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THE IRANIAN FACTOR  
IN BYZANTIUM DURING  
THE REIGN OF HERACLIUS

IRFAN SHAHID

This paper was read at the Symposium on "Byzantium and Sasanian Iran," held at Dumbarton Oaks from 30 April to 2 May 1970.

A tripartite formula for the structure of Byzantine history has been suggested and generally accepted—Roman political institutions, Greek cultural elements, and the Christian religious faith, representing Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem respectively.<sup>1</sup> Is this division in the formula accurate, or can it be modified by enlarging the concept of the Orient represented by Jerusalem in order to accommodate such influences as hailed from other parts of it; for instance, Iran? The question is not a spurious one, and its examination is indeed imperative, since Iranian influences and factors in both Parthian and Sasanid times have found such strong advocates among a number of distinguished Byzantinists<sup>2</sup> that a modification of the tripartite formula may become necessary if their views turn out to be correct.

The problem can be solved only by intensive study of the series of claims which have been made; so much has been claimed, so little proved. The theme of this Symposium, "Byzantium and Sasanian Iran," led me to examine the question during the reign of Heraclius, the period which witnessed the climax of all Sasanid-Byzantine relations and which is associated with two major areas where the Iranian factors have been suspected to exist, namely, the theme system and the imperial titles.

The second of these two areas, the imperial titles, has received less attention than the first;<sup>3</sup> a thorough examination of it is, therefore, called for.

## I

In the year 629 the Emperor Heraclius formally assumed the title *basileus*, βασιλεύς, which no emperor before had been willing or able to do.<sup>4</sup> The emperors

<sup>1</sup> See the chapter entitled "The Christian Roman Empire" in G. Ostrogorsky's *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. J. Hussey, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J., 1969), 27–50. The German edition of this work will be referred to only when necessary.

<sup>2</sup> Of these, Stein and Ensslin may be singled out: E. Stein, "Ein Kapitel vom persischen und vom byzantinischen Staate, *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher*," 1 (1920), 50–89; W. Ensslin, "Die weltgeschichtliche Bedeutung der Kämpfe zwischen Rom und Persien," *Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft u. Jugendbildung*, 4 (1928), 399–415. For further bibliographical orientation, see p. 401 of the latter article.

<sup>3</sup> Basic articles on the imperial titles and related problems are: L. Bréhier, "L'origine des titres impériaux à Byzance βασιλεύς et δεσπότης," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 15 (1906), 161–78; G. Ostrogorsky, "Das Mitkaisertum im mittelalterlichen Byzanz," in E. Kornemann, *Doppelprinzipat und Reichsteilung im Imperium Romanum* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1930), 166–75; E. Stein, "Post-consulat et αὐτοκρατορία," *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves*, 2, *Mélanges Bidez* (1934), 869–912; H. Grégoire, "Sur les titres impériaux," *Byzantion*, 10 (1935), 763–75; F. Dölger, review of Stein, "Post-consulat...", *BZ*, 36 (1936), 123–45; *idem*, "Die Entwicklung der byzantinischen Kaisertitulatur und die Datierung von Kaiserdarstellungen in der byzantinischen Kleinkunst," in *Studies Presented to David Moore Robinson* (St. Louis, 1953), II, 985–1005.

<sup>4</sup> It appears for the first time in the inscription of one of Heraclius' novels, dated 629; see J. and P. Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, I (Athens, 1931), 36. Bréhier was the first to note the fact in "L'origine..." (p. 173), and was inclined to think that the year 629 represents the actual date of the formal assumption of *basileus*, not simply its earliest occurrence in extant official communications. In this he was followed by those who have written on the subject, but in view of the importance of the year 629 for the discussion of the *basileia* in this paper, it is necessary to argue the point (see Appendix A).

had followed local usage when they assumed the title *basileus* informally, but in 629 Heraclius initiated a new phase in this process, that of the formal assumption of the title in official communications. The other imperial titles, lapsed for the remaining part of the reign, although they did appear, fitfully, late in the century and later still in the millennium.<sup>5</sup> Before the new title, *basileus*, there appeared a descriptive phrase, πιστός ἐν Χριστῷ, the full but impressively short titular formula reading πιστός ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεύς. The new formula marked a significant change in the most prominent facet of the image of Byzantium at home and abroad. It was a break with more than six centuries of legal and constitutional fictions which had masked the true nature of the imperial dignity, namely, its autocratic character as a *dominatus*; and it signified the restoration to Roman constitutional history of the title *rex* in its Greek form, *basileus*, after an exile which had lasted over a millennium, at the same time introducing into the political terminology of the eastern half of the Mediterranean basin a new term which was to have a fateful history, extending through some eight centuries up to the fall of Constantinople.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of this change for Roman constitutional history is recognized, but much else—notably the content of this concept and the circumstances which led to its formal adoption—has not received due recognition. Two diametrically opposed views have been advanced to explain this change; their examination forms the first part of this paper.

J. B. Bury, in his well-known essay on "The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire," was the first to give the problem more than a cursory treatment. After discussing the position of his French colleague, he went on to say: "Bréhier, however, has failed to see the reason of this change of style, but the significant date A.D. 629 supplies the explanation. In that year Heraclius completed the conquest of Persia. Now, the Persian king was the only foreign monarch to whom the Roman Emperors conceded the title Basileus; except the Abyssinian king, who hardly counted. So long as there was a great independent Basileus outside the Roman Empire, the Emperors refrained from adopting a title which would be shared by another monarch. But as soon as that monarch was reduced to the condition of a dependent vassal and there was no longer a concurrence, the Emperor signified the event by assuming officially the title which had for several centuries been applied to him unofficially."<sup>7</sup>

Earlier in the same essay he stated that the diadem, too, introduced by Constantine, was borrowed from Sasanid Persia.<sup>8</sup> Bury's views thus represent

<sup>5</sup> As Ostrogorsky has argued, these titles lapsed and ceased to be for the reigning *basileus*. Their later and intermittent reappearance does not argue against the validity of his views on the lapse of these titles, since by then they had lost their former significance. But just as it is necessary to argue for the formal assumption of the title *basileus* in 629, so it is equally necessary to examine the reappearance of these titles, especially as the late F. Dölger formally raised this question in a copious note (see Appendix B).

<sup>6</sup> L. Bréhier, *Les institutions de l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 1949), 49.

<sup>7</sup> J. B. Bury, "The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire," in *Selected Essays of J. B. Bury*, ed. H. Temperley (Cambridge, 1930), 109.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-4.

a complete surrender to the Iranian theory, which states that the assumption of the kingship in 629 and its symbol, the diadem, reflect Iranian influence.

G. Ostrogorsky has with reasonable finality disposed of Bury's view that the Romans conceded the title *basileus* only to the Persian king;<sup>9</sup> while A. Alföldi has argued the Hellenistic origin of the insignia.<sup>10</sup> It remains to examine the rest of Bury's argument, namely, that Heraclius conquered Persia, made the Persian king his vassal, and appropriated the title formerly conceded only to the Persian monarch. These are plainly and demonstrably erroneous statements. Heraclius did not conquer Persia; he only defeated its armies on battlefields not far from the Roman-Persian border. After his final victory at Ninevah in 628 he did not march to Ctesiphon, but simply returned to Roman Armenia. Persia was not reduced to a vassal state; it remained a sovereign power and, although defeated and exhausted, the other superpower in the Near East. The defeat produced no basic change in the structure of the Sasanid state nor, with the accession of a new ruler, Parviz the son of Chosroes, any irreparable breakdown in the machinery of government. All this is reflected in the official document which has been preserved in the *Chronicon Paschale*,<sup>11</sup> the letter addressed by the new ruler to Heraclius, in which Kavad affirms his title, "king of kings,"<sup>12</sup> and the legitimacy of his kingship by the grace of the gods. The tone of the letter is more subdued than previous ones addressed by Persian kings to Roman emperors, but it certainly does not concede primacy to the Roman *imperator*; it rather conceives of the two as the two "great kings" vis-à-vis the minor kings around them, appropriately described by the diminutive *basiliskoi*.<sup>13</sup>

Bury's conclusions rest upon misapprehensions which must be examined both for an understanding of why he argued as he did and for the light they throw on Byzantine-Persian relations in this period.

Bury conceived of Heraclius as another Alexander.<sup>14</sup> There is indeed something in the career of Heraclius which is reminiscent of Alexander: mounted on his charger, Dorkon,<sup>15</sup> he fought on occasion a Homeric *aristeia* in much the same way that Alexander, mounted on Bucephalus, had done before, though more significant is his role in the contest of East and West and in the

<sup>9</sup> Ostrogorsky, *History...* (as in note 1 *supra*), 106 note 2, which makes use of the evidence set forth by R. Helm in his "Untersuchungen über den auswärtigen diplomatischen Verkehr des römischen Reiches im Zeitalter der Spätantike," *Archiv für Urkundenforschung*, 12 (1932), 375-436.

<sup>10</sup> A. Alföldi, "Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung*, 50 (1935), 1-171.

<sup>11</sup> *Chronicon Paschale* (Bonn ed.), I, 735-37.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 735, line 5, where it appears in Persian, mutilated as Σαδασαδασάχ. Apparently Bury failed to see in this unintelligible word the Persian title "king of kings."

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 736, lines 3-4.

<sup>14</sup> See the first edition of his *History of the Later Roman Empire* (London, 1889), II, 242, 273 and his Introduction to the *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, IV (Cambridge, 1923), ix, reprinted seven years later under the title "A Survey of Byzantine History" in Tempereley's *Selected Essays...* (as in note 7 *supra*), 215-227; the reference to Heraclius occurs on p. 219. The analogy between Heraclius and Alexander in Bury's thought may also have been implied in his discussion of Heraclius' first campaign in 622, where he identified the *pylae* of the sources with the Cilician Gates, an identification which since then has been proved erroneous; see his *History of the Later Roman Empire*, II, 227.

<sup>15</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883), I, 318-19.

victory of the latter over the former, represented by Persia. The analogy cannot be pressed much further, and everything else about their careers and personalities invites a contrast which draws them apart rather than a comparison which brings them together. Alexander had already inherited the title of king from the Macedonian monarchical tradition; as the conqueror of Persia, possibly a prospective world-conqueror, and with a war of revenge on his hands, it was natural for him to assume the title of the Persian king, "King of Asia," after the battle of Issus.<sup>16</sup> The title was his as *spolia opima* and its appropriation was consonant with the Homeric style of his battles and the heroic dash of his individual combats.

None of these facts is true of Heraclius. Particularly erroneous is Bury's conception of Persian-Byzantine relations after the battle of Ninevah, which for him was the equivalent of Issus or Gaugamela. Quite unlike Alexander, Heraclius had no intention of conquering and annexing Persia. A statesman and not a mere soldier, he wanted coexistence with his eastern neighbor, and this was his major contribution to Byzantine-Persian relations, a new tone already sounded by Tiberius<sup>17</sup> in 576 and scrupulously and consistently followed by Heraclius. It is inconsistent with this attitude that he should have appropriated the title which preeminently described and distinguished his adversary after his final victory at Ninevah.<sup>18</sup>

It is surprising that Bury of all historians should have invoked an analogy from Greek history rather than from the history of Rome itself. The latter could have provided him with more relevant and important analogies than that of Alexander and Achaemenid Persia, e.g., the two Emperors, Gallienus and Constantine, and their dealings with Sasanid Persia. In the third and fourth centuries, the Empire was faced with military threats posed by the aggressive policies of the two Shapurs, against whom it pitted Odenathus, the prince of Palmyra, and Flavius Claudius (popularly known as Hannibalianus), the nephew of Constantine the Great, conferring on both the title "king of kings." The more relevant for our purpose is the title conferred on Hannibalianus, since the conferment took place after the *translatio imperii*.

The historical background is, of course, the division of the Empire among the three sons of Constantine in 335 and the deterioration of Byzantine-Persian relations which led to a declaration of war in 337. Constantine was determined to conduct the war in person, but his sudden death in the same year put an end to his plans. Before his death, however, he had made extensive

<sup>16</sup> For his letter to Darius after Issus, see Arrian, *Alexandri Anabasis*, II, 4-9.

<sup>17</sup> M. J. Higgins, "International Relations at the Close of the Sixth Century," *The Catholic Historical Review*, 27 (1941), 279-315.

<sup>18</sup> Bury was, of course, aware that the title *basileus* had been applied informally to the Roman *autokrator*, borrowed from the political system of the Hellenistic world. But his argument, relating the formal assumption of the title to his interpretation of the events of 629, clearly indicates that the title acquired its importance and significance only from the lapse of the Persian title after Heraclius' victory, or as Bury expressed it, by the circumstance that "there was no longer any concurrence"; in 629 it was the Byzantine ruler who was the sole *basileus*, just as the Iranian had been before 629. The implications of Bury's views were made explicit by E. Barker, who goes to the extreme of speaking of "the transference of the Persian title of 'King' westward to Constantinople" (see his *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium* [Oxford, 1957], 27).

military preparations for the Persian War and had associated his two nephews with his three sons in the government of the Empire: Dalmatius he made Caesar, like his three sons, and gave him the dioceses of Thrace and Macedonia; the other, Hannibalianus, he designated "king of kings" and gave him Armenia and Pontus.<sup>19</sup> This situation which obtained in the fourth century provides ideal conditions for examining the practice of Roman rulers in dealing with Persia and Persian royal titles. Three observations may be made in this connection:

1. The title was conferred on a Roman during a period of hostilities with Persia, reflecting the surly mood of the Empire and implying a desire to defeat, conquer, or annex, none of which was true of the imperial mood under Heraclius after the battle of Ninevah. 2. The application of the title not to one of the three sons of Constantine, who got the lion's share in his will of 335, but to his nephew who was allotted eastern Asia Minor, sheds some light on the degree of importance which Constantine attached to "king of kings";<sup>20</sup> it was meant to be a slight to Shapur,<sup>21</sup> and is therefore not the sort of title which an emperor himself, let alone so victorious an emperor as Heraclius, would have cared to assume.<sup>22</sup> 3. Constantine's action clearly indicates that if the Romans wanted to appropriate a royal title from an enemy, whether already defeated or still to be defeated, they would have appropriated the title in its entirety, "king of kings," not only a part of it, "king," as Heraclius is supposed to have done. The latter title would only have reflected his inferior status vis-à-vis the Persian king,<sup>23</sup> who experienced no change of status or diminution of his royal dignity after Ninevah, but remained to himself, to his people, to Byzantium, and to the world, the *Shāhānshāh*, the "king of kings."

<sup>19</sup> For an account of Perso-Byzantine relations during the last years of Constantine and the place of Hannibalianus in his scheme of things, see O. von Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* (Stuttgart, 1911), IV, pp. 7, 24–26. Basic for an understanding of Hannibalianus are two articles, of which one appeared before and one after Seeck's work: N. Baynes, "Rome and Armenia in the Fourth Century," *English Historical Review*, 25 (1910), 625–43 (reprinted in his *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* [London, 1955], 186–208); W. Ensslin, "Zu dem vermuteten Perserfeldzug des rex Annibalianus," *Klio*, N.F. 11 (1936), 102–110. More recent works that treat Constantine's last years do not add much to the solution of the problems that surround Hannibalianus: E. Stein, *Geschichte des spätromischen Reiches I. Vom römischen zum byzantinischen Staate* (284–476) (Vienna, 1928), 199–201; A. Piganiol, *L'Empire chrétien* (325–95), in *Histoire générale; Histoire romaine* IV, 2 (Paris, 1947), 54–57.

<sup>20</sup> Hannibalianus was not given the title *caesar* as were his three cousins and his own brother, Dalmatius. His title, flattering as it was, assigned Hannibalianus to the political heritage of the barbarian, not the Roman, world. It is possible that Constantine may have wanted not to exceed the Diocletianic prescription of four *caesars*; see Benjamin's article on Constantine in Pauly-Wissowa, IV, 1, col. 1022. Of particular interest as a parallel in this context is the conferment in 34 B.C. of the same title, "king of kings," upon Caesarion, the son of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra.

<sup>21</sup> Such was the implication of the title, as applied to Odenathus of Palmyra.

<sup>22</sup> In this connection it may be noted that Baynes thought the title "king of kings" suggests an Arsacid rather than a Sasanid provenance; see his review of J. Bidez' "La vie de l'empereur Julien" in *Journal of Roman Studies*, 21 (1931), 134. But both proposed origins are in fact Iranian and non-Roman; so the conferment of the title on a Roman pitted in a frontier war against the Sasanid king of kings can only imply a hostile attitude and a deliberate attempt to slight the legitimate bearer of that title, the Sasanid Shapur.

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, such an inferior status is reflected in the use of the two terms in the same document. In 615, after a series of Persian victories which gave the Persians *inter alia* the Holy City, the Senate addressed to Chosroes Parviz a communication in which he is referred to as ἀρχιβασιλεύς, while Heraclius is referred to as βασιλεύς; see *Chronicon Paschale*, I, 708, lines 15, 20.



Although Bury's views on the Iranian profile of the *basileia* must be rejected, he did render a service to the solution of our problem by drawing attention to the year of the title's assumption, 629, immediately after the successful conclusion of the Persian War. As this paper will demonstrate, Persia is not an irrelevant factor in a correct interpretation of the fate of the imperial dignity in that year.

Bury's views have been accepted in whole or in part by a number of scholars,<sup>24</sup> but they have been rejected by others,<sup>25</sup> among whom Ostrogorsky went beyond contesting them and offered alternative explanations, succinctly presented in his *History of the Byzantine State*, for the important titular change. After describing the linguistic change which took place during the reign of Heraclius—the dropping of Latin and the use of Greek exclusively as the official language of the Empire—he goes on to say:

Under the influence of this Hellenization an important change, which was at the same time a simplification, was made in the imperial title in the Byzantine Empire. Heraclius gave up the complicated Latin form of address, and following popular Greek usage he took the title of βασιλεύς. Thus the royal title of the ancient Greek kings, which had hitherto only been used unofficially for the Byzantine Emperor, now replaced the Roman titles, *imperator*, *caesar*, *augustus*. In future the Byzantine Emperor was officially designated as Basileus and this was recognized as the actual imperial title. It was this title which Heraclius gave to his son and co-Emperor, Heraclius νέος Constantine, and then later to his second son, Heracleonas. From now on until the downfall of the Empire it was held by all Byzantine Emperors and co-Emperors, while the title of Caesar finally lost its imperial significance.<sup>26</sup>

Ostrogorsky thus goes to the opposite extreme. He rejects completely the external Persian influence and seeks an explanation for the change within the Empire, in its linguistic Hellenization.<sup>27</sup>

It may be said that Ostrogorsky's is an argument from the general to the particular. It remains to be proved that this linguistic process did affect those crucial words which pertained to sovereignty and the constitution and of which the imperial titular formula consisted, words which were in a special category like those belonging to the military, legal, and administrative termi-

<sup>24</sup> For example, A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 324–1453, (Madison, 1952), 199; N. Baynes, *The Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1925), 68. Bréhier himself, with whom Bury joined issue, restated his views in a manner betraying a subtle change in his position; compare what he wrote in 1906 in "L'origine..." (as in note 3 *supra*), 173, with what he wrote in 1949 in *Les institutions...* (as in note 6 *supra*), 50. Others relate the assumption of the *basileia* to the defeat of Persia and the victory of Heraclius in terms which suggest that the relationship was that of sequence, leaving open the possibility that it might have been that of consequence; see S. Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization* (London, 1933), 62, who cites Bréhier; W. Ensslin, "The Emperor and the Imperial Administration," in *Byzantium, an Introduction to East Roman Civilization*, ed. N. Baynes and H. Moss (Oxford, 1948), 269; F. Dölger, "Die Entwicklung..." (as in note 3 *supra*), 986.

<sup>25</sup> Stein, an advocate of the Persian factor in Byzantium, caught the *non sequitur* in Bury's reasoning; see his review of Vasiliev's *History of the Byzantine Empire* in *BZ*, 29 (1930), 353.

<sup>26</sup> As in note 1 *supra*, 106–7.

<sup>27</sup> It is important to draw attention to the fact that the German for the word "Hellenization" which occurs in this citation is not *Hellenisierung* but *Gräzisierung*; see p. 89 of the third German edition of his *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, XII, pt. 1, vol. 2). Failure to realize this can lead to some unnecessary misunderstandings. "Graecization" (or "Graecising"), inelegant as it is, is a more correct rendering than "Hellenization," which has wider implications and more strident overtones. "Gracising" is used by the translator on page 56 (see note 1 *supra*) to render "Gräzisierung."

nologies, which persisted for a long time and were not affected by the change.<sup>28</sup> His argument encounters more serious objections when examined in detail. First, the adoption of *basileus* cannot be described simply as a change from Latin to Greek, since the emperors had always used the Greek *autokrator* for the Latin *imperator*, and it was this Greek word, *autokrator*, which was ousted by *basileus*, another Greek word. Thus, the change was not only from *imperator* to *basileus* but also from *autokrator* to *basileus*, a change within the same language. It cannot, therefore, be conceived of in merely linguistic terms; some important political concepts were also involved. Second, the fate of the other two terms in the imperial titles, *Augustus* and *Caesar*, argues in the same direction. Latin as these two terms were, they had been thoroughly naturalized in the Greek of Byzantium; written in Greek characters, they were solid loan words which had become so firmly part and parcel of the language of the *Romaioi* that perhaps only etymologists would insist upon their foreign derivation.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, they were not dropped altogether; they were retained to designate potential heirs to the throne.<sup>30</sup>

Ostrogorsky conceives of the change as a reduction and a simplification. It is indeed this, but only stylistically or quantitatively; much more is involved in this change. The substitution of *basileus* for *autokrator* or even for the three titles—*autokrator*, *Augustus*, *Caesar*—represents an important constitutional shift, since *basileus* is not the equivalent of *autokrator* or even of the three titles—*autokrator*, *Augustus*, *Caesar*. This point was appreciated by writers of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, such as Synesius and John Lydus.<sup>31</sup> As for the view that the change was a concession to popular Greek usage, it may be said that such a concession had already been made when the title was unofficially applied to the emperor, but the case in 629 is a different one, that of the *formal* assumption of the title. Furthermore, this view makes the emperor a passive agent, burning incense to common usage in the most vital area which concerned him. Such docility or passivity might be predicated of an emperor such as Justin II was or became, but it would be unbelievable of the self-willed and assertive Armenian that Heraclius was.

Finally, there is the provenance of the title *basileus*. There is no quarrelling with the view that *basileus* as a title had been assumed by the ancient Greek kings nor with the provenance of the word from Ptolemaic Egypt, applied in Egypt and the East first to Augustus and then to his successors.

<sup>28</sup> See H. Zilliacus, *Zum Kampf der Weltsprachen im oströmischen Reich* (Helsingfors, 1935) and Dölger's review in *BZ*, 36 (1963), 108–17.

<sup>29</sup> It should be remembered that the above argument concerns only *individual* words, the retention of which does not contradict the fact of the important linguistic change during the reign of Heraclius. Loan words exist in all languages, including Greek, whose etymologists have shown that *basileus* itself is in this category: see H. Fisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1960), I, 222–23.

<sup>30</sup> See *infra*, p. 305 and Appendix B, pp. 318–320.

<sup>31</sup> In the sixth century John Lydus pointed out in the *De Magistratibus* that the *autokratoria*, the imperial dignity, is not to be equated with the *basileia*; see *De Magistratibus*, ed. R. Wünsch (Teubner, 1903), I, sec. 4. Before John Lydus, Synesius, too, expressed some pertinent views on the same subject, for which, see the apposite quotation in F. Dvornik's *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, IX (Washington, D.C., 1966), II, 703.

But much had happened since the days of the ancient Greek kings, and much water had flowed under the bridge (in particular under the *pons Milvius* in Rome); yet no reference, explicit or implicit, is made by Ostrogorsky to the history of this concept—the *basileia*, which certainly had not remained static in the three centuries before 629, and no account is taken of the descriptive phrase adopted by Heraclius to introduce the new title, a phrase which reads *pistos en Christo*. All these omissions are conspicuous.

Ostrogorsky conceived of the problem as linguistic, set within the context of the diglossia with which official Byzantium was plagued; rather than as related intimately and directly to the most central area in Roman constitutional history—imperial sovereignty.

In spite of these criticisms, Ostrogorsky has advanced the problem by contributing two important points: (1) disposing of Bury's erroneous views on the non-equivalence of *basileus* and *rex* before Heraclius and (2) drawing attention to the fact that the solution of the problem has to be sought primarily within the Empire, not outside it, in Sasanid Persia. Furthermore, the linguistic plane on which he argued is not entirely irrelevant to the conclusion of this paper.

## II

Perhaps the foregoing examination of these two opposite views has cleared the ground for a fresh approach to the problem. It will be argued here that the formal assumption of the title *basileus* is related not so much to remote Hellas or foreign Persia as to the most vital constituent in the make-up of the late Roman Empire, namely, Christianity itself. It could not have been otherwise for a ruler of an empire whose culture had become biblio-centric or Christo-centric; for this particular reign which witnessed a religious war of some twenty years' duration; for this particular Emperor, an intense religious personality and the first Crusader;<sup>32</sup> in this particular year, 629, which witnessed his return from a long, victorious campaign which was conceived as a *μυστική θεωρία*.<sup>33</sup>

The new look of the imperial titulary speaks for itself in support of this view: *pistos en Christo basileus*. The descriptive phrase unequivocally evokes what is implied in *basileus*, guarding against any misapprehension of the correct affiliation of the term in the history of political ideas, ensuring that it is the Christian concept of *basileus* that is intended here, even though the term had been applied originally to the Ptolemies and to the pagan Roman emperors before it passed from them to the Christian Roman emperors, beginning with Constantine. Both Christian and Hellenistic political thought

<sup>32</sup> In the literal sense of the word, since the recovery of the Holy Cross figured so prominently in his wars with Persia. The recovery of the Holy Land from the hands of the Persians added another dimension to his image as a Crusader and could have suggested to his contemporaries that he was another Joshua; on the analogy between the two, see Cyril Mango, "The date of Cod. Vat. Regin. Gr.1 and the 'Macedonian Renaissance,'" *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia*, 4 (1969), 126.

<sup>33</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia*, I, 327, line 26.

conceived of the ruler in terms of a king and both used the same term, *basileus*; but it is impossible to believe that when the ruler of the Christian imperium in the seventh century assumed the title, it was the remote Hellenistic term and concept he had in mind rather than the Christian one, closer to him chronologically and spiritually. This is not to say that the Christian concept of *basileus* worked out by such thinkers as Eusebius is not heavily indebted to Hellenistic thought; it goes without saying that it is. For hard, practical, and prudential reasons, Eusebius had no choice, but to conceive of it in Hellenistic terms.<sup>34</sup> Despite the Hellenistic substrate, however, the Christian concept was essentially different, the distinction being simply that the Hellenistic king was God-king while the Christian was king by the Grace of God. Whether Heraclius assumed the *basileia* as conceived by Eusebius or the much simpler version as conceived by the inspired writers of the relevant books of the Bible is a matter of detail.<sup>35</sup> Whichever he assumed, it was a Christian concept that had been purified of pagan and Hellenistic traces, a fact reflected in the gradual shedding of the Hellenistic titles earlier in the reign,<sup>36</sup> an indication that by the time the title was formally adopted in 629 it had lost its non-Christian associations. In that year Heraclius' assumption of a Christianized title transformed the image of the imperial dignity from that of a non-Christian ruler to one which befitted the ruler of a Christian state.

This Christianizing process can be traced also in the fate which awaited the rest of the titular formula, composed of heterogeneous elements—pre-Christian, non-Christian, and un-Christian—titles which had accumulated and had been retained for reasons of state. The complete formula contained four constituents—the Roman, the Hellenistic, the Christian, and the military cognomina.<sup>37</sup> Of particular interest is the fate of the four Roman titles, *autokrator-imperator*, *Flavius*, *Caesar*, and *Augustus*, and its relation to the Christianizing process.

*Autokrator-imperator* was the most functional of all the titles and the symbol of the supreme power of the ruler. Although there were other reasons perhaps even more cogent for dropping it, as will be pointed out later in this paper, its non-Christian or even un-Christian character is striking when set against the background of the concept of the Christian ruler as the humble servant

<sup>34</sup> See N. Baynes, "Eusebius and the Christian Empire," *Byzantine Studies*... (as in note 19 *supra*), 168–72; Dvornik, *op. cit.*, II, 614–22.

<sup>35</sup> For the image of Heraclius reflected as a David in the Cyprus silver plates, see E. Kitzinger, "Byzantine Art in the Period between Justinian and Iconoclasm," *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress, München 1958*, IV, 1, pp. 4–7. According to E. Cruickshank Dodd, the dating of these plates on the basis of their silver stamps should be A.D. 613–629/30, which makes possible their relation to the *basileia* assumed in the year 629; see her *Byzantine Silver Stamps*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, VII (Washington, D.C., 1961), 178–94.

<sup>36</sup> The gradual process of shedding these titles becomes apparent from an examination of the inscription of the novel dated 612 (Zepos, *op. cit.* [*supra* note 4], 27), of the titular formula of the year 613 preserved in the *Chronicon Paschale* (I, 704), and of the inscription of the novel dated between 620 and 629 (Zepos, *op. cit.*, 33).

<sup>37</sup> This is preserved in the inscription of the earliest novel to survive from the reign of Heraclius, dated 612 (Zepos, *op. cit.*, 27).

of his Lord. More than its Latin equivalent, *imperator*, of which it is not a precise translation, it signified the unattractive concept of *autarkeia*, the state of independence and unaccountability to any other power, the arrogance of power expressed in the first part of the compound, *autos*, missing in the original Latin term. Its true "autocratic" nature comes to the foreground a little later when it was used in conjunction with *basileus* to distinguish the actual ruler from the co-emperor whose *basileia* was merely titular, and so expressed, in Bury's words, the "plenitude of despotic power."<sup>38</sup>

The Christianizing process is even more clearly reflected in the fate of the title *Flavius*, the *nomen gentilicium*, which was dropped from the imperial titular formula.<sup>39</sup> The term had become anachronistic and even embarrassing, since it was not only non-Christian but also anti-Christian; for the name of the Flavians was associated with what Eusebius considered a great persecution, and Domitian in particular was hardly a model of the Christian ruler.<sup>40</sup> The survival of *Flavius* as an imperial title is thus a curiosity, evidence of how out-of-date those titles had become.

It had been assumed by the last pagan emperor, Constantius the Elder, the father of Constantine, and the latter inherited it before he became Christian.<sup>41</sup> He kept it after his conversion for dynastic reasons and as a link with the Occident, Italy, and the Roman past, and every emperor after him followed suit.<sup>42</sup> But its inappropriateness had already become apparent in the reign of Constantine himself, when a pagan temple for the *Gens Flavia* was erected at Hispellum in Umbria. Constantine could not forbid its erection but had to forbid the community to offer sacrifices in the temple.<sup>43</sup>

The anachronistic character of the title *Flavius* must have become particularly apparent in this period. The Flavians were objectionable to Christians not only as their persecutors during the reign of Domitian but also as the destroyers of the Holy City over which their Lord had wept, as recorded in Luke 19 : 41–44. The vandalism of the Flavians in A.D. 70 could easily have come to the foreground during the reign of Heraclius, evoked by the strikingly similar record of the Persian occupiers of Jerusalem in 614. Another observation may be made in this connection and it pertains to Heraclius himself. He was the liberator of the Holy Land and of the Holy Cross from its Babylonian captivity of some fifteen years, and above all and most relevantly here, the restorer of destroyed Jerusalem. It must have been particularly

<sup>38</sup> "The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire" (as in note 7 *supra*), 109. See also Appendix B for an explanation of the reappearance of these titles after Heraclius. It might be added here that the struggle with the Arabs could have been responsible for the remilitarization of the image of the *basileus* after its demilitarization following the peace with Persia (see *infra*, pp. 319–320). If so, the restoration of *autokrator* to the imperial titles was only natural.

<sup>39</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>40</sup> Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, III, 17–20.

<sup>41</sup> On the assumption of *Flavius* by Constantius the Elder, see Pauly-Wissowa, IV, col. 1040.

<sup>42</sup> It has also been suggested that "the extension of the nomen *Flavius* in Byzantine Egypt was part of a deliberate imperial policy"; see J. G. Keenan, "The Nomina *Flavius* and *Aurelius*: A Question of Status in Byzantine Egypt" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1968), chap. II.

<sup>43</sup> See L. Bréhier and P. Batiffol, *Les survivances du culte impérial romain* (Paris, 1920), 14.

incongruous for the restorer of Jerusalem to be saddled with the title of its destroyer.<sup>44</sup>

The possible reasons behind the dropping of *Flavius* become clearer when it is contrasted with the other two titles, *Caesar* and *Augustus*. These two were dropped from the personal titular formula of Heraclius but were retained to perform functions elsewhere—to designate appropriate members of what had become by then the Royal Family; they were applied to Heracleonas and David, reflecting the inferior position of these remote heirs to the throne.<sup>45</sup> Although a case can be made for their retention on functional grounds, there is on the other hand the fact that, quite unlike *Flavius*, the titles *Augustus-Caesar* and *Augustus* were not objectionable to Christian thought. Origen and Eusebius had argued for the respectability of Augustus and the messianic character of his age and thus placed him within the framework of accepted Christian political theology.<sup>46</sup> No such favorable reception was accorded *Flavius*. Indeed, in Melito's letter to Marcus Aurelius, Domitian is classed with Nero, and both are contrasted unfavorably with Augustus.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, the changes made in the various parts of the titular formula could not have been fortuitous but, rather, followed a certain pattern. If Heraclius was mad in introducing these changes, there was method in his madness.

### III

The preceding part of this paper has indicated that the formal assumption of the *basileia* must be related primarily to factors which were operative within the Empire. This is not tantamount to consigning Iran to oblivion or irrelevance, and it is to the Iranian profile of the problem that I now turn in an attempt to uncover its facets and mark their significance. These facets are three, and they pertain to: A, the year 629 and the nature of the peace settlement between the two empires; B, the Armenian origins of Heraclius; and C, the war itself between Byzantium and Sasanid Iran.

A. It has already been noted that the term *autokrator* is distinguished from *basileus*, which supplanted it, by its un-Christian connotations, but it is even more sharply distinguished from the latter by the military connotation which

<sup>44</sup> Whether or not such thoughts crossed Heraclius' mind cannot be established with certainty. For a pertinent reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Flavians and their place in contemporary thought, see Theodore Syncellus, *Analecta Avarica*, ed. L. Sternbach (Cracow, 1900), 14, 18; in Syncellus' homily, Titus is classed with such monsters as Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the Khagan of the Avars; p. 14. This reference is especially important since the writer was a presbyter of St. Sophia, who was celebrating the deliverance of Constantinople in 626 from the siege by the Persians and the Avars. Like another better-known presbyter of St. Sophia, George of Pisidia, he would have been very close to Heraclius either directly or indirectly, through his association with the Patriarch Sergius, who inspired some of the period's compositions which bear on Heraclius, such as the *Hexaameron*.

<sup>45</sup> Heracleonas became Caesar in 632 and augustus in 638; David became Caesar in 638.

<sup>46</sup> See E. Peterson, "Kaiser Augustus im Urteil des antiken Christentums. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie," *Hochland*, 30 (1932-33), 289-99; see also the references to Augustus in the index of Dvornik, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 31), II, 944.

<sup>47</sup> For this letter written by the Bishop of the Diocese of Sardis, see Eusebius, *op. cit.*, IV, xxvi, 7-9.

allies it to war rather than to peace. The substitution of the one for the other by the victorious Roman *autokrator* after Ninevah is remarkable, even striking, and invites a thorough examination of the cluster of events around the year 629 (which rightly attracted the attention of Bury), for the light they might throw on this Iranian profile. Such an examination cannot but make the term *basileus* more intelligible and less abstract, and relate it to the sequence of events which brought about its assumption and which possibly imparted to it some of its overtones. The sources—both contemporary and primary, the latter represented by the official letter of the Persian king and the works of George of Pisidia, the court poet of Heraclius—speak clearly on two relevant issues: the tone of Byzantine-Persian relations after Ninevah and the image of Heraclius at this time, possibly even a self-image which he projected or promoted.

The tone of Byzantine-Persian relations after Ninevah is almost unique. It is informed by a genuine desire for coexistence between the two superpowers and a renunciation of territorial expansionism. This tone is clearly reflected in the negotiations which preceded the peace treaty and in the terms of the peace settlement.<sup>48</sup> It is the more noteworthy in Heraclius, since he was the victor. Although he had worsted his adversary and won a decisive victory at Ninevah, all that he requested or demanded was the restoration of the status quo; even the military cognomen, *Persicus*, he significantly omitted to assume.<sup>49</sup> His letter to the new Persian king, Kavad, very clearly reflects this conciliatory tone in stating that he never contemplated territorial aggrandizement at the expense of Persia and that as far as Kavad's late father, Chosroes, was concerned, he would have restored his throne to him if he had been in a position to do so.<sup>50</sup> This desire for peace and coexistence is reciprocated by Kavad in his reply to Heraclius.<sup>51</sup>

If such was the mood of the two empires at this juncture, the formal assumption of the title *basileus* may well be related to it: the term brings the two empires nearer to each other on the ground of a common concept of sovereignty deriving from kingship,<sup>52</sup> and, furthermore, by its non-military

<sup>48</sup> The tone is audible as early as 615, in the Senate's letter to Chosroes, for which, see *Chronicon Paschale*, I, 707–9.

<sup>49</sup> He assumed the long list of military cognomina early in his reign, for which, see the inscription of the novel dated 612 (Zepos, *op. cit.*, [*supra*, note 4], 27).

<sup>50</sup> See Nicephorus, *Opuscula historica*, ed. C. de Boor (Teubner, 1880), 20, lines 5–14.

<sup>51</sup> *Chronicon Paschale*, I, 735–37.

<sup>52</sup> The most crucial piece of evidence relevant to this discussion is to be found in Kavad's letter to Heraclius preserved in Nicephorus, *op. cit.*, 20, 11.3–5. It deserves to be quoted and it speaks for itself: γράφει δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐνοῦσθαι τε ἀλλήλαις τὰς ὑπ' αὐτοῦς πολιτείας καὶ εἰρήνην παρὰ θεοῦ ἀσπάζεσθαι, ὡς ἐκάστην καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἡσυχάζειν. The Roman *autokrator* and the Persian king addressed each other as equals in diplomatic exchanges, despite the difference in their titles, and they resorted to the concept of *fraternitas* to reflect this relationship of equality. The assumption of the title "king" by the Roman *autokrator* in 629 enhanced this relationship of equality through the employment of identical titular terms. It is also pertinent to remark that, according to the Arabic sources, the new Persian king, Kavad, was the son of a Byzantine princess, Maurice's daughter Maria. For the concept of *fraternitas* between the two rulers, see F. Dölger, "Die 'Familie der Könige' im Mittelalter," *Byzanz und die Europäische Staatenwelt* (Darmstadt, 1964), 56–61; for Maria, Kavad's mother, see A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen, 1944), 487–88.

character—compared with *autokrator*—it chimes better with the hopes of the two rulers for the peace envisaged in their treaty. The outcome of the battle of Ninevah could also contribute to this interpretation; while formerly the Byzantine *autokrator* may have been reluctant to adopt *basileus* because *inter alia* it would have relegated him to an inferior status vis-à-vis the Persian ruler, styled “king of kings,” such a misunderstanding of relative status would have been ruled out at this point in view of the fact that Heraclius had just emerged triumphant from a long struggle crowned by a resounding military victory, news of which had reverberated in the *oikoumenê* from central Asia to western Europe.<sup>53</sup> The assumption of the title *basileus* under these conditions could reflect the mood of a victor, confident in his victory and in the prospects of a permanent peace.

The peace with Persia and its relation to the *basileia* admits of a closer and better examination from within the domestic Byzantine scene. As long as the ruler was designated *autokrator* there was something about the image of Byzantium which suggested an army that had conquered a state rather than a state that possessed an army. The assumption of the *basileia* was in a sense a demilitarization of the image of the ruler<sup>54</sup> and a return to civil government after the protracted military crisis of twenty years had been weathered. Such a return to civil rule has parallels in Roman history—in the third century of the imperial crisis, but most relevantly in the first century, at the end of the Civil Wars. After Actium, there was a general feeling that a universal and lasting peace had been established, the *Pax Augusta*, sung by the poets and later confirmed by Christian writers who construed the Augustan Age as a *praeparatio evangelica*.

If the peace of that pagan Emperor had been understood in messianic terms, so were the labors of Heraclius viewed in a similar light by his contemporaries, in particular by his court poet, George of Pisidia. His poems composed in and for 629 clearly reflect this mood. The *Hexaemeron* is an unmistakable allegory which speaks of the creation of the world in six days and God’s rest on the seventh, suggesting a comparison with Heraclius’ campaign of six years and his laying down the sword in the seventh for a period of permanent rest.<sup>55</sup> Thus did his contemporaries understand the significance of the victory of Ninevah; they saw in the campaign a flattering biblical analogy and in the year 629 the beginning of an era of rest or peace analogous to that of the

<sup>53</sup> For the Indian embassy, see Theophanes, *Chronographia*, I, 335; for the Frankish, see *Chronicon quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici*, IV, 62 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, II, 151).

<sup>54</sup> This is strikingly confirmed by the numismatic evidence for the earlier part of the reign. On the solidi of Heraclius, Philip Grierson writes: “Heraclius at the same time introduced the crown and the chlamys for the two busts of the solidus, the contrast with the helmet and the paludamentum of the preceding bust being very plain. Thenceforward, for the next hundred years, the chlamys was to be the normal costume of the imperial bust, other ones being used only exceptionally”; see his *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection* . . . , II (Washington, D.C., 1968), 76–77. The evidence of the coins suggests that the demilitarization process was in Heraclius’ thoughts even before 629.

<sup>55</sup> For the *Hexaemeron*, see *Patrologia Graeca*, 92, cols. 1425–1578; A. Pertusi’s edition is anxiously awaited.



Almighty after His labors in creating the world, the threshold of a new age splendidly opening 629 years after the birth of the Messiah whose *parousia* and *basileia* were awaited, and of which the new Chosen People were reminded whenever they recited the Nicene Creed. Heraclius might very well have thought he was opening the last phase of the millennium as a *praeparatio* for the Second Coming.<sup>56</sup> The assumption of the *basileia* in 629 may be related to these hopes; the title *basileus* was most appropriate for reflecting an imperial image which was conceived by contemporaries as messianic or even a self-image which had in fact become messianic.

Bury's contribution to this interpretation is his observation that the chronological problem is basic for understanding the *basileia*, and the foregoing argument has been an attempt not only to follow up this observation, but also to substitute for the assumption of the *basileia* as *spolia opima* an alternative explanation, namely, that the most sympathetic background against which the assumption of the *basileia* may be intelligibly set is related to imperial moods in both Byzantium and Iran and to the spiritual ambiance which prevailed after the conclusion of the war, as reconstructed from primary and contemporary sources. The year 629 thus serves as an introduction to the two other facets of the Iranian profile, which fortunately are not as elusive as this first one.

B. The important role played in the history of Byzantium by that talented minority, the Armenians, has been generally recognized.<sup>57</sup> Some twenty years ago this recognition was enhanced by the realization that the seventh century, the turning point in the history of Byzantium, was practically an Armenian century,<sup>58</sup> dominated as it was by the house of Heraclius, the Armenian provenance of whose founder has been generally accepted.<sup>59</sup> This provenance has remained an interesting or colorful ethnographic datum, but its significance goes beyond this and may now be related to the assumption of the *basileia* and to the theme of this Symposium—Byzantium and Sasanian Iran. It will

<sup>56</sup> A tripartite division of Heraclius' soul was attempted by L. Drapeyron in his *L'empereur Héraclius et l'empire byzantin au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1869), 20–29. But more than a century has elapsed since then; furthermore, what is needed now is an exploration of the mystic and Messianic strands in Heraclius, inextricably entangled with each other. There is reasonably sufficient material in the sources to enable this exploration to be carried out. The main source is of course the work of George of Pisidia. The *Hexaemeron* has already been referred to as an allegorical treatment of the six years of Heraclius' counter-offensive, aptly described in Theophanes by the significant phrase *μυστική θεωρία*. The poet's conception of the new age to be opened by Heraclius and his sons is of particular interest; see *Hexaemeron*, PG, 92, cols. 1575–76, lines 1845–68, and *Heraclius*, I, 244 line 84. The other poems of George of Pisidia also contain much relevant material, which may be illustrated by (1) a passage in *Heraclius*, II, which speaks of his retirement before he opened his counteroffensive, in the manner of Elias; (2) a passage in *In Restitutionem S. Crucis*, which speaks of the mystic power of the Cross, *μυσταρχία*, transferred to Heraclius, its restorer; see *Georgio di Pisidia, Poemi, I: Panegirici epici*, ed. and trans. A. Pertusi, *Studia patristica et byzantina*, VII (Ettal, 1959), 257, lines 133–35 and 227, lines 43–46.

<sup>57</sup> See P. Charanis, "Ethnic Changes in the Byzantine Empire in the Seventh Century," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 13 (1959), 28–36.

<sup>58</sup> See H. Grégoire, "An Armenian Dynasty on the Byzantine Throne," *The Armenian Quarterly*, 1 (1946), 4–21.

<sup>59</sup> C. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine* (Paris, 1896), 517; A. Pernice, *L'imperatore Eraclio* (Florence, 1905), 25; Grégoire, "An Armenian Dynasty...", 6; Charanis, *op. cit.*, 35.

be argued that the ethnic background of the *autokrator* who in 629 presided over the liquidation of the last vestiges of both the Roman Republic and the Roman Principate might have been an operative factor in that process.

In or about 387 the Emperor Theodosius terminated the autonomy of Roman Armenia.<sup>60</sup> The political system he dissolved was a monarchy and what is more a Christian monarchy which prided itself upon the fact that it was the first Christian state in existence, antedating even Byzantium itself. *Ca.* A.D. 300 St. Gregory Illuminator had converted the dynast of Armenia, Tiridates III, an event which thenceforth decided the cultural orientation of the country, away from the Iranian East and toward the Hellenic Christian West. The concept of a Christian *basileia* about which Christian thinkers from Eusebius onward continued to theorize was realized concretely in the Armenian monarchy. The line of its Christian kings in Roman Armenia came to an end in 387 and in Persian Armenia in 427, but memories of the monarchy, the symbol of an independent Armenia, remained very much alive in the consciousness of its people throughout the succeeding centuries,<sup>61</sup> partly owing to the association of that monarchy with Christianity, the new faith with which Armenia identified itself in its struggle to resist cultural assimilation by Iran.

The formal assumption of the *basileia* may be related to this background. From 622 to 628 Heraclius had his headquarters in Armenia, whose contingents were a decisive factor in his victories and from where he conducted the campaigns that finally broke the power of Sasanid Iran. Throughout these six years (and those that followed) he spared no efforts to win over his schismatic people to the new theological formula he had worked out for ecclesiastical unity,<sup>62</sup> and it was to Armenia, rather than to his own capital, that he repaired after his final victory at Ninevah.<sup>63</sup>

It is not unlikely that the thought of assuming the *basileia* may have been inspired by his prolonged residence in Armenia, where the tradition of its Christian monarchy was still alive and where he would certainly have always been referred to as "king." As one of them he must have reminded the Armenians of Tiridates III, their first Christian king, the contemporary, friend, and ally of Constantine the Great,<sup>64</sup> memories of whom Heraclius evoked in various ways, as is attested by the evidence of the literary sources, the coins,

<sup>60</sup> For the history of Armenia in the Byzantine-Sasanid period, see R. Grousset, *Histoire de l'Arménie* (Paris, 1947), chaps. VI–VIII; see chap. VIII, pp. 163–84, for the partition of Armenia by Byzantium and Iran and the dissolution of Arsacid rule in Roman and Persian Armenia; see also the relevant chapters in the more recent work of C. Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, D.C., 1963).

<sup>61</sup> Even before its revival in the Muslim period, the ceremony whereby in 485 the Mamikonid prince, Vahan, was invested with the Marzbanate of Armenia was tantamount to a coronation; see Grousset, *op. cit.*, 229. The sermon preached on that occasion by the Patriarch, H. Mandakouni is preserved in Lazare de Pharbe, *Histoire d'Arménie*, included in V. Langlois, *Collection des historiens anciens et modernes de l'Arménie*, II (Paris, 1869), 365–67.

<sup>62</sup> Grousset, *op. cit.*, 281–87; Grégoire, "An Armenian Dynasty...", 14–17.

<sup>63</sup> *Chronicon Paschale*, I, 734; his return to Armenia may, however, admit of other explanations.

<sup>64</sup> On Tiridates and Constantine, see G. Garitte, *Documents pour l'étude du livre d'Agathange*, Studi e Testi (Vatican city, 1946), 127.

and the inscriptions.<sup>65</sup> Heraclius' well-known preoccupation—military, ecclesiastic, and other—with the Orient, of which Armenia and the Armenians formed for him the most important part, might have been a factor in his assumption of a title which answered to the Orient's conception of a ruler.

So much for the remoter background of his provenance. More important is a piece of evidence which is new in the sense that it has not been brought into a relationship with the *basileia*, and which comes from that primary source for the history of Heraclius, the chronicle of Bishop Sebeos, described by Grégoire as "the gem of Armenian historiography." In that work occurs the startling statement that the Heraclids were related to the Arsacids.<sup>66</sup> I

<sup>65</sup> The evocation of the figure of Constantine must have helped Heraclius in his dealings with the Armenians, whose Church inscribed the names of Helen and Constantine in its diptychs and who, like other good Monophysites, looked back upon the Council summoned by Constantine as the fountainhead of their orthodoxy upon whose Creed their own rested. Tiridates' son, Aristakes, attended the Council of Nicaea. No Armenian representatives attended the Councils of Constantinople, Ephesus, or Chalcedon.

Although it was his son who was officially called *νέος* Constantinos, it is practically certain that Heraclius wanted to draw attention to himself also as the new Constantine. This becomes clear from the following observations: 1. the term *νέος* cannot in this context mean "young"; that is, it cannot be the *νέος* that distinguishes a father from a son of the same name, because in this case the son was already distinguished from his father by the addition of the name "Constantine." The word, then, must mean "new"—"the New Constantine"—and carry the implication of a historical role similar to that of Constantine the Great which the bearer was to play. The son, however, was an infant when "the New Constantine" was added to his name; so the title was hardly apposite for him. But by making his son co-ruler as early as 612 and by referring to him in the titular formula as *Novus Constantinus*, Heraclius was able to draw attention to himself as the *Novus Constantinus* by association. 2. Heraclius conducted his war along strictly religious lines, a war which was, *inter alia*, aimed at the recovery of the Holy Cross, discovered three centuries earlier by Constantine's mother, Helen, and the restoration of the Holy City, (destroyed by the Persians) whose religious monuments, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, had been erected by Helen. 3. The coins and the inscriptions leave no doubt whatsoever about Heraclius' vision of himself; the famous Constantinian *ἐν τούτῳ νίκα* was inscribed on the Heraclian coins, and, even more importantly, the inscriptions found at Smyrna and Ephesus speak of both father and son as *τῶν νέων Κωνσταντίνων*. But the most explicit evidence for the true image of Heraclius as a Constantine comes from George of Pisidia, in a passage of some seventeen lines which, in addition, explains this relationship between the two in terms of the recovery of the Holy Cross. For the numismatic evidence, see Pertusi, *op. cit. (supra)*, note 56), 266; for the inscriptions, see H. Grégoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Asie mineure* (Paris, 1922), vol. I, nos. 79, 80, 113. Grégoire's note on inscription no. 80 could have been enriched by a confrontation of the epigraphic with the literary evidence, but apparently he was unaware of the important passage in George of Pisidia, for which, see Pertusi, *op. cit.*, 227, lines 47–228, line 63.

<sup>66</sup> Sebeos, *Histoire d'Héraclius*, trans. F. Macler (Paris, 1904), 108. The statement on the Arsacid affiliations of the Heraclids reads as follows in the French translation: "Il lui donna une femme de la maison des Arsacides, ses parents." "Il" stands for Constans II, "lui" for the Bagratunid Smbat, the son of Varaztirots, the Armenian chief. The occasion was the confirmation of the son in the office of his father after the death of the latter, whom Constantine had magnanimously pardoned after his escape from Constantinople and his usurpation of power in Armenia. The French version presents two difficulties: (1) the antecedent of "ses" can be "il"—Constans—or "lui"—Smbat; (2) the exact meaning of "parents" is not clear. The Armenian original does not solve definitively either of these problems: (1) "iwr," Armenian for "ses," can be either "eius" or "suus" and so leaves open the question whether it was Constans or Smbat that was related to the Arsacids; (2) "merjawork," Armenian for French "parents," means "kinsmen" or "relatives," but leaves the precise nature of this relationship unspecified.

Despite the difficulty of arriving at precise conclusions on the two questions, there is no doubt that at least the first can be answered with some certainty from the context. The natural meaning of the sentence suggests Constans as the antecedent. The emperor who was conferring privileges on Smbat to ensure his loyalty to the imperial cause was acting in full conformity with imperial matrimonial diplomacy—honoring the prince by giving him the hand of a princess from the imperial house or from a house to which he was related. The point of this matrimonial transaction as a diplomatic stroke would have been lost if the bride had belonged to the house of the prospective bridegroom. Such matri-

have subjected this statement to intensive examination and have called upon Armenologists to advise on the Armenian term which expresses this relationship. Unfortunately the term "kinsmen" is too general to define the nature of the relationship which obtained between the Heraclids and the Arsacids; it remains, therefore, an open question whether the Heraclids were Arsacids in the sense of being lineal descendants of the Armenian royal house or simply related to it distantly and collaterally. Whichever interpretation is accepted, and I prefer the conservative one which relates the Heraclids only distantly to the Armenian royalty, Heraclius did have some Arsacid connections or affiliations. This introduces into the picture an important element which is clear in its implications. It cannot have been entirely coincidental that the first Roman *autokrator* formally to assume the *basileia* was himself descended from royalty or related to it, a fact not true of any *autokrator* before him; and this circumstance may have constituted a motive force, or at least an element in the dramatic titular change of 629. In view of the importance of this new evidence of the Arsacid affinity of Heraclius, it is appropriate to terminate its isolation in Sebeos' *History* by setting it within the larger context of other statements in the sources, not on the Armenians in general but on a particular group within this minority, the Arsacids, and on their activities not in Armenia but in the Byzantine diaspora. Several of them appear in the pages of Procopius, and their careers reveal a certain pattern. After the dissolution of the Arsacid monarchy, its representatives enjoyed a privileged position according to the terms of the settlement.<sup>67</sup> They placed their talents at the disposal of the Roman *autokrator* but remained jealous of their privileges and very much aware of their royal descent. The career of Art-

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monial deals were very common in the course of Byzantine history. Reference has already been made in this paper to Maria, Maurice's daughter, who was given as a bride to the Persian king Parviz, but another instance is even more significant, that of the fourth-century Constans I, who gave the Armenian king Arshak (Arsaces) a princess from the royal family; see *Des Faustus von Byzanz Geschichte Armeniens*, trans. M. Lauer (Cologne, 1879), 95. An examination of the sources on the women of the house of Heraclius—the wives of the Elder Heraclius, Heraclius, and Heraclius Novus Constantinus—yields nothing certain about their Arsacid affiliation; less is known about the wife of Constans, to whom there is a solitary but fruitless reference in an anonymous Syriac chronicle (J. Kaestner, *De Imperio Constantini III (641–668)* [Leipzig, 1907], 74). But to the reference in Sebeos concerning Constans and the Arsacids may be added the fact of the support that the Arsacid Valentine gave to the cause of Constans against Martina and Heracleonas (Ostrogorsky, *History*... [as in note 1 *supra*], 113); this support might (but does not necessarily) indicate some family relationship.

Such being the state of the sources, all that can be said about the important evidence in Sebeos is that the Heraclids were related in some way to the Arsacids. They were a distinguished Armenian family of the sixth and seventh centuries, possibly related to the Heraclius who conquered Libya and Tripoli for the Emperor Leo after defeating the Vandals (Theophanes, *Chronologia*, I, 117), a relationship suspected by Du Cange; see *Constantinopolis christiana*, I, 100. It is therefore quite likely that they intermarried with the most distinguished Armenian family, that of the Arsacids, many of whom were living in the Byzantine diaspora and some of whom were associated with Africa and the West. It is because of the lack of precise information on the Arsacid affiliations of the Heraclids that the views expressed above on the relevance of these affiliations to the *basileia* have been presented with the utmost conservatism; but even if this Arsacid relationship turns out not to be significant, the Armenian origins of the house of Heraclius remain a relevant feature of background for the assumption of the *basileia*.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to Prof. C. Toumanoff and to Dr. G. Egan for their kindness in answering my queries concerning the two Armenian terms in the passage in Sebeos discussed in this footnote.

<sup>67</sup> See Procopius, *Wars*, II, iii, 35.

banus,<sup>68</sup> the famous general of Justinian's reign, is perhaps the best example of the fate of an Arsacid with imperial appetites which, however, landed him in a gloomy dungeon instead of the imperial palace.<sup>69</sup> Set within what might be termed "Arsacia in Byzantium" the advent of Heraclius to power becomes more intelligible; his Armenian descent related him to the small circle of Arsacids who made a bid for the purple and who may have been in the mind of the elder Heraclius when he dispatched his son and namesake to try to achieve what Artabanus before him had failed to do. In 610 Heraclius seized the scepter, and nearly twenty years later, in 629, assumed the title *basileus*, an act which made of that year an important date in the chequered history of the Arsacids. The year 629 inevitably recalls for the student of Roman history the famous scene in 66, when Nero formalized the vassalage of the Arsacids to Rome by placing the diadem on the head of Tiridates I in the forum of Old Rome.

It remains to indicate the relevance of Iran to Heraclius' background. The Armenian Arsacids were Iranians, a collateral branch of the Arsacid house that had ruled Parthian Iran. The few drops of Iranian blood that Heraclius had or may have had are not as important as the fact that the monarchical system of Armenia followed the Parthian Iranian model (though modified by the Armenian tradition, just as the Arsacid blood itself became diluted by intermarriage<sup>70</sup>). Further, if the Hellenistic *basileia* was Christianized in the fourth century (and this process continued progressively), so, to an even greater degree was the Arsacid monarchy of Armenia in the same century, since it became identified with the new faith as the symbol of independence from Sasanid Persia and the safest guard against cultural assimilation. Even so, the Iranian dimension or substrate of the Armenian monarchy is a fact which must be taken into account in this discussion of the Iranian profile. The assumption of the *basileia* by an *autokrator* of Heraclius' background represents a confluence of the two Christian versions of the *basileia*, the Hellenistic and the Arsacid, and this provides new insights into this concept which became the imperial dignity in 629.

C. Even more important than Heraclius' Armenian origins and possible Arsacid affiliations is the Byzantine-Sasanid war of twenty years' duration—the backdrop that has been touched upon lightly in this discussion and that constitutes the last of the three facets of the Iranian profile.

Constitutional changes take place under the influence of either internal drives or external pressures or both. Sometimes the internal drives that assert themselves are not sufficiently strong to bring about changes and consequently these must await the force of external pressures. It was precisely as an external pressure that the war with Iran functioned during the reign of Heraclius. Likewise, the three major wars of Rome—the Second Punic War,

<sup>68</sup> The relevant part of Artabanus' adventures are related by Procopius in the seventh book of the *Wars*.

<sup>69</sup> Another scion of the Arsacid line—Vahram Chobin, the rebellious general who forced Parviz to flee and seek the protection of the Emperor Maurice—wrote a similar but much more important chapter in the history of sixth-century Iran (see Christensen, *op. cit.* [*supra*, note 52], 443–45).

<sup>70</sup> For example, see *Des Faustus...* (as in note 66 *supra*), 206.

the Civil Wars, and the military crisis of the third century—had invariably been attended by constitutional changes. The Persian War of Heraclius' reign has a natural affinity with these three wars, as the fourth major military endeavor of the Roman state which effected significant internal transformations.

The internal drives are represented by the steady progress of absolutism in the preceding centuries reflected, *inter alia*, in the informal application of the concept of the *basileia* to the imperial dignity and accelerated by the Christianization of the Empire. In spite of the coexistence of these two elements and their fusion, no emperor before Heraclius had been able to assume the kingship formally. It was only after the successful conclusion of the struggle with Iran that this constitutional change was made possible. The war was thus the external pressure required for enabling these internal drives to effect constitutional changes. It increased, or may have increased, the appeal of the Christian concept of the *basileia*, since it was conducted along intensely religious lines as a holy war and a crusade. Furthermore, its strategist was a statesman who fought to secure an everlasting peace, a peace with messianic overtones, to be a *praeparatio* for the King of Peace and the readier acceptance of his Vicar on Earth as a Christian king.

But much more important is the fact that the war made possible the career of Heraclius, the agent of the important change from *autokrator* to *basileus*. It was a rare conjunction of events and circumstances that the Emperor on whose shoulders devolved the task of conducting this war belonged to a family that hailed from Armenia, a region where a strong Christian monarchical tradition had obtained, and that he was reunited with his people and his monarchical tradition for some six years, at the conclusion of which he returned to Constantinople and formally assumed the *basileia*. The concept of the Christian king and the ruler who aspired to it finally met under the ideal circumstances created by the storms and stresses of the Persian War.

In the constitutional history of Rome the year 629 was the terminus of a development which had been going on for centuries—the internal drive toward absolute autocracy. The year has been treated rather unceremoniously by Roman historians, with the exception of Bury, the unrepentant unitarian who unequivocally continued to affirm that what fell in 1453 was not Byzantium but Rome on the Bosphorus.<sup>71</sup> Most seem to lose interest in Roman history after 476 or after Justinian, and thus the reign of Heraclius suffers, as does the year in that reign which witnessed the constitutional change whose roots go back to imperial desires for autocracy in Old Rome.

To Old Rome we must now turn for a final element in our construction of the Iranian profile. The scene is the Festival of the Lupercalia in 44 B.C., when Marc Antony offered Julius Caesar the diadem.<sup>72</sup> The offer was refused by

<sup>71</sup> As early as 1889, for example, in his *History...* (as in note 14 *supra*), II, 539, and as late as 1923 in his Introduction to volume IV of the *Cambridge Mediaeval History* (*ibid.*).

<sup>72</sup> For the latest on the scene at the Lupercalia, see Karl-Wilhelm Welwei, "Das Angebot des Diadems an Caesar und das Luperkalienproblem," *Historia*, 16 (1967), 44–69. A. Alföldi's monograph on the subject deserves special mention because of its remarkable handling of the numismatic evidence; *Studien über Caesars Monarchie* (Lund, 1955).

him who coveted it most. Immediately after, preparations were made for Caesar's Parthian campaign, a campaign which has been variously interpreted. One interpretation, however, has received general acceptance, namely, that, it was to be used by Caesar to pave the way for the constitutional transformation of the Republic into a monarchy, in name as well as in fact. If public opinion was not yet ready at the Lupercalia for a formal assumption of *rex*, it would be after the successful conclusion of the Parthian War, when a smashing victory over Iran would enable Caesar to ride the crest of a popular wave of enthusiasm for the victorious *imperator*. The Sibylline Books were rummaged for a prophecy and a phrase was found to the effect that the Parthians could be overcome only if the Romans were led by a "King." The Ides of March interfered with the fulfillment of that prophecy and with the hopes and desires of every Roman *imperator* for some six centuries; the legacy of Augustus prevailed and the Euphrates remained the eastern frontier of the Empire, notwithstanding such adventures as those of Trajan and Septimius Severus. And so it remained after the advent of the Sasanids to power and in spite of their aggressive policies in the third and the fourth centuries, during the reigns of Ardashir and the two Shapurs.<sup>73</sup>

The second phase of Byzantine-Sasanid relations was one of peace throughout the fifth century, owing to the fact that the two empires were busy with their barbarians, the Persians warding off the Hunnic peril in central Asia, the Romans being occupied with the Germanic invasions in western Europe. The third phase saw a period of hostilities throughout the sixth century, but the basis of the conflict was not ideological, as had been true of the war of revenge which had exercised such dangerous fascination upon Ardashir and the two Shapurs. It was, instead, the gold and silver which Iran succeeded in extracting from Byzantium and which Justinian was prepared to pay in order to buy peace in the East.<sup>74</sup> This was high-class brigandage and blackmail<sup>75</sup> and was so conceived by Chosroes Anushirvan himself,<sup>76</sup> but it ensured that the scale of the war would remain Lilliputian, as in fact it did.<sup>77</sup> A dangerous turn, however, was reached toward the end of the sixth century with the ominous rise of militarism<sup>78</sup> in the Sasanid state brought about by ambitious army commanders,<sup>79</sup> a situation the Roman Empire had known only too well in the third century. Even this did not seriously threaten the relative stability of the Byzantine-Sasanid front or affect the scale of the conflict; only the advent

<sup>73</sup> The best history of Sasanid Iran is still Christensen's (see note 52 *supra*); the Perso-Byzantine wars of the third century are treated by Christensen in a section entitled "The Persian Wars with Rome" in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, XII (Cambridge, 1939), 126-37.

<sup>74</sup> On the centenary of gold payed by Justinian to Chosroes, see Procopius, *Wars*, I, xxii, 3, 8; for the Peace Treaty of 532, *Wars*, II, xxviii, 10-11.

<sup>75</sup> This is especially true of Chosroes' campaign against Syria in 540, during which he made it his business to extract gold and silver from its cities; the sums are recorded in detail by Procopius; see *Wars*, II, v-xiii.

<sup>76</sup> Perhaps the best example for this is Procopius, *Wars*, I, xxvi, 1-4.

<sup>77</sup> With the exception of the 540 campaign, when Antioch was captured and destroyed.

<sup>78</sup> The seeds of which were sown by the military reorganization of the Empire during the reign of Chosroes Anushirvan, for which, see Christensen, *op. cit.* [*supra*, note 52], 369-71, 500-501.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 443-44, 446; for the period immediately following the death of Parviz, see page 502.

of a "king of kings" sufficiently haunted by anachronistic ideals and endowed with a will to conquer would radically change the military situation. Such a king appeared in the person of Chosroes Parviz,<sup>80</sup> who was possessed by the dream of restoring to Sasanid Iran its ancient Achaemenid boundaries.<sup>81</sup> This was tantamount to conceiving the whole of the *Pars Orientalis* as *Persis Irredenta* and virtually decreeing Byzantium out of existence. The stage was thus set for that truly gigantic struggle with Sasanid Iran which lasted for some twenty years, releasing energies and forces and creating conditions and circumstances which made possible the constitutional development that succeeded in transforming the imperial image from that of *Imperator, Caesar, Flavius, Augustus* to *pistos en Christo basileus*, and which makes of *Annus Domini* 629 the true terminus of the Late Roman Period.<sup>82</sup>

#### IV

For those who come to the holy city of Byzantium from Rome on the Tiber and approach it as students of Late Antiquity, Heraclius' assumption of the *basileia* is a milestone on the constitutional and institutional journey of a thousand years or more, through Kingship, Republic, Principate, and Dominate.

For the second half of this millennium or so of Roman history, his act represents the consummation of an imperial desire going back to the days of the first *princeps*. Augustus had created a complex structure of legal and constitutional fictions to conceal the true nature of the new system he devised—the Principate—by presenting as a dyarchy what in truth was a monarchy. Throughout the six centuries that followed, the transformation of the Principate into a Dominate took place in gradual but progressive steps. Both the symbol and the title of monarchy, diadem and *rex*, had been denied to the uncle of the first *princeps*, but in the fourth century Constantine formalized the assumption of the diadem as part of the royal insignia, and in the seventh it was an Armenian with presumed Arsacid affiliations who presided over the last

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 441–96.

<sup>81</sup> There can be no doubt about the irredentist mentality Parviz inherited from the first Sasanids, whose ambitions are attested in the sources such as Shapur's letter to Constantius, in which he reminded him: *Ad usque Strymona flumen et Macedonicos fines tenuisse maiores imperium meos, antiquitates quoque vestrae testantur* (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XVII, 5, 5). That Alexander, the destroyer of Achaemenid Persia, was alive in Parviz' historical consciousness is fully attested in his letter to Maurice, for which see Theophylactus Simocatta, *Historiae*, ed. C. de Boor (Teubner, 1887), IV, 13, 11. The reference to Alexander in that letter is of course not related to Parviz' ambitions to restore Iran's Achaemenid boundaries, since he wrote it as a suppliant when his fortunes were at their lowest ebb; but it does indicate that Alexander was in his thoughts.

<sup>82</sup> On the question of periodization in Byzantine history, see G. Ostrogorsky, "Die Perioden der byzantinischen Geschichte," *Historische Zeitschrift* (1941), 229–54. The state of the sources does not permit the drawing of a conclusion on contemporary awareness of the significance of the constitutional change in A.D. 629; future research, however, may turn up some evidence for such awareness. If the significance of the year 629 was not grasped at the time, it was not the only instance of contemporary unawareness of the significance of a historic change; what James Bryce wrote concerning the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 is particularly apposite in this connection; see *The Holy Roman Empire* (New York, 1961), 1, 415.



phase of this process by calling a scepter a scepter. When the mask fell in 629 and the new title was assumed, the transformation from *res publica* to *basileia* was not merely formal, important as that was; it bore directly on one of the thorniest problems which had faced the Principate, namely, that of succession.

Sovereignty could not be transmitted by right of inheritance, a concept utterly unacceptable to Roman constitutional theory. The difficulty was circumvented by the double process of adoption and association, which reached a high degree of complexity under Diocletian and his system of tetrarchies. Constantine departed from the practice of Diocletian and introduced, or reintroduced, collective or collegial rule among members of his own family, thus drawing very close to an open hereditary principle. After him the system worked, with occasional breakdowns as in 602; however, the constitutional forms and the terms which expressed them remained as they had been before, the old Roman titles, *imperator-autokrator* in particular, not conceding or reflecting the principle of hereditary succession. The formal assumption of the new title, *basileus*, supplied just the constitutional term which had been missing in the imperial titles, formalizing thereby the principle of hereditary succession which had obtained in fact since the days of Constantine. Heraclius' grandson, Constantine IV, carried the process one step further when he deprived his two crowned brothers of their imperial rights, thus establishing "the principle of a single supreme ruler," and furthermore limited the succession to his eldest son.<sup>83</sup>

Although the assumption of the *basileia* in 629 was the fulfillment and consummation of certain internal drives which had been operative for centuries within the Roman state, perhaps more importantly it represented, together with the other changes introduced in the imperial titular formula, what could be termed a de-Romanizing process, which might or might not have been deliberate.

The drastic reduction in imperial titles, which did away with concepts of sovereignty inherited from Old Rome, set against the background of the discontinuation of Latin as an official language, has already been noted. It remains to draw attention to another element which has not been brought into a meaningful relationship with this de-Romanizing process—the beginning of the end for the consulate. It could not have been coincidental that the lapse of the consulate and the advent of the *basileia* took place during the same period. After all, the consulate was the republican magistracy that had replaced the kingship after the revolution of 509 B.C. The year 629 inevitably evokes 509 B.C., when the last king of Rome was expelled and the first consul, or praetor, as he was then called, appeared; now the process is reversed, the last consuls making their exit even as the first *basileis* formally step in, thus initiating the second period of Kingship in the history of Rome. Just as the lapse of the *autokratoria* erased the last vestige of the Principate, so the lapse of the consulate, the most important republican magistracy, effaced

<sup>83</sup> Ostrogorsky, "Das Mitkaisertum..." (as in note 3 *supra*), 166, and his *History*... (as in note 1 *supra*), 128.

the last trace of the Republic. Synoptically viewed, these changes seem deliberate strokes to cut the Roman state loose from its old moorings and to steer it along a new course.<sup>84</sup>

The tripartite formula referred to at the beginning of this paper may be referred to again in connection with the assumption of the *basileia* and the process of de-Romanization. In 629 the term *rex-basileus*, repulsive to Roman constitutional sentiment, could return from its exile. This return was made possible by the combined forces of the Hellenistic and Christian elements, of which the second functioned as a catalyst. The first contributed the substrate of the concept and the lexeme—the more palatable Greek term which was the semantic equivalent of *rex*. But much more important was the Christian element, the new force which had been transforming the cultural and spiritual life of the Empire since the days of Constantine. By a happy coincidence, the new religion was a scriptural one whose Bible conceived of the ideal ruler as “king.” The new roots and associations of the term succeeded in inducing in the Romaioi of the Bosphorus a tolerant mood for the acceptance of the term which had been odious to the Romans of the Tiber, and the term thus returned to Roman constitutional history with a strong Christian complexion. But the retreat of the Roman element before the combined interaction of the Hellenic and the Christian could not have been effected only by the operation of these internal elements in the makeup of the Roman state. External pressure was needed to accelerate the internal *katalysis* and this pressure was provided by the hammer blows of Sasanid Iran.

#### APPENDIX A

In support of the view that 629 was the year which witnessed the formal assumption of the *basileia*, the following arguments may be advanced.

1. Of the novels issued by Heraclius, four have survived (for which, see Zepos, (*op. cit.*, [*supra*, note 4], 27, 31, 33, 36). The first two are dated A.D. 612 and 619, respectively. The inscription of the first does not have *basileus* but, instead, the traditional imperial titles in their entirety, while the inscription of the second, which must also have had them, has not survived. From this it may be inferred that *basileus* had not been formally assumed in 619, since the inscription of the third novel, which is undated but is assigned to the period 620–29, has the traditional titles but not *basileus*. The evidence of these three novels suggests that the formal assumption of the title must have taken place some time in the second decade of Heraclius' reign, within which the year 629, the presumed year of its assumption, falls.

<sup>84</sup> On the last days of the consulate, see Bréhier, *Les institutions...* (as in note 6 *supra*), 104–105. Stein argued that it was not Heraclius Novus Constantinus who was the last consul but probably his son Constans II: “Il est donc au moins probable que Constant II, le dernier empereur romain qui entra dans la ville de Rome, fut aussi le dernier à prendre le consulat en tant que magistrature éponyme de l'année civile, et que celle-ci cessa en 642, après une existence, si nous en tenons à la tradition, d'exactement onze siècles et demi” (“Post-consulat...” [as in note 3 *supra*], 896). Justinian II's interest in the consulate late in the century, reflected numismatically in his donning of the *loros*, may be explained by the same factors which have been suggested for the reappearance of such imperial titles as *Flavius* and *Augustus* after Heraclius had dropped them from the official imperial titulary (see Appendix B). For Justinian II and his consular costume, see Grierson, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 54), 79.

2. It is difficult to believe that such an important constitutional change would have taken place in the second decade of Heraclius' reign *before* the year 629, in view of the fact that that was a period of national crisis, of a life and death struggle for the Empire. It was hardly the time for constitutional changes, especially changes of this sort, which affected directly and intimately the image of the Emperor. And this was an Emperor who distinguished himself from all his predecessors since Theodosius the Great by taking the field personally (which he did after disposing of Priscus quite early in the reign), by establishing direct and personal rapport between himself and the troops, by recruiting and fashioning a new army, and, finally, by mounting the counteroffensive which left him the victor at Nineveh in 628. It simply does not make sense that the Emperor who for some twenty years of continual warfare had projected the image of a field commander should have "swapped horses in midstream" and relinquished, *while* the war still raged, the very title *autokrator-imperator* which so accurately and faithfully reflected the image he wanted to promote.

3. The more natural date for a constitutional change that did away with the military title, *autokrator*, and substituted for it the more civil *basileus* falls within the years of peace which followed the victory at Nineveh in 628 and the conclusion of the war. Such a date is 629, the year of the fourth novel, which constitutes the first extant record of the formal assumption of the title *basileus*. Since this happens also to be the first year of the peace period following the war, the presumption that this was the actual date of formal assumption is promoted to a very high degree of probability. For a discussion of the civil and military overtones of some of the imperial titles and an assessment of Heraclius' position on the peace treaty with Persia, see *supra*, pages 303–304; 305–308.

4. It is possible to detect in the *prooimion* of the novel of 629 a note which suggests that the formal assumption of the *basileia* did in fact take place in 629. The *prooimion* refers to the purple and the sceptre of kingship, ἀλουργίς, αὐτεξούσια σκήπτρα, and contrasts them with "pious action," πρᾶξις εὐσεβής, suggesting that the latter is more powerful and meaningful than the former. It is true that references to the purple and the scepter as symbols of power are common; nevertheless, no other novel contains them in its *prooimion* in the way the novel of 629 does, the same novel in whose *inscriptio* Heraclius is referred to formally as *basileus*. This suggests that the two references in the *inscriptio* and the *prooimion* are related: aware of the great honor just conferred upon him, Heraclius made a pointed reference to its symbols in a context of modesty and humility which a novel dealing with ecclesiastical legislation conveniently provided. (For the *prooimion* (see Zepos, *op. cit.* [*supra*, note 4], 36, lines 1–5).

## APPENDIX B

There is another problem related to the foregoing, namely, whether as Ostrogorsky has argued, the formal assumption of the title *basileus* entailed in fact the dropping of the other titles. These titles start to reappear side by side with *basileus* later in the century. Although it is generally granted that in spite of their reappearance they did lose the significance they had had before and lost it to the new title, *basileus*, it is necessary to discuss the problem in detail. F. Dölger formally raised the question in a long footnote in his "Die Entwicklung. . ." (as in note 3 *supra*), 987 note 12, where he suggested that these titles did not actually drop out of usage in A.D. 629, but did so only apparently, due to the work of copyists who shed them, motivated by a desire to abbreviate the long string of titles or by a piety which revolted against the paganism of some of them.

Dölger's argument is valid when it is employed to explain the complete disappearance of the imperial titles in the cases cited by him, as in the *Epanagoge*; and, for the reign of Heraclius, it is valid in the case of the novel dated A.D. 619 (Zepos, *op. cit.*, 31), where the *inscriptio* of the novel is missing *in its entirety*, a fact which might be attributed to scribal efforts or more probably to some accident in the process of transmission which the manuscripts of this particular novel went through. But it is difficult, almost impossible, to contend, as Dölger does, that the *inscriptio* of the

novel in which Heraclius formally assumed the title *basileus* falls in this category. The burden of proof lies on Dölger, but the following observations may be made in support of the view that Heraclius did in fact drop the other titles, retaining the phrase *pistos en Christo*, which appears in its plural form in the *inscriptio* of the fourth novel.

1. As has been pointed out (*supra*, p. 303), an examination of the imperial titles throughout the reign on the basis of the four novels which have survived makes clear that the shedding of the long titular formula was *gradual*. This argues in favor of a deliberate attempt to shed these titles and finally to transform the titular formula by the employment of only the phrase *pistos en Christo basileus* which is the climax of this process and which the *inscriptio* has preserved. Dölger's argument is confronted by the fact that this process of shedding was a *trend* which can be documented.

2. The shedding of the other titles is to be expected when a new title suddenly makes its appearance, a title which has been avoided scrupulously and piously in the inscriptions of formal edicts, and which now is used formally to describe the constitutional position of the ruler. *Basileus* was *not* an insignificant addition to the titular formula; it was a capacious title which previously had been considered incongruous with the titles inherited from the Roman tradition. In view of all this, it is natural to suppose that the newcomer would have entailed a reordering of the old titular formula, tantamount to a shedding of the other titles as superfluous and the employment of *basileus*, preceded by the phrase *pistos en Christo*, to reflect accurately and without adulteration the imperial image of Heraclius in 629.

3. It is clear from the sources that the other titles, *Augustus-Caesar*, were employed to designate members of the royal family (see *supra*, p. 305); this argues that these titles remained functional or became functional when applied to members of Heraclius' family. Their functionalism would have been lost or weakened if they had also been simultaneously applied to Heraclius himself. They solved for Heraclius, or so he thought, the problem of succession by reflecting the positions of the near and the far heirs to the throne.

4. The view that these titles were dropped because they offended the religious sensibilities of pious copyists can be applied with more cogency to Heraclius himself, the Crusader, as has been done in the course of this paper in connection with the title *Flavius* (see *supra*, pp. 304-305). One could add that the imperial title in its final form, *pistos en Christo basileus*, is strikingly Christian not only because of what it expresses, but because it stands alone, unencumbered by a long list of miscellaneous titles which had formerly obscured it by sheer numbers.

It is not enough to argue that these titles were in fact dropped from the *personal* titles of the ruler in 629; it is equally important to explain the phenomenon of their reappearance, which has been noted by all those who have written on the subject, but was used by Dölger to argue retroactively for their retention in A.D. 629.

a. It has already been pointed out that the titular changes effected by Heraclius were related to co-emperorship and the problem of imperial succession. Toward the end of the reign there were two *basileis*, Heraclius and Heraclius Novus Constantinus, one *Augustus*, Heracleonas, and one *Caesar*, David. But what Heraclius had hoped for (and expressed in his will) was not fulfilled. His descendants and successors tampered with the system he had devised—based on the principle of co-emperorship involving brothers—in favor of a system involving undivided sovereignty and succession by the eldest son (see *supra*, p. 316). Consequently, *Augustus* lost its function as the title of an heir to the throne, and it is not surprising to find it applied to the reigning *basileus* in the documents referred to by Dölger.

b. Another, perhaps more important, key to understanding the reappearance of these titles is the major problem Heraclius and his successors had on their hands, namely, the rise of Islam and the Arab conquests. For the thirty-one years of his reign Heraclius was almost exclusively pre-occupied with the *Pars Orientalis*. After the conclusion of the Persian War he formally assumed a title deriving from the Christian Orient to the detriment of the one whose origins were in Rome and the Latin West. But he did not anticipate that the Orient he thought he had secured would be exposed to the onslaught of Islam. The fall of Syro-Palaestina to the Arabs during the reign of Heraclius, and of the whole of North Africa during the reigns of his successors, quickly changed the situation Heraclius had restored; it brought to the foreground the crucial importance of the

West to the Heraclids, while the loss of the schismatic Oriental provinces brought about a re-orientation in ecclesiastical policy—the renunciation of Montheletism and a return to the doctrinal fold of Old Rome. It was perfectly natural for the *basileis* of Constantinople—New Rome—desiring to reaffirm their connections with the West, in order to appear to the West as good Roman emperors rather than as Prodigal Sons—truant Romaic *basileis*—to resort to the employment of titular formulae which had their origins in Old Rome and to the wearing of the costume of an office—the Consulate—which had become extinct in the seventh century.

The effects upon Byzantium of the conflict with Sasanid Iran and with Islamic Arabia tend to be confused with each other, the latter following so closely upon the heels of the former. But in the study of seventh-century Byzantium it is important to draw a line which would separate the one from the other. Failure to do so has led Dölger to argue retroactively from the latter part of the century to the earlier in his attempt to explain the reappearance of some of the imperial titles.