AGATHIAS ON THE SASSANIANS

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Byzantine historian Agathias includes in his continuation of Procopius' Wars two long excursuses on Persia, the first (II.25ff.) on religion, the second (IV.24ff.) on Sassanian history, or rather, the annals of the Sassanian kings. These excursuses are of importance as an illustration of Agathias' method, in which they are closely paralleled by his excursus on the early Merovingians (I.2ff.). But they have a wider and greater importance for the information which they preserve. Agathias used material supplied to him by his friend Sergius, a leading interpreter who on a visit to Persia specially transcribed for Agathias extracts from the Persian Royal Annals (IV.30, p. 134. 284f.). This annalistic material is uniquely valuable. The Royal Annals (see note on IV.30, p. 134.285) certainly formed the main source of the Pahlavī Khvadhāynāmagh (Book of Lords), which in turn provided the material for the Shahnameh, the Persian national epic. Apart from what Agathias tells us, our earliest substantial evidence for the Khvadhāynāmagh tradition comes from Persian and Arabic chroniclers writing in the ninth century and later, when the tradition had become heavily contaminated. Nothing survives of official Sassanian literature—indeed hardly any Sassanian literature at all—and, aside from some important inscriptions, the political history of the Sassanian Empire has to be written largely from the Khvadhāynāmagh tradition as represented in late chronicles. It is vital, therefore, to try to sort out and isolate the genuine annalistic material in Agathias' account, for a good deal of what he says, particularly in the second excursus, represents an earlier stratum of the official record than is preserved elsewhere.

What follows is an attempt, in the form of a commentary, to do just that. Agathias has often, though not always, been recognized by Orientalists as a source of primary importance. But no one before this has made a systematic attempt to evaluate his evidence. My purpose here is not to give either a critical account of Sassanian religion or a history of the Sassanian Empire, but to provide some means of distinguishing the good from the bad in Agathias' evidence. Several problems need to be faced before placing trust in his statements, and some of them can only be solved by considering his historical method in general. Both excursuses mix in with the hard information a quantity of decoration and moralizing provided by Agathias himself. Again, both owe a debt to Procopius, even at the very point where Agathias explicitly disclaims it (see on IV.28, p. 130.217f.). The excursus on religion presents the popularized impression of an outsider, not the informed comment of one who really understood it. The second excursus lends support to Agathias' own

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statement (p. 134.294f.) that Sergius abbreviated what he derived from the Annals, so that caution is needed in accepting at face value Agathias' accounts of some of the shorter reigns. Further, both excursuses have an admixture of non-Oriental material. Nor is all of Agathias' account, as we might otherwise have expected, told from the Persian side. Only Nöldeke\(^3\) has explicitly recognized (and then without developing the point) that some of Agathias' Sasanian history has a Syrian, anti-Persian slant, very probably unnoticed by Agathias himself.

We are unfortunately dealing with an author who had only the remotest (though nonetheless lively—see II.27, p. 88.197f.) idea of the real worth of his material, and even less of the right way to use it. In the two cases where he tells us explicitly that what he says comes from the Royal Annals, he is in one case mistaken (p. 88.196f.) and in the other misleading (IV.30, p. 134.300f.).

The two excursuses are very different. The first, dealing with Persian religion, contains little material directly from the Annals. The contemporary evidence in it must derive from supplementary information provided by Sergius, and as an account of Sasanian Zoroastrianism it is hardly satisfactory. Further, it is heavily interlaced with Agathias' own deductions and interpretations, often mistaken. Where the second excursus is in the main a straightforward presentation of the Annalistic material, the first is far more elaborately treated (with bad results from our point of view). At least, however, it is not contaminated by references to the other chief Greek accounts of Persian religion, for it seems that Agathias did not know them. In view of the controversial nature of the whole subject of Zoroastrianism, I have tried here to keep my commentary as factual as possible, concentrating on the task of distinguishing Agathias' own comments from the hard information he preserves, and where possible of tracing his sources in the places where he diverges from Sergius' account.

With the second excursus the procedure is much clearer and simpler. This section consists largely of a chronological account of the Sasanian dynasty from Ardashīr I to Chosroes I. Most of this can be directly collated with the surviving Khvadhāynāmagh tradition in the later chronicles, sometimes with interesting results. The problems are those of distinguishing the parts where Agathias' account shows Syrian bias and those where he departs from the annalistic material for non-Oriental sources. The latter case rarely arises, and where it does it proves the limitations of Agathias' range; he seems to have had little idea of the Western accounts of the years which he covers, nor on the whole does he trouble to insert any allusions to the Greek or Roman versions of the events he describes. This means that, as source material for Sasanian Persia, the second excursus is a good deal more valuable than the first, nor is the issue confused by the sort of controversy that centers among modern scholars on the subject of Persian religion.

This commentary is not, as will be clear, the work of an Orientalist. Consequently, Orientalists may find details at which they can cavil. My hope, however, is to have made things a little easier for them by providing an analysis of a source which, though vitally important, needs a sympathetic as well as a firm dissection. For Byzantinists and those interested in Agathias as a historian and a writer I hope to have provided an interesting analysis of his methods, his limitations, and his strengths. For, although there is much to criticize in his presentation of these two excursuses, to have conceived them at all is a remarkable achievement. Together with that on the Merovingians, these excursuses show an independence of mind which, despite all the conventionality and the rhetoric, Agathias shows elsewhere in his History too.

The orthography I have used is based in the main on that of A. Christensen, L’Iran sous les Sassanides, 2nd rev. ed. (Copenhagen, 1944). In an awkward matter it seemed best to approach at least basic uniformity. I have given some bibliographical help in the introductions to the two separate excursuses, and there is a general bibliography of works cited. As will be clear, I have used Oriental sources in translation. This procedure is more defensible than it might appear, firstly because what is at issue here is not points of expression or the formulation of a phrase, but simple factual information, and secondly because in many cases, although the translation used is a nineteenth-century one, there is no more modern text in the original language. If some of my references, particularly in the commentary on the second excursus, seem to be to old editions and equally old scholarly works, it is simply because there is a great need of solid modern work in this field. New work in recent years has naturally concentrated on the great Sassanian inscriptions of Shahpūhr I and Kartēr (only available in reliable transcriptions since the late 1950’s), as on the ever popular subjects of Sassanian art and Sassanian religion. In the field of Sassanian history and in the re-editing of texts there is great need of new work.

I include here, with a simple translation for convenience, the relevant portions of the standard edition of the History, by R. Keydell, CFHB, 2 (Berlin, 1967), by kind permission of the editor and of W. de Gruyter Ltd. Since, however, the pagination and line numbering have had to be altered, all references in the commentary to the portions of the text reprinted here are to the page and line numbers of the present work. References to parts of the History not reprinted here are given with page and line numbers from Keydell’s edition. The Bonn page numbers are given at the head of Keydell’s pages, and are added in the margin in my text.

This commentary was begun at Glasgow University and formed part of a doctoral thesis at the University of London. I am grateful to Professor R. Browning for setting my thoughts in this direction and to Professor A. Momigliano for constant friendly help and encouragement. I have had further help and advice from Professors R. N. Frye and R. Keydell. I was enabled to finish the work in the peaceful surroundings of the Dumbarton Oaks Library; I am grateful for this hospitality, and also to the Publications Committee for
making it possible for this commentary to appear in the Dumbarton Oaks Papers. Mrs. F. Bonajuto too deserves my gratitude for her care in dealing with this difficult manuscript. But I owe the greatest debt to my husband, Alan Cameron, for his constant help, his lasting patience, and above all for the stimulus of his ideas in our common interest in the later Roman Empire.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following should be particularly noted:

AJSL American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
BSOS Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
BZ Byzantinische Zeitschrift
CFHB Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae
CQ Classical Quarterly
CSCO Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSHB Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae
FGrHist F. Jacoby, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker, 5 vols. in 16 pts. (Berlin and Leiden, 1923–1958)
GCS Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller
HThR Harvard Theological Review
JA Journal Asiatique
JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society
JNES Journal of the Near Eastern Society
JRAS Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JRS Journal of Roman Studies
PG Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne
SBE The Sacred Books of the East
ZDMG Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

For further abbreviations, consult the Bibliography
I

AGATHIAS ON PERSIAN RELIGION AND CUSTOMS

INTRODUCTION

This excursus claims to be an account of the customs and religious beliefs of
the Sassanians at the time when Agathias was writing, the latter years of the
reign of Chosroes I. In fact it is a hotchpotch of genuine information, Greek
tradition, technical chronography, and pure speculation and interpretation
by Agathias himself. It is, incidentally, the passage where Agathias’ approach
to source material can best be tested, and where he comes off worst. Whereas
the second Persian excursus is on the whole a straight record of the Sassanian
Annals as reported to Agathias by Sergius, mixed only with material taken
from Procopius, the first is based on a far smaller proportion of hard informa-
tion, and was therefore the more vulnerable to “literary” ornamentation.

Agathias certainly thought that here, as well as in the second excursus, he
was using material from the Persian Royal Annals (cf. p. 88.196f.). It so happens,
however, that he is wrong on the very point for which he claims such reliable
evidence (note ad loc.), for what he says there about the birth of Ardasher
clearly comes from a popular source. And since the Annals hardly contained
a resume of the principles of Sassanian religion (for their content, see infra,
p. 115f.), he can have had no such documentary evidence for most of what he
says in this excursus. Probably his knowledge of Persian dualism and Persian
customs derives from what Sergius told him, in addition to his material from
the Annals. If so, then Agathias’ remarks are at best second-hand and at
worst subject to the misunderstanding of Sergius as well as Agathias’ own
reinterpretation. With this material he has mixed details from Procopius (see
on p. 82.101), stories from his own reading (see on p. 80.53f. for Semiramis
and Parysatis, and p. 86.162f. for Smerdis), chronographical material of a
highly technical kind (p. 84.109f.) and, finally, his own comments and deduc-
tions (cf. on pp. 80.53f., 86.162f.). There is no attempt, of course, to signal a
change of source; the task of working them out is left to us. Thus, pp. 78.1
to 80.53 come mainly from Sergius (i.e., are genuinely Oriental material), but
at p. 80.53 there starts a passage which is an amalgam of Ctesian story and
Agathian comment. Another piece of contemporary information (p. 80.65f.)
is sandwiched between the tale of Parysatis and a garbled account of early
Persian religion based on sources which we are in no position to check (notes ad
locc.). More information about Sassanian dualism follows (p. 82.82f.), and then
what is probably an echo of Procopius (p. 82.98f.). The middle of the excursus
(p. 84.109f.) is occupied by a long digression within a digression, on Persian
chronology, which has nothing to do with Agathias’ Oriental material. This
part presents its own problems, for it seems to tell us something about Alexan-
der Polyhistor’s Χαλδαῖκα. But they are not problems which concern an Orientalist. At the end of this section Agathias suddenly deserts his chronological source for a piece of genuine Persian information of great interest, which may indeed have come from the Annals (see on p. 86.150). Back to Sergius again for Agathias’ account of Ardashēr—which does not, despite his claim (p. 88.196f.), originate in the Annals. But it is typical of him that he ends the excursus (p. 88.213f.) with a synchronization that very probably comes from the same source as the admirable Seleucid date he gives elsewhere (p. 120.17), in conspicuous conflict with the garbled figures in p. 84.109f.

Despite this, he has some useful contemporary information to offer, once it has been isolated. He is the more valuable in that he does not seem to know of other standard accounts of Persian religion in Greek sources (notably Herodotus, the pseudo-Platonic Alcibiades, Plutarch’s De Iside, and Strabo, on all of which see R. C. Zaeher, The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism, [London, 1961]). At least his account is free of contamination from that quarter. It has indeed been argued (by G. Franke, Quaestiones Agathianae, Breslauer Abhandl., 47 [Breslau, 1914]) that his whole excursus is heavily influenced by imitation of Herodotus. This would, if true, be important. Herodotus’ account of Persian religion (I.131f.) gives rise to many difficulties of interpretation (Zaeher, op. cit., with bibliography). But, however the details are explained, the fact remains that it relates to the Achaemenid period. If Agathias could be shown to have used Herodotus, his value as a source for Sassanian religion would be seriously diminished. But, as I have argued in detail already (“Herodotus and Thucydides in Agathias,” BZ, 57 [1964], 33ff.), such dependence cannot be proved; indeed, there are strong reasons against it. The alleged borrowings themselves are unconvincing, the likeness being no more than would be inevitable through similarity of subject matter. In addition, however, Herodotus makes a sharp distinction between popular and Magian practice, which is unknown to Agathias; even Agathias must have noticed this difference, had he had this part of Herodotus’ work in mind. In fact, as I argue in the article cited above, Agathias’ linguistic borrowings from Herodotus are very limited in scope. He does know and use certain portions and certain stories from Herodotus, but that hardly proves that he must have gone to Herodotus for Persian religion. Further, when he comes to the chronological section, Agathias follows the Ctesian tradition which differed diametrically from the Herodotean. If he had used Herodotus in the way that is suggested, it must surely have struck him that Herodotus’ information on Persia was quite unlike what Sergius had told him about current practice; and since this excursus already contains so many examples of Agathias interpreting his Persian material in the light of remembered scraps from Greek sources, the argument from silence has some force. The truth is that Agathias’ hard information on Persian religion was all contemporary. He did not trouble to seek out the important Greek accounts and collate them with his own, but was content to rely for comparison on his own surmise and on well-known stories usually stemming from the ubiquitous Ctesian tradition.
Agathias thought that he was telling us how modern Persians (Πέρσαι τοῖς νῦν—p. 80.65) differed from the Persians of earlier times. There are two dividing lines, marking distinct changes in Persian religion—the teachings of Zoroaster (p. 80.65f.) and the religious reforms of Ardashēr (p. 86.160f.). We must however be careful not to attach much importance to the dating which Agathias attributes to the various features which he describes, for it is clear that he has only a hazy idea of Iranian religion before Zoroaster or of Zoroaster’s date itself and the placing of his teachings in their context (see notes on pp. 80.44f., 80.49f., 80.53f., and p. 97, infra). Very naturally, he attributes all the distinctive features of Sassanian religion to Zoroaster. That he did not have in the material from Sergius any distinct statement about the historical development of Iranian religion beyond personal details about Zoroaster is evident from the fact that his attempts to set Sassanian customs in perspective are based on his own deductions from non-Oriental evidence (e.g., the stories of Semiramis, Parysatis, and Smerdis and the detail, presumably derived from Sergius, that there were tombs in parts of the Persian Empire despite the Sassanian practice of exposure). We should therefore take as good evidence only those statements which are clearly referring to contemporary Sassanian practice, and not mistake Agathias’ deductions for more than they are.

Once the contemporary material is isolated, there is no reason why we should deny it credibility. Sergius had access through the priests to the Royal Annals; it is likely then that his information about religion is based on good sources too, for he will have known about it from those best qualified to give him information. It remains the impression of an outsider, no more than a generalized picture, but it is a contemporary picture which we can in the main accept. If I am right in tracing to Sergius the signs of Syrian-Christian bias in the second Persian excursus (infra, p. 113), then Sergius will not himself have been very sympathetic to Zoroastrianism; its theological subtleties as well as any discrepancies there might be between popular and official versions will have been lost on him. Agathias could not improve on what he heard from Sergius, for Sergius was his only source of authentic material. So, from the point of view of Iranian scholars it is regrettable that he did try to improve on it by the only way open to him, that of personal interpretation.

NOTE:

There exists a brief commentary on part of this passage in J. Bidez and F. Cumont, Les mages hellénisés (Paris, 1938), II, 84f., and a discussion in C. Clemen, Die griechischen und lateinischen Nachrichten über die persischen Religion, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten, Band 17, Heft 1 (Giessen, 1920), 199f. I have kept bibliographical references on individual points to a minimum; this is not the place for discussion of the features mentioned by Agathias in themselves. The whole subject of Zoroastrianism, moreover, is still so much a battleground for conflicting theories, and there is so much discrepancy between rival inter-
pretations that I have tried to confine myself so far as possible to the elucidation of what Agathias actually says rather than its interpretation. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, The Western Response to Zoroaster (Oxford, 1958), gives an exhaustive account of Western Zoroastrian studies. The same author’s La religion de l’Iran ancien, “Mana.” Introduction à l’histoire des religions, vol. I, 3 (Paris, 1962), provides a very useful general survey of Zoroastrian studies and problems, with full critical conspectus of modern works. There is also an excellent critical bibliography in Zaechner, The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism, 339ff.
I.

TEXT

113.11 B  II. 22. . . 6 τότε δὴ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Μεμερόνος οἱ ἄμφοι αὐτῶν ἀνελόμενοι καὶ ἐκτὸς ποὺ τοῦ δίστος ἀποκουμίσαυτες, οὕτω δὴ ἔρημον τε καὶ ἀκάλυπτον κατὰ τὸν πάτριον ἔθνετο νόμον, κυσὶ τε ἁμα καὶ τῶν ὄρνεων τοὺς ὀσά μιαρὰ καὶ νεκρόβωρα, παρανάλωμα γενησόμενον.

114 B  5 Ἡδέ γὰρ τὰ ἐς τὴν ταφήν οἱ Πέρσαι νομίζοντες, ταύτη τε τῶν σαρκῶν ἀφαιρομένων γυμνὰ δὴ τὰ ὀστά τύθεται σποράδην ἀνὰ τὰ πεδία περιέρριμένα. θῆκη γὰρ τινὶ ἐμβαλεῖν ἢ λάρνακει τοὺς θενεῶτας ἦ καὶ τῇ γῇ καταχωνύννα ήκίστα θέμις αὐτοῖς. 2 ἐπ᾽ ὧτῳ δὲ ἄν σώματι μὴ βάσταν καταπίπτασεν οἱ δρνεῖς ή οἱ κόνεις οὐκ αὐτίκα ἐπιφοίνοντες διασπαράζασιν, τοῦτον δὲ ἱγούνται τὸν ἀνθρωπὸν βέβηλον γεγονέναι τοὺς τρόπους καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν δείκνου καὶ βαραβρῶδη καὶ τῷ κάκῳ δαίμονι ἀνεμισμένη. τότε δὴ οὐν καὶ μάλλον οἱ ἐπιτηδεῖοι τὸν κείμενον ὀλοφύρωνται, ὡς τελέωτα τεθυκότα καὶ οὐ μετὸν αὐτῷ τῆς κρείττονος μοίρας. 3 ὅς δὲ ἄν τάχιστα καταβρωθεῖ, μακαρίζουσι τῆς εὐθυνομίας καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὑπεράγανται ὡς λίαν ἄριστην καὶ θεοείκειον καὶ ἐς τὸν ἄγαθον χώρον ἀναβησθομένην. 4 οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ καὶ ἀστημότεροι εἰ ποὺ ἐν στρατοπέδῳ τύχοις νόσῳ τινὶ δυσκολοτάτη πεπισμένοι, έμπνεοι ἔτι άγονται καὶ νηπίαις. ἐπειδὴ δὲ τής οὕτως ἐκπεθεῖ, ἄρτου τρύφου αὐτῷ καὶ οὐδορ καὶ βακτηρία ξυμπαράκειται καὶ μέχρι μὲν οἷος τε ἐπὶ τῆς ἐκοινότητις ἀπογεύεσθαι καὶ τὴν δυνάμεας αὐτῶς ὑπολείποιτο, δὴ ἀμύνεται ταύτη δὴ τῇ βακτηρίᾳ τὰ ἐπίστα τῶν ἔθνων καὶ ἀποσοβεῖ τοὺς διαιρομένας. 5 εἰ δὲ οὕτως μὲν πάμπαν διαφθάρει, νικῶ δὲ δώσω τά τῆς νόσου ὡς μηκέτι κυνείσαθι τῷ χείρε, τότε δὴ τὸν δείλαιον ἡμιβυῆτα καὶ ἀρτὶ ψυχορραγεῖν ἀρχόμενον κατεστίουσι καὶ προσαφαροῦνται τῇ ἐπιθιᾷ τοῦ ἱερῶς ἀν καὶ περιέσθει. 6 πολλοὶ γὰρ ἴδῃ ἀναρρωσθὲντες ἀπενόστησαν ἐς τὰ οἰκεῖα, καθάπερ ἐν σκηνῇ καὶ πραγμαδείᾳ ἐκ τῶν σκοτῶν πυλῶν ἀφιγμένοι, ἵσχυς τινὲς καὶ ἐνεργόχωρες καὶ οἷοι δεδίδεθεθαι τοῦ ἔντυν |χάνοντας. 7 εἰ δὲ τῆς οὕτως ἐπαινῆξει, ἐκτρέποντα ταύτω ἀποτρέψωσιν ὡς ἐναγάπασαν καὶ ὑπὸ τοὺς χονδιούς ἐτι τελοῦντα, καὶ οὐ πρότερον οἳ ἐφείσαν τὸν ξυνήθην μεταλαχεῖν διατημάτων, πρὸ ὑπὸ τῶν μέγαν ἀποκαθαρθεῖν τὸ μάσσα δήθεν τῷ ἔλπιτθεντος θανάτου καὶ οἶνον ἀνταπολάβοι τὸ οὐθεὶς βιῶναι. 8 καὶ εὐθηνὸν
At that time then the attendants of Mihr-Mihroe took up his body and removed it to a place outside the city and laid it there as it was, alone and uncovered according to their traditional custom, as refuse for dogs and horrible carrion birds.

For this is the Persian funeral practice: the flesh is removed in this way and the exposed bones rot, scattered at random all over the plain. They consider it irreligious to place the dead in a tomb or container, or even to bury them in the ground. And if the birds do not fly down upon a body quickly, or if the dogs do not come up at once and tear it to pieces, they hold that this man was profane in his ways and that his soul is wicked and doomed, given over to the power of evil. So then his relatives mourn all the more for the dead man, thinking him truly perished and with no share in the higher life. But if a body is devoured quickly they congratulate the dead man on his good fortune and marvel at his soul, believing that it is virtuous and godlike and destined for the dwelling of the power of good.

As for the mass of ordinary people, if they should be seized by a serious disease while in the army, they are carried out while still alive and breathing. When a man is exposed like this, he is supplied with a lump of bread, water, and a stick. As long as he is able to taste the food, and while some strength remains to him, he keeps off marauding animals with this stick and scares off the feasters. But if, before he is completely finished, the disease overcomes him to the extent that he can no longer move his hands, then they devour the poor wretch while he is still only half dead and only just beginning to give up the ghost, cutting off his hopes of possible survival. For there are many who have before now recovered their strength and returned home. They are like actors on the stage in a tragedy who have come from the “gates of darkness,” feeble and cadaverous, fit to terrify those they meet. If a man does return like this, everyone turns away from him and avoids him as though he is accursed and still in the service of the infernal powers. He is not allowed to resume his former way of life until the pollution, as it were, of his expected death has been exorcised by the Magi, and he can take in exchange, so to speak, his renewal of life. It is very clear that each
μὲν δὴ τῶν ἀνθρωπείων ἐθνῶν ὡς ἐκαστοί, εἰ γε ὅτω δὴ οὖν νόμῳ ἐκ πλείστου νεκρικότα εἰμιτεύσατει, τοῦτον δὲ ἄριστον ἠγούντα καὶ θεσπέσιον, καὶ εἰ ποι τι παρ’ ἐκείνων πράξεις, φευκτόν τε αὐτοῖς εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ καταγέλασον καὶ ὧτοις ἤδη καὶ ἀπιστεύσαι. ἐξεύρηται δὲ οὕτω αἴτια ταῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ λόγοι τῶν οἰκείων περί νομίμων ἄλλοι, τυχόν μὲν ἄλθεῖς, τυχόν δὲ καὶ ἐς τὸ πιθανότερον ἐκεκυκλημένοι. 9 καὶ οὐδέν οἷοι θαυμαστῶν, εἰ καὶ Πέρσαι τὰ παρὰ σφίσιν αὐτοὺς ἔθη αἰτιολογούντες ὀμείνοις πειράζονται τῶν ἔκασταχοῦ ἀποφαίνειν· ἐκείνο δὲ καὶ λίαν θαυμάσαμεν ἄρα, ὅτι δὴ οἱ παλαισται τῆς χώρας οἰκήτεροι, εἰς δ’ ἂν οὖτις Ασσύριοι τε καὶ Χαλδαῖοι καὶ Μηδοὶ, ἄλλ’ ἐκεῖνοι γε οὐ ταῦτα ἐδόκει. 10 καὶ γὰρ ἁμφὸ τὴν τὸλπιν καὶ ἀνὰ τὴν Βαβυλωνίαν χώραν καὶ πρὸς γε ἐν τῇ Μηδικῇ τύμβου τε καὶ θῆκας τῶν πολέων ἐπιβαλόντων ἤθρωτο, οὐκ ὄλλον τινὰ ἢ τὸν ἡμέτερον ἀποσώζουσα τρόπον, καὶ εἶτε | σώματα εἶτε κοίνας ἢ τὸ κρυπτόμενον, ὡς δὲ ἐκεῖνον κατὰ τὸν παρ’ Ἑλλησ τὸν νομὸν πυρποληθέντων, οὐδὰμος ὄμοια γε ταῦτα τοῖς νῦν γιγνομένοις ἐπιγχαίνον ὄντα.

24. Οὐκοῦν ἐκεῖνοι γε ὡδε ἐγγίνοσκον οὔτε πετὶ τὰς ταφὰς, οὐ μὲν οὖν ἄλλη οὔτε ἐς τὴν τῆς εὐνόης παρανομία ὅπως οἱ οὐν ἀκολασταθούσιν, οὐ μόνον ἀδελφαίς τε καὶ ἀδελφίδας ἀνεδήπον, μην γεγυμῆνοι, ἀλλὰ πατέρες τε θυγατράζατο καὶ τὸ δὴ πάντων ἀνοσίωτέρον, ὁ νόμοι γε καὶ φύσις, νοὸι ταῖς ποιούσις. ὃς γὰρ αὐτοῖς καὶ ταύτῳ κεκαινοτομηται, ἐκεῖθεν ἄν της σαφέστατα διαγνοή. 2 λέγεται γὰρ ποτε Σεμίραμιν την παύν την 'Ασσυρίας εἰς τούτο ἅγασισ ἠγιάσθη, ὥς Νινὺς τὸ θαύμα ἐπελήσαι ξυνελθὲν ἐς ταῦτα καὶ ἦδη πειράζον τὸν ναον. 3 τὸν δὲ ἀπανήμισθαι καὶ χαλεπῆς καὶ τελευτῶντα, ἐπειδὴ αὐτὴν ἔφορα σφαδάζουσαν καὶ ἐγκεκριμένην, ἀποκτείνα την μητέρα καὶ τὸ δὲ ὅγος ἄντ’ ἐκείνου ἐλέσθαι. καίτοι εἰ νόμο ταῦτα ἐφέστο, οὐκ δὲν, οἷαμαι, ὁ Νινὺς ἐς τὸ ὁμὸτήτος ἔσται. 4 καὶ τι διὲ τὰ λῖαι παλαιάτα λέγειν; ὁλίγῳ γὰρ ἐπιστρεπτὸς τῶν Μακεδονίων καὶ τῆς τοῦ Περσῶν καταλύσεως ἀρραβώνην φασὶ τὸν Δαρείου Παρυσάτιδος τῆς μητρὸς παραπλησία τῇ Σεμίραμὶν παθοῦσης καὶ ἐγγενέσθαι οἱ λειμένης ἀποκτείναι μὲν αὐτὴν ἠκοστά, ἐκάλυπται δὲ ὁμος ἐν ὀργῇ καὶ ἀποσείσασθαι, ὥς οὐκ ὁσιὸν δὲν τοῦτο γε οὐδὲ πάτριοι οὔτε οὗτος ὁ βίος ἐνειθεσμόνοι. 5 Πέρσαι δὲ τοῖς νῦν τὰ μὲν πρότερα ἔθη σχεδὸν τι ἐπανά παρατέρεται ἄμελει καὶ ἀνατρεπται, ἀλλοίους δὲ τίσι καὶ οἷον νεοσθενείοις χρῶνται νομίμοις, ἐκ τῶν Ζωράστρων τοῦ 'Οραμαθεός διδαγμάτων κατακατάθεντες. 6 οὖτος δὲ ὁ Ζωράστρος ἦτοι Ζαράβδης (διττή γὰρ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἡ ἐπωνυμία) ὀπτηκα καὶ τῶν ἀρχην καὶ τοῖς νομοῖς ἔθετο, οὐκ ἔνεστι σαφῶς διαγνω-
individual nation considers any practice to which it is accustomed by long usage to be admirable and hallowed, and if a transgression is committed against it, it seems dreadful and ridiculous and even incredible. Nonetheless, men have discovered various explanations and accounts of their own individual customs, sometimes true, sometimes actually designed with an eye to probability. I do not think it surprising if the Persians also try to show that their customs are superior to those anywhere else, when they are tracing the explanations for them. But this does surprise me—the most ancient inhabitants of the land (the Assyrians and Chaldaeans and Medes) did not hold the same views. For around Nineveh and Babylonia, and in Media too, tombs and graves were set up for the dead in ancient times, following our custom exactly. Whether corpses or ashes were buried there (in the latter case they would have been following the Greek practice of cremation), it was still quite different from contemporary practice.

Those early inhabitants of the place did not hold the beliefs held today, whether in the matter of funeral rites or in the lawless marriage custom. The Persians of today have an abominable practice—not only do they shamelessly sleep with their sisters and nieces, but even fathers with daughters, and worst of all, O law and nature! sons with their mothers. That this too is an innovation can be clearly seen from the following: it is said that the famous Semiramis, the Assyrian, was driven to such a pitch of wantonness as to desire intercourse with her son Ninyas, and actually approached the young man. He angrily refused, and finally, when he saw that she was excited and pressing him, he killed his mother, preferring this pollution to the other. Yet if this had been allowed by law, it seems to me that Ninyas would never have come to such violence. What need to cite examples from such ancient times? Not long before the Macedonians and the fall of the Persians, they say that Artaxerxes the son of Darius was in the same position, for his mother Parysatis had the same passion as Semiramis and wanted to sleep with him. He did not kill her, but he recoiled in anger and pushed her away, as though this was neither righteous nor customary nor natural in human life. But the Persians of today neglect and spurn nearly all their earlier practices, and have adopted new ways which might be described as bastard, seduced by the teachings of Zoroaster the son of Horomades. When this Zoroaster or Zarades (for he is called by two names) first flourished and made his laws is impossible to discover with
ναι. Πέρσαι δὲ αὐτῶν οἱ νῦν ἐπὶ Ὄστάσπεω, οὗτοι δὲ τι ὁπλῶς, φασὶ
γεγονέναι, ὡς Λίαν ἀμφιγυνεῖσθαι καὶ οὐκ ἔλεινα μαθεῖν, πότερον ὁ Δαρείου
πατὴρ ἡτέ καὶ ἄλλος οὗτος ὑπήρχεν Ὅστάσπης. 7 ἦρ’ ὅτε δ’ ἂν
καὶ ἤνθησε χρόνον, ὑψηλήτης αὐτοῖς ἔκεισθαι καὶ καθηγοῦν τῆς μαγικῆς
γέγονεν ἁγιοτείας, καὶ αὐτάς δὴ τὰς προτέρας ἱερουργίας ἄμεισα
παμμιγής τινας καὶ ποικίλας ἐνέθηκε δόξας. 8 τὸ μὲν γὰρ παλαιὸν
Δία τε καὶ Κρόνου καὶ τοῦτος δὴ ἀπαντάς τοὺς παρ’ Ἑλληνας βρυλομέ-
νους ἐτίμων θεοὺς, πλὴν γε ὅτι δὴ αὐτῶς ἡ προσηγορία οὐκ ὁμολογεῖτο
ὑπὸ Δία τοῦ νῦν Ἀναβάτηδα τὴν Ἀποφεύγει καὶ ἄλλως τοὺς ἄλλους ἐκάλουν, ὡς που Βηρωσσίων
τε τὸ παλαιὸν καὶ Ὀθινικολεί καὶ Σιμάκιν, τοῖς τὰ ἀρχαῖα ἄτακτὰ τῶν
Ἀσσυρίων τε καὶ Ἡλίδων ἀναγγαρασμένης, ἑστόρηται. 9 νῦν δὲ ὡς
τὰ πολλὰ τοῖς καλουμένοις Μανιχαίοις ἐξαίρονται, ἐξ ὅσον δυὸ τὰς
πρώτας ἤγειραν ἄρχας καὶ τὴν μὲν ἄγαθην τοὺς ἄμα καὶ τὰ κάλλιστα
τῶν δυνάμεων ἀποκυψάσαν, ἐναντίως δὲ κατ’ ἄμφοι ἔχουσαν τὴν ἑτέραν
ἀρχήν ταῦτα ἐτέρας ἀρχήν θεαμάτων καὶ τὴν σφῶνας ἀρχήν τῶν
καλύτερων. τὸν μὲν γὰρ ἄγαθον εἰπτε θεοῦ εἴπε δημιουργὸν Ὠρμισδάττην ἀπο-
καλοῦσιν, Ἀριμάννης δὲ ὅνομα τῷ κακίστῳ καὶ ἀληθίρῳ. 10 ἐξήρην τὴν
πανόμοια μείζων τὴν τῶν κακῶν λειμαράν τοὺς ἀντικατέστησεν ἐκτελοῦσιν, ἐν ἢ τῶν
τε ἐρτετῶν πλεῖστα καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅποσα ἄγρια καὶ ἐρημονόμα
κατακτεῖντες πολλὰς μάχικας προσάγουσιν ὅπερ ἐξ ἐτείς ἐφεσας
ταύτη γὰρ οὖσαν τῷ μὲν ἄγαθος κατεβαίνοντας διαπερισσάμενος, ἀμάλτη
καὶ λαμαίνεσθαι τοῦ Ἀριμάννην. 11 γεραίρουσι δὲ ὡς τὰ μάλιστα τὸ
ῦδερ, ὡς μήδε τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶς ἐναπονεῖσθαι μὴ ἄλλους ἐπιθυγά-
νειν, δ’ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐκατὶ καὶ τῆς τῶν φυτῶν ἐπιμελείας.

25. Πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ ἄλλους θεοὺς ὅνυμαζοσκεί τούτοις τοῖς Ἐλληνικοῖς
θυσίαις δὲ τὰ πρῶτα καὶ ἀφαγνισμοῖς καὶ μαντείαις καὶ τοῖς Ἐλληνικοῖς
τὸ δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς τίμιον τὸν θεὸ δοκεῖ καὶ ἀγιώτατον τὸν
καὶ τοῖς ὅσιοις τοῖς ἑορταῖς τοῖς ἐποιεῖται καὶ τῶν ἐσομένων σοφῶν ἀναπηδάν. 2 τούτῳ δὲ, ὡς οὖν, ποίμινον ἢ παρά Χαλδαίων ἢ ἡ ἐγέρσαι τοῦ ἀνελεξαντο γένους’ ὡς
γὰρ καὶ τὰς ἄλλους ζωμοῖς. 2 δὲ πάσα οὖν ἄδεις ἢ δόξα, ἢ πλείστους
ὅσαν ἐναντίον ἤγειραν, ὡς σωσικτοῖς ἐξογκειοῦσα, καὶ μοι τούτῳ οὖν
ἀπὸ τοῦ πολλοῦ δοκεῖ γεγεννήθησαί. 3 ἄλλην γὰρ οὕτως πολλοῖς οὐκ
οἶδα ἢ πλείστας χρόνος τὸν καὶ σχῆμας μεταβαλόμενον καὶ τοῦτο
μένει ἐπὶ πλείστους ὅσον διασχίζοσαν, ἀλλὰ μυρίων ἐναντίον ἄλλως
ἐπικράτειάν διεξάμεθν’ τῷ τοῖς ἀρα καὶ ἑκάστοις πολλοῖς ἴδεῖσαν τὸ καὶ
certainty. The Persians of today say that he was born in the
time of Hystaspes, without further qualification, so that it is
very obscure and impossible to tell whether this Hystaspes
was the father of Darius or someone else. But at whatever
time he flourished, he was their teacher and guide in the rites
of the Magi; he replaced their original worship by complex
and elaborate doctrines.

In ancient times they worshipped Zeus and Cronos and all
the familiar gods acknowledged by pagans, except that they
did not use the same names. They called Zeus Bel, say, and
Heracles Sandes, and Aphrodite Anaitis, and the rest by
other names, as is somewhere recorded by Berossus the Baby-
onian and Athenocles and Simacus, who wrote the ancient
history of the Assyrians and Medes. But now they resemble
in most respects the so-called Manichaeans, insofar as they
hold that the first principles are two, one good, the source of
all that is best in creation, the other the opposite in both
respects. They give them barbarian names in their own
language. The good spirit or creator they call Hormisdates,
and Arimanes is the name of the bad, destructive one. Their
greatest festival is that called the "Removal of Evil," when
they kill large numbers of serpents and other wild and desert-
living creatures and bring them to the Magi as though as a
sign of piety. In this way they believe that they are doing
what pleases the good spirit, while vexing and offending
Arimanes. They honor water greatly, to the extent that
they neither wash their faces in it nor touch it in any other
way except for drinking and the nurture of crops.

They have names for and worship many other gods too. 118.17 B
They practice sacrifice and purification and divination. Fire
they hold to be worthy of reverence and very holy, and for
this reason the Magi keep it unquenched in certain holy
buildings, set apart, and look toward it while performing
their secret rites and inquiring about the future. This practice
they derived I believe from the Chaldaeans or from some
other people, for it does not accord with the rest. In this way
it seems that their faith, to which so many different peoples
have contributed, has become very complicated. This seems
very understandable. I do not know of any other state which
has assumed so many forms and shapes, not able to remain
for long in the same form but suffering the domination of
countless different peoples at different times. So it is very
natural that it should preserve the signs of so many types
and customs.
νόμων γνωρίσματα σύζει. 4 πράγματι μὲν γὰρ ὄν ἀκοῇ ἶσμεν Ἀσσυρίοις λέγονται ἀπασαν τὴν Ἀσίαν χειρώσασθαι πλὴν Ἰνδῶν τῶν ὑπὲρ Γάγγην ποταμοῦ Ἰρμύμενον. Νῦνός τε πρότερον φαίνεται καὶ βασιλείαν ἐνταύθα βεβαιάν καταστησάμενος Σεβίραμις τε αὐτῷ ἔκειν καὶ ἔξης ἀπαντῆς οἱ τούτων ἀπόγονοι μέχρι καὶ οἱ Βελεόντων τὸν Δερκετάδου. 5 ἐς τούτων γὰρ δὴ τὸν Βελεόντων τῆς τοῦ Σεβίραμειον φύλου διαδοχῆς παυσαμένης Βελτᾶραν τὶς δύνα, φυτουργὸς ἄνηρ καὶ τῶν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείσι κήπων μελεδωνός καὶ ἐπιστάτης, ἐκαρτόσατο παραλόγως τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ τῷ οἰκείῳ ἐνεφύτευσε γένεις, ὡς που Βίωνι γέγραπται καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρω τῷ Πολυστορί, ἐως ἐς Σαρδανάπαλλον, ὡς ἐκεῖνοι φαιντὶς, τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀπομαραθνεῖσις Ἀρβάκης ὁ Μῆδος καὶ Βελεότος ὁ Βαβυλώνιος ἀφήρηται αὐτῷ τοὺς Ἀσσυρίους, καθελόντες τὸν βασιλέα, καὶ ἐς τὸ Μηδικὸν μετατήθησαν ξένος, ἐς τε καὶ τριακοσίων ἥδε πρὸς τοὺς χιλίοις καὶ ἕλγον πελεόνων ἐυτῶν παραχηκότων, ἐξ οὐ τὰ πρῶτα ὁ Νῦνος τῶν ἅκεινα κατέσχε πραγμάτων. οὕτω γὰρ Κτησία τῷ Κινδιῶ τοῦ χρόνου ἀναγράφθηκε καὶ Διόδωρος ἤξυφησεν ὁ Σικελώτης. 6 Μῆδοι τοῖς αὐθεὶς ἐκράτουν, καὶ ἀπαντὰ τοῖς ἑκείνων ἐτάττητο νόμως. ἔτη δὲ καὶ τοῦτων ἐν τῇ ἁρχῇ διανυσάντων ὡμοῖοι ἤ τριακόσια Κύρος ὁ Καμβίσου τῶν Ἀστυάγην καταπολεμήσας ἑπὶ Πέρσας τῆς ἡγεμονίας μετατίθημεν. πῶς δὲ οὐκ ἦμελλεν, Πέρσης τε ὑπὸ αὐτὸς Ἰσαγενίης καὶ ἀμα χαλεπατίους τοῖς Μῆδοις διά τὰς ἔτους Ἀστυάγει παρατάξεις; 7 κρατήσασες δὲ καὶ οἱ Περσαικοὶ βασιλεῖς ὀκτώ τε καὶ ἔκοσι καὶ διακόσια ἐτής, καὶ μέντοι καὶ ή τούτων ἁρχῇ τελεώτατα διερρύθη, στρατῷ ἐπηλύθη καὶ βασιλεὶ ἄλλοτρῷ καταστέθη. 8 Ἀλεξάνδρος γὰρ ὁ Φιλίττου Δαρείου ἄποκτεινας τὸν Ἀρασίμου τὸν βασιλέα καὶ ἀπασαν τὴν Περσίδα παραστηθεῖσας ἐς Μακεδονίαν τὰ πράγματα | μετέθηκε πολιτείαν. οὕτω γὰρ ἦν μεγαλογυρίδος ἐς τὰ μάλιστα καὶ ἀμαχώτατος, ὡς, ἐπειδὴ αὐτῶν καὶ ἀποβιβώναι ζυνέθη, δὲμοι τοὺς ἑκείνου διαδόχους, Μακεδόνας γε δῆτας, κατασχεῖν ἐπὶ πλείστῳ τῆς ἀλλοδαπῆς καὶ ἰδίειας καὶ ἐπὶ μεγάνυσῳ ἀρίσκθαι. καὶ οὐκαὶ ἄχρι καὶ ἐς τάδε τοῦ καιροῦ ἤχρων ἐν καὶ ἐπικράτους τῷ τοῦ ὀικιστοῦ κρατυσώμενου δῇ, ἐν μὴ ἐς ἄλληλον στασιάσαστες καὶ θαμά κατὰ τέ σφεν ἀκείτω καὶ πρὸς Ὀμαιόν παρασταθέμενοι τοῦ πλείσου ἔκατε διέλυσαν τὰς οἰκείας δυνάμεις καὶ οὐκάτε ἀνάλωτοι τοῖς πέλας ἐπόκοι. 9 ποιγάρτου ἄρξαντος οὐ λιᾶ οἰκάτον χρόνον τῶν Μῆδων, ὅτι μὴ ἐπέτα ἔστει δέοντα (πειστέον γὰρ κανταύθα τῷ Πολυστορί), ἐς τοσοῦτο δὴ οὖν κρατήσαστε, Παρθεναῖοι γε αὐτοῦς, ἔθνους κατηκοῦν καὶ ἡκίστα ἐν τῷ πρὸ τοῦ ὀνομαστάτην, παρελύσαν τῆς ἁρχῆς τοὺς Μακεδόνας. 10 καὶ εἶτα ἔκεινοι τῶν ἄλλων πλὴν Ἀλγητοῦ ἡγούμενος, Ἀρσακοῦ μὲν πρότερον τῆς ἀποστάσεως ἀρχαμένου, ὡς καὶ Ἀρσακίδος τοῦς μετ’ αὐτῶν ὀνομάζεσθαι, Μιθριδάτου δὲ οὐ πολλῷ ὤστερον ἐς μέγα κιλεός τὸ Παρθεναῖον δύνα ἐξενεγκόντος.
First among those about whom we know, the Assyrians are said to have subdued all Asia except for the Indian peoples living beyond the River Ganges. Ninus was, it seems, the first to establish a settled kingdom hereabout, and after him Semiramis, and in turn all their descendants even as far as Beleus the son of Derketades. Semiramis' line ended at this Beleus, when a certain Beletaras, a gardener who was keeper and head of the palace gardens, unaccountably harvested the kingdom and planted it in his own family, as is recorded by Bion and Alexander Polyhisor. The dynasty died out, as they tell us, with Sardanapallus, when Arbaces the Mede and Belesys the Babylonian took the kingdom from the Assyrians after killing the king, and transferred it to the Median people, 1306 years having passed or perhaps a little more since Ninus first gained control of affairs there. These are the figures of Ctesias the Cnidian, and Diodorus the Sicilian agrees with him. So the Medes ruled in their turn and everything was organized according to their laws. When they had ruled for no less than three hundred years Cyrus the son of Cambyses made war on Astyages and transferred the power to the Persians. Naturally enough, for he was Persian himself by birth, and was angry with the Medes besides, because of their campaigns with Astyages. The Persian kings ruled for 228 years themselves, yet their power too collapsed utterly, put down by a foreign army and a strange king. For Alexander the son of Philip killed Darius the son of Arsames, the king, and gained control of all Persia, on which he turned it over to Macedonian rule. He was so exceptionally great and invincible that after his own death his heirs, who were Macedonians, nonetheless got control of a very large area of alien and foreign territory and became exceedingly powerful. I believe they would have ruled it and controlled it to this day, on the strength of the reputation of their founder, had they not quarrelled among themselves and constantly made war against each other and against Rome in greed for gain, and dissipated their own power and destroyed their appearance of invincibility. At any rate, they ruled for not much less time than the Medes, only seven years less (for here too we must follow Polyhisor), and after this length of time the Parthians, a subject people of no particular fame before this, displaced the Macedonians from their kingdom. After this they ruled the whole area except for Egypt. Arsaces began the revolt, so that his descendants were called Arsacids, and not long afterwards Mithridates brought the Parthian name to great glory.
26. Ἐβδομήκοντα δὲ ἔτων ἦδη ἐπὶ διακοσίοις παραχνηκότων ἀπὸ Ἄρσακου τοῦ προτέρου ἐξ Ἀρτάβανου τὸν ἐσχάτον βασιλέα, ἦνικα τὰ Ῥωμαίων πράγματα ὑπὸ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ τῷ Μαμαιᾷ παιδὶ ἐπέτάχθην, κατ’ ἐκείνῳ δὴ τοῦ καίρου τὸ Χοσρόου τοῦ καθ’ ἡμᾶς βασιλεύειν ἦργατο ἱένος ἢ τε μέχρι καὶ νῦν παρὰ Πέρσαις κατέχουσα πολιτεία ἐν τοῖς ἄρχην ἐλπίδε καὶ οἷον κατάστασιν πρῶτην. 2 Ἀρταξάρης γὰρ τις τοῦνομα, Πέρσης ἁνήρ, ἄνδρας μὲν τὰ πρῶτα καὶ ἄφαινόστατος, ἄλλους δὲ μεγαλουργὸς καὶ δραστήριος καὶ δεινὸς κινήσας τὰ καθεστῶτα, ἵππονόματα ἄγειρας καὶ ἐπιθέμενος Ἀρτάβανον μὲν ἀναίρει τὸν βασιλέα, ἑαυτῷ δὲ περιθές τὴν κίδαρν καὶ τὴν Παρθικὴν δύναμιν καταλύσας οὖθε τοῖς Πέρσαις τὴν σφετέραν ἀνενέκαστο βασιλεῖαν. 3 ἦν δὲ γε οὕτος τῇ μαγικῇ κάτοχος ἱεροῦργια καὶ οὕτουργὸς τῶν ἀπορρήτων. ὑπὸ τούτοις καὶ τὸ μαγικὸν φῶναν ἑγκρατεῖς εἰς ἐκείνου γέγονε καὶ ἀγέρωχον, ὃν μὲν ἦδη καὶ πρότερον καὶ ἐκ παλαιοῦ τῆν ἐπικήλην ἀποσάλον, οὕτω δὲ ἐς τὸν τιμῆς τε καὶ παραρρήσιας ἡμέρῃς, ἀλλ’ ὅποιον ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν τέλει ἤστην ἢ καὶ περιορίσθαι. 4 δήλοι δὲ οὐ γὰρ ἐν ὅι ἀμφὶ Δαρεῖον Πέρσαι Σαμερίδιοι πάλαι τοῦ μάγου μετὰ Καμβύσην τὸν Κύρου τὴν βασιλείαν ὑποσυλλήσατον συμφόρον ἐποιοῦντο τὸ γεγενημένον καὶ αὐτὸν τε τὸν Σεμὲρδιν ἀπέκτειναν καὶ πολλοὺς τῶν δειοί θυγατέριες ἰδέας, ἐτύγχανον ὑπότε, ὡς οὐκ ἔζον τοῖς μάγοις τῷ βασιλεύοντος ἀναφερόμεθα καὶ Περσαίοις δέννοις, ὅποιος μὲν δέννοις ἵππον μείναι εἰς οἱ φόνοι, μάλλον μὲν οὖν καὶ μείνοις ἰδίοις μνήμης, διότι ἦδη τὴν στάσιν ἐκείνην Μαγοφώνια ἔστη καὶ θυσίας ἐπιτελεῖσθαι χρηστηρίους. 5 νῦν δὲ τιμῶσιν αὐτοὺς ἀπαντεῖς καὶ υπεράγαγον, καὶ τὰ τε κοινὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς βουλαῖς καὶ προαγορεύσῃς διατάττεται καὶ ἦδη ἐκάστῳ τῶν συμβαλλόντων τῆς ἀἰσχρώντος ἐφισταται διασκοποῦντες, τὰ ποιοῦμενα καὶ ἐπικρίνουσας, καὶ οὕτως ἐπικρινόντος, τούτων όποῖοι παρὰ Πέρσαις δόξειν ἐν ἔννομον τε εἶναι καὶ δίκαιον, δὲ γε μὴ ὑπὸ μάγου ἐμπεπεθεῖν.

27. Λέγεται δὲ τὴν τοῦ Ἀρταξάρου μητέρα Παβέκὼ τινὶ ξυνωχηκέναι, παντόπασι μὲν ἀσθενότατον καὶ σκυτοτόμον τὴν τέχνην, τίς δὲ τῶν ἀστερῶν πορείας δασμοκεκατάτω καὶ ὁμιλίας τὸ εὐσεβείαν διακοσμοῦσα. 2 ἄνδρα δὲ στρατιώτην Σάσανον ὅνομα διὰ τῆς Καδουσαίων, οὕτως ξυνωχθέν, πορευομένων χῶρας ἐπιθεωροῦν τῇ Παβέκῳ καὶ ἐς τὸ ἔκεινον δοματίου καταχθήναι. 3 τὸν δὲ ὅτι δὴ ὅνων τρόπων, ὃτε, οἴμαι, μάν, ἐπηγνώοντα ὡς ἂ τὸν ξένου γονὴ ἀριστή τε ἔσται καὶ ἀρίστῆλας καὶ ἐπὶ μέγα εὐδαιμονίας χωρῆσαι, ἀλλὰς μὲν καὶ \"ολοφύρεσθαι,
Two-hundred and seventy years passed from Arsaces the first to Artabanus the last king, at the time when Rome was under the rule of Alexander the son of Mammaea; at that time the dynasty of Chosroes, of our own day, began, and the government which prevails among the Persians to this day took its beginning and, as it were, its foundation at that time. A certain Persian called Artaxares, at first obscure and undistinguished, but able and energetic all the same, and good at instigating disturbance, gathered together a band of fellow conspirators and made an attack, killing the King, Artabanus. He assumed the kidaris himself and by putting an end to Parthian rule he restored to the Persians their own kingdom. This man was bound by the rites of the Magi, and a practitioner of the secrets. So it was that the tribe of the Magi also grew powerful and lordly as a result of him. It had indeed existed before, and its name was very ancient, but it had never been so honored and enjoyed so much freedom. It had sometimes actually been spurned by those in power. This is clear, for otherwise, when in ancient times Smerdis the Magus seized the throne after Cambyses the son of Cyrus, the Persians around Darius would not have thought ill of it, nor would they have killed Smerdis himself and many of those who were of his party on the grounds that it was not lawful for Magi to give themselves airs and sit on the royal throne. But as it was, the murders did not seem to them to be wicked—on the contrary, they actually thought they deserved greater commemoration, for they made that uprising into a festival called "The Killing of the Magi," with performances of thanksgiving sacrifices. Now they all honor them and admire them, and public affairs are conducted at their wish and instigation. In private affairs too they preside over and oversee the proceedings when anyone makes an agreement or conducts a suit, and nothing whatever is held to be lawful or right among the Persians unless it is ratified by a Magus.

It is said that Artaxares' mother was married to a certain Pabak, who was quite obscure, a leather worker by trade, but very learned in astrology and easily able to discern the future. It so happened that a soldier called Sasanus who was travelling through the land of the Cadusaei was given hospitality by Pabak and lodged in his house. The latter recognized somehow, in his capacity as a seer I presume, that the offspring of his guest would be splendid and famous and would reach great good fortune. He was disappointed and upset...
ότι δὴ αὐτῷ οὗτοι θυγάτηρ ὑπῆρ ὦντε ἄδελφῃ, οὐ μὲν οὖν οὐδὲ ἄλλο τι γύναιον ὃς ἔγγυτοτα δεξιομένου. τέλος δὲ δυνατάδειναι οὐ τὴν γαμή-
την καὶ τῆς εὔνης ἐπικορῆσαι, ὑπεριδόντα μᾶλα γενέσεως τοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς παραστίκα λύβης τε καὶ ἀτιμίας τῆς μέλλουσαν τούχην ἄνταλ-
λαξάμενον. 4 οὕτως τε γίνεται τὸν Ἀρταξάρην τραφῆται μὲν ὑπὸ τῷ Παβέκῳ, ἐπεὶ δὲ νεανίς γενέσεως καρπωρώτατα τής βασιλεύς κατέσχεν,
ἐριν εὐθὺς καὶ νείκος ἡξαίτον ἀναφαγοῦν Σασάνω τε καὶ Παβέκῳ ἀναφα-
γήσαι. ἐκάτερον γὰρ ἐθέλειν πρὸς αὐτοῦ τόν παίδα ἐπιστομαξαίσθαι. 5 μόλις δὲ ἐμφέω ἐμπρῆσαι, ἐφ’ ὃ ἔδήτα ὑλον μὲν αὐτὸν Παβέκου καλε-
θαί, εκ σπέρματος δὲ ὄδος Σασάνου τεχθέντα. οὕτως μὲν τὸν Ἀρταξάρην
γενεαλογοῦντες οἱ Πέρσαι ὁληθῆ ταύτα φαινει καθεστάναι, ὡς καὶ ἐν ταῖς
βασιλείοις διήθεραι ἀναγεγραμμένα. 6 ἔγον δὲ ἀπάντων τῶν ἐφεξῆς
ἀπογόνων, οὐσοὶ δὴ τήν ἀρχήν διεδέσσαντο, τὰ το οὐκόματα ὁλίγορ ὑστερον
φράσας καὶ πρὸς γε ὑπόσον ἕκαστος ἐκπράττετο χρόνων· καίτοι ἀπαιτεῖ τοῖς
μέχρι νῦν χρονογράφοις παρεῖται καὶ οὐ περὶ πλείστον γεγένεται τὰ
τοιαύτα διερευνησάθασθαι. 7 ἄλλα τοὺς μὲν Ἑρμαῖων βασιλεῖς ἀτό
Ῥομύλου τυχόν καὶ ἔτι πρότερον ἄπο Αἰνείου τοῦ Ἀγγλίου ἀρχής ἐπερ
μέχρις Ἀναστασίου τε καὶ Ἰουστίνου τοῦ πρεσβύτου ἀπαριθμοῦται,
τοὺς δὲ παρὰ Πέρσας (φημὶ δὲ τούτους ἐκείνους, ὁπότα δὴ μετὰ τήν
125 B 205 Παρθιανοὶ κατάλυσιν ἐποχὸν βεβασίλευσεν τότες) οὐκέτι ὄρεισ ἀντι-
θέτες τοὺς χρόνους διεκρινήσαστο, δεόν οὗτοι ποιεῖν. 8 ἔμελ δὲ τὸ
ἀκρίβεις καὶ τούτων πέρι ἀναλέκτα εἰκὸς τῶν παρὰ σφιάν ἐγγεγραμμέ-
νων, καὶ οἴμαι τῇ παρούσῃ δεξιομενή μᾶλα προσήκειν ἀπάντων ἐπι-
μνημήναι. καὶ τοῖνυ προϊόν ἐπιμνησίας, ὡς καὶ δὲν ἐνθεῖναι, εἰ καὶ
ὀνομάτων πολλῶν καὶ τούτων βαρβαρικῶν οὕτω δὴ τῇ ψιλῆς κατολ-
γούσας ποιεῖσθαι δεῖ, καὶ ταύτα ἐνών οὑδὲν δὲ τὴν ἀξιαφήγητον ἐδρασ-
σένων. 9 τοιαύτων δὲ μόνων πρὸς τὸ παρὸν ἐπιτοίμαι ἐκ τοῦ σαρκῶς ὑπὸ
ἐκατε καὶ ἐπὶ πλείστα χρῆσιμοι, ὡς ἐννέα τε καὶ δέκα καὶ πρὸς τῇ προ-
σομοι ἔνιαστοι τελευτῶσιν ἐς τὸ πέμπτον τε καὶ εἰκοστὸν ἔτος τῆς Ἡθόπο-
τούτου βασιλείας, καθ’ ὑπὸ τὴν χρόνον ὑπὸ τῆς τῇ Κολχίδα χώρᾳ πόλεις
διεφέροντο καὶ τὸν Μερεμήνην ἀποβιοῦντο δεξιομενῆς. διήνυστο δὲ ἔρα
τῷ τότε Ἰουστινιανῷ βασιλεῖ ὅκτω τε καὶ ἐκοστον ἔτη ὑπὸ βασιλεῖς κατούντε.
that he had no daughter or sister or any other close female relative. But finally he yielded his own wife to him and gave up his marriage bed, nobly enduring the shame and preferring the future good fortune to the present disgrace and dishonor. And so Artaxares was born, and was reared by Pabak. But when he grew up and boldly seized the throne, a bitter quarrel and dispute immediately broke out between Sasanus and Pabak. Each of them wanted him to be called his son. Finally and with difficulty they agreed that he should be called the son of Pabak, though born from the seed of Sasanus. This is the genealogy of Artaxares given by the Persians, and they say it is true since it is actually recorded in the Royal Archives. In a later passage I will give the names of all his descendants in turn who inherited the throne and, in addition, how long each reigned. This has been neglected by all chronographers to date—they have not thought it important to inquire into it. Yet they count up the Roman kings from Romulus, say, and still further back, from Aeneas the son of Anchises as far as Anastasius and Justin the First. But as for the Persian kings (I mean by these, those who have reigned after the fall of the Parthians), they have not so far compared the chronology and inquired into them in the same way, even though this should have been done. I have read the truth about these too, however, in their own writings, and I think it very suitable to mention them all in this present history. As I proceed I shall mention them, therefore, when I think it appropriate, even though it will be necessary to make dry catalogues of many names, and barbarian ones at that, and, what is more, of some who did nothing worthy of note. I will say just this for the present for the sake of clarity and utility, that 319 years passed until the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Chosroes who is the subject of this. At that time the wars in Lazica were going on, and Mihr-Mihroe died. And at that time the twenty-eighth year of the reign of the Roman Emperor Justinian had come to an end.
COMMENTARY

78.1f. [Persian exposure of the dead. Exposure of the sick. The Medes did not follow this practice. The examples of Semiramis and Parysatis show that consanguineous marriage too is an innovation.]

78.2f.: ἐκτὸς ποὺ τοῦ ἀστεῖος . . .

The whole excursus is hung upon Agathias’ description of the disposal of the body of Mihr-Mihroe, the Persian general in Lazica, in A.D. 555. For modern Zoroastrian funerary practice, see J. J. Modi, The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees (Bombay, 1922), 51ff.

78.6: γυμνὰ δὴ τὰ ὀστᾶ . . .

It is still the custom to strip the body in the dakhma (the “tower of silence” of modern Parsism in which corpses are exposed, though cf. Duchesne-Guillemin, La religion, 106). Agathias’ words are not, as suggested by G. Franke, Questiones Agathianae (Breslau, 1914), 10, an imitation of Herodotus, I.140—see my article in BZ, 57 (1964), 34. Though both Agathias and Herodotus mention dogs as well as vultures, as against Strabo (p. 735), this is no more than coincidence of detail. Agathias makes it clear that exposure is now the universal practice, and is unlikely to be drawing on Herodotus, who makes a sharp distinction between the popular customs and those of the Magi, to whom alone he attributes exposure. For the origin of the custom, see E. Benveniste, Les mages dans l’ancien Iran, Société des études iraniennes, 15 (Paris, 1938), 24.

78.7: θήκη γάρ τινι . . .

Further confirmation of Agathias’ independence of Herodotus and of Strabo too (who here follows Herodotus—loc. cit.). Herodotus claims that the “Persians,” as distinct from the Magi, did bury their dead, after covering them with wax. The whole tendency of Herodotus’ account is to separate the Magi from the “Persians.” Agathias was probably drawing on extra information derived from Sergius in addition to his extract from the Annals (so J. Suolahti, “On the Persian Sources Used by the Byzantine Historian Agathias,” Studia Orientalia, 13 [1947]). For further remarks on burial customs, see p. 80.43f.

This is in any case only an outline account of Persian burial customs, without any indication of why earth burial was not allowed (to avoid polluting the earth). Agathias prefers to explain the practice of exposure in moralising terms—cf. II.31, Keydell, 81.22f., where he reports the conventional Byzantine reaction to it and gives the explanation for it in the form of two hexameters supposedly spoken by a dream figure to one
of the Athenian philosophers in Persia who were rash enough to bury a corpse they found exposed. Mother Earth, the figure says, rejects any attempt to pollute her by burying men whose practice it is to commit incest with their mothers (cf. on p. 80.49f.). Despite Agathias’ professed moderation (p. 80.59f.), his real attitude of disapproval for Persian religion and customs comes out clearly in his reactions to next-of-kin marriage and to the exposure of the dead.

78.8f.: ἐφ’ ἐτω δὲ ἐν σώματι . . .
This sounds very much like a story Agathias had heard from Sergius.

78.16f.: Exposure of the sick
Is this a mistake? (So Clemen, Nachrichten, 199.) It was an old Bactrian custom (Cic., Tusc., I.45, Strabo, p. 513f., Euseb., Praep. Ev., I.4.7); perhaps, as Clemen suggests, it survived in some remote areas and Agathias has wrongly attributed it to the whole of Persia.

78.30f.: οὐ πρῶτερον . . ., πρὶν ὑπὸ τῶν μόγων ἀποκαθαρθεῖ . . .
Clemen, Nachrichten, 200. Cf. Modi, The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees, 51ff., for the very strict rules laid down in Parsi liturgy for the purification of any clothes which have come into contact with a dead person. The dead man’s own clothes are always to be thrown away.

80.39: οὐδὲν οἷμαι θεομαστόν . . .
This relatively broad-minded attitude (for a Byzantine) partly explains Agathias’ unusual interest in foreign customs as shown here and in the excursus on the Franks. But it did not keep him from a deep-seated hostility to the Persians as such (see infra, on Agathias’ attitude to Chosroes).

80.44f.: τὸμβοι τε καὶ θῆκαι . . .
It is highly unlikely that this represents personal knowledge by Agathias—if it was, and if he had been to Persia, he would hardly have needed to use Sergius as an intermediary. But it is an example of an intelligent reference to archaeological evidence (cf. p. 80.53f. for another example of Agathias using his material critically, if not very efficiently). His speculation here is however vitiated by his extremely sketchy idea of the relation of Assyrians, Achaemenids, and Sassanians—see infra, on pp. 80.49f., 80.53f., 82.76f. Here he assumes that the tombs predate the Persians simply because he projected back the situation prevailing in his own time, when exposure was the general practice, to cover the whole Persian period. This is therefore mere guesswork by Agathias. Further on Agathias’ ideas of pre-Sassanian religion, infra. Cf. Clemen, Nachrichten, 116–17, for Achaemenid tombs; he takes Herod., I.140, as referring solely to the Magi, but see my note on p. 78.7.
80.49f.: οὗκοιν ἐκεῖνοι γε οἴδε ἐγήγνωκον ...  

ἐκεῖνοι seems to refer to the Assyrians (p. 80.42). But as proof of the changes that have taken place in Persian religion with the coming of Zoroaster (p. 80.65f.), to whom he seems to attribute the whole of the Sassanian system, including exposure and consanguineous marriage, Agathias takes an example from the Achaemenids (Parsatis, p. 80.60f.). Yet, when he comes to speak of pre-Zoroastrian Iranian religion (p. 82.76f.), it is again the Assyrian system that he claims to be describing. Clearly Agathias knew nothing of Persian religion beyond what Sergius told him, and beyond some very garbled half-knowledge about early times.

80.50f.: τὴν τῆς εὐνής παρανομίαν ...  

Khvēdhvaghdas (consanguineous marriage)—one of the fundamentals of Zoroastrianism (e.g., Dādistān, West, 77.6, 78.19, etc.), though disowned by modern Parsees (cf. J. A. Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism* [London, 1913], 205). Agathias refers to it obliquely, as though it would be perfectly familiar to his audience. This is hardly surprising, as the Greek and Latin writers, for natural reasons, seized upon it with righteous indignation as a typical feature of Persian religion. Cf. Xanthus, *ap. Clem. Alex., Strom.*, III.11.1, ed. Stählin (our earliest evidence, if it can be trusted); Ctesias, *ap. Tert., Apol.*, 9, *Ad nat.*, I.16.5; Catullus, 90.1; Curtius Rufus, VIII.2.8, 19; Origen, *Contra Cels.*, VI.80. Theodoret affords a curious parallel to Agathias (*Graec. aff. cur.*, 9 [PG, 83, col. 1045 B]): κατὰ τούς Ζαράδου πόλας Πέρσαι πολιτευόμενοι νόμους, καὶ μητράς καὶ δελφας δῖδες καὶ μέντοι καὶ θυγατράς μιγνύμενοι, καὶ ἔννομον τὴν παρανομίαν νομίζοντες. . . .

80.53f.: καὶ τούτο κεκαινωτόμηται ...  

This is a place where Agathias is interpreting his material from his own reflections; see *infra*, on p. 86.162f. He takes Semiramis and Parsatis as exempla, from which he concludes that next-of-kin marriage is a Sassanian innovation. We should not then treat the phrase τούτο κεκαινωτόμηται as a genuine piece of evidence, but simply as an inference; see *supra*, on p. 80.44f. Insofar as Agathias is including the Achaemenid period with the example of Parsatis, his conclusion is incorrect: there are several examples of Khvēdhvaghdas from Achaemenid times (Christensen, *L'Iran*, 323f.). Cf. the story of Cambyses in Herodotus (III.31). It is interesting to find that Agathias' conclusion from the cases of Semiramis and Parsatis is the opposite of that drawn by some of his contemporaries, to whom they were the prototypes of Persian incest (see my article in *BZ*, 57 [1964], 39, note 25). The part of his inference which rests on the case of Parsatis is in fact mistaken, for it rests on a false premise; the incest motif only entered the stories of Parsatis at a late stage.

Both exempla go back, ultimately, to Ctesias (*FGrHist*, 688, F 14 and F 16), though in neither case does Ctesias have the incest motif itself. For Semiramis, cf. Pompeius Trogus (*Justin, Epit. Hist.*, I.2.8); Proc., *Anecd.*
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I.9: τὸν Σεμιράμιδος ἁκόλουθον βίον; and Ps.-Mos. Chor., I.15 (Langlois, II, 67ff.), calling her "l'impudique et voluptueuse," in the midst of a very Ctesian passage. When Agathias mentions Semiramis again (p. 84.112f.) his account is purely Ctesian (see note on p. 84.109f.). As for Parysatis, the incest motif is absent in, e.g., Xen., Anab., I.1.3, Plut., Artax., 2f., Polyaeon, VII.16.1; but it would at any stage have been a natural development from Ctesias' account of her scheming (FGrHist, 688, F 16). Pp. 80.49–82.71 is then more Agathian speculation, based on non-Oriental sources. It is interesting that those sources are Ctesian.

80.54f.: Σεμιράμιν τὴν πᾶν ...  
C. F. Lehmann-Haupt, Die historische Semiramis und ihre Zeit (Tübingen, 1910), and in W. H. Roscher, Lexicon, s.v., Klio, 1 (1901), 256ff., 3 (1903), 135ff., 8 (1908), 227ff., 10 (1910), 476ff. It is important to notice that Agathias' version falls into the class of Semiramis legends which Berossus condemns (ἀφ. Jós., Contra Ap., I.142), though at p. 82.76f. Agathias cites Berossus himself and at p. 84.118 boasts of following Alexander Polyhistor, whose main source for the Χαλδαῖκα was Berossus. See infra, on pp. 82.80f., 84.112f.

80.65f. [The changes date from Zoroaster, who introduced dualism. Persian fire-worship.]

80.65f.: Πέρσαις δὲ τοῖς νῦν ...  
Agathias on Zoroaster. The passage from here to p. 80.103 appears (with commentary) in Bidez and Cumont, Les mages, II, 83ff. Agathias seems to think that all the distinctive features of Sassanian religion originated with Zoroaster, whom he places after the Achaemenid period, to judge from his example of Parysatis. It is an account more interesting for what it leaves out than for what it includes. Cf. A. D. Nock, "The Problem of Zoroaster," American Journal of Archaeology, 53 (1949), 280, "the late conventional picture of Zoroaster's work."

80.67f.: Ζωροάστρου τοῦ Ὀραμάδεως ...  
Cf. Ps.-Pl., Alc., I.122a: Ζωροάστρου τοῦ ὥρομάτου

80.69: Ζωρόαστρος ἢτοι Ζαράδης ...  
Agathias takes the two names as referring to the same person, rather than to two different people, as they do in Clem. Alex., Strom., I.15.70, ed. Stählin, Pliny, NH, XXX.3ff., Plut., De anim. procr. in Tim., I.37. With Agathias compare Theodore of Mopsuestia, ἀφ. Phot., Bibl., cod. 81, and an inscription from Cyrene quoted in L. Gray, "Additional Classical Passages mentioning Zoroaster's Name," Le Muséon, 9 (1908), 313.

What Agathias says is entirely independent of classical sources—see below on p. 82.71f.
82.71: Πέρσαι δὲ αὐτὸν ... ἐτὶ Ὑστάσπεω ...

Only one other source makes an explicit identification between the Vishtâspa with whom Zoroaster was connected and Hystaspes the father of Darius—Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIII.6.32. It is merely suggested by Eutychius when he makes Zoroaster a contemporary of Cambyses and Smerdis (Annales, ed. Pococke [Oxford, 1658], I, 262–63; see Jackson, Zoroaster, 167). The fact that, apart from this, the Persian and Arabic chroniclers show no signs of identifying the two, might well suggest that Agathias is here simply drawing his own conclusions from the name. Indeed, he says as much himself when he remarks that Persians of his own day simply say that Zoroaster belonged to the time of “Hystaspes,” αὐτῷ δὲ τι ἄπλως (p. 82.71). This is therefore another example of Agathias’ own speculation and should not be used as evidence. He knew of Hystaspes the father of Darius (cf. I.2, Keydell, 11.7) and quite naturally made the connection himself. Despite the silence of nearly all the sources, the identification has won vigorous support in modern times, notably from E. Herzfeld, Zoroaster and his World (Princeton, 1947). See however the convincing refutation by W. B. Henning, Zoroaster, Politician or Witch-doctor? (Oxford, 1951). For a summary of the very widely differing views held about Zoroaster by modern scholars, see Duchesne-Guillemin, La religion, 135ff.

Agathias’ source evidently said nothing about the traditional date for Zoroaster in Persian reckoning (258 years before Alexander), for support of which see Henning, op. cit. This is not surprising. In the first place, it is probably not a Sassanian date but a later calculation (Duchesne-Guillemin, La religion, 136). And secondly, even if it had been available to Sergius, this is just the sort of detail which he might have omitted. On the other hand, Agathias is equally ignorant of the ubiquitous classical tradition putting Zoroaster six thousand years before Plato, and of the equally common synchronization between Zoroaster and Semiramis (cf. A. V. W. Jackson, “On the Date of Zoroaster,” JAOS, 17 [1896], 4f.; idem, Zoroaster, App. II). In view of Agathias’ use of the Ctesian exemplum, Semiramis, this is noteworthy, especially as he draws heavily on the Ctesian tradition for his Assyrian dating in the chronographical section (infra, on II.25, p. 84. 109ff.). Eusebius, among the “Ctesian” authors, connects Zoroaster and Ninus (Chron./Jerome, Helm, 20a), and much of Agathias’ chronographical material of course goes back to Eusebius: evidently Agathias acquired it only at second hand (see infra). Agathias’ treatment of Zoroaster in fact demonstrates his independence of earlier Western accounts of Persian religion. His source is contemporary; where he adds to it or emends it he is not drawing on Greek versions of Persian religion, but merely on his own general knowledge and native wit.

82.74f.: τῆς μαγικῆς ... ἄγιοτεῖας...

Not “magic” but simply “of the Magi.” Agathias does not share the classical tradition of attributing to the Magi any and every kind of sorcery
—cf. Paus., V.27.3; Lucian, Nec., 6; Ps.-Clem., Rec., IV.27–9; Cyrill. Alex., *Contra Jul.*, III (PG, 76, col. 633); Joh. Chrys., *De S. Bab.*, 2 (PG, 50, col. 536); Aug., *Civ. Dei*, XXI.14; etc. (An interesting passage differentiating between μάγεια and γοῆμα is Ps-Eudocia, *Viol.*, 633.) See Bidez and Cumont, *Les Mages*, I, 143f. John Chrysostom links Zoroaster and Zalmoxis as the founders of sorcery, asking at the same time why so few people know about them, even by name. Agathias did not know of the common (Christian) linking of Zoroaster and Zalmoxis (cf. my article in *BZ*, 57 [1964], 52)—a further indication that most of what he says about Persian religion is, thanks to his ignorance, remarkably free from contamination from Greek ideas of Zoroastrianism. If what Chrysostom says was true, Agathias may well have thought he was filling a gap.


For Agathias' views on the date of the rise of the Magi to importance in the state, see further on p. 86.162.

82.76f.: τὸ μὲν γάρ τοῖς τοῖς ... 

What does Agathias mean by τοῖς τοῖς ... From what has gone before, it would seem as if he means this to refer to the Achaemenids; but his authorities are for the "Assyrians and Medes" (p. 82.82). *Ibid.* (82.79): Βῆλων μὲν τῶν Δανειδῶν ... 


no. 1785, p. 188), and that of Antiochus I of Commagene (C. Michel, *Revue d'inscriptions grecques* [Brussels, 1900], no. 135, line 43: Δίὸς Ὠρό-
μάθους Σφόνυς [see Cumont, *op. cit.*, 137]). There is unlikely to be any con-
scious assimilation of this kind on Agathias’ part.

Σάνδηνη: Sandes, the Cilician Heracles. See E. Meyer, “Über einige semiti-
sche Götter,” *ZDMG*, 31 (1877), 736ff.; R. Dostálková, in *Klio*, 49 (1967),
39. It is not likely that O. Höfer (Roscher, *Lexicon*, s.v.) was right to
s.v. “Ἀδαια. It is tempting to see a connection between Agathias and Nonnus,
*Dionys.,* XXXIV.191f.: Ὑδὲν Κηλίκων ἐνι γαίη | Σάνδην Ἡρακλῆς κτιλήσκεται εἰσεῖ
(and cf. also Joh. Lyd., *De mag.*, III.64: Σάνδων Ἡρακλῆς), but it is far more
likely that Agathias took over this set of identifications *en bloc.*

Ἀναὴōsa: with the Semitic Bel and Sandes Agathias puts the Iranian
Ἀνάχιτα, more commonly identified with Artemis (Diod., V.77; Plut.,
*Artax.*, 27; Paus., III.16.8, etc.). For Aphrodite-Anāχītā, see Herod., I.131
(who puts Mithra, though Anāχītā is clearly meant); Berossus, *op.* Clem.
Alex., *Protrept.*, V.65.2; Strabo, p. 732. Fr. Windischmann, *Die persische
Anahita oder Anaitis* (Munich, 1856), 16, takes Agathias as simply reporting
Berossus. So too Wikander, *Feuerpriester*, 61, note 2, on the grounds of
the identification with Aphrodite. But, for the syncretism of Iranian and
Greek deities as affecting Anāχītā, see M.-L. Chaumont, “Le culte de la
déesse Anahita (Anahit) dans la religion des monarques d’Iran et d’Armé-
nie au Ier siècle de nôtre ère,” *JA*, 253 (1965), 170. It is very likely that
Agathias’ statement does indeed come ultimately from Berossus (cf.
on Belus), but we can hardly assume that Agathias was using him
direct.

The source of this odd collection of deities is not clear, despite Agathias’
citation. Of the three authorities whom he names, two are otherwise un-
known. We learn from Berossus that the erection of statues to Anāχītā
was an innovation in the late Achaemenid period (*FGrHist*, 680, F 11 =
Clem. Alex., *Protrept.*, loc. cit.; cf. R. G. Kent, *Old Persian: Grammar,
Texts, Lexicon*, 2nd rev. ed. [New Haven, 1953], 154, inscr. of Artaxerxes
Mmemon). But there is confusion in Agathias’ collection, and we have no
way of knowing at what stage the confusion came in.

This passage shows that Agathias *only* knew of Sassanian religion in the
outline form he gives on p. 82.82f. Otherwise he could hardly have failed
to recognize in his “old” deity one of the leading figures in the Sassanian
pantheon. For Anāχītā in general, see Wikander, *op. cit.*, also M.-L. Chaum-
l’histoire des religions*, 153, fasc. 2 (1958). The passage confirms also that
Agathias was not using Herodotus, or he would surely have noticed the
discrepancy between Herodotus’ account of the Persian gods and his own
(Herod., I.131). Nor, significantly, does he seem to have any familiarity
with the Greek works, including Diodorus, in which Anāχītā was identified
with Artemis.
82.80f.: ἐπισωστη τε ... καὶ Ἀθηνοκλῆς καὶ Σιμάκω ... 

Athenocles and Simacus are quite unknown from other sources. E. Schwartz (RE, 2, s.v. "Athenokles [4]"), while calling Agathias a poor witness, tends to identify Athenocles with the Athenaeus cited by Diodorus (II.20.3) for a story told by Dinon (Aelian, Varia Hist., VII.1). According to N. Iorga, "Médaillons d'histoire byzantine," Byzantion, 2 (1925), 242, and Suolathi, in Studia Orientalia, 13 (1947), 8, this passage shows Agathias' learning. See, however, on p. 82.76f., and, infra, p. 103f. P. 82.73–82 appears as Berossus, FGrHist, 680, F 12.

NOTE: Agathias' Idea of the Historical Placing of Zoroaster's Reforms

Like other Greek writers on the subject Agathias knows that Zoroaster was the great innovator in Persian religion; cf. Xanthus, ap. Diog. Laert., I.2, para 2; μετ' αὐτῶν γεγονέναι πολλοὺς τινος Μάγοις κατὰ διαδοχήν; Plut., De Iside, 46; Theodoret, Graec. afr. cur., 9 (PG, 28, col. 1045). But he does not really know what it was that Zoroaster changed, for his ideas on what Persian religion was like before Zoroaster are extremely confused, and he cannot distinguish between the Assyrians and the Persians—when he comes to deal with Persian history (p. 84. 109f.) he starts in conventional fashion with the Assyrians. Nor does he know exactly which features of Sassanian religion as it existed in his own day originated with Zoroaster; he tends instead, as was natural, to attribute to him all the characteristic elements. In this he may be compared with the Arabic writers who viewed Iranian religion, like Agathias, from the outside, and knew Zoroaster simply as the founder of the "Magian religion"—cf. R. Gottheil, "References to Zoroaster in Syriac and Arabic Literature," Classical Studies in Honour of Henry Drisler (New York, 1894), 33f. For the originality of Zoroaster, see in particular J. Duchesne-Guillemim, Zoroastre (Paris, 1948), 137f.

82.83: τοὺς καλομένους Μανιχαίους ἐμφέρονται ... 

According to a ninth-century text, converts from Manicheism to Christian orthodoxy were required to anathematize Zarades—Jackson, Zoroaster, 253. This is another of Agathias' additions, and it does not amount to much. It is clear from his section on the Sassanians that Agathias knew little or nothing about Mani himself (see infra, in Note, p. 142), and we cannot deduce from the present passage that he knew much about Manicheans, save in general terms.

82.83f.: δύο τόσ πρῶτας ... ἀρχάς ... 

Our first Greek reference to Persian dualism comes from Aristotle (ap. Diog. Laert., I, pref. 8): καὶ δύο κατ' αὐτῶν εἶναι ἀρχάς, ἀγαθὸν δαίμονα καὶ κακὸν δαίμονα, καὶ τῷ μὲν δομίμα ἦν Ζεὺς καὶ ᾨρωμάσθης, τῷ δὲ "Αίδης καὶ Ἀρειμάνιος. Cf. esp. Plut., De Iside, 46: νομίζωσι γάρ οἱ μὲν θεοὶ εἶναι δύο ... τὸν μὲν ἀγαθῶν,
τὸν δὲ φαύλων δημιουργὸν. Zoroaster called τὸν μὲν ἢ' ὠρομάζην, τὸν δὲ ἢ' Ἀρειμάνην. Agathias' brief notice is completely in the spirit of the Pahlavi books—i.e., orthodox dualism as against Zurvanism, according to which Zurvan (= Χρόνος, time) was the parent of the two principles. Christensen, L'Iran², 150ff., would have it that Zurvanism was the ordinary form of Zoroastrianism in the Sassanian period. But, except for the Dēnkard, the Pahlavi books know nothing of it; nor does the inscription of Kartēr on the Ka’ba of Zoroaster, which boasts of the establishment of Mazdeism as the state religion. Some texts do indeed indicate a lack of unity in Sassanian belief (cf. Christensen, loc. cit., and Etudes sur le zoroastrisme de la Perse antique, Kgl. Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, Hist.-filol. Meddelelser, XV, 2 [Copenhagen, 1928], 48ff.; R. C. Zaehner, "Zurvanica I–III," BSOS, 9 [1937–39], 303ff., 573ff., 871ff.; J. Duchesne-Guillemin, "Notes on Zurvanism in the Light of Zaehner’s Zurvan, with Additional References," JNES, 15 [1956], 108ff.), and it has been suggested that there were alternating phases of Zurvanism and orthodox dualism (R. C. Zaehner, Zurvan, a Zoroastrian Dilemma [Oxford, 1955]). It has been argued, however, that Zurvan was never more than an intellectual tendency, which did not reach the masses (so R. N. Frye, "Zurvanism again," HTR, 52 [1959], 63ff.). If so, even if it survived in Chosroes' day in intellectual circles, Sergius very probably never heard of it. Agathias' version does not, of course, prove that Zurvanism no longer existed, but it does surely reflect the popular outline of dualism which an outside inquirer was likely to hear. We have in Damascius' Dubitationes et Solutiones (chap. 125 bis) an account of Sassanian religion by another who had firsthand experience of the court of Chosroes, and it is a Zurvanite account. It has therefore been seen as reflecting his own experiences (so O. von Wesendonk, Das Wesen der Lehre Zarathushtras [Leipzig, 1927], 14); but since Damascius ascribes it explicitly to Eudemos of Rhodes, and we have no reason to disbelieve him, Damascius cannot be used to refute Agathias. Further—Zaehner, Zurvan, 49.

82.87: Ὀρμισδότην...

82.88: Ἀρειμάνης...
Cf. I.7, Keydell, 18.27ff.; τὸν παρὰ Πέρσας καλούμενον ἢ' Ἀρειμάνην, and see B. Rubin, "Der Fürst der Dämonen," BZ, 44 (1951), 473.

82.88f.: ἐνρηθὲν τε πασῶν μείζονα...
Not an imitation of Herod., I.140, even if Agathias is in fact describing the same festival. See my article in BZ, 57 [1964], 37; Bidez and Cumont, Les mages, II, 85; Christensen, L’Iran², 177. It was regarded as a religious duty to kill noxious animals, which belonged to Ahriman—cf., e.g., Vendidad, XIV.5 (SBE, 4 [Oxford, 1880], 166); Dīnā-i Mainūg-i Khirād, V.8 (West, 28), etc., and cf. Plut., De Iside, 46: καὶ τῶν ὕφων ὄστερ κύνας καὶ ὅρμης...
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καὶ χερσαῖος ἐξίνους τοῦ ἁγαθοῦ· τοῦ δὲ φαύλου τοὺς ἐνδρούς μὺς εἶναι· διὸ καὶ τὸν κτείναντα πλείστους εὐθαμονίωσιν, and Quaest. Convív., IV.5.2.

82.93f.: γεραῖρουσι δὲ ἐς τὰ μάλιστα τὸ ὅθωρ

Compare Herod., I.138, and Strabo, p. 732. But borrowing is unlikely; the sanctity of water was a commonplace theme (cf. Pliny, NH, XXX.6.17, and also Vasishtha, VI.11, SBE, 14 [Oxford, 1882], 36). See my article in BZ, 57 [1964], 37f. This was one of the most widely known features of Persian religion; thus Diog. Laert., I.6, advances the case of Xerxes flogging the sea as an example of Herodotus’ “lies” on the grounds that he could not have polluted an element in this way (see Moulton, Early Zoroastrianism, 216f., 418; Clemen, Nachrichten, 54f.). Compare the epigram representing the words of a dead Persian (Anth. Pal., VII.162), ending:

ἀλλὰ περιστείλας με δίδου χθονί· μηδ’ ἐπί νεκρῷ
λουτρὰ χέρις· σέβομαι, δέσποτα, καὶ ποταμοῦς.

Tacitus tells the story of Tiridates of Armenia refusing to go by sea to receive his crown from Nero because sacerdotii religione attineretur (Ann., XV.24).

82.96f.: Πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ ἄλλους θεῶς . . .

One of them was Anāhitā (see on p. 82.76f.).

82.98f.: τὸ δὲ πῦρ . . .


82.100: ἐς ἔκεινο ἄφορώντες . . .

This is not from the Zoroastrian tradition (see Wikander, Feuerpriester, 7).

82.101: τῶν ἐσομένων πέρι . . .

See Proc., BP, II.24.2, and compare Catullus, 90.2; Cic., De div., I.41. 90: in Persis a augurantur et divinant magi, qui congregantur in fano commentandi causa atque inter se conloquendi. See also Geo. Pis., Heracl., I.60: τῶν τῶν ὁ ληρός τῶν δεισφαλῶν μᾶχας;
ποὺ τῶν ἐν ἄστροις ὅργιον τὰ σκάμματα;
ποῖος πέσοντα Χορών ώρασκοπεῖ;
82.103f.: ἐκ πλείστων δῶν ἑθῶν ἡραμήσατο... 

So Agathias does realize that the Assyrians are not the same as the Persians, but he seems to think all the same that there are elements in Sassanian religion which go back as far as Assyria—while still maintaining that it was all changed at the time of Zoroaster.

84.109f.: πρῶτοι μὲν γὰρ...

Jacoby prints the whole passage (to p. 86.152) as Alexander Polyhistor (FGrHist, 273, F 81). See, however, p. 102ff., and my "Zonaras, Syncellus and Agathias—a Note," CQ, N.S., 14 (1964), 82f.

84.109–86.155 [Chronographical Section: Brief conspectus of Persian chronography—the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, the Macedonians, the Parthians, and the forming of the Sassanian dynasty.]

This section is in the form of an excursus within an excursus, a chronographical record of the various kingdoms which preceded the Sassanians, from the Assyrians on. The problems are largely concerned with the sources and, except for the last part, they do not involve Oriental material. This is, in fact, an insertion which Agathias took largely from the Ctesian chronicle tradition followed by Eusebius and other chronographers, and then enlivened with his own comments and expansions. It is significant for the hint it gives (or fails to give) as to the contents of the work of Alexander Polyhistor, and (more important) for the light which the end of the section throws on the content of the Royal Annals in Agathias' day. I shall have to deal with this section at length, so the next part of the Commentary is concerned only with chronography. Agathias goes back to his Oriental source material at p. 86.150f.

The whole passage is reproduced by Syncellus, Bonn ed., 676.15f., with only a few abbreviations, and Syncellus, ibid., 677.13f. and 678.6f. reappear as Zonaras, XII.15 (Bonn ed., 572.7–10) (direct from Syncellus—see my article in CQ, N.S., 14 [1964], 82f.). Syncellus certainly copied his section from Agathias (ibid.), no doubt thinking it worth including, though it conflicts with what he says elsewhere about Persian chronology, as the only detailed account in Greek of the founding of the Sassanid dynasty. De Boor was wrong, therefore, to suppose that Syncellus and Zonaras had a common source in some chronicle dating from the reign of Heraclius (BZ, 1 [1892], 29).

There is considerable confusion in this passage; so much so that it was dismissed by E. Schwartz (RE, 1, s.v. "Alexandros [Polyhistor] [88]") as "Byzantine nonsense." At p. 120.17f. Agathias gives a figure of 538 years for the duration from Alexander to the beginning of the Sassanian dynasty, which he places in the fourth year of Alexander Severus (cf. p. 86.152). This is a Seleucid date and agrees very well with other Syriac and Oriental sources (note ad loc.; on p. 88.213f., see infra, p. 110). But it does not cohere with the sum of the dates given in this chronographical section. It is my
belief that the discrepancy can be explained on the assumption that Agathias is combining two Oriental versions, together with a mass of material from Greek sources, without, perhaps, realizing the conflict. If this is so, it means that the excursus is not mere nonsense, and it carries interesting implications for the Royal Annals.

As for the authors whom Agathias professes to be following, some modern scholars have taken his claims at face value (e.g., Iorga in Byzantion, 2 [1925]). This is a priori unlikely to be right. Agathias was not much of a scholar, and it would have been surprising if any writer had done research of such a fundamental kind at this date. The very form of the citations looks suspicious, especially the introduction of Ctesias with the telltale words καὶ Διόδωρος ξύμφησιν (p. 84.124). There are considerable difficulties, moreover, in accepting the credentials which Agathias offers for his statements. It is highly likely that he did not go back himself directly to any of the authors he names. For a more sympathetic, but mistaken, view, see Schnabel, Berossos, 150f.

84.109f.: Πρώτοι μὲν γὰρ ... καταστησάμενοι ...
This derives ultimately from Ctesias (FGrHist, 688, F 1b = Diod., II.1; Euseb., Chron. Arm., Karst, 27.9f.; Synellus, Bonn ed., 313.4f.). Cf. esp. Synellus, ibid., 313.12f. (= Diod., II.20): αὐτὴ μὲν οὖν βασιλεύσασα τῆς Ασίας ἀπαύγασε τὴν ἱνδον, and 119.9 (Africanus): πρῶτος ἦρε Νῖνος ἀπάσης τῆς Ασίας πλὴν ἱνδῶν; Euseb./Jerome, Helm, 20a: Primus omnis Asiae exceptis Indis regnavit Ninus, Beli filius; Ps.-Dion. Telm., 1: 〈Primus rex〉 totius Asiae excepta India fuit Ninus, Beli filius.

84.111–130: Νῖνος τε πρότερον ... διακόσια ἐτη...
This is printed by Jacoby, FGrHist, as Ctesias, F 1o (β). See below on the difficulties.

84.112ff.: Σεμίραμις τε αὐτ' ἑκεῖνον ...
Semiramis follows Ninus in all accounts—e.g., Diod., II.7.1; cf. Euseb., Chron. Arm., Karst, 26–29, Synellus, Bonn ed., 119.11 (Africanus), etc.

Schnabel, Berossos, 150f., argues from p. 84.114–124 (Polyhistor, FGrHist, 273, F 81, § 4) that Polyhistor was using Ctesias in the main, with additions from Berossus. It is most unlikely, however, that he was following only one main source—Jacoby, FGrHist, IIIa (comm.), 289. As we are in the dark about the relative dates or identities of Bion, Athenocles, and Simacus, little can be deduced from this passage about Polyhistor's sources. Is it clear in any case that the citation of Polyhistor (p. 84.118) covered everything from 84.118 to 84.124? It would be more natural to refer it only to what it immediately follows. That would give Agathias a reason for his second mention of Polyhistor.

We can distinguish Ctesian and non-Ctesian elements here. The account of Beletarlas (p. 84.114f.) is not from Ctesias but from Berossus—see Leh-
mann-Haupt, in Roscher, Lexicon, s.v. "Semiramis," and "Βηλιταύδος und Βελχτάρας," Orientalische Studien Theodor Nöldeke ... gewidmet (Giessen, 1906), II, 997ff. What is more, though Agathias has obviously developed the gardening metaphor to his own (bad) taste, it goes back to an old Babylonian saga-motif (Schnabel, op. cit., 152). In Ctesias' version there was only one dynasty (Diod., II.21: καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ βασιλεῖς, παῖς πατρὸς διαδέχομενος τὴν ἄρχην, ἐπὶ γενεάς τριάκοντα θεαστεύοντο μέχρι Σαρδαναπάλλου). According to Lehmann-Haupt, the Beletaras version is the true founding story displaced by the Ctesian Semiramis saga against which Berossus protested (p. 93, supra). The Ctesian version starts at p. 84.118 with the mention of Sardanapallis and Arbaces the Mede (cf. Diod., II.23f.), and the phrase ὃς ἔκεινοι φασί (p. 84.118) certainly attributes this to Bion and Polyhistor.

If we assume that the whole section as far as p. 84.124 derives from Polyhistor we should have to suppose that Agathias himself noticed that Diodorus gave the same date as Ctesias (p. 84.123f.), and added the reference. This would hardly conform to what we know of his practice in other cases, nor to his apparently scanty knowledge of Diodorus. ὃς ἔκεινοι φασί may indeed show that Polyhistor used Ctesias as well as Berossus, if we can trust Agathias, but it seems most unlikely that Agathias himself took this section from Polyhistor. The mode of citation of Ctesias and Diodorus (which seems, from the use of τῶν χρόνων ἀναγραφαμένων, to refer only to the date for the Assyrians) is surely an example of a method familiar in many late authors, whereby a string of authorities is named and the source given last, with the telltale “and also ...,” or alternatively, where the source is not named at all, merely the authorities named by the source. Here we know that the citation of Bion and Polyhistor did not come from Diodorus. Agathias is surely suppressing his actual source and just giving the names, including that of Diodorus, contained in it. If Agathias copied the whole passage, in outline at least, from a source later than Diodorus there is no reason for supposing that Polyhistor preserved Ctesias' Assyrian date, though he may have mentioned Arbaces the Mede.

Bion is otherwise unknown, but see Schnabel, op. cit., 153.

84.119f.: Ἄρράκης ὁ Μῆδος καὶ Βέλεσυς ὁ Βαβυλώνιος ... ἔστε καὶ τριακοσίων ἡ διὰ πρός τοὺς χιλίους ...

This is of course, as Agathias tells us, the Ctesian date for the Assyrians —cf. Diod. II. 21 and 28. Agathias' 1306 years are represented at Diod., II. 28, by ἐπὶ πλείω τῶν χιλίων καὶ τριακοσίων; at II.21, Diodorus gives the figure as 1360. Syncellus, however, quoting Diodorus II.21 (Bonn ed., 313.18 and 317.9), guarantees that the original figure was 1306. Agathias then has the true Ctesian figure (cf. also Justin, Epit. hist., I.2.13 [1300]; Euseb., Chron. Arm., Karst, 32 = Castor, FGrHist, 250, F 1 d [1300]; though cf. Syncellus, Bonn ed., 318.4).
84.120: καθελόντες τοῦ βασιλέα ...

According to Diodorus, II.27, and Athenaeus, XII.38 [529 b–d], Ctesias' version made Sardanapallus commit suicide by burning himself on a great pyre. Cf. also Nic. Dam., FGrHist, 90, F 2 and 3.

84.124 f.: Μηδοὶ τοινυν αὐθίς ἐκράτον ...

The three-hundred-year duration for the Medes (the "long" chronology) is again the Ctesias version as against the Herodotean one (Herod., I.98–107). For the ubiquity of this Ctesias version, see my article in BZ, 57 [1964], 40, and cf. Diod., II.42–44.

84.129: τὰς εὖν Ἀστυάγει παρατάξει...


84.129 f.: κρατήσαντες δὲ ... οἱ Περσικοὶ βασιλεῖς ...

Agathias now gives us Africanus’ figure for the Achaemenids—230 years or 228 years 23 months—cf. Euseb., Dem. Ev., VIII.2; Syncellus, Bonn ed., 497.2; Ps.-Leo Gramm., Bonn ed., 49.2; etc. The reckoning is from 559 to 330, i.e., from Cyrus’ first year, fixed at Ol. 55.1 (Exc. Barb., Frick, I, 312; cf. Ps.-Leo Gramm., Bonn ed., 46.17), to Alexander’s first Babylonian year, i.e., the death of Darius III (Euseb., Chron./Jerome, Helm, 124; idem, Chron. Arm., Karst, 33; J. A. Cramer, Anecdota Graeca, II [Oxford, 1839], 147.11; Chron. Pasch., Bonn ed., 321.1).

84.132–143: Ἅλεξανδρος γὰρ ὁ Φιλίττου Δαρείου ἀποκτείνας ... τοιγάρτοι ἀρξαντες οὐ λίαν ἑλάττονα χρόνον τῶν Μῆδων, ὅτι μὴ ἐπτά ἔτεις δέοντα (πειστέου γὰρ κάνταθα τὸν Πολυστορί) ...

Syncellus (Bonn ed., 677) and Suda (s.v. Ἄρσακης) interpret the phrase ἔπτα ἔτεις δέοντα to mean 293 years (i.e., the Median duration minus seven). The difficulty is that, if Agathias really is following Polyhistor here (p. 84.143), we should have to suppose both that Polyhistor had the three-hundred-year duration for the Medes and that he was still writing in 30 B.C. (293 years calculated from 323, the death of Alexander). It is just possible that Polyhistor was still writing in 39 B.C. (G. F. Unger, “Wann schrieb Alexander Polyhistor?” Philologus, 43 [1884], 529, and cf. idem, “Die Blütezeit des Alexander Polyhistor,” Philologus, 47 [1889], 177 f., Jacoby, FGrHist, III a [comm.], 248 f.), but even if we were to extend his activity as late as 30 B.C. it seems prima facie unlikely that a writer who based himself largely on Berossus in his Χαλδαϊκά would have used the Ctesias figure for the Medes as a measure for dating the Macedonians, even supposing that he gave the Median duration as three hundred years at all.

Conceivably Agathias took from Polyhistor, or more probably a later source, the statement that the Macedonians ruled for seven years less than the Medes, without further details. But more probably he started from the
figure 293 and did his own deduction from his own Median figure. For the figure 293 is amply attested as a conventional duration for the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt, calculated to the death of Cleopatra the Great in the twenty-second year of her reign. Cf. Exc. Barb., Frick, I, 280, 320, 330 (giving 294); cf. Euseb., Chron. Arm., Karst, 33; Porphyrius, ap. Euseb., Chron. Arm., Karst, 79 (giving 293); Ps.-Leo Gramm., Bonn ed., 49ff. (294); etc. What Agathias is giving us is not the duration of the Seleucid branch of the "Macedonians," which he ought to have given us, but that of the Ptolemaic branch—an easy mistake, for the term Macedonians was regularly used for "Ptolemies" (cf. Syncellus, Bonn ed., 584, 496; Euseb., Dem. Ev., VIII.2 [Africanus]; Ps.-Leo Gramm., loc.cit.; etc.), while the Seleucids were known as "Syrians" (Sync., 552, etc.). Clearly Agathias thought that he was giving a date for the beginning of the Parthian era—cf. p. 84.123f. His terminus could not therefore be the conquest of Syria by Tigranes of Armenia (Jacoby, FGrHist, IIIa [comm.], 289, contra Unger, in Philologus, 43 [1884], 529). The similarity of Agathias' figure with that for the whole Ptolemaic period suggests rather that his dates really refer to that, i.e., that he has taken for his Seleucid duration a set of figures which refer to Egypt. In that case, what of Polyhistor? On the evidence of Agathias alone we can only assume that Agathias here was drawing on a source later than Polyhistor. Either that source or Agathias himself has confused the exact portions of the chronographical synthesis which do in fact derive from Polyhistor.

It is interesting that Agathias shows no trace of the fanatical hatred of Alexander which we find in the later Oriental sources (e.g., Dēnkard, VIII.1.21 [SBE, 37,9]), on his burning of the sacred books in the sack of Persepolis); this of course because, although he used information from Persia for most of his excursus, the chronographical section, as far as p. 86.150 at least, comes wholly from Greek material.

84.144f.: Παρθανοὶ γε οὕτως, ... παρέλυσαν τῆς ἀρχῆς . . .

Agathias' mistake in giving the Ptolemaic date causes difficulties here also. The words πλὴν Αλγύττου (p. 84.146) clearly show that he thought he was giving the duration of the Seleucids, for, as he implies, he knew that Macedonian rule continued in Egypt after the founding of the Parthian era. He is not therefore suggesting that the Parthian kingdom dated only from 30 B.C.; he is referring to its real founding (cf. the derivation of the name Arsacidae in Africanus, ap. Euseb., Chron. Arm., Karst, 97, and Dio Cass., XL.14; see J. Wolski, "L'historicité d'Arsace Ier," Historia, 8 [1959], 222, who does not, however, quote Agathias or Syncellus' repetition of the Agathias passage, nor indicate that the Suda's notice s.v. Ἀρσάκης comes from Agathias also). The chronographers had a date for the beginning of the era—248 B.C. (Euseb., loc. cit.; idem, Chron./Jerome, Helm, 132; Syncellus, Bonn ed., 539 [from Arrian]; Ps.-Dion. Telm., 35. Cf. also Justin, Epit. hist., 41.4, and Strabo, p. 515).
84.147:  'Ἀρσάκου μὲν πρότερον . . .

86.150:  Ἐβδομῆκοντα δὲ ἐτῶν ἢδη ἐπὶ διακοσίοις . . .
Where did Agathias find this figure? As a date for the period from the beginning of the Parthian dynasty to that of the Sassanids it is far too short; and it conflicts with the 538 years which Agathias gives elsewhere for the same period (IV.24, p. 120.17, on which see note *ad loc.*). He could not have found it in Greek sources; Eusebius had no date for the duration of the Parthian dynasty since he did not mark the seizure of power by Ardashēr. Nor, it seems, did the sources of Syncler—is at least, Syncler tells us nothing beyond his extract from Agathias. I believe that this figure comes from Agathias’ Persian sources. So too Nohlke, *Tabari*, p. xvi, note 3, without explanation. Agathias is certainly drawing on his Persian material at the end of this passage (p. 86.155 f.), and the striking congruence between his Parthian date and the evidence of the Persian-Arabic sources suggests that he found his Parthian duration there too.

It has long been noticed that many Persian and Arabic sources shorten the period from Alexander to the beginning of the Sassanian era (cf., e.g., E. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, I [London, 1902], 119; S. H. Taqizadeh, "Some Chronological Data relating to the Sasanian Period," *BSOS*, 9, pt. 1 [1937], 138; H. Lewy, "Le calendrier perse," *Orientalia*, 10 [1941], 60 f.). It was acknowledged that the chronology of this period was obscure—cf., e.g., Firdausi, *Le livre des rois*, trans. J. Mohl, V (Paris, 1877), 217; Birūnī, trans. C. E. Sachau, I (London, 1876), 127 [129]; Masʿūdī, *Les prairies d’or*, text and trans. C. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courtemp, II (Paris, 1863), 137; Taʿālībī, *Histoire des rois de Perse*, text and trans. H. Zotenberg (Paris, 1900), 458; and, later, Mīrkhōnd, trans. E. Rehatsek, pt. 1, vol. 2 (London, 1892), 320. The number of years most commonly given was 266, with variations between 260 and 300. Some at least knew the real date of over 500—e.g., Tabari, Noldke, 1; Taʿālībī, Zotenberg, loc. cit.; Birūnī, Sachau, 116–27. The shortened form was said to be the result of a falsification by Ardashēr in order to ensure that certain prophecies of Zoroaster were fulfilled (cf. Masʿūdī, *op. cit.*, IX [Paris, 1877], 327; see Taqizadeh, *op. cit.*, 138, Lewy, *op. cit.*, 60 f.). Masʿūdī says (*op. cit.*, II, 137) that those who maintain the shortened date do so "par suite des controverses religieuses." In view of the obscurity that prevailed about the whole period, the shortened figure may have been a simple mistake, and Masʿūdī’s explanation mere etymology. See H. Lewy, "The Genesis of the Faulty Persian Chronology," *JAOS*, 64 (1944), 197 ff., S. Taqizadeh, "The Era of Zoroaster," *JRAS* (1947), 33 ff., Henning, *Zoroaster, Politician or Witch-doctor?* 37–38, Taqizadeh (*BSOS*, 9 [1937], 138) dates the falsification or
mistake on general grounds earlier than Chosroes. If I am right, Agathias' evidence confirms this. He will be our earliest source for it, for none of the Persian or Arabic sources was written earlier than the ninth century.

Was the shortened figure in the Khvadhāynāmagh? Its appearance in Agathias strongly suggests that it was already in the Persian Royal Annals, from where it must surely have passed into the Khvadhāynāmagh (Book of Lords) when it was compiled at the end of the Sassanian period. There are some other indications that this was so. While Firdausī does not give a specific figure, he seems to support a date in the 200's rather than the 500's (Mohl, V, 216); further, Ṭa'ālibī mentions l'auteur du Schah-nāmeh' in connection with the reign of the first Arsacid (Zotenberg, 457), and Bīrūnī cites as his authority for the figure 266 and a table of Arsacid reigns a "synopsis of the Shahnahmeh" (Sachau, 116). Firdausī, it is true, states that the Arsacid reigns were not given in the Khvadhāynāmagh (Mohl, V, 270), but this does not exclude a figure appearing there for their total duration. Lewy (in Orientalia, 10 [1941], 60f.) argues that the Zoroastrian clergy must always themselves have known the correct figure (as indeed Agathias does), but the shorter one appears to have been current very early—and on the assumption that it was a falsification, it is this one that will have been in the Royal Annals.

When therefore his Greek sources failed him, Agathias turned to his Persian material. He made the mistake of supposing that the figure which in reality was meant to cover the whole period from Alexander to the Sassanians covered only the Parthians. How natural this was we can see from the rationalizing explanation of the shortened figure given by Bīrūnī (Sachau, 116f.), according to whom it was a mistake born out of the confusion of the period, caused by supposing that the Arsacids followed on immediately after Alexander, so that the Seleucids, or "Macedonians," dropped out.

86.151: Ἄρσακος τοῦ προτέρου...

It might seem tempting to emend προτέρου to πρῶτου, for the sense required is clearly "first," to correspond with "Artabanus the last king," but see Keydell, 75.2, app. crit. Unger's view (Philologus, 43 [1884], 530) that Agathias changed πρῶτου in his source to προτέρου, to mean "the first of two kings, Arsaces and Mithridates," depends on his view that Polyhistor was the source for the Macedonians; see supra, however.

NOTE: Agathias' Sources for Chronographical Section

This is formally a very conventional piece, but Agathias has enlivened it by writing it up to suit his literary ideas—for instance, by the development of the elaborate metaphor from gardening (suggested by Beletaras' profession) with which he adorns his description of the second Assyrian dynasty (p. 84.115f.), and by adding at intervals his own rather obvious remarks (pp. 84.128, 84.138, 86.153, etc.). In view
of his apologies for the "dry" catalogue of Sassanian kings which he promises to give later (p. 88.209f.), and his wish that his history should be pleasing as well as instructive (III.1, Keydell, 84.5–6), it is perhaps surprising that he felt his chronographical section suitable for inclusion.

On the face of it, Agathias has consulted four sources—Bion, Polyhistor, Ctesias and Diodorus. All we know of this part of Polyhistor's Χαλδαικά comes from Agathias. Nevertheless, the citation of Diodorus seems to me sufficient to indicate that Agathias was not simply following Polyhistor. It would indeed be surprising if he were, for he is on the whole very ignorant of earlier historiography. Further, if he did use Polyhistor, he must have consulted other sources too; it is hardly likely that Agathias would have had the specialist skill to produce such a synthesis himself. It is more reasonable to suppose that he found it in some handbook of chronology, of the type which undoubtedly existed (H. Gelzer, Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie, pt. 1 [Leipzig, 1880], 125), just as he found most of his Herodotean vocabulary by searching through lexica (my article in BZ, 57 [1964], 44f.). There was a recent model for Agathias—the Χρονική Ιστορία of Hesychius of Miletus, which went from Belus to the death of Anastasius and which included synchronizations (Suda, s.v. Ἡσύχιος Μιλήσιος). Cf. p. 88.199f.

86.151f.: ἡνίκα τὰ Ἄρωμαῖον πράγματα...
Agathias dates the beginning of the Sassanian era elsewhere (IV.24, p. 120.18f.) to the fourth year of Alexander Severus—i.e., A.D. 226. See note ad loc.

86.155ff. [Ardashër founds the Sassanian dynasty and furthers the power of the Magi. Ardashër's origins: the story of Sasan and Papak. Promise of more information on the Sassanians later in the History.]

86.155: Ἀρταχάρης
For the forms of the name see Th. Nöldeke, in Beiträge zur Kunde der indogermanischen Sprachen, ed. A. Bezzenerberger, IV (1878), 35, note 2. It is noticeable that Agathias' account of Ardashër is based entirely on his Persian material; he shows no sign of any acquaintance with Greek sources.

86.155–160: Ἀρταχάρης ... ἀνενέωσατο τὴν βασιλείαν
See my article in CQ, N.S. [1964], 14, 83.

86.156: ἀδοξος μὲν τὰ πρῶτα...
Cf. IV.24, p. 120.35: (Odenathus) ἀνὴρ ἀφανής μὲν τὰ πρῶτα καὶ ἄγνωστος and see note ad loc. Agathias is here reflecting the popular tradition about Ardashër, which emphasized his lowly origins—see on p. 86.177f. The Khvadhāynāmagh version, on the other hand, traced his descent to the
Avestan saga-kings and the Achaemenid dynasty (cf. Ṭabarī, Nöldeke, 2, 3). With Agathias compare George of Pisidia, *Heracl.,* II.173f.:  
Τὸν Ἀρτασέρχ μὲν, δούλον δύνα τὴν τύχην,
τυραννικὸν λέγοισι καὶ θρασεῖ εἶφει
Πάρθος ἀποστήσαντα τοῦ τότε κράτους
εἰς αἰχμαλώτον δυτικεὶς ἡρτασεῖς θρόνουν
ἀντικρινίζειν ἐν κακοῖς τῇ Περσίδα.

86.161:  
magikē ...


86.161:  
autourγάς τῶν ἀπορρήτων.

Malchus, fr. 20 (*FHG*, IV, 131f.) (on Pamprepius): ἡσαρ ἡ θεότητος σοφίας
eîδεῖν—magic? But Agathias uses the word in a neutral sense; cf. also Π.2,
Keydell, 85.23; 12, Keydell, 99.28 (of Christianity). Here it means simply
"doctrines" or mysteries. Agathias' evidence on Ardashēr provides useful
material for the disputed question of the religion of the early Sassanians. See
M.-L. Chaumont in *JAS*, 253 (1965), 172. For Ardashēr as magician (in accord
with the standard non-Persian view of Persian religion, which Agathias
does not share), see the Syriac work "The Cave of Treasures," cited ap.
Gottheil, in *Classical Studies in Honour of Henry Drisler*, 26: "Idsher was
the first to occupy himself with the signs of the Zodiac and destinies, lots,
coincidences, quiverings, and other things belonging to the science of the
Chaldeans."

86.162:  
τὸ μαγικὸν φύλον ...

Agathias dates the rise of the Magi firmly to the reign of Ardashēr: cf.
A. Christensen, *Die Iranier* (Munich, 1933), 289f. This is another vexed
subject: summary of views in Zaeheer, *Zurvan*, 18f. We cannot be sure
whether Agathias means us to take φύλον literally (cf. Herod., I.101).

86.162f.:  
ex ἐκείνου ...

Cf. Ammianus, XXIII.6.35, on the Magi: aucti paulatim, in amplitudinem
gentis solidae concesserunt et nomen, villasque inhabitantes, nulla murorum
firmaudine communitas, et legibus suis uti permessi, religionis respectu sunt
honorati. But see Clemen, *Nachrichten*, 206–07. It would be unwise to press
Agathias' evidence on the Magi; he is probably following the common practice of attributing to Ardashēr all the innovations in Sassanian religion. A good deal of the establishment of the state church, including the organization of the Magi, in fact took place in the reign of Shāhpuhr I and later, as we can see from the great inscription of Shāhpuhr's minister Kartēr on the Ka'ba of Zoroaster (M. J. Sprengling, "Kartēr, Founder of Sasanian Zoroastrianism," AJSLL, 57 [1940], 197f.). Magi in Herodotus' day—Herod., I.132.

Here as elsewhere Agathias' account of Persian religion is very idiosyncratic. He had excellent contemporary sources, but he gave his own interpretations of his evidence throughout, reporting his conclusions as though they too were founded on fact. Thus, ἐπιγόν ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν τέλει ἔστιν ἢ καὶ περιορόσθαι (p. 86.164f.) is merely an inference of Agathias' own, based on his use of the Smerdis story. Compare τοῦτο κεκατονθηταί in his remarks on consanguineous marriage (note on p. 80.53f.). He uses the Herodotean Smerdis story, with which he was familiar, to interpret his Persian material in just the same way as he uses the exempla of Semiramis and Parysatis.

86.165f.: οὐ γὰρ ἐν ὦι ἐμφί Δαρείου ...

See my article in BZ, 57 [1964], 38f. Agathias' inference from the Smerdis story is in any case only superficially true, for already in Herodotus' day the Magi controlled sacrifices (I.132) and exercised official functions (Christensen, Die Iranier, 289f.). Smerdis: Darius' Behistun inscription (Kent, Old Persian, 2nd ed., 116f.), Herod., III.67ff.

86.177f.: Λέγεται δὲ τὴν τοῦ Ἀρταξέρκου μητέρα ...

It is clear that here Agathias' material derives not from the official Annals but from popular accounts of Ardashēr; see A. Christensen, Les gestes des rois dans les traditions de l'Iran antique (Paris, 1936), 81. The version of Ardashēr's descent in the Kārnāmāgh (one of our few surviving remnants of Sassanian literature) made Papak a local chief and Sasan his herdsman, though in reality of the stem of Dārā. The official version however makes Papak the son of Sasan, of a distinguished family (cf. Ţabarī, Nöldeke, 1f.). Cf. also Agathangelus, 1.3 (Langlois, I, 110), making Ardashēr τοὺς μεγαστάνους, and 1.6, calling the agents of the revolution οἱ τῶν Περσῶν ἄρσιτοι. See R. N. Frye, The Heritage of Persia (Cleveland, 1963), 207.

88.916f.: ἐν ταῖς βασιλείοις διψθέρας ...

It is curious that Agathias should choose for his claim to an official source the very place where we can see that he was actually reflecting popular tradition. This shows that he was unaware of the variability of Sergius' material; very probably he was equally oblivious to the fact that in his second excursus he reproduces Syrian bias under the guise of Persian official material—see note on IV.24, p. 136. διψθέρας—cf. Theophylact, III.18.6. Further, on p. 134.285.
88.199f.: τοὺς μέχρι νῦν χρονογράφους...

Who are these chronographers? Agathias’ reference to records of all Roman Emperors from Aeneas (sic) to Justin I (p. 88.201f.) suggests that he had a definite source in mind, clearly a contemporary chronicle or chronicles—the source of his chronological material? He has justifiable pride in his history of the Sassanians.

From the historiographical point of view the inclusion of this chronological material is of great interest. Agathias was writing a formal secular history. Chronography, on the other hand, belonged above all to Christians. Indeed, Polyhistor, cited twice by Agathias, was, according to Jacoby, otherwise read only by ecclesiastical writers (FGrHist, III a [comm.], 289). The fact that Agathias can include this sort of subject matter is further proof of his characteristic blending of Christian and pagan elements (see my Agathias, chap. 9).

88.213f.: ἐνεάε τε καὶ δέκα καὶ πρός γε τρισακόσιοι...

At IV.24, p. 120.17, Agathias gives a firm period of 538 years from the death of Alexander to the beginning of the Sassanian era—see note ad loc. He knows, too, that Chosroes came to the throne in the fifth year of Justinian (IV.29, p. 132.244f.), so that the synchronization here between the twenty-fifth year of Chosroes and the twenty-ninth of Justinian (E. Stein, Histoire du Bas-Empire, II [Paris–Brussels–Amsterdam, 1949], 811f.) is confirmed (see next note). But the 319 years which he gives here for the Sassanian kingdom up to the twenty-fifth year of Chosroes only take us back to 236 instead of 226. Hence Classen’s conjecture, 329 for 319 (cf. Nöldeke, Tabarî, 429, note 2). If the text is right, Agathias has made a mistake. Note that the 538 figure, which includes the Parthian period, comes only in the second excursus. When Agathias was dealing with the Parthian period in his chronographical section he gave the shortened figure. It seems very likely that he derived only this figure from his Persian sources, and that the correct Seleucid figure of 538 years came, whether Agathias realized it or not, from a Syrian source, no doubt Sergius himself. See further, note ad loc.

88.214: τὸ πέμπτον τε καὶ εἴκοστὸν ἕτος...

Stein, Bas-Empire, II, 811f. This is an exact figure, for Agathias knows the date of Chosroes’ accession (see supra). Chosroes came to the throne on August 18, 531 (see Taqizadeh in BSOS, 9 [1937], 128ff.); his twenty-fifth year therefore began on July 6, 555. Stein presses the pluperfect διήμητο to imply a synchronization with Justinian’s twenty-ninth year, which ended March 31, 556. The date meant would then be between July 6, 555, and March 31, 556. Though Agathias is far from precise in his use of tenses, particularly in his use of the pluperfect (cf. H. Reffel, Über den Sprachgebrauch des Agathias, Programm Kempten [Kempten, 1894], 17f.), Stein is probably right, for this is obviously an attempt at exactness.
Neither this synchronization nor the figure for the duration of the Sassanian kingdom to date would have been in the Annals. If they derive from Agathias' own calculation, it is likely that the δικα (p. 88.213) is corrupt, not a mistake. If Agathias' reckoning of Chosroes' twenty-fifth year rested on a Syrian dating, like his 538 figure (which is possible, despite Stein, *Baṣ-Empire*, II, 811, note 4), the period indicated would be narrowed to October 1, 555 (a.s. 867), to March 31, 556. But, as Stein points out, the use of the pluperfect δινωστο suggests a date not long after the beginning of Justinian's twenty-ninth year—i.e., before October at any rate.
II
AGATHIAS ON SASSANIAN HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

The value of this excursus, founded as it is on direct information from the Persian Royal Annals, was early recognized (cf. F. de La Mothe le Vayer, Notitia Historicorum Selectorum, English trans. W. D’Avenant [Oxford, 1678], 160f.). But there has never yet been a full discussion of the excursus itself or of the problems which it raises. The nearest approach to such discussion is contained in the notes to Th. Nöldeke’s fundamental translation of the Annals of Ṭabarī (Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden. Aus der arabischen Chronik des Ṭabarī übersetzt [Leiden, 1879]), but, valuable as Nöldeke’s comments are, they are by no means complete, while the only study devoted entirely to Agathias’ Persian sources (J. Suolahti, in Studia Orientalia, 13, [1947]) does little more than scratch the surface.

There is a basic difference between Agathias’ two sections on Persia. Unlike the first Persian excursus, this section largely keeps to the material collected for Agathias by Sergius from the βασιλικά ἀπομνημονεύματα (p. 134.285; see p. 162f., infra). Since Agathias had a good source on which to work, he had less need to write up this excursus with comments and additions of his own, and the result is accordingly better from all points of view. In the main it is a straightforward annalistic account of the Sassanian dynasty as far as the accession of Chosroes I—a list of the kings with their chronology and a brief account of their doings, as Agathias promised (p. 88.197f.; cf. pp. 153.10f., Keydell 134.294f.). We can therefore compare it directly with the versions in the Arabic and Persian chroniclers whose works date from the ninth century onwards. From the congruence of most of Agathias’ account with the later versions it is obvious that the Royal Annals formed the basis of the lost Khvadhāynāmāgh or Book of Lords from which the later chronicles are in various ways descended; it ought therefore to be possible to use Agathias’ excursus as a direct indication of the contents of the original Khvadhāynāmāgh. In principle and in fact this can be done, though the results will be only partial—i.e., we can tell what was in the tradition, but not (because of Sergius’ abbreviations) what was omitted. In general the Annals must have been, as Agathias describes them, a “dry catalogue.” Not, however, as limited as the Shāhpūhr KZ inscription (as envisaged by J. Gagé, La montée des Sassanides et l’heure de Palmyre. Le mémorial des siècles, ed. Gérard Walter [Paris, 1964], 193), for the later chroniclers reproduce a good deal of personal material about the kings and their accessions, some of which is reflected in Agathias’ account. Some at least of the expansions of the simple chronological account which are found in the later sources must have originated in the Sassanian Annals
themselves. But two factors make the collation of Agathias' version with the later ones a confusing procedure—firstly, the complex problem of the interrelations between the Arabic and Persian chroniclers and the many different versions which they present, and secondly, the difficulty, as yet relatively unperceived, of isolating the genuine annalistic material in Agathias' account.

a) The "Khwadhāyānāmagh tradition": by this I mean all the Persian and Arab chroniclers of the ninth century onward who used material going back ultimately to the Pahlavī Khvadhāyānāmagh (dated by Christensen, L'Iran², 59, to the reign of Yazdgard III). There is a full list and description of the main chronicles in Christensen, op. cit., Introd., p. 69f. They are of uneven value, but this is such a contaminated tradition that it is impossible to dismiss any one section of it as secondary. As illustrations I have taken chiefly the Annals of Tabarī (Arabic), from the early tenth century, and Firdausi's Shāh-Nameh (Persian), from the early eleventh century. The complications in the tradition derive from the number of versions of the Khvadhāyānāmagh which were in circulation, from the existence of alternative stories within the Khvadhāyānāmagh itself, and from the use by some of the later chroniclers of material drawn from quite different sources—e.g., popular saga-material. The first Arabic translation of the Khvadhāyānāmagh was that by Ibn'l-Muqaffa' in the eighth century, but Ḥamza (tenth century) claims to have used eight different works, with different titles, all deriving in various ways from the Khvadhāyānāmagh. That there were numerous different translations, with differing contents, was shown by V. R. Rosen in his work Les traductions arabes du Khuday-namé, in Russian (St. Petersburg, 1895). For further discussion of the chronicle sources, see Nöldeke, Tabarī, Introd.; H. Zotenberg, Histoire des rois des Perses (text and trans. of Ta'ālibī) (Paris, 1900), Introd.; A. Christensen, Le règne du roi Kavād I et le communisme mazdakite, Kgl. Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, Hist.-filol. Meddelelser, IX, 6 (Copenhagen, 1925); idem, L'Iran², loc. cit.; N. Pigulevskaja, Les villes de l'état iranien aux époques parthe et sassanide, French trans. (Paris, 1963), 198; J. Rypka, History of Iranian Literature, English trans. (Dordrecht, 1968), 58, 620.

b) Agathias' account: Though in the main a faithful record, Agathias' version of Sassanian history is not entirely what it seems. First, he was at the mercy of the reliability of Sergius, his immediate source (see on IV.30, p. 134.284f.). If Sergius misrepresented his material Agathias had no way of knowing. Hence certainly some of the mistakes in the first Persian excursus. In the second excursus there are details which cannot have been in the Annals and must have come from Sergius himself, without Agathias realizing it. Hence those places where Agathias reports a Syrian and a Christian instead of a Persian point of view—see pp. 120.25, 124.100f., 126.58f., 128.167. It is clear that Agathias had no conception of the strictly Zoroastrian bias of the Khvadhāyānāmagh and presumably of the Annals too; otherwise he could not have represented Yazdgard I, known to the Khvadhāyānāmagh tradition as the "sinner," as a virtuous monarch (see on p. 126.143), nor described Valash, hated by the Zoroastrian clergy for the favor he showed to Christians, as "gentle and mild"
(see on p. 128.167). Again, Agathias himself tells us that Sergius abbreviated his material (p. 134.294f.); hence, Agathias was in no position to know whether he had done so without misrepresentation. There are in fact places where there seems to be clear evidence of abbreviation (see on pp. 126.146f., 126.151f., 126.153f.). If, therefore, a story is not in Agathias’ account, it does not follow that it was not in the Annals. And Sergius’ abbreviation may have been more drastic than it looks; why else should Agathias have to turn to Procopius, e.g., for the reign of Vahrām V, when he is so eager to persuade us to believe that his version in general is better than Procopius’ (p. 134.300f.)? We cannot therefore tell from Agathias’ version anything about the scope of the Annals or about what was not in them, nor does all that he says in fact derive from that source, whatever he may have believed about his information himself.

Secondly, while telling us that he has better information than Procopius (loc. cit.), he does not scruple to plagiarize him; see on pp. 126.146f., 128.174f. Similarly, it is not clear whether he had before him the annalistic account of Yazdgard I, but preferred for his own reasons to devote his whole account of the reign to refuting Procopius, or whether Sergius’ account in fact failed him at this point (p. 124.114f.). When he gets to the reign of Cavādh (p. 128.170f.), he refers to Procopius’ story of Cavādh’s escape from the fortress of Lethe (p. 128.192f.) in terms which suggest that he knew another version; if so, he does not say what it was. And when he does say explicitly that his material is more trustworthy than Procopius’ (p. 134.300), he is referring to this same reign, the very point in the excursus where he had used Procopius; but he does not tell us which point in his account of Cavādh is a correction of Procopius.

The use which Agathias was able to make of Sergius’ extract was limited also by his own attitude to Persia, which was hostile and prejudiced. He hints that his excursus will bring ἑυλογία to Persia (p. 134.291), yet it is really to him only a string of barbarian names for which he feels it necessary to apologize to his sophisticated audience (II.27, p. 88.210). He is afraid that his excursus will seem no more than a “dry catalogue,” the mere record of unimportant kings (loc. cit.); he takes some pains, therefore, to justify himself for including it. Even the great Chosroes incurs his scorn; he is only a barbarian after all, and his learning can only attain to barbarian standards (see Appendix A). Any pretensions to real wisdom on his part are of course absurd (II.28, p. 164.24f.), and he is readily duped, boasting of his knowledge yet knowing nothing (11.31, Keydell, 81.5: φιλοσοφοί, μὲν φιλοσοφόμενοι, οὐδὲν δὲ διὰ τι καὶ ἐπάθοντα τῶν αἰσθήτων). The ire which Agathias directs against Chosroes’ protégé, Uranius (II.28), testifies to the depth of his conviction of Chosroes’ incapacity. And when he describes the reactions of the Athenian philosophers to the real Persia he slips from reported speech to the simple statement of what was obviously his own opinion—p. 168.74f.: ἐώρων, ὡς τοιχορύχοι τε πόλης καὶ λεπτοῦνται οἱ μὲν ἡλίκοντο, οἱ δὲ καὶ διελάθανον, ἄπως τε ἡ ἡδίκαις ἡμερῶντας καὶ γὰρ οἱ δύνατοι . . . , etc. With such an attitude—and it was probably a widespread one, for Menander Protector speaks in similar vein of the need καταμαθαίσαι φρονήματα βαρβαρικά σκληρά
ta kai dykōdei (fr. 12 [FGH, IV, 218])—Agathias could have had no understanding of the people whose history he relates, and it is not surprising to find that he fails to appreciate Iranian politics, or the strength and influence of the national religion.

Allowing for all these factors, how much of the genuine contents of the Annals can be isolated from Agathias' account? In general, we can assume that when Agathias shares an anecdote with one or more of the later chroniclers it was in the Annals and in the first version of the Khvadhāynāmagh. Anything in Agathias that can be paralleled from demonstrably popular Sassanian sources cannot be assumed to come from the Annals, even where Agathias thinks it does (see my note on p. 88.196f.). If the later chronicles have stories, or divergent genealogies which are not in Agathias, it does not follow that they were not in the Khvadhāynāmagh, for they may have been omitted by Sergius in making his extract. Variant genealogies and chronological data in particular may have been in the Khvadhāynāmagh from the beginning; Sergius may well have thought it unnecessary to give alternatives. The case of Narseh and Hormizd II (see on p. 122.59f.) may show that there were already in the Annals two versions of the length of their reigns, one which said that they each reigned for nine years, and another which said that they each reigned for seven years five months. But it may well be that variants were recorded in the Khvadhāynāmagh that had not been in the Annals at all—hence their absence in Agathias. Again, Agathias' account is very selective; it is only a bare chronicle. So we cannot tell whether the Annals were of the same basic type, though fuller, or whether they were on a much more ambitious scale. Nor do we know how early the different versions of the Khvadhāynāmagh came into being.

Not all these problems are soluble. To Agathias' credit, however, is the contribution that his excursus makes to the establishment of the chronology of the period, for his is the best, as it is the earliest, of the king lists (Nöldke, Tabari, 400). Some of his notices, again, seem to preserve the true early version as against variants in the later chronicles. See for instance on pp. 124.107, 124.112f., 130.214. The omission of any mention of the Persian persecutions of Christians—save in the implied praise of kings who were pro-Christian, which comes from a non-Persian source (see on Yazdgird I, p. 126.143, and Valash, p. 128.167—is probably to be ascribed to the nature of the Annals (see note on Shāhpuhr II, p. 146, infra). The same is true of the complete absence of Mānī from Agathias' account of Shāhpuhr I (p. 142., infra), and probably of the otherwise surprising lack of detail about the Persian wars with Rome in this period. Agathias did not, despite the implication of p. 126.120f., compare his account with Western sources except for Procopius; it is almost entirely derived from Sergius' extract. Agathias would not have found much about the wars with Rome in the Annals; Shāhpuhr I, for instance, lists his conquests in the West in his great inscription (KZ, see on p. 120.25f.), but the Annals, to judge from the later chroniclers, contained only a sketchy outline (see on p. 120.34). Such references as Agathias does give to Western
sources for the period are all of the most vague and sketchy kind (see on pp. 120.24, 120.34f., 124.100f.). On the whole he does not trouble to indicate synchronisms with Roman history—for which we must be glad, since it means that we do not have to contend with the sort of "interpretation" which Agathias gives us in the first excursus.

It is not surprising that Agathias was proud of his excursus. Perhaps it noes not come up to modern standards of research, but for Agathias it was no mean achievement, and the very idea of asking Sergius for the transcript from the Annals in itself shows considerable initiative. But it is not, of course, nor was it meant to be, a complete history of the Sassanians. Agathias was chiefly interested in the dynasty and personalities of the kings themselves. We look in vain, if we look at all, for light shed on wider historical issues. For that we need to utilize a wider selection of sources—contemporary inscriptions, popular works, Syrian and Armenian writers. Agathias’ excursuses are based only on an abbreviated extract from the Annals, which were themselves selective, supplemented by a certain amount of popular material, all seen from the viewpoint of an outsider and partly reflecting the attitudes of a Syrian. Agathias himself, though proud of them, did not and could not fully perceive their worth. He thought more of portions which are in fact wrong or inauthentic, he made the wrong deductions, and he failed to realize the true value of some of his statements. The task of evaluation must be done for him, by commentators who are in the fortunate position of being able to profit by his mistakes, and to see his merit for what it is.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agathias' Duration</th>
<th>True Date (Christensen)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ardashîr I</td>
<td>14 yrs. 10 mths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shāhpūr I</td>
<td>31 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hormizd I</td>
<td>1 yr. 10 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vahrām I</td>
<td>3 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vahrām II</td>
<td>17 yrs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vahrām III</td>
<td>4 mths.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>226–41</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>241–72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>uncertain</td>
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<td></td>
<td>272–73</td>
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<td>273–76</td>
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<td>276–93</td>
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AGATHIAS ON THE SASSANIANS

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Agathias' Duration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Narseh</td>
<td>7 yrs. 5 mths.</td>
<td>293–302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hormizd II</td>
<td>7 yrs. 5 mths.</td>
<td>302–9/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shāhpūr II</td>
<td>70 yrs.</td>
<td>309/10–79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ardāsḫer II</td>
<td>4 yrs.</td>
<td>379–83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shāhpūr III</td>
<td>5 yrs.</td>
<td>383–88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vahrām IV</td>
<td>11 yrs.</td>
<td>388–99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yazdgdard I</td>
<td>21 yrs.</td>
<td>399–421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vahrām V</td>
<td>20 yrs.</td>
<td>421–38/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yazdgdard II</td>
<td>17 yrs. 4 mths.</td>
<td>438/9–57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hormizd III</td>
<td>omitted</td>
<td>457–59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pērōz</td>
<td>24 yrs.</td>
<td>459–84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valāsh</td>
<td>4 yrs.</td>
<td>484–88</td>
</tr>
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<td>Cavādh I</td>
<td>11 yrs.</td>
<td>488–96</td>
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<td>Zāmāsp</td>
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<td>496–98/9</td>
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<td>Cavādh I</td>
<td>30 yrs.</td>
<td>498/9–531</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khusro I (Chosroes)</td>
<td>48 yrs.</td>
<td>531–79*</td>
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</table>

These figures do not represent the exact dates; in order to get the exact dates, allowance has to be made for the fact that the Persian year did not begin on the same day every year (see Nöldeke, Tabari, 436, for table of New Year's Days). Further, the first regnal year of each king was counted from the beginning of the calendar year in which he ascended the throne. Thus Agathias' figure for Shāhpūr I probably covers the period from the beginning of the year in which he came to the throne (i.e., 22 September 241, whereas his coronation did not take place until April 243) to the beginning of the year in which he actually died (i.e., 14 September 272) —see Taqizadeh in BSOS, 11 [1943], 26f. The lists in the sources will therefore vary according to the terminal dates chosen for each reign—the formal beginning or the actual one. Thus, for Vahrām III Agathias' procedure is the opposite of the one he follows for Shāhpūr I; he gives Vahrām III four months, whereas formally his reign would count as one year. Nöldeke (*loc. cit.*) traced all the king lists to the same original, which he dated to the time of Chosroes I. Agathias' list would be our earliest and only contemporary exemplar. In any case, his is the best of the lists that we have. I have not for the most part commented on the chronological problems; all individual cases are fully discussed by Nöldeke. Genealogy of the Sassanian dynasty: R. N. Frye, The Heritage of Persia (Cleveland, 1963), Appendix 3.

For a survey of the scanty remains of Sassanian literature, see O. Klíma, in J. Rypka, History of Iranian Literature, English trans. (Dordrecht, 1968), chapter 1. Still very useful is the introduction to Christensen, L'Iran², containing a very full list and bibliography (to 1944) of all the principal surviving works and of all the main sources for the history of the period. This is still the standard work on Sassanian history, indispensable for any study of the period.

*See Taqizadeh, in BSOS, 9 (1937), 128ff.

Of general importance, especially for the Mazdakites: Pigulevskaja, *Les villes*.


far as the year 506, is important for Pērōz and especially Cavādh; see N. V. Pigulevskaja, La Mésopotamie du Ve au VIe siècle après J. Chr.: la chronique syriaque de Joshua le Stylite comme source historique, in Russian (Moscow–Leningrad, 1940). Later chronicles of value are by Michael the Syrian (twelfth century), trans. J.-B. Chabot, 4 vols. (Paris, 1899–1910), and Barhebraeus (thirteenth century), trans. W. Budge, I (London, 1932). All these sources present a version of events which runs counter to the official Persian one, and which is often the version of Persia’s enemies. It is very striking that Agathias, for all his protestations about his official source, sometimes agrees with the Syrian-Armenian tradition as against the Persian.

All other sources are discussed fully by Christensen, L’Iran², Introduction.
24. Επει δὲ μοι ὁ λόγος διὰ τῶν δέλπομενον περιπτωτότων, παλιν ἔστ' Ἀρταξάρην ἀφίκετο, καὶ ἄν έη ἐκπληροῦν ὅν τόν πρότερον ἐπηγγελμένον καὶ τόν εφεξῆς βασιλέως ἐπιμαθηθαι. οὕτως μὲν οὖν ἔξ ην τό ἐφυ καὶ ὡστε καὶ ἕνισχυν τόν κλάραν ἀνεδήσατο, ἔστη μοι ἐς τό ἁλρίπης προσεφήγηται. ἔκειν δὲ μόνον προσθείνε έν έπτ' αὐτῷ. ὥστε ετερον ὅτι τό καὶ πρότερον ἐτρακότα καὶ πνευκακοῦσι τ' ᾿Αλεξάνδρου τού πάνου τοῦ Μακεδόνος, τετάρτῳ δὲ έτει τής θατέρου τ' ᾿Αλεξάνδρου τοῦ Μαμίλας ἀρχής, τής τού Περσῶν βασιλείας ἐπιλαβομένω τ' ᾿Αρταξάρης, καθ' δὲ πρότερον ἀπήγγελται τρόπον, διηνυσται χρόνος εν αὐτῇ ἐνιαυτῶν πνευκακία, δυσῆν μηνόν ἐνδεόντων. 2 διαδέχεται δὲ τό κράτος Σαπτόρης ἐκείνος ὁ ἐναγχότας, καὶ διεβίο πρός τό ἐν πρότερον τοῦ πάντως ἐνιαυτοῦ, πλέοντα δι' αὐτούς 'Ρωμαίον λυμανόμενος. 3 ὧν γὰρ τόν βασιλέα σφόν ἀνελών καὶ οὔδεν ὅσοιν κώλυμα ἐσθαι διανοοῦμενος, δὲ έδικ' τά πρόσαν ἐσχορεί καὶ δῆ τήν τε μέστα τῶν πυταμίων ἐδήσσε κοράλλα καὶ εἴτε τήν ἐφεξῆς ἐχομένην. Κιλίκας τῷ ἐλησσατο καὶ Σύρους καὶ μέχρι τῶν Καππαδοκῶν ἐλάσσας ἐξαίτος πληθος φόνων κατείγρασατ, ὡς καὶ τὰ σημαγωγή καὶ κοιλα χωρία τῶν ἐν τοῖς δρεστι φραγμοῦ τοῖς σώμασι ἀναπληροῦν τῶν πεπτωκότων ἀνθρώπων καὶ πρός ἐστίν τοῦ χρόνου τα διεστότα καὶ ἐξανέχοντα, καὶ οὕτω καθισταὶ περί εὐτοῖς καὶ διαβαίνειν ὡστε προτο ὁμαλῶς τός ἀκρωρίας. 4 τούτων μὲν οὖν έκαθεν αὐτής ἀφιγμένον καὶ οὗ μετρίος χρησάμενος οἱ ἀσχημάσεις ἐπήγγειν, ὅ ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀλαζονέας ἀρέστα πολλὴν, ἀπεπαινεύτων οὐκ ές μακρῶν τοῦ φρουγματος 'Οδένας ὁ Παλλμπρῆς, ἀνὴρ ἀράμιος μὲν τά πρόσα καὶ δυνάμες, τοίς δὲ Ἀπολλού ξυμφοροῖς καὶ οἷς ἐβρας ἐπτ' αὐτῶς, μεγίστην ἀράμενος δόξαν καὶ πολλοῖς τῶν πάλαι διηγοῦμεθαν ἀξιοφηνοῦσίς γεγενημένος. 5 τεθνηκότος
[Flaying alive, says Agathias, was first introduced by Sapor I]. . .

Sapor was very wicked and bloodthirsty, quick to anger and cruelty and slow to mercy and forgiveness. Whether he had made use of this terrible punishment against others previously, I cannot be sure. But that he punished Valerian, the Roman emperor, in this way after taking him alive when he had made war on him and been defeated, many accounts testify. Indeed, the first rulers of Persia after the defeat of the Parthians, Artaxares and Sapor, were both wicked and abominable men, if indeed the one killed his own overlord and set up by force a usurper's rule, while the other initiated such a dreadful punishment and terrible defilement.

But my narrative, by a natural progression, has come back to Artaxares. It is time to fulfill the promise I made earlier, to record the kings who came after him. As for Artaxares himself, I have already told in detail his origins and how he assumed the throne. I will add only this about him—that Artaxares seized the throne of Persia 538 years after Alexander the Great of Macedon, in the fourth year of the other Alexander, the son of Mammaea, in the way that I have already recorded, and held it for fifteen years less two months. The wicked Sapor of whom I have spoken succeeded him, and lived on for thirty-one years more, doing great harm to the Romans. For, after killing their Emperor, and thinking that there would now be nothing to stop him, he advanced further, ravaged Mesopotamia and then the land adjoining it, and plundered Cilicia and Syria, and pressing on as far as Cappadocia caused wholesale slaughter. Even the valleys and hollows of the mountain thickets he filled with corpses and levelled the spaces between the hills and flattened their projecting summits; then he rode across them, traversing the mountain ridges as though they were level ground. When he came home again, far from showing restraint in his use of his ill-won gains, he was puffed up with pride. But it was not long before Odenathus of Palmyra put a stop to his arrogance. Odenathus was at first unknown and obscure, but won great fame as a result of the disasters he inflicted on Sapor, and many earlier historians wrote about him.
δὲ τοῦ Σατώρου Ὄρμισδάτης ὁ τοῦτον παῖς τὴν βασιλείαν παραλαμβάνει καὶ διεβίω ἐν αὐτῇ χρόνων ἐσὶ δὲ τι ἐλάχιστον ἐνιαυτὸν γὰρ ἐνα ἴνα καὶ δέκα ἡμέρας τῆς τούτως ἀπώλεσε ἡμᾶς ὅτι οἱ δύσις ὅποιον καὶ ἕσε λόγον φέρεσθαι μὴν, καθὰ που καὶ ἐν μετ’ ἑκείνου Οὐαραράνης, τρισίν ἦται βασιλεύσας. ἐδὲ δὲ ύλος ὁ τοῦτον ὁμόνυμος μὲν ἐν τῷ γεγενημένῳ, ἐπετακθείη δὲ κατὰ τὴν βασιλείαν μεμένηκεν ἐπὶ, δὲ τρίτος Οὐαραράνης ἐσι μῆνας μὲν τέσσαρας κόλας ἄργενσατο τῆς βασιλείας, Σεγάν ἦν σαλ ἐπεκλήθη, οὐκ ἀπεικός, οἶμαι, οὐδὲ ἀυτομάτως, θέους τινὸς πολεοῦ μετασχόν καὶ πατρίου. 7 οἱ γὰρ τῶν Περσῶν βασιλεῖας, ἡμῖνα μέγιστον ἔναν τῶν πλησιοχώρων καθέλειν προσπολεμήσαντες καὶ τῆς ἑκείνου ἐπιλαμβάνοντο χώρας, οὐκέτι μὲν ἀναιροῦσι τοὺς ἐπιτημένους, ἐδὲ φόρου ἀπαγωγῆν ἀπατοῦσα ὑποτιθέντες δείχνουσι εὐνοεῖν τε καὶ ἀροῦν τὴν δοριάλωτον πλῆς ἀλλὰ τοὺς προτέρους τοῦ γένους ἡμιμῶναι ἐκτρόπτατα καταλῦντες οἱ δὲ τοῖς σφετέροις ἔπαιτο τῆς ἄρχης προσηγορίαν ἀπονεμοῦσι, μὴν ἐσοικε, ἐκάτῳ καὶ κόμπῳ τὰς ἐπὶ τῶν προταιρίων μεγαλείπεις. 8 ἐπειδὴ οὖν καὶ τὸ τῶν Σεγαστανῶν ἔνθους Οὐαραράνη τῷ τούτῳ πατρὶ ἑδεδούλωτο, εἰκότως ἀραὶ ὁ παῖς Σεγαστανὼς ἐποικομαστὸς δύναται γὰρ τοῦτο τῇ Ἐλληνῶν φώλη Σεγαστανῶν βασιλεύς.

25. Τούτον δὲ θέττων διαφθαρέντως Ναροθῆς εὐθὺς τὴν βασιλείαν ἐνιαυ- τοῖς μὲν ἐπὶ, μησὶ δὲ πέντε μετῆλθε. διαδέχεται δὲ τῇ ἄρχῃ Ὅρμισ- δάτης ὁ παῖς καὶ κληρονομεῖ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐ μόνον τοῦ κράτους, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς τοῦ χρόνου ἱσορροπίας. καὶ γὰρ δαιμόνιαν ἔπι τοῦτο, ὡς δὲ κατέργα ἐπειδὴ τε καὶ μητέρας τῆς ἄρχης ἐπιμελεῖται ἐμετρήθη. 2 ἀλλὰ Ἀβδόρων μετά τούτων ἐπὶ πλείονον δοὺν καὶ μηκαστὸν χρόνον ἀπόωντο τῆς βασιλείας, ποτότοις ἐπειδὴ κρατήσας, ὁπόσος καὶ διεβίω. ἐπὶ γὰρ αὐτῶν κουσύς τῆς μητρὸς ἢ μὲν τοῦ βασιλείου γένους διαδοχὴ ἐκάλεσε πρὸς τὴν ἄρχην τὸ τεθασμούμενον. ἢ δὲ τά τῶν ὄδηγου ἀμφιβολά ἐς ὅποιαν γονῆν εὐ παντοβεῖν. 3 τοιοῦτοι ἀπατεῖς ὑν ἐν τέλει ἄλλα προοιτεθεὶς καὶ γέρα τοῖς μάγοις ἐπὶ τῇ προαγορεύει τῶν ἑσομένων. καὶ τοῖς ληγὼν ἐς μέσον κύουσαν ἤππον καὶ ὡς πλησιαῖται | προε- ροῦσαν τοῦ τόκου ἐκλεύουν τοὺς αὐτῶς ἐπὶ αὐτῇ πρώτῃ μαντεύονται, ἀπ᾿ τούτω ἄνεχθαι. οὕτω γὰρ ὁλίγας ὑστερον ἡμέρας γνώσει- βαί ἡγούντο τὴν πρόφυσιν ἐς δὲ τὶ χορήσει τούτῃ τοῦτο τοῖς παραπλη- σιός ἐκβησθεῖσαι καὶ ὁπόσα σφίσιν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνθρώπῳ προαγορευθεῖ. ὃ μὲν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τῇ ἤππῃ μεμάντευται, οὐκ ἔχο μαρφύς ἀποφήμιασταί· οὐ γὰρ μοι τὸ ἄκριβς τούτου γε πέρι ἀπήγγελται· πλὴν ἄλλα οὕτω ἐκάστα προβῆ, ὅπως ἐκείνος ἔτυχαν εἰρήμενα. 4 γνώτες δὲ ἐνεδόξασθοι οἱ ἄλλοι, οὗ ὁγον τῶν μάγων διηκρίβωτα τὰ τῆς τέχνης, προστρεπεῖ καὶ ἐτὶ τῶν γυναικῶν, ἄττα ἔσσαβα γνωίει, διεξεῖ. τῶν δὲ φησάντων ἄρεσσα παῖδα τεθασμεῖν οὐκ ἔπει ἐμέλησαν, ἄλλα γὰρ τῇ γαστρί περι- θέντες τὴν κιδεριν ἀνείπτον βασιλεύ ἐμπρὸς ὁνόματι τε ἀπέκριναν.
On Sapor's death, his son Hormizd took over the throne, but held it only for a very short time. He enjoyed his good fortune for a year and ten days, without doing anything that has ever been recorded. The next king, Vararanes, who reigned for three years, was the same. Vararanes' son had the same name as his father and reigned for seventeen years. Bur Vararanes III enjoyed the kingdom for only four months. He was called Segansaa; this was for a special reason, in accordance with an old traditional custom. When the Persian kings defeat in war a large tribe among their neighbors and conquer the country, they no longer kill the conquered people but reduce them all to tributary status and let them live in the captured territory and cultivate it, save that they kill the former leaders of the tribe most cruelly, and give their own sons the title of their kingdom, to commemorate and glorify their pride in their victory. So since the tribe of the Segestani had been enslaved by Vararanes, the father of this King, his son was naturally called Segansaa, for this means in Greek "the king of the Segestani."

This King soon perished and Narses was the next to hold the throne, for seven years, five months. His son Hormizd succeeded him, and inherited not only his father's kingdom but also the length of his reign. It is a surprising fact that each of them reigned for exactly the same number of years and months. But after them Sapor enjoyed his kingdom for by far the longest time, and his reign was as long as his life. For, while his mother was still carrying him, the royal succession summoned the unborn child to the throne. It was not known whether the child would be a boy or a girl. So all the political leaders offered prizes and gifts to the Magi if they could foretell what would come to pass. So they brought out a mare in foal that was very near her time, and told them to prophesy first about this, as they thought the result would be. In this way they reflected that they could know in a few days how their prophecies turned out and could thus judge that whatever they prophesied about the woman would turn out in the same way. What they foretold about the mare I cannot say for sure, for I was not told all the details, except that everything came to pass exactly as they had predicted. The others, judging from this that the Magi were accurate at their craft, urged them to reveal what they thought would happen in the case of the woman too. And when they said that the child would be a boy, they waited no longer but held the crown over her stomach and proclaimed the embryo king,
τὸ ἀρτι ἐκτυπωθὲν καὶ διωργανωμένον, εἰς δοσιν, ομοια, διέττειν ἐνδον ἠρέμα καὶ ὑποπάλλεσθαι. 5 οὖν δὲ τὸ ἀφανὲς τῇ φύσει καὶ ἀδήλου ἐς τὸ βέβαιον τε καὶ ἀνωμαλογημένου τῇ δοκήσει μεταλαβόντες δύον οὐ διήμαρτον τῆς ἐλπίδος, ἀλλὰ καὶ λίαν ἔτυχον τοῦ σκοποῦ, πολλοὶ πλεῦν τῶν δοκιμεθέντων. τίκτηται γὰρ οὐκ ἐς μακρὰν ὁ Σαβάορης σὺν τῇ βασιλείᾳ, ἐνυδαίζει τε αὐτῷ καὶ ἑγγράσκει, εἰς ἐρθομηκόντα αὐτῷ ἔτη διανυσθέντος τοῦ βίου. 6 κατὰ δὲ τῶν τέταρτῶν τε καὶ εἰκοστῶν τῆς τοῦτο ἄρχης ἐνιαυτὸν Νίσιβις ἢ πόλις ὑπὸ Πέρσας γεγεννηται, Ῥωμαιόν μὲν πόλει | οὖσα κατηκοσ, Ἰραμιανὸ ὑπὸ τοῦ σφῶν βασιλεός παραδόθηκας καὶ προεμένου. ἐν αὐτοῦ γὰρ δῆτον τοῖς ἐνδοτέρω χαριοῖς τῆς Περσικῆς ἐπικράτειας Ἰουλιανοῦ τοῦ προτέρου Ῥωμαιῶν αὐτοκράτορος ἀθρόου διαφαραντός αὐτὸς ἐναγορεύεται ὑπὸ τοῖς στρατηγοῖς καὶ τῶν στρατευμάτων καὶ τοῦ ἄλλου ὅμιλου. 7 ὅτε δὲ τῆς ἄρχης αὐτῷ ἀρτι καθισταμένης καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων, ὥστε εἰκός, παρατημομένου, καὶ ταῦτα ἐν μέσῃ τῆς πολεμίας, οὐχ οἷος ἦν τὰ παρόντα ἐν δεόντι σχολαίτερον διασέβεται. τοιγάρτοι ἀπαλλαξέων τῆς εἰς ὅθεν καὶ δυσμενεὶς χόρος διαίτης καὶ μόνης τυχεῖν τῆς ἐς τὰ οἰκεία ἐπανόδου βάθτουν ἰέμενος ξυνθῆκας τίθεται ἄγενεις καὶ ἀσχήμονας καὶ όποιας μέχρι καὶ νῦν τῆς Ῥωμαιῶν λυμαίνεσθαι πολιτείας, περιστέλλου εἰς τὰ ὁπίσω καινοὶ ὀρίσι καὶ ὑποτεμομένοις τῆς οἰκείας ἄρχης τὸ περαιτέρου ἐκβαίνου. 8 τὰ μὲν οὖν κατ’ ἐκείνον τοῦ καἰροῦ ξυνενεχθέντα πολλοῖς ἢδη τῶν προτέρων ἡγουμερέων ἰστόρησει ἰμοι δὲ οὐ περὶ ταῦτα ἐνδιατρέβειν σχολή, ἀλλὰ τοῦ προτέρου λόγου ἑκτέον.

26. Μετὰ γὰρ Σαβάορην 'Αρταζήρ οἰκεῖος οὖν αὐτῷ καὶ μετασχόν τῆς βασιλείας τεττάρων ἐτῶν χρόνων κατ᾽ αὐτὴν ἀπεθάνα. ὁ δὲ ύστερος τοῦτο, Σαβάρω δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπεκέλυτο, ἐν ἔστει πέντε τὸ οἰκεῖον ἠρέμησιν κράτος· ἐν διπλασίοις δὲ τούτων καὶ πρὸς γε ἐνὶ ἐτέρῳ ἐνιαυτῷ Ὀυαραράνης | τὸ παῖς, δὲ δὴ καὶ Κερμασα ὀνομαζότω. 2 τῶν δὲ τοιουτῶν ἐπικλήσεων ἡ αἰτία ἢ ηῆς μοι εἰρήται. καὶ γὰρ Κερμα θνόν τυχόν ἢ χώρας ὑπῆρχεν ἐπωνυμία: ταύτης δὲ τῷ πατρὶ τοῦ Ὀυαραράνου διαστρεμένης εἰκότως δὲ παῖς τῆς ἐπωνυμίαν ἐκτῆσατο, καθά που πρότερον καὶ παρὰ Ῥωμαιίσι ὁ μὲν 'Αφρικαῖος τυχόν, ὁ δὲ Γερμανικός, ὁ δὲ εἴς ἄλλου τοῦ γένους νεκρομυθέναι ἐπεκλήθη. 3 ἐπὶ τούτους Ἰσαίτερης ὁ Σαβάρωρ τὴν Ἑπερσικὴν ἴγεμονοι παραλαμβάνει, ὁ πολύς παρὰ Ῥωμαιίσι καὶ περιλάλλης. φασί γὰρ Ἀρκάδων τὸν βασιλέα πρὸς τὸν θανάτῳ γεγενομένου καὶ τὰ μετ᾽ αὐτῶν, ὡς τὴν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους νερώσωμαι, διαστάτων, τούτῳ δὲ φύλακι χρήσασθαι καὶ κηδεμόνι ἐπὶ τῷ παιδὶ Θεοδοσίῳ καὶ πάντα τῇ Ῥωμαιίσι καταστάσει. 4 ζῆτεται γὰρ αὐτὸς ὁ λόγος ἐπὶ πλείοντον ἐν ἡμῖν ἐκ παλαιοῦ τῇ μνήμῃ παραδο-
designating by this name a creature just formed and shaped just enough I suppose to move about and kick a little inside. And so they changed what is naturally uncertain and unknown by their expectation into revealed certainty, yet even so, their hopes did not fail them; they actually achieved their aim, and even more than they had expected. For not long afterwards Sapor was born, at the same time as his kingdom, and he grew up with it and grew old with it, his life lasting for seventy years. In the twenty-fourth year of his reign the city of Nisibis fell to the Persians. It had long been subject to the Romans, but Jovian their own emperor yielded it and gave it up. For Julian the previous Roman emperor had suddenly been killed while actually in the interior of the Persian kingdom, and Jovian was proclaimed by the generals and the armies and the rest of the throng there. And since he had only just come to the throne, and affairs were naturally disturbed—and all this in the middle of enemy country too—he could not under these circumstances devote much time to settling the present situation. So in order to rid himself of the need to stay in a strange and hostile country and wanting nothing so much as to return home quickly, he made a shameful and disgraceful truce, so bad that it is even now harmful to the Roman state, by which he made the empire contract into new boundaries and cut off the outer parts of his own territory. What happened at that time has been recorded already by many earlier historians. I have no time to spend on these matters—I must take up my narrative.

After Sapor, Artaaxes his brother gained the throne and died after a reign of four years. His son, who was also called Sapor, ruled for five years. But his son Vararanes, called also Kermansaa, ruled for double this number, and one more year too. I have already explained about these titles. Kerma was the name of a people or perhaps a place, and after Vararanes' father had conquered it the son naturally acquired the name, just as in former days among the Romans also one man was called, for instance, Africanus, another Germanicus, and another from a different conquered people. After these Yazdagard the son of Sapor took over the Persian rule. He is the one who is much talked about by the Romans. They say that when the emperor Arcadius was near to death and was settling the succession, as men do, he made this King the guardian and protector of his son Theodosius and of all the Roman state. This story is very widespread, and has been handed down by tradition from generation to generation over a long
θείς τοῖς ἔφεσοις καὶ μέχρι ύπον παρὰ τοῖς λογίμοις καὶ τῷ δήμῳ περιαγόμενος· γραφῇ δὲ τινι καὶ λόγοις ἱστορικοῖς οὐκ οἴδα εὐρόν τοῦτο φερόμενον, οὐδὲ παρ᾽ ὅτι τινι τῆς Ἀρκαδίου τελευτῆς ἀπεμνημένων, ὅτι μὴ μόνον ἐν τοῖς Ἰστορίας τῷ ῥήτορι διόγγεραμίσθις καὶ οὐδὲν, οἷοι, θαυμαστῶν ἐκείνων μὲν ὡς πλεῖστα μεμαθηκότα καὶ πάσαν, ὡς εἰτερῴ, ἱστορίαν ἀναλέξαμεν καὶ τὴν ἐπεξεργάσει τῆς ἀφήγησιν ἐτέρῳ πρότερον ἐκπεποιημένην, ἐμὲ δὲ αὐτὴν μηδαμῶς ἔτι ἔλεγεν ἐλάχιστα εἰδότα, ᾧ γὰρ ἂν ἄλλα καὶ μέλλον ἀθώοι δέχονται ἢ γνωρίσθη, ὅτι διεξείδον τὰ περὶ τούτων οὐχ ἄπλος οὖτω τὰ ἐγγονεύμανα διεξείρισθαι, ἀλλὰ ἐπαινεῖ τὸν Ἀρκάδιον καὶ ἀποσεμνόει, ὡς ἐρίστης χρησάμενον εὐβουλίαν. οὕτω γὰρ αὐτὸν οὐ λίαν ἀγχόνων εἶναι τὰ ἄλλα περικότα ἐν τούτω δὴ μόνῳ φρενήρῃ τε καὶ προκυπέται ἀποδεδεχθείη. 6 ὁμοί δὲ δοκεῖ ὁ τούτῳ ἄγαμους οὖ ἡ πρῶτη ὤμη τοῦ βουλευτήτου τὸ εὐλογον κρίνειν, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὑπέρ τοῖ σωτηροῦ ἁποθεθηκότα. ἐπεὶ πάντως ἄν εἴχε καλῶς ἄνθρωπον καὶ βαρβάρον καὶ γένους ἀρχοντο πολεμιστάτου καὶ ὠροι κατ᾽ αὐτῷ μετῆν πτυσσόσε τε καὶ δικαιοπαρενθή ἡγομενικὼ καὶ πρὸς γε τὰ ἐς θεὸν πεπλαισμένω καὶ ἀλογνώμονα τὰ φίλτατα παραδοῦναι; 7 εἰ δὲ μηδὲν ὤποιον ἐπὶ τῷ βρέφει ἡμάρτηται, ἀλλὰ μεμενήκην ἢ τούτου βασιλεία βεβαιοτάτη πρὸς τοῦ κηδεμόνος φυλαττόμενη, καὶ ταῦτα ἐτὶ ὑπὸ μαζὶ τισινουμένου, ἐκείνου ἄν μᾶλλον ἐπαινετέον τῆς εὐγνωμοσύνης ἢ Ἠρκάδιον τοῦ ἐγχειρήματος. τούτων μὲν οὖν ἐνεκέρ, ὡς τῇ ἑκαστος γυνώσει τε καὶ ἀκριβείας ἔχοι, δῶδε κρινετέο. 8 ὁ δὲ Ἰσιδιγέρδης εἰκοσι πρὸς τῷ ἐνι βασιλεύσεις ἐνιαυτοῦ οὖδειν πάντη κατὰ Ὀρμαίων ἦρατο πόλεμου οὐδὲ ἄλλο τι κατ᾽ αὐτών ἄρα ἐξαραθεν ἀλλὰ μεμετήκεν ὡς δὲ εὕνους τε ὄν καὶ ἐλεημνῶς, ἐτε ὀιτω συμβάν, ἐτε καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς οἱ φειδοὶ τῆς παιδός καὶ τῶν κοινῶν τῆς κηδεμονίας νομίην.
period, and is current even today among both the educated and the ordinary people. But I do not know of its appearance in any record or history, not even in those which treat of the death of Arcadius, except for the works of Procopius the rhetor. This is not surprising—that he, who was so learned and had read the whole of history, so to speak, should come across this story also in some earlier writer, whereas I, who know so little—if indeed what I know can even be described as a little!—cannot find it. But this is what I find surprising, that when he tells the story he does not simply record what he knows, but praises and lauds Arcadius for his wisdom. He was not particularly sensible in other respects, he says, but in this alone showed himself to be shrewd and farseeing. In my opinion anyone who admires this is judging its good sense from later events, not from the first impulse of the plan. How could it be a good thing to hand over one’s dearest possessions to a stranger, a barbarian, the ruler of one’s bitterest enemy, one whose good faith and sense of justice were untried, and, what is more, one who belonged to an alien and heathen faith? And if we are to grant that he did no harm to the child, but that Theodosius’ kingdom was most carefully safeguarded by his guardian, even while he was still a babe at the breast, we ought rather to praise Yazdgard for his decency than Arcadius for the idea. On this subject, however, let each man judge according to his opinion and his judgement. Yazdgard reigned for twenty-one years, without making war once on Rome or doing any harm against it. He remained friendly and peaceable for the whole time, whether by chance or because he really was thinking of the child and the common laws of guardianship.

When he died his son Vararanes came to the throne and made an incursion against the Romans. But when the generals posted on the borders received him in a friendly and peaceable manner he soon gave up and returned to his own territory without making war on the people nearby or damaging the country in any other way. After ruling for twenty years he handed on the kingship to his son, Yazdgard II, whose reign lasted for seventeen years and four months. After him Peroz was proclaimed king, a man who was over-bold and fond of war, always prone to grandiose schemes. He had no firm or steadfast judgement—there was more boldness in him than forethought. He perished in a campaign against the Hephthalites, not so much because of the strength of the enemy, in my opinion, as from his own folly. He should
αὐτὸν ἐξ ὅς ἀσφαλεῖ κατὰ τὴν πολεμίαν πορεύεσθαι τὰς ἀδήλους ἐπιβουλαὶς προδιασκοποῦντα καὶ φυλαττόμενον, ὃ δὲ λέληθην ἕαυτὸν ἐνέδρας ἀθρόν περιπετειών καὶ βοῦθος καὶ διώρυξεν, ἐπὶ μὴ κιστὸν τοῦ πεθίου πρὸς τὸ ἀπατηλὸν μεμηχανημένως, αὐτὸν τε ἐξ ὅς ἐτραπέ τις κατά καταλείπει τὸν βίον ἀκλέως, ἔτι δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν Ὀὐνίων κατεστρατηγημένως· Ὀὐνίων γὰρ γένος οἱ Νεφελιληται. 5 Οὐδὲς ὅς ὅ τοῦτου ἀδελφὸς ἦτο τὴν ἀρχήν ἀναβὰς οὐδὲν τι φαίνεται ἀξιαρχητὸν δρᾶσας πολέμων ἕνεκα καὶ παρατάσσον, οὐ μόνον τὸ πρῶτον εἶναι τοὺς τρόπους καὶ ἦτος καὶ πρὸς ὁμας ἀλόγους καὶ δισμενείας οὐ μάλα διανικάτους, ἀλλ’ ἐτι καὶ βροχὴν ἐπεβίω χρόνον· τέταρα γὰρ αὐτὸς μόνον ἐτή κατὰ τὴν βασιλείαν διέβαμεν. 6 ἔτι τούτῳ τε Καβάθης ὁ Περὸς τῶν Περησικῶν πραγμάτων κρατήσας πολλοὺς μὲν κατὰ Πρωμαίων πολέμους διῆγεν χείρας, πολλὰ δὲ κατὰ βαρβάρων τῶν προοιμίων λήτη τρόπα, καὶ χρόνον οὐδένα παρῆκε ταραχής τε καὶ κινδύνοις ἐγκαλινδομένους. 7 ἂν δὲ ἄρα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ὑπήκοου ἀπειθεῖς τε καὶ δυστηθεσέντος καὶ οἷος ἀνακινεῖν τὰς καθεστάτα ἐξ τῆς τὴν πολιτικὴν δίαιταν κακοργεῖν καὶ παρατρέπειν τὰ πάλαι ἕξωσθαι συμπερασμένα. λέγεται δὲ, ὅση καὶ νόμον ἐθεσαν κοινὰ τοῖς ἀνδράσι προκεῖται πάντα γύναι, ὃ κατὰ τὸν Σωκράτος, οἷος, καὶ Πλάτωνος λόγον καὶ τῆν ἐν τῷ λόγῳ κεκρυμμένην ὥφελειαν, ἀλλ’ ὅστε τῷ προστυχόντι ἐξέδωκε τὸ ἔνθ’ ἂν ἐθέλει χωρεῖν καὶ τῆς εὐνόης μεταλαγχάνειν, εἰ καὶ ἐτέρῳ τῷ ἐνοικοῦσα καὶ ἀποκεκριμένῃ ἔτυγχανε· |

28. Καὶ τοῖς μασά τούτῳ ἔννομος ἐξημαρτάνετο, χαλεπαϊοῦντον περιφανῶς τῶν δυναστῶν καὶ οὐκ ἀνέκτον ἤγουμένων τὴν ἄτιμιαν. ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς γὰρ αὐτὸς ὁ θεωρὸς ἐπιβουλής τε καὶ καταλύουσας αἰτιόλογος γέγονεν. τοιγάρτους ἐξυμφραζόμενοι ἄπαντες καὶ διανικάστατες καθαι- ροῦσι γε αὐτὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τῷ ἐνδεκάτῳ παύτες ἀναλάτι καὶ ἐς τῆς λήθης ἐμβάλλουσα φρούριον. 2 τὸ δὲ τῆς βασιλείας κράτος μετάγουσιν ἐτί Ζαμάσφην, Περὸς καὶ αὐτὸν παίδα γεγονόμενον καὶ ἄλλους προά- πτητος τε καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἄριστα ἔχειν δοκοῦντα. ὁμὼ τε ζώντο καλὸς αὐτοῖς ἄπαντα κατεργάσατο, ὡς ἔξω τὸ λοιπὸν ἐν εὐκαλιπτε τε καὶ βραστων πολίτευσαι καὶ βιοτεύειν. 3 ἀλλ’ ὁ Καβάθης οὐκ ἐς μακρὰν ἀποδόρασας, ἐτεῖς τῆς γαμητῆς αὐτοῦ ἐξαιρομένης τῆς δόλου, ὡς Προκο- πίτος φησί, καὶ τὸν ὑπέρ ἐκείνου βάναυσον ὑπελέξει ἐλομένης, ἐτεῖ καὶ ἄλλω χρησάμενος τρόπος, ἀποδόρας δὲ οὖν ὅμος καὶ ὑπεκβας τοῦ ἐσμοτηρίου, ὄχιτε παρὰ τοὺς Νεφελιληταις καὶ γίνεται τοῦ ἐκείνων βασιλείων Ικήτης. 4 ὁ δὲ τὰς ὀστάκτους θετάς τῆς τύχης διανοησάμενο- προσείτο γε αὐτὸν μάλα εὔμενος καὶ διετέλει παρηγορός καὶ παραιροῦ
have looked ahead for hidden traps, and taken precautions, if he was to pass through the enemy country in safety, but instead he was taken by surprise and fell into an ambush—ditches and trenches dug as a trap over a wide area of the plain. He perished there with his army in the twenty-fourth year of his reign, and ended his life in dishonor, outgeneraled by the Huns (for the Hephthalites are a Hunnic people). Valash his brother came to the throne, but did nothing of note so far as wars and campaigns are concerned, not only because he was mild and gentle of character and not quick to undertake attacks and hostilities without good reason, but because he only lived for a short time after this. He only reigned for four years. After him Cavades the son of Peroz ruled over Persia, carrying on many wars against Rome and winning many victories over the neighboring barbarians and so wallowing in trouble and danger that he let no opportunity go by. Toward his subjects, too, he was harsh and unyielding, ready to upset the established order, introduce revolutionary measures into the political life and set aside long-practiced customs. It is said that he actually made a law according to which women were to be available to men in common—not, I am sure, according to the argument of Socrates and Plato, or for the hidden benefit in their proposal, but so that anyone could consort with whichever one he liked, and have intercourse with her, even if she was actually living with another man and set apart for him.

These sins were being committed frequently, with full legality, and the leading men showed their displeasure openly, for they thought the disgrace unendurable. For this law was more than anything else responsible for Cavades' being attacked and deposed. They all rose up and plotted against him, cast him from his throne, and flung him into the fortress of Lethe, in the eleventh year of his reign. They transferred the royal power to Zamaspes, who was also a son of Peroz, and who gave the impression of having a calm and fair disposition. In this way they imagined that they had ensured that for the future they could spend their lives and conduct their affairs in peace and quietness. But Cavades soon escaped. Either his wife helped him in the plan, as Procopius says, and chose to face death on his behalf, or he was helped in some other way. At any rate, he escaped, got out of the prison, and went to the Hephthalites, going as a suppliant to their king. The latter reflected on the uncertain vicissitudes of fortune and received him with great cordiality. He tried
μενος της γνώμης το άνιωμενον, τα μέν πρῶτα θωπείς τε άγαθή και παραινήσει πρὸς τά ἀμείνονα το φρονοῦν ἀναφοροῦνυστή και πρός γε τραπεζή | χαμελετή η λοιποτής θαμα πρωτεινομένη και έφευρισε τι- μίας καὶ τούτοις δὴ ἀπασι τοις εἰς φιλοξενίαν προχειροτάτος- ὀλίγω δὲ ύστερον καὶ τήν θυγατέρα κατεγυς πρὸς γάμον τῷ ξένῳ καὶ στρα- τίαν αὐτῷ πρὸς τήν κάθοδον ἀποχρώσαν παραδόν ἐπειεικές αὖθις, τό τε ἀντιστατοῦν καθελοῦντα καὶ τήν προτέραν εὐδαιμονίαν ἀνακτησό- μενον. 5 ἐπεὶ δὲ πεφύκασι πρὸς τάναντα πολλάκις συμψυχεομεῖς τοις ἄνθρωποις αἱ τῶν δοκηθέντων ἐκβάσεις, τοιοῦτε τι καὶ τότε ἔξωθη, καὶ πρὸς τήν ἐφ' ἐκάτερα βοτήν τε καὶ κίνησιν ἐπὶ πολλῷ διαλαμάθητον ὁ τοῦ Καβάδου βίος ἐπαλαμπήθη, καὶ ταῦτα ἐν χρόνῳ μετρήθη. 6 ἐκ μὲν γὰρ βασιλέως πρότερον ὑπόδικος γέγονε καὶ δεσμώτης, ἀπαλαγεὶς δὲ τῆς εἰρκτῆς φυγῆς καὶ μέτοικος καὶ ἱκέτης, ἐκ δὲ ἴκετον καὶ ξένου ηδεσ- τῆς βασιλέως καὶ οἰκειόστατος- εὐθύς δὲ κατελέγον εἰς τά πάτρια ἦθη ἀνείληθη πάλιν τήν ἀρχήν πόλων ἐκτός καὶ κινδύνων, ὡσπερ οὐδαμός αὐτῆς ἀφημένοις, ἀλλ' εὐρόν ἔστη σχολὰσαν καὶ οἷον ἐκδιχοῦμεν. 7 ο ὅ γὰρ Ζαμόσφης ἔκων ἀπέστη τοῦ θάκου καὶ μεθείλαι μάλλον ἐγὼν τήν βασιλείαν, τέταιρας ἐναιμοῦν ἡσθεῖς εἰς αὐτῇ, καὶ ἀπαγορεύεις μὲν τῷ γαυρομένῳ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ φιλοδοξοῦντο, τὸ δὲ ἐπραγμον ἦν τῷ ἀσφαλεῖ ἀνθελεόθαι καὶ προοιμάθη τήν ἀνάγκην ή ἐνορία. 8 ο δὲ Καβάδος ἐγκαταλημνήσας πηλός ή πρότερον ἐξ τρίακοντα ἐτέ- ρος ἐναιμοῦν διενειμε τής μοναρχικῆς δυναστείας ἐχόμενος πρὸς τοῖς ἐνδεκα τοῖς προτέροις, ὡς πεσοράκοντα πρὸς τῷ ἐνι τοὺς ἔμπιπταις καθεστάναι, ὁπόσους εἰς αὐτῇ ἐπεβίω.
constantly to soothe and calm his distress of mind, at first with friendly talk and advice designed to strengthen his mind and bring it to its senses, and with elegant banquets and frequent hospitality, and gifts of costly garments and all that is most suited to the reception of guests. And shortly afterwards he gave his own daughter to be betrothed to his guest, and bestowing upon him a force large enough to bring about his restoration he sent him back to destroy his enemies and recover his former prosperity. And as the outcome of men's expectations is often distorted to the very opposite, something of the kind happened on this occasion too. Cavades' life oscillated in the balance from side to side, with a vast difference between, and in a short space of time. From being a king he became a defendant and a prisoner. On his escape from prison he became an exile, an alien, and a suppliant. From being a suppliant and a stranger, the kinsman and close friend of the king. And as soon as he returned to his own country he recovered his throne without trouble or danger, just as if he had never lost it but had found it empty and as it were waiting for him. For Zamaspes gave up the throne of his own free will and decided to yield up the throne after enjoying it for four years, to renounce the motives of ambition and glory and prefer a safe obscurity. In this way common sense forestalled the inevitable. Cavades became more powerful than before, and remained in control of the royal power for thirty years in addition to the eleven previous ones, so that his reign totalled forty-one in all.

The details of what happened during the first and the second parts of his reign have been treated already in the form of history by earlier scholars. It is appropriate, however, to add something which has been omitted by earlier writers but which I think deserves pointing out. It is a surprising fact that very similar happenings occurred at that time in Rome and in Persia, as though in each state a hostile wind had fallen upon the rulers of its own accord. Only just before this Zeno the Isaurian, the Roman emperor, who was formerly called Tarasicodissa, also lost his throne, as a result of plots by Illus, Basiliscus, and Conon, with considerable help from Verina also. He was driven out and managed to escape to Isauria. But he returned to his kingdom again, killed Basiliscus who had usurped his throne for only two years, took the royal power and continued once more on the throne, conducting all affairs—not for long, however, though he kept the throne until his death. At the same time Nepos,
πως ὁ τῆς Ἐσπέρας βασιλεὺς ὄμολαις ἦ καὶ μείζονις ὁμίλησε συμφοραῖς. ὕπο γάρ ὁ Ὀρεότου χειροκίνητος πέφευγεν ἐκ τῆς Ἰταλίας, ἀποβεβηλίσκος μὲν τὴν ἀλουργία, οὐκέτι δὲ αὐτὴν ἄντικενε, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἰδίωταις τελῶν διερήσῃ. 4 οὖτος ἄρα ἐν τῷ τότε μεταβολᾶς παραλόγους κατὰ τῶν κρατίστων δυνάμεως συνελθεῖν ἔσπευξεν. Ἡττούντων μὲν οὖν τὴν τούτων αἴτιαν οἱ τῶν τῶν ἀδήλων ἀνυχεῖεν ἀρχὰς εἰθισμένοι καὶ λεγέτωσαν ὅποιας καὶ βούλωσιν, ἔμοι δὲ τῆς προτέρας ἐκδρομῆς καὶ αὐθεντικότερον. 5 τεθνηκότος γάρ τοῦ Καβᾶδου κατὰ τὸ πέμπτον ἔτος τῆς Ἰουστινίανος παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις βασιλείας Ἐσπέροις ὁ πάνυ ὁ καθ’ ἡμᾶς διαδέχεται τὴν πατρίδαν ἀρχήν, καὶ πέτρα χείστα διὰ καὶ μέγιστα, οὖν ἐνα μὲν Προκρίνε τῷ βήτωρ προαναγέγραπται, τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν ἔμοι γα τά μὲν εἰρήται ἡδη, τά δὲ ἀκολούθως εἰρήται. 6 ὡς δὲ τοῦ τών χυρῶν τελεύτατα διαφανεῖται, τοσοῦτον ἐρώταιρόν τοῦ παρόν, ὡς ἐς ὅτι τε καὶ πασαράκτοις ἐντόστη τοῦ κράτους ἐξόμενοι πολλὰς ἀνεδήσσατο νίκαι, καὶ γέγονεν ὅποιος οὔτω πρότερον ἄλλος τῶν παρὰ Πέτρουσα βεθαυλευκτόν ἀναδεδείκται, εἴ γε τῷ παντὶ ἐκάστῳ συγκρίνοντο, οὐδὲ εἰ Κύρον εἴπει τις ἀν τὸν Καβᾶδον οὔδε Δαρείου ἀν θεοῦ Ζέρβην ἔκειν, τὸν ἱππήλατον μὲν δεικνύεται τὴν θάλαττα, εἰ δὲ τοῖς δραμεῖ ναυτιλόμενοι. 7 πλὴν ἄλλα εἰς οἰκεῖον γα τά, ἀκίλες γα αὐτῷ ἡ τοῦ βίου καταστροφή γέγονεν καὶ ὅτι πάντα καὶ τῶν φιλοτάτων ἄλλοτι τάτη. ἐπήγαγε μὲν γάρ ἐν τῷ τότε ἄμφι τὰς Καρδούχια ἄμφι ἀκόμης Ἡθαμάν διὰ τὴν τοῦ θέσου ὄραν καὶ τὴν τῶν τῶν εὐκραινίαν μεταβάς τε καὶ ἐνδιατόμενος. 8 Μαυρίκιος δὲ ὁ Παῦλου, ὑπὸ Τιβερίου Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ Ῥωμαίων βασιλέως ἀρχεῖν τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἑω τοιούτων προστατοῦμεν, ἀπεβαλεν ἀθρόες ἐς τὴν Ἀρχαίαν χώραν, πρόσοικον οὖσαν τῇ τῆς κώμης περιοικίδα καὶ ἐχθέτερον καὶ δήθη ἄλλοις ἄνεις δην ὁπιέως ἀρχεῖος καὶ ληπίδομος. περαιώθεις δὲ τἀ λείπα τοῦ Ζίπρα ποιναμοῦ ἀνά τὰ πρόσο ἐτὶ ἔχορει καὶ τὰ ἐν ποιεῖ ἑλεγίζει καὶ ἐνεπίμετρα. 9 οὐτός δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀρέτης ἀπαντά καταστροφομένου καὶ ξυγκυκόως ὁ Ἐσπέρος, (οὐ πόρρος γάρ ἢ, ἀλλ’ ὅσον ἀρθείαν ἡ ἑθάναι τὴν φλόγα) οὔκ ἤμεγε τὴν ὁμοῖως τοῦ πολεμίου πυροῦ, ἐπεὶ μὴ πρότερον ἐσκότιε. τοιαύτης αἰσθαί τὸ καὶ δεῖ καταπετπηγμένοις οὕτε ἀντικεῖ οὕτε ὁμωνείε· ἀλλὰ τῶν προστεττόσι πέρα τοῦ μετρίου περιγράφεσα καὶ οἷον ἀνεπικήρ τοῖς ἐπισην αὐτίκη νόσῳ ἢ όπλο ὑπὸ δυσθυμίας δεινῆς τε καὶ ἀνήκεστοι. 10 καὶ τοῖνοι φοράδην ἀλήθεις μετὰ τόχου πολλοῦ εἰς τὰ ἐν Σελευκείᾳ καὶ Κτησίφωνι βασιλεία καὶ φυγή τὴν ἀναχώρησιν ποιησάμενος οὕτως ἢ μεγάλως καταλύει τὸν βίον.
too, the Western emperor, met with similar or even greater misfortunes. Deceived by Orestes, he fled from Italy. He lost the purple; nor did he recover it, but died a private citizen. In this way then the most powerful rulers at that time met with extraordinary reversals. Let those who are accustomed to track down the origins of obscure things look for a reason, and let them say whatever they like; I must go back to the place where I digressed.

Cavades died in the fifth year of the reign of Justinian over the Romans, and Chosroes the Great of our own day inherited his father's throne. His achievements have been many and great; some of them have been recorded already by Procopius the rhetor, and of the rest I have mentioned some already and will describe others in what follows. But in order to preserve complete chronological continuity I will say this much at the moment, that during his forty-eight-year tenure of the kingdom he won many victories; he became a king such as no other Persian king has ever been before, to compare him with them all singly, not even if anyone were to mention Cyrus the son of Cambyses, or Darius the son of Hystaspes, or even the famous Xerxes who made the sea passable for horses and sailed on the mountains. Yet, though he was a king of this stature, the end of his life was humiliating and pitiful, very different from what had gone before. At that time he happened to have crossed to a village of the Thanani in the Carduchian mountains and to be spending some time there because of the summer heat and the temperate climate of the place. But Maurice the son of Paul, who had been appointed to lead the forces in the East by Tiberius Constantine the Roman emperor, suddenly invaded Arzanene, which bordered and adjoined the land surrounding the village. He engaged in continual merciless plundering and devastation of the country. He crossed the stream of the river Zirma and kept advancing, ravaging and burning all before him. Thus he was causing utter confusion and devastation, and Chosroes, who was near enough for the flames to be discernible, could not bear the sight of the enemy's fires, for he had never seen this before. He was overcome by shame and fear; he did not go out to meet the enemy, or make any defense; instead, he took his present situation too much to heart, and, as it were, having fallen into despair, he was immediately seized, in his depression, by a terrible and fatal disease. He was carried back in great haste to the palaces in Seleucia and Ctesiphon, and after making his retreat a flight he soon afterwards died.
30. Ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὐκ ἦδα δυναί με τρόπον ἢ τοῦ λόγου φορὰ παραλαβοῦσα καὶ τῷ ἀξιαγάστῳ, οἷοι, τῶν πράξεων ἡμοῦ ἡμᾶς ἐγένετο ἐκ τῆς ἄγαγας, ἐκεῖνα μὲν ἐκείνος πρὸς τὸ παρὸν, ἐν τοῖς ὀικεῖοις ἀναγραφησόμενα χρόνοις ἐπανήξει δὲ αὐθεὶς ἢ τὸ ξυνεχὲς καὶ ἀκόλουθον τῶν προτέρων.

2 ἢ τε γὰρ τῶν Περσικῶν βασιλέων διαδοχή καὶ ὁ τῶν ἐνιαυτῶν κατάλογος καὶ συλλήβδην φάναι ἐπεί μοι τὸ ἐπήγειμενον ξυνετέλεσθαι. οἷοί δὲ ἄγαν ἀληθῆ ταῦτα καθεστάναι καὶ ἐς τὸ ἀκριβῆς ἐκπεπονημένα, ὡς δὴ ἐκ τῶν Περσικῶν βιβλίων μεταληθήσεται. 3 Σέργιος γὰρ τοῦ ἐρμηνεύως ἔκει ἡμοῦ καὶ τοῦς τῶν βασιλικῶν ἀπομνημονευμάτων φοινικῶς τε καὶ ἐπιστάτας μεταδοῦσαι οἱ τῆς περὶ ταῦτα γραφῆς ἑκλαδορήσαντος (πολλάκις γὰρ αὐτὸν ἐς τούτῳ προτρέπας ἐτύγχανον), προσθέντος δὲ καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν, ὡς οὖν ἄλλου του χάριν ἤτοι τῶν τῆς τυχεῖν ἢ ὡστε καὶ παρ’ ἡμῖν ἀναγράφατα ἔσεθαι τὰ σφίσιν ἐγνωσμένα καὶ τίμαι, παρέσχον εὐθὺς εὖ γε ποιούντες ἔκειν, οὐκ ἄχαρι τὸ χρήμα εἰναι ἡγούμενοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς εὐκλείας τοῖς σφῶν βασιλεύσιν ἐξόμενον, εἶ μέλλοις καὶ παρὰ Ἐρωμαίον γιγνώσκεσθαι, ὡς τοῖς τε γεγονόσι καὶ ὑπόσι, καὶ ὡς τὸν γένους αὐτοῖς ἀποσέασσοτος τάξις.

4 λαβὼν οὖν ὁ Σέργιος τὰ τε ὅνωστα καὶ τοῦς χρόνους καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ αὐτοῖς γεγονόσιν τὰ καιροὺτερα καὶ μεταβαλῶν ἐνδιόσοις εἰς τὴν Ἐλλάδα φωνὴν ἢ γὰρ δὴ ἐρμηνεύως ἄριστος ἀπαντῶν καὶ οἷον ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ Χορήσου βασιλέως, ὡς ἐν ἐκατέρχοντες καὶ πρωτείας λαχοῖ τῆς ἐπιστήμης, εἰκότως οὖν ἀκριβεστάτην ποιήσαμεν τὴν μετάφρασιν ἀπεκόμισε τέ μοι ἀπαντὴν μόλα πιστός καὶ φιλικός καὶ προσπέρας διανύσει τὴν αἰτίαν, ἐφ’ ἤτε παρὰ τοιοῦτος καὶ παραπείπης, καὶ τοῖνα διήνυσται. 5 ὡστε εἰ καὶ Προκοπίπτῳ τῷ βήτροι ένια τῶν ἐπὶ Καβάδη ἐπηγεῖδον ἐπίρρως ἀπηγγέλλαται, ἀλλ’ ἡμῖν ἀκολούθητον τοῖς Περσικοῖς χειρογράφοις καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς φερομένων ὡς ἀληθετέρων ἀντιληπτέον. τούτου δὲ οὖν ἡμῖν τοῦ πόνου τελεώτατα ἐξεργασμένον, φέρε πρὸς αὐτὴν αὐθεὶς ἐπαινίωμεν τὴν τῆς ἱστορίας ἄνεχειαν.
I do not know how the flow of my narrative has caught me up like this. In its pleasure at these stirring events it has driven me to such impetuosity that I have gone on to what lies a long way ahead, passing over what comes in between. So, as I have now at any rate realized the point I have reached and the point from which I started, I must leave this topic for the present, to relate it in the appropriate place. I will go back to my continuous narrative at the point where I left off. I have completed the list of Persian kings and the chronological table and, to put it briefly, I have fulfilled the whole of my promise. It is my belief that this is quite true and accurate, since it was translated from the Persian books. When Sergius the interpreter went there he asked the officials in charge of the Royal Annals to give him access to the records (for I had often urged him to do this). He added his reason—that his sole purpose in wanting this was so that their affairs could be recorded by us also and become known and honored. They agreed at once—rightly—thinking the idea a good one. It would actually bring credit to their kings, they thought, if the Romans too knew what they were like and how many they were, and how the succession of their dynasty had been preserved. So Sergius extracted the names, the chronology, and the most important happenings in their time, and translated all this most skillfully into Greek (for he was the best interpreter, admired by Chosroes himself as having the highest possible reputation for learning in both states). So it was to be expected that he made a very accurate translation, and he gave it all to me in a most conscientious and friendly way, and urged me to make good the reason for which he had procured it. This has been achieved. So if Procopius the rhetor has a different version of any of my account of Cavades, we ought still to follow the Persian writings, and prefer their account as being the more nearly true. So now that I have fulfilled this task in great detail, come now, let us return to the point from which I digressed....
COMMENTARY

120.16f. [Duration of Ardashêr's reign. Reign of Shâhpuruhr I, his campaigns. Hormizd I, Vahrâm I, Vahrâm II, Vahrâm III, Narseh, Hormizd II, accession and reign of Shâhpuruhr II. Jovian yields Nisibis to Persia.]

120.16: ἔκεινο δὲ μόνον προσθείην . . .

For Ardashêr, cf. II.26, p. 86.155f. It is unlikely that Agathias found this date in a Greek source, for the change of government in Persia passed relatively unnoticed, at least in surviving writers, despite Ps.-Mos. Chor., II.69 (Langlois, II, 116): “l'histoire de cette époque est écrite par un grand nombre de Perses, de Syriens et de Grecs.” The only date to be extracted from the brief notices of Dio Cassius (LXXX.3) and Herodian (VI.2.6f.) is that the first news of Ardashêr reached Rome in the fourteenth year of Alexander Severus (i.e., A.D. 234/5. See Herodian, VI.2.1). I have pointed out in CQ, N.S., 14 (1964), 82f., that the passage from Zonaras, XII.15, cited by Boissevain in his edition of Dio, ad loc., comes in fact from Agathias via Syncellus.

The figure 538 is not reconcilable with Agathias' figure of 270 years for the Parthians (p. 86.150). He seems to think that the “Macedonians” ruled for 293 years (p. 84.142, see p. 103f., supra); but 293 plus 270 is 563, not 538. The 538 years is a Seleucid date, found in Syrian sources—e.g., Jacob of Edessa, Brooks, 212: anno 538° Graecorum . . . stetit subito et praevaluit regnum ultimum Persarum . . .; Elias of Nisibis, Brooks, I, 26: <secundum computum Jacobi Edesseni> . . . Anno 538° Alexandri coepit initium regni Persarum filiorum Sasan; Barhebraeus, Bude, I, 95 (cf. Lewy, “Le calendrier perse,” Orientalia, 10 [1941], 1f.). It was certainly known in Persia (see supra, on p. 86.150, and S. H. Taqizadeh, “Some Chronological Data relating to the Sasanian Period,” BSOS, 9 [1937], 125ff., idem, “The Early Sasanians,” BSOS, 11 [1943], 6ff.). Thus the Book of Mânî synchronizes the second year of Ardashêr with the year 539 of the Babylonian era (which began 311 B.C.); the Acts of the Persian martyrs synchronize A.S. 799 with 261 of the Persian era, which leads back to 538 exactly (G. Hoffmann, Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Martyrer [Leipzig, 1880], 78). And Ţabarî places the “springing” of Ardashêr 523 years after the rule of Alexander in Babylon. (Nöldeke, 1; see Taqizadeh, in BSOS, 11 [1943], 24).

The Seleucid era was in use in Persia during the Sassanian period, and Birûnî (supra, p. 105) assumes that learned Sassanians would have known the true figure. But Agathias, as Nöldeke remarks, surely got his 538 years from a Syrian source, not from his Persian material where he would not have found the synchronization with Alexander Severus; compare Jacob of Edessa, loc. cit.: anno 7° (sic) Alexandri filii Mammæae.
AGATHIAS ON THE SASSANIANS

Thus Agathias seems to be clearly dating the reign of Ardashīr from A.D. 226, and not 223 or 224, the year in which he killed Artabanus; contrast Ṭabarī’s statement that the reign was reckoned “vom Fall des Ar-da-wān” (Nöldeke, 21). The date 226 would represent the beginning of the Persian year in which Ardashīr was crowned or conquered Ctesiphon—cf. Taqizadeh, in BSOS, 11 [1943], 22, and Lewy, op. cit., 45f. He was actually king of Stakhr as early as 208 (inscription of Shāhpūr I at Shāpūr, cf. R. Ghirshman, in Revue des arts asiatiques, 10, No. 3 [1936], 127–28).

Even if I am right in suggesting that the 538 years derive from a Syrian, not a Persian, source, its value as a calculation of the dates of Ardashīr is hardly diminished. Nöldeke and Taqizadeh reckon the early Sassanian chronology from 226, whereas W. B. Henning proposes dating Ardashīr (and with him the dependent reigns of Shāhpūr I, Hormizd I, Vahrām I, as well as the death of Mānī, whose dates are central to this problem) from a base year of 223. See Henning, in Asia Major, 6 (1957), 117, and cf. ibid., 3 (1952), 196f. Taqizadeh’s datings, from the year 226, are set out in BSOS, 9 and 11, and in Asia Major, 6. The striking agreement of Agathias with the third-century testimony of Mānī as well as with the later Syriac sources makes his evidence here hard to reject—see A. Māriq, “Classica et Orientalia 5. Res Gestae Divi Saporis,” Syria, 35 (1958), 347–48.

120.17f.: Ἀλέξάνδρου τοῦ πάντων τοῦ Μακεδώνος ...

Niebuhr, note ad loc., supposes that Agathias has made a mistake in thinking that the “era of Alexander” referred to a date in the life of Alexander the Great when in fact it began only in 312 B.C., after his death. But the Seleucid era, beginning in 312, the date of Seleucus’ return to Babylon, was commonly called the “era of Alexander,” and Agathias is merely following the convention: see, e.g., Chronicon Maroniticum, Chabot, 41 and esp. 43: aerae Alexandri, quae incipit ex quo regnavit primus in Syria, qui est Seleucus Nicator.

120.18: τετάρτῳ δὲ ἐτεί ... 

Cf. p. 86.2f.: ἡνίκα τὰ Ῥωμαίων πράγματα ὑπὸ Ἀλέξανδρου τοῦ Μακεδώνος παιδὶ ἐπετάχθη ... Cf. Taqizadeh, in BSOS, 11 (1943), 9: the date should be the fifth year. Agathias, or his source, has failed to calculate from the zero year.

120.20f.: διήνυσαι χρόνος ἐν αὐτῇ ... 

See Taqizadeh, in BSOS, 11 [1943], 17, for all the sources for the duration of Ardashīr’s reign. Agathias agrees with Ṭabarī’s second version (Nöldeke, 22); other sources for the same figure—BSOS, 11 (1943), 18. It is certainly the correct one—see Henning, in Asia Major, 6 (1957), 108 and 116 (though Henning’s remark that this duration is guaranteed by its appearance in sources “so far apart in the tradition” is merely a typical example of the failure to realize Agathias’ real place in the tradition; he is in fact very
closely related to Tabari via the Khvadhāynāmagh, no matter how far removed they are from each other chronologically). There are four possibilities for the base date from which this duration was calculated, according to the peculiarities of the Persian calendar (supra, p. 117)—a) the beginning of the Persian year in which Ardashīr killed Artabanus, i.e., September 27, 223, b) the actual death of Artabanus, April 28, 224, c) the official date of Ardashīr’s coronation, i.e., September 26, 226, d) the real date of Ardashīr’s coronation, April 6, 227, on Taqizadeh’s calculations. See Henning, op. cit., 108.

120.22: Shāhpuhr I: ὦ ἐναγέστατος

A very hostile account, continuing and expanding the view of Shāhpuhr I which Agathias has already expressed (p. 120.1f.), where he calls him ἀδικός τε ... καὶ μισηφόνος, because of the flaying of Valerian—see infra. Suolahti (in Studia Orientalia, 13 [1947], 5), indeed, advances this section as evidence of the one-sidedness of the Annals. But this is a basic misunderstanding of Agathias’ source. We should expect Shāhpuhr’s cruelty to be commended in the Persian tradition, as befits the tone of Shāhpuhr’s Ka’ba of Zoroaster inscription (Shāhpuhr, KZ). Thus Tabari says of him without sign of condemnation, “er tödtete die Soldaten, machte Frauen und Kinder zu Sklaven und erbeutete grosse Summen die dort [Nisibis] für den Kaiser lagen” (Nöldeke, 32), and Firdausi’s account is wholly favorable. Eutychius, indeed (Pococke, I, 376), even goes so far as to say summa ... cum iustitia inter homines versatus est. Further infra.

120.22f.: πρὸς τῷ ἐνὶ τριάκοντα τούς πάντας ἐνιαυτοῦς ...

See further Taqizadeh, in BSOS, 9 (1937) and 11 (1943). His final dates (Asia Major, 6 [1957], 114) are as follows: official beginning of Shāhpuhr’s reign, September 22, 241; actual succession, February, 242; coronation, April 9, 243; death, April, 273. Agathias’ duration belongs to a well defined group among the many strands of the Persian tradition (set out in BSOS, 11 [1943], 19 and 26f.); the differences are accounted for by the different possible termini. Thus Agathias’ thirty-one years would be from Shāhpuhr’s official accession to the beginning of the Persian year in which he died.

120.24: ἀπε γὰρ τὸν βασιλέα ... ἀνέλκων ...

The Oriental sources offer no help on the question of Valerian’s fate, except for the tradition that he was forced to labor at the great dam at Shōstar (cf. Tabari, Nöldeke, 33; Christensen, L’Iran², 221, note 1) and a story recorded by Tabari (loc. cit.) according to which Shāhpuhr released him after cutting off his nose. It is to the Christian moralists, beginning with Lactantius, that we owe the stories of Valerian’s being used as a human mounting block and then flayed (Lact., De mort. pers., 5.2; Euseb., Vita Const., IV.11, Orat. Const., 24.2; Orosius, VII.22; and cf. Peter Patr., fr. 13 [FGH, IV, 188f.]). The pagan writers, who had no axe to grind
against the persecutor Valerian, were more moderate (*Scriptores Historiae
Augustae*, Gall., 1, Valer., 4; Zosimus, I.26.2). It has been argued (though
without total conviction) that the favorable picture of Valerian in *Scripto-
tores Historiae Augustae* is an answer to Lactantius (see most recently A.
Alföldi, in *Historia-Augusta-Colloquium*, Bonn, 1963 [= *Antiquitas*, Reihe 4,
Band 2], 1 ff., and cf. also H. Mattingly, “The Religious Background of
the ‘Historia Augusta,’” *HThR*, 39 [1946], 215). At any rate, Agathias
knew the Christian version, since he refers to Valerian’s flaying elsewhere
(p. 258.9–10, mentioning πολλα ἡ ἱστορία); it is interesting that he does not
develop the *Tendenz*.

Shāhpūr commemorated his victory by several monuments—the Ka’ba
of Zoroaster (KZ, see infra), a relief at Naqsh-i Rustam (Fr. Sarre, *Die
Kunst des alten Persien* [Berlin, 1923], pl. 74; Christensen, *L’Iran*, fig. 14),
three reliefs at Shāpūr (Fr. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Iranische Felsreliefs*
[Berlin, 1910], pls. 43–5 and p. 220 f.; Christensen, *L’Iran*, fig. 15). For
the identification of the figures in the Valerian reliefs, see B. C. MacDermot,
“Roman Emperors in the Sassanian Reliefs,” *JRS*, 44 (1954), 76 f.

For the historical problems surrounding Shāhpūr’s campaigns, see A.
Alföldi, in *Berytus*, 4 (1937), 56 f.; A. T. Olmstead, in *Classical Philology*,
37 (1942), 241 ff.; M. I. Rostovtzeff, “*Res Gestae Divi Saporis and Dura,*”
Klasse, 1947, Heft 5 (Munich, 1949) (who, however, follows the chronology
of M. J. Higgins, *The Persian War of the Emperor Maurice I. The Chronol-
ogy* [Washington, D.C., 1939]); R. N. Frye, in *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 8
(1951), 103 ff. On the date of the capture of Valerian, see J. Fitz, *Ingenium

In accordance with the Khvadhāyānāmag tradition Agathias speaks
only vaguely of Shāhpūr’s campaigns, referring only to the final one
which saw the capture of Valerian. But three are distinguishable on the
KZ inscription, the first achieving the defeat of Gordian, the second an
incursion into Syria after the defeat of a Roman army at Barbalissos.

120.25 f.: ὁ δὲ ἀνὰ τὰ πρόσωπα ἐξώρει …

Cilicia and Cappadocia: Tābarī, Nöldeke, p. 32 with note 2; Eutychius,
Res Gestae Divi Saporis,*” *Syria*, 35 (1958), 312: “*Et la Syrie et la Cilicie et
la Cappadoce, nous les avons incendiées, dévastées, pillées. Dans cette
troisième campagne nous avons conquis sur l’Empire romain: la ville
de Samosate et le plat pays, Alexandrette ~, Katabolos ~, Aigeai ~,
Mopsuestia ~ …*”

But Agathias is not simply reporting the Persian version (so Nöldeke,
Tābarī, 32, note 2). His tone is so hostile to Shāhpūr (cf. p. 120.1 f.,
ἀδικὸς τε ὁν ἐς τα μόλιστα καὶ μισήνος καὶ ἐς μὴν εἰς ὄργην καὶ ὦμότητα … and
p. 120.34 f.) that we can only suppose that his attitude was conditioned by
what he had heard from his Syrian informant, Sergius. It seems to have escaped his notice—or at least he does not remark on the point—that the Royal Annals would hardly have contained a passage so violently hostile to one of the greatest Sassanian kings. Such a memorable event as Shāhpuhr’s progress through Asia Minor was amply remembered in the Syrian sources—cf. Chronicon ad 724, Chabot, 98, 115; Jacob of Edessa, Brooks, 212 (cf. Euseb., Chron./Jerome, Helm, 220d). The Syrian sources indeed took over from Eusebius the Christian Tendenz against Valerian (cf. Chronicon ad 724, Chabot, 98; Euseb., Chron./Jerome, loc. cit.), but in Agathias the religious motif becomes a moral one: righteous gratification at Valerian’s fate becomes righteous indignation against the wicked Shāhpuhr (cf. p. 120.8f.).

In Agathias’ accounts of both Ardashīr and Shāhpuhr I there is, therefore, a good deal of material which does not come from the Annals. His main story of Ardashīr’s coup is a popular version (see supra, on p. 86.155f.), and immediately before the beginning of this excursus he has given us his own opinion of Ardashīr’s action—p. 120.8f. Ardashīr was wicked and unjust because διὰ τῶν οἴκεσθαι διεσπούσθην ἀπεκτούσι, τυραννικὴν τε καὶ βιαόν τὴν ἀρχὴν κατεπτήσατο. This is part of Agathias’ policy of interpreting his Oriental material for Greek readers; even he cannot have thought that the Annals would say this sort of thing about the founder of the Sassanian dynasty.

120.27ff.: ἔξαισιον πλῆθος φόνων . . .

Cf. Zonaras, XII.23 (Bonn ed., 596.4): ἐν δὲ τῇ ἑπανάδοξῃ φάραγγι βοθεὶς περιτυχῶν δ’ Σατώρης, ἢν διελθείν τοὺς ὑπολογίος ἀποροῦν ἢν, αἰχμαλώτους ἔκλεψεν ἀναστηθήσιν καὶ ρέσανα κατὰ τῆς φαραγγος, ἢν οὐς τοὺ βάσιθα διήρξεν πληρωθέντος διὰ τῶν νεκρῶν σωμάτων τὰ σφόν διελθόμεν ὑπολογία. Zonaras’ anecdote is set in the context of Shāhpuhr’s retreat before Odenathus (cf. Agathias, p. 120.35f.), but it is strikingly similar. Shāhpuhr’s cruelty is hinted at by Zosimus (I.27.2) and stated more fully by Zonaras again—Bonn ed., 594.15: καὶ πληθὸς αἰχμαλώτων συναγαγόντες, οὐδὲ τροφῆς αὐτῶς μετεδίδουν εἰ μὴ βραχίστης ἄτστι ἄποτήν, ὡστε μὴν ὤδας μετέχειν εἰς κόρον εἰςοι ἄυτος, ἀλλ’ ἄταξ τῆς ἡμέρας οἱ τούτων φρούριοι Ελαυνοῦ ἄυτος ἐφ’ ὄσποι ὁστερ βοσκήματα . . . . It is clear, in fact, from Shāhpuhr’s inscription on the Ka’ba of Zoroaster that a primary purpose of his invasion was pillage; he took advantage of his victory over Valerian, as he had of his earlier victory, to raid Syria and sack as many towns as possible. It is not surprising that the descendants of his victims should have remembered such a scourge nor that Shāhpuhr’s cruelty should have become legendary. Bridging the valleys with corpses is of course a version of a regular topōs: Menander Rhetor mentions the topōs of rivers being filled with corpses (Rh. Gr., ed. L. Spengel, vol. III, p. 374.13), and cf. Appian, Hann., 28, Sil. Ital., VIII.668f., Lucian, De mort. dial., XII.2, Val. Max., IX.2. Ext. 2, Florus, II.10.18, Claudian, Laud. Stil., I.131f. (Vos Haemi gelidae valles, quas saepe cruentis / stragibus
aequavit Stilico ...), Paneg. Lat., X (4).30.1, Priscian, Laud. Anast., 114f. The closest parallel is from Arrian, Anab., II.11, on Alexander after the battle of Issus: ὃς ἐπὶ φάραγγι τινὶ ἐν τῇ διώξει ἐγένοντο, ἐπὶ τῶν νεκρῶν διαβήματι τὴν φάραγγα. This is another example of Agathias writing up his subject matter.

For the source of Zonaras, Bonn ed., 594.15f., see infra, Appendix B.

120.34f.: Οδέναθος ὁ Παλμυρηνός, ἀνὴρ ἀφανῆς ... πολλοὶ τῶν πάλαι ξυγγραφέων ἀξιοθυγγητὸς γεγενημένος.

For the phrase, cf. p. 120.6, πολλὴ μαρτυρούσα ἡ ἱστορία, and p. 124.100f., πολλοὶ ἦδη τῶν προτέρων ξυγγραφέων ἱστορήται. Another piece of information which does not come from the Annals, where the unflattering tale of his exploits was naturally omitted from accounts of Shāhpur (in Ṭabarī [Nöldeke, 41] as in Firdausī [Mohl, V, 315] he dies peacefully of old age). Agathias leaves his source very vague: the ξυγγραφέως included in fact Eusebius, Chron./ Jerome, Helm, 221d; Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Trig. Tyr., 14.15, Valer., 4.2–4, Gall., 1, 3, 10, 12; Eutrop., IX.10; Orosius, VII.22.12; Zosimus, I.39; Peter Patr., fr. 10 (FHG, IV, 187); and, significantly, Proc., BP, II.5.7. But there is no verbal similarity between the statements of any of these writers and what Agathias says. It is noticeable that when he speaks of “many historians” he never gives any details but refers to the story in question only in general terms. Contrast his display of learning in the first Persian excursus, where he is at pains to cite as many names as he possibly can. These references to “many historians” cannot be regarded as showing that Agathias was widely read; they surely show no more than that he knew that the stories he mentions were well known. If he had read any non-Oriental accounts of the period covered by this excursus in more than the most superficial manner, we should expect more comments from him, and certainly some names. The contrast between the two Persian excursuses is interesting; the first excursus, where he had less genuine Oriental material and called upon more supplementary matter, is inferior to the second, for much of which, as we shall see, he simply copied out the information from Sergius.

120.35: ἀφανῆς μὲν τὰ πρῶτα καὶ ἄγνωστος ...

Rubin, Das Zeitalter Justinians, I, p. 446, note 546, compares this statement with the Book of Elias, which called Odenathus “der niedrigste der Könige” (P. Riessler, Alljüdisches Schrifttum ausserhalb der Bibel [Augsburg, 1928], 235; cf. W. Bousset, in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, I [New York, 1928], 580, s. v. “Antichrist”). If Agathias means Odenathus was of lowly birth, he differs from Zosimus (I.39). But more probably the phrase ἀφανῆς μὲν τὰ πρῶτα ... is a simple antithesis, contrasting with μεγίστην ἀράμενος δόξαν. Compare on p. 86.156 where, however, the very similar phrase applied to Ardashēr can be more closely pressed. Another similar phrase—IV.21, Keydell, 149.14.
NOTE: Agathias on Shâhpuhr I

We can see that, although he does not report the Persian attitude to Shâhpuhr, Agathias does follow in outline the highly selective account of his reign in the Khvadhâynâmâgh tradition. Thus he tells us nothing of Mâni (Christensen, *L'Iran*, 180, note 2). The Khvadhâynâmâgh evidently showed its Zoroastrian orthodox bias at this point by minimizing the truth of Shâhpuhr’s sympathy with Mâni, of which we know chiefly from Manichaean sources—Christensen, *op. cit.*, 196 f., C. Schmidt and H. J. Polotsky, *Ein Mani-Fund in Ägypten*, Sitzungsberichte d. Preuss. Akad. d. Wissensch., Phil.-hist. Klasse (Berlin, 1933), etc.; cf. Zaehner, *Zurvan*, 36. The Royal Annals would be even less likely to mention it. The Syriac chronicles, on the other hand, tend to record all possible details about Mâni at this point—e.g., *Chronicon Edessenum*, Guidi, 4: *anno 551 natus est Manes* (nothing else about Ardashêr or Shâhpuhr I); *Chronicon Maroniticum*, Chabot, 47; *Chronicon ad 724*, Chabot, 115. But in spite of Agathias’ Syrian bias, there is nothing to show that he ever saw any Syriac chronicles, and while he knows a little about Manichaeism in general (*supra*, on p. 82.83), it seems that he knew nothing of its connection with the reign of Shâhpuhr I.


122.40: μηδὲν ὅτιοὺν δράσας . . .
So Firdausi’s account (Mohl, V, 317–23) is occupied wholly by speeches, and Ŵabarî’s (Nöldeke, 43–46) by details of his birth.
A genealogical table of the first six generations of the Sassanian dynasty is given by Maricq in *Syria*, 35 (1958), 333.

122.41: ὁ μετ’ ἐκείνον Ὀμαραράνης . . .
For the form, see Nöldeke, *Ŵabarî*, 46, note 3.

122.41 f.: Vahrâm I
Son of Shâhpuhr I, brother of Hormizd—Nöldeke, *Ŵabarî*, 49, note 1. Ŵabarî (Nöldeke, 47), Ḥamza (*Annales*, Gottwaldt, II, 14), and Firdausî (Mohl, V, 324) make him Hormizd’s son. Agathias omits Mâni’s end, put by Ŵabarî (Nöldeke, 47), Ḥamza (Gottwaldt, II, 36), and Mas’ûdî (Barbier de Meynard, II, 167 f.) under Vahrâm I, by Eutychius (Pococke, I, 386)
under Vahrām II. If Sergius reported to Agathias any details from the Annals concerning the religious policy of the kings (or, indeed, if the Annals contained any such material—note that Agathias knows little of Mazdak and nothing at all of Zurvanism), Agathias must have felt it to be unsuitable for inclusion in his excursus. The reign of Vahrām I was a time of orthodox persecution (Ḫamza, loc. cit., and cf. the inscr. of Kartēr at Naqsh-i Rustam); this is probably represented by Ṭabarī’s phrase, “Bahrām ... war ... ein saufter u. milder Mann, so dass die Leute sich bei seiner Thronbesteigung freuten” (Nöldeke, 47). The attitude displayed to the various kings in the Khvadhāynāmāgh was dictated entirely by their religious position, i.e., whether or not they were strictly orthodox (see infra, on Yazdgard II); this bias is completely lacking in Agathias.

It was in this reign too that war broke out again between Rome and Persia (Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Aurel., 35); Agathias tells us nothing of this.

122.42: Vahrām II

Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Carus, 8: in A.D. 283 the Persians were occupati domestica seditione. Vahrām’s brother Hormizd attempted to set himself up as an independent ruler in the East (Christensen, L’Iran², 228).

122.45f.: Σεγάν δὲ σακα ἐπακλήθη ... 

For the custom, see Herzfeld, Paikuli, I, 42f., Nöldeke, Ṭabarī, 49, note 2. The campaign commemorated here was that against Hormizd, who was leading the Sacai.

122.54: ὁν Σεγεστανῶν ἑθος ... 

The place was called Sagistān, the people, the Sacai; hence Σεγεστανῶν is a conflation of the two.

122.57f.: Narseh

Agathias has no details of Narseh’s genealogy, which is indeed wrongly given by both Ṭabarī (Nöldeke, 48) and Firdaust (Mohl, V, 333): if he is (as seems certain) the Narseh mentioned in Shāhpūhr KZ (section 48) as king of India, Sagistān, and Turan, he was the son of Shāhpūhr I. From the inscription of Narseh at Paikuli we learn that he gained the throne after a revolt against Vahrām III (Herzfeld, Paikuli, I, 94f.). This was evidently suppressed in the Khvadhāynāmāgh, as was his unsuccessful war against Diocletian and the peace by which he had to cede Nisibis (Peter Patr., fr. 14 [FHG, IV, 189]; Ps.-Joshua Stylites, Wright, 7).

122.59f.: κληρονομεὶ τοῦ πατρός ... ἱσορροπίας.

Nöldeke (Ṭabarī, 416) sees this as a mistake, for the other sources give Hormizd II seven years five months, but are unanimous in allotting to
Narseh nine years. The "mistake" is reversed in Firdausi (Mohl, V, 333f.) and Biruni (Sachau, 127), where both have nine years. Agathias' version is repeated by Mas'udi (Barbier de Meynard, II, 174). In view of Firdausi and Biruni, it seems very likely, however, that Narseh and Hormizd did rule for the same length of time; Agathias' figure of seven years five months will be the correct one, in view of the calculations of the other reigns.

122.62f.: Σαβώρ μετὰ τούτοις ...  

The Khvadhāynāmāgh tradition glosses over the interregnum and the troubles which followed the death of Hormizd II, and there is accordingly nothing of this in Agathias either. The only sign of confusion is Firdausi's statement (Mohl, V, 339): "Le trône resta inoccupé pendant quelque temps et la tête des grands fut remplie de soucis"; Tabarī actually assures us (Nöldeke, 51) that Hormizd left no sons and himself designated the unborn Shāhpuhr king. We are left to discover from Zosimus, II.27, John of Antioch, fr. 178 (FHG, IV, 605), and Zonaras, XIII.5, that Narseh had, by his first wife, three sons, of whom Adhirnarseh became king—though soon deposed—while the younger two suffered at the hands of Shāhpuhr's guardians, one fleeing to Rome, the other being blinded. But Zonaras can hardly be right in making Shāhpuhr Narseh's son, in view of what follows.

122.65f.: ἦν δὲ τὰ τῶν ὁδίνων ἀμφίβολα ...  

Cf. Eutychius, Pococke, I, 398, though there the wife herself prophesies that the child will be a boy.

122.78f.: τῇ γαστρὶ περιθέντες τὴν κίδαριν ...  

Cf. Firdausi (Mohl, V, 339): "On suspendit audessus de sa tête une couronne." Forty days after the birth "on prepara un trône royal, et les héroïs aux ceintures d'or suspendirent au-dessus une couronne d'or ... on plaça cet enfant de quarante jours sur le trône de son glorieux père et au-dessous de la couronne." Nöldeke is wrong in saying (Tabari, 51, note 3, and 147) that, according to Firdausi, Shāhpuhr II was born forty days after his father's death. There is in fact some confusion in Firdausi, for all he says (Mohl, V, 338) is that the mourning for Hormizd II, during which the throne was unoccupied, lasted forty days. At some unspecified time (after the throne had been empty "pendant quelque temps"—ibid., 339), the unborn Shāhpuhr was designated king (by suspending the crown over the head of his mother), after which "un peu de temps se passa" and Shāhpuhr was born. His actual crowning (ibid., 340) took place when he was forty days old, during the whole of which time the people feasted. Even supposing that the figure of forty days for the interregnum is trustworthy and not a mere doublet of the forty days before the infant Shāhpuhr was crowned, Firdausi allows more than forty days between the death of Hormizd and the actual birth of Shāhpuhr.
AGATHIAS ON THE SASSANIANS

124.86f.: κατὰ δὲ τῶν τέταρτῶν τε καὶ εἰκοστῶν ... ἐνιαυτῶν ...

The ceding of Nisibis by Jovian took place in A.D. 363 (A.S. 674)—cf. Ps.-Joshua Stylites, Wright, 7; Chronicon Edessenum, Guidi, 5; Chronicon ad 724, Chabot, 154. Agathias’ date is simply wrong (Nöldeke, Ṭabarî, 410, advocates the correction πεντακοστῶν). But Eutychius, Pococke, I, 486, puts the reign of Jovian in Shāhpuhr’s twenty-first year; possibly then this was an early error which did not originate with Agathias.

124.100f.: τὰ μὲν οὖν κατ’ ἐκείνο τοῦ καίρου ἡμείς ἡδη τῶν προτέρων ἔγγραφων ἱστορίης.

See supra, on p. 120.34. We do not know which writers Agathias means, if indeed he does mean any specific ones.

The starting point for Agathias’ mention of Julian is the loss of Nisibis to Persia, and p. 124.87–99 is told with a strong pro-Nisibis bias. That Agathias was not using Persian material here is evident from the fact that there is nothing about the death of Julian in Firdausî (who mixes up Shāhpuhr I and Shāhpuhr II at this point) or Eutychius, while Ṭabarî’s version (Nöldeke, 59) has been shown to come from a sixth-century Syriac romance (Th. Nöldeke, “Über den syrischen Roman von Kaiser Julian,” ZDMG, 28 [1874], 263f.). Agathias is cited by the chronicle preserved in Par. gr. 1712 and by Cedrenus, Bonn ed., I, 538, for an oracle given to Julian before he set out for the East (cited by Theodoret, HE, III.21 [ed. L. Parmentier, 200], and Graec. aff. cur., PG, 83, col. 1069). This must be a mistake, unless it refers simply to this bare mention of Julian on p. 124.90, for there is nothing here about any oracle, and I have argued elsewhere (“Agathias and Cedrenus on Julian,” JRS, 53 [1963], 91f.) that Agathias would not in any case have used the tendentious account of the apostate Julian which is given by Theodoret and the other ecclesiastical historians. It seems equally unlikely that he owes anything to the hostility to Jovian’s peace that we find in Greg. Naz., Or., V.15, or in the nexus Ammianus, XXV.9.1–12, Zosimus, III.30f., Suda, s.v. ἱοβιανός (= John of Antioch, fr. 181 [FHG, IV, 606], Exc. de virt., Büttner-Wobst, I, 201.8f.)—see my article in JRS, 53 (1963), 93.

Here again we have an episode seen from the Syrian viewpoint. Like Ps.-Josh. Styl. (Wright, 7), an early sixth-century writer, Agathias sees the ceding of Nisibis as a turning point, whereas the Western (Greek and Latin) authors are chiefly interested in the fate of Julian. Compare, for the Syrian point of view, the Chronicon ad 724 (the so-called Liber Calipharem), Chabot, 104, where, however, the Christian partiality for Jovian neutralizes so far as possible local hostility to the peace. Here again Agathias departs from his Persian material to look at things from the Syrian side. His vague reference to τὸ πολλὰς τῶν προτέρων ἔγγραφων probably means no more than that the death of Julian was a favourite topic; it certainly does not imply that he had bothered to look up any of the authors.
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τὰ...κατ’ ἑκείνο τοῦ καίροῦ ἕνενεχθέντα: Agathias refers vaguely to “what happened at that time”; he does not trouble to give the details, thinking them irrelevant to his purpose (p. 124.101, οὐ... ἐνδιατριβεῖν σχολή). There is no trace here of the religious Tendenz which the subject of Julian attracted in most sources, and it may be that here too Agathias has deliberately excluded religious bias, although it is very likely that Sergius’ account was coloured by it, like most of the Syriac chronicles. Agathias tries to avoid references to religious disputes, church history, Christian persecutions, etc., as being out of place in an ostensibly secular and classicizing work. He will however admit political bias, even when it ill accords with the Persian viewpoint of most of the excursus. Cf. 124.97: ξυνθέκας τιθεται ἄγενες... Hostility to the peace made with Jovian was part of the Roman tradition, for patriotic reasons—cf. Ammianus, XXV.7.13, 9.8—but it would have been livelier still in the East itself; see Stein, Bas-Empire, I, pt. 2, 507, note 71, for sources. Cf. also the songs of the Antiochenes, ἀφ. Suda, s.v. Ἱοβάννιος: ἀπεκκοιτην οὖν αὐτόν (sc. Ιοβιαν) φίδαις καὶ παραδίδεις καὶ τοῖς καλομένοισι φαμόσσοις, διὰ τὴν τοῦ Ναζιβίδος προδοσίαν.


NOTE 1: Agathias on Shāhpuhr II

Sergius has evidently abbreviated the account in the Royal Annals (cf. p. 134.294f.), for Agathias does not give us Shāhpuhr’s name, which Christensen renders “arracheur d’épaules” (L’Iran², 235 and note 2), and which was given to him by reason of the barbarous punishment he inflicted on his Arab prisoners. Nor does he tell us anything of Shāhpuhr’s Arab wars (see Ṭabarī, Nöldeke, 53f.). On the other hand, Agathias’ silence about all details of the wars with Rome save the ceding of Nisibis is quite in line with the Khvādāhānmāgh tradition, in which this was the only fixed event (cf. Firdausī, Mohl, V, 376). So is his silence on the subject of Shāhpuhr’s persecution of Christians, for we know of this largely from the Syrian Acta and from the Armenian sources (cf. Labouret, Le christianisme, 43f.). Again, we know many details about Shāhpuhr’s character from Ammianus, but Agathias, in line with the Persian tradition, gives a completely depersonalized account (cf. Christensen, L’Iran², 249f.).
NOTE 2:  *Shāhpūhr's sieges of Nisibis*

Except for the ceding of the city by Jovian, Agathias mentions no struggle for Nisibis, either by Shāhpūhr I or Shāhpūhr II.

Ṭabarī (Nöldeke, 31), supported by Eutychius (Pococke, I, 377f.) though not by Firdausi, speaks of a siege of Nisibis lasting for 11 years and undertaken by Shāhpūhr I. But the area of Shāhpūhr I's military activities was stereotyped as "Syria, Cilicia and Cappadocia" (supra, p. 139), not Nisibis, and Nöldeke (*Ṭabarī*, 32, note 1) mentioned the possibility that this is a doublet of Shāhpūhr II's attempts. Surely this is correct. For Firdausi too mixes up the two Shāhpūhrs, putting Mānī under Shāhpūhr II (Mohl, V, 379) and making both Shāhpūhrs fight a Roman called Baranousch, who is in the first case a "gardien des frontières," and in the second the Roman Emperor himself, who, on hearing Shāhpūhr's demands, concludes a treaty ceding Nisibis, with the greatest possible equanimity. It was only too likely that the two Shāhpūhrs would indeed be confused. See further Sprengling, *Third Century Iran; Sapor and Kartir*, 86.


124.103:  ἀρταχάρι ἀδελφός ὁν οὐτῷ ἀρκεῖ ἀρκεῖervertext

Agathias gives us no suspicion of the obscurity of this reign. It is likely that the statement here and in the chronicles that Ardashīr II was the brother of Shāhpūhr II is mistaken and that Ardashīr II was the son of Shāhpūhr Sagānsaa, himself brother (or more probably half-brother, in view of Ṭabarī's firm statement that Hormizd died with no son as yet born) of Shāhpūhr II. The reason for this confusion is obvious. Shāhpūhr Sagānsaa is mentioned in a Middle Persian inscription, *ca. A.D.* 311, for which see R. N. Frye, "The Persepolis Middle Persian Inscriptions from the Time of Shapur II," *Iranian Studies presented to Kaj Barr* (Copenhagen, 1966), 83ff. I owe this genealogy to Professor Frye, as also the suggestion that this Shāhpūhr might be the unnamed son of Hormizd II mentioned in Greek sources (supra, on p. 122.62f.). Ps.-Mos. Chor. significantly makes Ardashīr II the son of a Shāhpūhr (Patkanian, "Essai d'une histoire de la dynastie des Sassanides," *JA*, Ser. 6, vol. 7 [1866], 155), and cf. also Eutychius, Pococke, I. 473.

124.104:  ἀπέβαλονervertext

According to Ṭabarī (Nöldeke, 70), he was dethroned by the nobles—and Firdausi's and Ḥamza's (Gottwaldt, II, 14) story that he abdicated in favour of Shāhpūhr II's young son is probably an attempt to gloss over this, as Nöldeke points out (*Ṭabarī*, 70, note 2). The same happened with his account of the death of Ardashīr's successor—see *infra*. Possibly Agathias is reporting a tradition already contaminated. But cf. on p. 126.146.
124.104f.  ὁ δὲ υἱὸς ὁ τούτου, Ἁμζωρ . . .

τούτου—Ardashēr? In Ṭabarī (Nöldeke, 70), Ḥamza (Gottwaldt, II, 39) and Firdausi (Mohl, V, 388), as well as Eutychius (Pococke, I, 537), he is the son of Shāhpuhr II; so also the relief of Shāhpuhr III with Shāhpuhr II at Taq-e-Bostān (Christensen, L’Iran², 257, fig. 29), where inscriptions secure the identification (Herzfeld, Paikuli, I, 124).

Agathias tells us nothing about his death, but according to Ṭabarī (Nöldeke, 71) he was killed with a tent rope by the nobles; the whitewashed version however tells us that a tent rope fell on his head in a gale (Firdausi, Mohl, V, 390; Mas‘ūdī, Barbier de Meynard, II, 189).

124.107:  ὁ παῖς . . .

Cf. p. 122.45f. Agathias probably presents the true Persian account in making Vahram IV the son of Shāhpuhr III, as against Eutychius (Pococke, I, 537) and others who make him the son simply of “Shāhpuhr,” and Ṭabarī who makes him the son of Shāhpuhr II. See Nöldeke, Ṭabarī, 71, note 2.

124.107:  ὃς δὲ καὶ Κερμασαβά ὄνομάτεο.

Vahram IV received the name and government of Kermān (Ṭabarī, Nöldeke, 71), where he built a town. Pace Rawlinson (The Seventh Great Oriental Monarchy, 264), Agathias does not say explicitly that Vahram was governor of Kermān, but merely that he received the προσηγορία. For further examples of the practice, see Christensen, L’Iran², 102, Nöldeke, Ṭabarī, 49, note 2.

Neither the pure Persian tradition nor Agathias tells us anything of the partition of Armenia, placed by Christensen (L’Iran², 253) in A.D. 390, in the reign of Vahram IV (for the dating of this to 387, in the reign of Shāhpuhr III, see Stein, Bas-Empire, I, pt. 2, 528, note 89).

124.111:  καὶ παρὰ ‘Ρωμαίοις ὁ μὲν Ἀφρικαῖος . . .

Agathias might have mentioned Justinian’s titles, as he did (inaccurately) at 1.4, Keydell, 14.7, but prefers to take his examples from the remote past. It sounds from this as though the practice had been discontinued in his own day (καθότερ πρῶτον . . . ἐπεκλήθη), whereas the reverse was the case. If we are to believe Jordanes (Get., 315–6), it was not confined to the Emperor—victor et triumphator Justinianus imperator et consul Belisarius Vandalici Africani Geticique dicentur. The parallel is not exact, for in Roman practice the general himself, not his son, took the title.

124.112f.  ἐπὶ τούτους Ἰσδιγέρδης ὁ Σαβώρου . . .

In making Yazdgard the son of Shāhpuhr (II or III?) Agathias agrees with Lazarus of Pharb (Langlois, II, 268) and the Acts of the Council of Seleucia (called by Yazdgard himself [ed. Lamy, 23]), as well as with one branch of the Persian tradition (Nöldeke, Ṭabarī, 73, note 1); Ṭabarī on the other hand (Nöldeke, 72) makes him a son of Vahram IV, as does Ḥamza (Gottwaldt, II, 39).
AGATHIAS ON THE SASSANIANS

124.114f.: Ἀρκόδιον τὸν βασιλέα...

Cf. Procopius, *BP*, I.2.1f., then Theophanes, Α.Μ. 5900, Cedrenus, Bonn ed., I, 586, Niceph., *HE*, XIV.1, Zonaras, XIII.22, Barhebraeus, Budge, I, 71. حامزة (Gottwaldt, II, 13) also has it. The story is disbelieved by Gibbon, by Güterbock (*Byzanz und Persien in ihren diplomatisch-völkerrechtlichen Beziehungen im Zeitalter Justinians*, 27f.), by P. Sauerbrei ("König Jazdegard, der Sünder, der Vormund des byzantinischen Kaisers Theodosius des Kleinen," *Festschrift Albert von Bamberg zum 1. Oktober 1905 gewidmet vom Lehrerkollegium des Gymnasiums Ernestinum zu Gotha* [Gotha, 1905], 90ff.), and by Rubin (*Das Zeitalters Justinians*, I, 484, note 745). It is accepted by J. B. Bury, (*History of the Later Roman Empire*, 2nd ed. [New York, 1958], II, 2), by J. Haury (*Zur Beurteilung des Geschichtsschreibers Procopius von Caesarea*, Programm München [Munich, 1896], 21), by Nöldeke (*Tabari*, 74, note 3), by C. Zakrzewski ("Un homme d'état du Bas-Empire: Anthemiens," *Eos*, 31 [1928], 426–27), by Christensen (*L'Iran*, 270), and by Stein (*Bas-Empire*, I, 549, note 139). It is confirmed (Bury) or discredited (Rubin) by the parallel story of Cavadh's proposal that Justin I should adopt Chosroes (*Proc.*, *BP*, I.11.2, etc.). Agathias tells us that everyone knew the story; we have no reason to disbelieve him, and if it was so widely known it is likely enough that it was true. But it would be true only in the sense that there was some such diplomatic gesture; it certainly did not proceed so far as the adoption of Chosroes by Justin I (on which see A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, I [Cambridge, Mass., 1950], 265f.). It is interesting for Agathias' method to see that he devotes nearly all his account of Yazgdard I to refuting this story of Procopius’, as though he is so pleased at being able to disagree with him (see *infra*, on p. 134.300f.). The disagreement, like most of Agathias’ own comments on his material, is made on purely general grounds. It is also absurdly out of proportion in the context, much as his long and detailed account of the death of the Merovingian Theudebert is out of all proportion in his excursus on the Franks (I.4, Keydell, 13f.).

126.120f.: γραφῇ δὲ τινι καὶ λόγοις Ιστορικοῖς...

This looks like proof that Agathias did do some research; if so, he got little result from it. It is surprising (if true) that Procopius should be the only author to record the story; one might wonder how exhaustive Agathias’ research was.

126.123: ὡς πλείστα μεμαθηκότα...

An often quoted judgement on Procopius (e.g., Haury-Wirth, Pref., p. vii). But it is not so much for Procopius’ learning that he is justly admired as for his personal knowledge of the campaigns he describes (cf. *ibid.*, p. xiiif.). Agathias modestly disclaims any learning—and to judge from his citations of earlier historians in this excursus he is not being disingenuous.
126.135: καὶ πρὸς γε τὰ ἐς θεὸν πεπλανημένῳ ... 

Cf. III.12, Keydell, 99.27f.: τὸ δὲ πάντων ἀνωσιώτερον, δόξαν ὅρθην πρὸς εὐσέβειαν καὶ τὴν τῶν ἴερων ἀπορρήτων σεμισίτητα περιφρονήσας. τῶς γὰρ οὐ τούτῳ φανούμεθα δράστες, εἰ προσχωρήσαμεν τοῖς τοῦ κρείττονος ἐκατιοτάτοις; IV.2, Keydell, 124.24f.: ἐπὶ τοὺς ἑξιστότως καὶ ἄλλοτριώτατος καὶ πρὸς γε τὰ ἐς θεὸν ἔτερογνώμονας ... IV.3, Keydell, 125.28f.: ἄνδρα τοσοῦτον, φίλου ωμός καὶ συνήθη ... καὶ ταύτα περὶ τὸ κρείττον φρονοῦντα. ... These examples come from speeches. The present passage shows that Agathias fully shared the Christian sentiments he put into the mouths of his speakers.

126.143: ἄλλα μεμνημένοι εἰς αἰεὶ εὐνοὺς τὰς ὄν καὶ ἐφημαίοις ...

Agathias has been following Procopius’ account of the “adoption” (BP, I.2.9: [Ἰσδιγέρδης] ... εἰρήνη τε ἄφθονο χρώμανος διαγέγοιεν καὶ Ῥωμαίους τὸν πάντα χρόνου καὶ Θεοδοσίῳ τὴν ἄρχην διεισόατο ... and cf. ibid., 8: νῦν καὶ πρότερον ἐπὶ πρότσι μεγαλοφορούντα διαβότος εἰς τὰ μάλιστα). The account of Yazdgard I in the Khvadháynámagh tradition is very tendentious; he was known as “der Sündér” (Ṭabari, Nöldeke, 72, etc.), while according to Firdausí (Mohl, V, 395), “toute tendresse et toute justice avaient disparu de son âme” and (ibid., 396) “tous les Mobeds” were “peinés et tourmentés par lui.” See Christensen L’Iran², 269. The reason for this was that he showed himself (at first, anyway) friendly toward the Christians, so alienating the native clergy. The Christian sources praise him to the skies; cf. Nöldeke, Ṭabari, 74f., note 3, quoting from J. P. N. Land, Anecdota Syriaca, I (Leiden, 1862), 8, a contemporary Syrian source which calls him “der gute und barmherzige König Jazdeger, der christliche, der gesegnete unter den König, dessen Andenken zum Segen und dessen zukünftiges Leben noch schöner sein möge als sein früheres; alle Tage der Gutes den Armen und Elenden.” Cf. Labourt, Le christianisme, 91f. (with further examples), Nöldeke, loc. cit. Even the change in Yazdgard’s attitude at the end of his reign (Theodoret, HE, V.38) did not erase the memory of his earlier sympathies. But Agathias’ praise of Yazdgard surely comes directly from Procopius, his source for the whole reign.

126.146: Ἕκεντον δὲ τεθηκότος ...

The Khvadháynámagh tradition claims that Yazdgard I was kicked in the heart by a mysterious horse, which then disappeared (Ṭabari, Nöldeke, 77; Eutychius, Pococke, II, 78; Firdausí, Mohl, V, 418 [a more complicated version]); this is regarded, probably rightly, by Nöldeke (note ad loc.) as a cover story invented by the Zoroastrian nobles to hide the fact that Yazdgard was assassinated (so also Christensen, L’Iran², 273). Compare the differing versions of the dethronement or abdication of Ardashār II (see note on p. 124.104) and the death of Shāhpur III (see note on p. 124.104f.). It is surely no more than coincidental that Agathias gives no details of the deaths of any of these kings; he is giving an abbreviated ac-
count, and Sergius probably omitted these stories as of no interest to Byzantines. Agathias shows no conception of the Zoroastrian and political *Tendenz* that was later present in the Khvadhâynâmagh, either because Sergius did not appreciate it either, or because it was not yet present in the official record. The latter seems unlikely, however, for Sergius got his information from priests, or at least officials (p. 134.285f.: τοὺς τῶν βασιλικῶν ἀπομνημονευόμενοι φρονεῖται τε καὶ ἐπιστάταις), and it is likely enough that he would have been given the version best designed to enhance the reputation of the kings (cf. p. 134.288ff.).

126.146f.: Vahrām V

In his brief account Agathias does not allow us to suspect any of the succession difficulties which fill the Khvadhâynâmagh tradition, nor the favor which the Zoroastrian Khvadhâynâmagh showed to this violent persecutor of Christians. The explanation (noted already by Nöldke, *Tabari*, 116, note 2) is that Agathias is still following Procopius. Thus p. 126.147–50 is simply a summary of *BP*, I.2.11f., which continues straight on from the story of Yazdgard and Theodosius. According to Procopius, Anatolius, the *magister militum* of Theodosius II, was sent as an ambassador to Vahrām, who was invading Roman territory. He advanced on foot towards the King, who was so struck by this apparent sign of surrender that he at once retreated, soon to conclude a peace agreeing to all Anatolius’ terms. In taking this over from Procopius, Agathias also takes over the mistake of putting in the reign of Vahrām V the peace that belongs to that of Yazdgard II (see *infra*).

On the succession, see Christensen, *L’Iran*, 274ff. Vahrām had been brought up by Mundir at Hirā (Tabari, Nöldke, 80, 86; Firdausi, Mohl, V, 399ff.): the nobles wanted to exclude from the throne the progeny of Yazdgard “the sinner” (Eutychius, Cocceke, II, 81), and succeeded in killing Yazdgard’s other son, Shāhpuhr, king of Armenia (Ps.-Mos. Chor., III.56 [Langlois, II, 164]). But Vahrām seized the throne with the aid of an army. The manner of his success is made into a fairy tale by Tabari, Firdausi, and Mas’ūdī, while in Eutychius Vahrām simply stands up and proclaims his qualifications. Nothing in Agathias of this.

Once he had achieved the throne, Vahrām became astoundingly popular, assuming the status of a romantic hero—cf. Nöldeke, *Tabari*, 98, note 3, and see the two hundred pages of adulation in Firdausi, as translated by Mohl. Yet Agathias is quite content to copy out Procopius, giving no hint of the many stories associated with Vahrām V. It is less surprising that he omits to mention his persecution of the Christians and the later treaty with Rome, whereby in 422 he guaranteed toleration of the Christians in Iran, for we hear of it only from Christian writers (Socrates, *HE*, VII.18, Theodoret, *HE*, V.39). But the impression remains that Agathias had only a very abbreviated account to deal with at this stage. Though Vahrām was criticized in Iranian sources (e.g., Tabari, Nöldeke, 98), his great reputation
was based on the power he allowed to the nobles and clergy (Christensen, L'Iran², 277), and their appreciation must have been reflected in the Annals. If so, then Sergius has drastically curtailed his material here. As with Yazdgard I, Agathias knows nothing of the elaborate stories of Vahrām’s death told in the Oriental sources; it is possible, however, that the tales of his having fallen into a ditch while hunting a wild ass are of late origin, for Firdausi records that he died a natural death (Mohl, VI, 62; cf. Nöldeke, Ṭabarī, 103, note 3). On the name Vahrām Gor, see O. Hansen, “Tocharisch-iranische Beziehungen,” ZDMG, 94 (1940), 162.

126.151f.: Yazdgard II

Again an abbreviated account. The Khvadhāyānāmagh tradition predictably represents this persecutor as mild and clement (Ṭabarī, Nöldeke, 113, and 114, note 1; Christensen, L’Iran², 283–89; Labourt, Le christianisme, 126f.). The peace which Procopius and Agathias attribute to the reign of Vahrām V (see supra) in fact belongs to this reign (Nöldeke, Ṭabarī, 116, note 2).

126.153f.: Περάλης δὲ μετ’ ἑκείνῳ . . .

Yet again no mention of the succession troubles, and no mention at all of Pērōz’s brother Hormizd, who preceded him in the royal line and from whom he wrested the kingship (Ṭabarī, Nöldeke, 115, 117; Firdausi, Mohl, VI, 68, where Hormizd’s reign is put at one year one month; Eutychius, Pococke, II, 101; Elisaeus, Langlois, II, 248, where the conflict lasts for two years). Nöldeke distinguishes three versions of the story (Ṭabarī, 114, note 2; 117, note 3). The Armenians (cf. Patkanian, in JA, Ser. 6, vol. 7 [1866]) make Pērōz complain to the king of the Hephthalites that he has been set aside in favor of his younger brother; this might be designed to cover the true story of an attack by Pērōz on the rightful king, in line with Firdausi’s usual adulatory tone.

126.157f.: οὐ τοσόν οἷοι, τῇ ρώμῃ τῶν δυσμενῶν . . .

According to one of the succession versions, Pērōz fled to the Hephthalites, whose king gave him an army with which he attacked Hormizd and seized the throne (Ṭabarī, Nöldeke, 115; Firdausi, Mohl, VI, 68). Christensen (L’Iran², 289f.) rejects the story as a doublet of that of Cavādh (infra, p. 155f.).

For the form Νεφσαλτκ, cf. Nöldeke, Ṭabarī, 115, note 2; G. Moravcsik, Byzantinoturcica, 2nd. ed., II (Berlin, 1958), 127; F. Altheim, Geschichte der Hunnen, I (Berlin, 1959), 34, 41ff. The form with the N is a Greek variant. Procopius has Ἑφσαλτκ (e.g., BP, I.3.1) but with Νεφσαλτκ as a varia lectio. The people were really called Chionites, Hephthalites being the name of the dynasty (R. Ghirshman, Les Chionites-Hephthalites, Mémoires de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire, 80 [Cairo, 1948], 115f.).
126.158f.: The death of Pērōz

Agathias’ violent bias against Pērōz (cf. ἄνηρ τολμητὸς μὲν ἄγαν ... ) is paralleled by Ps.-Josh. Styl., Wright, 8, and especially by the Armenian writers—Lazarus of Pharb (fifth century), Langlois, II, 259f.; Moses of Kalankatvaci (tenth century), Patkanian, in JA, Ser. 6, vol. 7 (1866), 173ff.; Kirakos of Gantzak (thirteenth century), Patkanian, loc. cit. Cf. John Catholicus (tenth century), Patkanian, loc. cit. Lazarus (chap. 73, Langlois, II, 350f.) emphasizes the magnitude of the disaster in which Pērōz was killed and says of it: “la cause de si grands malheurs et d’une si éclatante défaite est Bérose lui-même,” and later (chap. 74) Pērōz is described as “un homme violent, présomptueux et irrésistible” (exactly the sequence of characteristics ascribed to him by Agathias, p. 126.153–56). Again, Lazarus mentions “la cruauté de Bérose” and “son caractère orgueilleux et capricieux” (Langlois, II, 353). Pērōz threatens the Hephthalite envoys that he will tell his army to bring Hephthalite earth, with which “je comblerai la mer et les fosses des frontières qu’on a creusées entre nous.” Lazarus calls this “une réponse orgueilleuse” and comments: “Son coeur était devenu si insensible qu’il ne pouvait comprendre qu’il devait remplir avec les cadavres de ses soldats ce fossé qu’il avait fait creuser pour sa perte et pour celle de toute sa nation.”

No such hostility found its way into the Khvadhāynāmagn—indeed, Ţabarān calls Pērōz “gut und religiös” (Nöldeke, 118), evidently because of his support of the Zoroastrian clergy; it was in the Persian interest, moreover, to minimize as far as possible what was evidently a crushing disaster (Firdausi, Mohl, VI, 78: “aucun des princes n’était plus en vie, excepté Kobad, et cette armée et ce royaume étaient livrés au vent”). Nöldeke rightly says that the story Ţabarān quotes from “ein anderer Berichterstatter als Hisam,” which is full of hostility to Pērōz for the harm which he brought on his people, cannot have been in the Book of Kings (Ţabarān, 121, note 2).

In spite of some superficial resemblances (p. 128.161f., τοῦ πεδίου ... —Proc., BP, I.4.7, τοῦ πεδίου, ἀπείλουν Πέρσαι ... ; cf. I.4.12, οὶ δὲ Πέρσαι ξυνεῖναι τῆς ἐπι- βουλῆς συνειμή ἔχοντες κατὰ κράτος ἐν πεδίῳ λίαν ὑπτίκων ἐδίκουν ... ; I.4.14, μέλλοντα ἐς τὸ βάραθρον τοῦτο ἐμπεσεῖσθαι ... ), it does not seem likely that Agathias used Procopius here. Not only does Procopius have a much fuller and more detailed account of all Pērōz’ campaigns, but he lacks the vehement bias shown by Agathias. Procopius moreover repeats at length (I.4.14f.) a story about Pērōz’ having flung away his pearl earring so that no one should wear it after him, with full details of what happened to the pearl afterward, of which we hear nothing in Agathias.

Agathias must certainly have known Procopius’ account, for he is familiar with Procopius’ version of the reigns immediately preceding and following that of Pērōz (cf. p. 128.192f., where he explicitly mentions Procopius). But he evidently had some access to the Syrian-Armenian view of Pērōz; it is not impossible that Lazarus of Pharb’s account had somehow filtered through to him (cf. Proc., BP, I.5.9, ἡ τῶν Ἀρμενίων ιστορία φησί; I.5.41,
128.164: ὑπὸ τῶν Ὀὐνικῶν κατεστρατηγημένος.

Agathias tells us only of his last campaign, though the earlier part of the war against the Hephthalites gave rise to some fanciful romanticization (Christensen, L’Iran², 294, note 2; cf. Tabari, Nöldeke, 129).

128.164f.: Ὀὐνικῶν γὰρ γένος οἱ Νεφθαλίται.

Proc., BP, I.3.1: πρὸς τὸ Ὀὐνικῶν τῶν Ἐφθαλιτῶν ἔθνος, οὕτως περι λευκὸς ὑμοίλουσι—no doubt the source of Agathias’ information. Cf. also I.3.2: Ἐφθαλίται δὲ Ὀὐνικῶν μὲν ἔθνος εἰσὶ τε καὶ ὑμοίλουσι. Agathias is content not to go into further details; Procopius too, while distinguishing them from other Huns, still calls them by that name (I.3.8,9, etc.). See Altheim, Geschichte der Hunnen, I, 36ff., esp. 38, Moravcsik, Byzantinoturcica, II, 200f. The Byzantines knew them as Huns, as did the Syrians (Altheim, loc. cit.). While Tabari does tell us a certain amount about them (Altheim, ὁπ. cit., 40), Agathias gives no details whatever. For earlier bibliography, see Moravcsik, ὁπ. cit., I, 69. For an attempt to show a political connection between Byzantium and the Hephthalites in the fifth century, see K. Hannestad, “Les relations de Byzance avec la Transcaucase et l’Asie centrale aux 5e et 6e siècles,” Byzantion, 25–27 (1955–57), 421ff.

128.165f. [Valāsh. Cavād I, his character and policies, his deposition, and his escape from prison and flight to the Hephthalites. His return to Persia and removal of Zāmāsp. Similarities between Cavād and Zeno and Julius Nepos. Accession of Chosroes: his greatness. His inglorious death. Agathias’ statement of the credentials of his excursus.]

128.165: Οὔσαλας... ὁ τούτων ἄδελφος...

Omitted by Procopius, who confuses Valāsh with Zāmāsp (BP, I.5.2–3; cf. Agathias, p. 128.188). Agathias on the other hand makes no mention of the fact recorded by both Procopius (BP, I.4.35) and Lazarus (Langlois, II, 357) that Persia was subject to the Hephthalites for a period set by Procopius at two years. The Iranian tradition, bent on saving face, makes Zarmihr, Valāsh’s minister, fight a war with the Hephthalites and recover all the booty, including Pērōz’ daughter (Tabari, Nöldeke, 130; Firdausi, Mohl, VI, 87); it is quite uncertain whether this was already in the tradi-
tion in Agathias’ day. On the subject of the Hephthalite domination see Christensen, L’Iran², 297, note 2.
Nöleke, Tabari, 133, note 4. Only the later sources call Valāsh Perōz’ son; he is called his brother by Lazarus, Langlois, II, 352; Ps.-Josh. Styl., Wright, 12; Proc., BP, I.5.2.

128.165f.: ἕτεὶ τὴν ἄρχην ἀνοβάς ... Tabari (Nöleke, 153) makes Cavadh, defeated in the contest for the throne, flee to the Hephthalites. Eutychius (Pococke, II, 126) follows this, but omits Cavadh’s flight on his dethronement (Agathias, p. 128.195, see infra), while other versions only mention the latter flight (see Nöleke, Tabari, 133, note 6). Tabari’s first flight is surely a doublet of the second.

128.167: οὗ μονὸν τοῦ πρῶτος εἶναι τούς τρόπους καὶ ἡμῖνος ... Another place where Agathias agrees with the Syrian-Armenian tradition (cf. Nöldeke, Tabari, 134, note 2: “Sein Character wird als sanft und friedlich gerühmt von Lazarus [Langlois, II, 352], Josue [Wright, 12] und Agathias”). Christensen, L’Iran², 296, note 4, adds Michael the Syrian (Chabot, II, 151). According to Ps.-Josh. Styl., (Wright, 12), Valāsh was hated by the Magi for wanting to build baths (a pollution of the elements), and Nöleke well comments (Tabari, 134, note 5): “Zu dem Hass der Magier stimmt ... das Lob der Christen.”

128.168f.: δὴ καὶ βραχὺν ἐπεβίω χρόνον.
In fact he was blinded by the nobles and replaced by Cavadh—Ps.-Josh. Styl., Wright, 13; cf. Proc., BP, I.6.17, where he is confused with Zāmāsp. Compare Firdausī, Mohl, VI, 94—the great minister Zarmihr “écarta sans violence Balasch du trône.”

128.170f.: The reign of Cavadh I
This reign is very fully discussed in Christensen, Le règne, F. Altheim and R. Stiehl, Mazda und Porphyrios (Berlin, 1953), O. Klíma, Mazda. Geschichte einer sozialen Bewegung im Sassanidischen Persien (Prague, 1957), and esp. Pigulevskaja, Les villes, 195ff. (see also, by the same author, “Le mouvement mazdakite,” Isvestia AN SSSR, Ser. istorii i. filosofii, 4 (1944). Agathias does not have much that is new to offer on Cavadh, nor does he understand the nature of the Mazdaik movement. It is still important, however, to sort out how much of what he says does actually come from the official record.

128.171f.: τῶν λαῶν μὲν κατὰ Ρωμαίου πολέμους ... What Agathias does give us is in fact a compound impression gained from his reading of Procopius (e.g., BP, I.7) and from his Persian sources. He gives no details of the wars with Byzantium (for which cf. Stein, Bas-Empire, II, 93ff., etc.), no doubt because it was his avowed policy not to
cover ground already fully treated by Procopius (cf. Pref., Keydell, 7.23). He includes in his list of such subjects the reign of Cavâdâ, his capture of Amida and campaigns against Anastasius and Justin I.

128.172: πολλά δὲ κατὰ βαρβάρων τῶν προσοκούντων . . .

Christensen, L’Iran², 352. Agathias is surely exaggerating for the sake of symmetry.

128.174: ἤν δὲ ἄρα καὶ πρὸς τὸ υπήκουν ἀπημήνης . . .

Agathias’ hostility is in line with that of Ps.-Josh. Styl., Wright, 13; Procopius on the other hand seems to admire Cavâdâ (BP, I.6.19: ἤν γὰρ ἀγχίσεις τε καὶ δραστήριος οὐδενὸς ἤσσου). It seems very likely that Agathias’ unfavorable comments here are based entirely on his reading of Procopius, BP, I.5.1f.—see below.

128.174f.: καὶ οὗτος ἀνακινεῖν τὰ καθεστῶτα . . .

Agathias knows nothing of Mazdak or of the religious motives behind Cavâdâ’s measures; he presents him simply as a restless revolutionary. Procopius (I.5.1) mentions the law described by Agathias; probably Agathias’ λέγεται simply refers to Procopius. Ps.-Josh. Styl., in contrast, knows of the religious movement (Wright, 13: [Cavâdâ] “reestablished the abominable sect of the Magi which is called that of the Zarâdushtakân”—for which see Christensen, L’Iran², 337; Ţabarî, Nödeke, 154; Pigulevskaja, Les villes, 203). Agathias and Procopius give us an account purged of the true motivation of Cavâdâ’s innovations—his Mazdakite sympathies—but they do not, like Malalas (Bonn ed., 309–310) and Theophanes (a.m. 6016), connect Mazdak with Manichaeism, nor do they make the mistake of some of the later sources which make the Mazdakites attack Cavâdâ, or which put the whole Mazdak affair after his restoration, thus destroying the point of his exile. Cf. Christensen, Le règne, 39ff., on the confusions in the Oriental sources; it seems clear, however, that the Khvadhâynâmagh must have contained the true (i.e., Mazdakite) reason for Cavâdâ’s exile—cf. Ţabarî, Nödeke, 141; Eutychius, Pococke, II, 177. According to Christensen, the variations were already present in the Khvadhâynâmagh itself; according to Pigulevskaja (op. cit., 199), they are more likely to have arisen later. If Agathias was simply using Procopius at this point, we cannot use his account as evidence for the contents of the official Persian version or as proof of Cavâdâ’s brutality (so Christensen, L’Iran², 337).

128.182f.: χαλεπαπνόντων . . . τῶν δυστατῶν . . .

In Procopius it is τὸ πλῆθος (I.5.1). In view however of l. 183, Agathias’ ἄπαντες (l. 185) means “all the nobles” (and the clergy too, the two classes who stood to lose by Cavâdâ’s social programme and his heresy—see Christensen, L’Iran², 348, who misrepresents Agathias, however). Pigulevskaja emphazises the role of Cavâdâ as the supporter of a class struggle of
poor against rich (*Les villes*, 206). But Agathias sees him in *moral* terms only; he has no inkling of the religious question or of the social issue. Pigulevskaia argues that Procopius’ ἡ τε τιθήσεις must refer to the nobles, in view of what follows in section 3f.; but surely Procopius is as ignorant as Agathias of the real nature of the movement—see S. Mazzarino, “Si può parlare di rivoluzione sociale alla fine del mondo antico?” *Il passaggio dall’antichità al medioevo in Occidente*, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull’ alto medievo, IX (Spoleto, 1962), 413f.

128.183–85: ἀλλ’ οὗτος γὰρ αὐτῷ ὁ θεσμός ἐπιβουλὴς ... αἰτιώτατος γέγονεν.

Unlikely—cf. Christensen, *L’Iran*², 344. Agathias (following Procopius) is struck only by the marriage law. It is no use speculating as to why he did not remark on any of the other measures (so Christensen), for it is clear that he knew of the movement only in the most general terms.

128.186: τῷ ἐνδεκάτῳ παύτης ἐνιαυτῷ ... 

For the date, see Nöldeke, *Ṭabarī*, 427f. The eleventh year is in fact the year of Cavādh’s *restoration*. With Agathias cf. *Ṭabarī* (Nöldeke, 140), placing his deposition “after ten years.”

128.186f.: ἐς τὸ τῆς Λῆσης ... φρούριον.

*Proc.*, *BP*, I.5.7: ἐν φρουρῷ καθαρίζατι ὑπὲρ τῆς Λῆσης καλεῖν νεομείκασιν. If it was really true that it was forbidden to name the prison (Christensen, *L’Iran*², 307, note 4), it is not surprising that the Oriental sources do not tell us where Cavādh was imprisoned. Cf. *Ṭabarī*, Nöldeke, 142, “zu einem Ort, zu dem niemand als sie kommen konnte”; Eutychius, Pococke, II, 176, *loco quodam includentes ubi nemini ipsum adire permissem*. For the place, cf. Christensen, *L’Iran*², 307 and note 4.

128.188: Ζαμάσφην ... 

Called by Procopius Blases, in confusion with Valāsh (*BP*, I.5.2).

128.188f.: καὶ ἄλλως πραύτητος τε καὶ δικαιοσύνης ... 

Probably a rhetorical flourish added by Agathias.

128.192f.: εἰτε τῆς γαμετῆς ... εἰτε καὶ ἄλλω ... τρόπῳ ... 

All the sources agree on Cavādh’s imprisonment, except Ps.-Josh. Styl. (Wright, 15), who says that he heard of the plot and fled.

In the Iranian tradition the woman was Cavādh’s *sister* (*Ṭabarī*, Nöldeke, 144); the parallel version of Cavādh’s escape (coexistent in *Proc.*, *BP*, I.6.3f. with the woman-version) was that he was saved by a friend (called either Siyāvush or Zarmihr), while some sources combine both versions. See Christensen, *L’Iran*², 349, note 4, who concludes from what Agathias says that the story of the woman who somehow saved Cavādh by deceiving the commander of the prison was not in the Annals to which Agathias had
access. But Agathias does not tell us what was in the official account. Perhaps this is another example of abbreviation by Sergius—if Agathias knew a conspicuously different version we should expect more details of it. But his reservations about simply repeating Procopius’ story do suggest that he had some variation in mind—perhaps the version as found in Ṭabarī, which is different in detail, though similar in essentials.

130.202: τὴν θυγατέρα κατεγεγυμνὸς γάμον . . .

Proc., BP, I.6.10: αὐτῷ τὴν παιδιὰ γυναικά ὁ βασιλέως γαμεῖτιν δεῖδωσιν . . . We know from Ps.-Josh. Styl. (Wright, 15) that her mother was the daughter of Pērōz, who had been captured by the Hephthalites.

Agathias shows no acquaintance with the story found in the Khvadhây-námagh tradition that while fleeing Cavādh married incognito, left the woman behind, and on his return found that she had given birth to Chosroes (Christensen, L’Iran², 350, note 1)—an indication, if such be needed, that the tale is a fable originating only after the reign of the great Chosroes I.

130.209f.: ἐκ μὲν γὰρ βασιλέως . . .

Agathias knows nothing of the story of Cavādh’s period as a hostage at the Hephthalite court (only in Ps.-Josh. Styl., Wright, 8).

130.212: ἀνειλήψε τὴν τὴν ἀρχὴν πόλων ἐκτός . . .


130.214: ὁ γὰρ Ζαμάσπ ζητεῖν ἀπέστη τοῦ γάμου . . .

Christensen, Le règne, 114; L’Iran², 350. Only Elias of Nisibis (ap. Bar-hebraeus, Chron. Eccl., II.22 [Abbeloos and Lamy, III, col. 80]) says that Cavādh killed him. According to Procopius (BP, I.6.17) he was blinded; but Procopius is still confusing Zāmāsp with Valāsh and Agathias here, as at p. 128.188, seems to be tacitly correcting him. Some of the later sources follow Agathias’ version; others say that Zāmāsp was expelled. In that Agathias’ version is the less predictable, it is the more likely to be right.

130.217f.: δὲ Καβάδης . . .

Henceforth Agathias has nothing new to say; his reason for omitting further details is that it has all been told before by οἱ πόλεις οἰκοδομεῖν (p. 130.223)—a curious phrase when what he means is Procopius. The whole account of Cavādh is interesting, based as it is largely on Procopius; for at p. 134. 300f. Agathias tells us explicitly to follow his version of the reign of Cavādh in preference to Procopius’. Of what is he thinking? He openly corrects Procopius only once—on the story of Cavadh’s escape (see on p. 128.192f.)—yet in the vaguest terms and without giving an alternative version. It is possible that he is criticizing the Siyavush story by omission, in which case we cannot apply the argumentum e silento to say that had Agathias disbelieved this story he would have said so (so Christensen, Le règne, 94).
Or his claim may refer merely to his implicit correction of Procopius’ confusion of Zâmasp and Valâsh. In any case, his claim to have better information than Procopius about Cavâdh is at best very misleading, for he has chosen to take as his example the very reign where he has least that is new to offer. Such an instance of his approach to his source material makes it more than ever essential to sort out exactly what his sources were.

130.225: θαυμάσειε γάρ ἄν τις . . .

Here the section based on the Royal Annals ends, as Agathias signals himself (cf. p. 134.275 f.). It is prolonged with a piece about Zeno, followed by a digression on the death of Chosroes, which is chronologically out of place, and finally with a statement of Agathias’ credentials as a historian of Persia. What follows about Zeno and Julius Nepos is inspired by Agathias’ own speculations on the congruences between Persian and Roman history—part of his attempt to “write up” his subject matter.

130.230 f.: ὑπὸ Ἰλλοῦ τε καὶ Βασιλέακου καὶ Κώνωνος . . .

Agathias’ brief mention of the troubles of the Emperor Zeno is sketchy in the extreme, and misleading as well, for it confuses the two occasions on which Illus opposed Zeno. Agathias is clearly only referring to Zeno’s dethronement in 475/6; the mention of Conon however belongs to Illus’ revolt in 484. He was the bishop of Apamea, sent against Illus by Zeno, who joined the rebel cause. See Candidus, fr. 1 (FHG, IV, 136); Joh. Ant., frs. 210 f., 214 (FHG, IV, 618–21; cf. Mommsen, Hermes, 6 [1872], 325 f.); Ps.-Josh. Styl., Wright, 9 f.; Malal., Bonn ed., 376 f.; Stein, Bas-Empire, I, 363 f., II, 28 f. It is even possible that Agathias has confused the two revolts against Zeno with that of Longinus the brother of Zeno against Anastasius in 492, with which Conon was connected (Evagrius, HE, III.35; Stein, Bas-Empire, II, 82). There was also a Conon who was another brother of Zeno, according to Suda, s.v. Λογγύνος, but Agathias surely means the bishop Conon. Whatever his source (and it is quite unclear what it was), he has garbled it by thus lumping together all Zeno’s opponents. The dowager Empress Verina, Zeno’s mother-in-law, played a leading part in Basiliscus’ usurpation, but found that things did not go as she had planned (Stein, Bas-Empire, I, 363; cf. II, 28 f.).

130.234: οὐ πλέον ἢ ἔτεσι δύο . . .

Malal., Bonn ed., 378, gives two years also, but it was in fact not more than 18 months (Stein, Bas-Empire, I, 363).

130.236–132.237: καὶ Νέπτως . . . ομίλοις ἢ καὶ μείλοισιν . . .

Agathias was not the first to see the similarity between Zeno and Julius Nepos—cf. Malchus, fr. 10 (FHG, IV, 119): ἐκ τοῦ Νέπτωτος ἀγγελοί [came to Zeno]. . . δεόμενοι ἀμα ταῖς ἰσαίς τῷ Νέπτωτι συμφοράς χρησιμένῳ συστεποῦντάς προθύμως βασιλείας ἀνάκτησιν . . .
132.240: ... διεφθάρη.

The deposition of Nepos was covered by Malchus (see Phot, Bibl., cod. 78) and Candidus (ibid., cod. 79). We have no way of telling whether Agathias used either of these writers; it would be only natural that he should have read them. For Nepos, see Stein, Bas-Empire, I, 396.

132.244f.: τεθνηκότος γὰρ τοῦ Καβάδου ... 

For the date of Chosroes’ accession, see Taqizadeh, in BSOS, 9 (1937), 128f., proving that he was crowned 18 August 531; this was before Cavâdh’s death (Taqizadeh, loc. cit., Stein, Bas-Empire, II, 294, note 2). Agathias now goes on, for the sake of continuity, to Chosroes’ death. He makes it clear that this is only a brief mention, to round off his excursus; the main account of Chosroes is reserved for later (ll. 247f.). This shows clearly that the History as we have it is far short of Agathias’ original intentions; he seems to be implying here that he meant to continue it to his own day, whereas what we have goes only as far as 558. Cf. Menander Protector, fr. 1 (FHG, IV, 202): ὀρμήθην ἐπὶ τὴν τὴν συγγραφὴν, ἀρξάσθαι μετὰ τὴν ἀποβίωσιν τοῦ Ἀγαθίου, καὶ τῆς ἱστορίας ποιῆσασθαι τὴν αρχήν.

132.254: οὔδε μὴν Ζέρζην ἔκεινον ... 

For the comparison with Xerxes, compare George of Pisidia on Chosroes II (Heracl., I.27)—Ζέρζης τοὐ πρὶν ἀντερίζει. And for Xerxes as the exemplification of ὄρης, cf. Agathias, II.10, Keydell, 53.32f.

132.255f.: The death of Chosroes 


132.260: Μαυρίκιος δὲ ὁ Παύλου ... 

We must assume that Agathias died before the accession of Maurice in 582 (Niebuhr, pref., p. xv), for he gives no hint of Maurice’s future destiny. Contrast Theophylact, III.15.17: Μαυρίκιον στρατηγὸν ... τότε δὴ τῶν σωματοφυλάκων τοῦ βασιλέως ἠγούμενον.

132.260f.: ὑπὸ Τιβερίου Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ Ῥωμαίων βασιλέως ... 

Cf. Joh. Eph., VI.27, Evagrius, V.19, but for the date (Maurice was appointed before Tiberius actually came to the throne himself) see Stein, Studien, 70f., with notes 13 and 17.

132.262: ἐς τὴν Ἀρξιανηνην χώραν. 

Theophylact, III.14.11, 16.12: Ἀρξιανηνη.
132.265f.: Chosroes' retreat

Agathias does not tell us that Chosroes had taken the offensive and broken the three-year truce, nor that it was in answer to this that Maurice, after routing the Persian army, was ravaging Arzanene (Stein, Studien, 73f.). For 1. 265, τά εν ποιιν ἐσχάτει, see Joh. Eph., VI.15, a colorful account. All this happened before the coronation of Tiberius as Augustus on 26 September 578 (cf. Theophylact, III.16.3–5, Joh. Eph., V.13, Theophanes, a.m. 6070; cf. Stein, op. cit., 86, note 18; Evagrius wrongly dates Chosroes' death immediately after his precipitate retreat in 575).

132.273f.: οὐκ ἐς μακρῶν καταλύει τὸν βίον ...

Not until the winter of 578/9 had been spent in negotiating for peace with Tiberius. Compare Menander Protector, fr. 54 (FHG, IV, 255): ξυσρόν ... καταπλαγείς τοις ξυμβεβηκόσι (cf. Agathias, p. 132.269), προφθάσος ἐκπέμπει ὡς τὸν 'Ῥωμαίον αὐτοκράτορα πρεσβευτήν, ... Agathias’ account is no doubt highly coloured, but not necessarily therefore false. It pleased Baronius as example of divine vengeance on pride (Annales Ecclesiastici, una cum critica historico-chronologica P. A. Pagii, X [Lucca, 1741], 347).

134.279f.: ἐκεῖνα μὲν ἔστειλε πρὸς τὸ παρόν, ... ἐπαυνήξω δὲ ...

See on p. 132.244f.

134.282: ἄπαν μοι τὸ ἐπηγγελμένον, ξυνετελέσθη.

Cf. p. 88.197: ἐγὼ δὲ ἄπαντων τῶν ἐφεξῆς ἀπογόνων ... τὰ τε ὀνόματα φράσω ... , and see p. 120.13f.: καιρὸς ἀν εἴη ἐκπληρεῖν υἱὸν τὸ πρότερον ἐπηγγελμένον καὶ τῶν ἐφεξῆς βασιλέων ἐπιμισθήσηναι.

134.283: οὐμαι δὲ ἄγαν ἁληθός ταῦτα καθεστάναι ...

Agathias’ own statement of the credentials of his excursus. He makes the same claim for his version of the origin of Ardashēr (p. 88.196), though there he is mistaken. Compare his claim to superiority over Procopius on the reign of Cavadh (p. 134.300f.)—he is mistaken, or at best misleading (see on p. 130.217f.). Evidently Agathias did not suspect that Sergius’ information was not quite what it purported to be, nor did he realize that it was in some places contaminated with a Syrian bias. In spite of his section on Iranian religion in Book II, he has no real idea of the role that Zoroastrianism played in the Sassanian state and hence was unlikely to recognize the religious bias in the Annals, nor to miss it when it was absent from the material he had.

134.284: ἐκ τῶν Περσικῶν βιβλίων μεταληφθέντα.

Interpreters: Menander Protector, fr. 37 (FHG, IV, 240): ἱάκαμβον, ὥς τὰ Περσικὰ δήματα τῇ Ἑλληνιδί φωνῇ διασαφηνύειν ἡπίστατο, and cf. Proc., BP, II.2.3, where a Syriac-Greek interpreter is used for talks between Chosroes
and the ambassadors of Vitigis. In general, D. A. Miller, *Byzantion*, 36 (1966), 449ff. A. Baumstark, “Lucubrationes Syro-Graecae,” *Jahrbücher für klassische Philologie*, Suppl. 21 (1894), 368, argued for Syriac for the language of the Royal Annals. But Pahlavī was the official language of the period, of inscriptions, and of the Khvadhāynāmagh when it came to be composed (Nöldeke, *Tabari*, p. xv, Christensen, *L'Iran*, 59). Syriac was certainly much used as an intermediary language for contact between Persia and the Greek world, but the Annals cannot have been in any language but Sassanian Pahlavī. Agathias in any case explicitly calls the Annals *Περσικα βιβλια*, and says that Chosroes had Greek works translated into the Persian language (II.28, Appendix A, p. 164.4f.).

134.284f.: ἑργίου γὰρ τοῦ ἐρμηνευόμενος ἐκεῖσε γενομένου ...

On Sergius, see Baumstark, “Lucubrationes Syro-Graecae.” Sergius *was* very probably a Syrian—no other explanation can account for the Syrian bias in the excursus or for the Seleucid date given for the beginning of the Sassanian dynasty. So Nöldeke, *Tabari*, pp. xvi, 400. For Syrians as the intermediaries between Persia and the West, cf. the instance of Uranius (Agathias II.29—see Appendix A, pp. 164, 166), and Paulus Persa’s *De arte logica*, a Syriac version of Aristotle made for Chosroes (Christensen, *L'Iran*, 427, note 4: “nous pourrons supposer que le traité de Paulus a été traduit du syriaque en pahlvi, mais il n’est peut-être pas absolument invraisemblable que Khusro ait su lire le syriaque”). The line went both ways—for example, the lost Indian novel known in an Arab version from the Pahlavī as “Bilauhar and Budhasaf” was the origin, through a Syriac translation of the Pahlavī, of the medieval romance “Barlaam and Joasaph.” In post-Arab days also the Persian versions of Euclid, Ptolemy, and other writers were made “non pas directement sur les textes originaux, et il paraît démontré qu‘elles furent entreprises sur des traductions syriques et arabes” (Langlois, *Collection des historiens anciens et modernes de l’Arménie*, I, p. xxviii).

134.285f.: τῶν τῶν βασιλικῶν ἀπομημονευμάτων φρουρῶν ...

Baumstark, “Lucubrationes Syro-Graecae,” makes the mistake of supposing that Agathias said that Sergius was one of these guardians of the Royal Annals.

134.285: βασιλικῶν ἀπομημονευμάτων

Gottheil, in *Classical Studies in Honour of Henry Drisler*, 29)—the prophecy about the birth of Christ and the coming of the Magi was written down in the Persian βιβλιοθήκη (archives?) and ὑπομνήματα (chronicles?). Agathias’ official material ends with Cavādh; what he says about Chosroes is largely based on his own opinions and observations (see Appendix A). He may or may not have had access to some earlier version of the Khvādhāynāmāgh (cf. Nöldeke, *Tabari*, pp. xv–xvi); but his account agrees so closely in general with the Khvādhāynāmāgh tradition represented by the later chroniclers that it is obvious that the Royal Annals and the Khvādhāynāmāgh (probably not composed until the reign of Yazdgard III—Christensen, *L’Iran*, 59) were largely identical.

134.294f.: λαβὼν ... τὰ τε ὑπόμνημα καὶ τοὺς χρόνους ...  

We have seen that, as Agathias suggests here, Sergius very probably did abbreviate his material himself. There is no telling how far this went. Thus, when Agathias shows no knowledge of a story that appears in the later tradition, we cannot tell whether it was present in the Annals but omitted by Sergius or Agathias, or whether it came in only in the Khvādhāynāmāgh or later. When Agathias says however that Sergius took from the Annals only the bare outline (τὰ καταλέγοντα), it looks as though they were fairly full.

134.300f.: ὅστε εἰ καὶ Προκοπίῳ τῷ ῥήτορι ...  

Cf. on p. 130.217f. It is to be regretted that Agathias is not more explicit—though he must surely have some definite point in mind.
II. 28. Ἄλλα γὰρ βραχέα ἢττα περὶ Χασράου διεξελθῶν αὐτικὰ ἐγγυγε ἀνὰ τὰ πρότερα καὶ δὴ ἐπανήξου. ὤμνοιοι γὰρ αὐτὸν καὶ ἀγανταὶ πέρα τῆς ἁξίας, μὴ ὧτι οἱ Πέρσαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἕνιοι τῶν Ῥωμαίων, ὡς λόγων ἐραστὴν καὶ φιλοσοφίας τῆς παρ’ ἡμῖν ἢ ἄκρου ἐλθόντα, μεταβεβλημένων αὐτῷ υπὸ τοῦ ἐστὶ τῆς Περσίδα φανὴν τῶν Ἕλληνικῶν ἐγγυγραμμάτων. 2 καὶ τοῖνυν φασὶ, ὦτι δὴ ὄλον τὸν Ἐισαγερέτην καταπτίσω εἴη μᾶλλον ἢ ὁ ἄρτωρ δ ὁ Παιανιός τὸν Ὀλόρου τῶν τε Πλάτωνος τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος ἀναπτήσθηκα δογμάτων καὶ οὔτε ὁ Τίμιος αὐτὸν ἀποδράσειν ἢ, εἰ καὶ σφόδρα γραμμικὴ θεωρίᾳ πεποίηκται καὶ τὰς τῆς φύσεως ἀνιχνεύει κινήσεις, οὔτε ὁ Φαίδων οὔτε ὁ Γοργίας, οὐ μὲν οὖν οὖδὲ ἄλλος τῶν γλαφυρῶν τε καὶ ἀγκυλωτέρων διαλόγων, ὅποιος, ὁμιλεῖ, ὁ Παρμενίδης. 3 ἐγὼ δὲ οὕτως αὐτὸν ἀρίστα ἔχειν παιδείας, καὶ ταύτα τῆς ἀκροτάτης, οὐκ ἄν ποτε οὐθεῖν. πῶς μὲν γὰρ οἶν τε ἢ ἡ τὸ ἀκραφίας ἐκεῖν τῶν πολιάδων δυομάτων καὶ ἐλεύθερων καὶ πρὸς γε τῇ τῶν προγάμων φύσει πρόσθηκαν τε καὶ ἐπικαιρότατον ἁγρία τινὶ γλώττῃ καὶ ἄμουσο- τάτῃ ἀποσωθήσεως; 4 πῶς δὲ ἢ ἂν ἄνηρ βασιλείᾳ τύφῳ ἢ παιδίῳ καὶ κολακεία πολλῇ γεγαικομένῳ διαιτῇ τε λυχνίων ἢ δ’ τι βαρβαρικώτατη καὶ πρὸς | πολέμων ἂν καὶ παρατάξεις ὀρόσωσαν, πῶς δὴ ὅποι ὁδὸς ἰδίος ἦμελλε μέγα τι καὶ λόγον ἄξιον ἐν τοῖς ἀπόνασσαι τοῖς διδάσκωμι καὶ ἐνασκηθήσει; 5 εἰ μὲν οὖν ἠπαινοθή τοῖς αὐτῶν, ὥστε δὴ βασιλεὺς γε ὅ ν καὶ Πέρσης ἐνυῶν τε τοσοῦτον καὶ πράξεως μέλον αὐτῶς, ὃ δὲ ἐφίστα γούν όμως ἀμὴ γὲ τῆς ἀπογενέσθαι λόγων καὶ τῇ περὶ ταύτα γάνηθαι δόξης, ἐκυπηνεῖσαι ἢ ἢ καὶ ἐγγυγε τὸν ἀνθρακαὶ μείζονα θεῖν τῶν ἄλλων βαρβάρων. 6 δοσι δὲ λαίμα αὐτῶν σοφοὶ ἀπόκαλοῦσι καὶ μουν- σύχιτοι ὑπὸ ποτὲ περιφλοσοφηκότας ὑπερβαλλόμενον, ὡς καὶ ἄπασης τέχνης τε καὶ ἐπιστήμης τᾶς ἄρχας καὶ αἰτίας διανόωσαν, ὡποίον τὸν ῥήγαν πεπαιδευμένον οὐκ ἢ τοῦ περιπτότου ἐρίζονται, οἱ δὴ οὖν ταύτα ἔλιμου ἐκεῖν ἢ μᾶλλον φοιμαθεῖν οὐκ ἄλληθῶν ἐστοχασμένοι, μόνη δὲ τῇ τῶν πολλῶν ἐπόμενοι φήμη.

29. Ἄνηρ γὰρ τις Σύρως τοῦ γένος, Ὄσράνιος δύσης, κατὰ τὴν βασι- λείας πόλιν ἠλέητο, τέχνην μὲν ἐπαγγελλόμενοι τῆς ἱεραρχίας μετείναι,
AGATHIAS ON THE SASSANIANS

APPENDIX A

AGATHIAS ON CHOSROES

Translation

I will first say a little about Chosroes and then resume at once where I left off. People sing his praises and admire him more than he deserves—and not only Persians but some Romans too. They claim that he is devoted to literature and is very well versed in our philosophy, having had Greek works translated for him into the Persian language. It is said that he has drunk in more of the Stagirite* than the Paianian** did of the son of Olorus*** and that he is full of the doctrines of Plato the son of Ariston. The Timaeus, they say, is not beyond him, even though it is positively studded with geometrical theory, and inquires into the movements of nature, nor is the Phaedo, nor the Gorgias, nor any other of the more subtle and obscure dialogues—the Parmenides, for instance, I suppose. But as for myself, I should never imagine that he was so well educated, and in such a difficult subject. How, after all, could the purity and nobility of the ancient words, so suitable and well adapted to the nature of the subject matter, be preserved in an outlandish and uncouth language? And how could a man who has been cossetted by royal pomp and flattery from childhood, and spent his life completely in the barbarian manner, always concerned with wars and combat—how could he, after such a life, reap any great or worthwhile benefit from these teachings or be trained in them? If anyone were to praise him on the grounds that though a king and a Persian, with such vast peoples and great events to concern him, he still desired somehow to get a taste of literature and to take pleasure in a reputation for it, I should join in the praise of the man myself and rate him higher than any other barbarian. But, as for those who call him very learned, almost surpassing everyone who has ever practiced philosophy, so that he knows also the principles and foundations of every kind of skill and learning, like the Peripatetic definition of the fully educated man—those who are of this opinion can be convicted of missing the truth through following only what the majority say.

For a man of Syrian origin, called Uranius, went around Byzantium claiming to be a doctor, and boasting (though he

* Aristotle   ** Demosthenes   *** Thucydides
τὸν δὲ Ἀριστοτέλους δογμάτων οὐδὲν μὲν ἐς τὸ ἀκριβῆς ἐγράφωσεν, ἐκοιμεύετο δὲ ὡς πλεῖστα εἰδέναι, βρεννυόμενος τοῦ δυσέρεις εἶναι παρὰ τούς ξυλλόγους .

35 ἅλλα γὰρ τοιὸσδε ὅποι δ’ Ὀὐράνιος ἦκεν ποτε παρὰ τοὺς Πέρσας ὑπὸ Ἀρεοβίνδου τοῦ πρεσβευτοῦ ἀπηγμένος. ἦτε δὲ ἀπατοῦν καὶ κόθοροι καὶ οἱος τῆν οὐκ οὔσαν εὐκρινὲς ἐνεργοῦν. ἀυτὴ δὲ γε στολὴ πάντων οὐκ ἔμεινεν, ἤποιον ἣν τῶν λόγων καθηγοῦτο καὶ διδασκόντων οὐκ ἐπιβεβηθή τοῖς προσώπῳ ἐπεφέρα ὅτι τὸν Χασρόην. 10 ἂν δὲ τὸ παραδόξῳ λεγόμενο καταπεπληγμένος καὶ ἵππον τι εἶναι εἰκῶς τὸ χρήμα καὶ φιλόσοφος αὐτὸν ὡς ἀληθῆς ὑποτοπτῆσας (οὔτω γὰρ αὐτὸν καὶ ἀνομάζετο), δισμοῦς τε ἐγινε καὶ φιλοφρόνος ἐθελεύητο. 11 καὶ εἶτα ἤγγικαλέσμενος τοὺς μάγους ἐς λόγους αὐτῇ καθιστάτῳ γενεσέως τε καὶ φύσεως πέρι καὶ εἰ τὸ δὲ πάντως ἀπελεύθητον ἔσται, καὶ πότερον μίαν τὴν ἀπάντων ἀρχὴν νομιστέον.

30. Τότε δὴ ὅποι δ’ Ὀὐράνιος καίριον μὲν οὐδὲν ἔλεγεν οὐδὲ γε τὴν ἀρχὴν διεισεῖτο. μόνη δὲ τοῖς θραύσοις τῇ εἰναι καὶ στρωμιλώτατοι, καθα ποὺ φησιν ὁ ἐν Γοργίας Σοκράτης, „οὐκ εἶδος ἐν ὦν εἶδοιν’ εὖνικα.

50 2 οὕτω τε ἐπεὶ τὸν βασιλέα τὸν βασιλέα εἰκόνας καὶ ἐμπληκτὸς, ὡς χρημάτων τὲ ἐν διοικήσεως πλήθος καὶ κοινής μεταδούσι τραπεζής καὶ ἀπάρξεις ἐπικοινωνίας, οὕτω τοῦτο ἐπ’ ἄλλω τῷ γεγενεμένῳ, ἐπιμελεῖται τῷ πολλάκις ἢ μὴν οὕτωποτοι τοιώθη ἀνθρακάκοι. 3 καὶ καὶ προτερον ἀριστοῦς ὡς ἄληθος ἔτεθέν αὐτοῖς φιλόσοφος, ἐνθέβη ὥς αὐτὸν ἀφικομένους. οὐ πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐπιμεροθέν διαμάζοντος ὁ Σύρος καὶ Συμπλίκιος ὁ Κήλις Εὐλάμμοις τοῦ Φιλία τοῦ Πρισκινάκις τοῦ λυθοῦς Ἐμποίας τε καὶ Διογένης οἱ ἐν Φανίας καὶ Ἑσιδωρον οἱ Γαλατίας, οὕτως δὴ ὅποι δ’ ἀντεπε τοῦ ἀκρον ἀντων, καὶ τὴν ποίησιν, τὸν ἐν τοῦ καθ’ ήμας χρὸνος φιλοσοφίας, ἐπειδὴ αὐτοὺς ἢ παρὰ Ρωμαίοις κρατῶσαν ἢ τῷ κρήττου ἄποι ὅποι ἐρμής θρώσι καὶ πολλοὶ τὸν κατήκουν καὶ οὐτέ φάρος χρημάτων οὗτ οὕτως ἀρησχεῖται, ἀπ’ ὅποι δὲ τὴν ἄλλην μετάντεις ἀδίκειαν, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ πολλῷ καθάτοις ἐν ὅτι δὴ ὅποι χώρος ἐφημοτάτῳ καταλείφθη, ἀφαιρεῖται δ’ οὕτως τοῦ ἐντυγχανόντων, μὲν δὲ χείων τοῦ κατοικήτωτο, ἢ σωζόμενον τῷ λειτοτότε, ἢ” αὖ
had no real knowledge) that he knew all about the works of Aristotle, showing off by his factious attitude in discussions.

[Agathias now accuses Uranius of being a charlatan.]

This was what Uranius was really like. He once went to Persia in the train of Areobindus the envoy. Since he was a cheat and a braggart, the sort who would pretend to virtues he did not possess, he immediately put on a sober and respect-ed style of dress, such as is worn by our literary exponents and teachers, and wearing it, with a pompous and solemn expression on his face, he went to Chosroes. The King was struck by the unexpected sight and imagined that it was something wonderful and that he was really a philosopher (for this was what he called himself). So he was glad to see him and received him kindly. Later he called together the Magi and put them into discussions with him about generation and nature, and whether this universe will last for ever, and whether we should consider that everything has one origin.

On these occasions, then, Uranius said nothing to the point, nor did he even know how to start. But simply by being brazen and by glib talk—as Socrates says in the Gorgias, ‘the blind leading the blind’—he convinced them. And that crazy idiot so captivated the King that he gave him a large sum of money, and allowed him to share his table and to enjoy his hospitality, which had never been granted to anyone before. He often swore that he had never seen anyone like him. And yet he had seen really eminent philosophers before who had gone there to see him. Not long before this Damascius the Syrian, Simplicius the Cilician, Eulamius the Phrygian, Priscianus of Lydia, Hermias and Diogenes from Phoenicia, and Isidore of Gaza, all of these, the very flower (to use a poetic term) of the philosophers of our time, because they did not share the view of God prevailing among the Romans and thought that the Persian state was far better—they were persuaded by the very widespread tale that the Persian government was supremely just, the union of philosophy and kingship as in the writing of Plato, and the people disciplined and orderly, that there are no thieves or robbers among them, not do they practice any other sort of crime, and that even if some precious object is left in a lonely place, no one who comes by will steal it, so that it remains safe, even if it is unguarded, for the man who left it there to return.
31. Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τῷ βασιλεῖ διαλεξθέντες ἐφεύσθησαν τῆς ἐπιδος, ἀνδρὰ εὑρόντες φιλοσοφεῖν μὲν φιλοσοφεῖν, οὔδεν δὲ ὁ τι καὶ ἑπαθοντα τῶν αἰσθήμων, ὅτι συνετῶν, ὅτι τοιότῳ ἐσχον καὶ ἐκ τῆς δόξης ἔκσκευοι, ἔτερο δὲ ἔττα ἔνσωτος, ὡσοι δὴ ἡ δεῖ προσαντλήσηται τὴν τόν ἑπάρχον κακοδαιμονίαν οὐκ ἐνεγκόντες, ὡσ τάχιστα ἑπαθῆσαι. 2 καίτοι ἔστηρε τοις αὐτοῖς ζεύγοι καὶ μένειν ἥλιον, οἱ δὲ ζμενοῦ εἴναι σφίζου ἡγούμεν ἐπιβαίνσει τούν Ρωμαίοις ἄνωκα, οὕτω παρασχόν, καὶ τεθνάναι ἢ μένοντες παρὰ Πέρσῃς τόν μεγαντὶς γερόντων μεταλαχαίνειν. οὕτω τε ἑπάντῃς ὁ λεότατος ἑπάντησεν, χαίρειν ἑπάντησι τῇ τὴν πολιτάρθου. πολιτάρθον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡλικίου, τοῦ Πέρσῃς τοῦ καιρόν τοῦ ἡλικίου, ἡμέρα ὑπύρτηκης, μέρος ὑπήρχε τὸν κατ’ αὐτῶς ἰατροὺς ἰατροὺς ἴατος ἰατροὺς. 

135.4 Τούτων δὲ τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐς πειράματα ἐπὶ ὁ Χοσρίς ὁ δαμος τὸν οὐράνιον πλέον ἐκάμενος ἦν καὶ ἐπόθειν. αὕτην δὲ τοῦτον, ὅπερ, οἷς, φύσει τὸν γένεσεν πρὸστοι τὸν ἀνδρωτέκπην, περιτρικήν γὰρ ἑπάντης τὰ μὲν καθ’ αὐτῶς καὶ παρατηλήσει φίλα ἤγεισθαι καὶ κάλλιστα, ἀλείπειν
So, therefore, they thought that this was true and were inspired by it, and besides, they had been forbidden by law to live here in security, since they did not subscribe to the existing order, so they left forthwith for a foreign and wholly alien people, meaning to live there for the rest of their lives. First, finding that those in authority were very proud and full of more self-importance than their position warranted, they were disgusted and turned to abuse. Then they saw that there were many burglars and thieves, some who were caught but many who escaped, and that every kind of crime was being committed. The powerful abuse the weak and employ every sort of cruelty and inhumanity against each other. And what is the strangest of all, though every man can have countless wives, and does, adultery is still committed. So for all these reasons the philosophers were upset and regretted their emigration.

They were cheated of their hopes after conversations with the King, also, for they found a man with pretensions to philosophy but with not even an acquaintance with its subtleties, and discovered moreover that he did not even share their opinions, and had certain other habits, as I have described. They could not endure the unhappy marriage situation either, and they therefore returned as soon as they could. Yet the King liked them, and asked them to stay, but they thought that it would be better if they could only cross the boundaries into Roman territory and die at once, if this should happen, than remain in Persia and attain the highest possible honors. So they all returned home, bidding farewell to the King’s hospitality. But they benefited from their stay abroad in an important and conspicuous way, such that their life from then on ended in the most pleasant and agreeable manner. For, when at about this time the Romans and the Persians made a peace treaty, there was a clause in the agreement which stipulated that these men should be allowed to return to their own country and live there henceforth in safety, without being forced to adopt opinions which they did not hold, or to change their own faith, For Chosroes would only settle and ratify the peace on these terms ...

And though he had been acquainted with these men, Chosroes still admired and sought out Uranius more. The reason for this, I think, is inherent in human nature. We all think, that what is most like ourselves is desirable and preferable
δὲ καὶ ἐκτρέπεσθαι τὸ ὑπερβάλλων. 2 τοιγάρτοι καὶ ἐνταῦθα οἱ ἐπανελθόντες γράμματα τε κεχαρισμένα ἔστελλε καὶ διδασκάλως ἔχρητο. ὁ δὲ ὀὐκέτι ἐφαίνετο ἄνεκτός, βρεθνόμενος τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως φιλίᾳ, ὡς καὶ ἀποκαλεῖν ἀπαντᾶς ἐν τῷ τοῖς ξυμποσίοις καὶ ἀνὰ τοὺς συλλόγους, μηδὲν τι ἔτερον ἦδειν ἐξέλων ἢ ὅπως αὐτὸν ἐγέρατεν ὁ Ἡσσόρης καὶ ὅποια ὄτα διελεγόθησθι. 3 καὶ πολλὸς σκαλιστερὸς ἐπανήκεν ἤμιν ὁ γενναῖος ἢ πάλαι ὑπήρχεν, ὥσπερ τοῦτο ἐνεκα μόνου τοσαύτην ὅδον ἀναμετρήσας. ὡς, καίτοι φαυλότατός γε ὅπως καὶ καταγέλαστος, ἀλλὰ τῷ πολλάκις ὑμεῖν τὸν βάρβαρον καὶ δι' ἐπαίνου ποιεῖσθαι αὐτὸς δὴ του κατὰ τὸ μάλλον ἐπέπεσε τοὺς πολλοὺς, ὡς εἰς σφόδρα πεπαιδευμένος. 4 οἱ γὰρ ἀταλαιτώρως ἀπαντᾶ προσέρχοντο καὶ ἄμφι ταύτα δὴ τὰ ἔξω καὶ παραλογοῦσι τῶν ἀκουσμάτων διασκεδαστές ἐρωτώς ὑπήγγυστο ἐπικομικόντι τε αὐτῷ καὶ σημνολογομένῳ, μήτε διὰτ' ὅτι ἐπαινοῦν μήτε ὄντως ἐπαινοῦν καὶ ἐφ' ὅτι, διασκοτούντες. 5 ἐς μὲν γὰρ στρατευμάτων παρασκευήν καὶ ὅπλων εὐκοσμίαν καὶ τὸ διὰ παντὸς ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις διαπνέεσθαι δικαίως ἐν τῇ θεωρίᾳ τὸν Ἡσσόρην, ὡς οὕτε ὅκως ἐξαιτό πώποτε οὕτε τῇ τοῦ γῆρος ἀσθενείᾳ λόγων δὲ περὶ καὶ φιλοσοφίας τοἰοῦτον αὐτὸν ἡγητῷ, ὅποιον εἶναι εἰκὸς ἄνδρα ξυνόμιλον τε καὶ ἀκροατὴν Ὀὐρανίον ἑκείνου ἀποδεξαίῳ ἐκείνου τοὐδεδειγμένον.
and we shun and avoid anything better. So even when he returned here he sent him grateful letters and regarded him as his teacher. But Uranius then became unendurable, boasting of his friendship with the King enough to wear everyone out at parties and in discussions. He would talk of nothing else but how Chosroes liked him, and what they had said to each other. The fine fellow came back even more of a fool than he was before, just as if he had gone for that express purpose. But even though he was despicable and ridiculous, nevertheless, by constantly singing the praises of the barbarian, he succeeded in persuading the majority even more that he was very learned. Those who accept everything too easily and are always open for such strange and remarkable stories as this, were easily convinced by his boasts and his pretensions, and did not enquire who it was who was doing the praising, nor who was being praised, and for what. As far as military organization and armaments are concerned, and constant exercise in war, Chosroes can be justly admired for never yielding to fear or to the weakness of old age. But for literature and philosophy, he must be considered as revealed to me just like anyone would be who was an associate and hearer of that fellow Uranius.
APPENDIX A

AGATHIAS ON CHOSROES

Commentary

p. 164f. [Chosroes’ pretensions to philosophy: Greek works translated. Agathias’ opinions of this. Description of Uranius and his tales about Chosroes. Uranius’ trip to Persia and his reception by Chosroes. The expedition of the seven philosophers contrasted with this. Description of their visit and their impressions of Persia. The lawlessness they found there. Chosroes prefers Uranius.]

It is worth looking at Agathias’ section on Chosroes, for it contains much of interest. It must be stated first, however, that it is not (though of course Agathias does not mark any break) based on the Annals. On the contrary, it is a set piece designed to make the most of Agathias’ personal information about Uranius and the Athenian philosophers who went to Persia after the closure of their school in 529. It is not a complete picture of Chosroes; that was to be reserved for later, as Agathias says (p. 132.247f.). Nor is it really part of the first Persian excursus, which ends most emphatically at p. 88.217; it is itself an appendix and can most conveniently be treated in one.

164.2: ὑμνοῦσι γὰρ αὐτὸν . . .

Chosroes’ long reign, only just over when Agathias wrote Book IV, was one of the most brilliant in Sassanian history—cf. p. 132.251f.: γέγονεν ὅποιος οὗτος πρῶτερον ἄλος τῶν παρὰ Πέρσας βασιλευκῶν ἀναθέθεται—and he went down in legend as the type of the just king (Christensen, L’Iran², 374f.). The Athenian philosophers saw him as a philosopher king, at least before they went to Persia and saw for themselves, as Agathias goes on to describe.

164.4: καὶ φιλοσοφίας τῆς παρ’ ἑμῖν ἐς ἄκρον ἐλθόντα . . .

Clearly this section was written while Chosroes was still alive. Agathias uses the present tense throughout, and the length and vehemence which he devotes to his attempt to discredit Chosroes as a philosopher surely suggests that he was combating a current opinion about a living man. If the composition of the History was spread over a considerable period, as is likely, it would be only natural that Book II was written well before Book IV, where Agathias describes Chosroes’ death.

The Dēnkard represents Chosroes as a xenophobe and a persecutor of heretics—hence Zaehner, Zurvan, 47f., attributes his philhellenism to a later stage in his reign. Certainly his suppression of the Mazdakites, which
won him his reputation for orthodox zeal, came early (actually in the reign of Cavādh, following Malalas, Bonn ed., 444, against the Khvadhāynāmāgh tradition, which puts the final blood-bath in Chosroes' own reign—see Klima, Mazdak, 253f., Christensen, L'Iran², 360f.); but his kindly reception of the Athenian philosophers (see infra) also came right at the beginning of the reign, for the Eternal Peace, by the terms of which they returned to Constantinople, was made in 532 (Stein, Bas-Empire, II, 294). We have several examples of the breadth of Chosroes' sympathies. According to Procopius (BG, IV.10.11), for instance, he kept a Palestinian physician. He had Aristotle translated (see supra), and possibly other Greek medical and logical works as well as the dialogues of Plato which Agathias mentions (see infra; for the other treatises, see J. G. Wenrich, De auctorum graecorum versionibus et commentariis syriacis, arabicis, persicisque commentatio (Leipzig, 1842), 63f., and cf. Duchesne-Guillemin, La religion, 290. The Pahlavi translation of the Psalms perhaps dates from this reign (Christensen, L'Iran², 427), and Chosroes encouraged the importation of Indian works (A. Christensen, Les gestes des rois dans les traditions de l'Iran antique [Paris, 1936], chap. II; L'Iran², 429). John of Ephesus, though biased, is evidently reporting the truth when he describes him (VI.20) as fond of reading the religious books of all creeds, as well as philosophy.

According to Agathias, Uranius (see infra, on p. 164.30f.) was putting about in Constantinople the tale that Chosroes was a really learned philosopher (cf. p. 170.111f.). But this belief was current before Uranius went to Persia with Areobindus (in the early 530's—cf. Stein, Bas-Empire, II, 551, note 1), for the philosophers chose to go to Persia on the closure of the pagan schools in 529 (infra, on p. 166.55f.) because they had heard already of Chosroes' promise as a philosopher king. But Chosroes did not come to the throne till 531. Unless Agathias' chronology is at fault, it would seem that Chosroes' fame had reached the West even before he succeeded, for the hopes of the philosophers (p. 166.62f.) could hardly refer to Cavādh, with his notorious wars and incursions into imperial territory. One must assume that the philosophers had not heard of the blood-bath with which Chosroes put an end to the Mazdakites (Christensen, L'Iran², 360).

Suolahti (in Studia Orientalia, 13 [1947], 6) calls Agathias' account of the experiences of the philosophers (II.30, pp. 166, 168) "Byzantine market gossip." But to judge from what Agathias tells us about Uranius, Byzantine market gossip would support the tales of the "philosopher-king" (cf. p. 166.61: τοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν περισσομένοις), and would hardly have been sympathetic to the Athenian philosophers who where driven from their School as pagans. Agathias must have known one of the philosophers but found that Uranius, instead of those whom he considered the real scholars (p. 166.54), was being believed. This is his attempt to set the record straight. Incidentally he reveals both his real hostility to Persia and a surprising tendency to sympathize with a group of notorious pagans. See my Agathias, chaps. IX and X.
164.4f.: μεταβεβηλμένων αὐτῶ ... Rawlinson, *The Seventh Great Oriental Monarchy*, 448, note 5, simply accepts Agathias’ list at face value. I prefer to suspect that Agathias was airing his knowledge of Plato.

164.13: οὐκ ἂν ποτὲ οἶδεῖν.

Agathias’ reasons for disbelieving the tales of Chosroes’ learning are based not only on his trust in the informed opinion of the philosophers, but also on prejudice and hostility toward barbarians as such (cf. I.2, Keydell, 11, on the Franks, whom he is surprised to find even approximately civilized; I.16, Keydell, 30f., on Fulcaris the Erul; IV.1, Keydell, 123, on the Lazi). He considers the Persian language ἄγρια καὶ ἀνοσσότατη (p. 164.15f.), Persian names unpleasant (p. 88.210), and the first two Sassanian kings μισρῶ ... ἄμφω καὶ ἀδίκωτάτω (IV.23, p. 120.8f.). This is a good indication of what Agathias really thought of the people he describes at such length. For this anti-barbarian attitude, see K. Lechner, *Hellenen und Barbaren im Weltbild der Byzantiner*, Diss. München (Munich, 1954), 84f., regarding this passage as “programmatisch für die Auffassung der ganzen byzantinischen Epoche.” Agathias can make allowances for the Christian and orthodox Franks (loc. cit.), but not for Chosroes, great king though he is. He found the same hostility to Chosroes in Procopius (*BP*, I.23.1, cf. *Anecd.*, 18.29—see Christensen, *L’Iran*², 379).

164.20: εἰ μὲν οὖν ἐπανοίη τις αὐτῶν ... At first sight a more imaginative approach on Agathias’ part, but he refuses to give Chosroes any but the most patronizing credit, even for mere effort.

164.30–166.46: Uranius

A large part of Agathias’ scorn for Chosroes stems simply from the fact that he was taken in, as Agathias implies, by this pseudo-philosopher for whom Agathias had such a dislike. So great was his ire against Uranius that he was prepared to condemn Chosroes solely for daring to approve of him. Yet the picture he gives us of Chosroes and the “Magi” debating, on the instigation of Uranius, about γενέσεως τε καὶ φύσεως ... καὶ εἶ τὸ δέ τὸ πάν ἀπελεύθητον ἔσται, καὶ πῶς ἐκατὲρο μίαν τῆν ἄπαντων ἀρχήν νομιστέον (p. 166.44f.) is very diverting, even if it does lead Agathias to misrepresent him. The section on Uranius has interesting implications for Agathias’ religious and philosophical outlook in general, for which see my *Agathias*, chap. IX. Pp. 164.30f. and 166.35f. appear in Suda, s.v. Οὐράνιος. He is identified by Jacoby (*FGrHist*, 675) with a Uranius mentioned by Stephanus of Byzantium and Damascius as the author of a history of the Arabs. It would be nice to suppose that Agathias’ Uranius was the Uranius Damascius knew (see infra), though Agathias tells us he was a doctor (p. 164.31); if he was really the author of a history, we might have expected Agathias
to mention it with as much scorn as he shows for his philosophical pretensions.

166.55 f.: οὗ πολλῷ γὰρ ἐμπροσθεν...

Justinian closed the School at Athens in 529 as part of his general prohibition on pagan teaching (Malal., Bonn ed., 451). The Eternal Peace was made in Sept. 532 (Proc., BP, I.22.17; for the date, cf. Stein, Bas-Empire, II, 295, note 1) and Chosroes came to the throne in August 531 (Taqizadeh, in BSOS, 9 [1937], 128ff.). If therefore Agathias means by what he says at p. 166.61 f. to imply that the philosophers were taken in by stories about Chosroes himself, and not simply that they thought Persia a better place in general, only one year can be allowed for their expedition and their disillusionment. See Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, 2nd ed., II, 370. More probably, though, they left immediately after Justinian’s action. For the whole subject, see now Alan Cameron, “The Last Days of the Academy at Athens,” Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society, 195 (1969), 7ff.

166.55 f.: Δαμάσκιος ο ΢ύρος και Σιμπλίκιος ο Κίλις...

Quoted by Suda, s.v. πρέσβεις. Agathias is our only source for the journey of the philosophers and for the details about Chosroes’ enthusiasm for them as shown in his stipulations about the Peace (p. 168.93 f.). We can surely accept what he says, for he seems to have a detailed knowledge of the whole affair such as can only have come from information from one of the philosophers themselves (so E. Zeller, Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer Entwicklung dargestellt, 5th ed., vol. III, pt. 2 [Leipzig, 1923], 916, note 3 [Damascius]; P. Tannery, “Sur la période finale de la philosophie grecque,” Mémoires scientifiques publiées par J. L. Heiberg, No. 7, 1880–1904 [Toulouse–Paris, 1925], 238). Agathias does indeed include a poem by Damascius in his Cycle of epigrams (Anth. Pal., VII.553) and there are slight indications that he was familiar with Damascius’ outlook if not his actual writings (see my Agathias, 101). But Damascius’ dates (for which see W. Kroll, RE, IV, s.v. “Damaskios”) make it unlikely that Agathias could ever have met him. Simplicius is a more likely source for the information about the Persian journey. He was a younger man than Damascius (his major works were written after the return from Persia), and there are links between Agathias’ History and his commentary on the Encheiridion of Epictetus (Agathias, 100). This is the more interesting in that this commentary very probably dates from the time between Justinian’s edict and the subsequent removal of the philosophers to Persia; it alludes in oblique terms to the situation in which the Neoplatonists found themselves (esp. 153 and 332 [ed. Dübner, 138]). Simplicius chose to write on Epictetus because he too was a philosopher oppressed by tyranny (153); the message of Simplicius’ commentary is that the sixth-century Neoplatonists must follow his example. Not only therefore is this connection with
the Athenian philosophers interesting on the part of one who while at Alexandria had surely come under the influence of John Philoponus, the Christian rival of Simplicius (see Agathias, 102, 114f.); it also guarantees the authenticity of the information in this passage.

Though we know no details of the subsequent lives of the philosophers, two of them wrote works in which they drew on their experiences (Priscianus, Solutiones eorum de quibus disputavit Chosroes Persarum rex, and Damascius, Dubitationes et Solutiones, on which, however, see p. 98, supra). It is clear that Chosroes’ fame as an amateur of philosophy did not originate only with this visit. But their reports, even though hostile, must have done much to spread this image, so that Agathias can refer to it as though everyone knew it. Procopius certainly did, and he shared the hostility also (Anecd., 18.29).

168.62f.: πρῶτα μὲν οὖν τούς ἐν τέλει . . .

We must suppose that this hostile picture of Persian society also came from the philosophers themselves. This was the very beginning of Chosroes’ reign, when the state was still suffering from the evils left by the Mazdakite revolution and its bloody suppression. The new King had not had time to embark on his programme of restoring the status quo after the social upheavals and there were still succession problems to be settled (cf. Proc., BP, I.23). In such a situation the philosophers could hardly expect an ideal milieu for philosophical study. And, as Christensen says, they were too much bound by their own preconceptions to understand an alien way of life (L’Iran², 439). Persian customs shocked them; they expected a Platonic philosopher-king in the East, and when they found only an Oriental monarch with a taste for philosophy they could not adjust their ideas accordingly. Agathias’ own approach is the same. It is the traditional approach of Hellene to barbarian, and it prevented Agathias from reaching any real understanding of the people he is describing.

170.106f.: οὐ δὲ οὐκέτι ἔφανεν ἀνεκτός . . .

Is this Agathias’ personal grudge against Uranius? Simply that he had been bored by his constant praises of Chosroes? No doubt Agathias felt that he was providing a much-needed antidote.

APPENDIX B

THE SOURCE OF ZONARAS, XII.23

Zonaras, XII.23 (Bonn ed., II, 594.15f.), must surely be taken together with p. 596.4f., by reason of its similarity of subject matter and tone; the latter passage is strikingly similar to what Agathias says on Šâhpuhr I (my note
ad loc., p. 141, supra). Where then did Zonaras find an account of Shāhpuhr I which utilized Agathias? In view of the topos of valleys being filled with corpses, the resemblance with Agathias could of course be coincidental; I do not believe that it is, however, since there are other passages in this context in Zonaras which certainly come ultimately from Agathias (see infra), and because Zonaras’ version of the corpse anecdote looks suspiciously like a “working-up” of Agathias’, for he makes Shāhpuhr actually order prisoners to be killed for the very purpose of filling up the valleys and levelling the road for his army, whereas Agathias’ version simply regards the corpses as the result of his wholesale slaughter of his victims. I have argued already (p. 100, supra, and in my article in CQ, N.S., 14 [1964], 82f.) that Zonaras did not go direct to Agathias for the founding of the Sassanian dynasty, and another brief allusion to the early Sassanians in Zonaras supports this view. At. XII.31, Bonn ed., 616.5, he says: οὗ πρὸσεχ ἢ τῆς ἱστορίας συγγραφῆς ἔμμηνεσεν ὡς αὐτὴς Πέρσαις ἀνανεωσαμένον τὴν βασιλείαν ... , which looks like another piece of Agathias—II.25, p. 86.160: αὐτής τοῖς Πέρσαις τὴν σφετέραν εινεκὼσατο βασιλείαν. But the use of the word ἀνανεωσαμένον does not guarantee that Agathias himself was the source, for immediately afterward Zonaras uses the mistaken form Οὐσαράκης, which he has in common with Syncellus (Bonn ed., 678.13, Οὐράκης, and 722.3), as against Agathias’ Οὐσαράκης (p. 122.41, etc.). It would be surprising, then, if Zonaras went back to Agathias for Shāhpuhr I.

On the other hand, he could not have found the tales of Shāhpuhr’s cruelty in Syncellus, who did not carry his copying of Agathias’ passage as far as this (see my article in CQ; Syncellus, Bonn ed., 676.15f., is from Agathias, p. 84. 109f.). Syncellus ends his section with a list of Sassanian kings extracted from Agathias, p. 120f., but without any of the details that Agathias gives (Nöldeke, Ῥαβανάς, 400, note 1; my article, 83). Can we suggest another, later source?

De Boor scouted the idea that Zonaras, Bonn ed., 594.15f., could come from the anonymous continuator of Dio Cassius (BZ, 1 [1892], 28). But despite de Boor, the date of the anonymous has not yet been fixed with any degree of certainty. If I am right in supposing that Zonaras used Syncellus and not a source common to Syncellus as well as himself, we need to look for a source later than Syncellus. It would be an economical hypothesis to suppose that the anonymous continuator of Dio used Syncellus and Agathias as well as Dio and Herodian, and that Zonaras got his notices of the Sassanian dynasty from the anonymous. This would explain the difficulty in placing the anonymous earlier than Syncellus (de Boor’s candidate is Peter the Patrician)—namely that Syncellus shows no traces of Dio or Herodian. And it would relieve us of the need to multiply Zonaras’ sources still further, by having to postulate a source apart from the anonymous which used both Syncellus and Agathias.
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