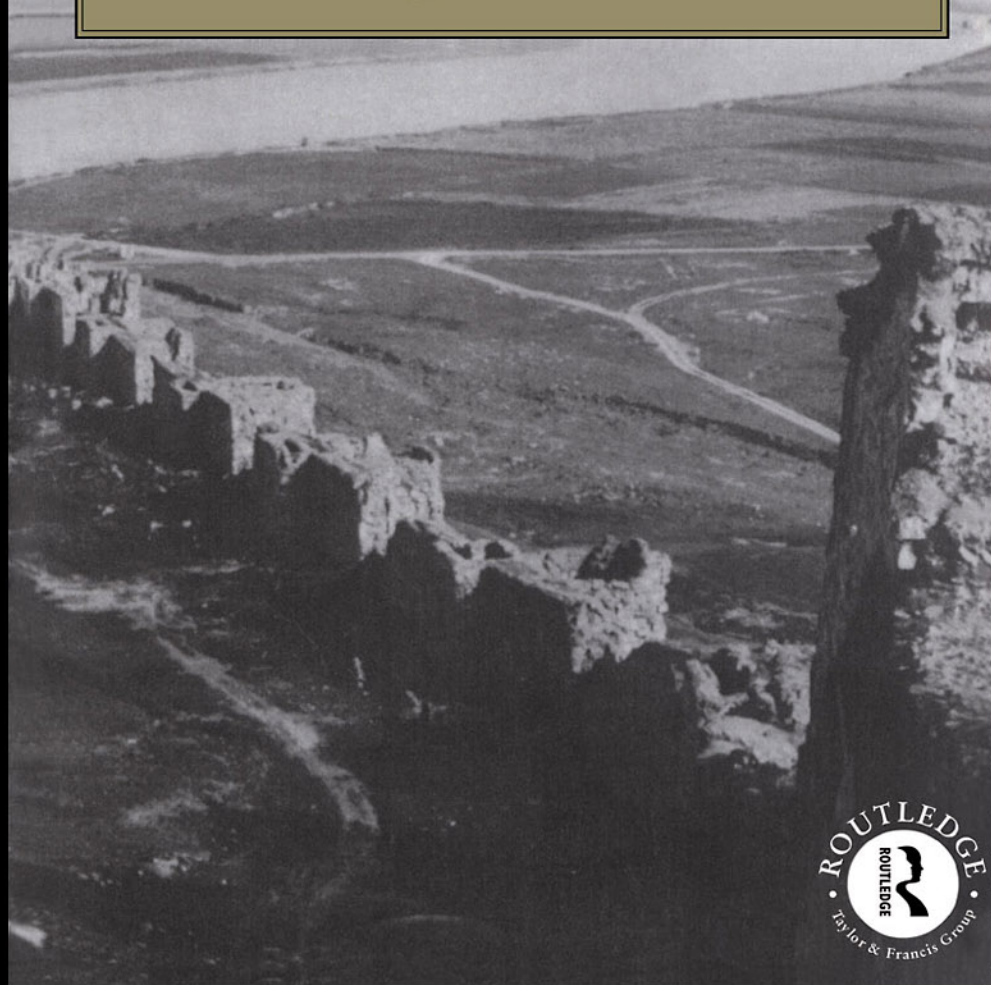


THE ROMAN EASTERN FRONTIER AND THE PERSIAN WARS

AD 226-363

A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

Compiled and edited by
Michael H. Dodgeon and Samuel N. C. Lieu



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Wars (AD 226±363)**

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Notes on the sources

(Sources which are only quoted once or twice are introduced in the notes.)

Agathangelos. Name given to the author of an Armenian historical work covering the years 226–330. See below pp. 309–14.

Agathias. Greek historian, lawyer and poet. A native of Myrina in Asia Minor, he was the author of a continuation of the Procopius' history, covering the years 552–68. Ed. R.Keydell, CFHB, 1967.

Ammianus Marcellinus. Latin historian but of Greek origin. A native of Antioch, he saw service on the eastern frontier on the staff of Ursicinus (*Mag. Equ.* 349–59 and *Mag. Ped.* 359–60). The surviving portion of his history which covers the years 353–78 is an essential source of eye-witness information on the later Persian wars of Constantius II and the expedition of Julian. Ed. W.Seyfarth, Berlin, 1968–71.

Artemii Passio. A fictionalized account of the life and martyrdom of Artemius (cf. *PLRE*, I, p. 112), a Christian official who was executed under Julian. The work was composed no earlier than the reign of Justinian. Its authorship is attributed in some manuscripts to a certain John of Rhodes and in others to John of Damascus (c. 675–c.749). Ed. B.Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, V, Berlin, 1988, pp. 185–245.

Athanasius. (c. 296–373) Bishop of Alexandria and foremost opponent of Arianism. His historical-cum-polemical works (in Greek) yield occasional pieces of valuable information on the eastern frontier, especially on the role of Constantius II. Ed. W. Bright, *St Athanasius's Historical Writings*, Oxford, 1881.

Aurelius Victor, Sextus. Latin historian. A native of Africa, he published (c. 361) a brief history of the Roman empire down to his own times. Ed. F.Pichlmayr, revised by R.Gruendel, Berlin, 1970.

Cassius Dio Cocceianus. Greek historian and statesman (*consul suffectus* c. 205 and consul with Severus Alexander in 229). His great history of Rome from the foundation of the city to his own time has only partially survived. The extant sections covering the reign of Severus Alexander are derived from the epitome of Xiphilinus (11th C). Ed. U.P.Boissevain, Berlin, 1895–1931.

Cedrenus, Georgius. Greek monk (?) and annalist. He compiled a chronicle which begins with the Creation and goes down to the year 1057. Ed. I.Bekker, CSHB, 1828.

Chronichon Paschale. Title given to an anonymous compilation of the early seventh century, covering the period from the Creation to AD 629. Ed. L.Dindorf, CSHB, 1832.

Codex Theodosianus. An official collection of imperial constitutions from AD 312 until 438 when the Code was published by Theodosius II. It is extremely valuable for reconstructing and dating imperial movements because the compilers had preserved the date and place of issue of most of the constitutions. Ed. T.Mommsen, Berlin, 1905.

Ephrem Syrus. Syrian poet and theologian. Born in or near Nisibis, he was compelled to leave his native city because of the treaty of 363 which surrendered it to the Persians. He later settled in Edessa where he distinguished himself both as a Christian poet and ascetic. His *Carmina Nisibena* and *Hymni contra Julianum* both include eye-witness material on the events they describe. Ed. E.Beck, CSCO, 1957 and 1961–3.

Epitome de Caesaribus. Title given to an anonymous epitome in Latin of the history of the Roman Empire from Augustus to Theodosius. The work is sometimes wrongly associated with Aurelius Victor. Ed. F.Pichlmayr, rev. R.Gruendel, Leipzig, 1970.

Evagrius. Greek lawyer and ecclesiastical historian. Native of Epiphaneia in Syria, he wrote an ecclesiastical history at the end of the sixth century covering the period 431–594. The work is noted for its attention to secular matters. Eds J.Bidez and L.Parmentier, London, 1898.

Eunapius. Greek sophist. Born near Sardis in Lydia c. 345, he wrote a continuation of the history of Dexippus from the pagan view point covering the period AD 270–404. It was the main source of the historian Zosimus for this period but the work has only survived in fragments. Ed. C.Müller, *FHG* IV, 1885, pp. 11–56. See also Blockley, 1983:2–126. Eunapius was also the author of a collection of lives of famous sophists of the fourth century which contains some important material on political history. Ed. C.Giangrande, Rome, 1956.

Eusebius. Greek ecclesiastical politician, historian and theologian (c. AD 260–340). A native of Palestine; his *Ecclesiastical History* covering the period from the Apostolic Age to the reign of Constantine was the model for later church historians. Ed. E. Schwartz, GCS, 1903–9. His *Life of Constantine* is one of the principal sources on the history of the reign of the first Christian emperor despite its panegyrical tone. Ed. F.Winkelman, GCS, 1975. Among his works is preserved a number of orations by Constantine. Ed. I.A.Heikel, GCS, 1902.

Eutropius. Latin historian. Probably a native of Bordeaux, he accompanied Julian on his expedition. His epitome of Roman history, published before 380, begins with Romulus and finishes with the reign of Jovian. Ed. C.Santini, Leipzig, 1979.

Eutychius (Sa'id b. al-Bitriq). Christian Arab universal historian. See below pp. 295–6.

Faustus Buzandats'i. Armenian historian. See below pp. 300–9.

Firdawsi (Abu 'l-Kasim). Persian epic poet. See below pp. 297–9.

Festus. Latin historian. He was *magister memoriae* when he published his brief summary (Breviarium) of Roman history c. 369–70. The work pays considerable attention, unusual for an epitome, on the eastern campaigns of the emperors down to Jovian. Ed. J.W.Eadie, London, 1967.

Georgius Monachus. Greek monk and author of a widely read world chronicle which runs from Adam to AD 842. Ed. C.de Boor, rev. P. Wirth, Stuttgart, 1978.

Herodian(us). Greek historian. His history from the death of Marcus Aurelius (AD 180) to the accession of Gordian III (AD 238) is one of the most important sources for the history of the third century, especially for the period not covered by the surviving parts of the history of Cassius Dio. Ed. C.R.Whittaker, London, 1969–70.

Jerome (Eusebius Hieronymus). Biblical scholar and theologian (c. 342–420). Born near Aquileia, he is best known for his translation of the Christian Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin. He also translated (into Latin) and continued Eusebius's 'Chronicle'. The work (published c. 380/1) is specially useful for the dating of particular events. Ed. R.Helm, GCS, 1956.

John of Antioch (Iohannes Antiochenus). Greek historian of whom nothing is known. His chronicle covers the period from the Creation to 610. Ed. C.Müller, *FHG* IV, 1885, pp. 535–622.

Jordanes. Latin historian who lived c. AD 550. He summarized the Gothic histories of Cassiodorus in his *Getica* to which he added a summary of Roman history (*Romana*), which he seems to have derived from the lost history of Aurelius Memmius Symmachus. Ed. T.Mommsen, *MGH*, 1882.

Julian(us Apostata). Roman emperor (AD 361–3) and Greek man of letters. His panegyrics in honour of his cousin, the emperor Constantius II (AD 324–61), are a valuable source on the Persian Wars of the early part of the latter's reign. Ed. J.Bidez, Paris, 1932.

Lactantius. Latin Christian apologist (c. 240–c. 320), his polemical treatise *De mortibus persecutorum* (On the Manner in which the Persecutors died) published c. 314–15, is one of the main sources on the reigns of Diocletian and his colleagues. Ed. J.Creed, Oxford, 1984.

Libanius. Greek sophist and rhetor of Antioch (314–c. 393). One of the most influential pagans of the fourth century; his speeches and letters composed during the reigns of Constantius, Julian and Jovian provide a wealth of information on events in the East and he knew personally a considerable number of those who took part in the campaigns. Ed. R.Förster, Leipzig, 1909–27.

Malalas, Ioannes. Greek advocate of Antioch who published sometime after 574 a world chronicle from the Creation to AD 563. It preserves much that is

important as well as trivial on Antioch and the province of Syria. Ed. L.Dindorf, CSHB, 1831. See also Stauffenberg, 1931 (Bks IX–XII only).

Michael the Syrian. (1126–1199) Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch and compiler of an important chronicle in Syriac from the Creation to 1194/5. Ed. J.B.Chabot, Paris, 1899–1910.

(Ps.)Moses Khorenats'i. Name given to the author of a work of great importance on Armenian history. See below pp. 314–27.

Notitia dignitatum. Title given to a catalogue of titles of administrative offices in the two halves of the Roman Empire. Ed. O.Seeck, 1876. See below pp. 340–8.

Orosius. (fl. early fifth century) Spanish priest and controversialist. In 417, he undertook, at the invitation of Augustine, a *Historia adversus Paganos*—i.e. a history of Rome from the beginning to AD 417 as seen from the Christian viewpoint. The work is of importance to the study of the history of the third century through lack of other more reliable evidence. Ed. C.Zangemeister, Leipzig, 1889.

Panegyrici Latini. A collection of twelve Latin panegyrics given by various authors in honour of specific emperors. All but one (the one being that of Pliny the Younger) of the twelve were composed after the third century and some make occasional mention of imperial achievements in the East. Ed. E.Galletier, Paris, 1949–55.

Petrus Patricius. Greek diplomat and official under Justinian who composed various works on historical matters. These have come down to us only in excerpts but they yield some valuable information on Romano-Persian relations not found elsewhere. Ed. C.Müller, *FHG* IV, pp. 181–91.

Philostorgius. (c. 368–c. 439) Greek ecclesiastical historian. His principal work, a history of the church from the Arian view point has come down to us mainly in an epitome by Photius and in the historical sections of the *Artemii Passio* (see above). Ed. J.Bidez, rev. F.Winkelmann, GCS, 1981.

Procopius. (fl. sixth century) Greek historian and chronicler of the reign of Justinian. A native of Caesarea, he was military secretary to Belisarius and saw service on the eastern frontier. His account of the Persian Wars of his time contains some useful pieces of information on those of the earlier periods. Ed. J.Haury, rev. P. Wirth, Leipzig, 1963–4.

Scriptores Historian Augustae. Collective title given by Casubon to the author (s) of a collection of Latin biographies of Roman emperors from Hadrian to Numerianus. The work claims to have been composed by six authors in the reign of Diocletian. Most modern scholars subscribe to single authorship and a post 360 date of composition. The biographies down to Opelius Macrinus contain much accurate information but the remaining ones combine reliable facts with outright forgeries and inventions. Ed. E.Hohl, Leipzig, 1927, tr. D.Magie, LCL, 1922–32.

Oracula Sibyllina. Collections of the prophetic utterances of the Sibyls had been in existence in Rome since the time of the Kings. The fourteen

miscellaneous books of prophecies in verse which bear the title of the Sibylline Oracles are blatant Judaeo-Christian forgeries. Book 13, composed before the death of Odaenathus, is particularly informative on conditions in Syria during the invasions of Shapur I. Ed. J.Geffcken, GCS, 1902.

Socrates (Scholasticus). Greek lawyer and ecclesiastical historian. He was the author of a continuation of the Church History of Eusebius and extends from 305 to 439. Ed. R.Hussey, Oxford, 1853.

Sozomen(us). Greek ecclesiastical historian and another continuator of Eusebius. His work which covers the period 323–425 is heavily dependent on that of Socrates but contains valuable information on the history of Christianity in Armenia and the Sassanian Empire. Ed. J.Bidez, rev. G.C.Hansen, GCS, 1960.

Suidas (or *Suda*). Name of a Greek encyclopaedic lexicon compiled about the end of the tenth century AD. Ed. A.Adler, Leipzig, 1929–38.

Syncellus, Georgius. Greek chronographer who lived in the latter part of the eighth and the early part of the ninth century. He intended to compile a chronicle down to his own time but the project was cut short by his death and the extant text goes only as far as the accession of Diocletian in 284. He made extensive use of the now lost Greek version of the chronicle of Eusebius. Ed. A.A. Mosshammer, Leipzig, 1984.

al-Tabari. Arab historian, whose principal work contains an important monograph on the history of the Sassanian dynasty in Persia. See below pp. 275–95.

Themistius. (c. 317–c. 388) Greek philosopher and rhetor whose panegyrics found favour with every emperor from Constantius II to Theodosius. His speeches are also important as sources for the history of his time. Eds H.Schenkl, G.Downey and A.F.Norman, Leipzig, 1965 ff.

Theodoret(us). (c. 393–c. 466) Greek ecclesiastical politician and historian. A native of Antioch, he later became the Bishop of Cyrrhus and was embroiled in the Christological controversy between Nestorius and Cyril of Alexandria. His *Ecclesiastical History* continues that of Eusebius down to 425. Ed. L.Parmentier, rev. F.Scheidweiler, GCS, 1954. He also wrote a history of the monks of Syria and Mesopotamia (*Historia Religiosa*) which contains the life of Jacob of Nisibis. Eds P.Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen, Paris, 1977–9.

Theophanes (Confessor). A Byzantine monk who compiled a chronicle (in Greek) covering the years 284 to 814. Though a major source on the Arab Conquest and the Iconoclast Controversy, its coverage of the events of the third and fourth centuries is very sketchy. Ed. C.De Boor, Leipzig, 1883.

Zonaras, Ioannes. Byzantine historian and canonist of the twelfth century. He was the author of a universal history (in Greek) down to 1118 which is in essence an epitome of the standard histories. For the Severan period he used mainly Dio Cassius and for the period between Severus Alexander and Constantine, probably the lost portions of the histories of Petrus Patricius. Eds M.Pinder and T.Büttner-Wobst, CSHB, 1841–97.

Zosimus. Greek pagan historian and imperial bureaucrat, whose only surviving work, the *Historia Nova*, covers Roman history from 180–410, he is second only in importance to Ammianus as a source for the history of the fourth century. The work contains much material drawn from the now lost history of Eunapius (see above). Ed. F.Paschoud, Paris, 1971 ff.

List of abbreviations

AAS	<i>Les Annales archéologiques Arabes syriennes</i> (Damascus, 1951 ff.).
Abh. (Gött.)	<i>Abhandlungen der (königlichen) Gesellschaft (Akademie) der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen</i> , Philolog.-hist. Kl., N.F. (Berlin, 1897 ff.).
AE	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i> , published in <i>Revue archéologique</i> and separately (Paris, 1888 ff.).
Amm.	Ammianus Marcellinus.
AMS	<i>Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum</i> ed. P.Bedjan, 7 vols (Paris, 1890–7).
ANCL	Ante-Nicene Christian Library (Edinburgh, 1864 ff.).
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i> , eds H. Temporini <i>et al.</i> (Berlin, 1972 ff.).
BAR	<i>British Archaeological Reports</i> (Oxford) (S=International Series).
BGU	<i>Berliner Griechische Urkunden</i> (Berlin, 1895 ff.).
BMC	<i>British Museum Catalogue of Coins of the Roman Empire</i> (London, 1923 ff.).
CAH	<i>The Cambridge Ancient History</i> (Cambridge, 1923 ff.).
CHI	<i>The Cambridge History of Iran</i> (Cambridge, 1968 ff.).
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin, 1863 ff.).
CISem.	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> (Paris, 1881 ff.).
CJ	<i>Codex Justinianus</i> , ed. P.Krüger (<i>Corpus Iuris Civilis</i> , Berlin, 1929).
CMC	<i>Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis</i> , eds L.Koenen and C. Römer (Opladen, 1988).
Cooke	G.A.Cooke, <i>A Text-Book of North Semitic Inscriptions</i> (Oxford, 1903).

- CRAI* *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres* (Pans, 1857 ff.).
- CSCO* *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (Paris, Louvain etc, 1903 ff.).
- CSHB* *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, 49 vols (Bonn, 1828–78).
- CT* *Codex Theodosianus*.
- Dessau *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, ed. H.Dessau, 3 vols (Berlin, 1892–1916).
- Diz. Epig.* *Dizionario epigrafico di antichità romana*, ed. E.de Ruggiero (Rome, 1895 ff.).
- EE* *Ephemeris Epigraphica Corporis Inscriptionum Latinarum Supplementum* (Berlin, 1872–1913).
- Ephr., *HcJul.* Ephrem Syrus, *Hymni contra Julianum*.
- FHG* *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. C.Müller, 5 vols (Paris, 1841–70).
- GCS* Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte (Leipzig 1897–1941; Berlin and Leipzig, 1953; Berlin 1954 ff.).
- Gk* Greek
- GRP* *Gazeteer of Roman Palestine*, ed. M.Avi-Yonah, QEDem 5 (Jerusalem, 1976)
- hist. eccl. or h.e.* *historia ecclesiastica*.
- IGLS* *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, eds L. Jalabert *et al.* (Paris, 1929 ff.).
- IGR* *Inscriptions Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes*, eds R.Cagnat and G.Lafaye (Paris, 1906–27).
- ILAI* *Inscriptions latines del'Algérie*, I–II, eds St. Gsell and H.-G.Pflaum (Paris, 1922–57).
- Inv.* *Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre*, eds J.Cantineau *et al.* fasc. 1–11 (Beirut, 1930–65).
- IRT* *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania*, eds J.M. Reynolds and J.B.Ward-Perkins (Rome, 1952).
- Itin. Anton.* *Itineraria Antonini Augusti* ed. O.Cuntz, *Itineraria Romana*, I (Berlin, 1929).
- Job. Chrys.* Ioannes Chrysostomus.
- JRS* *Journal of Roman Studies* (London, 1911 ff.).
- KKZ* (Inscription of Kirdir at the Kaaba of Zoroastre) ed. M.L.Chaumont, 'L'inscription de Kartir à la "Ka'bah de

- Zoroastre” (texte, traduction, commentaire)’, *Journal Asiatique*, 248 (1960) pp. 339–80.
- LCL Loeb Classical Library (London and Camb., Mass., 1911 ff.)
- Lib. Libanius Sophista.
- MGH Monumentae Germaniae Historica (Berlin, 1877– 1919) (*Auct. Ant=Auctores Antiquissimi*).
- mp. Middle Persian.
- MUSJ *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* (Beirut, 1906 ff.).
- Nöldeke Th. Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden. Aus der arabischen Chronik des Tabari übersetzt und mit ausführlichen. Erläuterungen und Ergänzungen versehen* (Leiden, 1879).
- Not. Dig. *Notitia Dignitatum* (Or.=in partibus...orientis)
- PAES E.Littmann, D.Magie, and D.R.Stuart, *Syria, Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904–5 and 1909, Div. III, Greek and Latin Inscriptions: (A) S.Syria; (B) N.Syria* (Leiden, 1921–2).
- PECS *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Classical Sites*, eds R. Stillwell *et al.* (New Jersey, 1976).
- PG *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graceco-Latina*, eds J.P.Migne *et al.* 162 vols (Paris, 1857–66).
- PIR² *Prosopographia Imperil Romani Saeculi I, II, III*, 2nd edn by E.Groag and A.Stein (Berlin, 1933 ff.).
- PL *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*, eds J.P. Migne *et al.*, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64) and 5 Suppl. (1958–74).
- PLRE, I *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, I, eds A.H.M.Jones, J.Morris and J.R.Martindale, I (Cambridge, 1971).
- PO *Patrologia Orientalis*, eds R.Graffin and F.Nau (Paris, 1907 ff.).
- PS *Patrologia Syriaca*, 3 vols (Paris, 1893–1926).
- PDura *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report V, Pt. I, The Parchments and Papyri*, eds C.B.Welles, R.O. Fink and J.F.Gilliam (New Haven, 1959).
- POxy. *Oxyrynchus Papyri*, eds B.P.Grenfell, A.S.Hunt *et al.* (London, 1898 ff.).
- PThead. *Papyrus de Théadelphie*, ed. P.Jouguet (Paris, 1911).
- pth. Parthian.

<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> , ed. T. Klauser (Stuttgart, 1950 ff.).
<i>RE</i>	<i>Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , eds A.Pauly, G.Wissowa <i>et al.</i> (Stuttgart, 1893 ff.)
<i>RÉA</i>	<i>Revue des études arméniennes</i> (Paris).
<i>RGDS</i>	<i>Res Gestae Divi Saporis</i> . See <i>SKZ</i> .
<i>RIC</i>	<i>Roman Imperial Coinage</i> , eds H.Mattingly, E.A. Sydenham <i>et al.</i> (London, 1923 ff.).
<i>Sb. (Bayr.)</i>	<i>Sitzungsberichte der (königlich) bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (zu München)</i> (Munich, 1860– 1871, philosoph.-philolog. und hist. Kl., 1871–1930; Philosoph.-hist. Abt., 1930 ff.).
<i>Sb. (Wien)</i>	<i>Sitzungsberichte der (kaiserlichen) Akademie der Wissenschaften (in Wien)</i> , Philosoph.-hist. Kl. (Vienna, 1848 ff.).
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> (Berlin, 1923 ff.).
<i>SHA</i>	<i>Scriptores Historiae Augustae</i> .
<i>SKZ</i>	(Inscription of Shapur at the Kaaba of Zoroastre), ‘ <i>Res Gestae Divi Saporis</i> ’, ed. and trans. A.Maricq, <i>Syria</i> 35 (1958) 245–60.
<i>Soc.</i>	Socrates (Scholasticus).
<i>Soz.</i>	Sozomenus.
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i> (Philadelphia, 1870 ff.).
<i>TAVO</i>	<i>Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients</i> (Wiesbaden)
<i>Tab. Peut.</i>	<i>Tabula Peutingeriana</i> , ed. K.Miller, <i>Itineraria Romana</i> (Stuttgart, 1916).
<i>Thdt.</i>	Theodoretus Cyrrensis.
<i>Zos.</i>	Zosimus Historicus.

Foreword

The compilation and translation of this collection of texts on Romano-Persian relations were begun by Sam Lieu about five years ago for students taking his course on the history of Roman Mesopotamia (and adjacent Syria) at Warwick University. The need for some sort of collection was particularly felt for the period *c.* AD 224–350 because of the diverse nature of the surviving evidence and the lack of a major historical source. Michael Dodgeon joined the task of translating when the collection was already half completed, thus enabling Sam Lieu to extend his search for relevant material and, later, to concentrate on compiling the notes and the appendices. We are both extremely grateful to Richard Stoneman of Routledge for his generous invitation to publish what can only be regarded as a working collection since a great deal of new research remains to be done on Rome's Eastern Frontier and relations with Persia in one of the more tempestuous and less well-studied periods of its history. Richard's personal interest in this collection and his infinite patience have been invaluable assets to the editors. It is fortunate that the first part of the excellent commentary by Wolfgang Felix on the literary sources on Romano-Sassanian relations (*Antike literarische Quellen zur Aussenpolitik des Sasanidenstaates*, Vienna, 1985) became available to us at a time when it was still possible to make additions and alterations to our collection. Our debt to Felix's work is enormous and is amply reflected in the notes to the first five chapters of this collection. It is a cause of some regret that we could not delay the publication of our collection until after the appearance of the second part of his work covering the period from AD 309 onwards.

The diverse origins of the texts in this collection (Greek, Latin, Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew, Palmyrene, Middle Persian, and Armenian) necessitated our turning to friends and colleagues for help at every stage of compilation. We are immeasurably indebted to their willingness to give of their valuable time. Sebastian Brock, always an unfailing source of profound knowledge and learned advice for anyone working on the history of the Near East in this period, undertook the arduous task of revising the translations of all the Syriac texts and Palmyrene inscriptions in this collection. Ahmad al-Issa, Doris Dance, and Sheila Vince have contributed much to the preparation of the translations given

in the appendices. James Russell kindly checked Mrs Vince's translation of parts of Renoux's French translation of Ephrem's *Sermones de Nicomedia* against the original Armenian. Paddy Considine generously agreed to translate several chapters from the *History of the Armenians* of Faustus of Buzanda at short notice. Stephen Mitchell read the first draft of the collection and proffered many useful corrections, additions, and suggestions. His fellow Anatolian researcher, Stephen Hill, corrected a number of misidentifications we had made of Cilician place names given in the Great Inscription of Shapur I. David Kennedy gave us much of his valuable time and expert knowledge in checking our attempts to identify the place-names in the sections of the *Notitia Dignitatum* which cover Syria and Arabia and made available to us material which is still in press. Werner Sundermann kindly commented on the first part of the collection from the perspective of an Iranologist and has saved us from a number of factual and chronological errors. Much help and advice on the translations were also received from James Jordan, Charles and Marna Morgan, Judith Lieu, and Ze'ev Rubin. Tim Barnes, Roger Blockley, Han Drijvers, and Michael Speidel generously sent us off-prints of their articles and monographs. Kay Rainsley ungrudgingly undertook the bulk of the word-processing and we owe much to her skill, dedication, and good humour. Michael Dodgeon is deeply indebted to Brian H. Warmington of Bristol University for his critical but kind direction of his earlier research. He would also like to express his gratitude to his wife Jean for her painstaking help with proof-reading. Sam Lieu would like to record a personal word of thanks to Sir Ronald Syme for several stimulating and informative discussions on the extracts from the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* included in this collection and also to Peter Brown for first introducing him to the history of the fascinating world which existed between the Roman and the Sassanian Empires.

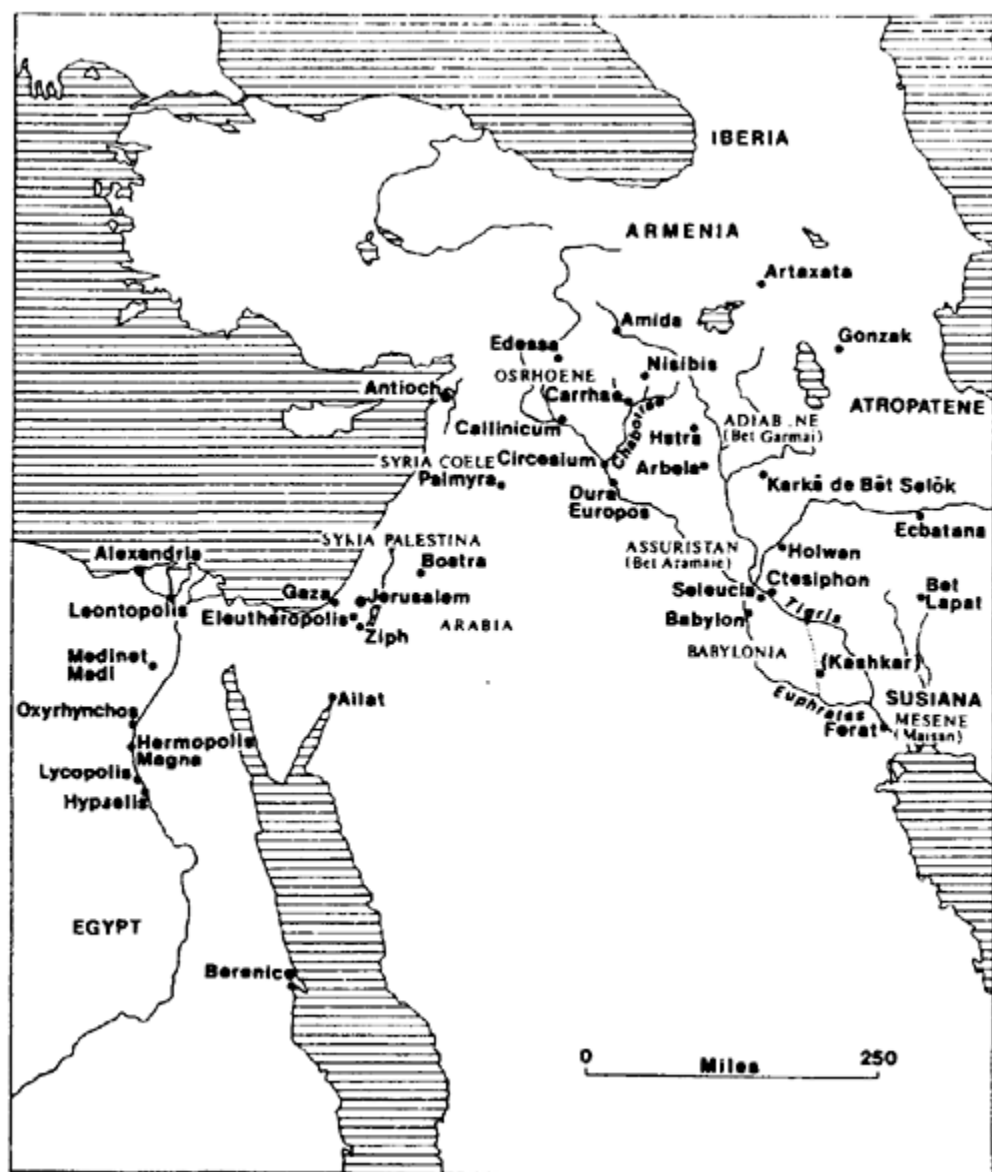
A grant for 'innovative teaching' from the Nuffield Foundation to Sam Lieu enabled work on this collection to be started at Warwick University alongside his other academic and administrative commitments. He is grateful to the Foundation for the award of a further research grant on Urbanism in Mesopotamia in the Parthian and Roman periods which yielded much material that is relevant to this collection. He would also like to thank the Wolfson Foundation for a research grant on Roman foreign policy, and the British Academy for two small research grants, one on Libanius and the other on the *Artemii Passio*. The Research and Innovation Committee and the European Humanities Research Centre, both of Warwick University, have made a number of small grants over the last five years to the project, mainly to cover secretarial, reprographic, and travel costs. Without the generous help from all these grant-giving bodies, the task of compiling a documentary history which draws material from more than a hundred classical, oriental, and medieval sources, as well as collections of inscriptions and papyri, would have been well nigh impossible from local resources. The main part of the research for this collection was carried

out at the Joint Library of the Hellenic and Roman Societies in London. The helpfulness of its staff is a delight to record.

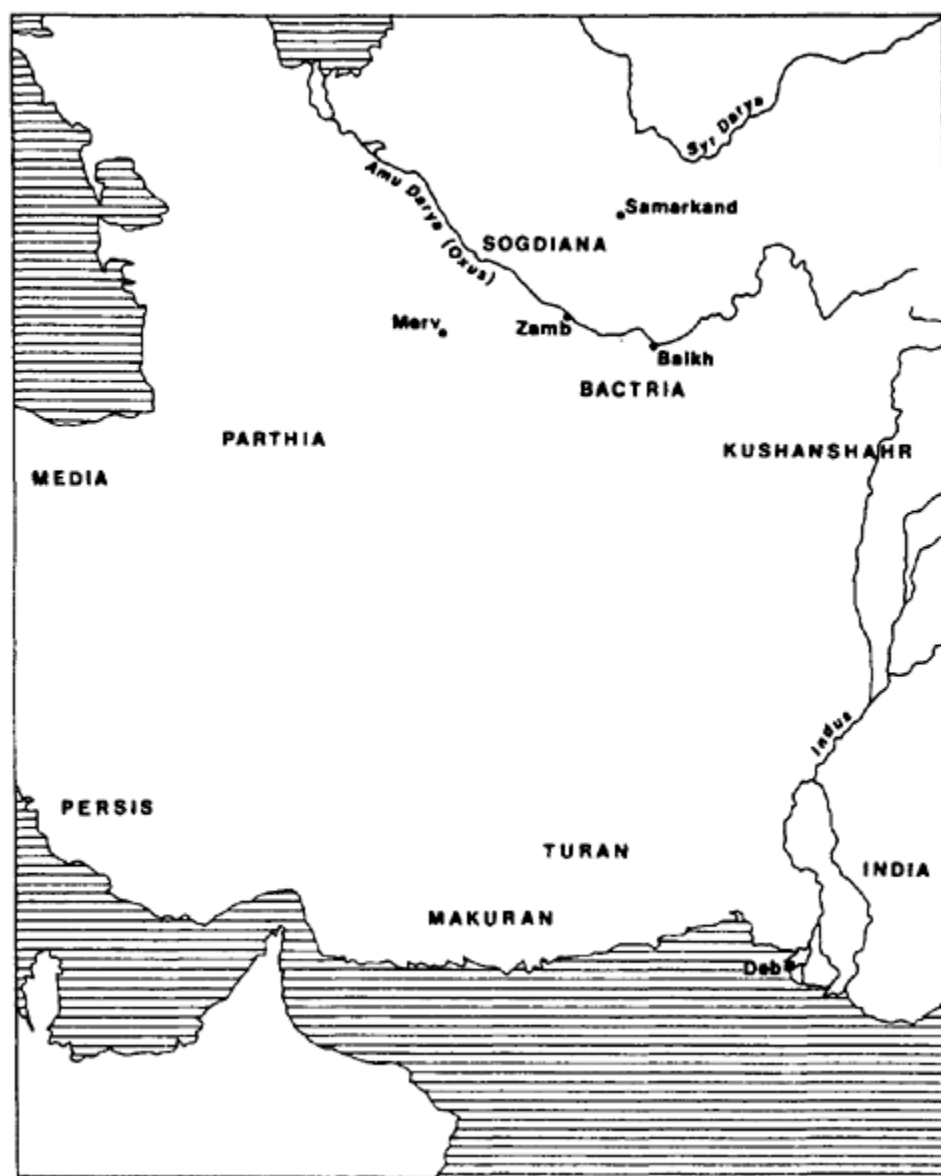
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Magistracies of the Roman State (1983); to the editors of *Sumer* for the map on Julian's attack against Ctesiphon by M.Fiey (1967); to J.M.Dent for an extract from Sir Walter Lamb's translation of *Heliodorus, Ethiopian Story*, Everyman's Library (1961); and finally to Prof. Michael Speidel for his personal permission to reproduce his translation of two Latin military inscriptions.



Map 1 The Near East in the third century



Introduction

(1)

Outline of Romano-Persian relations (224±363)

The coming to power of the Sassanian Dynasty in Iran in AD 224 opens a new chapter in the struggle for hegemony in the Near East. Till then, Rome's fortunes had fared reasonably well in its perennial conflict with the Parthians. The ignominy of Crassus' defeat at Carrhae was little more than a schoolboy jingle: 'Carrhas Crassi clade nobiles' (Carrhae whose name was renowned by reason of her defeat of Crassus) and it certainly did not compel commanders like Corbulo to regard the Euphrates as a sacred barrier to ambition and fame. Though Trajan's sweeping conquests at the beginning of the second century in Mesopotamia were mostly abandoned by his immediate successors, Roman power gradually reasserted itself east of the Euphrates as the century progressed. The Parthian Wars of Lucius Verus in 165 saw the formal incorporation of the Euphrates corridor into the Roman sphere of influence with Roman troops garrisoned as far south as Salhiye (Dura Europos), Ana (Anatha), and Kifrin. The oasis city of Palmyra, a Roman colony since the time of Hadrian, contributed to the stability on the southern flanks by acting as policeman of the Syrian Desert. More importantly, Septimius Severus created the new province of Osroene c. 197, confining the power of the Abgars, renowned for their political vacillations, to the city of Edessa and its immediate environs. The new network of roads allowed Nisibis and Singara to be more firmly integrated into Rome's eastern defences, giving her valuable access to the Tigris and a choice of invasion routes. Thus, when Opellius Macrinus withdrew the army of the murdered Caracalla, whose Praetorian Prefect he was, from Mesopotamia after an indecisive battle with the Parthian king Artabanus V near Nisibis in 217, few would have predicted any major change in the balance of power. Both sides seemed set for a period of minor wars and the consolidation of their existing frontiers.

Yet, seven years later, Artabanus V was dead on the field of Hormizdagan, victim of a rebellion which began inconspicuously in c. 208. The victor,

Ardashir, the scion of an Iranian royal house from Istachr, wasted no time in trying to incorporate client states of the former Parthians like Hatra and Armenia into his new dominion, in flagrant disregard of the status quo which had existed between the Roman Empire and the Parthian kingdom. Rome was not slow to send help to the threatened areas and a three-pronged expedition in 231–3 fought the Persians to a draw, with victory in Media and defeat in Mesopotamia. By 238/9, however, the Persians had recovered sufficiently to resume the attack on Roman Syria and Mesopotamia, capturing a number of cities, and in 240 the crown prince Shapur finally subdued the kingdom of Hatra, thus neutralizing the main threat to Persian expansion into Armenia and Upper Mesopotamia. The Roman response came four years later when the young Gordian III led an expedition which liberated some of the captured cities but suffered a major defeat near the Sassanian twin royal city of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Gordian perished in mysterious circumstances and his successor Philip signed a pact with Shapur which was detrimental to Roman interests in Armenia. Later attempts to redress this by the Romans were the perfect pretext for Shapur (Shahanshah since 242) to direct a series of raids from 252 onwards against Syria, Commagene, and Cappadocia. The capture of Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, by the Persians would have undoubtedly sent shock waves reverberating through all the eastern parts of the Roman Empire. Against these *razzias* Rome made no effective reply, thus encouraging Shapur I to launch a full-scale invasion of Roman Mesopotamia via the Tigris route in 260. An attempt by Valerian (emperor 253–60) to oppose this led to his defeat near Edessa and captivity in Persia. The victorious Persians plundered Syria, Cilicia, and Cappadocia at will and were only halted by local resistance by Valerian's officers at Pompeiopolis and the unexpected rise to prominence of Odaenathus, the prince of Palmyra, who seized the opportunity of the power vacuum created by the conflict in the north to raid deeply into Sassanian-held Mesopotamia (Assuristan). His victories kept the Persians at bay but Rome had effectively lost control of territories south of the Anti-Taurus, especially when, under Odaenathus' successor Vaballathus (with his mother Zenobia ruling as regent), Palmyrene power extended into Egypt. The success, however, proved to be short-lived as Rome had now realized the need for stronger men at the helm. Under Aurelian (270–5), the first of a series of soldier-emperors who would restore military discipline and revive Roman fortunes in the face of foreign adversaries, Rome regained control over her Near Eastern possessions from the Palmyrenes after a decisive victory outside Antioch in 272.

The death of Shapur I, c. 272, heralded a period of political unrest in Persia as his immediate successors, Hormizd, Bahram I, and Bahram II, all had very short reigns. A struggle for power broke out after 282 between Bahram III, the descendant of a minor queen or concubine of Shapur, and Narses, the king of Armenia, the last of Shapur's sons. The Roman emperor Carus took advantage of this and made a successful raid against Assuristan in 283, penetrating as far as Seleucia-Ctesiphon. His death on campaign compelled the Romans to withdraw

and on the mysterious death of his successor Numerianus, the army elected Diocletian, a soldier from Dalmatia, as emperor. He used the years of relative peace to overhaul the defence of Rome's Eastern Frontier, constructing a major line of communication across the Syrian Desert from Sura on the Euphrates to Damascus via Palmyra. The line (*limes*) was interspaced with a series of fortresses and camps for patrolling cavalry units. In 296, Narses, now secure on the throne of Persia, took to the offensive and defeated Diocletian and his junior colleague, the Caesar Galerius, near Carrhae. The fact that he seems to have been unable to exploit his victory is a testimony to the frontier reorganization carried out in the intervening years. With a fresh army Galerius surprised Narses in Armenia and scored a major victory, capturing the harem of the Shahanshah, thus forcing Narses to make major territorial concessions beyond the Tigris (the Transtigritanian *regiones*) to the Romans in the negotiations conducted in 297/8.

The new gains confirmed the upper reaches of the Tigris as Rome's first line of defence and gave the cities of northern Mesopotamia like Amida, Nisibis, Singara, and Bezabde a new defensive role. They also ensured Persian hostility as no self-respecting Shahanshah would allow the matter to rest. The steady growth of the Christian community in the Eranshah introduced a new ingredient to Romano-Persian relations after the persecution of Christians came to an end in the Roman Empire under Constantine, who also actively promoted Christianity as one of the official religions of Rome. Not long before hostility resumed between the two empires in 337, Constantine put himself forward as the advocate of the Christians in Persia, adding a possible religious dimension to the impending conflict. The Diocletianic frontier reforms proved their worth in the long reign of Constantius II (337–62) as Shapur II (309–79) made repeated and fruitless attacks on Nisibis. Though some cities were lost to the Persians in 359/60, the valiant defenders of Amida, Singara, and Bezabde inflicted such heavy casualties on the enemy that Shapur was unable to follow up or consolidate his gains. However, three years later, the premature death of Constantius' successor, Julian, in the course of his Persian campaign (363) led directly to the loss to the Romans on the negotiating table of three of the five Transtigritanian *regiones* which they had gained through the victory of Galerius, as well as of Nisibis and a number of key fortresses. The citizens of Nisibis, who had proved their loyalty to Rome on so many occasions, were allowed to be evacuated under truce to the west, leaving their city to become a major Persian stronghold on the very doorstep of the Roman Empire.

(2)

The problem of the sources

The study of the events outlined in the above section has long been bedevilled by the lack of a coherent and reliable ancient authority. The loss of the first thirteen books of the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus has left a gap in chronological narrative down to 353 which is only partially filled by the history of Herodian,

the *Historia Nova* of Zosimus (which itself has gaps, especially on the reign of Diocletian), the highly problematic *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, and the polemical *Historia adversus Paganos* of Orosius. Though a number of important sources on early Sassanian history exist in oriental languages (especially in Arabic, New Persian, and Armenian), they are relatively late compilations and the political and military relationship between Rome and Persia was rarely the main interest of the compilers. In the case of the Armenian sources, scholars since Whiston and Gibbon have noted that they abound in problems of genealogy and chronology, which means that they cannot be regarded as reliable or independent, or even be used as a check on the more contemporary classical sources. Nevertheless, the period is covered in outline by a number of epitomes of Roman history (especially those of Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, Festus, and the anonymous *Epitome de Caesaribus*) which were all compiled in the fourth century, and also by Byzantine chroniclers like Petrus Patricius, Malalas, John of Antioch, Theophanes, Syncellus, Cedrenus and Zonaras who had access to earlier material now lost to us. Moreover, contemporary documents like the works of the Church Fathers and the Latin Panegyrics make occasional references to the events in the east. And in the thirteenth book of the so-called *Sibylline Oracles* we have the work of an author who was well informed on Romano-Persian wars and particularly their effects on Syria from the reign of Gordian III to the domination of the province by Odaenathus of Palmyra. For the early wars of Constantius, we also possess the poems (in Syriac) of one eyewitness, Ephrem Syrus, and the panegyrics of two contemporaries. Julian and Libanius. Though Libanius himself was not a witness to the fighting, he personally knew a number of the officers who held important military commands in the east and with whom he corresponded regularly.

The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by European powers after the Treaty of Versailles opened Syria and Iraq to systematic archaeological surveys and selective excavations. The pioneering work of Poidebard, Mouterde, and Stein in the use of aerial photography has afforded us a better understanding of Rome's frontier defence system, especially of the Syrian and the Arabian *limes*. Though the number of inscriptions from the region remains small, they yield much new information, especially on the history of the Roman army in the frontier regions. As many of them are dated, they also serve as an important correlate to our literary evidence. Those from Palmyra, in both Greek and Palmyrene, have proved particularly valuable to both our understanding and dating of certain important events in the third century, especially those related to the rise and fall of the city as a major political power between the two empires. The excavations at Dura Europos yielded a number of important documents on papyri, especially the files of the Twentieth Cohort of the Palmyrenes, and these go down to within a few years of the capture and destruction of the city in 256. The trilingual Great Inscription of Shapur on the Kaaba of Zoroaster, first discovered in 1936 near Persepolis, gives us a detailed and unique account of the three main

wars of Shapur I against the Romans, albeit solely expressing the Persian point of view.

(3)

The structure of the book

Modern scholarship on Rome's Eastern Frontier and her relationship with Persia, her chief adversary, in the third and early fourth centuries, then, is based on the critical examination of this very wide range of literary and archaeological evidence. The fact that the relevant texts exist in more than half a dozen ancient languages imposes a considerable burden on the researcher and puts the subject out of the reach of the average undergraduate. Jean Gagé's *La Montée des Sassanides et l'heure de Palmyre* (Paris, 1964) remains the only work known to us which attempts to make some of this diverse material available to the non-specialist. However, its small selection of classical sources makes any critical evaluation of Rome's part in the struggle impossible and the epigraphical material is represented by only three Sassanian royal inscriptions and the famous Tariff of Palmyra which was inscribed in AD 137, almost a century before the rise of the Sassanians. Gagé's collection also stops with the reign of Diocletian, while the historiographical problems which necessitate such a collection continue until the last years of Constantius II. The work of Felix, mentioned in the Foreword, is the only systematic attempt to locate the main classical and Byzantine sources on Romano-Sassanian relations but the work is purely a commentary, containing neither text nor translation.

The present collection is divided into two parts and the division does not represent a natural chronological break but a major difference in the presentation and organization of the material. Part One contains translations of all classical and Byzantine sources on Romano-Sassanian relations from c. 224–c. 350, i.e. from the coming to power of Ardashir to the end of the early conflict between Shapur II and Constantius II. It includes material on the rise of the Sassanians in order to allow the collection to be used as a corpus of Roman and Byzantine sources on the early history of the Sassanian Dynasty. The only major omissions, necessitated purely by the problem of space, are the Greek version of the Acts of the Persian Martyrs under Shapur II and Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* account of the same (*hist. eccl.* II, 9–15). The extracts are grouped under headings in chronological sequence; under each heading, the extracts are given chronologically according to the generally accepted date of composition of the source. We are aware that such an arrangement implies a high degree of interpretation, especially when problems of dating surround particular events. It also means taking the relevant material out of its literary and historiographical context, and, in the case of the extracts from the *Augustan History*, running the risk of presenting probable fiction as palpable truth. However, the information we are seeking is often of a specialized and well-defined nature which lends itself to being studied in isolation. Where knowledge of the context of the extract

is essential to its evaluation, we have tried to indicate this in the notes. Furthermore, it is only through juxtaposing the extracts from the *Augustan History* with all other known sources on the same topic that we can determine their historical value.

From 353 onwards, we have a superlative and substantial eyewitness source to the main events on the Eastern Frontier in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus. He was one of the defenders of Amida in 359 who survived the subsequent massacre at the fall of the city to take part in the ill-fated Persian expedition of Julian in 363 (XVIII, 5–XIX, 9 and XXIII, 2–XXV, 8). In view of the different state of the sources, Part Two of our collection follows a very different format. Since an excellent modern English translation of the main parts of Ammianus' historical work including nearly all the relevant material on the Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars from 353 to 378 is now generally available (Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, translated by W.Hamilton, and introduced and annotated by A.Wallace-Hadrill, London, 1985), the need to include lengthy extracts from it is no longer justifiable in terms of space and cost. The same applies to the other two main literary sources on the Persian Expedition of Julian, namely *Oration XVIII*, 212–75 of Libanius and Book III, 12–34 of the *Historia Nova* of Zosimus, as reliable English translations of these works, by A.F.Norman (LCL, London, and Cambridge, Mass., 1969) and Ridley (Canberra, 1982) respectively, are also readily available. (We have, however, included passages from these three authors in Part One of our collection as the 'flashbacks' from Ammianus and Libanius often provide valuable pin-point information on earlier events. As for Zosimus, his exclusion from Part One would deprive the reader of one of the more coherent narrative sources on third-century history and would make the reconstruction of the events immensely more difficult.) The two chapters in Part Two are each preceded by a chronological analysis of the sources including Ammianus, Libanius, and Zosimus. This is then followed by the translated sources, listed alphabetically, a format well-known to many ancient historians through its adoption by the revisers of G.F.Hill's much-used source collection for the study of the Pentekontaetia (*Sources for Greek History between the Persian and the Peloponnesian Wars*, a new edition by R.Meiggs and A. Andrewes, Oxford, 1951).

Since this is a predominantly literary collection, the selection of epigraphical material has inevitably been difficult, not least because of the signal contribution given to our knowledge of the physical evolution of the Eastern Frontier by the study of inscriptions on a regional basis. The problem of space limits us to a selection of the more often cited, and therefore the more important, inscriptions, especially those which provide information on events described in the literary sources. We have included a number of recently published inscriptions like the dedication to Septimius Odaenathus of 252 published by Gawlikowski and the 'praetensio' inscription from Azraq published by Speidel, in recognition of their significance even though other scholars have not yet had the opportunity to

comment on them. A small number of oriental sources are given in the appendices, chosen mainly according to the same criteria as the epigraphical material. Syriac sources, however, are included in the main body of the collection because they are often contemporary or near contemporary with the events they describe.

1

The Rise of the Sassanians

1.1.1.

The lineage, parentage, and childhood of Artashir (r. 226±241/2)

Agathias II, 27, 1–5: It is said that Artaxares' (i.e. Artashir's) 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. 2. It so happened that a soldier called Sasanus, who was travelling through the land of the Cadusaei,¹ was given hospitality by Pabak and lodged in his house. 3. 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 that he had no daughter or sister or any other close 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 dishonour. 4. 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. 5. 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.²

(Cameron 1969/70: pp. 87–8.)

Syncellus pp. 440, 11–441, 2 (pp. 677, 11–678, 7 *CSHB*): Alexander, the son of Mamaea (i.e. Alexander Severus), was emperor when Artabanus the Parthian was the king of Persia. After Artabanus, the family of Chosroes (i.e. the Sassanians) began to rule. It began as follows: Artaxerxes (i.e. Artashir), an unknown and undistinguished Persian, gathered a body of irregular troops, destroyed Artabanus and assumed the crown. And he once more restored the Kingship to the Persians. He was a Magian and through him the Magians have become prestigious in Persia. They say that the mother of Artaxerxes (i.e.

Ardashir) lived with a man called Pambecus, who was a shoe-maker by profession, but an astrologer and in this respect versed in the dark arts or stuff and nonsense. And a soldier by the name of Sananus (*sic.*) was marching through the land of the Cadusaei and was entertained in the house of Pambecus, and Pambecus had 'foreknowledge', we suppose, through his astrology, that the offspring of Sananus would be raised to a high level of good fortune. But not having a daughter or a sister or any female relative, he shut in his own wife with Sananus, and she conceived and brought forth Artaxerxes. Chosroes' family, therefore, was descended from this Artaxerxes, also called Artaxares.

(Dodgeon)

al-Tabari, pp. 813–15 (Nöldeke, pp. 2–5): see [Appendix 1](#), pp. 275–6.

1.1.2.

The revolt of Ardashir (c. 208±224)

Dio Cassius (Reliq.) LXXX, 3, 1–2: Many uprisings were made by many persons, some of which caused serious alarm, but they were all checked. But affairs in Mesopotamia were still more terrifying, and provoked in the hearts of all, not merely the men of Rome but the rest of mankind, a fear that had a truer foundation. 2. Artaxerxes (i.e. Ardashir), a Persian, having conquered the Parthians in three battles³ and killed their king Artabanus....⁴

(Foster, vi, p. 108)

Herodian VI, 2, 6–7: He (i.e. Ardashir) was the first Persian to dare to launch an attack on the kingdom of the Parthians and the first to succeed to recover the kingdom for the Persians. Indeed, after Darius had been deprived of his kingdom by Alexander of Macedon, the Macedonians and Alexander's successors divided up the territory by countries and ruled the nations of the East and all Asia for many years. 7. When these governors quarrelled and the power of the Macedonians was weakened by continual wars, they say that Arsaces, a Parthian by race, was the first to persuade the barbarians in those regions to revolt from the Macedonians. Invested with the crown with the consent of the Parthians and the neighbouring barbarians, Arsaces ruled as king. For a long time the empire remained in his own family, down to Artabanus in our time; then Artaxerxes killed Artabanus and took possession of his kingdom for the Persians. After easily subduing the neighbouring barbarian nations, the king began to plot against the Roman Empire.

(Echols, 1961: pp. 155–7, revised)

Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, 3–9 (Gk version), ed. Lafontaine, pp. 173–7:⁵ I shall begin at that point at which the Parthians started to collapse. Artabanus, the son of Valarses, being of Parthian origin, had experience of the teaching of the Chaldaeans. He understood how to measure the course of the stars and their turning points and was educated in divination. While he was

sleeping with his wife in his tent, he looked out at the stars on view and made a discovery and he said to the queen, 'I observed the course of a star and I have inferred today the following, that if someone wished to rebel against his own master and to make war upon him, on the present occasion he would win and his master be defeated.' And after saying this he turned back to sleep. Following the usual custom, one of the queen's servant girls was sleeping in the same tent and fulfilled the duties that were ordered by her mistress. She was the daughter of high officials and was a close friend of one of the magnates, who was called Artasiras and whose native country was Assyria. She was in love with him and, after hearing the king's words, she slipped out past the king and queen; she ran to Artasiras (i.e. Ardashir), son of Sasanus, which is the origin of the Sassanian name of the Persian kings descended from him.

4. Therefore she entered his tent (for she could not be prevented by the servants; for the affection of the pair was well understood) and spoke as follows: 'Dear Artasiras, let sleep depart from your eyelids. Start now upon the design which you have had for a long time. Be confident when you look upon the king's prophecy. Now is the time for your suit of armour, now there is need for the advice of the wisest men, now you must gather an army for battle. For the king has seen the course of the stars and said: "Now a slave working against his master gains the victory upon the present occasion." But here, you go upon your design and give me your assurance and upon oath give guarantee of my proposition—that when you have gained the throne of Persia you do not place me outside your bed and authorise me as the partner of your dignity. For this is what you always said to me in your professions when you began the same design.' These were the words of Artaducta. Artasiras admitted his deep gratitude and, holding the woman's hand in his own right hand, he stretched (their arms) up to heaven and said the following: 'Behold, divine power, sun and fire, air and earth, how today I take counsel with the nobility of Persia and rebel from the King and that presently in my household I shall make you mistress of all.'

5. Upon hearing this, Artaducta said, 'I shall go now to the King's tent. For I must today continue my service of the preceding days. For though we have the status of being free, since we are born of high nobles, nevertheless we must serve the royal needs.' Saying this she proceeded to the King's tent and without being noticed slipped into bed and lay down. Artasiras arose and gathered the magnates of the Persians and Assyrians⁶ with whom he took counsel on other days too. Standing in their midst, he said, 'Noblest of the Persians and Assyrians, we know of the boastfulness of the Parthians from a long time ago, as they snatch the produce of other peoples' labours. They take pride in their injustice; they do not cease killing pointlessly; the Parthians loathe the Persians and Assyrians; they stole upon us from a barbarian land. So what will you say? If my words are untrue, let him remain as your unjust king. But if I have not spoken untruthfully, let us start out for battle. For it is better to die than to be slaves of an unjust master.' These were the words of Artasiras.

6. The Persian nobles welcomed what was said; for they prayed to be freed from the Parthians and that the king of Persia should belong to their own race. And they said to Artasiras: 'We have you as our leader in words and deeds, and hold onto the experience of your good judgment and understand that in your person the state is based upon virtue. So take the lead and do whatever you wish while we follow your words to do what is in the interest of both our parties.' When therefore it was daytime and the Persians with their leader Artasiras looked to war, they first sent to King Artabanus the ambassadors Zecas (i.e. Zik)⁷ and Carinas (i.e. Karen), the most important clan leaders and generals, who departed and stood before the king of kings. The following was the introduction to their address: 'We are the envoys of the Persians, and if you are possessed of a most calm attitude for receiving the words of the Persians, we shall speak like ambassadors to announce our lengthy message, being outside fear and danger—and the law established by the nobles of old urges this practice when they kept unharmed visiting envoys. If therefore you agree, o king, we shall speak.' And Artabanus granted them leave to speak as they wished.

7. Then they began their speech as follows: 'Your Majesty, among us the Persians it is customary practice to obey kings, inasmuch as the king is master of all; whereas the king himself governs the state with one observance of the law and in justice, conducts the government without barbarian arrogance, appears frightening to his adversaries and kindly to his subjects. For how can he hinder those who are unjust if he himself starts the injustice? How does he punish the perpetrators of dreadful deeds if he himself is quick to trespass? We have experience of your dread deeds and have withdrawn ourselves from your kingdom, not because we hate to obey but in avoidance of a lawless king, not becoming despots but because we do not tolerate a despotic attitude.' These were the words of the Persians. King Artabanus inclined his head for very many hours and looked at the floor. He foresaw the coming fall of his kingdom and facing the envoys he said, 'I am the author of this outrage, having honoured some with offices and positions of authority, and by royal gifts establishing many as owners of fields and property. But you proceed to what you have resolved upon; you will see that I am reformed to your viewpoint. I shall teach you not to stand against your king. But you envoys go forth and no longer be the authors of such words, lest somehow I make you the first examples for insulting me.'

8. When they heard this, Zecas and Carinas proceeded to the council of the Persians and on their arrival they made a full report to Artasiras and the remaining Persian nobles. They added to what was said the madness of the king since he was no longer awaiting a second embassy but was arming against the leaders of the council. Artasiras sent to Artaducta and bore her away and put her with his own property in a very strong fortress, and himself armed with the Persians and Assyrians against Artabanus the King of Kings. When he saw the preparation against him, Artabanus himself also armed with his Parthians. He had a large number of Persians who were not confederates of the council of their fellow countrymen. When the Persians and Parthians warred upon each other in

their first clash, very many from each side fell. But Artasiras gained the upper hand, when very many others deserted Artabanus and joined him. When they charged at each other in the second battle, they destroyed a very large number of the Parthians and King Artabanus quickly turned to flight. He once more prepared for war. And so for twelve months they rode against each other, at one moment making war and then taking a rest; finally they looked once more to battle and came to the place of conflict.

9. (Fragmentary) But remember your words when you spoke to the queen, after you saw the course of the stars. We heard (them) on that day...We set forth on the understanding...the victory was mine and the destruction (would be) yours.

(Fragmentary) King Artabanus himself said to Artasiras 'I cannot while still alive...be deprived of my kingdom nor serve you.

(Fragmentary) He charged at the Persians...and casting his spear at Artasiras.

When he admitted this, he governed with her over the remaining Parthians, Persians and Assyrians. All his actions were reasonable and he rejoiced in respect for the law and most just government. For he was eager to earn praise since he had unexpectedly mounted the throne of Persia. These events were reported to Chosroes the Arsacid ruler of Great Armenia, that Artasiras the son of Sasanus had gained the throne of Persia and had destroyed Artabanus his brother. There was an additional report that the Parthians preferred the kingship of Artasiras to that of their own countryman.

(Dodgeon)

Agathias IV, 24, 1: But my narrative, by a natural progression, has come back to Artaxares. It is time to fulfil 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 Mamaea (i.e. 226), in the way that I have already recorded, and held it for fifteen years less two months.

(Cameron, p. 121)

George of Pisidia,⁸ *Heraclias* II, 173–7, p. 259, ed. Pertusi: For they say that Artaser (i.e. Ardashir), being a slave by station, with his despotic and arrogant sword removed the Parthians from their former (share of) power to the captive throne which he had seized and is now enthroning Persia again in evil.

(Lieu and C.J.Morgan)

al-Tabari, pp. 816–18 (Nöldeke, pp. 7–14): see [Appendix 1](#), pp. 276–7.

Zonaras XII, 15, p. 572, 7–17 (iii, p. 121, 3–16, Dindorf): Artaxerxes (i.e. Ardashir) however the Persian, who was from an unknown and obscure background, transferred the kingdom of the Parthians to the Persians and ruled over them. From him Chosroes is said to trace his descent. For after the death of Alexander the Macedonian, his Macedonian successors ruled over Persians and Parthians and the other nations for a long time, but in going against one another

they destroyed each other's power. After they had thus become weakened, Arsacides the Parthian was the first to attempt rebellion from them and he gained control over the Parthians; and he left his dominion to his own descendants. Artabanus was the last of these. The afore-mentioned Artaxerxes defeated him in three battles and captured and killed him.

(Dodgeon)

1.1.3.

Ardashir's initial (and unsuccessful) attempt to capture Hatra (c. 229)

Dio Cassius (Reliq.) LXXX, 3, 2: (After killing Artabanus, Artaxerxes) made a campaign against Hatra which he endeavoured to take as a base for attacking the Romans. He did make a breach in the wall but he lost a number of soldiers through an ambushade; he transferred his position to Media.⁹

(Foster vi, pp. 108–9)

1.1.4.

His failure in Armenia¹⁰

Dio Cassius (Reliq.) LXXX, 3, 3: Of this district (Media), as also of Parthia, he acquired no small portion, partly by force and partly by intimidation, and then marched against Armenia. Here he suffered a reverse at the hands of the natives, some Medes and the children of Medes, and the children of Artabanus, and either fled (as some say) or (as others assert) retired to prepare a larger expedition.

(Foster, vi, p. 109)

Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians* I, 18–23 (Thomson 1976: 35–43): see [Appendix 2](#), pp. 309–311.

Moses Khorenats'i, *Hist. Arm.* II, 71–3 (Thomson pp. 218–20): see [Appendix 2](#), pp. 314–16. Zonaras XII, 15, p. 572, 18–19 (iii, p. 121, 16–19, Dindorf): Then when he marched against Armenia, he was defeated by the Armenians and Medes who were joined in an attack upon him by the sons of Artabanus.

(Dodgeon)

1.1.5.

Ardashir's invasion of Roman territory and his demand for the restitution of the Achaemenid possessions in Europe

Dio Cassius, (Reliq.) LXXX, 4, 1–2: He accordingly became a source of fear to us; for he was encamped with a large army over against not Mesopotamia only but Syria also and boasted that he would win back everything that the ancient

Persians had once held as far as the Grecian Sea. It was, he said, his rightful inheritance from his forefathers. He was of no particular account himself, but our military affairs are in such a condition that some joined his cause and others refused to defend themselves. 2. The troops are so distinguished by wantonness, and arrogance, and freedom from reproof, that those in Mesopotamia dared to kill their commander, Flavius Heracleo....

(Foster vi, p. 109)

Herodian VI, 2, 1–2: And so for thirteen years he (i.e. Alexander Severus) ruled the empire in blameless fashion as far as he personally was concerned. In the tenth (MS: fourteenth)¹¹ year (AD 222), however, unexpected dispatches from the governors of Syria and Mesopotamia revealed that Artaxerxes (i.e. Ardashir), the King of the Persians, had conquered the Parthians and broken up their Eastern kingdom, killing Artabanus who was formerly called the Great King and wore the double diadem. Artaxerxes then subdued all the barbarians on his borders and forced them to pay tribute. He did not remain quiet, however, or stay on his side of the Tigris River, but, after crossing its banks which were the borders of the Roman empire, he overran Mesopotamia and threatened Syria. 2. The mainland facing Europe, separated from it by the Aegean Sea and the Propontic Gulf, and the region called Asia he wished to recover for the Persian empire. Believing these regions to be his by inheritance, he declared that all the countries in that area, including Ionia and Caria, had been ruled by Persian governors, from the rule of Cyrus, who first made the Median empire Persian, and ending with Darius, the last of the Persian monarchs, whose kingdom Alexander the Macedonian had destroyed. He asserted that it was therefore proper for him to recover for the Persians the kingdom which they formerly possessed.¹²

(Echols, p. 156, revised)

Zonaras XII, 15, p. 572, 20–2 (iii, p. 121, 19–22, Dindorf): But he (i.e. Ardashir) once more recovered (i.e. from his failure in Armenia) and, with a greater force, occupied Mesopotamia and Syria and threatened to recover all the lands that belonged to the Persians, as it were, from their ancestors.

(Dodgeon)

1.2.1.

The reply of Alexander Severus to Ardashir

Herodian VI, 2, 3–4: When the Eastern governors revealed these developments in their dispatches, Alexander was greatly disturbed by these unanticipated tidings, particularly since, raised from childhood in an age of peace, he had spent his entire life in urban ease and comfort. Before doing anything else, he thought it best, after consulting his advisers, to send an embassy to the king and by his letters halt the invasion and check his expectations. 4. In these letters he told Artaxerxes that he must remain within his own borders and not initiate any

action; let him not, deluded by vain hopes, stir up a great war, but rather let each of them be content with what already was his. Artaxerxes would find fighting against the Romans not the same thing as fighting with his barbarian kinsmen and neighbours. Alexander further reminded the Persian king of the victories won over them by Augustus, Trajan, Verus, and Severus. By writing letters of this kind, Alexander thought that he would persuade the barbarian to remain quiet or frighten him to the same course.

(Echols, pp. 156–7, revised)

1.2.2.

Invasion of Mesopotamia and Cappadocia by Ardashir

Herodian VI, 2, 5–6: But Artaxerxes (i.e. Ardashir) ignored Alexander's written messages; believing that the matter would be settled by arms, not by words, he took the field, pillaging and looting all the Roman provinces. He overran and plundered Mesopotamia with both infantry and cavalry. He laid siege to the Roman garrison camps on the banks of the rivers, the camps which defended the empire. Rash by nature and elated by successes beyond his expectations, Artaxerxes was convinced that he could surmount every obstacle in his path. 6. The considerations which led him to wish for an expanded empire were not small.

(Echols, p. 157, revised)

Zonaras XII, 15, pp. 572, 22–573, 2 (iii, p. 121, 22–4, Dindorf): Then this Artaxerxes and the Persians overran Cappadocia and put Nisibis under siege.

1.2.3.

Alexander Severus' preparation for his campaign and his speech before the troops

Herodian, VI, 3, 1–4, 3: When the bold actions of this Eastern barbarian were disclosed to Alexander while he was passing the time in Rome, he found these affronts unendurable. Though the undertaking distressed him and was contrary to his inclinations, since his governors there were calling for him, he made preparations for departure. He assembled for army service picked men from Italy and from all the Roman provinces, enrolling those whose age and physical condition qualified them for military service. 2. The gathering of an army equal in size to the reported strength of the attacking barbarians caused the greatest upheaval throughout the Roman world. When these troops were gathered in Rome, Alexander ordered them to assemble on the usual plain. There he mounted a platform and addressed them as follows: 3. 'I wished, fellow soldiers, to make the customary speech to you, the speech from which I, speaking to the popular taste, receive approval, and you, when you hear it, receive encouragement.

Since you have now enjoyed many years of peace, you may be startled to hear something unusual or contrary to your anticipations. 4. Brave and intelligent men

should pray for things to turn out for the best, but they should also endure whatever befalls. It is true that the enjoyment of things done for pleasure brings gratification, but good repute results from the manliness involved in setting matters straight when necessity demands. To initiate unjust actions is not the way of issuing a fair challenge, but it is a courageous deed to rid oneself of those who are troublesome if it is done with good conscience. Optimism stems not from committing injustice but from preventing injustice from being committed. 5. The Persian Artaxerxes has slain his master Artabanus, and the Parthian empire is now Persian. Despising our arms and contemptuous of the Roman reputation, Artaxerxes is attempting to overrun and destroy our imperial possessions. I first endeavoured by letters and persuasion to check his mad greed and his lust for the property of others. But the king, with barbarian arrogance, is unwilling to remain within his own boundaries, and challenges us to battle. 6. Let us not hesitate to accept his challenge. You veterans remind yourselves of the victories which you often won over the barbarians under the leadership of Severus and my father, Antoninus. You recruits, thirsting for glory and honour, make it clear that you know how to live at peace mildly and with propriety, but make it equally clear that you turn with courage to the tasks of war when necessity demands. 7. The barbarian is bold against the hesitant and the cowardly, but he does not stand up in like fashion to those who fight back; it is not in set-battles that they fight the enemy with hope of success. Rather, they believe that whatever success they win is the result of plundering after a feigned retreat and flight. Discipline and organized battle tactics favour us, together with the fact that we have always learnt to conquer the barbarian.'

4 When Alexander finished speaking, the cheering army promised its wholehearted support for the war. After a lavish distribution of money to the soldiers, the emperor ordered preparations for his departure from the city. He then went before the senate and made a speech similar to the one recorded above; following this, he publicly announced his plans to march out. 2. On the appointed day, after he had performed the sacrifices prescribed for departures, Alexander left Rome, weeping and repeatedly looking back at the city. The senate and all the people escorted him, and everyone wept, for he was held in great affection by the people of Rome, among whom he had been reared and whom he had ruled with moderation for many years.

3. Travelling rapidly, he came to Antioch, after visiting the provinces and the garrison camps in Illyricum; from that region he collected a huge force of troops. On arrival at Antioch he continued his preparations for the war, giving the soldiers military training under field conditions.

(Echols, pp. 157–60, revised)