire, within which, by the consent of the king and the counsel of the kingdom, he happily founded a monastery on which he conferred the name Abingdon, alluding either to his own name or that of the place. For we have learnt from our contemporaries that, according to the language of the Irish, Abingdon is interpreted 'house of Aben'; but according to the language of the English, Abingdon commonly means 'the hill of Aben'.[136]

For once we can discover how a new foundation story, in this case with its distinctive Irish elements, came to a monastery. In 1180 the archbishop of Dublin, Lawrence O'Toole, stayed at Abingdon for three weeks. One of Lawrence's followers, perhaps with him at Abingdon, was Albinus O'Mulloy. Albinus may be identifiable with the author of the *Vita* of Abbán, which refers to that saint coming to Abingdon. So Lawrence's visit may well have been the occasion when the story of Abben reached Abingdon and set in motion the revision of its foundation history.[137] We thus end with a very pertinent reminder that local history in the Middle Ages was not just a matter of writing but also of no doubt very lively conversation.

[134] See van Houts, *Local Chronicles,* 53–4; and Sot, *Gesta episcoporum*, 50–2.
[135] Dunbabin, 'Discovering a Past', 7.
[136] *Historia ecclesie Abbendonensis*, ed. Hudson, i. 234.
[137] Ibid., i. p. xliii.

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Chapter 23

Institutional Histories

Peter Lorge

The writing of institutional history proceeded along markedly different tracks in Europe and China, primarily because the men writing those histories and the institutions they were concerned with were so very different. Where in medieval Europe most educated men were religious professionals, who involved themselves in royal or aristocratic court governments because of their class and education, in China in the same period most educated men pursued learning in order to work for the central, imperial government. Moreover, Chinese levels of education were considerably higher than in Europe or anywhere else in the world, both in literacy and numeracy, yielding an imperial bureaucracy that communicated with itself and its ruler in a highly systematic and nuanced manner. The governments of the Tang dynasty (618–907) and the Song dynasty (960–1279) had tens of thousands of officials, not to mention the even greater number of clerks, who operated in a formal hierarchy connected by a continuous flow of documents. Governments outside of China were far smaller, less coherent, less continuous, and less literate. Even within the Catholic Church, or related institutions such as monasteries, the level of literacy was usually quite low, and the understanding of formal institutional structure limited.

Chinese institutional history-writing was also directly linked to a strong political agenda for both the Tang and Song dynasties. It is not coincidental that a history focused exclusively on institutions first appeared in the ninth century, and that the next most important history of institutions was written in the fourteenth century. In both cases, the authors sought to affirm the legitimacy of the Tang and Song dynasties, respectively, in the aftermath of cataclysmic military and political disasters. Institutional histories by their very definition allowed the author to place all changes into a narrative of natural evolution in response to new circumstances. Military and political events were thus subsumed within the biography of an institution rather than endangering and undermining its legitimacy. The institution survived because it was legitimate, even if it changed in some minor ways.

Almost every change became minor when placed in an encyclopedic work covering centuries or millennia of development. In the Chinese case, the rise and

fall of dynasties marked the greatest changes, consigning even major events within a dynasty to the second tier. The sheer scope and depth of Chinese institutional histories smoothed out any problematic issues of political legitimacy. Size also allowed for the simplification of history and the exclusion of unwanted polities that challenged the author's political argument. Only important dynasties and their institutions were included; the illegitimate and barbarian institutions were excluded.

European historians in the Middle Ages did not have as secure a grasp of these historical functions, but the power of a history of an abstract institution existed nonetheless. Institutional history-writing thus first appeared in the Catholic Church. The Church, unlike the many aristocratic and royal courts, could not claim a simple bloodline descent for the legitimacy of its head (despite certain families who repeatedly supplied popes). This lack of real bloodline allowed the institution to endure the vagaries of marriage and birth that endangered or extinguished so many lineages. Yet without a physical connection to a legitimate founder, an argument had to be made for the abstract existence of the Church outside of mortal birth and death. It is ironic then that the form of institutional history first created for the Church emphasized the lives of the popes. Ironic, but a reasonable balance between the medieval European concept of personal rule and legitimate descent. The act of presenting a list of men, all legitimate, who ruled the Church in succession affirmed the correctness of this system of rule and the existence of the Church outside of bloodline.

Very little that could be called institutional history existed in the rest of the world during this period. In the Middle East there were some histories of urban centres. It is unclear, however, whether a city should be considered as an institution, in the sense of an abstract organization, or whether it is, in fact, a concrete artefact. Similarly, the history of a specific, individual church or religious site is fundamentally more about the changes in a site over time than it is of the institutions. By excluding these sorts of records and histories I am narrowing the focus of my concept of institutional history to the chronological description of the functions and administration of an organization. My goal is to emphasize the abstract historiographical process and intentions of historicizing an abstract administrative form: the institution. This inadvertently limits the consideration that follows to China and Europe, but I believe it is still a useful exercise.

A comparison between Chinese and European institutional history-writing is useful because it emphasizes the political value of this form of history. Church institutional history stands somewhere between a purely temporal and a purely religious administration narrative. In this respect it has some resemblance to imperial Chinese government, which also claimed a higher sanction: the Mandate of Heaven. This should not be taken too far, however, as the very different levels of historiographic sophistication between Europe and China render any detailed discussion pointless. Chinese historians were far in advance in every area of history-writing than their few counterparts in medieval Europe. Accordingly, I have

separated out the focused discussion of European medieval institutional writing from that of the Chinese materials, while drawing some connections within all the sections.

In the first section that follows, I describe the various kinds of Chinese institutional history texts, particularly the first history produced in 801. I then turn to the European materials, followed by a discussion of the effects of Chinese history between the tenth and fourteenth centuries. This includes several specific examples of how certain events were written about. Some of the examples involve military matters. This was done to counteract the general view that Chinese culture and history, particularly institutional history, is solely concerned with civil affairs.

THE BIRTH OF INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

Chinese history-writing was usually done by government officials, whether as part of their duties or privately, and Chinese historians have always maintained a consistent interest in government institutions. It is only in modern times, particularly with the establishment of Western-style universities, that the historical profession has become separated from government and the historian divorced from bureaucratic concerns. But Chinese historians were not just interested in institutions in their own times, they were fascinated by the different forms that institutions had taken in previous times, and in the ways that those institutions had changed over the ages. This interest stemmed in part from an intellectual tradition that looked to the past for the most perfect institutions of government. Confucius was profoundly concerned about the form that government had taken under the sage kings of antiquity. Many other early thinkers also focused on the question of how a government should best be organized and run. Institutions and systems have therefore always been a central concern of educated Chinese.

Although the greatest early Chinese historian, Sima Qian, included a section in his *Shiji* [Records of the Scribe] on institutions, a practice that would carry through all official history-writing for the succeeding two millennia, the separate writing of institutional history began with Du You in his *Tongdian* [Comprehensive Institutions] of 801, and was continued by Zheng Qiao with the *Tongzhi* [Comprehensive History of Institutions] in 1149, and then by Ma Duanlin in the *Wenxian tongkao* [Comprehensive Investigations of Records and Documents] in 1319.[1] Zheng Qiao recapitulated the data in Du You's

[1] Ma Duanlin's memorial accompanying the submission of the *Wenxian tongkao* to the throne is dated April/May of 1319. Endymion Wilkinson's footnote giving the date of the *Wenxian tongkao* as 1224 is clearly a typographical error. See Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 524 n. 5. See Thomas Lee's heroic attempt to make something interesting out of Zheng Qiao in Thomas H. C. Lee, 'History, Erudition and Good Government: Cheng Ch'iao and the Encyclopedic Historical Thinking', in Lee (ed.), *The New and the Multiple* (Hong Kong, 2003), 163–200.

work, adding little to institutional history, leaving us to focus on Du and Ma Duanlin. A separate form of institutional history compiled in this same period was the *huiyao*, a collection of government documents arranged to delineate the development of a particular dynasty's administrative system.[2] Wang Pu compiled the *Tang huiyao* [Tang Essential Documents] as well as the *Wudai huiyao* [Essential Documents of the Five Dynasties]. The *Song huiyao* [Song Essential Documents] was reconstructed in the nineteenth century, and in its extant form is thus attributed to Xu Song and entitled *Song huiyao jigao* [Collection of Song Essential Documents].[3] These three texts contain a wealth of documentary evidence no longer extant in archives or other texts, and form one of the most primary of sources for all history in this period, not just institutions.

As is widely known, history-writing was a basic function of imperial Chinese governments. Not only was the emperor accompanied by two officials responsible for writing down all that was said in the imperial presence, and all that was done, but court officials kept court diaries which were regularly submitted to the history bureau.[4] A first draft of history was created out of these daily records, and would form the basis of a future dynastic history that the succeeding dynasty would write. Writing the official history of the dynasty one had just overthrown was a way of proving ones' own dynasty's legitimacy. First, it showed that you had captured the government seat of the defeated dynasty and all the records collected there. Second, it demonstrated that you were a civilized and proper dynasty in the Chinese tradition. History-writing was a basic part of political and cultural legitimacy.

Yet there was also a very practical reason that Chinese governments kept such extensive administrative and historical records. It would have been virtually impossible to run the vast bureaucracies and territories of China without large-scale record keeping. Where European governments were run by barely literate and barely numerate officials, Chinese governments were run by extensively educated men, who often specialized in particular areas of administration, such as finance.[5] Every decision was recorded and kept available for future scrutiny. This was not simply a matter of careful attention to the precedents established by earlier emperors within a dynasty, records allowed for the efficient and consistent administration of policy. Simply put, records were part of the mechanism of

[2] The first *huiyao* was compiled by the brothers Su Bian and Su Mian in 803, but is no longer extant. See Denis Twitchett, *The Historian, His Readers, and The Passage of Time* (Taibei, 1996), 61.

[3] The contents were compiled from lost copies of the Daily Records and Veritable Records, along with materials from the Six Ministries and the Circuit Intendants. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 810.

[4] A fragment of the court diary of the eleventh-century statesman and historian Sima Guang is still extant. See Sima Guang, *Sima Guang riji jiaozhu*, ed. Li Sumin (Beijing, 1994).

[5] Robert Hartwell, 'Financial Expertise, Examinations, and the Formulation of Economic Policy in Northern Sung China', in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 30:2 (1971), 281–314.

control, and any competent official knew that. Indeed, a solid grasp of the institutional framework of government is what distinguished the merely educated official from the truly functional one.

While the larger picture of a single emperor ruling over a centralized bureaucracy remained constant from 221 BC to AD 1911, the institutions of the individual dynasties differed widely. Matters were often confused by the retention of earlier titles for unrelated uses. Tang dynasty government changed markedly over the course of its rule, without a concomitant alteration in titles. When the Song dynasty re-established unified rule of the empire, it adopted a dual system of rank and job title, whereby an official's rank and salary did not directly match his position title. A given position was supposed to be filled by an official of a particular rank, but depending upon whether that position was very attractive, or situated in a very attractive location, an official of a higher rank might fill it. Conversely, a lower ranked official than the position called for might fill an unattractive position in a distant province. It was simply impossible for any official to grasp completely the entirety of such a system without reference to written records.

One of the driving forces behind Du You's decision to write a more specific text focused on administration was probably the gradual increase in the number of officials entering government through the exam system. The Tang dynasty was noteworthy for the extent of aristocratic control over the bureaucracy when it began, placing powerful clans in competition with the imperial family. The exam system was one tool for diminishing aristocratic power by forcing those interested in serving in government to prove a certain degree of education. Even a man who expected to hold office by virtue of his ancestry had first to prove that he was competent to do so. This then opened the door to other men without illustrious forbearers who could demonstrate their competence by passing the exams. An emperor thus had a pool of non-aristocrats to serve him if any aristocratic officials proved disloyal or disobedient. Aristocratic power was almost completely shattered by the An Lushan Rebellion (755–63), when the rebels specifically targeted the major aristocratic clans for annihilation. In the wake of such thorough changes of personnel within the government, a manual of administrative practice was vital.

Du You served as prime minister three times, thus bringing a considerable wealth of experience and understanding to the task of institutional history. The *Tongdian* was not an abstract history, but a concrete manual of practice. Because of this, it offered the possibility of a less politicized discussion of policy, at least insofar as the general workings of the government were concerned. The official dynastic histories, by contrast, were steeped in politics and the conventions of historiography. As we shall see, however, there were important political implications for the historical place of the Tang dynasty itself in the writing of an institutional history. Still, there was a danger for Du You that an administrative manual would be mistaken for either a system of rules and laws, or was an

argument for an amoral administrative framework.[6] He was therefore compelled to present the book in the greater terms of good government in its preface:

> You studied in his youth, but his nature was stupid and dull; he could not reach to the art of magical calculation, and was not fond of studying chapters and sections. Consequently, intending to display what there is of administration and inquiring into the various affairs of men, [he] made selections for an anthology and compiled the *Tongdian*. Thus, the principles and way of ancestors lie in acting to teach and transform; the root of teaching and transforming lies in having sufficient clothing and food. The *Yijing* called the sage: 'capital'. Of the *Hongfan*'s eight administrations the first was 'food', the second 'money'. The *Guanzi* says: 'Full granaries come from understanding the requirements of etiquette, sufficient clothing and food comes from understanding prosperity and adversity.'
>
> The sage said: 'Once they are wealthy, instruct them'.[7] Thus teaching and transforming lies in establishing officials, establishing officials lies in examining official talent, examining official talents lies in refining the selection. The previous exemplar kings' great plans for bringing about order were to control the rites by refining their customs, and establish music by harmonizing with their hearts. Therefore officials are established and then rites and music flourishes; if teaching and transforming is destroyed then laws and punishments are used. Prefectures and counties are arranged so as to divide and control, border defences are established to forestall great enemies.
>
> It begins with food and money, then selection of officials, then establishing officials, then rites, then music, then laws, then prefectures and counties, and finally border defence. Of those who inspect it, a great number will understand the purpose of the sections and order.[8]

Administration, as Du explains it, is the concrete expression of the fundamental Confucian goal of 'teaching and transforming'. The prerequisite for any larger cultural or moral improvement is basic material well-being.[9] He is therefore able to justify starting from what might appear to be a suspect interest in food and money. Pragmatic statecraft and Confucian ideology came into conflict at a basic

[6] Although the writings and policies of the *fajia*, usually translated as 'Legalists', was instrumental in the creation of the imperial Chinese state and the unification of China for the first time under the Qin dynasty in 221 BC, government ideologically based upon the enforcement of laws and regulations rather than morality was explicitly condemned by most officials soon after the fall of the Qin in 206 BC. Certainly by Du You's time it would have been impossible for a mainstream official to argue for a purely Legalist approach to government.

[7] The phrase 既富而教 appears to be an abridgement of an anecdote related in chapter thirteen (number nine) of the *Lunyu* [Analects]: 'The Master traveled to Wei, with Ran Qiu as his carriage driver. The Master remarked, "How numerous the people of this state are!" Ran Qiu asked, "Being already numerous, what can be done to further improve them?" The Master replied, "Make them wealthy." "Once they are wealthy, what else can be done to improve them?" "Instruct them."' *Confucius Analects*, trans. Edward Slingerland (Indianapolis, 2003), 143. The only written instance of the exact phrase before Du You's time is quite obscure. The only one I am aware of is Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu* (Taibei, 1999), 35.1196.

[8] Du You, *Tongdian*, ed. Wang Wenjin *et al.*, 5 vols. (Beijing, 1988), i. 1.

[9] Confucius, however, explicitly placed the ruler's credibility ahead of sufficient food. See his reply to his disciple Zigong in the *Lunyu*, ch. 12, selection 7, in Xie Bingying (ed.), *Sishu duben* (Taibei, 1995), 198.

educational level. Educated men studied a fairly narrow set of texts that stressed the correct moral outlook of a cultivated person. Even the broader texts on history, poetry, and literature did not provide anything in the way of practical managerial tools. Officials therefore shared common cultural and ideological backgrounds but lacked even a language outside of these concerns with which to solve government policy issues. It was not that Confucian ideology necessarily conflicted with pragmatic statecraft, only that the education system neglected the latter. Du You's first step in presenting an administrative handbook was to connect these two concerns.

While Du You's preface bridged the ideological gap between Confucian learning and the practical, day-to-day concerns of a government official, the body of the *Tongdian* fits more neatly into the scholarly traditions of Chinese learning. Just as in the commentarial tradition of Chinese classics and histories, the *Tongdian* presented quotes from relevant documents followed by explanation and commentary. Chinese historians were acutely aware of the fact that government institutions changed over time and that the names and institutional frameworks of previous dynasties required considerable explanation. While the principles of imperial rulership remained constant, the means of carrying out that rule varied. The comparison of earlier dynasties' institutions both explained where one's own dynasty's structures came from and provided insights into how institutions as a whole functioned.

MEDIEVAL EUROPE

The situation in medieval European history-writing was considerably different. Where Chinese historians were acutely aware of the separate life of institutions *per se*, and that of dynastic governments in particular, only Church historians, as exemplified in the *Liber Pontificalis* [Book of the Popes], demonstrated any self-conscious engagement with institutions as entities worth discussing. European monasteries and monastic orders, if we may consider them in some way separate from the Church, also maintained some sense of independent institutional existence, but this did not extend to writing histories of the institutions themselves. The charge of a monastic record keeper was to maintain all those documents that supported the institution's claims to property and privileges. Abby cartularies are a wonderful source for modern historians, but they were not compiled into formal histories. Chinese religious institutions followed similar practices, frequently carving the texts of imperial bestowals onto stelae prominently displayed on the institution's grounds.[10]

[10] See, for example, the well-known stele inscription from the Shaolin Monastery recording the second Tang emperor's bestowal of lands as reward for its services. The inscription is reproduced and translated in Tonami Mamoru, *The Shaolin Monastery Stele on Mount Song*, trans. P. A. Herbert (Kyoto, 1990).

Any comparison between the *Liber Pontificalis* and even the most mundane of Chinese histories is rather unfair. The *Liber Pontificalis* is a composite text of uncertain authorship, which was added to by any number of hands over the centuries. Its first layer was probably composed in the fifth or sixth century, possibly as a simple list of Roman pontiffs. With respect to institutional history, one of the authors in the sixth or seventh century attributed some addition to ecclesiastic practice to each pope up to the second half of the fifth century.[11] Each pope therefore gained a certain measure of respectability insofar as he contributed to the Roman Church. These attributions were almost completely spurious, leaving the modern reader with not so much an institutional history, as an institutional myth-history. It is important, nonetheless, that the *Liber Pontificalis* demonstrates an awareness of the idea that practices changed over time due to the individual decisions of popes.

The myth-history of the *Liber Pontificalis* strove to inscribe the Roman bishop's primacy into a banal chronology of institution, ordination, and building construction. What is unclear is who the intended audience was, or if, in fact, there was only one. The many hands responsible for creating the *Liber Pontificalis* varied in their levels of education and their familiarity with the history and practices of the Church. Its message of Roman primacy would have been useful for autocommunication within the Roman Church, confirming and reaffirming this 'fact' for its priestly officials, as well as for external propaganda. It would also have served as a textual core for the Roman Church's identity. Perhaps its many functions were so intertwined that neither clarity of purpose nor demonstrable scholarly acumen were necessary. This is ironic in the context of institutional history, since institutional history-writing is often a means to disentangle and explain an otherwise complex and opaque existing institution.

A much clearer institutional structure is spelled out in the rules of the monastic orders, though these rules are not histories. The *Regula Benedicti* [Rule of St Benedict], written about 530, provided the underlying organizational and religious foundation for a structured, communal religious experience. In several respects, it is quite similar to Du You's *Tongdian*. Benedict's preface justifies the practice of monasticism as a means to serve God and reach heaven, thus making it clear that the extensive structure for monastic life that follows is consistent with the Christian faith. Where the *Tongdian* is a descriptive historical recounting of the manner in which Chinese governments ruled, however, the *Regula Benedicti* is a prescriptive text laying out principles and rules for monastic practice. In practice both texts served similar functions. Both served as touchstones for subsequent practice that deviated in some ways from past prescriptions.

An interesting contrast to the *Regula Benedicti* is the Magna Carta. Although the Magna Carta, like the *Regula Benedicti*, is prescriptive, functionally creating

[11] Louis Ropes Loomis (trans.), *The Book of the Popes* (Merchantville, NJ, 2006), p. xvi.

several institutions (a proto-parliament, the chancellery), it is most concerned with defining the legal limitations of the English king. King John was compelled by force to agree to its provisions in 1215, and repudiated it immediately after the barons left London. Pope Innocent III supported John's repudiation because the agreement, particularly clause 61, would have effectively destroyed John's sovereign powers by providing for a baronial council whose powers could overrule the king, and to which the king had to swear loyalty. The pope rejected a constraint on royal authority, not least because it would have ramified to undermine the Church's religious authority over the king. A modified form of the Magna Carta was issued in 1216, after John's death and with several sections removed, including the offending clause 61, and issued again in 1217. A further modified version was issued in 1225. Yet none of these documents self-consciously described a process of development from the 1215 version to the 1225 version, let alone including mention of Henry I's Charter of Liberties issued in 1100. The Magna Carta's importance in the inception of constitutional law stemmed from its explication of the hierarchy of legal powers within the English government, not from the creation of an institutional framework for the exercise of those powers. The Chinese imperial system did not recognize any legal restriction upon the emperor's power in theory or practice.

Overall, it is difficult to ascribe much in the way of institutional history-writing to the *Liber Pontificalis*, or even the *Regula Benedicti*. In a sense, the *Regula Benedicti* is much more of an institutional history than the *Liber Pontificalis* inasmuch as it accurately describes why and how certain monastic orders came to structure their organizations in the way that they did, and why they operated in their particular manner. The *Regula Benedicti*, like the Magna Carta, was also tremendously important as one of the formative texts in the history of European constitutionalism. It would appear, then, that there was little that could be called institutional history-writing in medieval Europe.

Even within the Roman Church there appears to have been only a limited awareness of the Church as an institution. The *Liber Pontificalis* demonstrates that some Church historians recognized that the Church existed and persisted in a different manner than royal or aristocratic courts. Unlike those temporal courts, the Church maintained a more elaborate structure of named religious/administrative offices with enumerated powers that might change over time. Temporal courts had less regular structures, and more informal balances of responsibilities above the scribal level. Customary procedures and rights were more important and better maintained, or at least fought over, than anything resembling a bureaucratic system. Indeed, it is something of a marker of the lack of a true bureaucracy in Europe in the Middle Ages, that there was no institutional history-writing.

In China, the institutions of government served neither to legitimize a dynasty, nor to constrain the power of the monarch. Government institutions were an expression of imperial power and imperial values. While there was considerable debate about the relationship between a ruler and his ministers, and on the moral

underpinnings that needed to govern imperial ideology, the specific institutional expression of those decisions was not important. Chinese government had moved away from the sort of feudal courts of medieval Europe even before the Qin dynasty (221–211 BC) unified China under its first empire. Any functioning government would have maintained a formal institutional structure, leaving the more important question of who should fill those positions.

The comparison between European and Chinese institutional history-writing in the Middle Ages, or what is known in Chinese history as the Middle Period (750–1550), confronts us with the very different societies, governments, and approaches to history of these two places. Even the *Liber Pontificalis*, the closest text to qualify as an institutional history, is more a work of propaganda, whether for internal or external consumption, than a serious history. The *Regula Benedicti* makes a much stronger case for the instrumental value of a clearly designed institution, and fits more closely with the *Tongdian*. The major difference is not just a history versus a 'constitution', but one of history itself: Du You had centuries of institutions to explain; St Benedict did not. Similarly, in the Magna Carta, we find the enumeration of rights and relationships within government, several of which would later redound to initiate formal institutions, with only a limited acknowledgement or acceptance of the pre-existing structures of government. Du You's work on the *Tongdian* was thus the expression of a mature understanding of both history and institutions; the limited work available in Europe was incipient in both areas.

FROM THE TENTH TO THE FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

In order to discuss the history of an institution, that institution must first manifest a certain degree of coherence and continuity. These conditions were already breaking down for the imperial Chinese government in the ninth century. Du You wrote the *Tongdian* in a diminished Tang dynasty still recovering from the impact of the An Lushan Rebellion. A subsequent upheaval, the Huang Chao Rebellion (874–84), essentially ended the power of the Tang court, though it would take until 907 for the dynasty to be officially extinguished. A number of kingdoms of varying sizes emerged from the ruins of the Tang Empire, many claiming imperial status. This period of multi-state competition within the Chinese ecumene created a number of serious historiographical problems for Song dynasty historians in the tenth and eleventh centuries. These issues not only reoccurred, but were also amplified by subsequent political events in the twelfth century, and would not be brought to a close until the Mongol unification of all of China in the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

Institutional history was a supporting line of argument for the legitimacy of the Song dynasty. Official Chinese history-writing was based upon the idea that only one family or ruler at any given time possessed the Mandate of Heaven, and was therefore the legitimate ruler of China (however that might be territorially

constituted). When a family or ruler lost the Mandate due to lack of virtue, it passed to a worthy ruler. This legitimate succession, or *zhengtong*, required, in a certain sense, a hand-off from one dynasty to another. Indeed, in this way, Du You may have been asserting the continued legitimacy of the Tang dynasty by writing his institutional history. The situation in the Song dynasty was somewhat less clear, however, as it had conquered somewhat more than a half dozen states during its rise, and failed to defeat the Kitan Liao Empire to its north.

With respect to the Chinese states conquered by the Song, the legitimacy question was not particularly fraught. Those states had been defeated, unequivocally demonstrating that the Song dynasty possessed the Mandate of Heaven. The historiographical question of which of those states had the Mandate of Heaven and the path through which it passed to the Song was resolved, with good reason, in favour of the series of five governments that had ruled China's Central Plains: the Later Liang, Later Tang, Later Jin, Later Han, and Later Zhou. These governments were designated as 'dynasties' (*dai*) by the eleventh-century statesmen and historian Ouyang Xiu in his *Wudai shiji* [Historical Records of the Five Dynasties], and the remaining states as 'kingdoms' (*guo*). Ouyang's position was generally accepted, and this was reflected in subsequent histories and institutional histories, such as the *Wenxian tongkao* [Comprehensive Investigations of Records and Documents], which, as we will see below, discuss the history of the institutions of the Five Dynasties.

The Song dynasty's inability to dislodge the Kitan steppe empire from the Sixteen Prefectures (an area around modern Beijing), and to accept the pre-eminence of the Song dynasty over the Kitan's own Liao dynasty, was a much larger historiographical problem.[12] A covenant of sorts between the two governments was concluded in 1005 at Chanyuan after years of debilitating war. The Chanyuan Covenant (Treaty of Shanyuan) elided the issue of which dynasty, in fact, held the Mandate of Heaven by establishing a fictive kin relationship between the two ruling houses. Ma Duanlin did not recognize this in the *Wenxian tongkao*, and by the simple act of omitting any discussion of Liao institutions, he delegitimized the Liao claim to the Mandate of Heaven. Ma could do this without fear of repercussions when he was writing because the Liao Empire no longer existed, and those interested in defending its cosmological honour could be fobbed off with the reasonable excuse that the lack of materials prevented inclusion. Ouyang Xiu's consignment of the Liao to the barbarian section of his history in the eleventh century, by contrast, elicited a direct diplomatic protest. Similarly, the Liao would regain a certain amount of historiographical legitimacy during the Mongol Yuan dynasty when former Jurchen Jin officials had a stake in supporting a Liao place in the legitimate succession of dynasties.

[12] The Kitan rulers went back and forth over using the name 'Liao'. I have used the single designation 'Liao' to refer to the dynasty and government for simplicity's sake, while continuing to distinguish the Kitan people from that government.

There was a political motivation behind Chinese institutional history-writing, in the same way that political motivations affected so many other areas of history-writing. Modern historians often regard institutional history as a dry, boring but necessary area of study, bereft of anything more than source bias. Surely the simple facts of the development and evolution of an institution, even a government institution, would not be of political concern to a given historian. But we must remember that most Chinese historians were also government officials. As a result of this, institutional history was closely connected to political history. Institutional histories could therefore be dry, and even of practical value in administration, but they were also highly politicized documents.

Modern historians, and even pre-modern historians, perforce use later histories to write the history of earlier periods. One of the great strengths and challenges of Chinese history is that it does not come down to us entirely in undigested form; formal written histories vastly outweigh raw records for most of Chinese history. This is to say that we read the work of actual historians who were acutely and self-consciously aware of their role. We can pull out the raw documents they reproduced in their histories, but we cannot read the documents that they chose not to reproduce.

The complicated political and military history of China from the tenth to the thirteenth century deeply affected the composition of all histories for the period, not just the institutional ones. The official dynastic histories of the Song, Liao, and Jin dynasties were all compiled at about the same time during the Mongol Yuan dynasty.[13] The fourteenth-century perspective on the preceding centuries strongly influenced the construction of those histories. Similarly, the eleventh-century perspective on the institutional past influenced the construction of those histories. Rather than discuss this in the abstract, in the section that follows I will illustrate these problems through three specific examples: the Battle of Gaoping, the eleventh-century construction of Tang and Five Dynasties' history, and the Mongol Yuan construction of Song, Liao, and Jin history.

The Battle of Gaoping in 954 was a turning point in tenth-century history that led in a very direct fashion to the creation of the Song dynasty in 960. During the battle, won by Later Zhou emperor Chai Rong, units of the Imperial Guard, led by its respective infantry and cavalry commanders, fled or surrendered to the enemy. As a consequence, Chai Rong was not only able to execute the top officers, but also to reorganize the Later Zhou army and shed an enormous number of old or poor quality soldiers. The Palace Corps, previously a much smaller and less powerful unit, was placed under the control of Zhao Kuangyin, the man who would subsequently found the Song dynasty, and was enhanced both in numbers

[13] Hok-lam Chan, 'Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories', in John D. Langlois, (ed.), *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton, 1981), 56–106.

and quality of troops.[14] The resulting administrative structure would persist until 1127.

Since the Song imperial army was originally the Later Zhou imperial army, the administrative changes implemented after the Battle of Gaoping were important for a functional explanation of how the Song defence establishment came to be structured the way it was, and to bolster the legitimacy of the founding emperor. These changes were thus recorded in the *Wudai huiyao* and the *Wenxian tongkao*.[15] This was also reflected in the official dynastic history. The dynastic history itself describes the development of the Song military in great detail, providing the date of creation of each battalion in the army.[16] These sources allow us to understand the Song military as an institution quite well, despite its great complexity.

Contemporary European militaries were not nearly as complex as the Song military, and this was not simply a reflection of the greater overall complexity of all Chinese institutions. The Song government and military were considerably more complex institutions than those of the Tang. The reasons for this were understood in the eleventh century to be entirely political. Here we must distinguish between the organic developments and numerous expedients that formed the institutional development of what would become the Song army from the later perception of the fundamental reasons for those changes, and the effects they had on the Song. Simply put, eleventh-century historians believed that the Tang dynasty's main political and military problems came from an overly militarized government that dispersed too much military power to border and provincial military governors. The Song solution to that problem was to centralize all power, both civil and military, and make sure civil officials were firmly in control of the government.[17] While this created a more stable empire, it also diminished the Song's overall military power.

Almost every subsequent historian up to the present day has largely accepted these institutional arguments for the nature of Song government.[18] Yet this perspective on the tenth century was created during a period of political rivalry in the eleventh century. While the *Wudai huiyao* was compiled in the late tenth century, the fitting of this important institutional and political event into a

[14] For a more extensive discussion of the Battle of Gaoping, including a discussion of the sources and the significant personnel changes involved, see Peter Lorge, 'The Entrance and Exit of the Song Founders', *The Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies*, 30 (1999), 43–62.

[15] Wang Pu, *Wudai huiyao* (Shanghai, 1978), 12.206; and Ma Duanlin, *Wenxian tongkao* (Beijing, 1986), 152.1325, respectively.

[16] Toghto (ed.), *Songshi* (Beijing, 1990).

[17] Song policy was known as 'Strengthen the trunk and weaken the branches'. Due to the mistake of a twentieth-century Chinese historian, Fang Hao, a policy, 'Emphasize the Civil, De-emphasize the Martial', attributed to the Song in a Ming dynasty (1368–1644) novel, *Erke Paian Dunqi*, is regularly cited as Song policy. On this mistake see Peter Lorge, 'The Northern Song Military Aristocracy and the Royal Family', *War and Society*, 18:2 (2000), 37.

[18] The best example of this in English is Wang Gungwu's classic study *The Structure of Power in North China during the Five Dynasties* (Kuala Lumpur, 1963).

developing narrative of structural Song military weakness belonged to the following century. Factionalism became a serious issue at court in the eleventh century, beginning during the quarter century of peace between the conclusion of the Chanyuan Covenant in 1005, and the outbreak of Tangut invasions in 1038. The political problem for eleventh-century statesmen was simple: to convince the emperor to invest an official or group of officials with sweeping powers over the government. In the absence of a crisis, there was no need to maintain anything but a balanced government that strictly limited the power of officials. Indeed, the early Song rulers had sought not only to limit the power of generals, who were a direct and obvious threat to the government, but also the powers of any individual civil official as well.

The first step in building the case for dramatic governmental reform, and thus the empowering of one or more officials to accomplish that, began with attacks on the Chanyuan Covenant. Although initially seen as a good solution to a serious and even, as some erroneously imagined, existential threat to the existence of the dynasty, the Chanyuan Covenant was soon attacked as a humiliating treaty concluded under duress. This was a useful way to discredit Kou Zhun, the official credited and rewarded for the covenant. The lingering sense of unease over the diplomatic end to the Song–Liao war, as well as Kou Zhun's unconventional behaviour, was a good foundation on which to develop a political attack. Moreover, Song emperor Zhenzong was increasingly uninterested in court affairs after the conclusion of the conflict. With the advent of a period of prolonged peace, there was no longer any need for a man like Kou Zhun at court.

While it was easy to attack Kou Zhun and the Chanyuan Covenant, attacking the basic institutional framework established by the founding emperor was much more difficult. In a sense, it was culturally impossible to argue that the dynasty's founder had acted in error. Since at least the Zhou dynasty, Chinese dynasties had been presented as cyclic political entities with brilliant, sage-like founders followed by increasingly less virtuous descendants. Eventually, the sage-like founder of another dynasty would overthrow the dissolute descendants. At the same time, the importance of filial behaviour in every aspect of society made direct criticism of one's parents and ancestors unacceptable. This was even more true of the emperor, who was not only the father of the state, but also its supposed moral exemplar. The actions of the founding emperor were thus, by definition, correct and unimpeachable. The institutions of government, it could be argued, were the rules handed down to the founding emperor's descendants.

Yet it was precisely in the realm of institutional history that an argument for change could be made. Institutional history, or at least the interpretation of it, allowed officials to portray the dynastic system as fundamentally flawed without being guilty of *lèse-majesté* for criticizing the founding emperor. Rather than being a set of rules established by the founding emperor, the structure of government was a set of practices implemented for expedience at a time and place. Zhao Kuangyin created the institutions he did in response to the problems of the

preceding periods. This was a wise choice, but it left the dynasty as a whole in a difficult situation. Nor were the decisions of the founding emperor wholly wrong over the long term, since he set the stage for the proper—from the civil officials' point of view—dominance of the civil elites over the generals. Zhao Kuangyin's general principles were correct, and constituted the real ancestral rules of the Song dynasty.

These more complex institutional arguments did not emerge, however, until after a military crisis created a sense of urgency within the court. Decades of peace following the Chanyuan Covenant had limited the virulence of factional politics; it was there, of course, but it had yet to develop fully. The outbreak of war with the Tanguts in 1038, and the initial poor performance of the Song army, briefly opened a window for reform. The Jingli Reforms, sometimes also called the Minor Reforms, were short-lived and ineffective. This dramatic shift in government, where the emperor brought in and empowered a small clique of officials to take control of policy, did point the way towards a means of obtaining full control over the government from the emperor. It was also significant for the participation of Ouyang Xiu, a statesman and noted prose writer (among many, many other talents), who would write his own history of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period.[19] Indeed, it is Ouyang Xiu to whom we owe the accepted tally of five dynasties and ten kingdoms.

What is critical in the interpretation of institutional history-writing in the eleventh century is that Ouyang Xiu, like all of the other historians of his time, was a government official actively involved in politics. In writing a history of the period immediately preceding the Song, in addition to his participation in a history of the Tang dynasty, he was directly shaping the understanding of how and why the Song dynasty developed the way it did. This was hardly a neutral position. Ouyang firmly believed in the cultural accomplishments of the Song dynasty and the correctness of civil control over the government. He explicitly attributed the problems of earlier periods to the domination of soldiers. The military problems of the eleventh century were the result of a reasonable compromise on the part of the Song founder: a certain amount of military effectiveness was sacrificed for internal stability and overall peace.

Ouyang Xiu's interpretation of tenth-century Chinese history has survived until the present, but it is not a perspective that tenth-century Song officials would have recognized. There are three reasons for the persistence of this view. First, most officials involved in the struggle for political control of the government promoted the idea that the dynasty was militarily weak because this was the only way to convince the emperor to give someone unchallenged power. Second, the subsequent loss of north China to the Jurchen Jin in 1127 effectively confirmed the view of military weakness. Third, the perspective of nineteenth- and

[19] Richard Davis has translated approximately 70 per cent of this history (by his own estimate). See Ouyang Xiu, *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties*, trans. Richard L. Davis (New York, 2004).

twentieth-century Chinese history has firmly embedded the criticism of all of imperial Chinese governments, excepting those of non-Han Chinese background, as being too concerned with civil affairs to the detriment of military matters in the narrative of Chinese culture. This last issue is beyond the scope of my current discussion, so I will now focus on the first and second issues.

Although the Jingli Reforms had accomplished very little, they did point the way towards what would become Wang Anshi's New Policies during the reign of Emperor Shenzong (1048–85). Wang Anshi actually began his career under the tutelage and support of several members of the Jingli Reform party, but his reform programme made all of his former supporters into opponents. Wang convinced the emperor that his programme of policies would enrich the country and strengthen its military to the point where the Song could defeat the Liao and capture the Sixteen Prefectures. It is not clear if this was merely an excuse for Wang, since he repeatedly put off military action, or whether he simply ran out of time. Shenzong was convinced, however, and gave Wang a free hand to introduce a raft of radical new policies. Wang's New Party was opposed by the Old Party, centred around Sima Guang. The Old Party contained virtually the entire pantheon of living Song cultural figures.

It is impossible to evaluate Wang's institutional changes objectively. They were so fiercely opposed, and so politically charged, that every available source is strongly biased. At a minimum, several were ill conceived and certainly less effective than Wang imagined.[20] They did not noticeably improve the dynasty's military fortunes. And with Shenzong's death in 1085 Sima Guang was brought into government to dismantle them entirely. The emperors who followed, however, not only returned to Wang's policies, but they prohibited members of the Old Party from holding office. The reformers were in power when the dynasty suffered its greatest military disaster, the loss of the capital and the capture of the emperor and retired emperor in 1127 to the Jurchen Jin.

The loss of north China to the Jurchen confirmed the weak military characterization of the Song in the eyes of the Song court and most educated men. The Chanyuan Covenant and the failure to capture the Sixteen Prefectures were now connected to the loss of north China. The Song never recovered the Central Plains, though the border was stabilized for the next century and a half, even as the Mongols, in turn, destroyed the Jurchen. Both Zheng Qiao and Ma Duanlin wrote their institutional histories in an environment similar to Du You's, where their dynasty's fortunes had suffered terribly, and the legitimacy of the ruling house was in question. It took the Mongols a half-century to defeat the Song completely, stamping out the final remnants of the Song imperial house in 1279.

It fell to Mongol Yuan historians to write the official dynastic histories of the Song, Liao, and Jin dynasties. Men loyal to the fallen Jin and Song dynasties

[20] See Paul Smith, *Taxing Heaven's Storehouse* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), for a discussion of the Tea and Horse Agency.

were deeply concerned with the Yuan perspective on their dynasties. With divided rule over the Chinese ecumene, the question of who held the Mandate of Heaven was paramount. The Jin saw the roots of their dynasty in the Liao dynasty, making the Liao possession of the Mandate of Heaven an important argument for the Jin's possession of the Mandate. Song loyalists were equally adamant that the Song had held the Mandate from the end of the Later Zhou to the end of the Song itself. Although there was no question that the Yuan dynasty held the Mandate, Yuan historians worked under a dynastic house that was Mongol, not Chinese. They therefore needed to balance the claims of non-Chinese ruling houses to the Mandate against the stronger cultural claims of the Song. This was accomplished in historical terms by simply compiling histories of all three dynasties.

The official histories of the Song, Liao, and Jin dynasties are, however, hardly comparable. If for no other reason than the quantity of sources available, the Song history is easily more than ten times the size of either the Liao or Jin histories. The Jin had not, itself, compiled a history of the Liao, functionally an argument against Liao and Jin legitimacy. The Liao government had probably never produced and stored administrative documents in the systematic fashion of the Song, and much of what had been stored was lost when the Jin took over. The Jin was more fortunate in being the later dynasty, and less was lost. Of course, massive stores of Song documents from the first part of the dynasty were also lost when the Jurchen captured the capital, but the Song had a far more sophisticated and extensive historical bureaucracy to make up for this.

What truly sets Song institutional history-writing apart from that of the Jin and Liao is the institutional history contained in the *Wenxian tongkao* and the *Song huiyao*. Nowhere is this more clear than in the detailed information on that most distinctive of Chinese government institutions, the civil service exam. Generations of modern scholars have mined this source to delineate the shifts in exam content and practice with excruciating precision.[21] Indeed, no other area of Song institutional history has been so thoroughly explored as the civil service exam system. This reflects the obsession of the literati exam-takers responsible for virtually all of our historical sources, official and private, and the focus of modern scholars.

To return to a point made at the beginning of this chapter, pre-modern Chinese scholars were intimately concerned with the institutional functions of government in ways alien to modern historians. Institutional history-writing during the Yuan dynasty reflected two concerns of Song officials, one functional, the other historiographical. Following the example of Du You in the Tang, Ma Duanlin exploited the extensive sources available to him to craft an astonishingly detailed history of Chinese government institutions. Even so, Ma's history was a

[21] For the most recent example of this see Hilde De Weerdt, *Competition over Content: Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China (1127–1279)* (Cambridge, 2007).

simplification designed to explain the general development and range of institutions governing the entire scope of dynastic functions. The reader was thus able to see what those functions traditionally were, how they had been dealt with in the past, and generally how and why they had come to operate the way they did in the Song. There was nothing abstract about the explanation; the narrative of history explained the system.

The political message of the *Wenxian tongkao* was even more powerful: only a truly legitimate dynasty had institutional history. A civilized government produced and stored official documents for historical purposes. Legitimate governments could be fit into the history of government institutions in ways that illegitimate ones could not. This was part of Du You's message when he initiated the separate writing of institutional history. A properly functioning government was a demonstration of legitimacy. Ma Duanlin naturally tied the *Wenxian tongkao* to the mythical sage rulers of antiquity and to Du You's *Tongdian* in his preface and memorial presenting the work to the throne.[22] Ma's history bridged the time from Du You to Emperor Ningzong (r. 1194–1224), maintaining Song legitimacy across the divide of the loss of north China to the Jurchen, just as Du You had bridged the An Lushan Rebellion in his history. Every institution continued in an unbroken chain from the sage emperors through the Song.

CONCLUSION

In both Europe and China, institutional history-writing was a fertile area for historical misinformation. Contrary to the image of objective and dry explanations of evolving bureaucratic structures, the selective choice of administrative documents presented in an unemotional manner allowed a historian to foster an enduring sense of eternal legitimacy for the institution of choice. This was less well developed in Europe because there was little in the way of institutional existence outside of the Church. Yet even the poorly educated Church historians who compiled the *Liber Pontificalis* understood at some level the power of institutional history. It was incipient, but it was there. China, by contrast, had a long history of interest in institutions, a highly developed culture of history, a well-developed bureaucratic tradition, and a large pool of educated officials serving in government.

Du You broke new ground with his *Tongdian* by separating institutional history from the overall framework of dynastic history. It is possible that his innovation was simply the product of inspiration. Inspiration in the abstract is difficult to prove, however, and the time in which he wrote suggests two possibilities. The first is that the evolution of Tang dynasty institutions had grown so complex by the

[22] Ma Duanlin, *Wenxian tongkao*, 3–11 (for the preface), 13 (for the memorial presenting it to the throne).

beginning of the ninth century that a guide of some kind was needed. It was no longer possible to rule informally through an experienced set of aristocratic lineages whose corporate identity obviated the need for specific rules and regulations. In other words, the bureaucratic state had grown beyond the customary administration of power. Moreover, those aristocratic lineages had not only been losing power for some time, the An Lushan Rebellion had mostly destroyed them.

The second possibility was that Du You saw the need to reassert Tang legitimacy a half century after the An Lushan Rebellion. He could not write an official Tang history with the dynasty still in existence, but he could create a manual that tied the Tang to past legitimate Chinese dynasties. Rather than admit the diminished state of the Tang court's power, he provided a history of its rulership through the medium of administration. The Tang had clearly endured beyond the rebellion that might have destroyed it had it not held the Mandate of Heaven. The Tang house endured as an institution across any political and military interruptions.

Both possibilities might coexist with each other. Certainly in the person of a Tang official like Du You there was no need to separate these functions. Administration was functional and symbolic. Order was the job of government and proof of its legitimacy. As a prime minister, Du You drew his historical legitimacy from serving a legitimate dynasty, and maintained that legitimacy by good governance. The new class of men who had begun to enter government during the Tang based upon their education, rather than their class background, were more dependent upon the dynasty for their own legitimacy. At the beginning of the Tang, the aristocratic lineages saw themselves, not the imperial house, as the keepers of Chinese culture. After the An Lushan Rebellion the government was the only cultural institution of real significance. The officials now needed the government as much as the government needed them. These mutual interests met in the form of government institutions. The men who made up these institutions were part of the legitimate political history that went back to the sage emperors.

The shift to a professional bureaucratic class who earned their posts through success in the exam system accelerated and became permanent during the Song. Song institutions were very different from those of the Tang, and went through a series of attempted reforms, reforms, counter-reforms, and, like the Tang, a wholesale disaster and reconstitution. Writing in the fourteenth century, Ma Duanlin found himself in a position very similar to that of Du You. By simply extending Du's history into the Song, Ma reaffirmed Song legitimacy and ignored the existence of the Liao and Jin. Although Ma could not control the writing of the dynastic histories, he could and did control the writing of an institutional history that made it very clear that the Song had been the legitimate dynasty before the Yuan.

Institutional history-writing required professional historians self-conscious of the connection between a larger bureaucratic structure, history, and political

legitimacy. This required something of an intellectual leap, and a personal identification with an abstract entity that exceeded the reign of one man. In medieval Europe this was embryonic in the Catholic Church and nowhere else. Few people had the historical sense to understand the presence of an institution, or to appreciate the reality that writing about its past existence provided it. Chinese historians and officials, on the other hand, were acutely aware of this. Du You took this a step further and constructed an institution-centred history for both practical and political reasons. Government documents themselves, arranged in order by Wang Pu, similarly took the ordinary impedimenta of government and created legitimacy and concrete institutional reality. The ultimate argument of institutions then is perhaps, 'I document, therefore I am'.

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Chapter 24
Dynastic Historical Writing

Charles West

To study dynastic historical writing is to explore one of the key ways in which diverse notions of family, with the full richness of meaning that concept bears, come to impose themselves upon, and are expressed by, written accounts of the past. The importance of the underlying issue is self-evident, because the intersection of family and history-writing touches on two fundamental means by which all people situate themselves in their world: through kinship and in relation to the past. Combining family loyalties with past sensitivities, dynastic historical writing represents the creation of a special, and specially revealing, form of knowledge, caught between the socially embedded and the detached.[1]

Examining the ways in which kinship and the past are combined in different times and places has moreover the potential to bring out differences and similarities in important fields of human experience, in particular the role played by kinship in representations of legitimate political activity. The topic is therefore eminently suited to wide comparative analysis, and so this chapter takes a comparative angle, chronologically and geographically. It will remain anchored in Western Europe, but to ensure proper comparative scope, material from Byzantium and China will be considered too. As a way of keeping this comparative element to the fore, the analysis pivots around three ostensibly 'dynastic' historians who were contemporaries of one another, namely William of Jumièges, Michael Psellos, and Ouyang Xiu. There is no reason to suppose any social or textual interaction between them, but their juxtaposition should help avoid the imposition of historiographical timetables tailored for one tradition upon the others, decentring vexed discussions such as whether China had a 'Middle Ages'.[2]

[1] Frank Pieke, 'The Genealogical Mentality in Modern China', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 62 (2003), 101–28, at 107: the point is made of genealogies, but applies equally to dynastic historiography. Dynastic history-writing is of course only one of the intersections of the past and kinship: for a wide-ranging investigation of the connections between them in medieval Europe see Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900–1200* (Basingstoke, 1999).

[2] Tanigawa Michio, *Medieval Chinese Society and the Local 'Community'*, trans. Joshua Fogel (Berkeley, 1985) is a helpful discussion of China's 'medieval period'. More broadly see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000); and Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge, 2007). Whether Europe had a 'Middle

A focus on individuals also serves to remind us that dynastic historical writing, and indeed historiography in general, is only ever a more or less useful abstraction for the practice of individual history-writers.

DYNASTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY IN WESTERN EUROPE: A SURVEY

At first glance, kinship and history-writing were far from integrated in the historiographical practice of early medieval Western Europe (400–900). Indeed, frameworks of biological descent seem consciously to have been avoided. The 'universal' or 'world chronicle', which enjoyed great prominence in Western Europe from well before the period which concerns us here, is a case in point: it eschewed models based on generational descent in favour of privileging a relentless unfolding of time rooted in eschatological perspectives, each year marking another step away from the world's beginning and towards the world's end. These chronicles were 'universal' not simply insofar as they attempted to be comprehensive in what they recorded, namely history from the beginning of time to its end, but also because their scope transcended this terrestrial history, seeking anchorage instead in a cosmologically oriented perspective.[3]

There were admittedly shifts in how these universal perspectives were appropriated and put to use in the early Middle Ages, but these shifts did not bring the perspectives themselves into question.[4] In particular, the rapid growth of chronologically more restricted annalistic writing from the later eighth century in Western Europe can most easily be interpreted as a broader dissemination, and application to the immediate passing present, of this wide-angled understanding of history, one whose rhythm was not that of succeeding generations, and still less of a particular generational sequence, but of divine intervention, irregular, hard to decipher, but crucially decisive in shaping human affairs.[5]

Of course there was more to early medieval historiography than annals and chronicles, and some texts of this period came close to adopting dynastic form, for example the collection of biographies of the popes of Rome known

Ages' can be equally debated: see Timothy Reuter, 'Medieval: Another Tyrannous Construct?' *The Medieval History Journal*, 1 (1998), 25–45, repr. in Janet Nelson (ed.), *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities* (Cambridge, 2006), 19–37.

[3] For the universal chronicle see Sarah Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form: Narrative in Annals and Chronicles', in Nancy Partner (ed.), *Writing Medieval History* (London, 2005), 88–108; and ch. 21 by Andrew Marsham in this volume.

[4] For ninth-century inflections of universal chronicles see Rosamond McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, 2006), 7–34.

[5] On annals see most recently Jo Story, 'The Frankish Annals of Lindisfarne and Kent', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 34 (2005), 59–109; and, in general, Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), 97–119.

collectively as the *Liber Pontificalis* [Book of the Popes] and the serial episcopal biographies it inspired. Yet none of these was actually written with the intention of documenting kinship ties.[6] The only evident and elaborated interweaving of kinship and history in this period comes in the shape of descriptions of the origins and history of a whole political community, known as *origo gentis* ('origin of a people') accounts.[7] Associated with some of the best-known early medieval authors such as Bede, Paul the Deacon, and Jordanes, the *origo gentis* model's success was doubtless connected with the processes through which communal identities based on ethnicity were generated ('ethnogenesis'), identities which were such a defining characteristic of post-Roman Western society, and to whose formation these histories themselves contributed.[8] In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, *origo gentis* histories began almost imperceptibly to slide into dynastic historiography, as texts within the genre placed increasing emphasis on ruling lineages and bounded space.[9]

However, this tendency remained latent in the early Middle Ages. In fact, the emergence of a fully fledged dynastic historiography is normally considered a development of the tenth century which blossomed in the eleventh and twelfth, and maintained its presence, though in absolute terms becoming increasingly peripheral, right through the later Middle Ages (1300–1500). Its general impact can hardly be doubted: indeed, according to some historians, the narrative thrust provided by the framework of family generation helped rescue historical narration from a mimetic paralysis or 'conceptual parataxis' from which it had suffered in the preceding period, characterized by the overwhelming dominance of figural themes as in Gregory of Tours's *Historiae* [Histories].[10]

Dynastic historiography's emergence on the scene at this point can be related to two highly influential meta-narratives of medieval Western history. The first of

[6] On the serial biographies of bishops see Michel Sot, *Gesta episcoporum, gesta abbatum* (Typologie des sources du moyen age occidental 37; Turnhout, 1981).

[7] On the *origo gentis* see Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, 2nd edn (Notre Dame, 2005).

[8] Matthew Innes, 'Land, Freedom and the Making of the Medieval West', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 16 (2006), 39–74. For stimulating comparative remarks, Patricia Ebrey, 'Surnames and Han Chinese Identity', in Melissa J. Brown (ed.), *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (Berkeley, 1996), 19–36. On the contribution to identity formation see Patrick Wormald, 'Bede, the Bretwaldas, and the Origin of the Gens Anglorum', in Wormald (ed.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 1983), 99–129, repr. in Stephen Baxter (ed.), *The Times of Bede, 625–865: Studies in Early English Christian Society and Its Historian* (Oxford, 2006), 106–34.

[9] Alheydis Plassmann, *Origo gentis: Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen* (Berlin, 2006).

[10] Gabrielle Spiegel, 'Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative', *History and Theory*, 22 (1983), 43–53; and Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1993), 224–5. Spiegel develops the ideas of Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton, 1968); see also Joaquin Martinez Pizarro, *A Rhetoric of the Scene: Dramatic Narrative in the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1989). On genealogy as a mode of thought see Kilian Heck and Bernhard Jahn (eds.), *Genealogie als Denkform im Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 2000).

these is the political fragmentation of universalizing empires, and in particular the dissolution of Charlemagne's revived Roman Empire after 888, leaving in its wake a number of successor kingdoms. The rise of durable but localized political formations made linking contemporary history with the grand sweep of divinely ordered history more complex, and thereby less satisfying. Jerome's universal chronicle could use parallel columns to record the fate of contemporary empires, and trace their gradual integration into the Roman Empire. But universal chronicle techniques like these, visually demonstrating how plurality gave way to unity, ceased to be plausible, or indeed graphically possible, when there was no longer a single political history to be followed.[11]

Secondly, this new, fragmented political order was intimately associated with the political achievements of powerful aristocratic families. A celebrated argument connects the appearance of this new political formation with the gradual emergence in the centuries around 1000 of a family consciousness more oriented towards the vertical, towards patrilineal ancestors and descendants, compared with the more open-ended, horizontally oriented kinship group of the early Middle Ages. Though this model has been nuanced and made more complex, the association of new family structure and new political structure retains considerable explanatory power; and to associate this development with the growth of a novel kind of history-writing is no great step.[12]

William of Jumièges's history offers a paradigmatic illustration.[13] William was a monk at a prominent monastery with strong ducal connections in the lower reaches of the Seine river valley, culturally colonized by Scandinavian raiders from the tenth century. This region, soon known as Normandy ('land of the Northmen'), owed its existence and autonomy to the genius of its leaders, who claimed the title of duke in the mid-eleventh century. Around the year 1060, William began his *Gesta Normannorum ducum* [Deeds of the Norman Dukes], a history on a considerable scale, from the Viking Rollo, identified as the early

[11] McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, 14–15; and more generally, Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006).

[12] Karl Schmidt, *Geblüt, Herrschaft, Geschlechterbewusstsein: Grundfragen zum Verständnis des Adels im Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen, 1998); for recent nuance see Constance Bouchard, *Those of My Blood: Constructing Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia, 2001); and Joseph Morsel, *L'aristocratie médiévale: la domination sociale en Occident (Ve–Xve siècle)* (Paris, 2004). For an historiographical summary see Janet Nelson, 'Family, Gender and Sexuality in the Middle Ages', in Michael Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997), 143–65. For the new history-writing, Georges Duby, 'French Genealogical Literature', in Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (London, 1977), 149–57.

[13] *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni*, ed. and trans. Elisabeth van Houts, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1995). In addition to van Houts's introductory comments see Leah Shopkow, *History and Community: Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Washington, DC, 1997), esp. ch. 2. On William himself see the recent account by David Bates, 'The Conqueror's Earliest Historians and the Writing of His Biography', in David Bates, Julia Crick, and Sarah Hamilton (eds.), *Writing Medieval Biography 750–1250* (Woodbridge, 2006), 129–41.

tenth-century founder of Normandy, through to William's contemporary, Duke William I ('the Conqueror'). In a sense a serial biography, William's history devoted a book to each Norman duke's most memorable deeds, but the overall structure makes it clear that William's intention was to document a lineage, made easy since all the dukes were related to one another.

William did not need however to start from scratch, since his account is based on an early eleventh-century history of the Norman people by Dudo of Saint-Quentin. Dudo, as it happens, was one of the first historians to begin inflecting *origo gentis* models towards dynastic history, but the revisions William made to Dudo's text highlight further shifts in historiographical practice in the intervening half century.[14] The space allocated by Dudo to the Viking origins of Normandy, in other words to the pre-ducal, communal aspect of Norman history, was reduced, as were the dukes' connections to their pre-Christian past. William also concentrated much more than had Dudo on questions of hereditary succession from one duke to the next, which was sometimes threatened by interested outsiders, notably the king of France. Specifying whether the dukes' unions were 'proper' marriages or not, and tending only to mention 'legitimate' children, William's history reflected the emphatically dynastic nature of the eleventh-century Norman principality.[15]

William's revision of Dudo's text proved far more popular than Dudo's original, a popularity demonstrated by the twelfth-century revisions of William's work, composed by two more Anglo-Norman monks, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni.[16] Robert of Torigni's additions and revisions are beautifully contextualized by a letter he wrote around 1151 to still another budding historian, the monk Gervaise of Saint-Céneri, advising him to concentrate on the family, on genealogies and succession. Reminding us of the immediate political relevance of dynastic histories, Robert emphasized the material advantages which could accrue from their composition.[17] Robert's revision moreover added still more dynastic material to William's original text, stressing how many noble families were related to the dukes.[18]

As we know from other accounts, dynastic histories like these were often produced in close association with ruling courts. One Angevin count appears even to have written his own in the 1090s, and Dudo's semi-dynastic history had been

[14] On Dudo's shift towards dynastic history see Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, 264, 370–3.

[15] See van Houts, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges*, p. xxxviii. On this dynastic characteristic see the provocative Eleanor Searle, *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power, 840–1066* (London, 1988).

[16] Also edited in van Houts, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges*.

[17] Shopkow, *History and Community*; and van Houts, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges*, p. lxxix.

[18] Elisabeth van Houts, 'Robert of Torigni as Genealogist', in Christopher Harper-Bill, Christopher J. Holdsworth, and Janet Nelson (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown* (Wolfbero, 1989), 215–33.

directly commissioned by a member of the ducal family.[19] Though there is no specific evidence that William began writing his re-edition of Dudo on commission, there is some indication that it came to the attention of powerful patrons during its composition. William's haste to revise his work in the aftermath of the Norman conquest of England in 1066 can reasonably be interpreted as not merely evidence that William wanted his history to be up-to-date for scholarly reasons, because he hints that he had been asked to make the revision, and the entire work was dedicated to the Conqueror.[20]

Subsequent dukes, Anglo-Norman kings (notably Henry II), and others too retained their interest in the model sketched out by Dudo and so successfully reworked by William. However, Robert of Torigni's late twelfth-century revision of William's text was neither completed, for Robert turned to write a chronicle instead, nor widely distributed. William's dynastic history model seems to have lost its historiographical prominence in the Anglo-Norman court at this point. It has been persuasively suggested that this was because the form was no longer adequate to the task of describing the increasingly sophisticated Anglo-Norman, and Angevin, political system. This deficiency was particularly acute when the dukedom of Normandy and the kingdom of England fell to different rulers, while the attachment of Anglo-Norman kings to Normandy began inevitably to fade as they saw themselves more and more clearly in an empire of which Normandy formed only a fraction.[21]

Yet dynastic historiography's fall from favour in this particular context was more than countered by its growth from strength to strength in others. The genre was increasingly employed by families of lesser political importance, best illustrated by the great body of material associated with the Welfs of southern and of northern Germany: a powerful family, to be sure, but one which never achieved the political autonomy enjoyed by the Norman duke-kings. Precociously early, a range of texts was produced at or around the Welf court in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, detailing their family history in different forms.[22] The model which had become less appropriate to the trans-national dukes descended from Rollo clearly retained its purchase in describing smaller-scale, more stable (though not static) political configurations.

In fact, the composition of such texts was to become a particularity of the Holy Roman Empire in the later medieval period, especially from the fourteenth century onwards, reflecting the struggle of leading families to assert themselves

[19] See most recently on Fulk's *Fragmentum*, Jane Martindale, 'Secular Propaganda and Aristocratic Values: The Autobiographies of Count Fulk le Réchin of Anjou and Count William of Poitou, Duke of Aquitaine', in Bates, Crick, and Hamilton (eds.), *Writing Medieval Biography*, 143–60.

[20] Elisabeth van Houts, 'Historical Writing', in van Houts and Christopher Harper-Bill (eds.), *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World* (Woodbridge, 2003), 103–21.

[21] Ibid. For the politics see the classic John Le Patourel, *The Norman Empire* (Oxford, 1976).

[22] On the Welfs and their histories, Bernd Schneidmüller, *Die Welfen—Herrschaft und Erinnerung* (Stuttgart, 2000).

within an only loosely constraining political system. These texts justified not just the claims to power of those families over particular territories, but the system itself.[23] Initially the genre was associated with monastic houses founded by these families, for example the eleventh-century history of the Ezzonids recorded at Brauweiler, while the families directly enacted dynastic commemoration through other means, for instance embroidered tapestries.[24] But increasingly, aristocratic bloodlines were written at the prince's court itself, worked into narratives telling a family's story sometimes even from Creation. Such texts were produced beyond the empire too: the Fleming Lambert of Ardres's history of the noble houses of Ardres and Guines written about 1200 is perhaps the best known of all medieval dynastic histories, though circles within the Anglo-Norman kingdom produced similar works.[25]

It was also outside the empire that vernacular dynastic historiography emerged on a large scale from the twelfth century, chiefly written in various forms of old French, in a remarkable move away from Latin, the language of religion and religious truth, heavy with implications both for the interpretation of the content, and for its accessibility. William of Jumièges's history is again exemplary. Even as its political relevance to the kingdom faded, William's text was adapted into Anglo-Norman verse. The first of these adaptations, known as the *Roman de Rou* [Romance of Rollo], was written about 1175 by a Norman called Wace.[26] Wace's preface, the *Chronique Ascendante*, synthesizes William's story, and adds even stronger dynastic emphasis: the reader is pulled backwards in time, starting with the contemporary king and his patron Henry II and tracing his descent all the way to Rollo. The shift to the vernacular suggests that Wace had a listening audience in mind, and this, given what we know of patterns of medieval literacy, could have expanded its potential audience considerably.

William provided inspiration for still another vernacular history, the *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre* [History of the Dukes of Normandy

[23] Peter Johanek, 'Die Schreiber und die Vergangenheit: Zur Entfaltung einer dynastischen Geschichtsschreibung an den Fürstenhöfen des 15. Jahrhunderts', in *Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter: Erscheinungsformen und Entwicklungsstufen* (Munich 1992), 195–209 for a rich survey.

[24] For example, a late eleventh-century dragon tapestry woven by Adela of Hameland: Reuter, *Medieval Polities*, 142. For the wider context of family memorialization see van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe*. On the *Fundatio brunwilarensis* see Jonathan Rotondo-McCord, 'Locum sepulturae meae . . . elegi: Property, Graves, and Sacral Power in Eleventh-Century Germany', *Viator*, 26 (1995), 77–106.

[25] For Lambert of Ardres see ch. 22 by John Hudson in this volume. For Anglo-Norman aristocratic dynastic writing see Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Authorising History in the Vernacular Revolution* (Woodbridge, 2000). Lambert's celebrity is owed to his prominence in Georges Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France*, trans. Elborg Foster (Baltimore, 1978). On later English examples see Gudrun Tscherpel, *The Importance of Being Noble: Genealogie im Alltag des englischen Hochadels in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Husum, 2004).

[26] *Wace: The Roman de Rou*, ed. Anthony J. Holden, trans. Glyn S. Burgess, notes by Elisabeth van Houts (St Helier, 2002).

and the Kings of England], written in the 1220s by the 'Anonymous of Béthune'.[27] This was an adaptation with a difference, for like many others of the time, it was in prose. That was a move inspired by a new sense that verse was an inherently fictional medium and so unsuitable for 'history', in spite of the fact that the prose reworkings included adaptations of Vergil and the Song of Roland (the so-called Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle).[28]

Notwithstanding the shift down the social scale in audience, which translation into the vernacular implied, much of what was translated into verse or prose effectively promoted royal power.[29] This is true for Wace's verse rendition of William which though commissioned by the king (Henry II) was intended for aristocratic consumption, but the point is paradigmatically illustrated by the thirteenth-century *Grandes Chroniques de France* [The Great Chronicles of France]. Based around the successions of the kings of France, and the best-known of all prose vernacular dynastic histories, this work met with remarkable success in the later Middle Ages when it was copied for use in aristocratic households in spite of its relentlessly royalist perspective, perhaps contributing in a small way to a steady revival of royal power.

QUESTIONS OF GENRE: EARLY MEDIEVAL WESTERN TEXTS

The above account summarizes the current orthodoxy on the rise of dynastic historiography in Western Europe: its emergence from texts oriented to community history to reflect new political realities, the proliferation of histories it provided for the new dynastic houses of Western Europe, and the shift from Latin first to vernacular verse and then to prose. The rest of this chapter is devoted to comparing this picture with the historiographical traditions to be found in Byzantium and China, and drawing out the implications arising from this comparison.

First of all, however, we should reconsider a little more critically the distinction outlined above between the early, and the central and later medieval historiography. As already discussed, the early medieval period is not usually considered to have produced dynastic historiography properly speaking, being characterized instead by a mixture of *origo gentis* texts like Jordanes's *Getica* [Gothic History], sequences of dramatic scenes without clear narrative plotlines like Gregory of Tours's *Historiae*, and universalizing annals and chronicles. The conventional account of the emergence of dynastic historiography against this background is

[27] Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, 224–36.

[28] On vernacular history see ch. 19 by Charles F. Briggs in this volume.

[29] On the rise of vernacular prose history-writing, and the paradox presented by the manuscript evidence see in general Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past.* On the royal family's self-awareness see Andrew Lewis, *Royal Succession in Capetian France: Studies on Familial Order and the State* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982).

therefore an argument based on classifications of genre and form. But these are classifications which detailed consideration can bring into question as easily as confirm. If, to adopt a recently proposed definition, dynastic historiography is that 'whose organisational principle is the reign of a sequence of rulers or the generations of a family', then we ought to try to look beyond the outward form of any given text, to assess instead its inner logic.[30]

It is significant therefore that recent work on early medieval historical writing has emphasized that its underlying message could often be far more centred around the promotion of socio-political systems focused on particular families than is apparent from the form or genre alone. Just this, for example, has been argued for a mid-eighth-century revision of a world chronicle by the mysterious Fredegar. In this version of what remains formally a universal history, the rise of the Carolingian family is delicately picked out with care and attention.[31] Similar arguments have been mounted for much Carolingian annalistic writing too. For all that they appear to imply universalizing perspectives, many of these annals were produced in court circles, and perhaps worked to emphasize the Carolingian family's political dominance precisely by embedding it within a natural progression of time, associating community identity with the rule of a particular family in a fashion which can only be described as dynastic. Alternatively, annals could bear aristocratic family memories and identities in partial opposition to messages produced at the centre, still functioning thereby in a sense as dynastic historical writing.[32]

Arguments of this nature are equally applicable to *origo gentis* texts, whose distinctiveness from dynastic texts is clearer in the abstract than in empirical detail, even in early examples of the genre. Prominent families can usually be found lurking somewhere at the bottom of ostensibly ethnically focused texts. A good example is that of the Merovingians, the earliest dynasty of Frankish kings, whose family lies at the heart of many surviving texts about the early Franks. The dynastic message these texts carried was not lost on the readers, since we can detect attempts to destabilize or subvert it: that at least is a plausible reading of the interpolation into the Merovingian dynasty of a sea-monster, thereby rendering the eponymous Merowech's paternity deliberately ambiguous and weakening the dynastic implications.[33]

[30] For the definition, Leah Shopkow, 'Dynastic History', in Deborah Deliyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2003), 217–48, at 217 n. 1.

[31] Roger Collins, *Die Fredegar Chronik* (Hannover, 2007); and McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 138–40. Compare for similar arguments, Alexandr Rukavishnikov, 'Tale of Bygone Years: The Russian Primary Chronicle as a Family Chronicle', *Early Medieval Europe*, 12 (2003), 53–74.

[32] On annals as bearers of oppositional memory see McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, 81–9. On the association between dynasty and community, particularly clear in the Royal Frankish Annals, McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 113–19.

[33] Helmut Reimitz, 'Die Konkurrenz der Ursprünge in der fränkischen Historiographie', in Walter Pohl (ed.), *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen: Von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters* (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 8; Wien, 2004), 191–209.

None of this is intended to deny the importance of the emergence of new articulations of political history in the shape of dynastic chronicles, it is simply to point out that questions of genre are not the only ones which we should be asking. Genre was one way in which authors shaped their text, but the meaning it bestowed on the text, and audience interpretations of what they read or heard, should not be taken for granted: after all, even Vergil's *Aeneid* could be read as a history book.[34] The manuscript context, the way in which texts were brought together, deserves consideration as a potential vehicle of dynastic messages in ways which cannot easily be recovered from the printed edition of a text alone.[35] In considering the writing of dynastic histories, we should not therefore be content to classify simply according to form, not least since much dynastic history-writing can be classified under alternative genres.[36] We should also attempt to gauge whether dynastic intent lay behind historical writing, a more subtle and difficult task.

QUESTIONS OF TRADITION: DYNASTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY IN BYZANTIUM

If some historiography covertly carries dynastic implications, the converse is also true: closer investigation of history-writing which at first sight appears soaked in dynastic principles can reveal a structural lack of orientation towards the family. This is a situation exemplified by Byzantine historiography, taking as an example the famous *Chronographia* written by Michael Psellos.[37] Psellos's text superficially bears a strong resemblance to that written by his approximate contemporary William of Jumièges. Like William, Psellos arranged his history by rulers, in this case fourteen successive emperors of Constantinople, many of whom were related to one another, and he lingers over successions to the imperial throne, for example those which took place via successive marriages to Empress Zoe. These characteristics lend the work a certain dynastic flavour.

Yet in reality this is not dynastic history-writing, it is simply historiography organized by the reigns of rulers who merely happened sometimes to be related. Such a structure certainly highlights the practical importance of certain well-

[34] McKitterick, *History and Memory*, 15.

[35] Ibid., 13–18, 121–3.

[36] For example as local histories, on which see van Houts 'Local and Regional Chronicles'; and ch. 22 by John Hudson in this volume.

[37] Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Emile Renauld, *Chronographie ou histoire d'un siècle de Byzance (976–1077)*, 10 vols. (Paris, 1926–8); trans. Edgar R. Sewter as *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers* (Harmondsworth, 1966). Anthony Kaldellis, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia* (Leiden, 1999), presents a strongly argued interpretation with comprehensive references to previous work; on Psellos in general see Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (2008), esp. 191–224.

connected families, and Psellos was very interested in his subjects' ancestry. Nevertheless Psellos's priority, intimated again and again, is the importance of the imperial office. Psellos does not concentrate on any one particular family in practice or aspiration, nor was his text written for any such family, and nor can any intention of promoting a family consciousness be uncovered. It was for his concentration on the court, not some penchant for dynastic historiography, that Psellos was posthumously admonished by a later Byzantine historian, Skylitzes.[38]

In similar fashion, other ostensibly dynastic histories prove to be not quite what they appear on closer inspection.[39] In fact, there was an absence of a developed tradition of dynastic historical writing in Byzantium. This can be connected to its specific political and social characteristics.[40] Admittedly, trends in family organization akin to those discussed above in relation to Western Europe have long been proposed for eleventh-century Byzantium.[41] Here, too, heightened interest in ancestry and the growth of the political importance of family ties have been identified as features of the empire's general historical development, and the rise to prominence at this time of military families originating from Asia Minor, together with suggestive developments in nomenclature—such as the emergence of family names on the lead seals of the aristocracy—constitutes a classic co-ordinating narrative of Byzantine history. However, the notion that this led to the emergence of a family centred notion of the imperial office under Alexios Comnenos has recently been questioned.[42] And above all, no one denies that the Byzantine state, in the form of the imperial court and the imperial tax-collector, retained predominant importance throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and beyond. Models of competition between state and aristocracy are rarely helpful, but it is apparent that even in the middle Byzantine period, the aristocracy's interests were usually still articulated through the state, not in spite of it.[43]

[38] Bernard Flusin (trans.) and Jean-Claude Cheynet (ed.), *Jean Skylitzès: Empereurs de Constantinople* (Paris, 2004).

[39] For example, Niketas Choniates's *History* is superficially a dynastic account of the Comnenes, but in fact aimed at puncturing dynastic pretensions: *Historia*, ed. Jan Louis van Dieten (Berlin, 1975); trans. Harry Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit, 1984).

[40] The best recent discussion of the delicate issue of dynasty in Byzantine politics is Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Etude sur le 'césaropapisme' byzantin* (Paris, 1996); trans. Jean Birrell as *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003), particularly c.1. The closest Byzantine historiography came to dynastic historiography was in the composite mid-tenth-century Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae; Bonn, 1838), a neglected but isolated text.

[41] For recent accounts see Michael Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204: A Political History*, 2nd edn (London, 1997); and Jean-Claude Cheynet, 'The Byzantine Aristocracy, 8th–13th Centuries', in Cheynet, *The Byzantine Aristocracy and Its Military Function* (Ashgate, 2006), ch. 1.

[42] Peter Frankopan, 'Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium', *English Historical Review*, 495 (2007), 1–34.

[43] On the aristocracy in general see Michael Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy 9th to 13th Centuries* (Oxford, 1984); and on its place in the state, Catherine Holmes, 'Political Elites in the Reign of Basil II', in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Leiden, 2003), 38–56. On the

Just as significant as the fiscal and political dominance of the state in creating conditions unfavourable for dynastic historical writing was the role of intellectual tradition. Byzantium had no tradition of historicized ethnicity which could be tilted towards dynastic historiography.[44] Instead, Psellos leaned heavily on the rich historiographical legacy stretching back to Herodotus and Thucydides of which eleventh-century Byzantium was so keenly aware. He also was influenced by the tradition of biographical writing which had recently been reinvigorated, part of tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantium's celebrated 'humanism', marked by an emphasis on personality which Psellos himself brilliantly exemplifies.[45] This does not mean that the stereotype of Byzantium as unchanging and timeless should be revived, simply that historiographical development took place in a dialogue with older traditions in a creative yet unproblematic way unparalleled in Western Europe.[46]

Psellos's text offers an excellent example of this development at work. Psellos was renowned, not least by his own account, as a leading contemporary intellectual figure whose commitment to reviving Hellenistic traditions of political thought overrode all other objectives.[47] Insofar as his authorial intentions can be plumbed, Psellos was engaged in a philosophical enterprise, using his history as a means of putting across points transcending a focus on the rise and fall of dynasties. The logic underlying this sequence of biographies was decidedly not one of dynastic succession, nor even of fascination by the politics of the court where Psellos led such a turbulent career. It was more about what made a just and wise ruler, and about re-shaping the tradition of imperial rule. The *origo gentis* model of text did not form part of that tradition, and nor did history-writing focused on families. Nor, for that matter, was there room at Byzantium for a shift from the language of the literary elite to the vernacular. Most written Greek continued to conform to classical norms (Attic Greek), just as the content of what was set down was mostly in clear development from classical texts, while those texts which were in a form of koine Greek, including epics like *Digenis Akritis*, were not on the whole devoted to telling historical accounts in a truthful register. Yet though marking out the educated, the language of Psellos's history did not represent the potential barrier of communication which Latin could for contemporary Romance and Germanic-speakers.

persistent dominance of state structures see Angelika Laiou and Cécile Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge, 2007).

[44] Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 87–96.

[45] On biography see Paul Alexander, 'Secular Biography at Byzantium', *Speculum*, 15 (1940), 194–209.

[46] Roger Scott, 'The Classical Tradition in Byzantine Historiography', in Margaret Mullett and Scott (eds.), *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition* (Birmingham, 1981), 61–74; and Steven Runciman, 'Historiography', in Anthony R. Littlewood (ed.), *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music: A Collection of Essays* (Exeter 1995), 59–66.

[47] Kaldellis, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia*, 178.

It may be that these two elements, political structure and intellectual legacy, presented here as complementary, were more intimately connected still, that Byzantium's intellectual heritage left little room for the expression of family oriented, durable political power. In the Roman tradition, the exercise of power on behalf of the community was emphatically not a matter of inheritance, even if practically speaking that was often the way in which the power was transferred. Just as Byzantium maintained a state into the twelfth century which would have been recognizable to second-century Romans in a way which the organization of Western Europe would not, so too the way in which that power was discussed was rooted in republican modes of thought.[48] This is another aspect of the importance of Byzantium's debt to ancient Roman political thinking, which has often been unjustly overshadowed by the combined influence of Hellenistic and Christian theories of political rule.[49]

QUESTIONS OF FAMILY: DYNASTIC HISTORIOGRAPHY AND GENEALOGIES

Dynastic historical writing appears to have exercised little influence, then, in Byzantium. And at first glance, something similar could be said for China. From the Tang dynasty onwards, it became a convention for a new, legitimately ruling dynasty formally to sponsor a history of its predecessor (with such sponsorship itself naturally acting as a claim to legitimacy). These texts are often termed 'dynastic histories' in Western scholarship. There is not space here to do justice to these extraordinary works, which receive substantial treatment elsewhere.[50] What is important for our purposes is to stress that they are not dynastic in the sense that William of Jumièges's text is dynastic.

Ouyang Xiu's *Wudai shiji* [Historical Records of the Five Dynasties], finished just a few years earlier than William of Jumièges's text, offers a good way into these texts. Like William of Jumièges, Ouyang had revised a previous work, and like William and still more so Psellos, Ouyang was celebrated for his literary style and moved in elevated court circles: this was no backwoodsman, this no backwoodsman's history.[51] Working within the tradition pioneered by astonishingly influential Sima Qian writing in the first century BC, Ouyang's history combined

[48] For a stimulating and nuanced discussion of the traditions of public and private in the Roman Empire see Kate Cooper, 'Closely Watched Households: Visibility, Exposure and Private Power in the Roman Domus', *Past and Present*, 197 (2007), 3–33.

[49] In addition to ch. 10 by Anthony Kaldellis in this volume see his *Hellenism in Byzantium*, esp. 49–51.

[50] See ch. 1 by Charles Hartman and Anthony DeBlasi and ch. 2 by Hartman in this volume.

[51] On Ouyang's work in general see Ronald Egan, *The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu* (Cambridge, 1984).

an annalist-style chronicle with a series of biographies of leading figures, further enriched with monographic micro-histories of particular institutions or fields of study. But whereas Sima's work had attempted to span the entirety of Chinese history to the date of composition, Ouyang, like most of Sima's successors, chose a more limited scope, restraining the coverage to a dynastically defined period of history.

This decision followed deeply rooted traditions of political legitimation, of which one influential strand attributed divinely conferred power (the Mandate of Heaven) to successive dynasties in turn. Though lukewarm about traditional concepts of the Mandate, for which this turbulent period presented something of a problem, Ouyang was keen on the virtues of traditional kinship. Yet the underlying logic of Ouyang's history does not point towards a predominantly kinship-centred conception of either the past or of political process. Blood ancestry had become a marginal factor in determining imperial legitimacy from well before this period, not least because emperors usually left a considerable number of children from several concubines, all of whom were potentially eligible, so filiation did not much narrow the pool.[52] Like Psellos, Ouyang was a leading literary and philosophical figure with a very considerable reputation, and again like Psellos, Ouyang had rather more philosophical or abstract motivations in mind. Indeed, this work was one of the few 'private' dynastic histories composed, in that it does not seem to have been commissioned directly by the emperor or his circle, nor written in the Historiography Office set up by the Tang emperors, though Ouyang was personally involved in one such official composition, the *Xin Tangshu* [New History of the Tang] (1060).[53] Ouyang's intentions were to write more intellectually satisfying history, and to promote a particular vision of Chinese culture, not to glorify a particular family.

On the face of it, these observations confirm in an empirical sense what would in any case be likely: the historiographical traditions and social conditions which produced the dynastic focus of much Western European historiography were not paralleled in either Byzantium or China. However, things are slightly more complex than a straight affirmation of difference would imply. For another of the works on which Ouyang Xiu's literary fame rests is a revised genealogy made around 1055, a written record of his family over several generations.[54]

[52] For a discussion of the Mandate of Heaven (*tian ming*) and definitions of bloodline/legitimacy (*zhengtong*) see Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions Under the Jurchen-Chin Dynasty* (Washington, DC, 1984), 9 (for particular reference to Ouyang's contribution). On Ouyang's philosophy of history see On-cho Ng and Q. Edward Wang, *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China* (Honolulu, 2005), 136–9.

[53] For the Historiography Office see ch. 1 by Charles Hartman and Anthony DeBlasi in this volume.

[54] On Chinese genealogies in general see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), 113–16. See also Patricia Ebrey, 'The Early Stages in the Development of Descent Group Organisation', in Ebrey and James L. Watson (ed.), *Kinship Organization in Late*

The composition of genealogies (*pudie* 譜牒) was in itself no novelty, for they had been drawn up for aristocratic and imperial families in pre-Tang and early Tang dynasty China, and even directly by the state. Yet there was a marked hiatus from the mid-eighth century, followed by a renewed interest, in a slightly different register, in the eleventh. Unfortunately Ouyang's genealogy, originally inscribed on stone (with arresting implications for its reception) does not survive: in spite of their popularity—indeed because of it, because they were so frequently updated—there are virtually no Chinese genealogies composed before the Ming dynasty extant in their original form.[55] But Ouyang's preface to this genealogy, in which he explained the principles he was applying and his intentions, is preserved.[56] And it provides sufficient evidence to attribute to Ouyang a major role in this genealogical renewal, even if his model was substantially revised and expanded in later years.

This eleventh-century Chinese interest in genealogy was strikingly paralleled in contemporary Western Europe, which also witnessed the spread of written genealogies beyond the restricted social groups which had promoted them in the past.[57] Distinct from the genealogical texts of the Celtic-speaking parts of Europe, which formed quite a different tradition (and whose precise dating is a matter of controversy), and from simple king lists such as those produced in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria in the later eighth century reflecting practices of oral recitation, genealogies made a definitive transition from memory to the written form in texts produced for Frankish Carolingian rulers around the year 800, though it seems likely that they were not commissioned by the Carolingian family itself.[58] But these royal texts were only put to more general aristocratic use from the tenth century in Flanders in western Frankia, and elsewhere in Europe and its earliest colonies in the twelfth century. Carolingian models were literally integrated into aristocratic models of kinship, as many aristocratic families grafted themselves

Imperial China, 1000–1940 (Berkeley, 1986), 16–61; and Peter Bol, '*This Culture of Ours*': *Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung Culture* (Stanford, 1992). Hugh R. Clark, 'Reinventing the Genealogy: Innovation in Kinship Practice in the Tenth to Eleventh Centuries', in Thomas H. C. Lee (ed.), *The New and the Multiple: Sung Senses of the Past* (Hong Kong, 2004), 237–86, puts Ouyang's genealogy in a wider context rather than a radically new departure.

[55] On the tradition of Chinese epigraphy see Edward L. Shaughnessy, 'History and Inscriptions, China', in Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 1: *Beginnings to AD 600* (Oxford, 2011), 371–93. Ouyang was personally interested in epigraphy: see Ng and Wang, *Mirroring the Past*, 145.

[56] Ouyang Xiu, 'Ouyang shi putu xu', *Ouyang Xiu quanjii*, *Jushi waiji*, j.21 (1983), with some extracts translated into English in Clark, 'Reinventing the Genealogy', 245, 267.

[57] Duby, 'French Genealogical Literature'; and Léopold Genicot, *Les généalogies* (Typologie des sources du moyen âge 15; Turnhout 1975); cf. ch. 19 by Charles F. Briggs in this volume for 'Trojan' genealogies.

[58] On the Carolingian genealogies, Otto Gerhard Oexle, 'Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 1 (1967), 249–364 remains fundamental. On the Anglo-Saxon king lists see David Dumville, 'The Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies and Regnal Lists', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 5 (1976), 23–50. For the Irish tradition see Donncha O'Corráin, 'Creating the Past: The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition', *Peritia*, 12 (1998), 177–208.

onto the Carolingian genealogical tradition.[59] The same period also saw important innovations in the graphical representation of kinship, with experiments in using images of trees as a means of schematically expressing relations, a development perhaps echoed by more or less contemporary shifts in representations of Christ's genealogy in the so-called Tree of Jesse (see Fig. 24.1).[60]

The compilation of genealogies was of course no whimsical pastime, it had pragmatic functions. Western Europe's genealogical efflorescence can be linked to concern to avoid incestuous marriage, at a time when the circle of kinship affected by incest regulation was widely drawn indeed, though the number of genealogies drawn up with this explicitly in mind is fairly small.[61] It can also be linked, more uncertainly, to changing levels of literacy and distribution of those skilled in literate practice, such as household clerics. But above all, it is clearly connected with the wide-reaching shifts in family structure and political power discussed above, as with more elaborated dynastic historiography: and indeed, genealogies have often been interpreted as themselves one form of dynastic historical writing.[62]

In contrast to both China and Western Europe, genealogies as such, as a subgenre of dynastic historiography, were never a feature of Byzantine literature. A handful are mentioned, it is true, in other historical sources, connecting aristocratic families with the ancient Romans or even more illustrious figures in more or less transparently fictive ways. The Byzantine writer Michael Italikos commented on beliefs which traced the descent of prominent families back to Zeus, in striking parallel to Anglo-Saxon assimilations of Woden, for example. But no Byzantine genealogies of this sort are actually extant, and it seems that in Byzantium, unlike in either China or Western Europe, the composition of these texts never became widespread.[63] This was not for lack of interest in the family, of course, as the example of Psellos makes clear, since he wrote abundantly about his family. Yet he never constructed a genealogy of it.[64]

[59] For the colonies in Syria and Palestine and the *Lignages d'Outremer* see Shopkow, 'Dynastic History', 222–3.

[60] See though Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *L'ombre des ancêtres: essai sur l'imaginaire médiéval de la parenté* (Paris, 2000), 51–6 for hesitations about the Tree of Jesse's connection with the emergence of the 'family tree', and the extent to which the Tree of Jesse actually represents a genealogical concept.

[61] Gerd Althoff, 'Genealogische und andere Fiktionen in mittelalterlicher Historiographie', in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter*, 3 vols. (Schriften der MGH 33, 1; Hannover, 1988), i. 417–41. The appearance of similar legislation in Byzantium stimulated the production of schematic kinship lists, but apparently not of genealogies. See Angelika Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté à Byzance aux XIe–XIIe siècles* (Paris, 1992).

[62] Shopkow, 'Dynastic Historiography', expertly brings out the connections.

[63] Michael Italikos, *Michael Italikos, Lettres et Discours*, ed. and trans. Paul Gauthier (Paris, 1972), 148. For a brief discussion of these genealogies, which for the most part are lost if they were ever written, see Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 89–90.

[64] For Psellos's family see Anthony Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos* (Notre Dame, 2006).

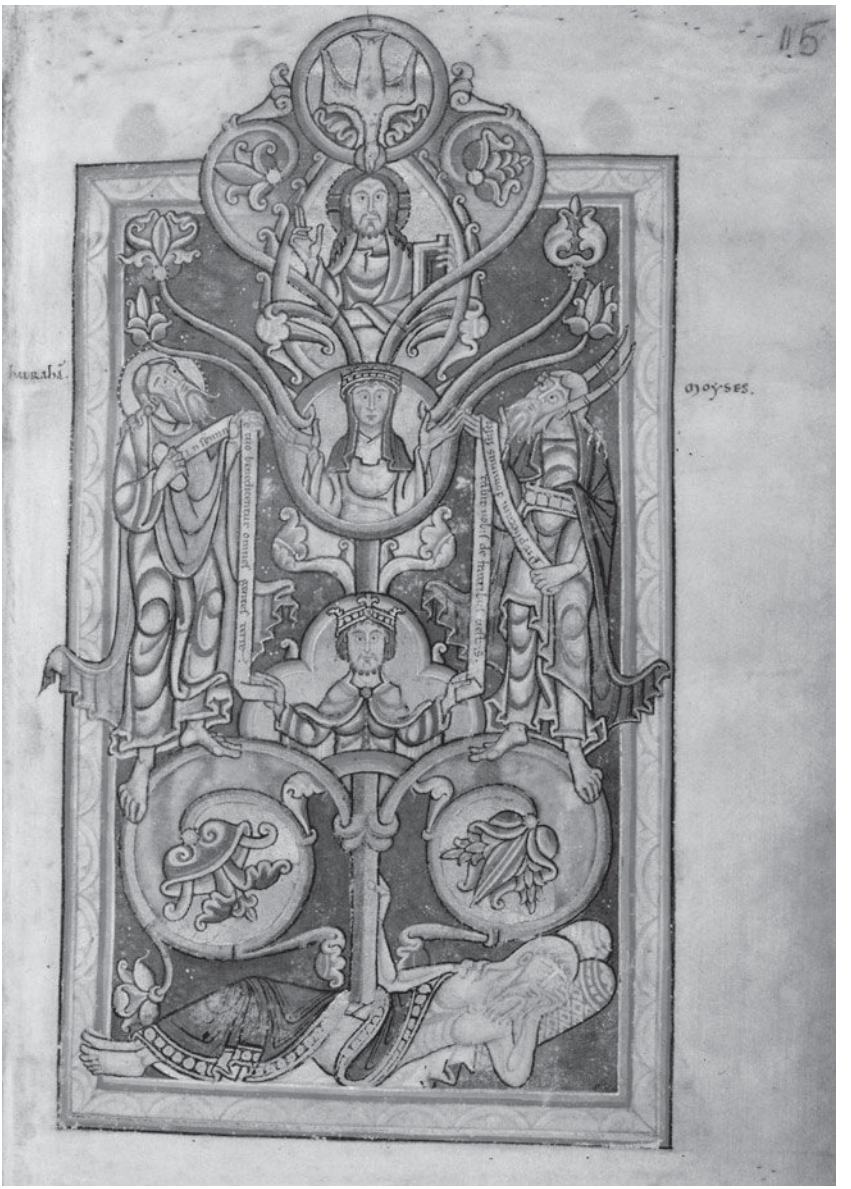


FIG. 24.1. A Tree of Jesse image from the *Shaftesbury Psalter* (British Library Lansdowne 383), f.15, an Anglo-Norman manuscript. Images of this kind, depicting the ancestry of Christ, appear in Western Europe from the eleventh century onwards, and have often been associated with an intensification of interest in written genealogies and dynastic history writing.

Moreover, these changes in the textual expression of kinship relations which are discernible at both ends of Eurasia but not in Byzantium would seem to be related to shifts in family structure. The changes in how Chinese genealogies were written have been associated with the breakdown of aristocratic clan structures and the emergence of new forms of family consciousness and organization, which would eventually produce what is known as the lineage structure. More or less precisely the same could be said of European genealogies too.

Yet in spite of superficial similarities, these shifts were radically different in nature. In China, the new family consciousness was not about certifying pedigree to bolster claims to privilege, and did not promote limitations on inheritance, as in Europe. Quite the reverse: it stressed horizontal connections to create a support network for aspirant *literati*, with a focus on ritual and cultic practice, and enabled claims to family lands. It also, eventually, reached much further down the social scale.[65] The fact that both transformations have been associated by historians with the emergence of 'the lineage' is wholly misleading, since lineage in Chinese scholarship is a term used primarily to describe corporate bodies holding shared land (the 'charitable estate') and resident in a restricted locality, often more or less co-existent with a farming community. This is a form of kinship organization which never developed in the West and which is almost the opposite of the conventional meaning of lineage in Western medieval scholarship.[66]

The political implications of these developments also differed widely. As in Europe, the transformation in Chinese structures was associated with a turn towards the local, though the details are rather contested.[67] Yet it was clearly not associated with the same sort of political development as that which took place in Western Europe. Though they were sometimes regarded with suspicion, Chinese lineages were not in practical terms sources of political authority alternative to the state. This was because, fundamentally, conceptions of political authority in China were not concerned with opposing public and private forms of authority. In line with Confucian (and neo-Confucian) tradition, family relationships were considered as only relatively, not absolutely, different from political relationships.[68] So, whereas in areas more or less intensely influenced by Graeco-Roman

[65] See Bol, '*This Culture of Ours*'. Fundamental on the family is the work of Patricia Ebrey, particularly 'Conceptions of the Family in the Sung Dynasty', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 43 (1984), 219–45.

[66] Patricia Ebrey and James Watson (eds.), *Kinship Organisation in Late Imperial China, 1000–1940* (Berkeley, 1986); and Zhenman Zheng, *Family Lineage Organization and Social Change in Ming and Qing Fujian*, trans. Michael Szonyi (Honolulu, 2001).

[67] The localization theory is associated with the work of Robert Hartwell, notably his seminal 'Demographic, Political and Social Transformations of China, 750–1550', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 42 (1982), 365–445. For a recent, balanced critique, see Beverley Bossler, *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status, and the State in Sung China (960–1279)* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998).

[68] Michel Cartier, 'En Chine, la famille, relais du pouvoir', in André Burguière *et al.* (eds.), *Histoire de la Famille*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1988), i. 445–77; and for a recent analysis of the politico-ethical interpenetration of family and administration in China see Christian Lamouroux and Deng Xiaonan, 'Les règles familières des ancêtres', *Annales—Histoire, Sciences sociales*, 3 (2004), 491–518.

legacies in which such an opposition remained powerful, the presence or absence of family centred history-writing tells us something about the distribution of political power, this is not quite so clear when it comes to traditions operating on significantly different pre-suppositions.

CONCLUSION

It has proved possible to go beyond the truism that the way in which family was integrated into the writing of history differed considerably across time and place. Looked at closely, the question of how kinship was integrated into accounts of the past sheds light on complex patterns of similarity and difference. The concept of dynastic historical writing as understood within the modern Western historiographical tradition has only limited applicability to Byzantine and Chinese historiography, and perhaps also neglects Western Europe's own more distant past. Yet Chinese traditions of historical record did leave ample scope for family focused history-writing. Only in Byzantium does there seem to have been little space at all for a developed interweaving of family and history.

These differences can be accounted for with reference to three key variables in how kinship related to political authority, those of actual political structure, intellectual legacy, and underlying assumptions of political thought. Ignoring the politicized role of certain families was hardly an option in a Western Europe which witnessed an extraordinary proliferation of legitimate and effectively autonomous authority vested in prominent dynasties. Moreover, there was a ready-to-hand tool for such bricolage, in that dynastic history-writing could, and in fact did, develop smoothly from ethnically based *origo gentis* historiography.

In comparison, Byzantium never saw political authority become so fragmented, notwithstanding the supposed rise of an aristocracy in the tenth and eleventh centuries. While it seems that its literary elites of the sixth and seventh centuries were deeply involved in the composition of ethnogenesis texts for the elites of the West, such models were never systematically applied at home. The aims of history-writing here reached back with ever-renewed vigour to a classical tradition of historiography which emphasized the importance of public affairs, and which sharply contrasted a family-based private to an office-based public. Biographies could and did flourish in this political culture, but dynastic historical writing could not. In a sense, Byzantine politics could never be described as dynastic, because dynastic principles had limited purchase in the Byzantine traditions of political thought.

China was different again. At least from the Tang reforms onwards, which greatly strengthened the bureaucracy, family structures never infiltrated office structures as profoundly as they did in the West. But more importantly, the Chinese classical tradition tended to avoid positing an unbridgeable gap between kinship and office, seeing the two instead as simply different registers of a divinely

inspired order. On the one hand this meant that dynastic history-writing is not a term applicable to China, since it assumes an inappropriate distinction, in that there was little formal history-writing which was not oriented around dynastic succession; on the other, it left space for developments in genealogical literature in a sense paralleled in the West, though nevertheless imbued with very different significance.

In conclusion, the study of dynastic historical writing proves useful on several levels. As conventionally undertaken in Western medieval research, it reveals changes in political structure, in political consciousness, and in the dissemination of particular forms of knowledge. But undertaken in a broader comparative light, it reveals not just differences in political structure but differences in political dynamic, too, based on the appropriation of different historiographical and cultural traditions, and gives due emphasis to the variety of experiences and outlooks which characterized the pre-modern world.

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Chapter 25

The Abbasid and Byzantine Courts

Nadia Maria El Cheikh

Research into court culture is part and parcel of the growth in the history of culture and mentality, or 'historical anthropology'.[1] The main historiographical developments have focused first, on the ritual and symbolic aspects of rulership as part of the political system; and second, on the personal and domestic world within which the prince lived. According to one scholar, 'Court and state are now seen as contemporary, confused, or identical, and no longer as separate worlds.'[2] Historians of the court have, however, highlighted the complexity of the subject. John Larner notes 'the ease with which any attempt at coherent examination dissolves either into a discussion of one of its parts . . . or into a general account of the character and policies of the prince who presided over it'.[3] Any historical investigation of the court faces the problem of definition because courts were so diverse and also because any ruler's court could be different depending on the occasion.[4]

This may explain, to some extent, why it is that court studies are almost non-existent for various periods of Islamic history.[5] Equally for Byzantine studies, the 1994 Dumbarton Oaks symposium was the first serious attempt to examine the Byzantine court in a broad range of respects.[6] One main reason for the reluctance to study the Byzantine court, according to Paul Magdalino, is linked to a fact that equally applies to Abbasid society: the Byzantines, like the Abbasids, did not isolate the court as a social and cultural phenomenon worthy of literary attention; rather, court culture was a fact of life which those who lived in it did not feel

[1] Gerard Nijsten, *In the Shadow of Burgundy: The Court of Guelders in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2004), 5.

[2] Trevor Dean, 'The Courts', *The Journal of Modern History*, 67 (1995), 136–51.

[3] John Larner, 'Europe and the Courts', *The Journal of Modern History*, 55 (1983), 669–81.

[4] Steven Gunn and Antheun Janse, 'Introduction', in Gunn and Janse (eds.), *The Court as a Stage: England and the Low Countries in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2006), 1–12.

[5] The topic of the Muslim court has benefitted recently from the following two publications: Jeroen Duindam, Tulay Artan, and Metin Kunt (eds.), *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective* (Leiden, 2011); and Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (eds.), *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries* (New York, 2011).

[6] Henry Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington, DC, 1997).

the need to articulate. Thus, they did not have a word for 'court'—a word that comes from the medieval West.[7]

The Byzantine and Abbasid courts have much in common, enough to warrant including them in a chapter that attempts to discuss the historiography of the court. That both societies did not isolate court and courtliness as a phenomenon worthy of literary attention is one commonality between them. Another aspect is brought up by Oleg Grabar. Using information from an eleventh-century book on gifts and treasures, *Kitab al-dhakha'ir wa al-tuhaf* [The Book of Gifts and Rarities], Grabar points out that the utilization and appreciation of objects was shared by both Islamic and Byzantine courts. This 'culture of shared objects implies a certain commonality of court behaviour and court practices'.[8] The kinds of questions that are pertinent in connection with both courts are: What is the terminology used in the sources to define the court and the courtiers? Who was a 'courtier'? Was it anyone who could attend the court and under what conditions? How was that environment—or space around the ruler—organized? Who filled it? How did it represent itself, and with what degree of ceremonial or spectacle? What were the rights and duties, obligations and privileges of the officers within the court and household?

The Abbasid and Byzantine sources can provide, in their respective ways, some answers to these questions. The Abbasid fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries witnessed a sharp rise in the number of chronicles and other literary works which offer us varied information. Singling out salient texts which address the topic of the court, I will discuss the terminology of courtliness, the roles and positions of certain Abbasid courtiers, and the interconnection between harem and court. This chapter will bear in mind questions about the textual production, specifically, whether it enjoyed direct or indirect court sponsorship. While the focus is on the Abbasid court, this chapter makes frequent references to the Byzantine court, within a comparative framework, in terms of sources and institutional models. For each section one or two texts from the respective Abbasid and the Byzantine traditions is discussed in order to reflect on the similarities and/or distinctions in genres and themes.

DEFINING THE COURT

Following the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 11/632, the Muslim armies conquered Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. By 101/720 the Arab Empire reached its

[7] Paul Magdalino, 'In Search of the Byzantine Courtier: Leo Choirosphaktes and Constantine Manasses', in Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, 14–65.

[8] Oleg Grabar, 'The Shared Culture of Objects', ibid., 115–29. Recent scholarship has promoted further the idea of an international court culture with shared values. See Anthony Cutler, 'Gift and Gift Exchange as Aspects of Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 55 (2001), 247–78. See also Leslie Brubaker, 'The Elephant and the Ark: Cultural and Material Interchange across the Mediterranean in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 58 (2004), 175–95.

maximum extent, incorporating North Africa, Spain, Transoxania, and Sind. The capital had been moved from Madina, in the Hijaz, to Damascus, in Syria, from where the Umayyad caliphs ruled until they were overthrown by the Abbasids in 132/750. The Abbasids established a new capital, Baghdad, in Iraq, and from there, the Abbasid dynasty reigned as the head of the greater part of the Muslim world for about five centuries. The late third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries brought about a political breakdown resulting in the fragmentation of power. In 334/945 the Buyids occupied Baghdad and for a century the caliphs had to submit to them. Different successor states emerged. In 447/1055 the Seljuks took control of Baghdad establishing a sultanate that lasted a century. The Abbasid caliphs from the fourth/tenth century on were weak in comparison to the Buyid and Seljuk dynasties. They, nevertheless, maintained themselves as integral players in the cultural and political events of the day.[9]

Despite their fluctuating power, the caliphs maintained a court, through which they compensated for their declining authority with an increasing display of prestige. The term court is rendered as *balat* by modern scholars without any assessment of what the term means and what underlies the particular terminology, specifically as it pertains to the Abbasid fourth/tenth century. The term *dar* comes perhaps closest to the concept of the court. Although Ibn Manzur's seventh/thirteenth-century lexicon *Lisan al-'arab* does not include in its definitions of the term *dar* any meaning that implies the idea of the court, *dar* is the term which Abbasid authors use in order to refer to the caliphal palace complex. Sometimes it stands alone and sometimes it is used alongside another qualifying term: Dar al-Khilafa or Dar al-Sultan. This word, *dar*, similar to the Greek *to-palation* (the palace),[10] perhaps best approximates the specific reality of the fourth/tenth-century court since it is the term used by contemporary sources to refer to the palace complex of the Abbasid caliphs both physically and metaphorically. This special sense of the court in Byzantium is mentioned by Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus in one letter where he speaks of the ruling class and the 'palace' officials, and in another of the 'the noble lords of the sacred palace'.[11]

The Abbasid court of the fourth/tenth century was polycentric and eclectic and seems to have constituted a space open to a vast range of outside influences. Similarly, Byzantinists have drawn attention to the complexity of definitions, and pointed to the overlap between the concepts of aristocracy, ruling class, and elite. In both fourth/tenth-century Baghdad and Constantinople the ruling class was constitutionally vague and not without features of a meritocracy. This unstable elite 'consisted of high-ranking military commanders, state bureaucrats, and courtiers,

[9] Eric J. Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in his Place: Power Authority and the Late Abbasid Caliphate* (Madison, 2007), 21.

[10] Alexander P. Kazhdan and Michael McCormick, 'The Social World of the Byzantine Court', in Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, 167–97.

[11] Nicholas I, patriarch of Constantinople, *Letters*, Greek text and English trans. R. J. H. Jenkins and L. Westerink (Washington, DC, 1973), 216, 312.

among whom the distinctions were blurred'.[12] Dominique Sourdel defines the Abbasid elite as 'all those who surrounded the caliph, who had access to him, who were part of the court or the administration, and who served as his delegates in the army and the judiciary'. There was, thus, no real 'nobility' but rather those 'whose functions rather than their birth' provided them with the privilege of attending the caliph's audiences, of participating in the *mazalim* court and of figuring among those who gave the oath of allegiance to the new ruler.[13] There were some whose birth status allowed them a ceremonial role at the court, notably the princes and the descendants of the Prophet.

In their study of the Byzantine court, Alexander Kazhdan and Michael McCormick state that 'the court was the human group physically closest to the emperor, a social world in which the emperor's household and his government overlapped, and a social world structured by the emperor's decisions'.[14] The authors surmise that it comprised the emperor's friends, the middle-ranking bureaucrats, stewards, housemen, and porters who were the people who raised the curtains at imperial audiences, heated the palace baths, and opened and closed doors, both literally and figuratively. The same group included the *domestikos* of each palace, the imperial goldsmiths, the lamplighters, clock attendants, etc. Next to them came the servants of the tables of the emperor and empress.[15]

In trying to understand the terminology used in describing the Abbasid courtier, the work of Miskawayh is fundamental. The most important source for this period is his *Tajarib al-umam* [Experiences of Nations], which was composed in the atmosphere of the Buyid court and which covers the years up to 373/983–4. It is, in the words of Tarif Khalidi, 'a long parable on the art of government', addressed primarily to rulers and the ruling class offering them examples of successful government.[16] Miskawayh follows the great annalist al-Tabari down to his own times in the early fourth/tenth century and then, for the later years, turns to first-hand experience and eyewitness reports. Characterized by synthesis and explanation, Miskawayh's history subjects events and people to critical evaluation. He provides a bureaucratic view that places the great administrators at centre stage.[17] This focus is helpful in trying to discern the court and the courtiers. Indeed, being a secretary for a number of Buyid viziers as well as to the Buyid

[12] Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World of the Byzantine Court', 168.

[13] Dominique Sourdel, L'état *imperial des caliphes abbasides: VIIIe–Xe siècle* (Paris, 1999), 212–3.

[14] Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World of the Byzantine Court', 167.

[15] Ibid., 181.

[16] Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994), 171–4. According to R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton, 1991), 130, history from the mid-fourth/tenth century on became chiefly 'a source of political prudence and moral admonition'.

[17] Claude Cahen, 'History and Historians', in M. J. L. Young, J. D. Latham, and R. B. Serjeant (eds.), *Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period* (Cambridge, 1990), 188–233; and Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London, 2006), 363.

ruler ʿAdud al-Dawla (d. 372/983), Miskawayh's activity as a historian was 'closely bound to his role as a courtier'.[18]

The term that most closely comes to describing the courtiers is *al-hashiya/al-hawashi*. In *Tajarib al-umam*, Miskawayh mentions that the vizier ʿAli b. ʿIsa abolished increases which had been extended to all ranks of the army, to the eunuchs (*al-khadam*), to *al-hashiya*, and to all clerks (*al-kuttab*), and employees (*al-mutasarrifin*). In one passage Miskawayh states that when he became vizier, Ibn al-Furat proceeded to examine ʿAli b. ʿIsa with reference to the allowances of the *hashiya*: 'You, he said, in the five years of your administration, reduced the allowances of the *harim* (the court of women), the princes, *al-hasham* and the horsemen.' In his defence, ʿAli b. ʿIsa answered: 'Your plan for meeting expenditure was to transfer sums from the private to the public treasury, thereby pleasing the *hashiya*.' From this passage it would seem that the term *al-hashiya* is inclusive of the *harim*, the princes, the *hasham*, and the horsemen.[19]

Miskawayh also provides another list where he states that during his second vizierate, ʿAli adopted strict measures. He reduced the allowance of the eunuchs (*al-khadam*), the courts attendants (*al-hasham*), the courtiers (*al-julasa'*) the table-companions (*al-nudama'*), the minstrels (*al-mughannin*), the purveyors (*al-tujjar*), the intercessors (*ashab al-shafaʿat*), and those of the retainers (*ghilman*) and the dependants of the heads of bureaux (*asbab ashab al-dawawin*).[20] Evidently large categories of people were implicated making it quite difficult to determine the boundaries between the different categories of courtiers, retinue, and bureaucrats.[21]

Another term which defines at least one circle of courtiers is the *khassa/khawass*. The *khawass* of al-Muqtadir are singled out among those who refused to partake in the conspiracy of Ibn al-Muʿtazz that tried to topple the young caliph. Miskawayh states: 'There were present the commanders of the army, the heads of bureaux . . . the judges and notables (*wujuh al-nas*), with the exception of Abu al-Hasan b. al-Furat and the *khawass* of al-Muqtadir.'[22] One way of defining the term is by exclusion: the term would thus exclude the groups that appear on this list. That the two terms *khawass* and *hawashi* define different categories of people seems clear in al-Sabi''s fifth/eleventh-century text where it is stated that *al-khawass* and *al-hawashi* paid official visits to the vizier.[23] But are these really two categories of people, clearly distinct, especially so in the minds of our authors? In

[18] Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden, 1988), 210.

[19] Ahmad b. Muhammad Miskawayh, *Tajarib al-umam*, ed. H. F. Amedroz, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1920), i. 108; trans. H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth as *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate* (Oxford, 1921), i. 120–1.

[20] Miskawayh, *Tajarib*, i. 152, trans. Amedroz and Margoliouth, i. 170–1.

[21] David B. J. Marmer, 'The Political Culture of the Abbasid Court, 279–324 (A.H.)', Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1994, p. 183.

[22] Miskawayh, *Tajarib*, i. 5.

[23] Hilal Al-Sabi', *Kitab tuhfat al-umara' fi tarikh al-wuzara',* ed. H. F. Amedroz (Beirut, 1904), 268.

texts that belong to the Mirror of Princes genre, the following seemingly synonymous terms refer to the courtiers: *hashiya*, *khassa*, *bitana*, *aʿwan*, *atbaʿ*, *khassat-al-khassa*. The authors of these texts do not display great interest in apprehending these terms conceptually as they fail to elucidate the nature of the tasks for each position or function.[24] In a similar vein, in their translation of *Tajarib al-umam*, H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth use the terms 'retainers', 'attendants', 'court-attendants', and 'court' to translate the term *hashiya* as it occurs repeatedly throughout the work.[25] There is thus a lack of clarity as to what these terms exactly mean in the various contexts in which they appear. The ways in which these terms were used in the texts, and the ways in which they have been translated, mask a confusion and an imprecise conceptual understanding of the terms and of the categories implied.

The Byzantine state, in what may seem an almost contrasting way, established early on a fairly precise hierarchy of rules and offices. Byzantinists benefit from surviving precedence lists, which provide a register of functionaries in the imperial administration, most importantly, the *Kleterologion* produced by Philotheos in 900. The titles can be grouped into some of the following categories: palace eunuchs, personal charges, imperial chancellery, the post and foreign affairs, the financial administration, justice, the palace guards.[26] However, as Nicholas Oikonomides notes, the jurisdictions of each duty are not clearly defined and thus an official could, parallel to his proper duties, have financial and juridical responsibilities in matters related to his administrative resort or to his position at court.[27] We also know that these ranks and offices brought with them a salary. The Western envoy Liutprand of Cremona attended on 24 March 950 the distribution of the yearly salaries to imperial officials in Constantinople. Byzantine texts confirm that these were distributed by the emperor himself 'in an act that stressed the personal relationship between the sovereign and his officials, and the complete dependency of the latter on the former'.[28]

No documents are available in the Abbasid context similar to the Byzantine precedence lists. The closest we get to such listings are budget statements which provide some categorization of court personnel. The fullest such budget statement is found in *Kitab al-wuzara'* [Book of Viziers] of Hilal al-Sabi', a secretary and at one point Director of Chancery at the Buyid court. Hilal belongs to a dynasty of learned men, a family that illustrates 'the affinity between chronography and ruling courts', since they were commissioned to write dynastic history by

[24] ʿIzz al-Din al-ʿAllam, *al-Sulta wa al-siyasa fi al-adab al-sultani* (n.p., 1991), 95–9.

[25] Miskawayh, *Tajarib*, i. 5–6, 29, trans. Amedroz and Margoliouth, i. 6, 32. The term *hasham* seems to be a sub-category of *hashiya*, but is equally unclearly defined.

[26] For details of these classifications see Nicholas Oikonomides, *Les listes de preséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris, 1972), 305–40.

[27] Ibid., 302.

[28] Oikonomides, 'Title and Income at the Byzantine Court', in Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, 199–215, on 201.

the Buyid rulers.[29] His administrative duties gave him access to official documents such as the invaluable budget that was drafted in 279/892, during the caliphate of al-Muʿtadid (279/892–289/901). The budget includes the following categories for the court staff: the Palace guards, including porters, both whites and blacks; the freemen from among whom chamberlains were recruited; the guards under various units, including horsemen and archers and the regiment of the 'selected' bodyguards (*al-mukhtarin*); the private secretaries; the Qurʾan reciters; the Callers to prayer; the astronomers; the water-carriers; the drummers; the trumpeters; the workmen ranging from goldsmith, to carpenters, to tailors, to shoemakers, etc.; the physicians; the harem women; the cleaners; the cooks; the court-boat crews; the lamplighters, and so on.[30]

Hilal al-Sabiʾ includes in his book on Abbasid ceremonials, of which more will be said below, a later budget statement, the one prepared by ʿAli b. ʿIsa for the year 306/918: for the Turks in the private and public kitchens; the monthly allowance prescribed to the caliph's mother (Umm al-Muqtadir), to the princes, to the female relatives and to the servants; the allowance for those in charge of the animals in the various stables; the salaries for the men managing the river boats; the salaries paid to the boon-companions, and others of their categories.[31]

Al-Sabiʾ states that the caliphal residence also contained farms and farmers, private livestock, and four hundred baths for its inhabitants (*ahliha*) and retinue (*hawashiha*).[32] Thus, a distinction is made here between the household and the retinue. Another distinction is between household and retinue on the one hand (serving the ruler) and the bureaucracy (serving the state) on the other. This distinction between serving the ruler and serving the state tended to be blurred, however. There was an overlap of functions that makes it difficult to establish a division between the administration and those attendant on the caliph's person. The interconnection between the two spheres was linked to the fact that the caliph, like the Byzantine emperor, was, in theory—and usually in practice—the ultimate source of authority and, therefore, a large part of the business of government was determined by the politics of intimacy. Indeed, the real criterion for membership of the court was access to caliph and emperor. The history of the court is, to a large extent, the history of those who enjoyed that access. What were the rewards of access? How influential were the 'persons known at court'? What part did they play in the factional struggles to advance men and dictate politics? Abbasid sources are rich in depicting the personality and roles of such categories of courtiers, including boon-companions, chamberlains, and eunuchs.

[29] Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), 164–6, at 166.

[30] Al-Sabiʾ, *Kitab tuhfat al-umara' fi tarikh al-wuzara'*, 11–22. In his article analysing this document, Heribert Busse identifies thirty-nine different types of expenses. See his 'Das Hofbudget des Chalifen al-Muʿtadid billah (279/892–289–902)', *Der Islam*, 43 (1967), 11–36.

[31] Hilal al-Sabiʾ, *Rusum dar al-khilafa*, ed. M. ʿAwwad (Baghdad, 1964), 21–5; trans. Elie A. Salem as *Rusum dar al-khilafa: The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court* (Beirut, 1977), 23–5.

[32] Al-Sabiʾ, *Rusum*, 7–8, trans. Salem, 13.

THE PRIVILEGE OF ACCESS: BOON-COMPANIONS AND CHAMBERLAINS

The absence of Abbasid documents similar to the Byzantine precedence lists forces one to sift through as many references as possible to court personnel in a broad variety of sources, notably treatises on monarchical government. Significantly, in Byzantium, we find no such works. Books of counsel for rulers, or Mirrors of Princes, form a distinctive genre of classical Arabic and Persian literature. While they share certain common features, different Mirrors vary in emphasis and subject matter. This Islamic genre points to the human grouping that surrounded the ruler and played a certain role in political life through acquiring a position or a political or religious employment, or indirectly through attending a *majlis* of the ruler.[33] It was in the *majlis/majalis* that the intellectual, cultural, and social life of the Abbasids took place. Some were devoted to music, some to poetry and literary discussions, some to grammar, to jurisprudence, to scholastic theology, and some were devoted to drinking. They were also often mixed, including music performances, poetry, and the history of the Arab tribes.[34]

The genre of counsel for rulers provides information on the boon-companions (*nadim/nudama*'), individuals of learning, wit, and graceful manners who were selected for their talents to befriend the caliph, keeping him company in his time of solitude, hunting parties, chess games, and drinking and literary sessions.[35] The boon-companions constituted an important group at the court of the ruler and were part of a well-defined institution. This influential institution had a set of rigorous requirements and was regulated by a strict etiquette. The bulk of the third/ninth-century *Akhlaq al-muluk* [The Conduct of Kings] of Muhammad b. al-Harith al-Thaʿlabi (previously known as *Kitab al-taj* [The Book of the Crown] by al-Jahiz), consists of prescriptions dealing with the interaction between rulers and their *nudama'*. In his introduction, al-Thaʿlabi states that he has gathered the rules of royal protocol so that they may serve as a model and guide for the education of the ʿ*amma* (the public) and the *khassa* (the elite).[36] The book emphasizes the necessity of establishing a hierarchy among the ruler's companions. The various sections detail some of the protocols surrounding the interaction between the ruler and his companions, and broaches subjects such as the etiquette of drinking, the use of the curtain, the ways to address the ruler, how to behave when the ruler stands up and

[33] Al-ʿAllam, *al-Sulta wa al-siyasa fi al-adab al-sultani*, 95.

[34] George Dimitri Sawa, *Music Performance Practice in the Early Abbasid Era 132–320/750–932* (Toronto, 1989), 111.

[35] Anwar G. Chejne, 'The Boon-Companion in Early ʿAbbasid Times', *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 85 (1965), 322–35.

[36] Muhammad b. al-Harith al-Thaʿlabi, *Akhlaq al-muluk*, ed. J. ʿAtiyya (Beirut, 2003), 32.

when he speaks, rules to follow when the ruler falls asleep, etc.[37] Kushajim, the fourth/tenth-century courtier of the Hamdanid court (first in Mosul and then in Aleppo), includes in his *Adab al-nadim* [The Etiquette of the Boon-Companion] a section on the characteristics of the boon-companion in terms of the required character, the types of knowledge that he ought to have, as well as his physical attire.[38] The *Rusum* describes the robes of honour bestowed on boon-companions and mentions the budget for the caliphal boon-companions.[39]

Although some *nudama'* could be officials of the caliph, in most of the literature concerning the institution, such doubling up is deemed unwise. One of the best known works of this kind is the *Siyasatnama*, or the 'Book of Government or Rules for Kings', of the Sejuk chief minister Nizam al-Mulk (408/1018–485/1092), written in Persian in 484/1091. In one chapter, Nizam al-Mulk states that a king needs boon-companions 'with whom he can enjoy complete freedom and intimacy'. He explicitly formulates the following exclusion: 'As a general rule people who are employed in any official capacity should not be admitted as boon-companions nor should those who are accepted for companionship be appointed to any public office.' In addition to providing company to the king in a familiar and relaxing atmosphere, they can also function as his bodyguards, listen to the king's serious and frivolous chatter, as well as report to the king about all kinds of matter. Nizam al-Mulk specifies that 'everyone of the boon-companions should have a rank and degree; some have sitting status, others standing status. . . . [T]he boon-companions must be given salaries, and treated with the highest respect among the retinue.'[40]

Aside from these highly prescriptive texts, we have a more personal reflection on boon-companionship in the works of Abu Bakr al-Suli, who was a *nadim* under a number of caliphs. He provides a unique picture of life at the caliphal court based on first-hand knowledge in his *Kitab al-awraq* [The Book of Folios], which consists of historical material, personal recollections, and eyewitness accounts. The proximity of its author to the court of Caliph al-Radi (322/934–329/940) could lead one, according to Marius Canard, to title this part of the book 'memoirs d'un courtisan'.[41] Al-Suli gives an eyewitness description of the manner in which the first gathering of the Table-companions of al-Radi was organized and conducted. The caliph sent to al-Suli a message in which he inquired about the companions of earlier caliphs who were still fit to be invited to his receptions. Al-Suli answered that of such companions, the only remaining one was Ishaq b. al-Muʿtamid but he suggested others who have the qualities

[37] Ibid., 49–152.
[38] Kushajim, *Adab al-nadim* (Bulaq, 1298), 7–12.
[39] Al-Sabi', *Rusum*, 23, trans. Salem, 24.
[40] Nizam al-Mulk, *Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyasatnama or Siyar al-Muluk*, trans. Hubert Darke (London, 1960), 92–4.
[41] Abu Bakr al-Suli, *Akhbar al-Radi billah wa'l Muttaqi billah*, trans. Marius Canard (Algiers, 1946), 39.

necessary to be present at the caliph's receptions, notably Muhammad b. ʿAbdallah b. Hamdun and Ibn al-Munajjim. The group (*al-jamaʿa*) arrived at the caliphal palace to assist at the caliph's reception and they sat in strict order: to the right sat first the prince Ishaq b. al-Muʿtamid; then al-Suli, then a philologist, private tutor of a prince, and Ibn Hamdun. To the left sat three literary courtiers of the family of Munajjim and Biridis of high official descent.[42] Al-Suli reports on the two activities that dominated such receptions: reciting poetry and drinking wine.[43] It seems that the roll was constituted of groups of four companions that took turns attending the receptions every other day.[44] This is also confirmed in an anecdote which relates that Caliph al-Radi became vexed with his companion Ibn Hamdun and forbad him access. Al-Suli comments that: 'Our team diminished; we used to be four including Ibn Hamdun and now it was Ishaq b. al-Muʿtamid, ʿArudi, and myself.'[45]

The proximity of al-Suli to the caliph al-Radi, as his boon-companion, afforded him opportunities to intervene on behalf of the highest bureaucrats of the state, notably viziers. One such important instance which occurred in 323/935 included his defence of the vizier ʿAli b. ʿIsa. The caliph accused the latter of embezzling 5,000 dinars. Al-Suli told the caliph: 'May your majesty examine this affair at its source and consider that ʿAli is not the kind of person to be lured by 5,000 dinars. He is the last man to act in this way.'[46] However, al-Suli's intervention backfired as some of his competitors at court spoke ill of him. Consequently, the caliph deprived him of the rewards he had so far been giving him.[47] The Byzantine evidence warns of such intrigues. One tenth-century Byzantine witness, Theodore Daphnopates, observed that side-by-side with the pleasures of court life, the palace was filled with jealousy, flattery, deceit and fear: 'Everything . . . is a game and a stage . . . offering only a faint trace of the truth.' Theodore complained in another letter of the liars at court, who were propelled by malice and envy into making false accusations.[48] Similarly, Michael Psellus in the eleventh century, referring to the reign of Theodora (1055–6) states: 'My visits, made at her invitation, excited jealousy.'[49] Throughout his text Psellus makes frequent references to this state of affairs at the Byzantine court. While in the above mentioned case al-Suli's closeness to ʿAli b. ʿIsa brought about his temporary dismissal, al-Suli's relationship with the vizier al-Fadl b. Jaʿfar in 326/937–8 carried benefits. Al-Fadl, who admired

[42] Al-Suli, *Akhbar al-Radi billah wa'l Muttaqi billah*, ed. H. Dunne (Cairo, 1935), 8–9, trans. Canard, 60–2. See this passage also in Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. S. Khuda Bukhsh and D. S. Margoliouth (London, 1937), 143.
[43] Al-Suli, *Akhbar al-Radi*, ed. Dunne, 9, 19, 55.
[44] Ibid., 137.
[45] Ibid., 102.
[46] Ibid., 65–6.
[47] Ibid., 66.
[48] Theodore Daphnopates, *Theodore Daphnopates: Correspondance*, ed. J. Darrouzes and L. G. Westerink (Paris, 1978), 227–31, 215–25.
[49] Michael Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, trans. E. R. A. Sewter (New York, 1984), 267.

al-Suli's manual for secretaries, *Kitab al-kuttab* [The Book of Secretaries], gave him 300 dinars and incorporated him on the pension list of his close associates (*al-hasham*).[50]

One other main personality at court with intimate access to the ruler was the chief chamberlain. The inherently sensitive and powerful role of chamberlains is highlighted in a third/ninth-century epistle of al-Jahiz, entitled 'Kitab al-Hujjab'. One anecdote has a caliph telling his *hajib*: 'You are my eyes through which I look, the shield on which I rely. I have put you in charge of my door, how, I wonder, are you treating my subjects?' The *hajib* answered: 'I look at them through your eyes, I uphold them according to their standing with you.... I determine their order according to the positions (*tartib*) in which you have placed them'.[51] Indeed, this was the primary duty of the chamberlain, that is, organizing the audiences, determining precisely the positions of the various dignitaries and courtiers. However, this was a most sensitive duty as an *amir* enjoining his chamberlain stated:

> Fulfilling the trust in matters of honour is more necessary than in matters of money. That is, because money constitutes a protection for honour whereas honour is not a protection for money. I have entrusted you with the honour of those who come to my door; this honour is their rank, so protect it for them ... and protect thereby my honour.[52]

This passage reflects the importance of hierarchy which was much more structured in the Byzantine Empire as expressed in the preface of Philotheos's treatise: 'The eminent place that someone has in life and the value of the titles that he holds are only manifested in the order of precedence at imperial banquets.' Order is hence of exceptional importance.[53] In both the Byzantine and Abbasid courts chamberlains were pivotal in regulating ceremonial.

The importance of court ceremonies in such systems need not be stressed. Constantine Porphyrogenitus's tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* maintains that ceremonial makes imperial authority appear more elegant and better-ordered, and gives extra worth to the titles and the stipends accompanying them.[54] The fifth/eleventh-century Abbasid period has also left us with an epistle on Abbasid ceremonials. Authored by Hilal al-Sabi', *Rusum dar al-khilafa* [Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court], redacted in the earlier part of the caliphate of al-Qa'im (423/1031–468/1075), relates the rules and regulations of the Abbasid court. *Rusum dar al-Khilafa* includes a myriad of material ranging from advice to viziers, secretaries, boon-companions, and others on how to dress, sit, and address the caliph, to descriptions of caliphal audiences.

[50] Al-Suli, *Akhbar al-Radi*, ed. Dunne, 90.

[51] Abu 'Uthman 'Amr al-Jahiz, 'Kitab al-Hujjab', *Rasa'il al-Jahiz*, ed. 'Abd al-Salam Harun (Beirut, 1991), 33.

[52] Ibid., 34.

[53] Oikonomides, *Les listes de preséance Byzantines*, 21.

[54] Jonathan Shepard, 'Courts in East and West', in Peter Linehan and Janet Nelson (eds.), *The Medieval World* (London, 2001), 14–36.

The two works are very different in the way they were compiled and in the detail that they provide. The Byzantine book is an official compilation, put together at the order of the Byzantine emperor, and is also the richer. It provides information for both religious ceremonies and civil imperial ceremonies.[55] The Abbasid book is the unitary work of one author who decided to publish on this topic 'lest this remaining knowledge falls into oblivion'.[56] Both texts are books of protocols, not descriptions of what necessarily happened. *Rusum dar al-Khilafa* was based on first-hand information from the author's grandfather, who had witnessed ceremonial in full splendour.

The prescriptions of the *Book of Ceremonies* and *Rusum dar al-khilafa* and their descriptions of ceremonial occasions indicate a developed and regulated court ritual. The attributes of the ceremonial contributed to glorify emperor and caliph. First there was a huge palace complex which provided the stage and the décor. Then there was a large number of 'courtiers' and servants who were simultaneously performers, extras, and the first row of audience. The emperor and caliph, respectively, were the stars of the show. It is important to note, however, that it was only in the fourth/tenth century that a degree of ceremonial elaboration was reached by Abbasid ceremonial, comparable to those of the Byzantines.[57]

The rules that governed appearance and behaviour in the presence of the caliph constituted a repertoire of restraint, mixed with regulations of distance from the caliph to be kept by different categories of courtiers. It was the chamberlain who was in charge of keeping an eye on the regulations, making sure that a person is properly dressed in attire and colour if he is to have an audience with the caliph; and supervising that the people in the hallways and corridors of the residence have a proper demeanour, heads covered, and not sitting with one leg upon the other.[58] The *hajib* was the master of ceremonies, and as such, supervised the organization of solemn audiences. The role of chamberlains in court ceremonial is outlined by al-Sabi' who states that:

> On procession days, the chief Chamberlain (*hajib al-hujjab*)…with the chamberlains and their lieutenants marching in front of him, sits in the corridor behind the screen.…If the caliph wishes to give a general audience, he sends his private servant in charge of correspondence to bring the chief chamberlain. The latter enters alone, stands in the courtyard, and kisses the ground. He is then ordered to admit people according to their respective ranks.…The *wazir* enters accompanied by chamberlains.…[59]

[55] Averil Cameron, 'The Construction of Court Ritual: The Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies*', in David Cannadine and Simon Price (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1987), 106–36.

[56] Al-Sabi', *Rusum*, 6, trans. Salem, 12.

[57] Dominique Sourdel, 'Questions de cérémonial abbaside', *Revue des études islamiques*, 28 (1960), 121–48; See also Marius Canard, 'Le cérémonial fatimide et le cérémonial byzantin', *Byzantion*, 219 (1955), 355–420; and al-Sabi', *Rusum,* 11–12, trans. Salem, 16–17; Miskawayh, *Tajarib*, i. 55.

[58] Al-Sabi', *Rusum*, 76–7, trans. Salem, 62.

[59] Al-Sabi', *Rusum*, 78, trans. Salem, 63–4.

In Byzantium, power in ceremonial matters was also in the hands of the chamberlain (*praipositos*). By the early tenth century, the chamberlain managed the ritual appearances and encounters of the emperor. The organization of ceremonial fell to the highest official of the empire, thus reflecting the importance of ceremonial for the imperial palace.[60]

Viziers, bureaucrats, and others seeking admission to the caliph could only reach the caliph's presence through the chief chamberlain and usually had to wait in his chambers. Various anecdotes relate that people entering Dar al-Khilafa were taken first to the residence of the chamberlain. For instance, a woman who wanted to report the hiding place of Ibn al-Furat's son al-Muhassin 'immediately proceeded to the palace, and continued until she reached the chamberlain's apartment and explained to him the matter'.[61] Al-Khaqani, sensing an intrigue to have him replaced, requested from the chamberlain Nasr to get him permission to meet with the caliph. Nasr got him that permission.[62]

The various hierarchies that converged on the court tended towards the conceptual classification of servant and master.[63] The viziers, the chamberlains, and various courtiers, irrespective of their different privileges, duties, and ranks, were all ultimately servants to the caliph. The functions of the caliph's men, grounded as they were in personal obligation to the caliph, meant that the most valuable quality for those in service was loyalty. This, in turn, implied the necessary goal of pleasing the caliph. In keeping the company of a caliph, those who were almost constantly in attendance, specifically the chamberlains, had to be wary of his disposition, keeping a constant vigilance for any signs of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Caprice was a correlate of absolute power as reflected in the work of Ibn Qutayba who devotes a section to the topic of royal caprice and inconstancy.[64] The chamberlains were, thus, subject to fluctuations in favour and disfavour. *Rusum Dar al-Khilafa* highlights this matter in a council to the caliph's entourage:

> Beware of arguing with the sultan when he is angry or of urging him to leniency when he is obstinate. . . . Try to avoid him when you detect his wrath mounting. Wait to present your excuse . . . until his anger is calmed . . . guard against the temptation of speech. . . . Do not complain . . . do not persist . . . be thankful . . . be patient.[65]

[60] Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1990), 222–5.

[61] Miskawayh, *Tajarib*, i. 132.

[62] Al-Sabi', *Kitab tuhfat'al-umara' fi tarikh al-wuzara'*, 269.

[63] Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge, 2004), 104–6.

[64] Aziz al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Polities* (London, 1997), 125. See Ibn Qutayba, *'Uyun al-akhbar*, ed. Yusif Tawil (Beirut, 1985), i. 73–82.

[65] Al-Sabi', *Rusum*, 87–8, trans. Salem, 70–1.

THE COURT OF WOMEN AND THE EUNUCH GUARDIANS

In the early fourth/tenth century, the Dar al-Khilafa was a large complex made up of a number of palaces. The configuration of these palaces as well as their internal organization remains unknown. Not only is archaeological information insufficient, but textual information is also inadequate for 'nowhere do we read a description that can be translated into architectural forms'.[66] We can infer from the excavations of the caliphal palace in Samarra', the temporary Abbasid capital in the third/ninth century, that the architecture of the caliphal complex in Baghdad was characterized by strictly delineated boundaries between private and public, exterior and interior, male and female, and royal and non-royal. Al-Jawsaq al-Khaqani, enclosed within a massive buttressed wall, functioned as the private residence of the caliph and his women.[67]

Dar al-Khilafa in Baghdad functioned simultaneously as a stage set for the representation of caliphal power, as an administrative centre of a vast empire, and as a residence for the caliphal family. Prominent women had their own apartments within this complex and it is probably from this time that a separate women's quarter within the palace first emerged.[68] The Abbasid harem of the early fourth/tenth century included family members and the administrative/service hierarchy. The former included the caliph's mother, the wives of the caliph, his concubines, the children and the unmarried, widowed or divorced sisters and aunts. The administrative hierarchy included the high-ranking administrative officers of the harem, namely stewardesses and eunuchs, the female servants who performed the housekeeping tasks of the harem, and female slaves.

The most powerful person in the Abbasid harem tended to be the mother of the caliph. This was certainly the case in the fourth/tenth century with the accession of the young al-Muqtadir. His mother, Umm al-Muqtadir, figures prominently in the annals of this period through her political interventions, her financial contributions to the reign, and her wide philanthropic activities. Umm al-Muqtadir's economic power was based on her agricultural estates which she had received as land grants. Her very wealth became a source of power and this in turn allowed her to foster a series of subordinate patronage networks. She had her own retinue, secretaries, and other officials. The sources highlight the closeness between the caliph and his mother, stating that the caliph used to spend a lot of time at his mother's quarters in the harem.[69]

[66] Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven, 1987), 158.

[67] Alastair Northedge, 'An Interpretation of the Palace of the Caliph at Samarra (Dar al-Khilafa or Jawsaq al-Khaqani)', *Ars Orientalis*, 23 (1993), 143–70; and, more recently, Northedge, *The Historical Topography of Samarra* (London, 2005), 133–50.

[68] Hugh Kennedy, *The Court of the Caliphs* (London, 2004), 165.

[69] Miskawayh, *Tajarib*, i. 118. For Umm al-Muqtadir see Nadia Maria El Cheikh, 'Gender and Politics: The Harem of al-Muqtadir', in Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith (eds.), *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900* (Cambridge, 2004), 147–61.

Umm al-Muqtadir played an important part in the power struggle within and between factions at the court. However, while the caliph's mother exerted important but informal influence, in Byzantium, women could become actual rulers. Thus, Psellus recounts how in 1042 the empire passed into the hands of the two sisters Zoe and Theodora 'and for the first time in our lives we saw the transformation of a *gynaeconitis* into an emperor's council chamber'. Psellus states, furthermore, that 'court procedure . . . was made to conform to the usual observance of the sovereign who had ruled before them'.[70] Unlike the Abbasid model, men were not completely banned from the empress's private quarters. Psellus describes the courtier Boilas within the *gynaikonitis* entertaining the elderly co-empresses Zoe and Theodora around 1049/50. Psellus emphasizes the success of this performance and the resulting privileges including unlimited access to the women's quarters: 'Well, this clown of ours . . . won the favour of both empresses. . . . These foolish women, captivated by the clown's stories, allowed him to come and go as he pleased by secret doors.'[71]

The *Book of Ceremonies* informs us that empresses presided over their own ceremonial and social spheres which were constituted of the wives of the members of the state hierarchy of dignities.[72] The *Book of Ceremonies* also records that during the Pentecostal liturgy in Haghia, Empress Sophia granted audience to the wives of imperial dignitaries and offered them the kiss of peace.[73] Moreover, Byzantine panegyrics of empresses employed similar conventions as those of their husbands: the women were praised for their noble birth, their imperial virtues, and their physical beauty and perfection.[74] This was not the case at all in the Abbasid context. We do not read of ceremonies taking place in the harem—but then we have very little information about that space. Moreover, the panegyrics of important female personalities had a mixed reception. The famous fourth/tenth-century poet al-Mutanabbi, for instance, was criticized for composing an elegy upon the death of Khawla, the sister of Sayf al-Dawla, head of the Hamdanid principality in Aleppo. Al-Mutannabi's verses aroused the rage of medieval critics who were guided by a strict sense of propriety. A court poet was not expected to address a deceased princess personally as al-Mutannabi had done. It was essential to ensure that the woman in the elegy did not become the centre of scandal simply by having her name on the lips of the public.

The Abbasid and Byzantine sources are different and reflect the different composition and role of the court of women in Baghdad and Constantinople. What the sources seem to share, however, is a common denunciation of female

[70] Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, 155–6.
[71] Ibid., 231.
[72] *Le livre des ceremonies*, ed. A. Vogt, 2 vols. (Paris, 1935–40), i. 61.
[73] Ibid., i. 61–2. See Liz James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (Lexington, 2001), 52–8.
[74] Henry Maguire, 'Images of the Court', in Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (eds.), *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261* (New York, 1997), 182–91.

rule. Psellus states that Zoe and Theodora 'confused the trifles of the women's quarters with important matters of state'. Moreover, he accuses their liberality for being 'the sole cause . . . of the universal corruption and of the reduction of Roman fortunes to their lowest ebb'.[75] The criticisms with respect to Umm al-Muqtadir similarly fit neatly within the general critical attitude that the sources hold towards female intervention in politics. Umm al-Muqtadir's involvement made her the target of vehement attacks in the sources. While our texts disclosed the reality of women's presence in the political arena, the implicit ideology as well as the explicit comments continued to stress what was expected of women in that sphere. Thus, the continuator of al-Tabari, ʿArib, in a partial defence of al-Muqtadir, states: 'Had he not been dominated in most affairs, people would have lived comfortably. But his mother and others of his retinue thwarted his plans.'[76]

The main administrators in the harem were the eunuchs. Eunuchs appear in Abbasid and Byzantine histories, chronicles, and political narratives as historical protagonists through their role in the organization and functioning of the palace and through the influential roles they played as the rulers' confidants. A summary of titles reserved to eunuchs is provided in the *Kleterologion* of Philotheos. They are arranged in ascending order of prestige, the lowest being the *nipsistianos*, the holder of the washing bowl, and the highest the *praepositos*, the chief of the corps of eunuch household servants, who was responsible for financial, administrative, and ceremonial matters.[77] Other than the titles, there were also clearly functional offices reserved to eunuchs, most notably, the *papiai*, who functioned as guardians of the doorway, thus controlling access to the imperial palace.[78] Thus, in the Byzantine Empire certain functions at the court were especially reserved for eunuchs. Such well defined functions do not seem to have existed in the Abbasid caliphate, where there seems to have been no distinction between eunuchs serving the harem and eunuchs fulfilling administrative and military duties. The same eunuchs could have connections and influence in both camps.[79]

The two main reasons given as to why the Byzantine emperors were keen on employing eunuchs at court have generally been that eunuchs could never aspire to be emperors themselves and that they were safe to have around females. While these explanations are, in the words of Shaun Tougher, 'half-truths', Keith Hopkins has proposed that the eunuchs' real function was to soak up criticism and thus acted as a lubricant that reduced friction between the ruler and the

[75] Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantie Rulers*, 157.

[76] ʿArib, *Silat tarikh al-Tabari*, ed. M. J. De Goeje (Leiden, 1965), 24.

[77] For the section on eunuchs at court see Oikonomides, *Les listes de preséance*, 124–34.

[78] Kathryn M. Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (Chicago, 2003), 168.

[79] David Ayalon, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study in Power Relationships* (Jerusalem, 1999), 197.

other forces of the state.[80] While this latter role may have been important as well in the Abbasid court, the presence of eunuchs here has to be clearly connected with the nature of the caliphal harem. It was the Muslim women's unique seclusion which made the employment of eunuchs inevitable. Accepted as a functionally legitimate group, this distinctive gender flourished in spite of the fact that Islamic law prohibited the making of eunuchs within the lands of Islam.[81]

Many of the roles and functions ascribed primarily to eunuchs involved mediations and transactions across boundaries. Michelle Hamilton has highlighted the power of the courtiers as negotiators and mediators, moving in the liminal, in-between spaces, smoothing over differences, and successfully crossing linguistic, religious, cultural, and even temporal borders.[82] Eunuchs acted as messengers because they could enter any gendered space forbidden to other men. Access to women gave eunuchs opportunities to influence men in high positions by means of their feminine connections within the harem. Indeed it was their intimate access which gave eunuchs considerable influence as reflected in an episode concerning the black eunuch Muflih. Following the dismissal of the vizier Hamid, the latter, trying to have an audience with the caliph, came in 311/923 to the palace and met with the chamberlain Nasr. The reliance on Muflih was, however, inescapable, he 'being the official who demanded admission to al-Muqtadir when the latter was in his private apartments'.[83] It was his status as eunuch—in other words, his liminal gender ascription as an 'unsexed man'—which gave Muflih precious access. The power of the eunuchs stemmed directly from this one factor: they had spatial access to the caliph in his private quarters, the harem, when everyone else—all the other men, that is—did not.

Indeed, ʿArib states that in the year 311/923 'all affairs were in the hands of Muflih, the black eunuch'.[84] His power had alienated the vizier Hamid so much that during an exchange of insults between them Hamid retorted: 'I have an idea of buying a hundred black slaves, naming them all Muflih and presenting them to my retainers.'[85] This episode is revealing of societal attitudes towards eunuchs. Hamid's remark was both racist, as it targeted black slaves, and also included anti-eunuch sentiments, targeting Muflih's physical condition. The physiological effects of castration were believed to affect changes in a eunuch's temperament and moral fibre. Al-Jahiz had described the metamorphosis of both body and

[80] Shaun F. Tougher, 'Byzantine Eunuchs: An Overview, with Special Reference to their Creation and Origin', in Liz James (ed.), *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium* (London, 1997), 168–84, at 170; and Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge, 1978), 174–80.

[81] See Cristina de la Puente, 'Sin linaje, sin alcurnia, sin hogar: eunucos en el Andalus en época Omeya', in de la Puente (ed.), *Identidades Marginales* (Madrid, 2003), 147–93.

[82] Michelle M. Hamilton, *Representing Others in Medieval Iberian Literature* (New York, 2007), 6–8.

[83] Miskawayh, *Tajarib*, i. 87, trans. Amedroz and Margoliouth, i. 96.

[84] ʿArib, *Silat*, 111.

[85] Miskawayh, *Tajarib*, i. 87.

character that eunuchs undergo as a result of the most complete type of castration, *al-jibab*. Their character is comparable to that of women and children; they cry easily and are gluttonous, they like to play and are sexually obsessed; they like domestic work; they are avaricious, indiscreet, jealous, and cruel. As a result, eunuchs, like women, were believed to be unable to control their desires for food, drink, and physical pleasure.[86] Byzantine historians describe eunuchs using terms such as weak, deceitful, greedy, effeminate, and incapable of self-control. They have high-pitched voices, carry themselves in effeminate manners, talk too much, over-eat, etc.[87] Thus, the power of court eunuchs notwithstanding, Abbasid and Byzantine sources are similar in their general hostility towards the 'third gender', associating eunuchs to women and children in their inability to control their appetites and passions.

CONCLUSION

Difficulties in apprehending the nature of the Abbasid and Byzantine courts stem in large part from the fact that 'while the court had institutional aspects it was not simply an institution. . . . [W]hat was subject to it was much less important than that business it carried out informally and through personal contact.'[88] Boon-companions, but more so chamberlains and eunuchs became more influential during the fourth/tenth century due to the new style of rulership. More specifically, because the caliphs were becoming private rather than public rulers, it was more difficult to acquire access to them.[89] Proximity to the caliph was one sure way of building a power-base at court. Entry was reserved for a select group of individuals and it was the chamberlains and eunuchs who held the keys for access. Access gave them influence as requests were finagled into their hands. Those courtiers who had access, as well as those who attended the court rituals were office holders, appointed through the patronage of caliph and emperor. 'They were not hereditary nobles idling away a life at court.'[90] Rather, their status derived from office and from their closeness to the rulers.

The Abbasid sources are useful in telling us about the personalities of members of the court and harem as well as the relationships among them. Indeed, one characteristic of these texts is their overemphasis on the role of the individuals. This aspect allows us to investigate the roles and positions of particular Abbasid

[86] Al-Jahiz, *al-Hayawan*, ed. A. Harun, seven volumes (Cairo, 1945), i. 106–18.

[87] See Kathryn M. Ringrose, 'Passing the Test of Sanctity: Denial of Sexuality and Involuntary Castration', in Liz James (ed.), *Desire and Denial in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1999), 123–37; and Ringrose, 'Eunuchs as Cultural Mediators', *Byzantinische Forshungen*, 23 (1996), 75–93. The hagiographical corpus does not include such negative rhetoric about eunuchs.

[88] Larner, 'Europe and the Courts', 669.

[89] Marmer, *The Political Culture of the Abbasid Court*, 220.

[90] Cameron, 'The Construction of Court Ritual', 122.

'courtiers'. However, there is a great deal that remains obscure. Indeed, rather than presenting a clear definition of the Abbasid court, a preliminary examination of the Abbasid sources, reveals the ambiguities surrounding the concept of 'court'. Navigating between *hashiya*, *hasham*, and *khassa* to mean in a variety of contexts attendants, court attendants, courtiers, and servants, the terminology does not translate adequately into any clear definition of court and courtier. It is, thus, necessary to undertake an exhaustive study of Abbasid (and Byzantine terminology) that would rely on concordances.

The other way, suggested by Magdalino, 'is to look at the writings of individuals associated with the court'.[91] Al-Suli, Miskawayh, and al-Sabi' were closely associated to the Abbasid court. Were their works produced in and for the ruling courts? Chase Robinson, who reflected on the question of the extent to which Muslim rulers patronized historiography, concluded that the commissioning of dynastic history became a feature of Islamic historiography only at the beginning of the sixth/twelfth century. Prior examples exist but 'although Islamic states embraced learning in several ways… they never fully absorbed it, even in the heyday of the bureaucrat historian such as Ibn Miskawayh'.[92] Nevertheless, by looking at the writings of individuals associated with the court, this chapter pinpoints the types of person, and the types of writing, that came closest to representing a court mentality or a court ideology. Indeed, networks of learning 'overlapped with the administrative and military grids that powered medieval Islamic states' and well-placed historians relied on accounts that were produced in court circles to which they themselves belonged.[93] Al-Suli, a boon-companion to Caliph al-Radi, wrote a very personal memoir of his years as a courtier; Miskawayh worked for many years at the court of the Buyid rulers recording events that he experienced or that he heard from the actors themselves; and Hilal al-Sabi belongs to a secretarial family that was affiliated to the court over several generations. It is hence not a coincidence that in attempting to understand the history of the Abbasid court, we should fall back on their works. Not only did their position give them access to information about the court, both orally and in terms of official documents; these authors were personally interested in including information about the internal organization of the court and the administration.

This chapter has focused on a few themes related to the court that were common to Abbasid and Byzantine texts, notably, the sense of hierarchy, rank, and proximity to the ruler, service, and reward for those in close attendance, the importance of ceremonial display, and the female presence at court. The two societies were on different historical trajectories. Baghdad was losing control over its provinces and regions assumed de facto independence; Byzantium was, by contrast, an expanding power, busy codifying its earlier sources of knowledge.

[91] Magdalino, 'In Search of the Byzantine Courtier', 145.
[92] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 119–20.
[93] Ibid., 120, 124.

Both, however, had developed very elaborate court structures and court ceremonials. The texts of the period reflect this development and hence we see for example the elaboration of ceremonial manuals in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries. The textual production seems to indicate that authors from both cultures shared, to some extent, comparable ways of understanding and organizing the past. Clearly, only a handful of texts from both traditions were broached in this chapter. The purpose was to highlight a commonality of shared themes about the court in both contexts. In a book on the French court which he wrote in 1987, Jean-François Solnon stated that the comparative history of the courts was still to be done.[94] More than twenty years later, this remains the case, especially so in the fields of Abbasid and Byzantine studies.

TIMELINE/KEY DATES

133/750	Abbasid Revolution
145/762	Foundation of Baghdad
222/836	Caliphate moves to Samarra
279/892	Caliphate returns to Baghdad
295/908	Death of al-Muktafi
295/908	Oath of allegiance taken to al-Muqtadir
305/917	Arrival of Byzantine Embassy in Baghdad.
309/922	Execution of the mystic al-Hallaj
311/923	Qaramita enter Basra
312/924	The vizier Ibn al-Furat executed
313/926	Qaramita attack *hajj* caravan and sack Kufa
317/929	Al-Muqtadir deposed, al-Qahir appointed caliph
317/929	Al-Muqtadir restored
317/929	Qaramita take black stone from Kaaba
320/932	Death of al-Muqtadir
320/932	Al-Qahir is reappointed caliph
934–40	Caliphate of al-Radi

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[94] Jean-François Solnon, *La Cour de France* (Paris, 1987), 9.

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Chapter 26

Historical Writing, Ethnicity, and National Identity: Medieval Europe and Byzantium in Comparison

Matthew Innes

ETHNIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: PROBLEMS OF CONCEPTION AND DEFINITION

Writing shortly after 900, the monk Regino reflected that human society consisted of many nations (*nationes*) whose populations were differentiated from one another by descent, custom, language, and law.[1] Regino, sometime abbot of the royal monastery of Prüm in the Ardennes, lived through the political crisis in which the power of the Carolingian dynasty—kings of the Franks since 751—stuttered. His reflections on national identity come from the introductory letter to his most influential work, one of the major medieval collections of canon law, *De Synodalibus Causis et Disciplinis Ecclesiasticus* [On the Judgements of Synods and the Discipline of the Church]. The secular markers differentiating the *nationes* which make up human society were presented as an analogy for differences in custom within the universal church. Regino's collection was in part designed to harmonize those differences and so ensure that the church remained united in prayer, establishing authoritative texts as the basis for 'correction', as well as providing practical guidance for clergy charged with administering penance and correcting sin. Regino's pioneering tract on music, *De harmonica institutione* [On the Institutes of Harmony], rested on a parallel logic: it drew on classical musical theory in order to 'correct' the liturgical chant. As we shall see, Regino's historical writing in his *Chronicle* articulated a similar worldview to situate and interpret the history of his own time, a history in which he was an agent as well as a commentator.[2]

[1] *Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*, ed. Friedrich Kurze (MGH SRG; Hanover, 1890), p. xx: *diversae nationes popularum inter se discrepant genere moribus lingua legibus*.

[2] Simon Maclean, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prum and Adalbert of Magdeburg* (Manchester, 2009); and Wilfried Hartmann (ed.), *Das Sendhandbuch des Regino vom Prum* (Darmstadt, 2004).

The perception that national difference was identifiable through a range of markers such as those listed by Regino was a commonplace in medieval Europe. Regino's prime claim to note here is that he was the first author to include written law as an ethnic marker: as we shall see, this was no coincidence and reflected the ideology of the Carolingian state. Nonetheless, his comment has been much quoted as a useful checklist, sometimes even as something approaching a dictionary definition, of Western medieval notions of nationality and ethnicity. Those notions in turn have been much discussed by modern Western European historians, for whom the modern emergence of the nation-state—and the subsequent export of this model to the non-European world, with all the attendant misunderstandings and tensions—constitutes an underlying grand narrative informing historical enquiry. Ethnic and national identity have thus been key concepts of analysis and interrogation for historians of medieval Europe, and so for students of medieval European historiography.

This chapter is written by a student of Western Europe's medieval past, and its commissioning reflects the wider reverberations of debates about the pre-modern origins of modern nationalism. It looks at the different ways in which issues of origin and identity were articulated in Western historical writing up to the beginning of the thirteenth century, and Byzantine historiography of the same period. Its starting-point is that debate about pre-modern ethnic and national identity has a specific valency, with its roots in Western modernity. The concepts and questions we use in discussing pre-modern 'ethnicity' and 'national identity' are therefore rooted in a Eurocentric framework, and risk decontextualizing and so misrepresenting 'ethnic' and 'national' modes of identification when and where they are used in pre-modern Eurasia. These problems are not solely those of interpretation, but are also rooted in the way that the sources for pre-modern European history are organized and encountered by modern historians, within a framework determined by nation-states which appropriated earlier political entities and social identities, constructing the past in terms of 'the peoples of Europe' and their striving for political self-determination.[3]

In posing these questions, some immediate issues of definition raise themselves. 'Identity' has been a hot topic in historical scholarship of late, used as an analytical tool to open up subjective elements of past motivation and perception; we need to bear in mind the obvious points, that 'identity' is a catch-all for a wide range of cultural and social phenomena, and that identities however created are by definition multiple and situational, 'and . . . also' rather than 'either . . . or'. 'Ethnicity' has similarly come into vogue as a term to denote claims to membership of a group defined by common descent and experience, in part because it lacks many of the more difficult overtones of 'race' and the potential anachro-

[3] Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2001); and Timothy Reuter, 'Whose Race? Whose Ethnicity? Recent Medievalists' Discussions of Identity', in Reuter, *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities* (Cambridge, 2006), 100–9.

nisms of 'nationality', whilst not carrying the interpretative baggage associated with 'tribe'. Nonetheless, modern analyses of 'ethnicity' have developed precisely in the context of contemporary states where the relationship between a dominant national identity and minority groupings claiming their own histories is a crucial issue, whereas in pre-modern history it is used as a more generic term for a group identity based on claims of shared descent. Moreover, as Rob Bartlett has pointed out in the context of medieval Europe, it would be mistaken to imagine that 'ethnicity' is a cultural, and 'race' a biological, phenomenon, their relationship analogous to that between 'gender' and 'sex': both terms in medieval and modern usage alike involve some element of claimed/perceived common descent as well as a range of potential shared cultural, linguistic, or political markers.[4] 'Nation' is more problematical still. A sizeable social scientific and historical literature has sought to delineate exactly how modern nationalism arose, focusing on the intellectual discovery and subsequent cultural dissemination of a belief in a shared past which defined key characteristics of the nation and its present aspirations, above all by underwriting a defined set of territorial boundaries and political institutions; this belief then, in the context of the emergence of modern forms of the state, became a potent vehicle for mass political mobilization by creating an 'imagined community'.[5] Belief in a 'primordial ethnicity' rooted in a common descent and shared origin in the distant past is thus a crucial element of modern national identity, and one which is frequently a historiographical construction. What remains difficult, however, is how to relate these modern phenomena to similar claims about shared origin and a collective past as and when they appear in pre-modern historiography. Did the mass communication and educational systems of modernity fundamentally alter the function and penetration of such beliefs within society? How much continuity can we trace between medieval and modern manifestations of group identity?

Our analytical terminology rests on sensitivities about biological descent, political identification, and social mobilization rooted in modern experience. Nonetheless, if used with care and tested against the categorizations of our sources, it can help us understand a series of phenomena. In analysing 'ethnic' and 'national' traditions it is vital to distinguish between historical texts of self-representation, in which members of a particular group write of the shared past defining their own collective identity and their place in the present; and the ethnographical templates inherited from ancient historiography, in which a civilized 'we' defined itself against a barbarian 'other', normally making claims about hierarchical world order, true religion, and the historical role of an imperial state in the process. Ancient polities from China to Rome developed remarkably similar

[4] Rob Bartlett, 'Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31 (2001), 39–56.

[5] From a huge bibliography the two landmark publications are Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (rev. edn, London, 1991); and Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1988).

rhetorics of the barbarian 'other', which normally identified a geographical median as the cradle of civilized society and then gave that society a historical genealogy by constructing peoples living outside that geographical zone in terms of their propensity to extremes of behaviour which threatened chaos and disorder. Such rhetorical strategies were not wholly outward facing: intellectual and political elites who might implicitly view the uneducated masses, or military specialists, or religious enthusiasts within their own society, as in certain ways exhibiting 'barbarian' traits, and ethnographic discourse might thus enable its authors to explore and explain tensions in the society they claimed to interpret and rule. But in our post-classical period, in Western Europe at least, we increasingly meet historiographical traditions which relied less on a dichotomy between civilized 'order' and a barbarized 'other', and focused instead on delineating the history and identity of one's own people among a range of peoples which made human society, as Regino alluded. Monstrous and half-human races still had a place in such schemes—normally on the edges of the known world or in defining the religious divide between true believers and the unconverted—but they underwrote a very different world-order from the imperial hierarchies sustained by classical ethnography.

STRUCTURES OF ETHNIC DISCOURSE IN REGINO'S WORLD

Let's return to Regino. His comments are usually quoted without note of either his context, or their immediate function. In fact, his categorization of the differences between peoples came not in his *Chronicle*, but in the introduction to his collection of canon law: he was writing about the universal church, and the need to ensure that merely terrestial differences did not undermine its unity in prayer. Regino's own historical writing, as a world-chronicle, similarly interpreted the events of his own time and place against the backdrop of Christian universal history. Regino thus recounted the political traumas in which he had himself been an actor as a continuation of the histories of the Old Testament and the ancient world, working with a framework which had been established by Eusebius, Jerome, and Orosius.[6] Regino was unusual in beginning his universal history with the Incarnation, and assuming his readerships' knowledge of the period before Christ's birth; this choice most likely rests on a growing ninth-century interest in the person of Christ himself as a model for the kings of the present, alongside the rapid rise of Incarnation dating as the approved measure of time within the Carolingian kingdoms. He alludes to the assumed universal

[6] On Regino's political involvement, Simon Maclean, 'Insinuation, Censorship and the Struggle for late Carolingian Lotharingia', *English Historical Review*, 124 (2009), 1–28; and on the framework within which he wrote, Michael Allen, 'Universal History, 300–1000: Origins and Western Developments', in D. Deliyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages* (Leiden and Boston, 2003), 17–42.

framework for his story in explaining his motives for writing: 'It seems to me unworthy that, since the historians of the Hebrews, Greeks and Romans and other peoples (*gentes*) have transmitted to our knowledge through their writings the deeds done in their times, there should be an unbroken silence concerning our own times'.[7] Simon Maclean has brilliantly illuminated Regino's working methods and historiographical aims. Book 1 of his two-book work is a carefully selected compilation of a range of written sources which 'reveals the times and deeds of rulers according to incarnation years . . . and make[s] known the triumphs of saints, martyrs and confessors'.[8] Book 2, starting in 741, covers the history of the Frankish world under Carolingian leadership, 'our own times'. Regino also drew on a rare classical text, Justinus, primarily as a source of impressive literary tags implicitly comparing and relating his plot to the great histories of the ancient world. Regino was, however, careful to draw no direct equation between the Roman and Carolingian worlds and he explicitly comments that Rome was 'formerly mistress of the lands of the earth because of the undefeated power of the name of Rome' but was now 'venerated by all the Holy Church with a certain special status because of the presence of the apostles Peter and Paul'.[9] Whilst the Romans prefigure his refrain about the deeds and powers of the Franks, his emphasis was on the apostolic Rome and papal defence of the faith: this was rooted in his reading of canon law and underpins his positive attitude towards papal judgements on moral matters in both past and present. In structure and design his was the story of the grandeur and decline of the Carolingian kings, and their place in Christian world history, it was not an essay in *translatio imperii* or papal plenitude.

For Regino, the various peoples who made up the universal church and its prehistory were the basic units of historiographical discussion. The vocabulary for these units was slippery, and does not coincide with our modern analytical categories. Regino cast himself as a historian of the Franks alongside the other *gentes*, drawing on the most common usage in medieval Latin. *Gens*, its etymology advertising common descent, had a wide semantic field, ranging from family (and in particular ruling dynasty) to the 'people' who made up a particular political unit (which might be a province or a kingdom) to wider groups sharing a common past; the notion of a 'gentile' identity might draw on the model of the Old Testament Israelites, but by and large early medieval ethnic groups did not mobilize this parallel in an exclusive manner so as to claim to be the one and only 'chosen people'.[10] Although less common, the term *natio*—etymologically

[7] Regino, *Chronicle*, preface, trans. Maclean, *History and Politics*, 61.

[8] Regino, *Chronicle*, epilogue to book 1, trans. Maclean, *History and Politics*, 119–20.

[9] Regino, *Chronicle*, s.a. 842, trans. Maclean, *History and Politics*, 132 (and pp. 23–8 for Maclean's fine analysis).

[10] For the latter point, Mary Garrison, 'The Franks as New Israel? Education for an Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne', in Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (eds.), *Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), 114–61.

rooted in birth—might also be used to denote an individual's affiliation and particularly their legal identity; it could also be used to refer to cultural and political collectivities, as in the introduction to Regino's canonical work, whilst being a common term for 'outsiders' and 'others'. Regino was aware of ancient and biblical ethnographic discourses that might be pressed into service to underline the Christian order of his own society—his careful discussion of the Magyars, for example, concluded that they shared the features of the Scythian nations of classical historiography and so were the latest manifestation of the barbarian 'other'—but he did so sparingly (never, for example, about the Viking warlords who were at once part of the Carolingian elite and an intermittent irritant to political order).[11] These ethnographic fictions played only the most marginal of roles in defining ethnic identity within the Christian, Frankish world, in marked contrast to their centrality to classical discourse or their continued valency in Byzantium.

Regino wrote a history of the *gens Francorum*. But he did not provide a continuous narrative of the Frankish past reaching back to ancestral homelands, mythical rulers, and tribal migrations: the Franks enter his narrative with the baptism of Clovis (*c.*481–511), that is on their entry into the Christian world as successors of the Western Roman Empire. His primary focus was the Carolingian dynasty whose rightful dominance—even though now fractured in practice—remained unquestioned in Regino's thought world, hence his reticence about their Merovingian predecessors. His narrative emplotted the political crisis of the late ninth century, drawing out its origins and parallels in earlier events: as a historian he thus sought to explain how the different segments of the empire had each come to raise 'kings from their own innards' rather than acknowledging 'their natural [Carolingian] lord'. For a historian raised in Prüm—a royal abbey which had been founded by the Carolingian family and closely tied to their newly won regality, and where a range of rebel scions of the dynasty had been exiled and encloistered—this Carolingian focus is no surprise, but Regino's dynastic framing was absolutely typical of a wider realignment of Frankish history across the Carolingian world: by Regino's day, Frankish identity had become synonymous with and hegemonic within a particular political order and the dynasty which defined that order.[12]

[11] Magyars as Scythians: Regino, *Chronicle*, s.a.889, trans. Maclean, *History and Politics*, 202–4. Carolingian 'othering' of Vikings: Simon Coupland, 'The People of God's Wrath or the Rod of God's Wrath: The Carolingian Theology of the Viking Invasions', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42 (1991), 535–54.

[12] Stuart Airlie, '"Sad Stories of the Deaths of Kings": Narrative Patterns and Structures of Authority in Regino's Chronicon', in Elizabeth Tyler (ed.), *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, 2006), 105–31; quotations trans. Maclean, *History and Politics*, 199. For the 'Carolingianization' of historiographical memory, Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004).

Within Carolingian order there was a range of ethnic groups and political units, with no simple identification between the two.[13] Regino himself was insistent that the *imperium* ruled by the kings of the Franks was made up of many peoples (*gentes*) and kingdoms (*regna*).[14] Frankish identity may have been hegemonic, in that it supplied a metanarrative about the past which underwrote current political arrangements, but it was not exclusive; it embraced rather than suppressed other ethnic identities within the empire. Regino's near contemporary Notker of St-Gallen could thus identify himself, his family, and his abbey with the Carolingian dynasty—but Notker himself was unambigiously Alemannian in his personal legal identity, and lived within an Alemannian *regnum* which had its own Carolingian king and whose effectively 'independent' past could be elided within the dynastic metanarrative.[15] As for Regino himself, his own abbey lay in a kingdom artificially created in ninth-century dynastic struggles, but whose aristocratic and ecclesiastical elites had forged a shared identity as 'Lotharingians': named for King Lothar II (855–69), their *regnum* was now contested between the West and East Frankish kings. Because the Lotharingian aristocracy and the Lotharingian church continued to be functioning collectivities which were understood as representing as well as ruling, their *regnum* could be seen as in some sense constituted by a *gens*.[16] Lotharingia was in ethnic and legal terms unambiguously Frankish, but Frankishness could not be defined linguistically for Regino's Prüm also stood on the linguistic frontier between the Romance speaking Western Franks and the Germanic vernaculars of the East. Linguistic commonality, indeed, played a role in East Frankish self-consciousness, in that the *lingua theodisca* was a shared idiom between the various *gentes* (Notker's Alemans, as well as Bavarians, Saxons, Thuringians, and Eastern Franks) whose *regna* collectively constituted the East Frankish kingdom: but the East Frankish kingdom was neither bound together nor legitimated by its linguistic Germanicness.[17]

Like language, law too might serve as an ethnic marker, but the relationship between *lex* and *gens* was neither binary nor exclusive. Einhard had presented Charlemagne (768–814) as a model ruler earnestly although ultimately incompletely

[13] The relationship between *gens* and *regnum* has spawned a large and primarily German historiography: e.g. Hans-Werner Goetz, Jörg Jarnut, and Walter Pohl (eds.), *Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden, 2001).

[14] See two important passages reflecting on Carolingian decline, s.a. 880 (trans. Maclean, *History and Politics*, 182–3) and 882 (ibid., 186–7).

[15] Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni*, ed. Hans Haefele as *Notker der Stammler: Täten Karls des Grossen* (MGH SRG; Hannover, 1959), trans. David Ganz as *Two Lives of Charlemagne* (London, 2008); and Matthew Innes, 'Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society', *Past and Present*, 158 (1998), 3–38.

[16] Bernd Schneidmuller, 'Regnum und ducatus: Identität und Integration in der lothringische Geschicte des 9. bis 11. Jahrhunderts', *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter*, 51 (1987), 81–114.

[17] Heinz Thomas, '*frenkisk:* Zur Geschichte von *theodiscus* und *teutonicus* im Frankenreich des 9. Jahrhunderts', in Rudolf Schieffer (ed.), *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Regnum Francorum: Festschrift Eugen Ewig* (Beihefte der Francia 22; Sigmaringen 1990), 67–95.

seeking the 'correction' of the laws for the peoples (*nationes*) under his rule, and having those which had not hitherto been recorded in letters written for the first time, just as the 'most barbarous and ancient songs, in which the deeds of the kings of old were sung' were recorded in writing for the first time and the Germanic vernacular was given a grammar.[18] Einhard was writing at the end of a long and complex historical process, whereby the legal compilations and rulings made by Roman advisors for barbarian kings came to be used as ethnically specific laws for the various peoples of the post-Roman West, so that by Charlemagne's time it was expected that a king—and still more an emperor—was responsible for ensuring that there were correct written redactions of the laws of the peoples under his sway. Regino was clearly drawing on this notion when he included the possession of ethnically specific laws as one of the defining characteristics of the *nationes* that made up human society. But in Einhard and Regino's world, neither ethnic law nor royal edict was an exclusive framework: law was ultimately God's law, and on a range of vital issues also included the rulings of the church, witness the range of practical subjects covered in Regino's canonical handbook. Similarly, Regino's interpretation of God's law shaped the narrative of his *Chronicle* and his presentation of the relationship between God, the Franks, and their rulers. Regino's plot of Carolingian decline revolves around his reading of the law of marriage, as contested and developed in the convoluted manoeuvring over Lothar II's scandalous divorce. The ultimate fate of Lotharingia was thus tied back to its ruler's failure to observe the proper rulings of the church and the pope, rulings which are emphasized throughout the earlier part of the *Chronicle* in passages which prefigured the denouement and which constituted historical *exempla* for the interpretation of the law of marriage essayed in Regino's canonical work. Regino, indeed, presented the divorce as a 'pestilential sickness, which resisted the remedy of an apostolic antidote', thus developing into a 'deadly infection' which doomed the Lotharingian kingdom, creating a situation where 'almighty God was enraged at the kingdom of Lothar and began to act against and utterly destroy the strength of that kingdom by increasing disasters'; this had been prophesized by Pope Nicholas I whose judgements on Lothar II had been ignored and thus became a curse on the kingdom. Faced with this damning verdict, Regino elsewhere disingeniously denied Lothar II's paternity of his kingdom, instead falsely claiming that it was named for Lothar II's eponymous father.[19]

[18] Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger (MGH SRG; Hannover, 1911), c. 29, p. 33; trans. Ganz, *Two Lives*; Matthew Innes, 'Charlemagne, Justice and Written Law', in Alice Rio (ed.), *Law, Custom, and Justice in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London, 2011), 153–203; and Dieter Geuenich, 'Die volkssprachige Überlieferung der Karolingerzeit aus der Sicht des Historikers', *Deutsches Archiv*, 39 (1983), 104–30.

[19] Regino, *Chronicle*, 866 (trans. Maclean, 151), 883 (trans. Maclean, 189), 842 (trans. Maclean, 132); my thanks to Simon Maclean for making this point to me. Similarly Lothar Bohnenkamp, 'Regino von Prüm und die religiose Bedeutung der Geschichtschreibung im Frühmittelalter', *Concilium medii aevi*, 14 (2011), 289–317. On the scandal, Stuart Airlie, 'Private Bodies and the Body Politic in the Divorce Case of Lothar II', *Past and Present*, 161 (1998), 3–38.

In Regino's world history, kings, peoples, and kingdoms were the basic units within the framework of a history framed by the Bible and the universal church and determined by God. But these basic units of *gens* and *regnum* quickly became multivalent and polyfocal. The law that structured Regino's narrative was not that of a narrowly ethnic secular law code, but a moral order which kings were responsible to God for upholding, with scandalous disorder in the royal household intimately related to wider disasters within the kingdom. We might wish to label this structure of discourse one rooted in ethnic identity, but it did not rest on exclusive or self-contained units defined by a primordial ethnicity or pristine historical traditions.

KINGDOMS, PEOPLES, AND HISTORIES IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Regino's *Chronicle* exemplifies some important features of the historiographical culture of the medieval West, as it developed through the Carolingian period into the High Middle Ages. Whilst 'peoples' were basic categories which defined the subjects of historical narrative, that narrative itself might take a range of forms and draw on a variety of genre expectations derived from Christian and classical models. Determined by kings and their doings, historical narrative was informed by a relentless sense of chronological development, in part here drawing on the church's interest in chronology and the development of the year-by-year annal as a basic form of record-keeping, and one which easily combined with the chronicle model and so placed contemporary events in a wider frame of Christian universal history as so evident in the case of Regino. Within this broad framework, the Old Testament histories of the Israelites, their kings, and their relationship with their God provided an ideological and interpretative template. Kings may have been the focus, but that the unfolding of earthly events rested on their relationship with God, and constituted the history of their 'people', was an unwritten assumption.[20] In such a scheme, the 'people' as a collectivity were a necessary correlate of Christian kingship, a grouping for whom kings were responsible to God; ethnic units thus slotted into a particular view of the universal history of the Christian past, and of Christian rulership in the present. Ethnic units were thus an ideological projection onto an often messy and problematic reality, not organic units rooted in biological, historical, or political community.

These characteristics were to underpin historiographical discourse in the West well beyond Regino's times, for all the increasing complexity and volume of historiographical writing through the High Middle Ages. Regino's understanding of the place within universal Christian history of the *gens Francorum* and their kings informed the self-identification of the emergent French and German kingdoms

[20] Karl-Ferdinand Werner, 'Gott, Herrscher und Historiograph: Der Geschichtschreiber als Interpret des Wirkens Gott in der Welt und Ratgeber der Könige, 4.–12.Jhts', in Ernst-Dieter Hehl (ed.), *Deus qui mutat tempora: Festschrift Alfons Becker* (Stuttgart, 1987), 1–31.

and their elites until the twelfth century: thus the deeds of crusading armies in the Holy Land were written up as an account of the 'deeds of the Franks'.[21] Indeed, the administrative kingship which shaped the French kingdom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries drew on a Frankish past in which the Carolingian kings served as a template for correct political order and were used to legitimate expanding royal power. Institutions which had a stake in the new order might draw on this past for their own ends: the assiduous historiographical efforts of the monks of St-Denis from the time of Suger (abbot 1122–51) onwards not only provided a royalist history for the kingdom, but also entrenched the status of their abbey at its heart. Such histories gained traction precisely because they were not top down impositions. In the complex cultural, social, and political transformations of the tenth and eleventh centuries the world of Charlemagne had been established as the definitive archetype for the present. When, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, aristocratic dynasties began to produce written narratives of familial histories and the genealogical traditions that sustained them, they did so to provide the newly formalized lordships of the present with a historical anchorage in the Carolingian past; and Charlemagne and his kin also enjoyed pride of place in the histories rehearsed by ecclesiastical foundations to claim ancient liberties and inform aristocrats and kings of their proper relationship with these holy places. It is no accident that the claims of the royalist chronicle tradition, when they began to be contested in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were challenged through the codification of alternative readings of the Carolingian order, often drawing on the *chansons de geste*. Certainly by the thirteenth century a legendary Carolingian past was the place where aristocrats, churches, and kings negotiatied current claims and controversies; and the development of vernacular historiographical tradition underlined the extent to which these traditions were accessible and accessed by the political community as a whole, defined by its shared Trojan and Frankish origins. This past was encapsulated in the *Grandes Chroniques de France* [Grand Chronicles of France] produced for royal patrons from the thirteenth century onwards, which provided a lavishly illustrated vernacular version of the St-Denis chronicle tradition moving seamlessly from Troy to Merovingians, Carolingians, and thence the Capetian present.[22]

[21] 'Frankishness' to French and German identity: Carl-Richard Brühl, *Deutschland—Frankenreich: Die Geburt zweier Völker* (2nd edn, Cologine 1995); and Brühl and Bernd Schneidmuller (eds.), *Beiträge zur mittelalterliche Reichs- und Nationsbildung in Deutschland und Frankreich* (Munich, 1997). 'Frankishness' and the crusaders: Alan V. Murray, 'Ethnic Identity in the Crusader States: The Frankish Race and the Settlement of Outremer', in Simon Forder, Lesley Johnson, and Murray (eds.), *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leeds, 1995), 59–73.

[22] Gabrielle Speigel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, Md., 1997); Speigel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth Century France* (Berkeley, Calif., 1995); Pat Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994); Amy Remensynder, *Remembering Kings Past: Monastic Foundation Legends in Medieval Southern France* (Ithaca, 1995); and Claudette Beaune, *The Birth of Ideology: Myths and Symbols of the Nation in Late Medieval France* (Berkeley, Calif., 1991).

In the eastern part of the Frankish world, political identity remained rooted in imperial claims with their roots in the age of Charlemagne, as culted by rulers such as Otto III (983–1002) and Frederick Barbarossa (1152–90). Imperial histories consisted of biographies and chronicles focusing on the person of the ruler, and when they were theorized they might include an eschatological gloss on imperial claims, as in the works of Otto of Freising. These imperial claims meant that there was no need for the development of a dominant identity to embrace the polity as a whole over and above provincial loyalties; this polity was an empire made up of constituent segments each defined by ethnicity, as Alemans, Bavarians, Franks, Lotharingians, Saxons, and so on. It was the lack of dominant identity within the empire that allowed Pope Gregory VII (1073–85), seeking to strip its rulers of their imperial claims, to coin the put-down 'kingdom of the Teutons', defining the polity not by an illustrious past which encoded the claims of its rulers, but by the vernacular language which was spoken by its populace; moreover, the fact that the imperial status of the polity was a matter of intermittently intense ideological conflict with popes from Gregory VII onwards not only precluded the development of an imperially derived identity for the wider political community, it also encouraged political fragmentation by providing ideological cover for the ruler's internal opponents to pose as defenders of the 'ancient liberties' of their peoples. The provinces of the French kingdom had their own representative assemblies and legal customs, but within an overarching regnal identity rooted in a royal history; in Germany, it was this latter element that was largely lacking. Nonetheless, a common historiographical culture harked back to the Carolingian template and the semi-legendary rulers of the migration period, whose tales were by now detached from any historical context. Thus, as in France, the histories of aristocratic princes, as written up in the twelfth century, reworked the Carolingian past to legitimate present claims: the twelfth-century Welfs, for example, proudly traced their origins back to the Empress Judith, wife of Charlemagne's heir Louis the Pious (814–40), and justified their southern German lordship with reference to the legend of 'Henry of the Golden Plough', who was granted ownership of all the land he encircled with a plough in the hour of midday whilst the emperor was sleeping. As in France, too, by the thirteenth century a vernacular histographical tradition was beginning, much in chronicle form concerning aristocratic families and cities but also interacting with oral tradition recounting the legends of shadowy heroes whose deeds were located in the age of Attila and Theodoric, which was now beginning to be read as well as heard.[23]

[23] Tim Reuter, 'Past, Present and No Future in the Twelfth-Century *Regnum Teutonicum*', in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Woodbridge, 1992), 15–36; Reuter, 'The Making of England and Germany, 850–1050: Points of Comparison and Difference', in Alfred P. Smyth (ed.), *Medieval Europeans: Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke, 1998), 53–70; both repr. in Reuter, *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities* (Cambridge, 2006); and Dennis H. Green, *Medieval Reading and Listening: The Primary Reception of German Literature 800–1300* (Cambridge, 1994).

On the southern fringes of the Frankish world, in the western Mediterranean, whilst Charlemagne was still a central point of reference in high medieval narratives of identity, 'national' history as it developed from the Carolingian model proved less attractive. In northern Italy, the retelling of Lombard history by Paul the Deacon, inspired by the Carolingian takeover, provided a template for such national history as was written, but as politics fragmented into cities and their hinterlands so too did the forms of historical writing: 'ethnic' or 'national' history was largely irrelevant in the world of the commune, though Charlemagne loomed large as a mythical founder.[24] In southern Italy, culturally mixed local communities subject to the intermittent rivalries and an oscillating political balance between Constantinople, Rome, and the empire needed room for manoeuvre, and so eschewed potentially divisive totalizing narratives: the eleventh- and twelfth-century Norman conquerors of the south inspired no 'national' or 'regnal' historiography precisely because of the cultural, ethnic, and religious differences within the *regno*.[25] In Spain, in the area of former Carolingian influence in and beyond the Pyrenees, a legendary Carolingian past was the crucial point of legitimation for aristocratic principality-builders and anxious ecclesiastical institutions, but one which encoded a regalian aura devoid of immediate implications. On a practical level, this past might be found in monastic foundation legends and legal claims long before it was essayed in historiographical narrative. The counts of Barcelona, for example, claimed to be ruling Catalonia thanks to prerogatives delegated by long dead Carolingian kings well before those claims were writtten up in a dynastic history in the twelfth century.[26] Elsewhere in Spain, in the Christian kingdoms expanding from north of the Duero, Charlemagne failed to provide a shared or usable past: here tales about heroic resistance against Muslim invaders, located in a safely distant past, provided origin legends for the ambitious kingdoms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and underpinned newly coined ideologies of 'reconquest' which was in turn to underpin a 'national history' of a different type from that seen further north, rooted in religious conflict.[27]

Beyond the Carolingian Empire's northern and eastern frontiers, the tenth and eleventh centuries were the age of conversion to Christianity and the establishment of kingship as the dominant form of political organization. By the twelfth

[24] Chris Wickham, 'Lawyer's Time: History and Memory in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century Italy', in Henry Mayr-Harting and Robert I. Moore (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History presented to R. H. C. Davis* (London, 1985), 53–71; and Wickham, 'The Sense of the Past in Italian Communal Narratives', in Magdalino (ed.), *Perception of the Past*, 173–90.

[25] Tom Brown, 'The Political Use of the Past in Norman Sicily', ibid., 191–210.

[26] Tom Bisson, 'Unheroed Pasts: History and Commemoration in South Frankland before the Albigensian Crusades', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 281–308; and Paul Freedman, 'Cowardice, Heroism and the Legendary Origins of Catalonia', *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), 3–28.

[27] *The World of El Cid: Chronicles of the Spanish Reconquest*, ed. and trans. Simon Barton and Richard Fletcher (Manchester, 2000); Fletcher, 'Reconquest and Crusade in Spain, c.1050–1150', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 37 (1987), 31–47; and Peter Linehan, *History and Historians of Medieval Spain* (Oxford, 1993).

century, kings needed histories to explain new arrangements, histories that—like the kingdoms they projected back into a legitimatory past—exported the basic forms of a Europe-wide political and religious culture and adapted it to local cultural conditions. The self-confidence and international coherence of the literatti formed by the 'twelfth-century Renaissance' facilitated the writing of 'national' history in Central and Eastern Europe. Consider the *Chronica Boemorum* [Chronicle of the Czechs] of Cosmas of Prague, which cast the civil strife of the present against an idealized eleventh-century golden age, prefaced by a legendary account of the origins, early history, and conversion of the Bohemians, inventing a common past and tying that past to the claims of the ruling dynasty.[28] Cosmas was a churchmen whose intellectual formation had taken place in the West, and who maintained Europe-wide contacts; Western models also shaped the works of his Hungarian and Polish counterparts, the anonymous authors of the *Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum* [Chronicles and Deeds of the Dukes or Princes of the Poles] (so-called 'Gallus Anonymous', writing *c.*1115) and the *Gesta Hungarorum* [The Deeds of the Hungarians] (the 'notary of King Bela', writing *c.*1200, later expanded by Simon of Kéza, *c.*1275).[29] The fabulous *Gesta Danorum* [Deeds of the Danes] by Saxo Grammaticus is the closest Northern equivalent to these Central and Eastern European purveyors of national myth, like them drawing on Western European literary histories and classical models to satisfy courtly patrons. Whilst in Denmark national history took a familiar form in the Latin historiographical tradition, further north the impulse to clothe royal claims with a dynasty-centred national history drew on broader traditions of vernacular story-telling, with Icelandic 'national' tradition first rehearsed in the early twelfth century and Icelanders subsequently being responsible for writing sagas of the kings of Norway in the period 1170–1230, as their island submitted itself to Norwegian rule.[30]

The most striking examples of the political use of 'national' histories to legitimate new polities come from the edge of the former Carolingian world, in Normandy and England. Carved out of north-western Francia by Scandinavian warlords in the tenth century, Normandy was to find its first historian within three generations of its foundation: about 1000, Dudo, an ecclesiastic at the monastery of St-Quentin, wrote his *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* [Deeds of the Norman Dukes] under the patronage of Gunnor, mother of Richard II (996–1026). Dudo projected the political community of the present, a product of tenth-century acculturation, back into the distant past. The origin myth for the

[28] *The Chronicle of the Czechs by Cosmas of Prague*, trans. Lisa Wolverton (Washington, DC, 2009).

[29] *The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, ed. and trans. Paul Knoll and Frank Schaer (Budapest, 2003); Martin Rady, 'The Gesta Hungarorum of Anonymus, the Anonymous Notary of King Béla: A Translation', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 87 (2009), 681–727; and *Simon of Kéza: Deeds of the Hungarians*, ed. and trans. László Veszprémy and Frank Schaer (Budpest, 1999).

[30] Birgit and Peter Sawyer, 'Adam and the Eve of Scandinavian History', in Magdalino (ed.), *Perception of the Past*, 37–51.

Normans was displaced from Scandinavia—after all, Vikings were still at large in Dudo's time—in a way that allowed Dudo to relate the newcomers to the Franks. The Danes, he claimed, originally came from Dacia—where they practiced human sacrifice, endemic warfare, and rampant sexuality—and were descended from the Trojans: they were thus equals with the Franks, whose legendary Trojan origins were a commonplace. Dudo then fast forwarded to *circa* 900, presenting Normandy as the personal creation of Rollo and underwriting the claims of his successors. A purposefully comedic account of a meeting between Rollo and the Frankish king served as a 'foundation charter' for Normandy: Rollo requested that he and his successors should hold the land from the Epte to the sea 'as if it were an estate (*fundus*) and an allod (*allodium*) for ever'. When the request was granted, bishops urged Rollo to kiss the king's foot in recognition of the gift. Rollo, however, refused: 'I shall never bend my knees to another, nor shall I kiss another's foot.' One of Rollo's followers was sent instead, seized the king's foot whilst the king was still standing, and put it to his mouth with such force that the king toppled over, to the mirth of the watchers. Dudo's account thus undercut any claim that the Norman dukes should formally submit to the West Frankish king, whilst entrenching the proposition—solemnly affirmed on oath by the Franks—that Rollo 'should hand down to his heirs the appointed country, as he held and possessed it, and that through the course of the time of his grandsons, from generation to generation, they should hold and cultivate it'.[31]

Viking settlers elsewhere in north-western Europe were unable to build a centralized or lasting political unit of the type that might stimulate a sustained historical narrative. The descendants of Alfred of Wessex (871–99), on the other hand, were able to ride the Viking tiger and carve out a new 'kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons'.[32] Alfred's ambitious cultural programme forged an identity to legitimate this new order, with the translation of foundational classical Christian texts into Old English. The compilation in the early 890s of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was intimately linked to this project. The *Chronicle* was not narrowly the history of Alfred's dynasty or kingdom: its narrative was consciously inclusive, with genealogical backbearings embracing all the Anglo-Saxons just as the preface to Alfred's law-code claimed inspiration from earlier royal laws from all the

[31] Dudo of St-Quentin, *History of the Normans*, trans. Eric Christiansen (Woodbridge, 1998), esp. i. 1–3 and ii. 28–9; trans. Elisabeth van Houts as *The Normans in Europe* (Manchester, 2000), 27–30; Eleanor Searle, 'Fact and Pattern in Heroic History: Dudo of St-Quentin', *Viator*, 15 (1984), 119–37; Leah Shopkow, 'The Carolingian World of Dudo of St-Quentin', *Journal of Medieval History*, 15 (1989), 19–37; and Cassandra Potts, 'Atque unum ex diversis gentibus populum effecit: Historical Tradition and the Norman Identity', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 18 (1995), 139–52.

[32] Sarah Foot, 'The Making of Angelcynn: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1996), 25–49; Foot, 'Remembering, Forgetting and Inventing: Attitudes to the Past in England after the First Viking Age', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 9 (1999), 185–200; Patrick Wormald, 'Engla Lond: The Making of an Allegiance', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 7 (1994), 1–24; and Alfred Smyth, 'The Emergence of English Identity, 700–1000', in Smyth (ed.), *Medieval Europeans*, 24–52.

Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Like those laws, the *Chronicle* was written in the vernacular. It thus made a potent claim for Alfred's rule of a 'kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons' as the natural outcome of a shared history. Treating Anglo-Saxon history as a unity was, of course, not in itself a novelty: witness Bede's remarkable *Ecclesiastical History*—itself translated into Old English in precisely this period—with its emphasis on the unity of the 'English people' (*gens Anglorum*) and their church. Alfred's terminology drew on Bede to the extent of downgrading the Saxon credentials of his own kingdom in its preferred vocabulary, styling his people 'Englishkind' (*Angelcynn*)—and thus combining an ethnonym (*Angel*) with explicit claims of kinship between its members (*cynn*).

What is truly remarkable, and remarkably under-researched, is the fact that Alfred's English history was rapidly embraced and adapted beyond his court, establishing the hegemonic narrative within which English historians worked through the tenth and eleventh centuries.[33] Not only was the base text of the *Chronicle* rapidly disseminated, but tenth- and eleventh-century historical narrative throughout the kingdom was written in the form of additions and continuations to that base text: we have ruler biographies, saints' lives, and political pamphlets aimed at an immediate audience but no attempt to write the narrative history of the kingdom in any other form, other than in the borderlands of the far north. Partly this was because the history of the *Chronicle* was inclusive, and it allowed tenth-century England in particular to develop a segmentary structure with some similarities to that of contemporary East Francia: the 'Kings of the Anglo-Saxons' admitted that their realm was made up of Mercians, West Saxons, and Northumbrians, and indeed it was Anglo-Saxon kings who embraced and guaranteed the 'Danish' identity of those areas that had been subject to Scandinavian overlordship after their 'reconquest'. But unlike East Francia the kings of England nurtured a homogemous aristocratic elite and moulded a church whose horizons were kingdom-wide, so that when an account sympathetic, for example, to the complex position of Northumbria within the kingdom came to be written it was written within a shared historiographical framework which underwrote an English regnal identity. This was not only a matter of genre: hagiographical texts similarly speak to a shared regnal framework, as in the presentation of the last king of East Anglia, Edmund, as one of the patrons of 'Englishkind' (*Angelcynn*), in Ælfric's Old English version of his life, *circa* 1000.[34] These values became a defining feature of English political culture in the eleventh century: in 1052, for example, civil war was just averted when, as one continuator of the *Chronicle* put it, the combatants realized that there were few but Englishmen (*Englisce men*) on either side and declared that they were loth to spill the blood of

[33] Pauline Stafford, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, Identity and the Making of England', *Haskins Society Journal*, 19 (2007), 28–50, with earlier bibliography.

[34] *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. and trans. W. W. Skeat, 4 vols. (London, 1881–1900), ii. 314–35, which draws on Abbo of Fleury's earlier Latin life.

their kin (*cynnes mannum*) and leave the country all the more exposed to outsiders (*utlendiscum Peodum*).[35]

The Norman conquest of England was the culmination of a series of eleventh-century regime changes which if anything served to accentuate this sense of shared political identity. It created an immediate impulse to the elaboration of the ducal histories of the Normans inaugurated by Dudo of St-Quentin and continued in the 1060s and then updated in 1070 by William of Jumièges. Authors such as William of Poitiers (writing in the 1070s), Orderic Vitalis (writing *c.*1115–42), and Robert of Torigni (writing from the 1130s to 1186) sought to essay a new Norman identity that came to terms with the breathtaking political success and broadening horizons of a ragbag aristocratic coalition, and one whose polity spanned the Channel through the twelfth century.[36] Whilst the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* narrative was continued post-Conquest at some centres, notably Peterborough, the rapid abadonment of Old English as a language of official record was one impetus towards the writing of new 'national histories'. By the twelfth century, in the second and third generations beyond the conquest, retelling the master narrative of the Anglo-Saxon past in terms which spoke to the identity of a newly formed Anglo-Norman political community led to a surge of Latin historical writing, looking back to Bede and establishing a continuous national narrative, by the likes of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon; these traditions could even be reworked as literary entertainment for the aristocracy by the likes of Geoffrey Gaimar, who in the 1130s published a Norman-French verse *L'estoire des Engleis* [History of the English].

The reconstruction of the English past was part of a wider movement, evident in the reworking of legal muniments and ecclesiastical traditions, and was in part a response to the development of a more professionalized law and royal administration under Henry I (1100–35), and the subsequent trauma of civil war under Stephen (1135–54). And, even as a renewed national narrative was being established, it was also contested, most notably in Geoffrey of Monmouth's fabulous *Historia regum Britanniae* [History of the Kings of Britain], which essayed a British history in which the legendary figure of Arthur was a central character, along with Brutus, the Trojan credited with the settlement of Britain; both enjoyed a real popularity in vernacular romance. The relationship between British and English readings of the past was a live issue precisely because twelfth-century kings and aristocrats remained as much conquerors as administrators, and the Anglo-Norman ruling class was forged partly through military expansion into the non-English areas of Britain: a process which could lead to the barbarization of

[35] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 5: MS C*, ed. Katharine O'Brien O'Keefe (Cambridge, 2000), s.a. 1052.

[36] Leah Shopkow, *History and Community: Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Washington, DC, 1997); and Emily Albu, *The Normans in Their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Woodbridge, 2001).

the 'Celtic fringe' essayed most memorably by Gerald of Wales, a critic of Geoffrey's fables.[37]

These 'ethnic' and 'national' histories did not constitute a distinct literary genre. Rather, the tendency for historical writing to be arranged around kings and 'their' peoples rested on a series of pervasive assumptions about the proper ordering of historical narrative. Social and political change—in particular the formalization of law and government and the territorialization of power—interacted with the rise of a literary class with Europe-wide horizons and committed to new cultural and educational models: hence the continued popularity of this historiographical template in the twelfth century, with the development of both fabulous history and historical fiction. 'Ethnic' and 'national' histories typically reached back to a legendary ancestor in biblical or classical myth or a distant homeland and ancestral migration, providing an origin myth which both legitimated and located the political communities of the present.[38] Characteristically, however, historical scholarship of the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries sought to write out literary elements in such accounts, instead searching for fragments of a primordial ethnic discourse. Thus 'Germanic' interpretations of Frankish identity—which emerge hesitantly, late, and in a very specific political context at the court of Charlemagne—have habitually been presented as more 'popular' than the Trojan legend, even though the latter was more widespread and more continuous in its diffusion and evidenced far earlier; similarly, the self-consciously 'fabulous' material about legendary rulers from the distant past which twelfth-century literatti began to include in their histories is often subjected to intense scrutiny in the hope of unearthing 'unpolluted' folk tradition.[39]

Such attitudes are a product of nationalist assumptions and ideologies that shaped historical scholarship in the nineteenth century; they are coloured by the anticlericalism that was an important element of much modern nation-building, and which helped create a perceived dichotomy between clerical literary traditions and popular consciousness. In fact, any reader of medieval origin myths searching for popular pre-migration tradition is doomed to search in vain. Probably the closest they will come is in the various accounts of Lombard origins, the earliest connected with the laws issued by various kings in the seventh century, the fullest in the version worked up by Paul the Deacon in his *Historia Langobardorum*

[37] Laura Ashe, *History and Fiction in England, 1066–1200* (Cambridge, 2007); John Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge, 2000); and Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Woodbridge, 1999).

[38] Susan Reynolds, 'Medieval *Origines Gentium* and the Community of the Realm', *History*, 68 (1983), 375–90; and Adelheys Plassman, *Origo gentis: Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen* (Berlin, 2006).

[39] Matthew Innes, 'Trojans or Teutons? The Carolingians and the Germanic Past', in Hen and Innes (eds.), *Uses of the Past*, 227–49.

[History of the Lombards]. Paul's stories do play—with no little humour—with characters and motifs from Germanic mythology, although they were written down at two centuries remove from the settlement of Italy and at the time when Paul's contacts at Charlemagne's court were showing an interest in a shared Germanic past.[40] Regardless of how we read these particular fragments and the origins of the characters and motifs with which they play, they stand in striking isolation: by and large 'national histories' did not traverse the moments of conversion and settlement and describe a primitive community in long-lost homelands. In the case of the Franks, the widespread claim that they were descended from the Trojans, and the alternative story which had their kings begotten by a quinotaur, had roots in classical ethnography: fundamentally, both located the Franks within the cultural geography of the ancient world, providing their regime with a pedigree that could be understood by the populations of former Roman provinces in the sixth and seventh centuries.[41] Similarly, fifth- and sixth-century Burgundian kings and their Roman advisers could mobilize no history that preceded the establishment of their short-lived kingdom within the provinces of the empire, and by the seventh century their history was retold in wholly ahistorical stories which legitimated current fiscal and military arrangements by projecting them back to the moment of settlement.[42] Jordanes's mid-sixth-century *Getica* [Gothic History] deployed classical ethnography to frame the regime of Theodoric the Ostrogoth and the subsequent struggle for Italy between Gothic kings and Justinian's armies; compare Isidore of Seville's early seventh-century *Historia Gothorum* [History of the Goths].[43] Even in England, Bede recorded no traditions which had survived the crossing of the North Sea, and his scheme of three peoples—Angles, Saxons, and Frisians—explains a relatively new political geography of the present, a political geography which had arisen in post-Roman Britain rather than resting on tribal identities transported intact from continental homelands; the surviving royal genealogies likewise elucidate the relationships between the kings and kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England, not a tribal past.[44] This discontinuity between the identities of Western Europe's medieval kingdoms and the 'barbarian homelands' is almost universal. The exceptions which prove the rule come from areas beyond the Roman Empire—Ireland, where complex cycles about mythical heroes were mapped onto the present through genea-

[40] Walter Pohl, 'Memory, Identity and Power in Lombard Italy', in Hen and Innes (eds.), *Uses of the Past,* 9–28.

[41] Ian Wood, 'Defining the Franks: Frankish Origins in Early Medieval Historiography', in Forde *et al.* (eds.), *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, 47–57; and Alexander Callendar Murray, '*Post vocantur Merohingii:* Fredegar, Merovech and "Sacral Kingship" ', in Murray (ed.), *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History* (Toronto, 1998), 121–56.

[42] Ian Wood, 'Misremembering the Burgundians', in Walter Pohl (ed.), *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen* (Vienna, 2004), 139–50.

[43] Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy 489–554* (Cambridge, 1997); and Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain* (Liverpool, 1999).

[44] Matthew Innes, *An Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300–900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book* (London, 2007), 346–9.

logical fictions, and Iceland, an empty landscape whose settlers with no king and no moment of conquest likewise used tales of colonizers to define relationships between groups in the present.[45]

The historians of the successor kingdoms of the post-Roman West can thus emerge as the impresarios of a new 'identity politics', tailoring new histories on order for royal patrons. This model, indeed, has been championed by a significant strand of recent research, as historians have stressed the permeability of Roman frontiers and the intensifying interaction between the Roman Empire and its neighbours, unmasking the barbarizing ethnographic rhetoric of classical Roman sources and arguing that the 'Germanic peoples' emerged thanks to the influence of Rome. Their ethnicities were cultural constructions, rather than biological givens, and traditional narratives of 'the age of migrations' need replacing by more complex analyses of 'ethnogenesis'.[46] We certainly must read medieval origin myths and national histories as developments from classical ethnography, Roman historiography and Christian ideology, and avoid the assumptions of an older scholarship which saw artless retellings of a timeless tribal memory.[47] Nonetheless, in crucial ways the medieval authors we have been discussing wrote in a wholly different context from their classical and Christian forebears. Roman history and ethnography, even in the decades around 400 which saw the crisis of the Western Empire, was written by professional litterati for a broad based, urban and leisured, literary public; it was framed as a narrative about Rome, its origins and history, even when Rome was primarily a cultural symbol not a cosmopolis; and presented Roman identity as open and interpretable, never closed or reduced solely to formal criteria of citizenship or law. This narrative rested in part on structuring a comparison between civilized, civilian, Roman order rooted in law, and the wilful, uncontrolled, and violent behaviour of barbarians beyond the Roman frontier: these stereotypes, even where in practice they were blurred, were fundamental to Roman self-identity. Christian historical writing relocated this narrative within the history of the Bible and the church, and posed questions about the eschatalogical role of the empire, carefully treated by Augustine of Hippo and his pupil Orosius; but it also inherited its basic categories, not least the barbarian 'Other' which counterpointed Roman order, witness Christian responses to the sack of Rome in 410.[48] Roman identity had many hues, and the

[45] Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth, 1990); and Chris Callow, 'Reconstructing the Past in Medieval Iceland', *Early Medieval Europe*, 14 (2006), 297–324.

[46] From a huge and contested bibliography see Geary, *The Myth of Nations*; Adrew Gillet (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002); and Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimnitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800* (Leiden, 1998).

[47] Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History, 554–800* (Princeton, 1988).

[48] e.g. Stefan Rebenich, 'Christian Asceticism and Barbarian Incursion: The Making of a Christian Catastrophe', *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 2 (2009), 49–59; and Theodore de Bruyn, 'Ambivalence within in a "Totalizing Discourse": Augustine's Sermons on the Sack of Rome', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 1 (1993), 405–21.

claims of provinces, cities, and even military units to have their own identities could be contained within this hegemonic discourse, and grafted onto the overarching narrative of Rome; but 'ethnicity' was a phenomenon associated with those outside of Roman order. In Western Europe, this changed in the immediately post-Roman centuries. New rulers such as the Gothic and Burgundian kings drew on traditional ethnographic categories to define relations between their military followers and provincial landlords within their kingdoms, claiming their regimes rested on a social contract between the heterogenous warbands under their command and their civilian Roman 'hosts'; within such discourses, the stereotypical barbarian 'Other' could still be selectively mobilized against external threats to this uneasy compromise. But by the seventh century, the sense of continuing civilian Roman order that underpinned such discourses had collapsed. The ethnic claims by which leaders had earlier attempted to mobilize the loyalty of their military followings became the basis of new identities, uniting the militarized landowning communities that were the bedrock of a new social and political order.[49] The origin myths essayed to underwrite the new order thus spoke to a different kind of identity with a different social function from their models in the ethnographical traditions of the classical world: they defined the new assembly based politics of weapon-bearing landowners.

Histories which understood the past in terms of the relationship between kings and peoples and the working out of God's will as mediated through the heroes of the church spoke to this new social order. The crucial development of the seventh to eleventh centuries in the West was the creation of histories which, though learned fictions, had immediate utility for the political communities that consumed them. With the growth of professional law and more formalized administrative systems in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, these political communities were becoming deeper than the coalitions of aristocrats and ecclesiastics and their retinues which ride across Regino's pages, meaning that myths and traditions of origin might resonate within a broadly conceived 'community of the realm', the notional constituents of the formal representative institutions which begin to emerge in the thirteenth century in the place of the assembly politics and counsel of the Carolingian and post-Carolingian centuries. By this date, the increasing self-awareness of Western Christians and the tightening definition of Christian belief meant that imagined Others beyond Christendom's moral and territorial boundaries began to appear more frequently in learned writing: but they counterpointed an 'imagined community' rooted in religious identity, not an imperial system claiming to be the fount of all order, and it was undisputed that Christendom itself was made up of separate kings and peoples defined by their separate histories.

[49] Matthew Innes, 'Land, Freedom and the Making of the Early Medieval West', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (2006), 39–74.

ROMANS AND 'ETHNICS' IN THE BYZANTINE WORLD

The experience of the Eastern Roman Empire—or Byzantium, as it is labelled in most modern historiography—points to an alternative evolution of classical ethnographic discourse. Byzantine identity rested above all on the claim of direct continuity from the Roman Empire, a claim tied up with Constantinople's status as the 'new Rome'. This identity underwent profound changes in the post-classical period, thanks to the rise of Christianity in late antiquity and the seventh-century collapse of imperial frontiers in the Near East, the Balkans and the western Mediterranean. The empire thus came to be understood not in terms of territory, provinces, or frontiers, but as the expression of a hierarchy emanating from the person of the emperor in the new Rome, the static centre—or in contemporary usage the 'head'—giving meaning and direction to the whole.[50] But to its rulers, the Byzantine Empire remained the 'Empire of the Romans', and its inhabitants the *Rhomaioi*.[51] Whilst Western critics of Byzantium might attempt to cut down imperial claims by referring to Byzantines as 'Greeks', within the empire there was no real tension between the official Roman identity and 'Greek' cultural and linguistic heritage: the same 'Roman' terminology was used to refer to demotic, spoken, Greek, in contrast to Hellenistic literary language.[52] The defining opposition was between the *Rhomaioi* and an ethnic 'Other': the terminology used to define the non-*Rhomaioi* was that of 'peoples' (*gene*), 'tribes' (*ethne*—literally 'ethnics'), and 'foreigners' or 'outsiders' (*phyla*, *xenoi)*. *Rhomaioi* was a collective term for ourselves, defined against alien outsiders whose difference was encapsulated in their possession of 'ethnic' traits, and who were normally referred to collectively in a 'barbarizing' language which recycled ancient ethnographic labels and stereotypes to refer to contemporary realities. Thus for Anna Komnene, writing a heroic account of her father the Emperor Alexius Komnenos (1081–1119) early in the reign of his grandson Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80), Westerners were often given the blanket label 'Latins', and sometimes more specific labels ('Franks' or 'Germans', for example), but the most common ethnonym was 'Celts', recycled from ancient literary sources and with no roots in contemporary Western usage, but admirably suited for ethnographic essays on

[50] David Olster, 'From Periphery to Centre: The Transformation of Late Roman Self-Definition in the Seventh Century', in Ralph Mathisen and Hagith Sivan (eds.), *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 1996), 93–102.

[51] On Byzantine identity see Dion Smythe, 'Insiders and Outsiders', in Liz James (ed.), *Companion to Byzantium* (Oxford, 2011), 67–80; Paul Magdalino, 'Constantinople = Byzantium', ibid., 43–54; and Evelynne Patlagean, 'Byzance, le barbare, le heretique et le loi universelle', in Patlagean, *Sociale Structure, Famille, Chrétienité à Byzance* (London, 1980), no. XV.

[52] e.g. the Carolingian Emperor Louis II of Italy: Paul Kehr (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Epistolae 7* (Berlin, 1928), 386–94.

their unbridled machismo and baffling propensity to swear oaths on even the smallest matter.[53]

The markers that typified the Roman 'us' were far less likely to surface in set piece discussions than the characteristics of the barbarian 'Other', precisely because they drew on an unwritten archetype which embodied accepted norms which were subject to comment only when and where they were breached. Even these boundaries were fluid and negotiable, because the identity of the *Rhomaioi* was wrapped up in claims simultaneously political (their empire was that of the new Rome, the direct heir of ancient Rome) and religious (theirs was the Christian Empire whose rulers were responsible to God for earthly order). Although to us the notion of being 'Roman' might sound like an ethnic categorization, 'Roman' was not, for Byzantine writers, an ethnonym, in the way that 'Frank' or 'Lombard' was for the Western authors we have discussed; and 'Greek' was avoided by Byzantine authors but used by Westerners precisely because it was a mere ethnonym stripped of imperial claims. Ideas of common descent played little role in defining the self-perception of the *Rhomaioi*, and their common history, as we shall see, was that of the Christian Roman Empire. This history flowed above all from the new Rome of the Christian emperors, the city of Constantinople, whose cultural, social, and political dominance within the empire was unquestioned. Symbolically, Constantinople was still the imperial centre whose name and identity defined its claims to world-historical status as a seat of a divinely ordained imperial dispensation. More than that, the cultural and political patronage of the imperial court and city of Constantinople proved an irresistible magnet for the able and ambitious from the provinces, who were thus inculcated into an official ideology which provided the only discourse of social and political order. For the motley crew of able provincials and half-barbarian frontiersmen who now ruled the empire, factional allegiance was expressed in terms of loyalty to the Christ-loving emperor, and ethnic identifications which stressed distinct traditions within the empire were divisive and avoided.

Provincial identities existed, even after the seventh-century crisis removed the largest and most coherent regional entities—the likes of Egypt and Syria—from the imperial sway.[54] They are, however, difficult to detect in our surviving sources. The closest we can get to provincial identity—prior to the letter collections of eleventh- and twelfth-century bishops, framed within a Constantinople-focused rhetoric of exile and loss but sometimes also hinting at local pride in provinces and their pasts—probably comes in the practical world of military manuals. Here we get a sense of the interactions between imperial officials and

[53] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, trans. E. Sewter (London, 1969); with Alexander Kazhdan, 'Latins and Franks in Byzantium: Perceptions and Reality from the Eleventh to the Twelfth Century', in Angeliki Laiou and Roy Mottehdeh (eds.), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington, DC, 2001), 83–100, at 86–7.

[54] Catharine Holmes, 'Provinces and Capital', in James (ed.), *Companion to Byzantium*, 55–66.

provincial societies, and the customary itineraries, mustering points, and social rituals whereby military contingents were assembled from each province (*theme*), and some hints at the collective identities feeding into and forged by such activity. But here too we also sense a structure of interaction with the state which differentiated contingents of 'Romans', each with their own provincial customs and origins to be sure, very clearly from the 'ethnics' from beyond the frontiers, who might be allies, mercenaries, or opponents. These organizing classifications differ from those of Regino's world, where commentators could quite happily parse the provincial breakdown of a particular army in terms of a kaleidoscope of ethnic contingents from within the Frankish Empire: whereas for Regino Frank, Lotharingian, and so on could be conceived of as overlapping manifestations of essentially similar phenomena, thus creating complementary registers of ethnicity, in Byzantium imperial-Roman identity and provincial loyalties were understood in different terms from one another. The worldview of Western historians conceived of a range of Christian peoples of more or less equivalent significance, albeit with the rulers of some enjoying forms of political hegemony and so supra-ethnic responsibility; but Byzantine authors thought in terms of the empire of the Romans as a divinely ordained historical vehicle. The Roman state was therefore understood as the guarantor of terrestial order (*taxis*), conceived in hierarchical and static terms: at the still centre stood the Christ-loving emperor, through whom God imposed Christian order on the world, and beyond whose sway swirled a kaleidoscope of *ethne* who were defined above all by their disorder (*ataxia*).

The mechanisms by which this world-order was articulated emerge vividly from the writings of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–59). Constantine was an antiquarian and politician in equal measure, and produced a remarkable range of compilations and compositions. His *De Ceremoniis* [Book of Ceremonies] catalogues the protocols and rituals of the palace. It describes a highly formalized set calendar of carefully choreographed ceremonies, drawing on a range of written sources as well as palace traditions. In fact, the presentation of well-defined protocols and rules, and fixed meanings, is misleading: Constantine's efforts at codification are also an attempt to fix a more malleable set of expectations and practices which allowed room for improvisation and interpretation, and to control innovation of particular—though normally anonymized—historical episodes.[55] Nonetheless, even allowing for Constantine's editorial hand, the role of imperial ritual in communicating the political and religious claims of the empire to visiting dignatories, officials, and the populace

[55] Averil Cameron, 'The Construction of Court Ritual: The Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies*', in David Cannadine and Simon Price (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1987), 106–36; and Mike McCormick, 'Analyzing Imperial Ceremonies', *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik*, 35 (1985), 1–20.

of Constantinople is made clear: this was an essay in the construction of a static imperial centre radiating hierarchical order.[56]

The same sense of hierarchical order permeates Constantine's *De Adminstrando Imperio* [On Governing the Empire and the Surrounding Peoples (*ethne*)]. Compiled in 948–52 as a compendium of advice for Constantine's son Romanus, its focus is the ethnography of the peoples beyond the Byzantine frontier. Constantine's prologue elucidates his aim to set out:

> Firstly, in what ways each people has the power to help the Romans, and in what to hurt, and how and by what other people each severally may be encountered and subdued in arms; then, concerning their ravenous and insatiable temper and the gifts they demand inordinately; next, concerning also the difference between other peoples, their origins and customs and manner of life, and the position and climate of the land they dwell in, its geographical description and measurement, and moreover concerning events which have occured at various times between the Romans and different peoples; and thereafter what reforms have been introduced from time to time in our state and throughout the Roman Empire.[57]

Within Constantine's acccount, the seemingly clear boundary between the *Rhomaioi* and the 'ethnics' beyond their frontier begins to dissolve. Areas which were imperial provinces, such as the Crimea and Dalmatia, for example, are dealt with in the section on the *ethne*, whilst the accounts of the history and geography of the *themes* of the empire and the mechanisms for managing their sometimes mixed populations and their obligations point to provincial identities, and to pride in local classical pasts. As in *De Ceremoniis*, Constantine also codifies, for example outlining diplomatic 'rules' for handling the 'Scythian peoples' to the north which are an attempt to systemize a rather more ad hoc and discontinuous set of political relationships. Constantine likewise elaborates complex protocols as to which gifts, titles, and prerogatives could be granted to which barbarian ruler, providing ethnographic and historical lore as justification. In fact, Constantine's ethnographic excurses need treating with extreme caution: they cannot be read as historical accounts of the ethnic and social map of Central and Northern Europe, and are at points consciously distorted or wholly fabricated so as to provide ballast for Byzantine policy.[58]

[56] Dion Smythe, 'Why do Barbarians Stand Around the Emperor at Diplomatic Receptions?' in Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy* (Aldershot, 1992), 305–12; and George Ostrogorsky, 'The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 35 (1956), 1–14.

[57] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed and trans. Romilly Jenkins and Gyula Moravscik (Washington, DC, 1967), proem, 44–7, though I have avoided their terminology of 'nations'; on structure and composition, J. B. Bury, 'The Treatise De Administrando Imperio', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 15 (1906), 517–77.

[58] See e.g. Francesco Borri, 'White Croatia and the Arrival of the Croats: An Interpretation of Constantine Porphyrogenitus on the Oldest Dalmatian History', *Early Medieval Europe*, 19 (2011), 204–31.

It is in his discussion of historical precedents for marriage alliances with neighbouring rulers that Constantine inadvertently slips in a discussion which reveals the basis of Roman identity. Outlining the various gifts and privileges that might be given to barbarian leaders, Constantine essays the ways in which they might be explained to their recipients so as to reiterate the legend of Constantine the Great and the status of his new Rome. He concludes, however, by entreating his son Romanus above all to observe the ban on marriages between the imperial family and any external people, a ban linked back to Constantine whom—it is claimed, quite anachronistically but with more than an eye on relationships with the rulers of Western Europe—had made a specific exemption for the Franks alone, on account of the close relationship between them and the Romans. If entreated by any other people for a marriage alliance, Constantine insists that Romanus should say 'no', and if the precedent of the Bulgarian marriage brokered by Emperor Romanus Lecapenus (920–44) was raised, this was to be rejected. The reader can almost feel Constantine's voice rising as he explains why: Lecapenus, he explains, had come from 'common illiterate stock', and not been raised in the palace, and so had not been educated in the customs of the *Rhomaioi*; because he was neither imperial nor noble in blood, once raised to power he had become arrogant and despotic and so ignored the teachings of the church and the example of Constantine the Great. Constantine goes on to argue that marriage between one of the *Rhomaioi* and an 'ethnic' should be avoided, for marriage would dilute the markers which distinguished each people: their customs, laws, and institutions, a list which interestingly complements Regino's.[59] The impetus for Constantine's ire was political and personal, for Romanus Lecapenus had forced his way onto the throne as co-emperor with the young and effectively token Constantine in a period of military crisis, and been deposed only a handful of years before the time of writing. But in giving vent to his spleen, Constantine laid bare the cultural and social basis of Byzantine identity: the *Rhomaioi* were tacitly and unconsciously identified with the imperial family and the personnel of the imperial palace, charged with maintaining the new Rome and so God's order on Earth by ensuring that Constantine the Great's example continued to be followed. This was the identity of an imperial elite written by and for the members of that elite but making a series of wider claims about Imperial society.

This identity underpinned Byzantine historical writing as it re-emerged from the ninth century onwards. The seventh-century crisis had seen the atrophy of the classicizing historiography of late antiquity, and Byzantine historiography of the ninth to twelfth century was dominated by the world-chronicle format. Such narratives took the events of the ancient and biblical worlds as the self-evident framework for the unfolding of history, and then proceeding seamlessly

[59] *De Adminstrando Imperio*, ed. Jenkins and Moravscik, c. 13, 72–5.

from the old Rome of antiquity to the new Rome and the deeds of its emperors.[60] The elaboration of historical genres encouraged by successive renewals of interest in classical learning—and notably by eleventh- and twelfth-century revivals of various aspects of that learning from ancient philosophy to the Hellenistic novel—allowed some writers—Michael Psellus in the eleventh century and Anna Komnene, John Kinnamos, and Niketas Choniates in the twelfth—to adopt a more contemporary focus and classicizing form, writing a historical narrative focused on the evaluation of individual rulers and deeds. But even in their works this standard world-historical backdrop was taken as read, and ancient and biblical exempla abounded to locate contemporary subjects in a longer perspective.

Within this framework, there was very little place for extended discussion of classical antiquity, either Greek or Roman. The historical referents were the great rulers of the ancient world and the Old Testament, but attention very quickly moved on from Christ, the early church, and Rome as world-empire to Constantine the Great—the key figure for chroniclers as for Constantine Porphyrogenitus, for in his reign Christian and Roman history converged and the new Rome began with his foundation of Constantinople—and the great emperors of late antiquity, perhaps with a sideways glance at the 'fall' of 'old Rome' in the fifth century and the physical secession of the city from the empire under Charlemagne.[61] The subject of this historical narrative was the empire, not a particular ethnic or national group: and it gained its Roman identity from its world-historical role, not ethnographic characterizations. Implicit in this particular delineation of the past was the identification of the empire of the *Rhomaioi* as God's chosen vehicle for the propagation of the true faith, a theme central to Byzantine political theology, exemplified in the providential coincidence of Augustus with Christ, and consummated in the reign of Constantine when the new Rome was physically founded. This ecclesiology and historiography likewise fed into eschatology, in that they encouraged the identification, explicit or implicit, of the empire of the new Rome with the fourth world-kingdom of Daniel's prophecy.

The Byzantine cultural matrix also provided a potent model for the construction of histories for new political communities as they emerged in eleventh- and twelfth-century Eastern Europe, which might not claim to be the 'new Rome' but did seek to appropriate and domesticate key elements of Byzantine imperial ideology. These processes are most visible in Russia, safely beyond the direct political reach of Constantinople but resolutely within Byzantium's cultural sphere. Here, in the aftermath of religious conversion and political stabilization just before 1000,

[60] Elizabeth Jeffreys, 'The Attitude of Byzantine Chroniclers towards Ancient History', *Byzantion*, 49 (1979), 199–238; and Ruth Macrides and Paul Magdalino, 'The Fourth Kingdom and the Rhetoric of Hellenism', in Magdalino (ed.), *Perception of the Past*, 117–56, at 120–36.

[61] For Byzantine representations of Constantine see Paul Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines* (Aldershot, 1994).

Kiev was physically reconstructed as a 'new Rome on the Dnieper', and Kievan churchmen busily drew on early Byzantine missionary tracts in Old Church Slavonic, compiling ecclesiastical and secular law-codes and developing a vernacular literature which sacralized the royal dynasty and undertook wholesale ideological *imitatio imperii*. These initiatives went hand in hand with the construction of history, in the form of a chronicle tradition whose earliest surviving witness—the *Povest' Vremennykh Let* [Tale of Bygone Years]—was compiled in early twelfth-century Kiev at the behest of a scion of the royal dynasty. In this text, as Simon Franklin has shown, imported imperial history is used to establish ethnic and national legitimacy, and demonstrate the status of the Rus' in the Divine Plan for mankind. It includes an origin legend for the Rus' in which they are derived, on the basis of their language, from Japhet, son of Noah, and so grafted onto biblical history via the Book of Genesis. The *Povest' Vremennykh Let* selectively used Byzantine chronicles, ignoring Byzantine traditions of the four world-kingdoms and the Roman Empire's providential role but mining biblical and ancient history for exemplars; it even has St Andrew visit Russia, giving Kiev an apostolic past foreshadowing its current claims. Onto this backdrop are tales of Scandinavian leaders dating back to the legendary ninth-century figure of Riurik, which are tied together by genealogical devices so as to create a linear narrative linking Riurik to Vladimir, the first Christian ruler and the figure from whom the current dynasty claimed descent. Genealogical claims are used to weave togther stories about the cities of eleventh-century Rus' and the Slavic groupings that inhabited their hinterlands, linking together potentially disparate and conflicting histories through traditions about dynastic ancestors. As with all genealogical history of this type, this narrative reflected the priorities of the present: it grounded the pre-eminence of Kiev, seat of the metropolitan, and the notional unity of this sprawling and segmentary agglomeration that was Rus', in the claimed family ties between the rulers of the various cities and provinces.[62]

THE CRISIS OF BYZANTINE IDENTITY AND THE 'FALL' OF THE 'NEW ROME'

By late eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the remarkable outgrowth in historical writing which they saw, the horizons of Byzantine historians likewise needed to adapt to new realities. It was more necessary than ever to reassert the Romanness of the new Rome, thanks to increased political conflict with Westerner

[62] S. Franklin, 'Borrowed Time: Perceptions of the Past in Twelfth-Century Rus' ', in Magdalino (ed.), *Perceptions of the Past*, 157–71; and A. Rukavishnikov, '*Tale of Bygone Years*: The *Russian Primary Chronicle* as a Family Chronicle', *Early Medieval Europe*, 12 (2003), 53–73; for the text, *Russian Primary Chronicle*, trans. S. H. Cross and O. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, Mass., 1953).

adventurers and rulers in Italy, the Balkans and the Near East, and in response to Western attempts to reclaim Roman history, whether advanced by German emperors relying on Roman law or Italian cities drawing on the model of Republican Rome. Hence the cluster of historians writing in and about the reign of Manuel Komnenus (1143–80).[63] In these narratives, the achievements of the conquering emperors of the late ninth to the early eleventh century, who had shaped an expanding and renewed imperial system, needed their place alongside their late antique forbears. The recounting of the victories of emperors like Nikephoras Phokas (963–9), John Tzimiskes (969–76), and above all Basil II 'the Bulgar-Slayer' (976–1025) involved a litany of defeated 'tribes', who appear in the role of the cowed barbarian in an image of imperial triumph. The ethnographic stereotypes drawn on may have been traditional, but in a changed political and military context they acquired a new force, and a certain ambivalence in an expanded empire in which some provinces such as the newly conquered Bulgaria were seen as not quite fully Roman.[64] Much in these representations was present-minded: Basil II's reputation as a soldier-emperor bent on destroying the Bulgarians and not shy of committing atrocities against the barbarian opponents of Roman order was a creation of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, and one which misrepresented a rather more cautious and less bellicose frontier policy.[65] The impulses driving such representations lay partly in the need to find a model for the campaigning emperor at the head of his troops, for under the Komnenian dynasty the empire was dependent on the martial deeds of a new breed of soldier-emperors and the parvenu clients and relatives they promoted.

The values of this new ruling class might on occasion seem distant from those of the world of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and have more in common with those of the rough Western adventurers whose relationship with Byzantium oscillated between watchful alliance and wilful assertion, but whose activities lay at the heart of Byzantine military activity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The advent of Westerners, normally given the generic label 'Frank', often in positions of supreme military command in the mid- and late eleventh century, created tensions within the ethnographic assumptions which traditional narratives of imperial victory implied, assumptions which were further challenged by the First Crusade and its aftermath. Whereas traditional Byzantine historiography had no collective term for 'Westerners', in the way that the Herodotean 'Scythians' might be applied to the peoples beyond the Danube and the Black Sea, by the twelfth

[63] Paul Magdalino, 'The Phenomenon of Manuel I Komnenos', in J. Howard-Johnston (ed.), *Byzantium and the West, c.850–c.1200* (Amsterdam, 1988), 171–99; and for Western uses of Rome, Robert Benson, 'Political *Renovatio*: Two Models from Antiquity', in Benson and Giles Constable (eds.), *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 340–59.

[64] Elisabeth Malamut, 'L'image byzantine des Petchénègues', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 88 (1995), 105–47; and Paul Stephenson, 'Byzantine Conceptions of Otherness After the Annexation of Bulgaria (1018)', in Smythe (ed.), *Strangers to Themselves*, 245–57.

[65] Paul Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer* (Cambridge, 2003).

century 'Latins' were seen as a defined group with their own ethnographic traits. Anna Komnene, for example, tended to use 'Latin' of enemies but was more positive about 'our' Franks (in fact, usually Normans): Latins with their martial values and greed for money and power filled the barbarian stereotype and Anna even commented that a civilized Latin was as rare as a Hellenized Scythian.[66] Religious difference played remarkably little role in this discourse.

By 'othering' the Latins the likes of Anna Komnene could differentiate the conduct of their heroes, the Komnenian emperors and their clients, from that of the Westerners with whose chivalric martial values they had so much in common. Indeed, given the evident connections and similarities between Byzantine leaders and the 'Frankish' warlords who so often doubled as Byzantine generals, detailed discussions of 'barbarian' machismo and military tactics could also serve as a proxy for discussing the tensions wrought by internal social change and the rise of a military power-elite whose values at important points diverged from the civilian traditions of the imperial court as chronicled by Michael Psellus. For example, under Manuel Komnenus, Westerners, though still common in imperial service, were rarely promoted to the highest positions as they had been in the eleventh century—but Nicetas Choniates criticized Manuel for lavishing privileges on half-barbarians whilst neglecting Romans even when they were seasoned fighters.[67] Comment on the Western origins of this or that imperial servant, moreover, was selective rather than transparent, and closely linked to perceptions of political loyalty: labelling someone a 'Latin' or 'Frank' mobilized a range of stereotypical expectations about their behaviour. The controlling comparison between Roman order and the rude vigour of Latin barbarians could be used to structure a complex narrative agenda: Nicetas may have been on the one hand an upholder of traditional values and a critic of Manuel, his sometime master, but as his work was completed after the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204, Latin machismo was counterpointed with Byzantine decadence to create a compelling plot of grandeur and decline.[68]

It was not only ethnic and military boundaries that were increasingly confused in twelfth-century society, and so increasingly scrutinized in twelfth-century historiography: the period also witnessed a dramatic fascination with the religious Other, notably the denigration and persecution of varieties of Christian practice which were seen as potentially threatening by the official hierarchy as 'heretical'. The 'rise of a persecuting society' was a pan-European development,[69] but in Byzantium where the relationship between 'church' and 'state' was not a matter

[66] Kazhdan, 'Latins and Franks', 87.

[67] Ibid., 95–100.

[68] Alicia Simpson, 'Before and After 1204: The Versions of Nicetas Choniates' *Historia*', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 60 (2006), 189–221; Jonathan Harris, 'Distortion, Divine Providence and Genre in Nicetas Choniates' *Historia*', *Journal of Medieval History*, 26 (2000), 19–32; and Alicia Simpson and Stefanos Efthymiadis (eds.), *Nicetas Choniates: A Historian and Writer* (Geneva, 2009).

[69] To borrow the title of Robert I. Moore's *The Formation of a Persecuted Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford, 1987).

for ideological angst or political conflict as in the West, it was directly connected with the self-representation of the emperor and so with imperial identity. For Anna Komnene, it was Alexius's persecution of heretics that marked him out as a true heir to Constantine, the 'Thirteenth Apostle', in a range of episodes that cluster towards the end of the *Alexiad* and so provide a rousing conclusion by shifting attention from a more equivocal political situation to the religious aspects of the imperial office. Here, ethnic labelling could overlap with religious categories and social slurs agains the illiterate masses to create a sense of an embattled Byzantine world whose core beliefs were being undermined from without. Anna's account of the condemnation of Michael Psellus's pupil John Italus, whose attempts to revive the study of ancient philosophy led to accusations that his teaching was undermining orthodox Christianity, played on his origins outside the empire, advertised in his surname: although Italos professed to teach Hellenistic philosophy and had studied at court, he could not command Greek speech and he lacked a proper 'Roman' education; what's more, when challenged he immediately resorted to violence, betraying his barbarian ancestry.[70] Similarly not only did the conduct and the dress of the Bogomil heretics mark them as transgressing social norms (notably about food and sex) but their political loyalty was also suspect, and they were associated with 'barbarian traits' through their geographical origins and their connections with recently conquered provinces of questionable loyalty and with a dubious past.[71]

Twelfth-century cultural, social, and political change thus led to a series of attempts to define the identity of the *Rhomaioi* more urgently, and in tighter juxtaposition to internal and external outsiders, than had previously been the case.[72] What's more, the empire's official identity came, for the first time, to be expounded in ways which opened up a critical distance between the actions of current rulers and the ancient norms that defined imperial history. Since late antiquity, the terminology of Hellenism had been avoided in historiography, as in official documentation and other branches of literary culture: it was seen as tainted with a pagan philosophical past, and so incompatible with the empire's Christian identity, and in any case it brought with it no usable claims given the lack of interest in Hellenic antiquity that was such a feature of official ideology. From the middle decades of the twelfth century onwards, however, whilst official documentation remained insistent on the empire's Roman identity, historians such as Nicetas Choniates increasingly laid claim to the Hellenistic past as a part of Byzantine identity; indeed Nicetas's brother Michael, as bishop of Athens, could not only celebrate the ruins of classical Athens and the deeds of its rulers, but also seek to understand his city and its present

[70] Anna, *Alexiad*, 5: 8–9; and Smythe, 'Insiders and Outsiders', 76.

[71] Dion Smythe, 'Alexios I and the Heretics: The Account of Anna Komnene's Alexiad', in Margeret Mullett and Dion Smythe (eds.), *Alexios I Komnenos* (Belfast, 1996), 232–59; and Patlagean, 'Byzance, le barbare, le heretique'.

[72] Dion Smythe, 'Outsiders by Taxis: Perceptions of Nonconformity in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Literature', *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 24 (1997), 229–49.

organisation in the light of that past.[73] In part, this was a rhetorical flourish, a by-product of the wider movement of cultural and political renewal and of the intensification of study of the classics. But it was more than literary froth, as the chronicles and histories of a number of imperial servants suffering disenchantment, disgrace, and internal exile vividly show: John Zonaras, writing in self-imposed island exile, reversed the pattern of traditional Byzantine chronicles and focused on Republican Rome to develop a cogent critique of what he believed to be the emergence of contemporary tyranny, whilst Michael Glykas writing in enforced retirement focused on the safer territory of biblical history to provide an implicit moral critique of contemporary imperial excesses.[74] Hellenizing flourishes were not inherently 'oppositional', and could just as easily be used to place imperial actions in an approving light. But they do speak to a world in which the traditional intellectual elite felt uneasy in its engagement with a new regime. The Hellenistic identity voiced by Niketas and others was in part an attempt to express the collective values of the intellectual elite—defined through its mastery of the Hellenistic literary language and a range of classicizing genres—and to establish a critical distance between them and the world of imperial self-representation: witness Niketas's own use of classical comparisons to call into question the conduct of contemporary emperors.

When internal political crisis in the last two decades of the twelfth century was capped by the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, the very fount of Byzantium's inherited identity itself was gone: this trauma fed into Nicetas's complex and multi-faceted narrative. Ancient history and the rhetoric of Hellenism played a heightened new role now that claims to be Constantine's heirs and custodians of the new Rome sounded hollow. For Nicetas, for example, Latin despoilation of Constantinople became the occasion for a rhetorical meditation of the meaning of the statues and buildings that were stripped down and shipped back to the West as plunder or melted down as bullion. Constantinople's streetscape had been an ever-present signifier in Nicetas's *History*. In describing the cultural 'asset-stripping' that took place after 1204 he displayed his virtuoso classicism to reconsider the interpretations and mythology of the historical landmarks that defined the city's topography, stripping bare the claims of city and empire.[75] Now that Romulus and Remus had been carried back to Italy by Western conquerors was this still the new Rome? The penultimate episode of his work—the melting down of a statue of Helen of Troy—leads to an extended consideration of Latin and Byzantine identities: 'What of the white-armed, beautiful-ankled and swan-necked Helen, who mustered the entire host of Hellenes and overthrew Troy? . . . Was

[73] Macrides and Magdalino, 'The Fourth Kingdom', esp. 139–56; Roderick Beaton, 'Antique Nation? "Hellenes" on the Eve of Greek Independence and in Twelfth-Century Byzantium', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 31 (2007), 76–95; and Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007).

[74] Macrides and Magdalino, 'The Fourth Kingdom', 120–36.

[75] *O City of Byzantium*, trans. Harry Magoulias, Jr. (Michigan, 1984), esp. 347–52.

she able to placate the unplacatable? Was she able to soften those men whose hearts were made of iron?' Nicetas's rhetorical question was, of course, answered in the negative. But he reminded his readers that Helen had been the cause of the Trojan War in so doing: it was on account of her beauty that the ancient Hellenes had sacked Troy, and now it might be claimed that her destruction by Westerners whose own learned traditions made them descendants of Aeneas and the survivors of Troy constituted the revenge of the Trojans on the Hellenes. 'O Helen, Tyndareus' daughter, the very essence of loveliness, offshoot of Erotes, ward of Aphrodite, nature's most perfect gift, contested prize of Trojans and Hellenes. . . . It was said that these descendents of Aeneas (*Aeneadae*) condemned you to the flames as retribution for Troy's having been laid waste by the firebrand because of your scandalous amours.' Nicetas thus played on the irony that the sack of Constantinople might be seen as the revenge of the Trojans, in the form of their modern Western descendants, on the Greeks. But he immediately rejected his own literary conceit, in a way that effectively repeated the charge and trumped it with an ethnic slur: Latins were by definition illiterate barbarians, and so scarcely likely to know enough about the classics to appreciate the history behind their actions. They must, Nicetas concluded, instead have been motivated by that most typical of barbarian traits, greed: 'After all, how could one expect to find of those unlettered barbarians who are wholly ignorant of their ABCs, the ability to read and gain knowledge of those epic poems sung of you?'

Whilst Byzantine identity remained tied up with Imperial claims even after 1204, the various successor-states which emerged from the wreckage, including the empire of Nicaea in which Nicetas sought high office, were no longer ruled from the 'new Rome'. The 'Hellenism' which had been emerging in the decades prior to 1204 became a potent element in the ideological identity of these Byzantiums in miniature, and even after the recapture of Constantinople in 1261, Hellenism remained an important part of a new imperial identity that developed under the Paleologian dynasty. But in Byzantium even the crisis of empire did not smash asunder the basic assumptions of Imperial ethnography.[76]

EURASIAN COMPARISONS AND THE UNIQUENESS OF THE WEST

The divergent historiographies of identity visible in Byzantium and the medieval West are best understood within a set of broader Eurasian comparisons. In such

[76] Dimitri Angelov, 'Byzantine Ideological Reactions to the Latin Conquest of Constantinople', in Angeliki Laiou (ed.), *Urbs Capta: The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences* (Paris, 2005), 293–310; Michael Angold, 'Byzantine "Nationalism" and the Nicaean Empire', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 51 (1975), 49–70; and Gillian Page, *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans* (Cambridge, 2008).

a scheme, the case of China under the Tang (618–907) and their successors stands, alongside Byzantium, as an exemplary case of imperial ethnographies which legitimated the state by pitting a wild and barbarized 'Other' against civilized order. The first years of Tang rule saw the production of 'official history' defined as a responsibility of the imperial bureaucracy. Current political arrangements were thus presented as the endpoint of a seamless succession reaching back to the Han, with histories demonstrating the 'Mandate of Heaven' which determined dynastic legitimacy; official histories also created a defined template of proper imperial order through which courtiers sought to control imperial policy. Hence Chinese history was understood as linear and unitary, even in periods when the reality was one of political division, regional powers, and the complex interrelationships between 'China' and the polities of the Inner Asian steppe. Furthermore, the development of the examination system to screen candidates for the imperial bureaucracy, rapidly expanded under the late Tang and their successors, created a potent mechanism for the dissemination of this agreed narrative of political continuity and cultural legitimacy: the self-conscious class of litterati that had emerged by the eleventh century were thus the guardians of imperial history.[77] In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this narrative was used to create a dominant Han ethnicity as the basis for Chinese nationalism.[78] However, in our period, mainstream imperial identity was not normally described in ethnic terms: the terminology was that of *hua* or *xia*, denoting the 'order' of the civilized sedentary world which was aligned with and underwritten by the structures of the state, defined in opposition to a tribal, martial, and nomadic 'Other' of *fan* and *hu*. This discourse rested not on strictly patrolled boundaries between different groups, but on the demonstration of 'core' attributes which aligned those exhibiting them to a particular archetype and could therefore be manipulated in both social practice and historiographical representation: warlords or frontier troops might be portrayed as the barbarian 'Other' when they were the opponents of a 'legitimate' dynasty, but assimilated to the social order in times of peace.[79] In the eleventh century the Sung dynasty (960–1279), its power increasingly confined to the south of the Yangtze, contested the legitimacy of the Liao (907–1125), rulers of the traditional Chinese heartlands to the north, by claiming a monopoly on the imperial past, rather as the likes of Nicetas alligned post-1204 regimes to Byzantine past: as a result the Liao, though they presented themselves in terms of traditional imperial ideology, are remembered as a non-Sinitic 'conquest

[77] See ch. 1 by Charles Hartman and Anthony DeBlasi in this volume.

[78] Frank Dikotter (ed.), *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan* (London, 1997).

[79] Marc Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China* (Philadelphia, 2008); Jonathan Skaff, 'Survival in the Frontier Zone: Comparative Perspectives on Identity and Political Allegiance in China's Inner Asian Borderlands during the Sui–Tang Dynastic Transition (617–630)', *Journal of World History*, 15 (2004), 117–53; and Skaff, 'Barbarians at the Gates? The Tang Frontier Military and the An Lushan Rebellion', *War and Society*, 18 (2000), 23–35.

dynasty', in remarkably different terms from the Tang, themselves of mixed origin and dependent initially on nomadic support. Whatever their effects on posterity, however, such discourses had no discernible effect on the loyalties of individual political actors, although they might be used to provide post hoc justification or denigration of particular individuals.[80]

The Islamic world points to another possibility altogether: the creation of a religious community in which ethnic loyalties in our sense played only a circumscribed role in historical discourse. Islam, at its inception, addressed an Arab society organized in terms of lineage, clan, and tribe, and created a literature rooted in a hitherto oral Arab language and culture. These basic loyalties were therefore accepted as the basis for all social organization, but exclusive loyalty to kin and tribe were equated with a pre-Islamic state of ignorance and factionalism (*jāhilīyah*), and seen as implicit threats to the new community of the faithful (*umma*) to which the Prophet spoke. With the dramatic growth of Islam following the conquests of the Sassanid Empire and former Roman provinces from Syria to Spain, the Arab cultural identity which had been taken as read in the first decades of Islam tied together a newly dispersed ruling class. At the same time, as non-Arab groups converted to the religion of the conquerors, some even becoming clients of Arab tribes or participating in further conquests themsleves, tensions increasingly arose over the identity of the Islamic community, and the pre-eminent status of the first generations of converts and the Arab tribes within it. The group loyalties around which these conflicts turned were not, however, understood in 'ethnic' terms of shared descent, customs, and history; rather specific dynasties or individuals were the rallying points around which politico-religious movements—themselves combining claims to legitimate political leadership and true religious faith—crystallized.[81]

Tensions between different ethnic groupings within Islamic society did, of course, exist, and they could find expression in a literary form, especially as politics became increasingly regionalized and local dynasties developed their own historical identities.The *shu'ūbīyah* movement of the second/eighth to fourth/tenth centuries reveals a crucial moment in this development. This literary controversy turned on the interpretation of verse 16 of sura 49 of the Qu'ran: 'Oh men, We have created from you a male and female, and We have made you into *shu'ūb* and *qabā'il* that you may come to know one another; truly the noblest amongst you before Allah is the most righteous; truly Allah is the All-knowing, the All-seeing.' The dominant interpretation of this verse saw it as underlining the divine origins of gender and genealogy as the only legitimate subdivisions of

[80] Maurice Rossabi (ed.), *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbours, 10th–14th Centuries* (Berkeley, 2002), esp. the chs. by Tao Jing-shen and Wang Gungwu; and see Naomi Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China* (Honolulu, 2007).

[81] Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980); and Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh, 2005).

Islamic society, reading *shu'ūb* and *qabā'il* as different levels of clan-based tribal organization. Those querying Arab dominance thus stressed the second half of the verse, with its emphasis on equality before God; some, however, reinterpreted the first half as referring to the basic equality of 'peoples' (*shu'ūb*) with 'tribes' (*qabā'il*), that is non-Arabs with Arabs; these claims could be accompanied by sometimes sharp polemic against the nomadic customs of the pre-conversion Arabs.[82] Political change in the third/ninth to fifth/eleventh centuries further created cultural and social milieux into which the non-Arabic past could be assimiliated into Islamic literary traditions. This development was most pronounced in the new heartlands of the Abbasid Caliphate and its successors, where a new 'aristocracy of the quill' monopolizing bureaucratic office emerged from the descendants of the Persian gentry: al-Tabari for example synthesized material on pre-Islamic Persia and its rulers in the framework of his universal Islamic history of rulers and prophets. Under increasingly autonomous regional dynasties in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, Persian models of rulership were selectively evoked, whilst Persian emerged as a literary language as many elements of pre-Islamic Persian myth were retold in a new Islamic context, most notably in the epic *Shah-nama* [Book of Kings] of Ferdowsi.[83]

How are we to situate Western European ethnic and national histories amidst the range of possibilities evident in Byzantium, China, and the Islamic world? Both Byzantium and China suggest how imperial identities might metamorphose into and interact with the history of a 'people', whilst Islamic historiographers could likewise selectively weave 'national' traditions into their narratives as regionalized political divisions emerged within the Islamic community, even as they stressed dynasty and lineage as the basic social ties. But only in the medieval West was universal history—defined, of course, in terms of a religious tradition—understood as made up by an array of 'peoples' each with their own discrete history. Rome was a crucial referent, source of knowledge, and historical model. But there was no sense in which medieval Europeans saw themselves as Romans, or their kingdoms as direct continuations of the Roman Empire. Here, the distinctive ecclesiology developed by Augustine of Hippo, and essayed by his pupil Orosius, was vital. For whilst unquestioningly accepting the Roman Empire within which he lived, Augustine refused to make a direct or unequivocal identification of the empire with the Christian religion, or to cast it as God's chosen vehicle for the dissemination of the true faith.[84] In the post-Roman crisis of

[82] Roy Mottehdeh, 'The Shu'ūbīyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 7 (1976), 161–82.

[83] e.g. Cyril Bosworth, 'The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran and the Search for Dynastic Connections with the Past', *Iran*, 11 (1973), 51–62; Sarah Savant, '"Persians" in Early Islam', *Annales Islamologiques*, 42 (2008), 73–92; and Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, 'Contested Memories: Narrative Structures and Allegorical Meanings of Iran's Pre-Islamic History', *Iranian Studies*, 29 (1996), 149–75.

[84] Robert Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970).

Western society neither the continuity of the state, nor the community of the faithful, were able to monopolize the legitimation of power: therein lay the uniqueness of Western historiography.

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Chapter 27

Historical Writing and Warfare

Meredith L. D. Riedel

Medieval cultures in the East were generally more reticent than Western ones in describing warfare in bloody detail. As events that involved the death or mutilation of large numbers of people, battles are traumatic experiences that tend to inhibit creative literary description of them. The three cultures examined in this chapter approached the recording of war very differently. The Tang Chinese histories are formulaic, abstract to the point of statistics; they offer only names and casualty numbers. Byzantine writing about warfare is pragmatic, gives some operational details, and is concerned for the character of commanders, but avoids exalting them. Abbasid war poetry and chronicles glorify the moral superiority of Muslim commanders, especially in comparison to non-Muslim opponents, yet present the brute facts of battles in an epigrammatic way. All three cultures combined accounts of war with the exigencies of religion, which influenced their goals before battle and means of commemoration after battle.

For the purposes of this chapter, 'medieval' will refer to the period between the seventh and thirteenth centuries. In taking an explicitly comparative approach, this investigation aims to illumine certain principles common to war-making in early medieval cultures, whilst also exposing religious biases that serve to differentiate opponents. Three cultures will be examined: the Tang dynasty in China (618–908), the Macedonian dynasty in Byzantium (867–1025), and the Abbasid caliphate in the Middle East (750–1258). All three came to power by violent means, each initiated literary innovations in their respective cultures, and for various reasons each is regarded by successive generations as an important and prosperous 'golden age' in their respective national histories.

THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL WRITING AND WARFARE

Military history-writing is, as others have noted, a slippery genre of historical writing.[1] Because war-making involves cultural influences, practical

[1] See ch. 28 by Thomas Sizgorich in this volume.

considerations, and often also moral justifications, there is no single way of writing about war that may be safely identified as mere 'military history-writing'. Rather, what one finds are varieties of writing about war in many different genres, such as chronicles, annalistic records, military manuals, poetry, saints' lives, mirrors of princes, legal documents, diplomatic dispatches, speeches, eulogies, and liturgical memorials. Through these, an attentive reader may discern cultural priorities and attitudes, and discover what their authors considered worthy of recording, and why.

The recording of history, and indeed, accounts about warfare, depended on an author's position, education, and language skills. In China, for example, most histories were written by government secretaries, educated civil servants assigned to collate and copy information gathered from a variety of sources. The high-prestige form of history-writing was annalistic, a condensed record sometimes viewed in Europe as rather more primitive and less informative than a gripping narrative of front-line combat. The Byzantines also maintained an enduring historiographical tradition of annalistic records, written by scholars rather than bureaucrats, yet in the medieval era also began producing historical narratives that revealed more fully the authors' own viewpoint.[2] Both cultures shied away from recounting the gory details of battle, just as their generals sought to avoid pitched battles in favour of winning by clever stratagems usually involving deceit. Similarly, the Abbasids sought to avoid pitched battles, yet pursued warfare with a more aggressive stance, engaging in regular raids on Byzantium that were later celebrated using various literary genres.

The methods of warfare have been of the most interest to military historians generally and include discussions of tactics and strategy, equipment and technology, organization and logistical support. But how does one evaluate the historiography of warfare? What social factors identified by the writers themselves influenced the willingness of medieval cultures to use military force? At the heart of an analysis of historical writing and warfare, one must ask: How did contemporary writers interpret war? What did they deem worthy of remembering and writing down, and why? This chapter contends that religious commitments often affected not only the decision to fight, as well as the ultimate goal in the use of deadly force, but also the means of commemorating the struggle, and all of these factors are reflected in the way early medieval Eastern cultures wrote about war. The Byzantines wrote primarily from a Christian perspective, the Abbasids from a Muslim one, and the Tang Chinese from a Daoist viewpoint. Each offers varying answers for the question of justification for war.[3]

[2] For more on Byzantine historiography see ch. 11 by Paul Magdalino and ch. 10 by Anthony Kaldellis, both in this volume.

[3] The notable Byzantine exception is Zosimos, who wrote from a pagan perspective.

THE MACEDONIAN DYNASTY (867–1025)

Just what is meant by Byzantine historiography, and how is it different from Chinese or Islamic historiography? Byzantium was a consciously 'backward-looking' culture that admired the literature of classical Greece. Throughout the eleven centuries of its existence, Byzantine writers therefore continuously produced writing about the past, often displaying a conscious reliance on Thucydides and Herodotus in their choice of language and selection of events. War and diplomacy formed a large part of their content, usually centred on the activities of emperors, and later writers would seek to continue the historical narrative where an earlier writer had ended. For example, the patriarch Nikephoros sought in the early decades of the ninth century to continue the history of Theophylakt, which had ended in 602, although his style was completely different; Michael Psellos, a highly educated scholar in the eleventh century, undertook a continuation of the elegantly written history of Leo the Deacon, which had covered only 959–76. Of course, the purposes of these historians were not necessarily objective. In the tenth century, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus commissioned a continuation of Theophanes's *Chronographia*, which had ended in 811, for the express purpose of glorifying his own dynastic line—the Macedonians. Book 5 of *Theophanes Continuatus* presents a blatantly eulogistic version of the life of Constantine VII's grandfather, Basil I, describing him as a warrior-king and even going so far as to claim his direct descent from Constantine the Great.

In the ninth century, the famous patriarch and scholar, Photios, distinguished two different kinds of history-writing in Byzantium: the history proper (*historia*) and the chronicle (*chronographia*).[4] They can be said to differ in terms of structure, length, and, perhaps most important, purpose. '*Historia* is characterized by a fullness (*pleroteta*), clarity and elegance, unaffected exactness, combined with intellectual honesty, in contrast to *chronographia*, which is marked by shortness and the writing of the very essential, overlooking the total picture of the events. Photios condemned the chroniclers' use of language (*lexilogion*), their lack of aesthetic sensitivity, and their mediocrity.'[5] Photios goes on to distinguish the two kinds of writing by how much can be discerned about their authors; historians typically reveal their personalities, while chroniclers do not, making the latter appear more 'objective' (in modern terms), if less aesthetically pleasing. 'Every educated Byzantine knew that histories could be either contemporary narratives or scholarly compilations, that war and politics were more suitable subjects for

[4] Photios is a uniquely crucial figure in the history of Byzantine literature because his annotated bibliography, the *Bibliotheca*, contains 279 summaries of ancient texts, many of which no longer exist.

[5] Demetrios Constantelos, review of Apostolos Karpozilos, *Byzantine Historians and Chronographers*, vol. 2: *(8th–10th c.)*, *Speculum*, 80:1 (2005), 244–6.

history than commerce or everyday life, that historians should praise good men and blame bad ones, and that historical truth and impartiality were virtues, at least in principle.'[6] In short, Byzantine historiography was considered an appropriate pursuit for serious scholars, who were expected to provide useful and sometimes entertaining narratives, preserve ancient knowledge for posterity, and offer to some degree language that was appropriately impressive. Writing about warfare was therefore an obvious subject for Byzantine historians, who chronicled the choices of emperors and generals as much as they described the uncontrollable forces of fate and divine providence.

Although the Byzantines continuously produced historical writing, there was a surge in history-writing during periods of upheaval or instability that shows the Byzantines' awareness of the importance of history as propaganda. The sixth-century historian Agathias came to view poetry as impractical, compared with history, which offered the 'signal merit of encouraging men to accomplish great deeds in the hope of being remembered'.[7] The interpretation and presentation of battles and wars therefore became tremendously important for those who wished to maintain power; the reign of the Macedonian dynasty emperor Constantine VII embodies the zenith of this literary production.

Heralded by scholars as the 'Golden Age' of Byzantium, the Macedonian dynasty produced encyclopedic literature, expanded Orthodox missionary movements, and most of all, developed innovations in warfare that reflected the contemporary needs of the day.[8] It was a 'storied age of military expansion' sparked by imperial initiative.[9] The borders of Byzantium, so catastrophically shrunken after the rise of Islam, were significantly extended under these emperors in the tenth century, but lost again by the middle of the eleventh century. This unique era of re-conquest came about only after the non-campaigning Emperor Leo VI (r. 886–912) himself determined to renew the Byzantines' grasp of military science by writing a military manual, which he specified was for the purpose of countering the Saracens, as he called them. That this emperor, the first one in many generations who was not a war leader, considered it part of his imperial role to write about war reveals a culture increasingly militarized as a result of hostile pressure from the caliphate.

A lengthy and important military handbook written around the year 900, the *Taktika* of Leo VI does not give any specific information on battles or other conflicts in Byzantium, but it is nevertheless important because it consciously addressed the problem of morale in an atmosphere of ongoing military setbacks vis-à-vis the Muslims, thereby opening a window on how the Byzantines

[6] Warren T. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke, 2007), 21.
[7] Ibid., 284.
[8] In ch. 10 of this volume, Kaldellis refers to it rather less exuberantly as an 'age of recovery'.
[9] Eric McGeer, 'Military Texts', in Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon, and Robin Cormack (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2009), 911.

themselves thought about war. Leo was obliged to break the Byzantine tradition that spurned the composition of new material, in order to articulate for the first time two previously neglected concerns: how to fight Muslims, and how to fight naval battles.[10] For the first, he recommends a careful sort of mimesis, suggesting that the Byzantine Christian armies should fight with a religious fervour similar to that of their enemies. For the second, he offers only tactical advice, much of which is viewed as nonsense by modern scholars.[11] Throughout the manual, he urges the general to employ Christian prayers and other observances to boost morale, and to remind the soldiers: 'we fight against this sort of impiety [i.e. Islam] by means of our piety and orthodox faith'.[12] Indeed, they are exhorted to consider themselves brothers of all those who fight against the enemies of the true God.[13] This differs somewhat from the classical Byzantine attitude towards warfare, which held it to be a necessary evil, permitted but not encouraged by the Church.

Leo's approach was imitated by later generals. The manuals attributed to Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–9), the emperor-general who most closely embodied Leo VI's ideal general as described in the *Taktika*, provide useful information about the Byzantine art of war as it was developed on particular terrain, against a particular enemy, and with a particular composition of military forces.[14] These manuals describe recently fought but already famous skirmishes, setting them up as models for imitation. For example, the tenth-century manual on guerrilla warfare known as *De velitatione bellica* [On Skirmishing Warfare] praises the tactics of the Byzantine general Leo Phokas and recommends that the Roman (i.e. Byzantine) army attack Saracen raiding parties on their way home when they are tired and laden with plunder, in order to achieve victory against a numerically superior force. An example of this was admiringly described by Leo the Deacon, a contemporary historian writing in the late tenth century:

> He set ambushes at intervals on the road, which had sheer mountain ridges above, for the most part precipitous and full of caves, while the foot of the mountain was filled with ravines and thick with trees and all kinds of brushwood… the barbarians [i.e. Muslims] had to crowd together in the very narrow and rough places, breaking their formations, and had to cross the steep section each one as best he could. Then the general ordered the trumpets to sound the battle charge to make his troops spring up from ambush, and attacked the barbarians.… With such victories and stratagems the general prevailed over the numerous host of barbarians and

[10] Constitution XVIII in its second half addresses fighting Saracens; Constitution XIX is entirely on naval warfare. Both are unique in the Byzantine military corpus.

[11] See John H. Pryor and Elizabeth Jeffreys, *The Age of the Dromon: The Byzantine Navy, ca. 500–1204* (Leiden, 2006).

[12] *Taktika*, XVIII. III.

[13] Jean-René Vieillefond, 'Les pratiques religieuses dans l'armée byzantine d'après les traités militaires', *REA*, 37 (1935), 323.

[14] The manual *On Skirmishing* and the one known as *Military Precepts* both date to the latter half of the tenth century and refer to the conditions of battle in the 950s and 960s.

destroyed them, breaking the insolent arrogance of Hamdan and reducing him to ignoble and unmanly cowardice and flight.[15]

The vividness of the account reflects not only the concern to highlight the rightness of Byzantine tactics, but also the justice of defending against the incursions of the Muslim aggressors. This propagandistic turn marks a change from the methods and aims of earlier military historiography in Byzantium.

Prokopios, the greatest Byzantine historian of war, deliberately modelled his sixth-century work after Thucydides, remarking in his preface that 'cleverness is the province of oratory, creativity of poetry, but truth of history'.[16] How did the Byzantines determine the truth of history? In the case of Leo VI, it was by researching historical documents, while for Prokopios, it was based on autopsy. Unlike Prokopios, Leo VI was not an eyewitness to battles fought by the Byzantine army; his knowledge was based on documents accessible to him as emperor—dispatches from his generals, previous histories, war stories from his own father. Yet both writers were consciously attempting to save Byzantine knowledge from oblivion. In the case of Prokopios, it was to record the wars of Justinian 'so that the passage of time which overcomes momentous deeds that lack a record, might not abandon those to oblivion', while in the case of Leo VI, it was to preserve (and reawaken) the art of war inherited from the Roman past.[17] No Byzantine military manual after the sixth century, for example, offers diagrams for the disposition of forces in battle or on the march. Earlier information is assumed; the manual of Leo VI is deliberately invoked as a resource familiar to the readers of the manual on guerrilla warfare.

Leo's attempt to reanimate Byzantine military wisdom appears to have borne fruit in the tenth-century re-conquest of eastern territories under Nikephoros II Phokas, and contemporary writers record this. The historian Leo the Deacon characterizes Nikephoros as 'a mighty and strong-minded man' who

devastated the surrounding regions like a thunderbolt, ravaging the fields and enslaving whole towns with thousands of inhabitants. When he had destroyed everything in his path with fire and the sword, he attacked the fortresses, most of which he captured at the first assault. . . . Thus in a very short time he captured and destroyed more than sixty Agarene fortresses, carried off an enormous amount of booty, and crowned himself with a victory more glorious than that of any other man.[18]

Leo the Deacon's *History* is primarily concerned with warfare, chronicling the reigns of two of Byzantium's most powerful and successful soldier-emperors, Nikephoros II Phokas and John Tzimiskes (r. 969–75). As he recounts their exploits, Leo describes the army, its weaponry, tactics, training, equipment,

[15] *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, trans. Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan (Washington, DC, 2005), 74–5. This battle took place on 8 November 960, and is described in the *De velitatione* XVII.2.

[16] *Wars* I.1–5.

[17] Preface of Book 1. *Wars* I.1.1.

[18] *The History of Leo the Deacon*, II.9, 81–2.

camps, battles, and enemies. This subject matter closely follows the information found in military manuals of the day, but Leo uses archaic language borrowed from Thucydides; for example, he calls naval ships 'triremes' rather than 'dromons'. He opens his history with a description of his purpose as a historian:

> Among the good things that are of benefit in life, history is not one of the least, but one of the most important, since it is by nature something useful and profitable . . . inasmuch as it brings mortal affairs back to life or gives them youthful vigor, and does not allow them to be swept away and concealed in the depths of oblivion.[19]

However, he does not merely wish to record events for posterity, but also to display them as lessons from a Christian God. He writes,

> Many people believe that life is now undergoing a transformation and that the expected Second Coming of the Saviour and God is near, at the very gates. For these reasons I have resolved not to pass over in silence events that are full of horror and worthy of amazement, but to recount them openly, so that they may be a lesson to later generations.[20]

He records the details of military engagements vividly and focuses on the character of the hero of each battle, usually one of the Phokas brothers. For example, he describes the siege of Chandax at length,[21] borrowing the language of the sixth-century Greek historian Agathias, and takes pains to portray Nikephoros II's military savvy as well as his Christian mercy: 'He restrained the soldiers' onslaught, persuading them not to kill the men who had thrown down their arms, nor to attack cruelly and inhumanely men without armor or weapons, saying it was a sign of inhumanity to cut down and slay like an enemy men who had given themselves up in surrender.'[22]

It is interesting to note that, before this momentous victory, a number of superstitions were swirling around the re-conquest of Crete. For example, when Constantine VII asked for the advice of Paul the Younger, a Byzantine holy man, on whether to launch the 949 expedition, he was told that it was not 'in God's mind'.[23] Another legend, which held that the conqueror of Crete would undoubtedly become emperor, was used to discourage Romanos II from pursuing the 960 expedition that eventually brought Nikephoros II to glory.[24] Theodosios the Deacon, an otherwise unknown poet, composed a panegyric poem in celebration that described the re-conquest as a victory of light over darkness.[25] The Arab historian Yahya ibn Sa'id, by contrast, relates in detail the riots that broke out in Egypt, including the slaughter of Christians there in retaliation for the deaths of

[19] *The History of Leo the Deacon,* I.1 (p. 55).
[20] Ibid., I.1 (pp. 56–7).
[21] Ibid., I.3–9 (pp. 60–9), II.6–8 (pp. 76–81).
[22] Ibid., II.7 (pp. 78–9).
[23] Hippolyte Delehaye (ed.), 'Vita S. Pauli Junioris in monte Latro', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 11 (1892), 71–4.
[24] *TC,* 474.23–475.1. Skylitzes, 250. *Jean Skylitzes: Empereurs de Constantinople*, ed. Jean Claude Cheynet, trans. Bernard Flusin (Paris, 2003), 210.
[25] Hugo Criscuolo (ed.), *De Creta Capta* (Leipzig, 1979), verses 182–3, 224–5, 443–4, 617–40, 654–5.

Cretan Muslims.[26] The victory was hugely significant for the Byzantines, and therefore merited fuller treatment in the historical accounts.[27] More than that, however, the importance of the character of the commanding general was highlighted by contemporary Byzantine writers. In large part, the virtue of the general, as insisted upon by Leo VI in his *Taktika*, was necessary for the Byzantines to pursue warfare without violating their Christian faith commitments.

Nikephoros II Phokas epitomized the Byzantine ideal of the Christian warrior-emperor. He was 'a paragon of the personal and imperial virtues'.[28] Gifted in military arts, he proved himself worthy of his name ('Bringer of Victory') in battle—from the recovery of Crete in 961 to the conquest of Antioch in 969—and therefore commanded the respect of the soldiers who fought under his leadership. Moreover, he was famed for his asceticism and Christian devotion, and sought to portray himself as the Byzantine ideal of the emperor-priest. He has been called 'the epitome of the pious warrior fighting for the Christian people'[29] and 'the φιλομόναχος [philomonachos; 'monk-loving'] emperor, the commander who went into battle with the prayers and the presence of monks'.[30] Leo the Deacon eulogized him as 'strict and unbending in his prayers and all-night standing vigils to God, [keeping] his mind undistracted during the singing of hymns, never letting it wander off to worldly thoughts'.[31] Clearly, the focus of the emperor's mind during prayer could not be ascertained by his admiring historian, placing such praises firmly in the category of panegyric, not verifiable historical truth. Thus, Nikephoros II was seen to embody the distinctly Byzantine fusion of war and religion, a monkish ascetic with a flair for fighting. After his death, he was celebrated in monastic circles as a martyr, and memorialized as a model of pious chastity for future emperors to emulate.[32]

Warfare was a ticklish subject for the Christian historians of Byzantium to write about. In order to hold their religious commitments, whilst simultaneously engaging in war, they chose to emphasize the justice of their cause, and the virtue of their generals, making Byzantine history-writing a rather more personal affair than the terse writings of the historians of Tang China.

[26] I. Kratchkovsky and A. A. Vasiliev (ed. and trans.), *Histoire de Yahya-ibn-Sa'id d'Antioche continuateur de Sa'id-ibn-Bitriq*, *Patrologia Orientalis*, 18 (1924), 782–3.

[27] For a later account see the recent English translation of Skylitzes's *Synopsis Historion* by John Wortley, *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811–1057* (Cambridge, 2010).

[28] Rosemary Morris, 'The Two Faces of Nikephoros Phokas', *BMGS*, 12 (1988), 84.

[29] Angeliki Laiou, 'The Just War of Eastern Christians and the Holy War of the Crusaders', in Richard Sorabji and David Rodin (eds.), *The Ethics of War: Shared Problems in Different Traditions* (Aldershot, 2006), 35.

[30] Angeliki Laiou, 'The General the Saint: Michael Maleinos and Nikephoros Phokas', *Byzantina Sorbonensia*, 16 (1998), 399.

[31] *Leo the Deacon*, V.8 (pp. 139–40).

[32] Joseph A. Munitiz (ed.), *Theognosti Thesaurus* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca, no. 5; Turnhout-Leuven, 1979), 196–203.

THE TANG DYNASTY (618–907)

The place of warfare in Chinese historiography is limited, but the place of warfare in Chinese history is not. Until the unification of the Chinese states under the Qin, the only war that China dealt with was civil war. After the unification of China in 221 BC, wars did not cease, but shifted toward conflict with non-Chinese on the frontiers. Partly because of its military power, the period of the Tang dynasty is viewed as one of the most glorious in Chinese history.[33] It was founded by Li Yuan (566–635), later Tang Gaozi, and an experienced general from a northwestern military family with cultural and genealogical links to the nomadic tribes along the northern frontier. He took over the empire with the help of the Turkish khagan who supplied him with horses and men. Li's second son, Li Shimin, declared himself emperor in 626 after deposing his father and killing his older brother, an act that shocked Confucian sensibilities that held filial piety as the highest virtue and fratricide a crime against nature. As Thomas Barfield has rightly noted, 'Steppe politics, particularly the use of violence, marked the beginning of Tang.'[34] From the start, the Tang was a multi-ethnic empire, unafraid to adopt traditions of warfare from the steppe, and in the process, creating its own distinctive military ethos.[35] Although war was considered an inferior part of culture, even Confucius admitted that the military arts had a positive role to play, including weaponry in his three requirements of government.[36] The art of war (*wu*) was intended for the establishment of peace.

How does this negative view of war affect warfare and Chinese history-writing about war? The sources are primarily dynastic histories written by bureaucrats (with an anti-military bias) and some military manuals written by generals (with information on how, but not necessarily why one should wage war). The dynastic histories sometimes incorporate 'announcements of victory' (*lubu*) but these are tersely formulaic, listing only the date, location, size of the enemy forces, names of notable commanders on both sides, and enemy casualties. Rarely are details of battles provided, and when they are, it is often only a clever stratagem, an unusual feature of the battle, or even a borrowed literary topos.[37] Information about battles in Chinese history-writing is therefore limited to snapshots of pre- and post-battle circumstances; there is a certain squeamishness about presenting blow-by-blow

[33] By selecting the Tang dynasty, which neatly falls into the historical period known in the West as 'medieval', I am avoiding a discussion of periodization, a concept not used by Chinese historians to refer to this period.

[34] Thomas J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Oxford, 1989), 141.

[35] For more on the Tang as a multi-ethnic empire see Marc S. Abrahamson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China* (Philadelphia, 2008).

[36] *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Burton Watson (New York, 2007), 81. The three requirements are food for the people, weapons for the military, and confidence in the ruler. The least important of these is weapons.

[37] David A. Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300–900* (New York, 2002), 7.

narrative accounts in the historical records. In a culture that refused to glorify warfare, such details were deliberately omitted. According to one scholar, in the 'veritable records' (*shilu*) or dynastic histories, military affairs 'receive comparatively little attention and are generally presented in a negative light'.[38]

The primary value of history-writing in imperial China was didactic. The oldest canonical text, the *I Ching* [Book of Changes] dates to the second millennium BC, and reveals 'the notion that there were discernible patterns in the flow of human affairs from which one could learn to govern oneself and navigate a world of continuous change'.[39] This was quickly linked to the search for moral order (the Dao, or the 'way') and later developed into an approach to history-writing that emphasized record-keeping for the purpose of moral instruction, including object lessons for good and evil. Yet an 'assumption of complete objectivity underlies the whole Chinese conception of historical writing'.[40] It is often said that Chinese historiography provides a longer and more continuous record of the past than that of the West, yet the overwhelming majority of these texts are compilations produced by official historians. Very few primary documents remain because it was the practice of these Chinese government scholar-historians to destroy or discard original documents after producing the official version of history that reflected contemporary political and cultural values.[41]

The Tang brought significant innovations to the practice of writing history. The *Tang liu-tien* [Tang Manual of Government] notes that, 'At the beginning of the Cheng-kuan period [627–49], the Bureau of Historiography was separately established within the Palace, especially charged with Dynastic historiography.'[42] This was the Historiographical Office (*Shih-kuan*), assigned to create veritable records for each emperor's reign; these were later compiled into the ever-growing 'national history' (*kuo-shih*), the basis of the dynastic history.[43] The historians assigned to writing these histories were highly educated intellectuals performing a bureaucratic function for the state, and although they produced veritable records (mostly annals, monographs, and biographies of notable officials and scholars), they also wrote unofficial chronicles, private biographies, genealogies, poetry, anecdotes, and other literary works.

Under the Tang, one famous writer, Liu Zhiji, wrote the first treatise on the writing of history in Chinese, the *Shitong* [Generalities on History].[44] It represents

[38] Denis Twitchett, 'Introduction', in Twitchett (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 3: *Sui and T'ang China 589–906*, Part 1 (Cambridge, 1979), 41–2.

[39] Daniel Woolf, 'Historiography', in Maryanne Cline Horowitz (ed.), *The New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, vol. 1: *Abolitionism to Common Sense* (Farmington Hills, Mich., 2005), p. xxxviii.

[40] Charles S. Gardner, *Chinese Traditional Historiography* (Harvard, 1938), 17.

[41] Denis Twitchett, *The Historian, His Readers, and the Passage of Time* (Taipei, 1997), 58.

[42] *Tang liu-tien* (30 chuan, ca. 739; Konoe Ishiro, collated edition, 1724; Kyoto Imperial University photolithographic reproduction, 1935).

[43] Twitchett, *The Historian, His Readers, and the Passage of Time*, 62.

[44] For a complete German translation see Byongik Koh, 'Zur Werttheorie in der chinesischen Historiographie auf Grund des Shih-T'ung des Liu Chih-Chi (661–721)', *Oriens Extremus*, 5 (1957), 125–81.

the criticism and theory of history-writing of a career bureaucrat who rose to a high position in the History Office, and reveals his personal frustrations about how official histories were compiled.[45] Official histories were intended to 'make a just and definitive record of the past . . . [and] served an essential moral purpose by holding up good and bad examples through which virtues could be encouraged and vice deterred'.[46] Liu Zhiji ascribed wholeheartedly to this as the goal of history-writing; his criticisms are primarily a matter of order and wording. He does have other, more controversial suggestions, however. For example, he objected to the inclusion of astronomical matters (he thought them inappropriate), bibliographies (of notable works, yes; of every book in existence, no), and portents (because they were sometimes sought after the fact). He preferred to provide human explanations, rather that resorting to 'the decree of Heaven', saying, 'When one discusses the rise and fall of states one ought certainly to take human affairs as the essential; if one must bring fate into one's discourse then reason is outraged.'[47] In all things, Liu Zhiji wanted clear language, concise information, and discipline on the part of the historian to include only what was true. He was particularly concerned with twisting or suppression of the truth, a well-known practice sometimes engaged in by contemporary historians at the behest of the powerful. Liu Zhiji was notorious in his own time for his criticism of previous historians, including canonical works, which he treated as ordinary books.[48] Although the deep conservatism of Chinese traditional historiography produced an institutionalized form of writing in the dynastic histories, they are not the only written sources.

For the purposes of understanding how the Tang viewed warfare, one must go beyond the dynastic histories, which bear the traditional Confucian distaste for the military arts.[49] In 1078, a group of scholars of the Song dynasty compiled the so-called seven military classics of ancient China, the most well-known of which is probably Sunzi's (Sun Tzu's) *Bing-fa* [*Art of War*]. These seven military texts were collected, edited, and codified to furnish 'the official textual foundation for government examinations in military affairs'. Apart from this collection, few other military writings were granted cultural currency, because 'the bureaucracy tended to disdain anything associated with the military and the profession of arms'.[50] Indeed, after the An Lushan rebellion (also known as the An Shi rebellion) of the mid-eighth century, military texts were kept hidden in an effort to avoid effective military uprisings. Only a restricted number of government officials and the emperor himself were

[45] For details of these criticisms see Edwin G. Pulleyblank, 'Chinese Historical Criticism: Liu Chih-chi and Ssu-ma Kuang', in W. G. Beasley and Pulleyblank (eds.), *Historians of China and Japan* (London, 1961), 142–8.
[46] Ibid., 143.
[47] *Shi-t'ung t'ung-shih*, 16.9b. Quoted by Pulleyblank, 'Chinese Historical Criticism', 15.
[48] Ibid., 147.
[49] Ralph D. Sawyer (trans.), *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (Oxford, 1993), 377–8.
[50] Ibid., 2.

allowed access to the government library and in particular, to military writings. This distaste for the details of martial history marks Chinese historiography throughout.

The latest text in the 'seven military classics' putatively dates to the seventh century of the common era, as a set of questions and answers written under the aegis of the early Tang dynasty. It is attributed to one of the Tang's most illustrious generals, Li Jing, and purportedly recounts a discussion between Li Jing and the emperor Li Shimin, himself an experienced general, after his usurpation of the throne.[51] The discussion retraces ancient strategies from earlier military writings, illustrating them with contemporary examples, or applying them to current situations. The book does not record military decisions so much as the thinking behind some of those decisions. For example, the emperor mentions Li Jing's aversion to selecting astrologically auspicious seasons or days when planning a campaign. Li Jing expands upon his views, explaining that in the past an emperor had gone to battle on an inauspicious day, called a 'going to perish' day, but won the battle. The emperor said, 'I will go forth and he will perish'; thus he mocked the power of the auguries.[52] Li Jing at this point reminded the reader of Sunzi's famous dictum, that the essence of warfare is deceit.

This dictum remained an essential part of the Chinese canon on warfare. Tang official historians, following ancient precedent, defined war as 'simply the greatest form of punishment', complete with the implication that it was to be conducted only in an area over which one had legitimate control; expansion of territory by military conquest was out of the question.[53] This view of warfare depicted it as a kind of failure, a means to be used only when absolutely necessary. The military manual of Li Jing, detailing how to make war, but not why, gives advice very similar to that found in a near-contemporary Byzantine handbook, the *Strategikon* of the emperor Maurice (r. 582–602).[54] Although not, strictly speaking, history-writing, these manuals nonetheless reveal the cultural attitudes and concerns of the men who waged war in China and Byzantium. They expose what is otherwise hidden in their respective historical traditions, that is, details of military technology, tactical formations, and battle objectives. Moreover, both cultures admired ancient military tradition and shared certain pragmatic approaches to warfare, demonstrating an unwillingness to fight pitched battles.

This tendency is interesting, because classical Chinese military texts emphasize deception in both politics and war.[55] Not only Confucian ideals from the ancient

[51] The text is widely considered a late Tang or Song forgery, and its authorship and dating are controversial. See ibid., 488–90 for a summary of the debate.

[52] *Questions and Replies*, Book III, ibid., 357.

[53] D. L. McMullen, 'The Cult of Ch'i Tai-kung and T'ang Attitudes to the Military', *Tang Studies*, 7 (1989), 65.

[54] For more on this comparison see Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare*, 254–5. See also his *The Eurasian Way of War: Military Practice in Seventh Century China and Byzantium* (Oxford, 2011).

[55] Sunzi claimed that 'all warfare is deception'. Cf. *The Art of War*, trans. S. B. Griffith (Oxford, 1963), 66.

past, but also the Daoist conceptions of the Tang agree that successful warfare meant 'not fighting and subduing the enemy'. However, this should not be interpreted to mean 'not fighting'. The prevalence of warfare throughout Chinese history, particularly the early period (called the 'Warring States' period) as well as the Tang period (marked by rebellions, foreign enemies, and cultural change), suggests that although historiographical texts may depict warfare as something aberrant, it nonetheless required a sophisticated response in order to protect the security of the state. This response was more comprehensive in scope than Western views on warfare; that is, it viewed war as a process whereby one must set up maximally advantageous conditions prior to battle, so that in the context of the actual fighting, victory appears to come by virtue of overwhelming violence.

The dominant view of warfare in the seven military classics of ancient China is therefore the 'parabellum paradigm'. In other words, nonviolent or accommodationist stratagems, like concessions or deception, are considered a necessary prelude to violence. In Daoist terms, one uses weakness to overcome strength (as in Taiji [T'ai chi]), or softness to overcome hardness (as a river wears down a rock). Victory can thus be anticipated, but it cannot be forced. These ideas would not seem terribly foreign to a Byzantine general. Although there are significant tactical differences—the Tang used infantry and crossbows while the Byzantines used cavalry and archers—much of the psychology of battle is similar, as is the goal of using force to avoid maximum loss rather than to achieve total victory.

The military ethos of the Tang was given a religious impetus by their family name. Conscious perhaps of their less than pure genetic lines, the Tang emperors carried the surname Li, which was the same name said to have been borne by the founder of Daoism, Laozi. Capitalizing on what was probably mere coincidence, they claimed descent from the famous sage, and gave patronage to Daoism, thus using religion to enhance their family prestige. T. H. Barrett suggests that 'T'ang support for Taoism may be seen as a logical answer to the ideological and cultural problems facing a dynasty of northern origins grappling with the problems of exerting its control over an empire far larger than any that had been maintained in China for several centuries'.[56] Their control could not rest on military power alone, strong as that was; it also employed the cultural gravitas of Daoism. The Tang dynasty marked 'the high tide of Taoist influence upon Chinese political life'.[57]

By the mid-eighth century, the Tang instituted a system of education designed for entrance into the civil service but based it on Daoist rather than Confucian texts.[58] Confucianism was not replaced or supplanted by any means. On the contrary, up to the later tenth century it was seen not as a philosophy but as 'an educational curriculum: the Chinese *paideia*, the study of the classics and their adjunct

[56] T. H. Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang* (London, 1996), 21.
[57] Ibid., 19. [58] Ibid., 61.

literature through which literacy was acquired and membership of the elite established'.[59] Daoism, on the other hand, denotes a variety of beliefs and principles, rather than one unified religion or philosophy. The Daoist view on warfare is found in Poem 68 of the *Daodejing* [The Book of the Way and Virtue]: 'Those eminent in war do not lose their temper. . . . This may be called the virtue which does not contend.'[60] On a strategic level, this is evidenced by an emphasis on speed and mobility and the use of indirect manoeuvres like flanking over frontal assaults or pitched battles, which guarantee high casualties but not necessarily victory.

Although China had strong Confucian traditions, and embraced Buddhism from India, Daoism was 'China's indigenous high religion'.[61] Its roots extend to the second century AD, and its canon was shaped by the early fifth century.[62] One of the important features of Daoism for the present investigation is the idea that 'as the Dao worked everywhere in the human world through the spirits that emanated directly through it, so too should the religion reach all classes of society, including the marginally sinicized and the illiterate'.[63] It is this openness to all persons, including 'barbarians' that would have endeared this religion to the Tang leadership. Since the goal of a Daoist is to merge with the Dao itself, which is immortal, one might see Daoism as a religion of immortality, but it is not changeless immortality, because one of the primary characteristics of the Dao is change. Transformation and not changeless eternity is the texture of Daoism, thus it 'has absorbed many popular divinities and practices'.[64] This also distinguishes the Tang approach from more Western philosophical stances, most of which, by relying on timeless principles for guidance, assume a more static view of the human environment.

Warfare was viewed negatively by traditional Chinese culture, yet China was often forced to deal with the exigencies of warfare. 'Martial thought in China profited significantly from the development of philosophical Taoism' because it offered a solution to the perennial controversy between martial values (*wu*) and civil values (*wen*).[65] These two words capture a wide range of meanings. The word for martial values has been interpreted as 'stopping the lance'; in other words, military science has as its highest goal the ability not to have to fight. An idealized concept, this definition is attributed to a general who in 597 'refused to make a

[59] S. A. M. Adshead, *T'ang China: The Rise of the East in World History* (Basingstoke, 2004), 134.

[60] Frederic H. Balfour, *Taoist Texts: Ethical, Political, and Speculative* (Shanghai and London, 1884), 42.

[61] Peter N. Gregory and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, 'The Religious and Historical Landscape', in Gregory and Ebrey (eds.), *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China* (Honolulu, 1993), 23.

[62] Ninji Ofuchi, 'The Formation of the Taoist Canon', in Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (eds.), *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese Religion* (New Haven, 1979), 253–67.

[63] Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley, 1997), 14.

[64] Rolf A. Stein, 'Religious Taoism and Popular Religion', in Welch and Seidel (eds.), *Facets of Taoism*, 81.

[65] Christopher Rand, 'Chinese Military Thought and Philosophical Taoism', *Monumenta Serica*, 34 (1979–80), 171.

mound of corpses of his fallen enemies'.[66] Thus it denotes a degree of military capability sufficient to deter further engagement. *Wen* embodies the values that make a civil bureaucracy an elite class: literary refinement, civil virtues, scholarly activities. Tellingly, it is the latter who wrote the histories.

There was an ongoing debate from the pre-Tang era 'over whether violent means (*wu*), ranging from a show of force to peremptory attack, or nonviolent means (*wen*), including peaceful moral example, intentional yielding, and ethical suasion or a combination of both was proper for dealing with chaos (*luan*)'.[67] In the early Tang period, these two approaches were viewed as complementary levers of government, with leading generals holding the status of civil officials.[68] Such men were expected to 'go out as a general and return as a minister' effectively making them loyal to the bureaucratic hierarchy.[69] While this may seem contradictory for a dynasty famous for its military prowess, it shows that the Tang were concerned less with strategic or tactical wisdom than with political and moral positions that could be legitimately held by the state. The fact that there appeared to be a controversy between these two desirable values shows that the historical sources acknowledged the tension between the Confucian ideals of a legendary age and the Daoist perspective of a changed environment.

As part of the organization of the army designed to lessen the impact of a professional fighting class, the Tang 'perpetuated a traditional ideal relating to warfare and farming, namely that three seasons should be devoted to agriculture and one to training in war'.[70] The important thing to note is that the entire populace was obliged to spend one season each year training for war, so that the lower levels of the army could be called on in emergencies, while spending most of their time in their primary occupation of farming. They were to be competent in the use of the 'implements of growth' (farming tools) but also in the use of 'implements of famine' (military weapons), as the *Daodejing* calls them.[71] A balance had to be struck, but the weight of tradition, even Daoist tradition, demanded that the greater virtue was in providing life, not taking it. During the rebellions against the Sui, before the Tang dynasty took power, forced military service was 'so onerous that men took to breaking their limbs to escape forced conscription. They called their arms and legs 'propitious paws' and 'fortunate feet'.[72] The problem was so widespread that in 642, the Tang emperor had to issue a decree stipulating

[66] Edwin G. Pulleyblank, 'The An Lu-shan Rebellion and the Origins of Chronic Militarism in Late T'ang Society', in John Curtis Perry and Bardwell L. Smith (eds.), *Essays on T'ang Society* (Leiden, 1976), 33–4; and Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany, NY, 1990), 65.

[67] Christopher Rand, 'Li Ch'uan and Chinese Military Thought', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 39:1 (1979), 107–8.

[68] D. L. McMullenn, 'The Cult of Ch'i T'ai-kung and T'ang Attitudes to the Military', *Tang Studies*, 7 (1989), 75.

[69] Ibid., 76.

[70] Ibid., 68.

[71] Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, 65.

[72] C. Benn, *China's Golden Age: Everyday Life in the Tang Dynasty* (Oxford, 2002), 2.

stricter sanctions on those who inflicted wounds on themselves. This reaction of the people shows how distasteful warfare was to the population in general.[73]

In the mid-eighth century, a peripatetic Daoist recluse named Li Chuan combined the characteristics of a military general and an enlightened civil bureaucrat, *wu* and *wen*, into one ideal. He disdained, as others before him had done, the reliance on omens or astrological portents in military planning, and asserted 'a certain independence of action in matters of war, as well as in life generally'.[74] However, he emphasized the pre-eminence of *wen* over *wu*: 'One skilled in leading an army does not align in battle array; one skilled in aligning in battle array does not initiate battle; one skilled initiating battle is not defeated; one skilled in being defeated does not lose [his entire force].'[75] Li Chuan's vision of the ideal general is one of a Daoist sage, and shows 'the importance of the *wen–wu* controversy for Chinese martial thinking, and also of the Daoist tradition in formulating a military philosophy for coping with violent change'.[76] In many ways, his ideas encapsulate the Tang approach to warfare that links it to the search for the Dao, or moral order. Although this is hard to discern in the official historiography of the era, it is reflected in other sorts of writings. Similarly, Islamic attitudes to war in the same general period may be discerned in many different genres of writings, in addition to historiography.

THE ABBASID CALIPHATE (750–1258)

The writing of history in the Islamic world results from a combination of orality and literacy; much Islamic historiography 'consisted of lecture and dictation notes taken by students, compiled (and approved) during the lifetime of the "author", or assembled (without approval) after it had ended'.[77] There is extensive debate among scholars regarding the problem of oral versus written transmission.[78] This chapter will not enter that debate but rather focus on what is said about warfare in written historical sources during the Abbasid era.

[73] Men in imperial China were subject to military service up to the age of sixty.
[74] Rand, 'Li Chuan and Chinese Military Thought', 114.
[75] Ibid., 118.
[76] Ibid., 130.
[77] Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), 174.
[78] For more on this debate see: Gregor Schoeler, 'Schreiben und Veröffentlichen: zu Verwendung und Funktion der Schrift in den ersten islamischen Jahrhunderten', *Islamica*, 49 (1992), 1–43; M. C. A. Macdonald, 'Literacy in an Oral Environment', in Piotr Bienkowski, Christopher Mee, and Elizabeth Slater (eds.), *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society: Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, supp. series 423 (Harrisburg, Penn., 2005), 45–118; Beatrice Gruendler, *The Development of the Arabic Scripts: From the Nabataean Era to the First Islamic Century According to Dated Texts* (Atlanta, 1993); Macdonald (ed.), *The Development of Arabic as a Written Language* (Oxford, 2010); Abd al-Aziz Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, ed. and trans. Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton, 1983); Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (London, 1985); Rina Drory, 'The Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya: Cultural Authority in the Making', *Studia*

Islamic history-writing began, unsurprisingly, with biographies of Muhammad, and also includes texts that one might more properly call law or theology. The lines of genre are therefore somewhat blurred in Islamic literature of the first two centuries; one could tentatively say that history-writing did not become a distinct genre of literature until the ninth century.[79] Writing that concerns warfare under the Abbasids itself includes a variety of genres: campaigns of the Prophet (*maghāzī*), biographies (*sīra*), conquests (*futuh*), poetry (*shi*), and history-writing more generally, or literally, 'dating' (*ta'rīkh*). This term, first attested in the eighth century, denotes 'assigning dates', an idea that makes sense because the *hijra* calendar is a lunar one, with no intercalation. So the material in these works is presented, at least theoretically, according to chronology.

In Arabic, poetry is also a vehicle for history, and in particular, for writing about war. The most famous poet of the medieval period was al-Mutanabbi, who composed odes in honour of Sayf al-Dawla, the emir of Aleppo, in the mid-tenth century. In the summer of 953 during a successful campaign that ranged from Edessa to Samosata, Sayf al-Dawla received news that Marʿash, the fortress town he had recently rebuilt, was under attack from the Byzantines. Accompanied by only 600 horsemen, he encountered them on their retreat and attacked furiously, scattering their large, heavy-laden army. He took plunder and prisoners that day, including Constantine, the son of the Byzantine commander-in-chief Bardas Phokas. As he rode triumphantly back to Aleppo, al-Mutanabbi composed verses which mocked Bardas for his cowardly flight, for abandoning his wounded son—now the emir's prisoner—and even describing Constantine as 'full of admiration' for the emir despite the irons on his feet. This scorn for the Byzantine high commander takes up four double lines of the *qaṣīda* (ode), indicating a certain pleasure in the indisputable evidence of Bardas's cowardice. More than rhetoric, the taunting of the enemy reveals more than mere delight in his defeat. It relishes the certainty of his moral inferiority as a father who abandoned a son, thereby highlighting not only the emir's military might but also his unquestionable superiority as a man. Al-Mutanabbi writes, 'when the lion is offered only one prey to devour, nothing will do but an elephant'.[80]

The emir's battle tactics are also described in the poem. After the initial attack, Sayf feigned a withdrawal, tricking the Byzantines into believing they were safe. However, a second, even more violent attack came at nightfall 'and the riders of the emir plunged into the blood of the enemy as though they would have to give an account for every one whose blood they failed to spill. Fire accompanied them

Islamica, 83 (1996), 33–49; and Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl, ed. James E. Montgomery (London, 2006).

[79] For more on Arabic historiography see Lawrence I. Conrad, 'Theophanes and the Arabic Historical Tradition', *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 15 (1990), 1–44.

[80] R. Blachère, *Un poète arabe du IVe siècle de l'Hégire (Xe siècle de J.-C.) Abou t-Tayyib al-Motanabbî* (Paris, 1935), 170.

on their way of death, where houses became ruins.'[81] The poetry powerfully evokes the ferocity of the attack, focusing here on the frenzy of Sayf's outnumbered cavalry. The poetic flourish of a path strewn with corpses and ruined dwellings, and illuminated by fire, serves to emphasize the intensity of Sayf's victory. Such vivid language is not to be found in Arabic historical accounts.

The conquest literature that recounts the rise of Islam includes the *sīra* as well as the *maghāzī*, which provides data for Muslim military expeditions within Arabia: dates, objectives, names of leaders and sometimes participants, results and numbers of combatants.[82] However, many of these details are topoi, repeated for situations in which they did not originally belong, and used to promote biases.[83] Unfortunately, the *maghāzī* literature does not provide much in the way of operational details, listing only dates, names, and some anecdotal information. Among the most famous authors of the *maghāzī* is al-Waqidi, of whose numerous books only one remains: *Kitab al-maghazi* [Book of Raids], which recounts the campaigns of Muhammad while he was ruling in Medina. Probably written during the reign of Harun al-Rashid (r. 786–809), a period widely regarded as the apogee of Abbasid power, it presents the Prophet and his companions as war leaders. Some scholars believe that 'this theme carries through in the Muslim historiography of the present day'.[84] Whether or not this is the case, one should not be surprised to find great interest in conquest literature during the reign of Harun al-Rashid, the first *ghazi*-caliph and a ruler dedicated to pursuing annual raids against the Byzantines. These raids continued through the ninth century and later; combined with an increase in piracy, such attritional warfare characterized Byzantine–Arab conflict for the next two centuries.

The Abbasids, descendants of an uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, came to power in the mid-eighth century, claiming divine blessing on their authority by virtue of their family relationship to the Prophet and supporting that claim with military force. The revolution that ousted the Umayyads was based on the idea that only a member of the Prophet's family would have the necessary divine guidance to lead the Muslims and solve the problems of division among them.[85] By the 760s, al-Mansur had moved the caliphal capital eastward to Harran, and then to Kufa in southern Iraq, where he built the 'Round City' of Baghdad, ordered the murders of illustrious generals who might become his rivals, and installed Khurasani troops as his household guard. It was Baghdad whence came most of

[81] Ibid., 170.

[82] A third group of texts that could be viewed as historiography are the genealogies (*al-tabaqat*), which became important when the caliph ʿUmar paid pensions determined on the basis of kinship to the Prophet.

[83] Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*, trans. Michael Bonner, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton, 1994), ch. 3 on topoi, 109–72.

[84] John Walter Jandora, *Militarism in Arab Society: An Historiographical and Bibliographical Sourcebook* (London, 1997), 7.

[85] Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London, 2004), 123.

the stories of the Arabian Nights, under the rule of the legendary Harun al-Rashid, and it was also under this caliph that Muslim histories began to appear.

Because these stories describe historical events, and indeed form the narrative of origin of Islam, Islamic historiography of the medieval era has always been associated with warfare to a degree. Originally predominantly oral, and often combined with other literary genres like hadith (Prophetic Traditions), these histories were first written down, or perhaps better, compiled under the Abbasids. It has been noted that Islamic history-writing developed with astonishing rapidity.[86] Arab culture was (and continues to be) transmitted orally; poetry had immense prestige. The techniques of prose composition and transmission were largely influenced by orality (and aurality). However, the translation movement of the ninth century lent itself to the keeping of written records. Greek writings, especially on science and philosophy, were translated into Arabic, and therefore contributed significantly to Arabic written culture. This in turn fed a growing interest in expanding books and book knowledge, an aim that gained impetus with the development of papermaking.[87] This knowledge came to the Arab world, coincidentally, as a result of warfare between the Abbasids and the Tang.

In 751, Muslim forces clashed with a Chinese army at the Talas river (Taraz in Arabic) beyond Transoxania in modern Tashkent. Chinese sources give more information on the battle than do Arabic ones, but precise details of the engagement remain unknown.[88] The loss appears to have been caused by a defection of Turks from the Tang to the Arab army, and it remains the 'only major battle ever fought between Chinese and Arab armies…entirely without sequel'.[89] The significance of this Muslim victory over the Tang forces lies in the transmission, putatively via Chinese prisoners, of the technology of papermaking into the orbit of the caliphate. Production costs subsequently fell, and the availability of books increased, fuelling a translation movement in the ninth century that had a substantial impact on Abbasid culture, including the development of historiography.

In the ninth century, the book trade flourished in Baghdad, and private libraries comprising thousands of books appear not to have been uncommon. Such institutions were made possible by the wide use of paper, rather than papyrus or parchment, for the making of books, and it was under Harun al-Rashid that paper was adopted for government business in Baghdad. This, together with the burgeoning translation movement, led to an explosion of literacy and indeed, writing and compiling of literature in the caliphate, including the development of the first written Qur'an as well as the establishing of history-writing of all kinds in Arabic.

[86] D. S. Margoliouth, *Lectures on Arabic Historians* (Calcutta, 1930), 4.

[87] W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion,* 2nd edn (London, 1958), 195–6; and H. A. R. Gibbs, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (London, 1923).

[88] D. M. Dunlop, 'A New Source of Information on the Battle of Talas or Atlakh', *Ural-altäische Jahrbücher*, 36 (1965), 326–30.

[89] Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare*, 215.

Ahmad b. Yahya al-Baladhuri, one of the most well-known writers of Muslim conquest history, composed a famous book incorporating conquest narratives; it was called *Futuh al-buldan* [Conquests of the Lands].[90] The accounts of Baladhuri have an almost epigrammatic quality: 'they attacked . . . and subjugated . . .'. In general, there is little if any information on military manoeuvres or operational details. Occasionally, he relates titbits of poetry, or brief statements made by political leaders, or sometimes the putative announcements of the people, all of which add vividness to his narrative. However, his stories are far too short to be gripping, and present information very briefly, in the manner of one repeating a legend that everyone already knows.

The role of military engagement in conquest literature is inextricably intertwined with Muslim religious history. As such, the aim of this type of history-writing 'is to show that God ensures victory and that the Muslims collectively carry out His design'.[91] These histories often give few details of battles or military movements, but rather report the bare bones of an engagement. For example, al-Tabari's ninth-century account of the famous battle at the Yarmuk river in 637 merely reports that the fighting was severe, that the camp of the Muslims was penetrated, and that even women fought. It concludes, 'Then Allah Exalted granted victory. The Romans and the contingents marshaled by Heraclius were defeated. Seventy thousand of the Armenians and of the people who were assimilated among the Arabs were killed. Allah killed the al-Saqalar and Bahan.'[92] This seeming reluctance to give full operational details of battles bears a certain similarity to annalistic accounts of war from other cultures, like the Tang Chinese and the Byzantines. However, unlike the emperors of the Chinese and the Byzantines, the caliph 'was expected to expand or at least defend the frontiers of Islam. Indeed, fulfillment of this role was an important aspect of the early Abbasids' self-image'.[93] Like the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas in the later tenth century, Harun al-Rashid in the late eighth century viewed himself as a ruler obliged to fight as part of his religious observance.

Arabic historiography thus reflected the political and religious as well as military situation of the caliphate. Al-Tabari, the greatest historian of the Abbasid era, regularly reports the winter and summer raids into Byzantine territory, revealing that the geopolitical stance of the caliphate was no longer one of long-range invasion with a view towards conquest, but rather a war of attrition and annual raids by holy warriors animated by jihad. The greatest example of this type of battle historiography concerns the siege of Amorion in 838.

[90] The most recent edition in English is P. K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State* (Piscataway, 2002), although it only reproduces a very old translation.

[91] Jandora, *Militarism in Arab Society*, 22.

[92] Al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*, 1.2349; trans. Y. Friedmann as *The History of al-Tabari*, vol. 12: *The Battle of al-Qadisiyya and the Conquest of Syria and Palestine* (Albany, NY, 1992), 133–4.

[93] Jandora, *Militarism in Arab Society*, 44.

The Syriac Chronicle of 1234, though compiled much later, uses earlier sources from within the caliphate and reports that many Muslims were reluctant to attack Amorion in 838 because the 'ancient historical books' of the Arabs prophesied that the caliphate would fall if they ever conquered the city.[94] These unnamed prophecies are not identified, but they are mentioned in passing elsewhere, leading one to suspect they were relatively well-known at the time, possibly among the widespread astrological predictions of the era. The Roman roads, built to maintain the *limes* of the antique empire, were also used by Arab raiding parties, and indeed, ninth-century Arab geographers indicate a growing awareness of this road system.[95] They had attacked Amorion six times previously, and the emperor Leo III, recognizing its strategic position, had subsequently reinforced its defences.[96] Arab familiarity with Roman roads revealed itself most dramatically in the invasion of the Abbasid caliph Muʿtasim in 838 with three armies.

The Arab chroniclers relate Muʿtasim's decision to invade as a move of vengeance for the loss of Zapetra, sacked by Theophilos in 837 and the putative hometown of the legendary caliph Harun al-Rashid, father of al-Muʿtasim.[97] Zapetra, located south-east of Melitene, was one of three cities taken by Theophilos on this campaign, which, according to al-Tabari, was accomplished with an army of 100,000, a number that seems to have been inflated to justify the extraordinary loss. The city was burned, the men in it put to the sword, and the women and children taken as slaves. The same fate befell Arsamosata on the other side of the Euphrates, but Melitene avoided total destruction by opening its gates and freeing all of its Byzantine prisoners.[98] The savagery of the attack on Zapetra was reported to the caliph, who immediately leapt on his horse to lead the counterattack, or so goes the legend.[99]

According to the story preserved in al-Tabari, Muʿtasim asked, 'which Greek fortress is the most impregnable and the strongest?' The response came: 'Amorion. No Muslim has entered there since the founding of Islam. It is the foundation of

[94] *Chronicon ad 1234*, II, 34; *Michael the Syrian* IV, ed. Chabot, 538. In light of the previous six attempts to take the city, the references to these prophecies are curious. The Syriac tradition is drawing here upon the Islamic tradition, which, famously reported in the poem by Abu Tammam, has it that the Byzantines were confident of the city's defences because of their books of divination.

[95] André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du IIe siècle: Géographie et géographie humaine dans la littérature arabe des origines à 1050* (Paris, 1967), 35–66, 87–92. In particular, Ibn Khurdadbeh demonstrates this familiarity. For the roads connecting Ancyra with the frontier see Friedrich Hild, *Tabula imperii byzantini*, vol. 2: *Das Byzantinische Strassensystem in Kappadokien* (Wien, 1977), 34–41, 55; for the roads connecting Amorion with the frontier see ibid., 60–3.

[96] The city was attacked in AD 645, 666, 669, 716, 779, and 797.

[97] Paul A. Hollingsworth 'Hārūn al-Rashīd', in Alexander P. Kazhdan (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* e-reference edn (Oxford, 1991, 2005), lists a town near Tehran as Harun's birthplace. However, the symmetry of Muʿtasim's attack on the city of Theophilos's father as revenge for Theophilos's attack on the city of Muʿtasim's father appears to have been too tempting for chroniclers to resist.

[98] Alexander A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les arabes*, trans. Marius Canard, vol. 1 (Brussels, 1935), 140.

[99] Al-Tabari, Ibn-al-Athir VI, 339–40; Vasiliev, *Byzance et les arabes*, 142.

Christianity, more famous than even Constantinople.'[100] The hyperbole of the response, coupled with its factual inaccuracy, leads one to conclude this exchange was most likely a fiction of storytellers. Whatever the circumstances of the caliph's deliberations, it was apparent that he took the decision to attack the city of Theophilos's fathers, despite its reputation and distance, with great enthusiasm and determination. This raid took the largest possible Muslim armies deeper into Byzantine territory than they had ever been, and it was duly mentioned by contemporary histories in several languages, not just Arabic.

Greek historians mention that the army of Muʿtasim bore banners inscribed with the name of the target: 'Amorion'.[101] The fighting force was estimated, probably inaccurately, at 200,000 or more.[102] Muʿtasim covered more than 100 miles of Anatolia in less than a week, arriving at Amorion by the end of July. Beginning the siege on the first of August, the Muslim army was at first unsuccessful against the city's forty-four towers, high walls, and defences.[103] Twelve days later, as the attackers were weighing plans to retreat, the defenders capitulated despite previously offering stiff resistance. They were betrayed by an Arab convert to Christianity living in the city who informed the caliph of the weakest point in the wall where he concentrated his artillery fire. Both Arabic and Greek sources testify to the existence of this Arab convert and his role in the fall of the city. The weapons of siege warfare include starvation and dehydration of the inhabitants, but Amorion was well-supplied by plentiful wells within the city walls, and by August would have already brought in a full food harvest.[104] It might have held out longer, even when the wall was breached, but was further betrayed by the lack of reinforcements from Theophilos, who retreated to Constantinople to quell reports of his death rather than riding to the aid of Amorion.

[100] Al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari,* vol. 33: *Storm and Stress along the Northern Frontiers of the 'Abbasid Caliphate*, trans. C. E. Bosworth (Albany, NY, 1991), 97.

[101] Genesios and Skylitzes.

[102] Warren Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival 780–842* (Stanford, 1988), 297, thinks the number closer to 80,000, but notes that the Byzantines had never defeated an Arab army of such size. The Arab geographer Ibn Khurdadbeh estimated the Byzantine army in the mid-ninth century at approximately 120,000, including Macedonia and Thrace. Cf. Mark Whittow, *Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600–1025* (London, 1996), 184–9. Since the Islamic armies were unanimously said to be significantly larger, it is theoretically possible that the invasion force could have been 200,000. However, since the logistical maximum for an early medieval army on the march was 30,000–40,000, it seems more likely that al-Muʿtasim's three invading forces together numbered no more than 120,000. Cf. John Haldon, 'Roads and Communications in the Byzantine Empire: Wagons, Horses, and Supplies', in John Pryor (ed.), *Logistics of Warfare in the Age of the Crusades* (Aldershot, 2006).

[103] The Arab geographer Ibn Khordadbeh describes the city's defences in *Bibliotheca geographorum arabicorum*, ed. Michael Jean de Goeje, vol. 6 (1899), 77–80.

[104] Margaret A. V. Gill, *Amorium Reports, Finds I* (Oxford, 2002), 1; cf. *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı*, 23:2 (2002), 245 and pl.9. 'Local volcanic soils can support rich harvests of cereal crops such as barley and wheat, as well as vegetables, fruit-trees, and viticulture. Excavated floral remains indicate that comparable crops were cultivated by Byzantine farmers living in the territory of Amorium.' Cf. R. M. Harrison and N. Christie, 'Excavations at Amorium: 1992 Interim Report', *Anatolian Studies*, 43 (1993), 152–3; and C. S. Lightfoot and E. A. Ivison, 'Amorium Excavations 1994: The Seventh Preliminary Report', *Anatolian Studies*, 45 (1995), 124–7.

The Muslim forces put the city to the sword and destroyed its walls and gates, killing thousands of inhabitants and burning their homes. Although descriptions of the siege aftermath depict a massacre, the majority must have survived, because a city the size of Amorion was unlikely to have fewer than 20,000 inhabitants, not including the military garrison.[105] Warren Treadgold has estimated the number of inhabitants in the late eighth century at 30,000, a number which appears not unreasonable, given that the average strength of an army varied from 4,000 to 12,000 and a cavalry tagma numbered 1,000 in the mid-ninth century.[106] The city was defended by an entire thematic army, plus three cavalry tagmata, making a total of approximately 30,000 soldiers, most of whom were killed by the invaders. Al-Tabari, while omitting to give specific population numbers, describes the slave market that was established at Amorion following the battle, and says that most of the inhabitants of the city were sold as slaves.[107]

MUSLIM HISTORIANS

Most Arab historians wrote or dictated history as an avocation, while officially employed as jurists or secretaries.[108] Abbasid writings emerged from poets like al-Mutanabbi, legal experts such as al-Tabari and Ibn Khaldun, or philosophers. Al-Tabari, who has been called 'the imam of Hadith historiography',[109] was known more for his massive commentary on the Qur'an than for his history.[110] Arabic historical writing was thus not written for commercial motivations, but more as a gentleman's pastime. 'By no stretch of the imagination were there practitioners of an independent and well-respected discipline known as the science of history.'[111]

Unlike Chinese or Byzantine history-writing, Islamic priorities rested not with objectivity, but rather, primarily on the integrity of the authority of its sources. In the ninth century, a debate about *isnād*, or chains of authority, occupied hadith scholars. The result for historians was a more focused method of writing history, 'an image of an enduring traditional orthodoxy . . . behind which lay a particular

[105] The excavation reports from Amorion indicate that the walls enclosed approximately 75 hectares, a significantly larger town than Ancyra. Cf. Gill, *Amorium Reports*, 5. Further, Amorion possessed a cross-wall (diateichisma) which provided an extra line of defence. Cf. Ch. Bouras, 'Aspects of the Byzantine City Eighth–Fifteenth Centuries', *The Economic History of Byzantium*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou, vol. 2 (Washington, DC, 2002), 506–7 and n. 97.

[106] Warren T. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford, 1988), 41.

[107] Al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari*, vol. 33, 116–19. The buyers were most likely the victorious Arab soldiers; booty from the city was also sold at these battlefield markets.

[108] Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 180.

[109] Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994), 73.

[110] For more on al-Tabari see Franz Rosenthal, 'Translator's Foreword', in al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari*, vol. 1: *General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, trans. Rosenthal (Albany, NY, 1989).

[111] Jacob Lassner, *The Shaping of 'Abbasid Rule* (Princeton, 1980), 23.

and slowly congealing interpretation of the history of Islam and the Muslim community'.[112] This traditional orthodoxy was a truth based on consensus, on the unity of the prophetic mission, and the experience of the people of Islam. The development of Islamic historical writing involved not only the original source and the chain of authority, but 'everyone who took up a career of learning added his own studies and research to those of his masters and in this way both preserved the learning of the school to which he belonged and added to it other material which had come to his attention'. 'History for al-Tabari was an expression of divine will and he wrote it accordingly. His history is thus the counterpart to his Qur'an commentary: just as the latter elucidates the will of God through His words, the former elucidates the will of God through the activities of mankind.'[113] Medieval Islamic historiography cannot be said to be either true or false, according to one scholar who has examined the Abbasid claims to power. It presents not 'truth' as a modern Westerner would like to define it, but rather 'a meta-truth that transcended the bare particulars of an actual situation by proclaiming what was more real than reality itself'.[114]

CONCLUSION

These three medieval cultures—Byzantium under the Macedonian dynasty, Tang China, and the Abbasid caliphate—display commonalities in their approach to warfare, in that all sought to secure victory by stratagem rather than brute force. However, they have different methods and motivations and very different views of the qualities required for political leadership. Byzantine methods included both guerrilla warfare as well as set pieces, along with classic siege tactics. The Tang sought to combine orthodox and unorthodox warfare in order to achieve victory without the need to fight ('stopping the lance'), while the Abbasids relied on fast horses for cross-border raids, with few if any medieval examples of large armies pursuing long-distance campaigns.

Their motivations and their priorities in commemorating these conflicts also differed. Byzantine historiography focused on the justice of the warfare, emphasizing the Christian virtue of the general, and the importance of divine blessing to achieve victory. Tang history-writing does none of this, but presents purely factual summary reports. The Abbasids, with their newly developing production of history-writing, present warfare, particularly against non-Muslims, as both a religious duty and an opportunity for glory. Those who created the histories in these three cultures were not what we might call professional historians. The men who wrote the Chinese records were primarily bureaucrats, whose objective was

[112] Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, 43.
[113] Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing*, 26, 159.
[114] Lassner, *The Shaping of 'Abbasid Rule*, 31.

the preservation of information that would aid the smooth functioning of government. Their version of history was thus coloured by a commitment to a low view of the value of warfare. This was based on a belief in the myth of cultural attraction 'whereby their vastly superior Chinese civilization, founded upon Virtue and reinforced by opulent material achievements, would simply overwhelm the hostile tendencies of the uncultured'.[115] Despite this, China developed a sophisticated philosophy of warfare characterized by deception and a holistic approach that emphasized the totality of the final objective, including economic and cultural superiority in addition to victory on the battlefield. Unlike Byzantium, Tang China did not maintain a warrior aristocracy composed of magnate clans, and unlike the Abbasid caliphate, they did not glorify martial pursuits at the political level. The Tang dynasty was widely regarded as a golden age under Li Shimin, and as an age of the development of literature as well as military strength until the rebellion of An Lushan in the mid-eighth century.[116] After that, their increased militarization showed an awareness of the danger of the army becoming too strong. That another rebellion did not take place could be ascribed to the Chinese view of warfare as a kind of last resort, and their deliberate hiding of military texts.

The Byzantine Macedonian dynasty, also considered a golden age for the development of literature as well as military strength, nonetheless focused attention on the reanimation of military strategy, and particularly on warfare against the Saracens. Although they professed a cultural distaste for fighting, this aversion existed within a highly militarized medieval culture in which eastern warrior clans predominated in the later tenth century. Byzantine literature emphasizes preparation and good military practice, yet seeks to avoid it as something spiritually damaging. Byzantine chroniclers and historians were scholars, diplomats, and churchmen like Leo the Deacon, who consciously imitated Herodotus and Thucydides by recording history for the purpose of demonstrating bad behaviour and lauding noble behaviour. The stories told about Nikephoros II Phokas show that the Byzantines experienced a deep tension between admiration for martial virtues and conviction that they were not acceptable to Christianity. They sought to reconcile this tension by emphasizing the character of their military leaders as pious, merciful Christians, dedicated to protecting the Byzantine *oikoumene* against the raids of Muslim emirs.

The Abbasid caliphate, also widely regarded as a golden age especially under Harun al-Rashid, fostered the development of literature as well as military strength, until the rise of the Turkish slave soldiers in the later ninth century. Their power spelled the disintegration of the caliphate into smaller emirates, especially on the frontiers, with a weakened centre. Frontier cities like Tarsus thus became forward bases for the staging of annual raids against the Byzantines. The

[115] Sawyer (trans.), *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, 2.
[116] Charles Benn, *China's Golden Age: Everyday Life in the Tang Dynasty* (Oxford, 2002).

proliferation of conquest literature and especially war poetry not only glamorized such warfare but emphasized its status as an honourable pursuit. The poetry of al-Mutanabbi, specifically his compositions in honour of Sayf al-Dawla, the emir of Aleppo, stands as the literary high-water mark of battle commemorations in Arabic. The historiography of the period offers rather less detail in terms of cultural attitudes, but does reveal the regularity of raids against the Byzantines, as well as the prophesied importance of one day conquering Constantinople.

These three cultures differ markedly in the interplay between warfare and politics. Chinese emperors rarely led troops into battle, but the majority of Byzantine emperors were battle-hardened generals. Abbasid caliphs until the later eighth century at least were viewed as religious authorities, and great warriors accrued or displayed qualities of moral superiority through their exploits on the battlefield. Chinese history-writing presents warfare in a formulaic, almost symbolic pattern, while Byzantine history-writing is rather more robust, and Abbasid writing conforms to neither of these. Both Byzantium and Tang China had long cultural inheritances, similar military technology and tactics, and both faced incursions of steppe nomads for which they were forced to develop new methods of defence.[117] The Islamic caliphate, with a younger, more dynamic cultural inheritance, was still developing both its cultural identity and its written heritage in the Abbasid era; their histories reflect ethical concerns to conform to the founding narratives of the early conquest era.

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Chapter 28

Religious History

Thomas Sizgorich

In the opening decades of the fourth century AD, Constantine son of Constantius dramatically altered the political life of the Roman state through a potent mix of violence and application of ruthless political acumen. In doing so, Constantine halted a cycle of extremely destructive civil wars, ended a radical experiment in imperial governance instituted decades earlier by the emperor Diocletian, and united the territorial expanse of the Roman Empire once more under the direct control of a single ruler. Whatever social, economic, or cultural trends it failed to disrupt, Constantine's elimination of his political rivals and reformulation of Roman governance represented a sharp and clear break with the recent Roman past. Moreover, no matter how destructive for the Roman Empire itself, Constantine's mastery of his enemies was brought about by impressive feats of arms of the sort that had long fascinated Roman historians, panegyrists, and poets. Significantly, however, as the most influential historians of Constantine's age set about commemorating his career, the worldly effects of Constantine's life and acts took second place in significance to what the great man's campaigns and decrees were taken to signify concerning a celestial drama that encompassed not only the affairs of the Roman world, but everything and everyone in the sight of the one god of Abraham from the moment of Creation.[1] The image of Constantine thus bequeathed to posterity was one crafted within a newly important and rapidly developing genre of historical writing, one whose interpretive framework derived from powerful pre-existing metanarratives of revelation, prophecy, and salvation. For the purposes of this chapter, this genre of historical writing, whose defining characteristics will be explored in detail below, will be called 'religious history'.

As any ambitious Roman noble deeply involved in the defining events of his age might have done, Constantine seems to have begun to think about his legacy soon after having established rulership of his world. As he did so, we are told, he surrounded himself with men who were particularly capable narrators of grand

[1] See Cameron, 'Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and the Construction of Constantine', in M. J. Edwards and Simon Swain (eds.), *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1997), 145–71, esp. 157–63.

events and personalities. Two of the most notable of these were the bishop Eusebius of Caesarea and the Christian man of letters Firmianus Lactantius. The task these men undertook as they set about composing histories of Constantine's advent was one with long precedent in the Roman world. Roman historiographic traditions held in store a variety of archetypes with which to employ men like Constantine in the grand sweep of Roman imperial memory; such figures might emerge as restorers of peace and stability to the Roman political order, vanquishers of tyrannical usurpers, or inspired leaders of Roman arms in defence of the *Res Publica*. In the previous four centuries, a series of hard men had emerged from the blood and horror of Roman civil war only to present themselves to their fellow citizens as restorers of order, vanquishers of tyrants, and defenders of the *Res Publica*. Of these, none had done so more successfully than the founder of the principate himself, Caesar Augustus.

In the years after Augustus's rise to power at the head of a battered and deeply fragmented Roman Empire, such authors as Titus Livy and Virgil strove to situate Augustus and his revolutionary station within the Roman state in accordance with much older models of Roman virtue, while later historians and philosophers, men like Seneca, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio,[2] stressed the capacity of Augustus to reunite his world, reinstitute order, and restore the strength of the Roman Empire itself. Later emperors, meanwhile, men like Hadrian and, most notably, Trajan, surrounded themselves with men of culture who elaborated upon the imperial themes initially articulated by Augustan-era authors to celebrate the deeds and contributions of a succession of 'good' emperors, culminating in their own persons and in their own rule. The foremost virtues celebrated in these emperors were martial strength, clemency, justice, dignity, legitimacy, and, most important of all, a selfless devotion to the Roman state, its traditions and its gods that allowed nothing to intercede between the emperor himself and the obligations this devotion brought to bear.

It was for this reason, for example, that Augustus's lineage could be traced, through Julius Caesar, to Rome's founding figure Aeneas,[3] and finally to the goddess Venus, and that the rivals he defeated en route to power were necessarily depicted as men driven by personal desire rather than duty to the Roman *Res Publica*. The legitimacy of such later victors in Roman civil conflicts as Diocletian had been similarly bound to centuries-old narratives of Roman origins, and in particular to previous dynasties of Roman rulers and to the eternal dynasty of the Olympian gods.[4]

[2] See Christopher Pelling, 'Biographical History? Cassius Dio on the Early Principate', ibid., 117–44.

[3] Venus is already *Aeneadum genetrix* (mother of the descendants of Aeneas) at Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 1.1, but at Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.731, Augustus is one of the descendants of Aeneas whose feats are depicted on his shield.

[4] See Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire: Lactantius and Rome* (Ithaca, NY, 2000), 19–42.

Although those who narrated the advent of Constantine as imperial ruler could not completely ignore these hallowed discursive precedents, they would in the end craft a remembered Constantine in accordance with an emerging mode of recalling the past whose descriptive palate and analytical resources were in many ways very different to those used to narrate and explain the exploits and characters of previous Roman emperors. Indeed, as Eusebius and Lactantius went about the project of explaining to their readers the history of Constantine's rule of the Roman world, they drew upon hermeneutic models that departed in crucially significant ways from those of previous Roman historians. In so doing, they helped to establish a genre of historiography that would, in time, provide normative models for recalling the past not only among Roman Christian communities, but among communities whose character neither man will have had the resources to imagine.

This mode of recalling the past may be called, for want of a better term, 'religious history'. In brief, the characteristics that defined 'religious history' during the closing centuries of antiquity and the opening centuries of the Middle Ages, when the writing of 'religious history' attained an unsurpassed cultural importance, are the following: religious history orders discursive recollection of events involving human actors and human institutions in accordance with certain grand narratives that are themselves derived from revealed, holy texts and the panoply of exegesis and commentary that grows up around them;[5] religious history regularly locates the foundational truths upon which historical interpretation is grounded beyond the observable, physical world, and within a system of reality that is accessible and knowable only through revelatory contact with the divine, whether the revelation in question is personal or scriptural; and religious history is most often particularly concerned with locating moments in the past in which human individuals, communities, and institutions were touched and altered by encounters with the numinous.

Obviously, the interpretive basis for any reading of the past available to producers or consumers of this genre of historical writing would reside in other, anterior texts or, more probably, in other, anterior corpuses of texts, including the revealed text itself and authoritative works of exegesis and commentary. Accordingly, we must note at the outset that 'religious history' (like every other genre of historiography) is an intensely intertextual genre of writing. What tends to set historical writing that can be properly characterized as 'religious' in opposition to most other genres of history is that the unyielding truths or primordial realities upon which its hermeneutic programme proceeds are to be located *exterior* to the observable world whose events it interprets (as, for example, in the will of one or more personal deities). Moreover, within such histories, terrestrial

[5] See Glenn F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, Evagrius* (Théologie Historique 46; Paris, 1977); and G. W. Trompf, *Early Christian Historians: Narratives of Retribution* (London, 2000).

events are properly comprehensible only in light of numinous, revealed truths as they are enshrined in divine texts and the metanaratives to which these divine texts are understood to have given birth.

By the beginning of the fourth century, the Jewish and Christian communities arrayed around the Mediterranean and throughout the Middle East and Mesopotamia had developed a genre of historical writing that cast in narrative form the consequences of divine revelation within the social, political, and cultural structures of the ancient world. This historiography took the forms of church histories and highly formulaic hagiographical works, including imperial biography, martyr stories, and the 'Lives' of 'holy men', particularly those of charismatic ascetics and powerful churchmen.[6] In most of its specific manifestations, this mode of historical writing was structured around a relatively small pool of narrative and interpretive options, and typically populated with a predictable and highly schematized cast of characters. Accordingly, for many modern critics, late ancient and early medieval religious historiography lacked the hermeneutic sophistication and richness of authentically 'historical' detail associated with the works of such classicizing historians as Tacitus, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Prokopios.

In fact, however, by the time of the seventh-century advent of Islam, this 'religious' historiography had provided for contemporaries the basis for highly compelling grand metanarratives of various confessional communities' pasts, presents, and futures, narratives in accordance with which the actions of emperors and peasants alike could be measured and evaluated. Perhaps more importantly, however, local communities experienced a profound connection to these metanarratives through local elaborations upon certain of their central themes, including, for example, that of persecution and resistance to religious coercion at the hands of pagan or 'heretical' imperial officials. Local iterations of these themes took such forms as the remembrance and celebration of local martyrs as communal founders and patrons. Moreover, the hermeneutic and semiotic elements of this historiography were familiar and legible in a way that those of classicizing historiography were not to individuals and communities relatively untouched by the

[6] For the 'Lives' of 'holy men' see Athanasius, *Vie d'Antoine*, ed. G. J. M. Bartelink (Paris 1994); Syriac version, *La vie primitive de S. Antoine conservée en syriaque*, ed. René Draguet (Louvain, 1980); Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria martyrum*, ed. B. Krusch (Hanover, 1885); trans. R. Van Dam as *The Glory of the Martyrs* (Liverpool, 1999); John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, ed. Ernest Walter Brooks, 3 vols. (Louvain, 1924–5); and Palladius, *La storia lausiaca*, ed. Christine Mohrmann (Milan, 1974); trans. Robert T. Meyer as *Lausiac History* (Mahwah, NJ, 1964), together with Hipolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography* (London, 1907; New York, 1962; Dublin, 1998); Charles Plummer, *Lives of Irish Saints*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1922); and Sergei Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint* (Oxford, 1981). On martyr stories see Herbert Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford, 1972). On imperial biography see especially Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, *Eusebius, Life of Constantine: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Oxford, 1999). Holy man and ruler are combined in the *Liber Pontificalis*. Eusebius has been (perhaps unjustly) suspected of forging documents in the Christian interest, but the pseudo-Isidorian decretals are the most impressive efflorescence of false historiography in the medieval era.

paideia-based cultural traditions of the Roman Empire. Indeed, whether in the metropolitan centres of the empire or beyond its farthest frontiers, mutually opposed confessional communities for centuries elaborated on this common pool of narrative elements to recall local pasts and assert the legitimacy of local interpretations of specific strains of doctrine and dogma.

Accordingly, it is little surprise that, with the advent of Islam as a religious, cultural, and political power during the seventh century, the characteristic elements of late ancient religious historiography should take up residence in the defining narratives of this most recent late ancient faith community. Moreover, over the next four centuries, these elements would continue to migrate into other forms of Christian and Muslim historiographic writing, including histories of the last wars between the Persian and Roman empires, the seventh-century Arab conquests,[7] and the political/religious rivalries that raged within the fledgling Muslim *umma* and the Christian communities that abided under Muslim rule. In addition, the histories of local Muslim civic communities (those of Damascus, Cordoba, and Baghdad, for example), intellectual communities and theoretical schools (*madhāhib*) were also narrated through hybrid genres of historical writing that incorporated generous helpings of signs, symbols, and narrative forms first elaborated in pre-Islamic religious history. The result was an expansive but closely kindred family of historiographies, applicable to all areas of human experience, and employed by Muslim and Christian communities alike in a wide geographical arc extending from Constantinople to Cordoba.[8]

With all of this said, however, there is in fact no definition of 'religious history' that will satisfy every reader. In part, the difficulty inherent in defining the genre of religious history is the problem of genre itself; almost any specific feature of those texts that we identify as examples of religious history will recur in so many other modes of historical writing as to make the defining characteristics, concerns, or strategies of religious history qua genre profoundly difficult to pin down. Meanwhile, if we take seriously the project of locating and isolating the defining traits of something called 'religious history', we must also admit that this locating and isolating is ultimately an exercise carried out on the basis of subjective criteria that originate and reside finally in the worldview and intellectual agenda of the reader. We might well say the same of political history, military history, and intellectual history, to name but a few equally slippery genres of historical writing.

This difficulty becomes particularly acute when we turn our attention to historical texts produced by societies in which the hermeneutic resources available to producers of literary recollections of past events do not assume, for example, divisions between 'scientific' and 'religious' ways of knowing or explaining. This

[7] See further James Howard-Johnston, *Witness to a World Crisis: Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010).

[8] On Muslim historiography in general see Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd edn (Leiden, 1968).

is not a difficulty that resides from any particular lack within these modes of recalling the past, of course; rather, it is a difficulty that derives from the specific epistemological commitments from which post-Enlightenment Western readers and authors of historical writing frequently imagine the past, and often expect to read about the past. In other words, the qualities that might make 'religious histories' recognizable as examples of a distinct genre to a Western, modern reader—a hermeneutics that admits divine agency in human affairs, the presence of miracles, wonders, or holy personages, for example—only become conspicuous as specifically 'religious' elements of historical narration or analysis when they are extracted and scrutinized in isolation from their place within the epistemic, ontological, and hermeneutic systems of those who produced the texts in which they are encountered.

Hence the troubling part of dealing with 'religious history' for historians working in the long shadow of the 'linguistic turn' is (or perhaps should be) an awareness that the category 'religious history' is in many ways a category that derives from readings of certain texts against what has emerged as a normative post-Enlightenment set of expectations concerning acceptable modes of explaining human events in the present or past—for example via empirical, 'scientific' observation of evidence and the application of human reason. In Middle Eastern antiquity or the European Middle Ages, for example, those who produced the texts historians now frequently treat as 'religious' histories most often sought to answer questions closely kindred with the questions that motivated or motivate authors of 'political', 'military', or 'intellectual' histories. In doing so, moreover, they most often did not think of themselves as writing accounts of the past that deviated wildly from the ontological or epistemological assumptions of those around them. In a world in which there is little division assumed between the roles of priests and the roles of kings, or the function of the church and the function of the empire, to explain the deeds of kings, nobles, or peasants, whether at court, on the field of battle, or in the mosque or basilica without reference to divine will is an impossibility. It follows, moreover, that in such a world it is equally impossible to write a history that is 'religious' at the expense of being equally 'political', 'military', or 'intellectual'. I will illustrate the complexity of this problem by returning briefly to the Constantine that emerges in the narratives of Eusebius and Lactantius.

For Eusebius, Lactantius, and other late ancient and medieval Christian authors, the significance of this Constantine's career resided not in the new emperor's military prowess, which left him the last man standing in a spate of Roman-on-Roman bloodletting, nor the capacity of Constantine to turn back the clock to the halcyon days of the distant Roman past, when, imperial apologists had so often insisted, Roman virtue had ruled the hearts of Roman citizens, and Roman institutions functioned as Rome's gods and great founders had intended. Rather, the advent of Constantine as ruler of the Roman world was both the function and the sign of an invisible but irresistible divine will manifested

through signs and wonders clearly legible in the recent history of the Roman world. For Eusebius, the will of the God of the Christians had summoned Constantine to his service via a vision on the eve of battle, during which Constantine was given the promise of victory and the means—a mysterious sign—to achieve it.[9] In Constantine as Eusebius wrote him into the memory of the Christian communities of the late ancient world, God had brought to a rousing end a centuries old narrative of persecution and violence waged against Christ's community, and had done so in a manner not even the most fervent believer would have been able to predict. Here, before the eyes of the Roman world, was a sovereign raised to power by the very hand of God, a pious and deeply committed Christian monarch in whom Christian and Pagan alike could recognize an unmistakable sign of the one God's favour and know once and for all the power and truth of Christian scripture and dogma.

Moreover, in Constantine Eusebius found not only a defender of Christians and Christian belief against attacks by persecuting pagans; for Eusebius, Constantine was an agent of active intolerance with regard to non-Christians, and in particular participants in the traditional religious rites and rituals. Although the specific character of Constantine's policy towards traditional religion has become a point of much debate for modern historians, it seems clear that, as Hal Drake and others have noted, for Eusebius, the place of Constantine in his own world and in the memory of the Christian communities ever after was tied crucially to the image of Constantine as an active and zealous persecutor of non-Christians.[10]

For Lactantius, too, the significance of Constantine's advent was tied to the history of persecution the Christian communities of the Roman Empire had suffered at the hands of Constantine's predecessors. Indeed, in his *De mortibus persecutorum* [On the Deaths of the Persecutors], Lactantius interpreted the conversion and battlefield victories of Constantine as episodes within a more pervasive plot in which the God of Abraham had, at long last, given his followers victory over their enemies via the advent of a strong and militant champion. Before Constantine's final victory, Lactantius wrote, God had punished the persecutors of the Christians privately with horrific illness and misfortune, but it was with the appearance of a Christian Roman emperor so soon after the terrors of the late third- and early fourth-century 'Great Persecution' that God's will became clearly manifested in the affairs of the earth's greatest political power.[11]

Although it is not the task of this chapter to trace the specific historiography of Constantine's conversion and advent as Roman ruler, these accounts do illustrate succinctly several of the defining traits of religious history as I have identified

[9] *Life of Constantine* 1.27–32.

[10] Hal A. Drake, 'Constantine and Consensus', *Church History*, 64 (1995), 1–15.

[11] See Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*, ed. and trans. J. L. Creed (Oxford 1984), with Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire*.

them. Unlike in the works of earlier historians of the Roman Empire, those of authors like Tacitus, Suetonius, or Plutarch, the career of the new emperor was not to be understood as a reflection or symptom of the state of Roman political culture, nor did it provide the occasion for classicizing moral speculation. Rather, for Eusebius, Lactantius, their continuators and many of their interlocutors, the significance of Constantine's career and conversion were to be understood as evidence of the workings of a cosmic drama proceeding from the will of the God of Abraham.[12] The players in this drama were not only Constantine and his rivals, but also the holy martyrs of local churches scattered across the face of the Roman Empire, the saints and persecutors of successive generations residing in the memories of Christian churchmen and laypeople, the bishops who received and validated the converted Constantine and the Old Testament prophets on whose mighty and fearsome path Constantine now trod. Nor was the stage upon which this drama played out limited to the territorial bounds of the Roman Empire; this was a drama whose acts resonated across heaven and earth like a mighty thunderclap. The magnitude of these events could only be measured on a scale calibrated to the weight of prophets, angels, and martyrs.

Such grand pageants required grand stages, of course, and here too Eusebius stands as a signal figure in the development of religious historiography. His sprawling *Ecclesiastical History* is the surviving portion of a synthetic universal history that incorporated material from Old Testament history, Near Eastern history, and Graeco-Roman history into a single grand narrative at whose centre was the advent of Christianity. In accordance with this narrative, all of world history was but prologue to the mission of Christ and the establishment of his Church. Moreover, in Eusebius's reckoning, a pattern of events could be discerned in the histories of non-Christian peoples that amounted to no less than a providential paving of the way for Christianity. Later chroniclers, authors like Sozomen, Socrates, Theodoret, Philostorgius, Rufinus,[13] as well as many Syrian, Armenian, and Coptic writers, seem to have embraced this model of historical hermeneutics, and in so doing dutifully folded contemporary or near contemporary events into

[12] Cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.4, with Cameron, 'Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and the Construction of Constantine', 157–63. On Constantine and Eusebius generally see Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981).

[13] See Sozomen, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G. C. Hanson (Turnhout, 2004); trans. in P. Schaff (ed.), *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* series 2.2 (Grand Rapids, often reprinted); Socrates Scholasticus, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Hansen (Berlin, 1995); trans. in Schaff (ed.), *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*; Theodoret, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. L. Parmentier and Hansen (Berlin, 1998); trans. in Schaff (ed.), *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*; Philostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. J. Bidez and F. Winkelmann (1913; Berlin, 1972); trans. Philip Amidon as *Philostorgius: Church History* (Atlanta, 2007); Rufinus, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Theodor Mommsen (1909; Berlin, 1999); and Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London 1898; Turnhout, 2007); trans. Michael Whitby (Liverpool, 2000); with Pauline Allen, *Evagrius Scholasticus the Church Historian* (Louvain, 1981). The most distinguished continuators of this tradition in the Middle Ages are John of Ephesus and Bede, on whom see J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *A Historical Commentary to Bede's Ecclesiastical History* (Oxford, 1988).

an evolving metanarrative of Christian history. Significantly, however, as we shall see below, during and after the fourth century, individual Christian communities tended to elaborate for themselves upon the metanarrative Eusebius and others had articulated in the formative fourth-century emergence of religious historiography as a medium of large-scale communal commemoration.

This was not a style of historiography invented by Eusebius and Lactantius, but the specific use these men made of it brought certain evolving hermeneutic strategies confined previously to local confessional communities into an authoritative and authorizing narration of the Roman imperial past for the first time. That is, as we have it narrated by these authors and later authors of ecclesiastical histories, hagiographies, and other modes of specifically 'religious' history, the career of Constantine and the advent of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire's ruling classes was cast as a cluster of episodes within a much larger archipelago of episodes through which relations between God and man had become comprehensible to the Christian communities of the Roman world.

Even as Constantine was written into the history of the Roman world as a figure whose career was best understood as a series of dazzling proofs of the truth and power of the Christian faith, other, much less well-known figures were emerging in the texts and imaginations of contemporary Christians as men and women through whom God worked his will on earth, and in whom contemporaries could well understand past, present, and future as but distinct chapters in an unfolding Christian narrative. Among the most famous of these was the great Antony, the wonderworking ascetic hermit of the Egyptian desert. In the seminal *Life of St Antony* written by the Alexandrian bishop Athanasius,[14] readers encountered a figure, who, like the Constantine of Eusebius and Lactantius's texts, stood not only as a great agent of religious change and conversion, but in whom the will and power of the Christian God seemed palpable.

Having left his Egyptian village behind at a young age, Antony sought in the Egyptian wilds spiritual perfection and freedom from his fleshly desires, desires he is said to have regarded as an obstacle between himself and heaven. Where Constantine fought demonic adversaries for imperial power, Antony struggled against demons themselves, often masquerading as beautiful women or desirable boys. As he advanced in his ascetic rigor, Athanasius wrote, Antony acquired a spiritual power that could be used to perform miracles, or to converse with angels or even God himself.[15] Antony's predecessors in all of this were the Christian martyrs of previous decades and centuries, of course. Those first Christian superheroes and celebrities established a template for spiritual perfection on earth—

[14] The authorship is generally accepted, though, as the Key Historical Sources indicate, conflicting views have been entertained with regard to the claims of the Greek and Syriac versions to priority.

[15] See esp. chs. 9–14, 22–43, 51, 66, 82, with David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford, 1995), 201–65.

the best of all Christians traded comfort, wealth, safety, and their very lives for a place in heaven when confronted with tyrannical and demonically inspired persecutors. With the cessation of wholesale persecution of Christians, however, this template required amendment, and in his creation of Antony from imaginative material reaped from the ubiquitous martyr stories circulating in his world, Athanasius contributed mightily to the evolving possibilities for imaging the past (and so the present and future) in terms that relied first and foremost upon a hermeneutics derived from a specifically Jewish/Christian metanarrative.

Indeed, in rendering his Antony as an aspiring martyr and a suffering spiritual superstar dying day-by-day for Christ, Athanasius elaborated upon a mode of communal narration shared in common with the Jewish communities of the Roman world. While others have explored the complexities posed by such shared Jewish/Christian martyr cults as that of the Maccabees, Daniel Boyarin has convincingly underscored the formative role that the spectacle and drama of martyrdom played as Jewish and Christian communities invented themselves as self-consciously distinct and discreet communities of God.[16] Perhaps unsurprisingly, much recent research on the work of the bishop Athanasius and the advent of Antony as a literary figure has emphasized the role played by Antony in controversies among closely kindred but mutually antagonistic Christian communities as they struggled over questions of legitimacy, primacy, and local power in the neighbourhood of Alexandria.

It is here, in fact, that we encounter one of the primary uses of 'religious history' during late antiquity and the Middle Ages, as a resource in intercommunal polemic. In particular, the Christian communities of late antiquity refined the themes and tropes of religious historiography in polemic struggles against Jewish, 'pagan', and, most notably after the close of the fifth century, other Christian communities. Often, this polemical historiography centred on advancing and contesting claims concerning the relative antiquity of Christianity's defining beliefs and, as recent research has demonstrated, a distinctive Christian 'race' (*gens* or *ethnos*) over and against the claims the Jews and adherents to the traditional religions of the Roman world. Aaron Johnson has argued recently, for example, that in addition to his writings on Constantine, Eusebius sought in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* [Preparation for the Gospel] to demonstrate that contemporary Christians were in fact an *ethnos* descended from the ancient Hebrews, and thus a people defined by their ancestral custom of devotion to the one God of Abraham: 'It was the distinctively Hebrew way of Life that made the Christians a new—and yet the most ancient—nation'.[17]

[16] Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, 1999).

[17] Aaron Johnson, 'Identity, Descent, and Polemic: Ethnic Argumentation in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 12 (2004), 23–56, at 55.

Elsewhere, this new approach to recollection of the past lent itself to new readings of the topography of the late ancient world, from the ancient city of Rome, which in the North African bishop Augustine of Hippo's reading now became simply one city among many in the grand sweep of history, to the new Roman capital of Constantinople, whose foundation by Constantine Augustine now understood as 'one of the blessings granted by the Christian God to its pious champion: "to him God granted that he should found a city, an aid to the Roman empire and the daughter, as it were, of Rome itself, but without any temple or image of demons" '.[18]

In the city of Rome itself, competing narrations of the local Christian community's ancient and recent past became rallying points for violently opposed Christian factions as they waged bloody street wars over the claims of competing claimants to the See of St Peter. The portion of the local past upon which these claims came to centre was the age of the heroic martyrs: control of the memory of the martyrs of Rome became a crucial component of the campaign waged by Damasus, the eventual victor in Rome's fourth-century Christian civil war. Similarly, in fourth-century Milan, the bishop Ambrose turned to the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius as resources in his struggle with the rival Arian church as he sought to define his own,[19] Nicene congregation as the one true Christian community in the city of Milan. Indeed, throughout the late ancient and early medieval world, martyrs as communal founders and communal champions came to play increasingly crucial roles as local Christian communities became aware of themselves as distinct, discrete communities of God, complete with a local lineage of holy persons as links between themselves and the divine. The narration of the careers of these holy persons in the form of martyrologies and saint's lives was the sine qua non of this process of local communal identification, and the writing and recitation of these lives became two of the defining cultural phenomena of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

With time, bishops like Augustine, Ambrose of Milan, and Rabbula of Edessa would become the focus of hagiographies of their own. Sometimes, these bishops were remembered as charismatic wonderworkers, while others were remembered to have gone about their episcopal duties quietly and largely without abrupt intrusions of the divine. In all cases, however, these figures, very much like the more flamboyant saints of the desert, were understood as visible outposts of the holy in the affairs of men. Through them God worked his will among his believers, brought unexpected relief to the oppressed and terrified the unbelievers of the present world.

[18] Clifford Ando, *A Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* (Berkeley, 2008), 160.

[19] See Ernst Dassmann, 'Ambrosius und die Märtyrer', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 18 (1975), 49–68; with Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), 35–7; and Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 2008), 58–61.

Moreover, as Christological controversy fomented division between local Christian communities and the Roman imperial government during the fifth and sixth centuries, local bishops, theologians, and high-profile ascetics emerged in works of hagiography and historiography as communal defenders and as conduits to crucial divine truth. Particularly among the Christian communities of Egypt and Syria, where anti-Chalcedonian views were most common, the narration of these centuries increasingly became one of confrontation between local communities and the Roman imperial government, which, in the histories we encounter in the chronicles and saint's lives that purport to record the events of the post-Chalcedonian age, emerges as a violent and brutal foreign power, despotic, proud, and alienated from the one God. In and around the city of Amida, for example, Roman imperial agents were remembered to have brutalized the local anti-Chalcedonian Christian population, using lepers to terrify believers and murdering local priests. Predictably, against this perceived aggression rose inspired bishops, monks, and lay people. In one particularly telling scene, an army of monks marshals on a field opposite a detachment of Roman troops sent to persecute the local Christian community for their unwillingness to accede to Chalcedonian dogma. Seeing the monks as giants, the Roman troops withdrew. While on this occasion, violence was avoided, by the beginning of the seventh century, the religious histories penned in the collapsing Roman world would increasingly describe miraculous events, wrought by divinely inspired, saintly figures, that resulted in bloodshed and conquest in the name of the God of the Christians.[20]

Indeed, as he recalled the early seventh-century war between the Persian and Roman superpowers of the late ancient world, the tenth-century Melkite bishop of Alexandria Eutychios crafted the Roman emperor Heraclius as a zealous holy warrior bringing to bear the wrath of an outraged Christian God upon the enemies of Christ and his Church. As he advanced into Persian territory, Eutychios wrote, Heraclius killed every Persian man, woman, and child he met, ripping Persian fetuses from their mothers' wombs and smashing them on rocks. In so doing, this Heraclius was said to imagine himself as a warrior on God's behalf with prophetic precedent, declaring 'I am the one whom the Prophet David foretold, when he said in Psalm 136 [Ps. 137:9]: "Blessed shall be he who takes your babies and smashes them on a rock!" '[21]

It is likely that the association of the Roman emperor with David and the horrors of war waged in God's name may be traced to Heraclius's own court rhetoric; Heraclius's court poet George of Pisidia cast his emperor's war with the Persians as a war on God's behalf through reference to precisely this section of Psalms, for

[20] *Zuqnin Chronicle*, trans. A. Harrak as *The Chronicle of Zuqnin, Parts III and IV, AD 488–775* (Rome, 1999), 65–6.

[21] *Eutychii patriarchae Alexandrini Annales, pars prior [posterior]*, ed. L. Cheikho, B. Carra de Vaux, and H. Zayyat, 2 vols. (Paris, 1906–9), 51.2–3.

example.[22] In one sense, Eutychios's depiction of Heraclius's character is easily legible as little more than a tenth-century reiteration of a Roman Christian rhetorical and historiographic trope that was centuries old by the seventh century. Indeed, the adoption of Old Testament archetypes as a means of emplotting Christian Roman emperors in a much longer and deeper narrative of Christian history was nothing new—Eusebius had in the fourth century cast Constantine as a new Moses who led his people out of oppression into a promised land of toleration and even imperial favour, for example, just as the bishop Ambrose had scripted Theodosius I as a zealous new Jacob who had 'put away the idols of the gentiles, whose faith indeed put away all worship of the idols, obliterated all of their ceremonies'.[23]

Where the Heraclius crafted by Eutychios is of particular interest to a study of religious history in the late ancient and early medieval Mediterranean is in the processes of change, continuity, and cultural diffusion that the author of this Heraclius may be read to represent. On the one hand, Eutychios may in many ways be read as a participant in the tradition of much earlier Christian historians, composing a specifically religious historical text in very much the style I have surveyed over the previous pages; he uniformly reports the same central events, interpreted in the same ways, as earlier chroniclers, for example, and he populates his narrative with a very familiar repertoire of figures, all of whom perform very familiar roles, whether these are those of martyr, wonderworker, or militant Christian ruler. And yet, for all that his history bears in common with previous examples of late ancient and early medieval religious history, Eutychios worked in circumstances that previous authors, men like Eusebius, Athanasius, or Ambrose, could never have foreseen. First and most importantly, Eutychios lived and wrote (in Arabic) under Muslim rule. Moreover, to judge from crucial sections of his history, Eutychios gathered the material he incorporated into his text not just from older Christian histories, but from Arabic Muslim sources as well.

This becomes particularly clear in the section of Eutychios's text that describes the seventh-century Muslim conquests. Indeed, Eutychios's analysis of the events that made his own home See of Alexandria one outpost within a non-Muslim empire accords exceedingly well with the accounts of earlier and contemporary Muslim historians, those of writers like al-Azdi in his *Ta'rikh futuh al-Sham* [History of the Conquest of Syria] and the sources of al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-muluk* [History of Prophets and Kings], a grand narrative of world history up to the late ninth/third century. In these texts, the arrival of the Arab armies led by Muhammad's companions and successors had been an act of the God of Abraham, angered by the sinfulness and pride of the Romans and the idolatry of the Sasanid Persian Empire. The ragged Arab armies that overwhelmed the two

[22] *Expedito Persica* II, 113–15. The poem appears in George of Pisidia, *Poemi*, ed. A. Pertusi, vol. 1 (Ettal, 1959), 84–136.

[23] Ambrose of Milan (*De obitu Theodosii* 4).

most powerful empires of the known world were, Christian and Muslim authors writing in Arabic, Syriac, Greek, and Armenian all but uniformly agreed, dispatched as a holy scourge, and their victory was legible only as a manifestation of the good will of God.

In this sense, Eutychios was part of a historiographic continuum that stretched across the boundaries of the various religious communities of the Middle East and Mediterranean. Writing in the late seventh century, for example, the Armenian Christian author Sebēos understood the Muslim conquests as a divinely inspired act in which the most unlikely inheritors of Roman and Persian power miraculously took to themselves an immense terrestrial empire.[24] The author of the anonymous thirteenth-century Syrian chronicle similarly described the conquests as a clash of worldly might and divinely aided but militarily weak nomads from the desolate wastes of Arabia.[25] Inevitably in these texts, and in the Arabic Muslim texts to which I shall turn presently, the Roman and Persian imperial officials who confront the Arab armies on the field of battle express shock and amazement at the events in which they are embroiled. This is the amazement of self-assured imperial officials confronted with the power of the numinous working on behalf of men striving on behalf of God's own will. But it was not only histories produced far from the centres of imperial Roman power that understood the victory of the Arab armies as evidence of divine displeasure with the Romans. The Byzantine historian Nicephoros, for example, writing in the eighth century, declared the conquests a result of divine wrath as well, wrath brought about by the sins of the Romans.[26]

How was it that in the decades and centuries after the Muslim conquests authors of opposed confessional identities, spread across a wide geographical range, living under competing imperial regimes, representing different cultural traditions and working in different languages came to such closely harmonized interpretations of the most important and far-reaching political and military event of the early Middle Ages? Why and how, in other words, did these authors, with their widely divergent worldviews and agendas, manage to agree so closely about so important an event, one with such important implications for questions touching on matters of political legitimacy and social hierarchy as well as religious truth, as they sought to explain and understand it? The simplest answer is perhaps the most compelling: by the late seventh century, as these communities looked back over decades of rapid and traumatic change, the hermeneutic resources available to all of them, despite their very different cultural, political, and religious positionings, were very much of a piece. Between the fourth and the

[24] Sebēos, *Armenian History*, 47, trans. Robert W. Thomson as *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, vol. 1 (Liverpool, 1999), 132–4.

[25] *Chronicle of 1234* in Andrew Palmer with Sebastian Brock, and Robert Hoyland, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool, 1993), 162; cf. ibid., 45–8.

[26] See further Paul J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople* (Oxford, 1953), 157–62.

seventh centuries, modes of historical interpretation and formal remembrance that privileged modes of causality dependent upon biblical narrative, that located the enduring truths in accordance with which analysis and interpretation of social, political, and military events could be carried forth outside the realm of human experience and in the realm of the transcendent and divine, and whose foremost concern was quite often to identify and interpret moments of human experience in which it was believed the divine had manifested itself, making clear to human eyes the will and intention of the God of Abraham.

Cataclysm of every sort lent itself readily to this style of historical interpretation. So powerful and so pervasive was this model of historical reasoning by the seventh century that even those for whom change had decreed loss and humiliation in the guise of the conquests could understand the previous decades only in accordance with the logic of divine providence. In the fifth century, the sack of Rome had prompted painful introspection for Christians confronted with pagan claims that the empire's misfortunes had been prompted by neglect of the old gods; the most powerful response to these charges, that of Augustine of Hippo, required a radical rethinking of the place of Rome in the cosmology of Christians, and a re-evaluation of such central Roman (and so Christian) concepts as citizenship, community, and the place of the individual in his or her world.[27] A century later, in the far west, as the cleric Gildas surveyed the 'ruin of Britain' following the Saxon invasions, he read the fate of Christian Britain through a prism of Old Testament drama, and cast the events in an idiom of human sin and divine chastisement.[28] By the eighth century, as Muslim authors cast the Arab conquests as a rebuke to Roman and Persian imperial vainglory, the failure of Roman Christians to keep faith with the God of Abraham, and the idolatry of the Persian Zoroastrians, Christian authors could scarcely disagree.[29] In an eighth-century Christian apologetic text, for example, the Syrian *catholicos* Timothy praises Muhammad for his conquest of the failed Christians of Byzantium and the creature-worshiping Persian Empire.[30] It was now Muhammad, much in the tradition of Ambrose's Theodosius and George of Pisidia's Heraclius, who was described as walking the path of Old Testament militant champions of monotheism.[31] In a Syrian Christian chronicle from the same period, meanwhile, a heavily armed and richly appointed Persian cavalryman is shown in terrified and helpless flight before a poor and poorly provisioned Arab Muslim warrior.[32] For Christian

[27] Augustine, *City of God* 1.1–7, with R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970).

[28] See *De Excidio Britanniae*, chs. 37–65, ed. and trans. Michal Winterbottom (London, 1978), 36–52, 104–18.

[29] See further Sebastian Brock, 'Syriac Views of Emergent Islam', in G. H. A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Edwardsville, 1982), 9–21.

[30] Timothy Catholicos, *Apology for Christianity before the Caliph Mahdi*, trans. A. Mingana (Cambridge, 1928), 50–2.

[31] See especially the *Heraclias*, in George of Pisidia, *Poemi*, ed. Pertusi, vol. 1 (Ettal, 1959), 240–61.

[32] *Chronicle of 1234* in Palmer *et al.*, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, 152.

authors, as for Muslim authors, the only means of explaining or understanding the explosive success of the Arab monotheists who had appeared from the deserts of the south was provided by a mode of historical reasoning that had slowly displaced (if not wholly eclipsed) all other modes of narrating and interpreting the past. While implications of the analyses this mode of historiography produced cannot have been immediately comforting, they did have the one advantage of locating the catastrophe of the Arab conquest within a familiar narrative, one that still promised salvation for true believers and that imposed upon the chaos of the seventh century a kind of readily comprehensible grammar of human transgression and divine chastisement.

For the Arab Muslim victors of the conquest period, the military miracle of the defeats dealt to the two most powerful powers of the known world was soon fitted into a much longer process of prophetic history that had dovetailed with the histories of the imperial powers of the ancient world, culminating in the fateful meeting of Roman (or Persian) and Arab warriors on the battlefields of Syria, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. The texts that recalled the *futuh* or 'conquests' (literally 'openings') combined what read as traditional tribal modes of recollection, including heroic poetry and tribal war narratives, with a narrative of providential Arab ascendancy thanks to the advent among the previously heathen Arabs of God's last prophet.

Intriguingly, all of this was accomplished using a historiographic toolbox that contained many narrative and interpretive elements that were all but identical to those employed by earlier and contemporary Christian authors. These elements included narrative strategies whereby defining events of early Islamic history were emplotted within much older narratives of ancient Mediterranean, Mesopotamian, biblical histories, narratives that had for centuries previous served as the basis for Christian-authored chronicles, hagiographies, and histories.

Some of the most striking of these took certain recent high-profile events in service of the emerging Muslim narrative of the Islamic *umma*'s primordial past. The Roman–Persian wars of the seventh century, for example, were contemporary equivalents of the world wars of the twentieth century; they were clashes of military titans that shook the political and religious lives of peoples spread across the Eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, and Mesopotamia. Perhaps not surprisingly, early Qur'anic exegesis described the primordial Muslim community in Mecca as crucial participants in these events, albeit at a considerable geographic remove and in ways that were only visible at the time to God and his Prophet. The Muslims of Mecca, we are told, were sympathetic supporters of the monotheist Romans in their war with the polytheist Persians, while their powerful polytheist Arab rivals cast their own lot with the Persians. Although this choice seemed vindicated when the Romans suffered serious defeats at the beginning of the war, God assured Muhammad that in time the Romans would emerge victorious. The second-/eighth-century *Tafsir Khams-mi'at aya* [Commentary on the Five Hundred Verses] of Muqatil b. Sulayman, for example, contains the following passage:

The Romans fought the Persians and the Romans were defeated. And this came to the Prophet and his companions, and it troubled them. They were in Mecca. But the unbelievers [i.e. Quraysh and their allies] were delighted, and they gloated and killed the companions of the Prophet. [The unbelievers of Mecca] said to them, 'You are a people of the book, and the Romans are a people of the book. But *our* brothers, the Persian people, have conquered your brothers, the Romans.'[33]

In time, of course, the Romans did triumph, and Muhammad's revelation, which Muslim exegetes explained became the basis for the thirtieth *sura* of the Qur'an, was proven correct.[34] In later centuries, as they struggled to historically situate *Sura* 30, very early Muslim exegetes and traditionalists insisted that the battles of the Christian Romans against the unbelieving Persians were to be understood as doubles for the battles that the Muslims of Mecca waged against their unbelieving Arab rivals—in these battles too an embattled but God-fearing community triumphed miraculously over proud and mighty unbelievers. Accordingly, these texts suggested, the early seventh-century battles of the Romans and Persians and the battles of the Muslims and Arab unbelievers yielded twin victories for God's twin armies.

The intercommunal conflict in Mecca thus became simply another front within a struggle of whose recollection became a preoccupation for Byzantine, Syrian, and Armenian historians of the period, and as such yet another of those moments of numinous clarity authors of religious history so avidly sought in the events they surveyed and recorded: here, before the eyes of the world, was an unexpected Roman victory over a powerful unbelieving enemy, one, no less that the victories of Constantine in the estimation of contemporary Christians, made plain the will of God and the bedrock truths of the universe in over which he held sway.

Similarly, as it became necessary to explain the confrontation between the Muslim armies and their fellow monotheists, the Romans, a narrative of the deep prophetic past came readily to hand for Muslim authors and historians. It was, early Muslim sources claimed, the ancient enmity of Esau and Jacob in combination with an inherited Roman imperial arrogance that brought about the war between Rome and Islam. Specifically, one of Esau's offspring, a certain Rum b. Rum, had, through imperial hubris, thrown off the monotheism of his fathers. In response, God had decreed the appearance of a series of armed prophets, including David and Muhammad. In his medieval history of the city of Damascus, Ibn ʿAsakir similarly paints the confrontation of Christian Rome and Islam as the consequence of Esau and Jacob's rivalry: the Arabs who met a Roman military commander in Syria explained to him that the inheritance of the Romans, from Esau, and the inheritance of the Arabs, from Jacob, was now due for a restructuring.

[33] *Tafsir*, III.3, 5–6.

[34] See further Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, 11th edn (Beltsville, Md., 2001), 1006–32.

In so doing, they demanded that the Romans surrender to the Arabs their rightful inheritance, to which the Romans predictably refused. It is a measure of the transcommunal appeal of the interpretive principles upon which this history was based that centuries before, as he composed his own history of the conquests, the seventh-century Christian Armenian historian Sebēos included much the same story.[35]

In addition to Old Testament characters shared in common between Muslim and Christian narrations of conquest-era history, we also encounter certain properly historical figures who had, by the close of the seventh century and even earlier, taken on a symbolic resonance that was crucial for the hermeneutic processes producers of Muslim and Christian histories of the conquests required. In Muslim accounts of the conquests and the period that immediately preceded it, for example, we encounter familiar depictions of the Roman emperor Heraclius as a zealous warrior on behalf of the one God of Abraham. In a fourth-/tenth-century Muslim history of the conquests, for example, we find Heraclius addressing the Christians of Syria:

> People of this religion . . . God has inclined toward you and he has been a comfort and a benefactor toward this religion against peoples of the past, and against Kisra and the Magians and the Turks who were unknowing [i.e. who did not know the God of Abraham] and whoever among all of the nations were like them. That was because you knew the Book of your Lord and the *sunna* of your prophet whose commandments were reasoned and whose actions were rightly guided.[36]

As recalled by eighth-century Muslim authors, the Roman Empire in the time of Heraclius was a militant monotheist empire, fighting in tandem with the community of Muhammad in Mecca, allies in a terrestrial struggle against idolatry and error. The Romans had overcome their enemies with the aid of the God of Abraham, the same god under whose auspices the Muslim community now took up arms and set out to eradicate polytheist error from the lands of Arabia. Accordingly, the emperor Heraclius as inspired warrior on God's behalf, so familiar from the poetry of George of Pisidia and such Byzantine historians as Nicephoros and Theophanes the Confessor, re-emerges very much intact in our earliest Muslim texts. This is of course a remarkable choice given the role that Heraclius would later come to play with regard to the Muslims; at the approach of the armies of Muhammad's successors he met the Arabs on the field of battle and opposed them (albeit with little success).

Indeed, the interpretive machinery of these narratives depended upon a cast of characters that functioned in strikingly similar and predictable ways to produce a tightly circumscribed range of meaning in both Muslim and Christian texts. Among the most important of these was the Christian monk, one of the most

[35] Sebēos, *Armenian History* 47.162, trans. Thomson, 133.
[36] Ibn A'tham al-Kufi, *Kitab al-futuh*, ed. M. A. Khan, 8 vols. (Hyderabad, 1968–75), i. 131.

common and deeply resonant figures in the literatures of late antiquity. It was, for example, a Christian monk who first recognized a young Muhammad as a prophet, according to earliest Muslim tradition. This was the sort of role in which monks had excelled for centuries; it was the inspired, charismatic Christian ascetic to whom Christian and non-Christian communities had long looked for holy insight and discernment of things otherwise hidden to the eyes of lesser men. Elsewhere in Islam's foundational narratives, it was a Christian ascetic who brought Abrahamic monotheism to the southern Arabian city of Najran, and a former Christian monk, Salman, who was the first of the Persians to accept Islam.[37]

Moreover, very early Muslim histories describe the Arab Muslim warriors who brought the righteous anger of God to the sinful Romans as ascetic, deeply pious men, zealous warriors 'on God's path' described in text after text as 'like monks at night, and like lions (or horsemen) during the day'. In al-Azdi's eighth-century history of the conquest of Syria, for example, the earliest such description still extant, we find this admiring appraisal of early Muslim warriors put into the mouth of a Christian ascetic, who recognizes in the assembled *mujahidun* ('practitioners of jihad') kindred spirits. Sent into the Muslim camp to spy, he returned with the following report: 'I come to you from a people staying up through the night praying and remaining abstinent during the day, commanding the right and forbidding the wrong, monks by night, lions by day. Should their king steal, they cut off his hand, and if he commits adultery they stone him.'[38]

It would seem, then, that as such early authors as al-Azdi and the first Qur'anic exegetes went about locating the events of the conquests in a prophetic narrative. So, when they recounted events properly at home in what I have described as works of 'religious history', they did so not only with the hermeneutic strategies of religious historiography, but with many of the specific tropes, figures, and narrative strategies developed over the preceding centuries by both prominent and obscure authors of Christian and Jewish religious histories. It is one measure of the degree to which early Muslim intellectuals understood the history of Islam to mesh with the histories of the Christian communities of the late ancient world that early works of Qur'anic exegesis sometimes turned not only to figures and stories that derived from the New Testament or Hebrew Bible, but also to those of local and popular Christian stories about inspired martyrs and friends of God as resources for elucidating puzzling portions of the Qur'an.

The sixth-century Christian martyrs of the Yemeni city of Najran, for example, were very early on understood by Muslim exegetes to have been the mysterious

[37] See al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, i. 1465, 1467–9, trans. Michael Fishbein as *The History of al-Tabari*, vol. 8: *The Victory of Islam: Muhammad at Medina A.D. 626–630/A.H. 5–8*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Albany, 1997), 6, 10–12; with Irfan Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najran: New Documents* (Brussels, 1971).

[38] *Ta'rikh futuh al-Sham*, 115–16.

'People of the Trench' (*Ashab al-Ukhdud*) alluded to in *Sura* 85.[39] Elements of the Christian hagiography describing the trials of the Najran martyrs were taken up by these early Muslim commentators as they attempted to situate the events described in *Sura* 85 within a properly 'historical' narrative of the Arabian past. Elsewhere, the equally enigmatic 'Companions of the Cave' (*Ashab al-Kahf*) of *Sura* 8 were identified by early Muslim scholars with the 'Seven Sleepers of Ephesus', whose story was well known among a constellation of communities throughout late antiquity.[40] Indeed, when in the third/ninth century the Muslim caliph Mu'tasim sent an expedition into the lands of the Roman Empire to investigate a collection of mummified bodies that, it was thought, might represent the worldly remains of the 'Companions of the Cave', the expedition found the site in question occupied by an aggressively territorial Christian caretaker.

Elsewhere around the Mediterranean and Middle East, the processes of commemoration whereby members of civic communities like Damascus, Alexandria, and Baghdad, inhabitants of regions like Egypt, Isbahan, and Andalusia, and intellectual communities like the Muslim Hanbalis of Iraq and the Syrian Christian School of Nisibis imagined and narrated their own pasts consistently depended upon the genres of commemorative writing developed from the fourth century onward, and upon the tropes, figures, and themes crucial to the many and varied individual texts produced in accordance with those genres. The histories of discrete Muslim (and, often, Christian) communities were but local iterations of the metanarrative of the miraculous conquests of the seventh century and the grand prophetic past that had preceded it, for example, while the hometown legal experts, traditionalists, and pietists whose lives were narrated in civic and institutional collective biographies were often inflected with the trappings of holiness with which authors of hagiographies had for long centuries before equipped their heroes.

In the centuries to come, the themes, tropes, and characters so common in late ancient and early Islamic religious history would recur as Urban II called Christians to crusade, relying heavily as he did upon martyr imagery identical in style and function to those martyr tales that resided at the core of the earliest Christian histories. Similarly, as he rallied his fellow Muslims to resist the Second Crusade, the sixth-/twelfth-century Muslim historian Ibn ʿAsakir read publicly in Damascus from the *Kitab al-Jihad* [Book of Jihad] of ʿAbd Allah b. al-Mubarak, a second-/eighth-century traditionalist who incorporated into his own works material first encountered in a fourth-century collection of Christian apophthegmata, and who included in his own works on jihad and ascetic renunciation a number of passages that liken jihad to the practice of Christian monks.[41]

[39] Ali, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, 1627.

[40] First related by Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, 94, trans. R. Van Dam (Liverpool, 1999), 117–18. On the Muslim reading see Ali, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, 709.

[41] See Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity*, 14–15, 180–2.

CONCLUSION

Across the Mediterranean and throughout the Middle East and Mesopotamia from the fourth through the tenth century, then, a single, unifying (if not strictly uniform) set of strategies for recalling the past was repeatedly put to work by local communities and authoritative intellectuals alike. What is most remarkable about this phenomenon is that the communities and individual authors who drew upon this shared mode of reckoning the past, with its attendant cast of predictable tropes, plots, themes, did so on behalf of what were very often mutually antagonistic communities, and in service of very different sets of truth claims regarding political and religious legitimacy, divine truth, and, ultimately, the implications of the competing pasts they recalled. Despite this, however, that they advanced these claims in a common medium, functioning in so similar a fashion, suggests much about the epistemological, ontological, and, ultimately, cultural (in the broadest sense) affinities these mutually opposed communities shared with one another.

As we have seen, the category 'religious historiography', contrived though it may be, may be said to encompass not only texts that sought simply to narrate the past, but also those that sought to impose order and meaning upon contemporary political arrangements, holy texts, intercommunal conflict, and communal origins. That is, in the case of the 'religious historiography' of the late ancient and early medieval world, we seem to be dealing less with a readily bounded discipline or genre than an array of cultural forms which, however different their specific tasks and whatever the specific positioning of their producers, depended for their capacity to make meaning upon a set of hermeneutic resources shared more securely among contemporary rivals than with the most sympathetic modern reader. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz suggested long ago that it is the function of cultural forms to 'bring a particular cast of mind into the world of objects, where men can look at it'.[42] In the case of 'religious history' of the late ancient and early medieval world, the 'cast of mind' in question is one that modern historians since the time of the Enlightenment have regarded with deep suspicion. It is a cast of mind that admits elements of causation that post-Enlightenment historiography (and science) does not, seeks and finds phenomena that post-Enlightenment historiography has excluded from the realm of the possible, and, frequently, celebrates modes of religiosity and piety whose extremes Enlightenment intellectuals sought to avoid or correct. In short, while we may identify an array of historiographic strategies and tropes particular to the modes of recalling the past that resonated with producers and consumers of late ancient texts of all kinds, late ancient or early medieval 'religious history' emerges as a

[42] Clifford Geertz, 'Art as a Cultural System', *Modern Language Notes*, 91 (1976), 1478.

distinct category of analysis only when viewed from a position that assumes as normative the epistemic conceits of modernity.

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