# Persians, Politics and Patronage

## Roman Conceptions of a Diplomatic Relationship with Sasanian Persia

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I, Sean Commons, certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution

**Abstract:** This thesis' aim is to explore how Roman authors and their portrayed subjects conceived of Rome's political relationship with Sasanian Persia. In particular, to what extent these conceptions were influenced by Roman notions and practices of 'patronage', at both a personal level and as transposed onto foreign relations as so-called 'client' or 'dependent' kingdoms. The interrelationship between these and previously explored elements of the Romano-Sasanian relationship shall be examined through a study of examples of both Roman internal political relations and existing foreign relations. It will be argued that shared practices and notions of patronage and *amicitia* could act as a cross-cultural mediator and have a demonstrable effect on the practice of diplomacy. This will be accompanied by an exploration of the persistence of dependent relationship well into Late Antiquity, demonstrating their continued pervasiveness and relevance in the period despite processes such as 'provincialisation'. Ultimately, examining the influences of interpersonal relationships like patronage and *amicitia* will provide a more nuanced understanding of Rome and Persia's political relationship.

CONTENTS

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# I INTRODUCTION

"And so the night watches were passed under the burden of arms, while the hills re-echoed from the shouts rising from both sides, as our men praised the power of Constantius Caesar as lord of the world and the universe, and the Persians called Sapor 'saansaan' and 'pirosen' which being interpreted is 'king of kings' and 'victor in wars.'

- Ammianus Marcellinus, 19.2.11.

The relationship between Rome and Sasanian Persia represents one of the most unique and significant forces of change for the Mediterranean world, throughout the first millennium CE. Ammianus, writing above in the fourth century, encapsulates the rivalry that would so come to dominate that relationship, while also hinting at the fundamentally irreconcilable ideologies that drove it. As a consistently pervasive subject of both ancient and modern scholarship, their relationship has been explored and portrayed in the pursuit of everything from questions of imperialism to examinations of orientalism. In the field of Roman history, the role of that relationship in the diplomacy, economics and military actions of the Roman world has featured heavily in any works dealing with the Roman East. Recent works have also been concerned with adopting a wider perspective, one that examines their relationship on its own rights and explores its impact beyond Graeco-Roman antiquity, rejecting the study of Sasanian Persia as peripheral to that of Rome.[1] As the cross-cultural interaction between them has received increasing attention, it has become clear that their political relationship is unique from other examples of Roman foreign relations in many ways; most significantly, in Rome and Persia's mutual development of a sophisticated diplomatic discourse and shared notions of kingship and legitimacy.

This thesis focuses on how the construction and negotiation of that relationship was actually conceived of, and portrayed by, Roman authors and contemporaries. In particular, to what extent those conceptions were influenced by the notions and practice of 'patronage' and *amicitia*, both at an interpersonal level and as transposed onto notions of indirect rule. In this, it will be drawing from the influence of works that engage with constructivism and the idea that aspects of international relations could be

[1] e.g. B. Dignas, E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 2.

socially constructed and influenced.[2] Patronage and *amicitia* were both integral parts of the Roman world, different types of personal-relationship with which to organise society. Sociological counterparts can also be found in most cultures around the world, historical or otherwise, including Sasanian Persia.

It will be argued throughout, that the historical and contemporary practise of forming dependent relationships had a formative effect on how Rome came to conceive, coexist with and reconcile a Sasanian Persia, which, despite close diplomatic ties and the mutual recognition of legitimacy, remained the *natio molestissima* for Rome until its downfall.[3] To this end, the thesis will begin with a synthesised review of relevant literature from both the study of Rome and Persia's relationship as part of Roman frontier studies and foreign relations, as well as the study of patronage in the Roman world (II). Underlying this is a discussion of methodology and selection of sources, and how they unite what are often otherwise two quite distinct research areas. The particular use and implementation of patronage, as a term and concept within this thesis, will also need to be examined further (III). In particular it seeks to address recent challenges to interstate models of *clinetela*, and argues for the use of a paradigm that presents Roman relationships as a spectrum including both 'patronage' and *amicitia*; one that explains the fluidity with which those relationships could change on both a personal and interstate level. This will set the stage for exploring the initial stages of Rome and Sasanian Persia's relationship, especially the influence of historical conceptions (IV). The role these played as a field of debate between the two empires is explored, such as claims of an Achaemenid legacy or a perceived continuity with Parthia. Also discussed is the conceptual use of patronage and dependency to reconcile ideologies in the face of a changing world. Ultimately it will provide a foundation from which to explore the more developed conceptions of the latter part of Rome and Persia's political relationship. Following is a slight digression, which is used to demonstrate the persistence of patronage and dependent relationships in the sixth century despite emphasis in modern scholarship to the opposite effect. Epitomised by Rome and Persia's Arab allies, who had a special influence on how both empires conceived of each other and the development of their own relationship, it will also examine how their use equated to a continuation of imperial client management (V). The continued

[2] P. Burton, *Friendship and Empire: Roman Diplomacy and Imperialism in the Middle Republic (353-146BC)* (Cambridge 2011), pp. 16-18.
[3] Dignas, Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, p. 241; Amm. 23.5.19.

practice of dependent relationships on an interstate level, despite provincalisation, will also demonstrate its persistence as social *habitus* in the minds of contemporary Romans (VI). Finally, it will be argued that the changing nature of Roman conceptions was intimately bound to the interaction and practice of personal relationships (VII).

Ultimately, studying the latter's role in mediating and influencing cross-cultural exchange will allow us to form a more nuanced understanding of Rome and Persia's political relationship. In particular, how shouts of universal dominance, echoing from the hills of both sides, could be maintained in the face of a growing need for the mutual recognition of sovereignty by both emperors and shahanshahs.

# II LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The contact and exchange between the Roman or Mediterranean world and the 'Near East' is a persistently stalwart subject among ancient historians. For Roman historians in particular, both ancient and modern, one cannot overstate the impact of Rome's perennial relationship with the eponymous 'Persians'. From representations in historiography and the emergent rivalry between Rome and Parthia, to the sustained development of a mutual diplomatic discourse with Sasanian Persia; the ultimate impact of their cross-cultural, political and military exchange was profound for all participants.

Ultimately, at the broadest level, this thesis is exploring how Roman authors conceived of Rome and Sasanian Persia's political relationship. This relationship is saddled, as it were, between the traditional periods of ancient and medieval, in 'late antiquity'. Needless to say, such a pivotal relationship has seen a multitude of studies with a myriad of approaches; everything from close examinations of individual or localized elements of said relationship, to attempts at incorporating it as a whole into grand narratives of Roman policy or Late Antiquity.[1]

The current study is primarily focused on the 'socio-political' nature of their relationship; on how certain social practices, i.e. 'patronage' and '*amicitia*', influenced Roman conceptions of that relationship and the character of international or inter-polity relations. Here we can also see two of the thesis' central constraints; namely, the restriction to, or emphasis on, the 'conceptual' and largely limiting the study thereof to Roman sources. Both constraints will be discussed in more depth below, in accordance with the selection of a research sample and the suitability of using a comparative approach regarding the influence of patronage. Whilst the focus on the 'socio-political' is somewhat dictated by the available evidence, some more recent studies have demonstrated how arbitrary such a distinction can be, and pertinent elements of a cultural and religious nature will also be drawn on.[2] By examining how Roman conceptions were informed by both the practice of personal patronage, and as it was conceptually linked with methods of indirect rule (e.g. 'client' or 'dependent' kingdoms), this thesis will also be drawing on a growing number of works which place

[1] A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602* (Oxford, 1964); A. Cameron , *The Later Roman Empire 284-430* (Cambridge, 1993); P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1989); et al
[2] E.g. M.P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, 2009); in his incorporation and integration of social, political, cultural and military topics in the study of cross-cultural contact.

themselves within a constructivist framework.[3] The use of such a framework, especially as related to how it is employed in the study of modern International Relations (IR), will need some further discussion, and ultimately this thesis will limit itself to engaging with particular elements of constructivism, for reasons explored below.

This study is engaging in two particular areas, each with their own voluminous, often distinct historiography. These are the study of 'patronage', both Roman and its sociological counterpart, and the Roman-Sasanian relationship. As this will obviously be quite multifaceted, it will largely be the underlying methodology that unites what could otherwise be seen as quite disparate elements and chapters. The integration of patronage as an influential element in their relationship is also intimately connected to that methodology, particularly to the constructivist idea that social and historical practice could have constitutive effects on IR. Therefore discussion of this methodology will be synthesized with the following review of relevant works from each field. Hopefully this will help elucidate their relation to each other with regards to the foci and construction of the study whilst avoiding any superfluous repetition.

## *2.1 - Rome and Sasanian Persia*

As has been established, Roman and Sasanian Persia's relationship is the central subject of this study. Historiographically speaking, their relationship has most commonly been studied as part of Rome's larger frontier studies and foreign relations, at least in the western tradition of scholarship. As we will see below, it is only relatively recently that their relationship has begun to be studied in its own right, not as something ancillary to the study of, say, Roman foreign policy or the Roman East, but as something that stood and developed on its own. The study of Roman frontiers and foreign relations is a long-established field, especially, as one scholar puts it, the study of military frontiers as manifestations of Roman political frontiers.[4] It is also one of the most disparate, constantly developing and contested, though some common trends can

[3] P. Burton, *Friendship and Empire: Roman Diplomacy and Imperialism in the Middle Republic (353-146BC)* (Cambridge 2011); M. Birdal, *The Holy Roman Empire and the Ottomans. From Global Imperial Power to the Aboslute States* (London, 2011); et al

[4] P. Freeman, 'Review - Roman Frontier Studies: What's New? Frontières d'empire. Nature et signification des frontières romaines by P. Brun; S. van der Leeuw; C. R. Whittaker; The Western Frontiers of Imperial Rome by S. K. Drummond; L. H. Nelson; Frontiers of the Roman Empire. A Social and Economic Study by C. R. Whittaker', *Britannia* 27 (1996), p. 465.

be discerned. The more recent wave of interest and resurgence in frontier studies owes a lot to Luttwak's, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*.[5] While criticized for some errors of content, his broad approach to what had often been the domain of military historians, effectively challenged Roman historians to rethink how frontiers were defined and what role they played.[6] This included an argument for a 'defence in depth' view of frontiers, which has heavily influenced the current tendency to see frontiers as zones (beyond military purpose) rather than linear borderlines.

This is exemplified in later works like that of Whittaker's, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire* or Isaac's, *The Limits of Empire*, in which rose new interpretations of sovereignty and purpose, to some extent in response to the imperialistic and colonial framework of older frontier studies.[7] With the integration of the study of frontiers and foreign policy there has also always been (as elsewhere in the study of Roman history) a tendency to demarcate between East and West, especially visible in the last two decades with numerous works published under similarly demarcated titles like "The Roman Eastern Frontier". [8] A few monumentally ambitious works aside, this is supported by two trends of methodology and content. Firstly, to look at frontiers in isolation and secondly, to look at them comparatively; both methods have merits and detractions.[9]

For one, using a comparative framework to study frontiers and the relationships across them can risk homogenising what were in reality distinctly individual and localised areas of contact and exchange.[10] Yet on the other hand, refusing to do so and over-localising a study restricts what can be inferred about any general theories of 'frontier' or 'foreign' policy, stemming from a centralised bureaucracy; though some

[5] E. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century AD to the Third* (Baltimore, 1976).
[6] J.G. Crow, 'Through Western Eyes: A Review of Recent Publications on Rome's Eastern Frontiers. The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East by B. Isaac; Rome's Desert Frontier from the Air by D. Kennedy; D. Riley; The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire, Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at Ankara in September 1988 by D. H. French; C. S. Lightfoot', *Britannia* 23 (1992), p. 335.
[7] C.R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1994); B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: the Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, 1990); e.g. works that stressed an overly hostile imperial acculturation, and 'Romanisation' of peoples on the peripheries.
[8] E.g. S.K. Drummond, *The Western Frontiers of Imperial Rome* (New York, 1994); G. Greatrex & S.N.C. Lieu, *The Roman Easter Frontier and the Persian Wars, 363-630* (London, 2002); et al.
[9] E.g. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*; A.D. Lee, *Information and Frontiers: Roman foreign relations in Late Antiquity* (New York, 1993); R.C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (Leeds, 1992); etc.
[10] Freeman, 'Review - Roman Frontier Studies: What's New?', p. 469.

scholars circumvent this by arguing against the existence of any such theories.[11] Often the method chosen is determined by whether a work's focus is a frontier itself (and all social, economic, political and cultural factors that locality entails), or a more abstract concept stemming from an eponymous 'Rome', such as 'Roman policy' or 'Roman relations'. As will be demonstrated below, much the same can be said for approaches to the study of patronage, and more often than not arriving at useful results is a matter of walking a fine line between the two.

In many ways study of the Roman-Sasanian relationship has benefitted from both schools due to its unique nature amidst Rome's foreign relations. It is not hard to find seminal works that try and place this relationship in the wider context of said foreign relations, such as Fergus Millar's collation of papers, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East* or A.D. Lee's, *Information and Frontiers*; most using some form of comparative approach.[12] More recently a number of works have focused on the relationship largely as it stood and developed on its own, such as the informative *Two Eyes of the Earth* by M.P. Canepa and B. Dignas and E. Winter's *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*.[13] This focus on the relationship itself follows the publishing of a number of source books like those by S. Lieu, M. Dodgeon and G.Greatrex;[14] all of which invaluably make accessible the primary sources of what has, traditionally, been a very language intensive research area (sometimes to an inhibitive extent).

Along with an ever increasing corpus of archaeological evidence, this increased accessibility has also resulted in an emergent desire in the current scholarship to uncover a 'Sasanian side' to what has traditionally been approached with a very 'Roman-centric' view. This is exemplified by Dignas and Winter's work, which stresses the late stage formalisation of Rome and Persia's relationship and sees the creation of a shared diplomatic discourse as a peaceful means of relieving tensions between different cultures. They treat the development of this discourse and the recognition of legitimate sovereignty by both empires as an ideological recognition of

[11] *ibid*., p. 469.
[12] F. Millar, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East* (London, 2004). See also, P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (London, 1971).
[13] B. Dignas, E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge, 2007).
[14] Greatrex & Lieu, *The Roman Easter Frontier and the Persian Wars*; S.N.C. Lieu & M.H. Dodgeon, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, 226-363* (London, 1991).

equal status between empires.[15] Others such as M. Whitby have argued for more subtle interpretations of their diplomatic dealings in lieu of any straightforward ideas of mutual recognition, a point this thesis seeks to address.[16]

The scarcity and one-sided nature of the literary evidence has also led to the implementation and integration of more art-historical approaches, such as Canepa's work on the shared art and ritual of kingship between the two powers.[17] Canepa in particular has emphasised a cross-cultural approach which exceeds the boundaries of the Mediterranean, comparing features of socio-political and cultural exchange between not only 'elites' of Rome and Persia, but through central Asia to Sui-Tang China.[18] It is only relatively recently that such an emphasis on the cross-cultural interaction of Rome and Sasanian Persia has begun to receive such sustained scholarly attention.[19] Examining the role of personal relationships in Roman social and political life, whether 'patron-client' or *amicitia*, will be building on Canepa's emphasis on the importance of cross-cultural interaction between courts and elites. The aim will be to demonstrate how they could serve as a method of social integration between and beyond different political systems and cultures.

Of similar importance to the study of Roman-Persian relations is their relationship with intermediaries, such as their Arab allies. In particular the sixth century Jafnids and Nasrids, who represent another under-represented aspect of the Late Antique Roman world.[20] While they have featured in more general works on Arabs, their most prominent treatment in the past few decades has been in the multi-volume study of Irfan Shahid and more recently Greg Fischer.[21] Their relationship as

[15] B. Dignas, E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*; a similar aim can be seen with the works of many Iranian scholars such as T. Daryaee, such as his 'The Construction of the Past in Late Antique Persia', *Historia Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 55, H. 4 (2006), pp. 493-503; and 'The Fall of the Sasanian Empire to the Arab Muslims: From *Two Centuries of Silence* to *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: the Partho-Sasanian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran*', *Journal of Persianate Studies* 3 (2010), pp. 239-254.
[16] M. Whitby. 'Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity. Neighbours and Rivals by B. Dignas; E. Winter', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 98 (2008), pp. 271-272.
[17] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*.
[18] E.g. M.P. Canepa, 'Distant Displays of Power: Understanding cross-cultural interaction among the elites of Rome, Sasanian Iran, and Sui-Tang China', *Ars Orientalis* 38 (2010), pp. 121-154.
[19] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 2.
[20] G. Fischer, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2011), p. vi.
[21] I. Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs* (Washington, 1984); *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington, 1995); *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, 2 vols (Washington, 1995, 2002, and 2010). Shahid's study is aimed at updating and re-working Theodor Nödeke's study, *Die Ghassanischen Fürsten aus dem Hause Gafnas* (Berlin, 1887).

dependents of Rome and Sasanian Persia will provide an important avenue of comparison for the contemporary practice of patronage, as will their impact on the development of Rome and Persia's political relationship.

### *2.2 - Patronage*

While the primary focus of the study is on the conceptions of Roman sources, it is hoped that by examining the role of personal relationships in Roman social and political life, framed in terms of a spectrum of patronage and *amicitia*, that it can be demonstrated, among other things, as having served as a method of social integration, not only within the Roman world but also between and beyond different political systems and cultures.

To this affect, it will be necessary to explore how patronage, particularly 'individual' and 'state' patronage, functioned in late antique Rome; a period in which it has seen markedly less study than say the Principate or Republic. The study of patronage has traditionally formed an integral part of the discipline and remained a pervasive element of political studies of the Republic and Early Empire, owing much to the prosopographical method as championed by Ronald Syme and his successors.[22] Over the years, its study has gradually moved away from the more legalistic interpretation of Mommsen, to encompass broader social and political approaches.[23] In itself this change reflects recognition of the constantly developing nature of patron-client relationships within Roman society; somewhat rejecting the monopolization of patronage by the Principate as portrayed in Millar's, *The Emperor on the Roman World*, and is probably best encapsulated in Ste Croix's work on *Suffragium*.[24]

Following the more legalistic interpretation of highly visible Republican patronage, was a common trend among some social historians to see personal patronage as becoming insignificant in the early Empire, instead emphasizing the role of

[22] R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939).
[23] J. Rich, 'Patronage and interstate relations', in W. Hadrill, *Patronage in Ancient Society* (London, 1989), p. 118.
[24] F. Millar, *The Emperor on the Roman World 31 BC-AD 337* (London, 1977); G.E.M. de Ste Croix, 'Suffragium: from vote to patronage', *British Journal of Sociology* 5 (1954), pp. 33-48.

municipal patronage before the later development of rural patronage.[25] Concurrently, another school of thought has argued for the persistence of personal patronage, perhaps the most famous (or infamous) proponent being the aforementioned Ronald Syme and his *Roman Revolution*.[26] His prosopographical method and view of history as the 'history of individuals' has had its fair share of detractors and proponents, but it has been inarguably influential in the creation of a number of prosopospographical studies from all periods of the Roman world.[27] While these in themselves do not necessarily address the particular social practice of personal patronage, they have been used in a number of works that do; such as, Richard Saller's, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire*, Koenraad Verboven's, *The Economy of Friends: Economic Aspects of Amicitia and Patronage in the Late Republic* and Wallace-Hadrill's, *Patronage in Ancient Society*.[28] As was demonstrated with the case of frontier studies above, many of these have benefitted by being placed in a comparative framework, often as a means of overcoming scarce evidence, which is a particular problem of this thesis' period of question, ca. 224-651 CE.

Many of the criticisms leveled against such approaches revolve around the risk of over generalising any models of interpretations, arriving at definitions of patronage that are so broad as to be useless, or as to be too mechanistic in political analysis.[29] It is therefore necessary to distinguish between and study both the structure and ideology of 'patronage', to differentiate between 'patronage' and 'clientage' as sociological concepts and the distinctly Roman concepts of '*patronicium*' and '*clientela*'.[30] This has been assisted in recent decades by interdisciplinary works like the sociological study of Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, clients and friends*.[31] In particular these have redefined many questions of Roman patronage along sociological lines rather than simply maintaining legal or political interpretations; something effectively carried on by

[25] R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations, 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven, 1974); L. Harmand, *Un asoect social et politique du monde romain: Le patronat sur les collectivites des origins au Bas-Empire* (Paris, 1957); P. Petit, *Pax Romana*, transl., J. Willis (London, 1965), p. 232; J. Gage, *Les classes sociales dans l'Empire romain* (Paris, 1964), p. 77.
[26] R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939).
[27] E.g. cf. A. Cameron, *Fifty Years of Prosopography: The Later Roman Empire, Byzantium and Beyond* (Oxford, 2003); et al.
[28] K. Verboven, *The Economy of Friends. Economic Aspects of Amicitia and Patronage in the Late Republic* (Brussels, 2002).
[29] R. Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 1-2; cf. n. 21
[30] Verboven, *The Economy of Friends* p. 51; in response to criticism raised by F. Millar, 'The Political Character of the Classical Roman Republic', *Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984), pp.63-74.
[31] S.N. Eisenstadt, L. Roniger, *Patrons, clients and friends: Interpersonal relations and the structure of trust in society* (Cambridge, 1984).

Wallace-Hadrill's, *Patronage in Ancient Society*. Such a differentiation will also be integral to the current work, primarily because of the changing visibility and nature of patronage in our later sources.

This is just as true for the study of patronage as transposed onto interstate relations. While the legalistic interpretation of foreign *clientele* first proposed by Mommsen came to be rightly criticised, the model as a whole has remained influential, especially that developed by E. Badian in his *Foreign Clientelae*.[32] In particular he argued that to speak of foreign relations in such a way was not to simply use metaphors, as many of his later critiques would argue.[33] John Rich's, *Patronage and Interstate Relations*, in particular, addresses many of those critiques and fully elucidates the ambiguity inherent in much of the later practice of Roman patronage and its associated language.[34] Such a recognition is particularly pertinent to its study regarding Rome and Sasanian Persia, for this thesis is not seeking to (inaccurately) depict their relationship as actually being one of patron-client, but rather to explore the influences and tensions, historical and otherwise, that such relationships from elsewhere in the Roman world had on it.

The practice of patronage transposed onto interstate relations has been continued in more recent studies with constant reiteration of the anthropomorphised nature of interstate, and in particular, inter-polis relations in the ancient Graeco-Roman world.[35] It is this latter element that is core to understanding the selection of patronage as one of the subjects of this study. Whilst recent works like that of Paul Burton have questioned whether the traditional *Clientele* paradigm would be better reinterpreted as one of interstate *Amicitia*, there remains a consensus that the anthropomorphization of Roman foreign relations (not just in modern scholarship, but by the Romans themselves) necessitates the study of 'unit-level' factors.[36] These can range from notions of honour and morality, to emotion and social practice; often as held by an aggregation of

[32] E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae (264-70 B.C.)* (Oxford, 1958).
[33] Cf. W.V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327-70 B.C.* (Oxford, 1979), p. 135 n. 2; D.C. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: the Character of the Client Kingship* (London, 1984), pp, 23, 29-30.
[34] J. Rich, 'Patronage and Interstate Relations in the Roman republic', in Hadrill, *Patronage in Ancient Society*, pp. 117-135.
[35] Badian, *Foreign Clientelae (264-70B.C.)*; J. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World*, (Oxford, 2001), p. 80; P. Low, *Interstate Relations in Classical Greece: Morality and Power*. (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 40-54.
[36] Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, p. 22.

participating individuals.[37] Essentially, this supports and is related to the notion that Roman interaction with foreign people and polities was an extension of its domestic relations, and that it was influenced by more than simple self interest, as is posited by more realist approaches.[38] The prominence of patronage in Roman domestic political relations, therefore, makes it a clear candidate for study with regards to Rome's foreign relations.

Comprehensive study of patronage as a method of indirect rule has traditionally been restricted to the Republican period, primarily because of the visibility or prominence of Rome's so called 'client' kingdoms'. By the early imperial period, and the later subject period of this thesis, many if not most of these kingdoms had been nominally annexed into the Empire as provinces. Similarly, as demonstrated by Saller, the language of patronage in both literature and diplomacy is subsumed, in part by that of friendship, and the growth of an imperial bureaucracy.[39]

It will be argued throughout this study that this does not equate to the disappearance of patronage as a social practice, but rather a redefinition of its role and place. This redefinition will include an attempt at reconciling the various interstate paradigms of *clientele* and *amicitia*, to demonstrate that they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.[40] Such a redefinition will emphasise the persistence of patronage, both as defined by the Romans and as a modern sociological concept, at much later dates then the majority of scholarship dealing with it addresses. In effect, this makes patronage a much more significant factor when examining Rome and Persia's political relationship. An immediate criticism could be that their political relationship was never actually one of client and patron. Thus the thesis' focus on conceptions and how they are influenced, not on the practical reality of their relationship; although it will be argued these conceptions did have a demonstrable impact on diplomacy between the two empires. If the persistence and importance of patronage (in its various forms and functions) in the late Roman Empire is recognised, and keeping in mind the tenets of

[37] *ibid*. p. 22.
[38] Cf. A. Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East: From Anarchy to Hierarchy in the Hellenistic Mediterranean, 230–170 BC* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 230-231.
[39] E.g. R. Saller, 'Patronage and friendship in early imperial Rome: drawing the distinction' in W. Hadrill, *Patronage in Ancient Society* (London, 1989), pp. 48-61.
[40] For a similar approach to the two cf. K. Verboven, *The Economy of Friends. Economic Aspects of Amicitia and Patronage in the Late Republic* (Bruxelles, 2002).

constructivism, it follows that its influence on the individuals and authors who build and take part in that relationship needs to be studied.

A comparative approach is inherently necessary for such an undertaking; both between similar political relationships and instances of 'clientage' or 'dependency' in interstate relations, but also between the relationships of the individuals involved. Syme was by no means the first to conceive of political interaction as inherently taking place between individuals, and it is clear that many ancient authors held much the same view.[41] Therefore examining both levels of relation is required if an accurate picture of their influence on conceptions of Rome and Persia's relationship, by those authors and contemporaries, is to be made. In effect it is an attempt to complement studies such as Canepa's and Dignas and Winters'. To add another strand of nuance to our understanding of their relationship: through, for example, examining 'patronage' as the practical application of universal ideologies, or whether similar sociological concepts of the practice served as a cross-cultural mediator and method of integration.

## *2.3 - Selection of Sources*

As mentioned above, while this thesis is examining an inter-polity relationship, it is primarily focused on the conceptions of Roman authors. The selection and use of evidence will obviously reflect this, with the large majority belonging to various traditions of Graeco-Roman literature, from histories like those of Procopius and Ammianus, to the more diplomatically orientated Peter the Patrician and the chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor. [42] The decision to limit the current study to mainly Roman sources requires some explanation, as it runs somewhat counter to recent trends in how scholars have approached the relationship between Rome and Persia.[43] Many of these recent works have laudably stressed a holistic approach to the available evidence; to utilise what archaeological, iconographic and numismatic evidence is available to us

[41] E.g. Sir Lewis Namier's *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London, 1929); and the portrayal of politics being carried out between individuals in the works of Procopius.
[42] E.g. Procopius, *De Bellis*; Ammianus, *Res Gestae*.
[43] Such as M.P. Canepa, *Two Eyes of the Earth Art and Ritual Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Leeds, 2009); B. Dignas and E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge, 2007).

and attempt to provide a balanced depiction of Rome and Persia's relationship, one that transcends the solitary confines of Roman or Iranian literary traditions.[44]

The primary reason such an approach is untenable for the purpose of this thesis, is one of scope and subject. The practice and effects of patronage are most visible in literary evidence, the most relevant and extant being of 'Roman' origin in Greek and Latin texts. Our literary evidence from the Sasanian Empire is much more limited, or has been transmitted to us through the later Arabic tradition. This in itself does not make it impossible to study with regards to patronage, but it would be better suited to a later study. Iconographic evidence will be used from non-Roman sources such as reliefs like the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*. This is primarily for reasons of synthesis, which will be addressed below, but essentially is to complement the exploration of how the effects of conceptions of patronage were transmitted or adopted across the political relationship.

The actual selection of Roman authors and sources is dependent on a number of factors. One is availability. With regards to the political relationship between Rome and Sasanian Persia, for various periods of its length we have only a few primary sources, in which case they will obviously take precedence.[45] Sources that directly address the creation of treaties between the two will be examined, while a representative sampling of the major authors of the period will also be taken, so as to provide a somewhat aggregated idea of what 'Roman' conceptions of the relationship were, but also how they could vary. Availability is also an issue regarding sources that directly address the issue of patronage. The aforementioned neglect of 'patronal' language in later sources, at least in comparison to its visibility in the late Republic and early Empire, means that sources will also have to be chosen utilizing its more sociological definition, rather than the stringent Roman one. This will also be complimented by slightly more indirect approaches, such as comparing historical practices of patronage with its less visible presence in our later sources.

The remaining selection of evidence and the criteria thereof, is related to the thesis' utlisation of a comparative methodology. Comparative approaches are common

[44] For instance cf. Philippe Gignoux's hierarchy of evidence in; 'Problemes de distinction et de priorite des sources', *Prolegomena to the Sources on the History of Pre-Islamic Central Asia,* ed. J. Harmatta (Budapest, 1979), pp. 137-141.
[45] E.g. Ammianus, Zozimus, Themistius and Procopius.

in both the study of Roman frontiers and patronage. In the case of the former, they often allow us to surmount the scarce nature of much of our evidence, or in some cases ostensibly postulate frontier 'theories' or notions of 'foreign policy'.[46] They have been criticised by the likes of Moses Finley for sometimes running the risk of homogenising what would otherwise be very localised phenomenon.[47] It is not this thesis' purpose to argue for any kind of unified Roman foreign policy. Rather, it is to recognise that the agents and actors taking part in Roman-Sasanian relations were influenced by other examples and practices of Roman political relations, be they removed geographically, such as along the Rhine and Danube, or temporally, such as with Rome's historical interaction with Parthia. Therefore sources and examples will be drawn that best (and most visibly) illustrate the impact of 'patronage' on the foreign political stage, such as with Arab *phylarchs* and the Caucasus region. These examples will be at varying levels; between polities, and personal patronage involving non-Romans, both of which had a role in influencing our authors' conceptions.

[46] C. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic study* (Baltimore, 1994), p. 9.
[47] Philip Freeman, 'Review - Roman Frontier Studies: What's New? Frontières d'empire. Nature et signification des frontières romaines by P. Brun; S. van der Leeuw; C. R. Whittaker; The Western Frontiers of Imperial Rome by S. K. Drummond; L. H. Nelson; Frontiers of the Roman Empire. A Social and Economic Study by C. R. Whittaker', *Britannia* 27 (1996), p. 465.

## III RECONCILING PATRONAGE AND *AMICITIA*

As has likely been gathered from the above literature review, much of the contention and debate in the study of patronage has typically revolved around defining or redefining the term itself. Whilst an overview of the sub-discipline's historiography has been given, it remains to briefly explain how the term and practice are actually being defined and used in this study. Rather than re-covering its entire development, instead attention will be given to the more recent and relevant works that directly impact this thesis; especially those addressing and trying to reconcile the concepts of patronage and *amicitia*, such as R. Saller and P. Burton.[1] Of central importance is the idea of processual development, both in the practice and conception of patronage and *amicitia* from the Republic to Late Empire, and their analysis thereof. So too will be how a link is created between interpersonal relationships (whether 'patronage' or '*amicitia'*) and methods of indirect rule (whether utlising Badian's 'client kingdom' paradigm or Burton's '*amicitia*' paradigm). Hopefully by achieving greater reconciliation between these oft conflicting interpretations of Roman relations and expressions of imperialism, both of which hold their own merits and detractions, we will ultimately be able to achieve a more nuanced understanding of Roman foreign relations in Late Antiquity. Before we explore how such a paradigm will be used by this thesis however, it is perhaps necessary to explain why these concepts and practices need reconciliation in the first place.

Until recently, most works on patronage held to some form of the definition put forward by Saller, based on Boissevain, and modified by Garnsey and Woolf.[2] Namely, that patronage as a social relationship is reciprocal, personal, asymmetrical, voluntary and extra-legal.[3] Important for our current purposes, is Saller's claim that it is the element of asymmetry between patron and client which differentiates their relationship

[1] Primarily R. Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge, 1982); Saller, 'Patronage and friendship in early imperial Rome: drawing the distinction', in A. Wallace-Hadrill (ed), *Patronage in Ancient Society* (London 1989); P. Burton, *Friendship and Empire: Roman Diplomacy and Imperialism in the Middle Republic (353-146 BC)* (Cambridge, 2011).
[2] Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Empire*, pp. 1-2.; J. Boissevain, 'Patronage in Sicily', *Man* n.s.1 (1966), pp. 18-33; P. Garnsey and G. Woolf, 'Patronage of the rural poor in the Roman world', in Wallace-Hadrill (ed), *Patronage in Ancient Society*, pp. 164-167.
[3] For the addition of 'extra-legal' see also, P. Millet, 'Patronage and its Avoidance in Classical Athens', in Wallace-Hadrill (ed), *Patronage in Ancient Society*, pp. 15-16. It should be noted that the term isn't synonymous with illegal, though typically how 'subversive' the practice of patronage is seen as, by a central authority or institution, will depend on how integrated it is with said authority or institution.

from one of friendship.[4] For as Burton points out, all the other elements of Saller's definition are shared by definitions of friendship.[5] He continues however, by arguing (convincingly) that friendships can be, and often are, asymmetrical.[6] This raises problems for Saller's definition, in that all friendships other than those between equals, would then be counted as examples of patronage.[7] There is a similar issue with any element of utility in these types of relationships. It is inherent to patronage, and while it finds no place in the idealised *virtus*-based friendship of Cicero or Seneca, it is without a doubt a major element in the actual practice of Roman *amicitia*.[8] In addition, essential to both types of relationship is the concept of *fides*, the quintessential moral bond found in all domestic Roman relationships.[9] While in general, the actual quality of the *fides* between those involved in bonds of patronage and *amicitia* may have differed, in our sources they appear very similar, to the point that on its own the quality of a single example of *fides* cannot tell us what a particular relationship is.[10] Such a conclusion can be reached, however, if the dynamics of the relationship are analyzed processually (i.e. evidence for the quality of *fides* in a relationship over time), something the nature of our evidence rarely allows.

How then, are we to distinguish between patronage and *amicitia*? Burton's response to this problem is to propose another mark of friendship, closely related to

[4] Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire*, pp. 1, 11-15.
[5] Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, pp. 30-31.
[6] This is largely based on two surveys of modern scholarship; J.M. Reisman, 'Adult Friendships', in S. Duck and R. Gilmour (eds), *Personal Relationships 2: Developing Personal Relationships* (London, 1981), pp. 98-100, 1012-104; K.E. Davis and M.J. Todd, 'Assessing Friendship: Prototypes, Paradigm Cases and Relationship Description', in S. Duck and D. Perlman (eds), *Understanding Personal Relationships: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (London, 1985), p. 21.
[7] Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, p. 32; cf. also C. Eilers, *Roman Patrons of Greek Cities* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 6-7.
[8] Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, p. 52. Most modern scholarship on friendship argues that all are formed through a combination of participants seeking similarity and utility; e.g. C. Williams, 'Friends of the Roman People: Some Remarks on the Language of *amicitia*', in A. Coskun (ed), *Freundschaft und Gefolgschaft in den ausw¨artigen Beziehungen der R¨omer (2. Jahrhundert v. Chr. – 1. Jahrhundert n. Chr.)* (Frankfurt, 2008), p. 34; M. Slote, *Morals From Motives* (Oxford, 2001), p. 12; J.O. Grunebaum, *Friendship: Liberty, Equality, and Utility* (Albany, 2003), pp. 64-65.
[9] The actual definition and particulars of *fides* carries its own extensive body of literature and debate, and fully engaging with it is beyond the scope of this thesis. A good introduction can be found, however, in works such as; E. Badian, *Foreign Clinetelae (264-70BC)* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 1-2; P.A. Brunt, '*Amicitia* in the Late Republic", *PCPS 191* (1965), p. 7; N. Rouland, *Pouvoir politique et dépendence personnelle dans l'antiquité romaine: Genèse et rôle des rapports de clientèle* (Brussels, 1979), .pp. 104-105; R. Heinze, '*Fides*', *Hermes* 64 (1929), pp. 140-166. For primary sources see Cicero, *Off*. 1.23; Cicero, *De Am*. 65-66, 88; et al.
[10] Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, p. 41.

trust or *fides*; candor.[11] As a signifier of intimacy, he argues that candor essentially equates to mutual freedom of expression; to exchanging "counsel, conversation, encouragement, consolation, and yes, sometimes even reproaches".[12] To a large extent, this is a good mark of differentiating the two. While at times he may emphasise a more extreme conception of patronage, one that relies primarily on the dependence of *clientela* and lacks most of the qualities of *amicitia*, ultimately it is true that the level of intimacy or candor differs between the two types of relationship.[13] Do we, then, have our method of distinguishing between patronage and *amicitia*? Burton uses two scenarios from Plutarch's *Life of Cato* and a fragment of the poet Ennius to demonstrate just how different levels of portrayed candor can indeed provide clues to the nature of a relationship.[14]

Yet it seems that here Burton has overlooked his own support for a processual approach. While the level of candor in a single episode from our sources can provide important hints as to the 'type' of a relationship, candor itself is not an absolute or immutable quality. Like many of our other qualities of patronage and *amicitia*; reciprocity, asymmetry, voluntary involvement; the level of candor in any relationship is variable over time. How much one party gives or provides to another, whether in physical goods, services or symbolic capital, can change depending on the shifting dynamics of a relationship. For instance, this could be the result of a change in the respective hierarchical positions of the parties; an increase or decrease in their relative asymmetry, brought on by environmental influences or advancement in society.[15] Even the voluntary element of entering into a relationship is flexible; perhaps circumstance limits the choice of a prospective client, forcing them into 'voluntarily' entering a relationship they would otherwise avoid.[16] The same can be said of a relationship's candor. The level of said candor, and by extension its intimacy, are just as subject to change; whether strengthening over time and shared experience, or weakening due to factors such as physical distance or falling-out. Following this line of thought, the level

[11] *ibid*., pp. 41-45; P. Burton, '*Clientela* or *Amicitia*? Modeling Roman International Behavior in the Middle Republic (264–146 BC)', *Klios* 85 (2003), pp. 345-346; S. Duck, *Personal Relations and Personal Constructs: A Study of Friendship Formation* (New York, 1983), pp. 69-70.
[12] Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, p. 42; Cicero, *Off*. 1.58.
[13] D. Konstan, 'Patrons and Friends', *Classical Philology* 90 (1995), p. 336; P. White, *Promised Verse: Poets in the Society of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 30.
[14] Plut. *Cat. Mai*. 24.2–4; Enn. *Ann*. frs. 268–286 S.
[15] Cf. P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, (trans.) R. Nice (Calif, 1990), pp. 122-123.
[16] Cf. J. Rich, 'Patronage and Interstate Relations', in *Patronage in Ancient Society* (ed) W. Hadrill (1989), pp.117-135; for a discussion of how terms of *clientela* could remain conceptually linked with the involuntary initialization of Roman foreign relations, e.g. through *deditio*.

of candor in a specific scenario, such as those above, can be used to judge the nature of a relationship; yet only as a snapshot in time. Just as with a single example of a relationship's *fides*, to truly judge the overall nature of a relationship would require processually analyzing the relationship over time.

To some extent this issue is addressed by Burton in his treatment of the 'breakdown' and 'dissolution' phases of friendships.[17] However, in this case a decrease in candor or intimacy is simply equated with a complete breakdown of *amicitia* and a relationship; little is said regarding relationships that persist in some form despite any variability, i.e. do not immediately breakdown when faced with change. It has already been stated that as personal relationships, patronage and *amicitia* share many of the same defining elements; they are reciprocal, personal, asymmetrical, voluntary and extra-legal. We have established that candor is particularly suggestive of *amicitia*. Yet as a variable element, the particular strength of a relationship's candor can be subject to change. If a relationship with the above qualities loses most of, or its entire element, of candor, then what remains?[18] It seems the answer would be patronage. Likewise, if a *patronus* and *cliens* began to engage in more candid exchanges, would their relationship not take on an element of *amicitia*, if not become *amicitia* in reality?

Rather than conceptualizing patronage and *amicitia* as distinctly different types of personal relationship, it would be more useful and accurate to envisage them as belonging to two ends of a spectrum. A similar approach was proposed by Koenraad Verboven in *The Economy of Friends*, though it was discounted with little discussion by Burton.[19] Koenraad suggests that while Roman patronage was not simply a variant of *amicitia* from an 'emic' standpoint (i.e. in the opinion of participating Romans), it should be described as a lop-sided *amicitia* when considered from an 'etic' standpoint (i.e. as observed from a neutral position outside of the relationship/culture).[20] Both

[17] Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, pp. 53-63.
[18] Such a scenario would likely not include the majority of reported relationship breakdowns found in our sources. As Burton rightly points out, the majority of such examples are sudden breakdowns, framed in terms of great 'betrayals of trust'. Such a betrayal would generally rule out any renegotiation of a relationship's nature, other than in terms of enmity. The practice of renegotiating relationships without dissolution remained however; even if they did not serve as such titillating subjects for our authors, and thus perhaps appear less often. As will be seen below, the potential for this renegotiation, even if just conceptually, was often at the forefront of Roman minds.
[19] K. Verboven, *The Economy of Friends. Economic Aspects of Amicitia and Patronage in the Late Republic* (Bruxelles, 2002), p. 62; Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, p. 31, n. 21.
[20] For more on the development of the emic/etic concept in modern anthropology, see T.N. Headland, K.L. Pike and M. Harris (eds), *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate* (London, 1990).

Verboven and Burton are right in dismissing the idea that Romans saw patronage simply as a form of *amicitia*. Yet perhaps there is merit in the idea that they conceptually linked the two practices as related, connected, forms of structuring interpersonal relations; just as we do in modern sociology.[21] Cicero himself cautions against accepting great favors or gifts that one would be unable to repay; lest your rank, and the labeling of that rank, fall from friend to client.[22] Similar warnings are given by a number of other authors, and indicate another way of differentiating between friendship and patronage; i.e. the perceived ability to return favours or gifts of equal value.[23] Again, such exchange is an element shared by both *amicitia* and patronage, and it is simply its magnitude, along with a variable level of candor, that decides whether a relationship becomes one or the other. In the case of 'agentic friends', where benefits are conferred competitively, and 'partner opponents', who often practice strategies of misrecognition and misidentification regarding exchange and gift-giving, this is even more true.[24] Ultimately these warnings show that the two practices of interpersonal relationship were conceptually linked in the minds of our authors. They clearly believed a relationship could change from one to the other, at the amendment of only one or two constitutional elements.

As has already been established, at its heart this thesis investigates the effects of particular social practices on Roman conceptions of one of Rome's foreign relationships. While this will include interpersonal examples in the practice of diplomacy, such as between individual emperors, shahanshahs, envoys, etc., it also requires the study of 'unit-level' factors due to the anthropomorphisation of Roman foreign relations (by both Romans and modern scholars). In this case, it means essentially taking an aggregated concept of domestic patronage, as held by Romans, and applying it as a method of practicing and interpreting imperialism, vis-à-vis Badian's 'Foreign Clientelae' paradigm. This paradigm has recently been challenged by Burton, who believes *Amicitia* would better suit the evidence and reflect Roman conceptions. He still supports the concept of seeing in Roman foreign relations the transposition of domestic political practices, but takes issue with using the concepts and language of

[21] Cf. S.N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, clients and friends: Interpersonal Relations and the structure of trust in society* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 5-8.
[22] Cic. *Off.* 2.69.
[23] E.g. Publilius Syrus, *Sententiae* B5 M; Seneca, *Ben*. 2.23.3.
[24] These two types of 'friendship' also best describe any *amicitia* between Rome and Sasanian Persia. Cf. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 105-106.

patronage to describe them; primarily due to the absence of such language, regarding other states, in our Roman sources.[25] Engaging with Constructivism, he argues convincingly that elements of diplomacy such as language (e.g. the use of terms such as *amicitia*) have real world effects, rather than simply being diplomatic euphemism or polite 'double-speak'.[26]

While this may indeed be the case in many examples, Burton perhaps too readily dismisses the fluidity with which such language could be and was manipulated in describing relationships of patronage and *amicitia*, both at an interpersonal and interstate level.[27] Many of Rome's foreign relations may indeed be better described in terms of *amicitia,* due to the above mentioned variables; less asymmetry in respective power balance, the quality of *fides* between the two, ability to define the boundaries of the relationship, and so on. Others, however, while still described by our sources as relationships of *amicitia*, would better fulfill the requirements of *clientela*, and analogies between those relationships and patronage have been drawn by ancient authors.[28] Saller attempted to reconcile this at the interpersonal level by suggesting that an asymmetrical relationship between men of relatively close standing, should be considered in terms of 'patron' and 'protégé'.[29] This suggestion captures much of the ambiguity we find in Latin between *amicitia* and *clientela.* While the traditional claim that such language was not used on the foreign stage for the sake of politeness has been effectively rebuffed, John Rich's suggestion that its absence was linked to Rome's imperial claims of universal hegemony is intriguing.[30] More so, with the fact that there is only a resurgence in its use by authors like Ammianus, around a time when Rome was re-conceptualising that hegemony in the face of a growing Sasanian Persia.

Therefore, while Burton is correct in stressing the interpretation of Rome's foreign relations in terms of *amicitia,* there still persists a need to consider the influence of domestic practices of patronage on those relations. Instead of transposing competing paradigms of *amicitia* or *clientela* onto Rome's foreign relations, we should instead

[25] Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, p. 3.
[26] See also, Williams, 'Friends of the Roman People: Some Remarks on the Language of *amicitia*', p. 40; M.J. Medhurst [et al.], *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology* (East Lansing, 1997), pp. xiv-xv.
[27] Cf Saller, 'Patronage and friendship in early imperial Rome: drawing the distinction', pp.55-60.
[28] Rich, 'Patronage and Interstate Relations', p. 124; Proculus, *Dig.* 49.15.7.1; Livy 34.58.11, 37.54.17.
[29] Saller, 'Patronage and friendship in early imperial Rome: drawing the distinction', p. 61. Eisenstadt and Roniger often use similar terminology, e.g. Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, clients and friends*, p. 2.
[30] Rich, 'Patronage and Interstate Relations', p. 127.

apply a spectrum of interpersonal relationship that incorporates both. Patronage and *amicitia*, overlapping gradations on a scale, by with which Rome could structure and conceptualise its position amidst a web of foreign relations.

# IV THE IMPACT AND INFLUENCE OF HISTORICAL CONCEPTIONS

The diplomatic relationship between Rome and Sasanian Persia came to be one of significant uniqueness in many ways; from the extent of cultural and ritual exchange between the two courts to a diplomatic discourse that reinforced mutual legitimacy. Yet their initial encounters and perceptions throughout the first two centuries of their relationship were heavily influenced by the past. Nor is this simply reflected by their respective portrayals in our sources, but by both parties' contemporaneous attempts at manipulating and using recorded and invented history to establish legitimacy. Viewing the state as an aggregation of individuals means contingent factors, like shared history, can have an explanatory force for the actual practices and decisions of that state.[1] Caution is certainly needed, in applying wholesale, modern theoretical constructions like 'constructivism' or 'realism' to the distant past.[2] Yet in this case, engaging with some of the core elements of constructivism is both encouraged by the evidence and can help elucidate just what role these historical conceptions played in the overall creation of a Roman-Sasanian relationship. These include the idea that states inherently make decisions based on past experiences with other states.[3] Dogmatic constructivists aside, it is also usually recognised that this causative element needs to be considered alongside other more *realpolitik* factors; a point that will also be repeatedly emphasised with regards to the influence of patronage throughout this thesis.[4]

For our purposes, it is necessary to examine these historical conceptions, as they provided a baseline of sorts, from which our later subject conceptions were built. From the barbarian and eastern 'other' in Graeco-Roman historiography, Rome's previous relationship with Parthia, and even claims to an Achaemenid legacy; all these elements had a constitutive effect on how Romans came to conceive of their relationship with Sasanian Persia. A comprehensive study of each of these elements is well beyond the

[1] P. Burton, *Friendship and Empire: Roman Diplomacy and Imperialism in the Middle Republic (353-146 BC)* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 17.
[2] See P. Edwell, 'Definitions of Roman Imperialism', in D. Hoyos (ed.), *A Companion to Roman Imperialism* (Leiden, 2013); for a discussion of how 19th c. concepts and frameworks of imperialism have influenced the study of Roman imperialism.
[3] A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 324-326.
[4] *Ibid*., pp. 17; R.N. Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests and Orders* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 166-167; A.M. Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome* (London, 2006), pp. 186-187.

scope of this thesis, and many excellent works can already be found regarding them.[5] Therefore in this chapter, the treatment of the constitutive elements of historical conceptions will be largely restricted to; firstly, their direct relevance to the development of Roman conceptions of Sasanian Persia; and secondly, the historical practice of patronage, and indirect rule, as it pertained to those elements.

In their examination, we shall also see clearly demonstrated the potential disparity between different conceptions and traditions of thought. Up until now, it has been repeatedly stated that the central foci of this thesis are 'Roman' conceptions. While describing them as Roman is correct in a general sense, it perhaps also conveys a slightly misleading sense of unity or cohesion. This is not helped by the above mentioned anthropomorphisation of cities and states. While in some cases it certainly explains the thoughts and actions portrayed in our sources, and is indeed how they were often conceptualized by our authors and their subjects, the point must be made once again that in reality cities and states were "not functionally similar, individual, economic decision-making units, but aggregations of peoples with shared histories, values, and beliefs about themselves and the world."[6] Although shared, one or more of those elements could often differ between people and groups, resulting in multiple 'strands' of tradition, thought and practice; competing and combining to form that ultimate aggregation. This will be seen below in an examination of two conflicting Roman traditions of how Parthians were portrayed, one of subjection and one of rivalry, neither necessarily contradictory. So too, will it be demonstrated in the tensions of the fourth and fifth centuries CE, regarding certain traditions of historiography and necessary attempts at reconceptualising the 'outsider' or 'barbarian' so as to develop new approaches to foreign relations.[7]

[5] E.g. A. Gillett, *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002); R.M. Schneider, 'Orientalism in Late Antiquity: The Oriental in Imperial and Christian Imagery', in (ed.) J. Wiesehöfer and P. Huyse, *Ērān ud Anerān: Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sasanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*; *Oriens et Occidens* 13 (Stuttgart, 2006); M. Canepa, 'Technologies of Memory in Early Sasanian Iran: Achaemenid Sites and Sasanian Identity', *American Journal of Archaeology* 114.4 (2010), pp. 263-596; C. Lerouge, *L'Images des Parthes dans le monde gré*co-*romain* (Stuttgart, 2010). To name just a few.

[6] Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, p. 16; cf. K.N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York, 1979), p. 126; for a neorealist perspective.

[7] R.C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (Leeds, 1992), pp. 99, 114; M.P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, 2009), pp. 37-38.

The idea of the 'barbarian' and the 'eastern other' were not notions limited to the Parthians or Sasanian Persians, but they played a great role in how both were represented in literature. In the broadest sense they were ways of organizing Rome's own place in the world; of portraying those people under Roman *imperium* according to universal ideologies, yet not necessarily under direct control or administration.[8] In this they were heavily influenced by previous Greek traditions of viewing the world as a series of concentric circles, levels of civilisation, semi-civilization, and barbarians.[9] While such conceptions had long been recognised as too schematic, they none the less heavily influenced Roman authors; especially concerning the development of imperial ideologies of universal hegemony, and how they were reconciled with reality. Such reconciliation will be seen in later stages of Rome and Sasanian Persia's relationship and it will be proposed that the practice and concept of patronage had an important part to play. Yet a precursor to these later tensions can be seen by even ca. 60 CE, in the poetry of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.

While the *Bellum Civile* nominally centres on the Republican period, it is also deeply concerned with exploring the changing geographical ideologies of the first century CE, in the face of growing Parthian power to the East.[10] This is presented by tension within the work itself, with initial books reflecting Virgil's *imperium sine fine*, while after book seven Lucan instead divides the world into east and west, making Rome sole sovereign of *a* world by effectively excluding Parthia from that world.[11] Interestingly, while Lucan lists a large number of peoples and groups (of varying relationships with Rome) affected by the civil war, it is the Parthians who receive especially lengthy treatment throughout the poem. The protracted history behind their rivalry, from warfare to diplomacy, hardly needs to be recounted here.[12] Rather, it will

[8] R.J. Pogorzelski, 'Orbis Romanus: Lucan and the Limits of the Roman World', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 141.1 (2011), pp. 156-158 ; C.R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire* (London, 1994), pp. 10-30, esp. pp. 18-20.
[9] E.g. Ael. Arist. *Ad Rom*. 81-82. Or the earlier works of Aristotle. See H. Patomäki, 'Cosmological sources of critical cosmopolitanism', in (ed.) N. Rengger, *Evaluating Global Orders* (Cambridge, 2010), p.185.
[10] Pogorzelski, 'Orbis Romanus', p. 144; J. Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan's Bellum Civile* (Cmabridge, 1992), pp. 150-178; E.M. Blexley, 'Replacing Rome: Geographic and Political Centrality in Lucan's *Pharsalia*', *CP* 104, pp. 459-475.
[11] Pogorzelski, 'Orbis Romanus', p. 168.
[12] For a good overview of their relations see Lerouge, *L'Images des Parthes dans le monde gré*co-*romain* (above, n. 5).

suffice to cover why and how the two traditions of their portrayal were used, and what impact they had on conceptions of Sasanian Persia.

The first tradition is that of Roman dominance; perhaps one of the most explicit examples being Augustus' claim in the *Res Gestae*, that after the return of the standards lost at Carrhae, the Parthians were compelled "to seek as suppliants the friendship of the Roman people."[13] While statements like this are often dismissed as rhetoric directed at an internal audience, there is power in how such language can shape present and future conceptions.[14] As will be explored, these conceptions often have real-world effects and consequences. Even a century later, authors like Florus were still using the same scenario as evidence for Roman dominance.[15] This portrayal is just as evident in Roman visual culture. The figure of 'the Parthian'; kneeling in defeat, as submitting foreign king, or performing *adoratio*; became pervasive in imperial iconography.[16] The depictions of *adoratio* are particularly telling with regards to the role of patronage in these conceptions. Unlike images of defeated barbarians or captives, *adoratio* suggests a 'negotiated' recognition of Roman dominance over the Parthians, and by extension, the semi-civilized world.[17] It contains the element of consent that is so important to relationships of patronage and *amicitia*, as defined above.

It also demonstrates the dynamic nature of these relationships. In 96 BCE, the Parthian ambassador Orobazos was received by Sulla, along with the Cappadocian king Ariobarzanes. The purpose and result of the meeting was to establish *amicitia* between Parthia and Rome, yet during this meeting Orobazos was comparably positioned on the same level as Ariobarzanes, who was already a dependant of Rome.[18] This scenario seems to better fit the end of our established spectrum that is Burton's concept of interpreting foreign relations through a paradigm of *amicitia*. Asymmetry is present, but

[13] *Res Gestae divi Augusti* 29.
[14] P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor, 1988), pp. 186-185; C.B. Rose, 'The Parthians in Augustan Rome', *AJA* 109.1 (2005), p. 22.
[15] Flor. 2.34.63-64; Strabo 11.9.2, 17.3.25.
[16] Canepa, 'Technologies of Memory in Early Sasanian Iran', pp. 34-37.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 35; Zanker, *The Power of Images*, p. 189; R.M. Schneider, 'Die Faszination des Feindes: Bilder der Parther und des Orients', in (ed.) J. Wieseöfer, *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse* (Stuttgart, 1998), pp. 95-96.
[18] B. Dignas, E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 12-13; Plut. *Sulla*. 5.4-5; A.N. Sherwin-White, 'Ariobarzanes, Mithridates and Sulla', *CQ* 27 (1977), pp. 173-183; A. Keaveney, 'Roman treaties with Parthia, circa 95 – circa 64 BC', *AJPh* 102 (1981), pp. 196-212.

it is not overt or of great magnitude. A spectrum it is however, from this *amicitia*, to the more explicit declarations of dominance by Augustus and his successors, and the increasingly, overwhelmingly, subservient language of later authors like Cassius Dio. In his recount of the crowning of the Armenian Arascid King Trdat I by Nero, the king is claimed to have said, "Master, I am the descendant of Arsaces, brother of the kings Vologaesus and Pacorus, and thy slave. And I have come to thee, my god, to worship thee as I do Mithras".[19] Taken with factors like increasing depictions of Parthians and other supplicants to the emperors performing *proskynēsis*, there seems to be a much greater asymmetry portrayed in these relationships than in earlier examples.[20]

While there seems to be a progressive increase in levels of asymmetry when Parthians are depicted as submissive during the imperial period, it is not entirely linear. Rather, it seems to accompany periods or instances in which imperial universal ideology was front and centre; when Rome was in a position of strength, prior to or following war. Alongside this tradition of dominance we also find one of rivalry.[21] Firstly, from the late Republican period onwards the Parthians were used as a unifying "other" to combat divisive domestic conflicts, both political and military.[22] Such practice was common in the ancient world, and it is easy to find similar instances regarding Rome and Sasanian Persia.[23] This seemed to have been a practice particularly favoured by Sasanian Shahanshahs in the turbulent years following successions.[24] To assist this portrayal, the "other" is thus presented as warlike and strong, a worthy adversary to overcome (in the case of the Parthians, a portrayal not undeserved).[25] Tension arises however, when this rival cannot be satisfactorily overcome or

[19] Suet. *Ner*. 13; Cass. Dio 63.1.
[20] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, pp. 149-153. A. Alföldi, 'Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells', *MDAIRA* 49 (1934), pp. 36-27; for the basis of modern conclusions, that argue that *proskynēsis* was not a sign of Roman 'orientalization', but rather a Roman, then mutual, development.
[21] E.g. Strabo 11.9.2, 17.3.24.
[22] Sallust *Cat.* 10, *Iug* 14.
[23] E.g. in 588-9 a mutiny of 5000 Roman soldiers at Monocarton was dispelled through threat of Sasanian attack, when all negotiations by their own commanders had failed, Theoph. Simoc. 3.2-3.
[24] Kavadh I, after regaining his throne in 498/499, Theoph. A.M. 5996; Proc. *BP*. 1.7.1-2; M. Morony, 'Sasanids', *EI2* 9 (1995), p. 76. Khusrau II in supposed retaliation for the usurpation of Maurice; *Chr. 1234*, 86; *Chr. Seert* 70, 79, *PO* 13.499, 519-20. Et al.
[25] J. Malitz, 'Caesars Partherkrieg', *Historia* 33 (1984), pp. 21-59; L. Craven, 'Antony's oriental policy until the defeat of the Parthian expedition', *Social Science Series* v3.2 (1920); H. Bengtson, *Zum Partherfeldzug des Antonius (36 v. Chr.)* (Munich, 1974); A.S. Schieber, 'Antony and Parthia', *Rivista storica dell'antichità* 9 (1979), pp. 105-124; C.A. Hersh, 'The coinage of Quintus Labienus Parthicus', *Schweiz Numismat. Rundschau* 59 (1980), pp. 41-45.

dominated; when the claims regarding universal hegemony above, could not be realistically sustained in the same form.

In the face of growing recognition of Parthia's strength, there is a growing use in the language and idea of equivalency. By the first century CE, Lucan was already playing with such ideas; "fates too much like our own fates drive the Medes".[26] Early imperial authors talk about the two powers as *maxima imperia*, the world divided between Romans and Parthians, and as the "two greatest rules under the sun".[27] These conceptions are direct antecedents to those that emerge regarding Sasanian Persia in the third and fourth centuries. That last description, by Josephus in the first century CE, is similar to the famous descriptions of Rome and Sasanian Persia by Peter the Patrician and Theophylakt Symokata, almost five centuries later.[28] While that relationship comes to be described in terms such as "two lights", "two eyes", the familial rising sun and setting moon, it is likely they emerge from historical conceptions of Parthia.[29]

In both cases, Parthia and Sasanian Persia, to reconcile this new equivalence with imperial universal ideologies required some conceptual gymnastics. In this, our spectrum of asymmetrical interpersonal relationship can help with interpretation. The practice of patronage had constantly played an important role in Rome and Parthia's relationship; with the mutual establishment of Armenian kings such as Trdat I, but also with the practice of exchanging hostages, and the various, related, attempts by Rome at establishing 'friendly' kings on the Parthian throne.[30] Some of the diplomacy between them was even carried out by dependant kings, such as Pompey using Deiotarus to seek an alliance with Parthia.[31] Again, these were also features of Rome's relationship with Sasanian Persia. Importantly however, it also provided a means of reconciling a rival Parthia with an ideology of universal hegemony. Rome already had a tradition of indirect rule, it had played various roles in their relationship before, and our authors and

[26] Lucan, *BC*. 8.307-308.
[27] Tac. *Ann* 2.56; Ios. *Aj* 18.46; Iust. 41.1.1.
[28] Petr. Patric. frg. 13;Theoph. Simok. 4.11.2
[29] Amm. 17.5.3. e.g. "From Sapor, king of kings, partner of the stars, brother of the sun and moon, to my brother Constantius Caesar, greetings."
[30] A.D. Lee, 'The Role of Hostages in Roman Diplomacy with Sasanian Persia', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd40.3 (1991), pp. 366-374; E.g. Trajan and Tiridates, Cass. Dio 63.1; Diocletian and Tiridates III, Agathangelos, *Hist. Arm*. 1.46-47; e.g. the Parthian nobility asking for the release of the prince Meherdates in 49 AD, to take the Parthian throne.
[31] Lucan, *BC*. 8.208-14.

their subjects had already grappled with the Greek influenced idea of administered and un-administered peoples, all within the *imperium* of Rome. Dividing the world into East and West as Lucan does allowed Rome to remain sole sovereign of the 'civilized' world, but it was the concept and practice of patronage and amicitia, as social *habitus* in the minds of the Roman nobility, that allowed them to connect those worlds and yet nominally maintain an unequaled *imperium Romanum*.[32]

So far we have covered the different ways in which Rome's relationship with Parthia was portrayed in our sources and how concepts of patronage and *amicitia* could be used to reconcile those portrayals with imperial ideology. It remains however, to explore just how these conceptions directly influenced initial Roman conceptions of Sasanian Persia, and what role the shaping and negotiation of cultural memory and history played. In this chapters' introduction, it was said that historical conceptions provided a base-line of sorts from which later conceptions were formed. This was thanks, in large part, to the ethnographic tendencies of our ancient authors and Roman society in general. It has long been recognized that Roman ethnographic writings in late antiquity continued to portray their subjects, especially 'barbarians', with little change from past depictions.[33] This was despite increased knowledge and experience to the contrary; entire groups of peoples were portrayed as inherently unchanging, in both defining qualities and geographical location.[34]

The same was initially true of the Sasanian Empire in Roman sources. Its founder, Ardashir I had ruled Estakhr and Darabgerd, within the ruling system of the Parthian Empire. The subsequent expansion of his power base, which eventually led to a final confrontation with the Parthian Great King Artabanus V, also encompassed the Fars Province; the original homeland of the Achaemenid Persians. The expansion of the empire's frontiers roughly coincided with those achieved by the Parthians and several Parthian clans remained of high importance within the Sassanid nobility.[35] It is easy to see why, then, their portrayal as Persians in Roman sources (who were writing from an etic standpoint) remained much the same. There is even continuation in the use of

[32] For more on how Romans reconciled imperialism with new concepts of space and geography, see Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, pp. 33-59.
[33] G. Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians: Ethnography and Empire in the Roman West* (2011), pp. 89-118.
[34] This was also largely because the rhetorical purposes of their depiction remained unchanged.
[35] These included the House of Karen, Suren, Varazes and Andigans. P. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire* (New York, 2008), pp. 37-43.

certain names in contemporary literature, likely propagated in part by Graeco-Roman historiography. The two most common variants (beyond the general term 'Persians') are 'Medes' and 'Parthians'.[36] In most cases our sources' use of 'Parthians' to refer to the Sassanids cannot be attributed to simple mistaken identity, or even the influence of historiographical tradition, but a conscious decision to connect and conceptualise them as equivalent. In some cases, rather than being depicted as the creation of a Sasanian Empire, Ardashir's rebellion is portrayed as the Parthian kingdom being transferred to the Persians and their rule. This type of portrayal creates quite a sense of continuity between the two powers. Nor is there much Roman interest in the actual Sasanian rebellion or 'revolution', until it had significance for the Romans themselves.

It is also clear that when they wanted to, authors like Cassius Dio, Procopius and Herodian, could quite clearly distinguish between the 'conquered Parthians' and the 'Persians'. They often did so in terms of ethnicity, and saw the Sasanian Persians as being descended from the Achaemenids.[37] This is also primarily why the term 'Mede' is used, to create a link between past and present conceptions. The use of these terms was carefully applied by our authors. For instance, Procopius makes prodigious use of all three labels, yet it seems he most often uses 'Medes' when describing Sasanian invasions or hostile action, invoking potent memories contained in the well known classical epics of past.[38] There is great debate amongst modern scholars around the extent to which the Sasanians consciously thought of themselves as heirs to the Achaemenids.[39] While many ancient authors portray them as such, those authors are inevitably Roman. Comparing Sasanian ambitions with the Achaemenids allowed Rome to proscribe an inherently hostile and expansionist agenda onto the Sasanians, even when they were not necessarily pursuing one.[40] There is no doubt, however, that the Sasanians supported, at various times, expansionist ideologies. They never make explicit connections to the Achaemenids, but rather to the legacy of their 'ancestors'

[36] E.g. for 'medes', Claudian, *In Eutropium* 2.474-84; for 'Parthians', Amm. 20.4, 21.7, 15.1. 29.1.
[37] Cass. Dio 53.4.-1-2; Herodian, 6.2.1-2. 6.2.6-7.
[38] Such as the works of Herodotus and Thucydides.
[39] T. Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden: Aus zur Zeit der Sasaniden: Aus der Arabischen Chronik des Tabari ubers* (Leiden, 1879); E. Yarshater, 'Were the Sasanians Heirs to the Achaemenids?', *Atti del Convegno internazionale sul tema: La Persia nel Medioevo (Roma, 31 marzo-5 aprile 1970)* (1971), pp. 517-531; A.S. Shahbazi, 'Early Sasanians' Claim to Achaemenid Heritage', *Name-ye Iran-e Bastan* 1.1 (2001), pp. 61-73.
[40] Dignas & Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, p. 53.

and a semi-mythical Kayanid dynasty.[41] As time progresses however, it seems Avestan history and Achaemenid sites became more important to the constructed Sasanian 'past'.[42]

It could be suggested that an Achaemenid ideology was first emphasised by Roman sources, indeed, much the same ambition was attributed to the Parthians in the first and second centuries.[43] Yet where those ambitions had been met derisively by Romans, the continued military strength and threat of the Sasanians forced Roman sources to take such claims regarding the Sasanians seriously.[44] It also encouraged them to cast the conflict in grand 'classicising' terms. The subsequent appropriation of an Achaemenid legacy by the Sasanians enabled them to reshape their identity and those Roman conceptions. This was accomplished primarily by ridding themselves of the historical conceptions of the Parthians above. The two strands of traditional conception, one of dominance and one of rivalry, were applied to the Sasanians. For instance, Severus Alexander attempted to portray Ardashir I as the next in line to the subject Parthian kings.[45] Yet their continued strength and military victory effectively made such claims untenable in their current form. Instead we see an emphasis and development of the 'rivalry' portrayal. Claiming an Achaemenid and Kayanid legacy, through tools like the Daray I Darayan, enabled the Sasanians not only to undermine the legitimacy of the dynasty they overthrew and thus strengthen their own, but also reject the yoke of being identified with conceptions of Parthian subservience.[46]

While successfully ridding themselves of those particular conceptions, the practice demonstrated by Severus Alexander remained a constant in the courts of both

[41] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, pp. 48, 54.
[42] *Ibid*., p. 44; P.O. Skjærvø, 'The Achaemenids and the Avesta,' in (ed.) V. S. Curtis, E. Stewart, *The Birth of the Persian Empire* (London, 2005), 53–81.
[43] Tac. *Ann*. 6.31; Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 49; H. Sonnabend, *Fremdbild und Politik:Vorstellung der Römer von Ägypten und dem Partherreich in der späten Republik und frühen Kaiserzeit,* Europäische Hochschulschriften 3.286 (Frankfurt, 1986), pp. 197-289.
[44] E.g. Maurice, *Stratēgikon* 11.1; He includes the expected historiographically influenced portrayals, "[t]he Persian nation is wicked, dissembling, and servile..."; but he also recognises their military power and shows a grudging respect, "...but at the same time patriotic and obedient... they are steadfast in enduring hard work and warfare on behalf of the fatherland... prefer to achieve their results by planning and generalship; stress an orderly approach rather than a brave and impulsive one... are formidable when laying siege, but even more formidable when besieged...", and the list goes on. Particularly notable are his points on their siege capability, something Roman authors typically considered 'barbarians' to be poor at.
[45] Hdn. 6.2.4; Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 49.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 48; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, pp. 33-37.

empires. Especially pronounced during times of war, both Emperor and Shahanshah would attempt to portray the other as inherently subservient, inevitably depicting one another as tributary or dependant. For instance, Sasanian claims to an Achaemenid legacy were reportedly manipulated by Constantius, who told Shapur II that the Persians of antiquity had been subdued by the Macedonians, who in turn had been conquered by Rome; thus, Persia was technically subservient to Rome.[47] While much of this could be dismissed as rhetoric, it clearly had real-world effects. Inherent to these depictions of dependency are the concepts of patronage and *amicitia*, both as historically between Rome's neighbouring states and at the personal level. The conflict between Ardashir I and Severus Alexander essentially led to a stalemate. Ardashir may have divided his empire into Eran and Aneran, yet no explicit claims to dominance over Aneran or Rome would appear until the reign of Shapur I.[48] It is possible that these later Sasanian claims and depictions of universal ideology were led to by initial Roman conceptions of dependence. This is not to say that Sasanian Persia would not have expanded or sought such an identity without them, but Roman imperial ideology, based on notions of sole hegemony and asymmetrical relationships, provided a readymade model for them to appropriate.

Clearly the past provided an important field of debate which Rome and Sasanian Persia could use to interpret and negotiate the nature of their relationship. We have seen the influence historical conceptions of Parthia had and explored how these were later augmented by claims the Sasanians pursued an Achaemenid legacy. So too, has been demonstrated how concepts of patronage and the general practice of asymmetrical relationships enabled Rome to reconcile challenged ideologies with reality. Yet the very dynamic interaction of these various historical conceptions shows that the manipulation of the past was only one element in the negotiated conceptions of their relationship. While it may have played a major role in the initial stages of their relationship throughout the second and third centuries, the manipulation of historical memory, such as with the Achaemenids, quickly lost its importance throughout the following centuries. This was primarily in the face of centuries of coexistence, which had resulted in a growing recognition of each other's right to exist and the creation of a diplomatic

[47] Zonar. 13.9.25-31.
[48] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 52; cf. Ardashir's claims in Naqš-e Rajab relief 3, Firuzabad relief 2, and Naqš-e Rostam relief 1.

discourse that, while influenced by historical conceptions, had become very much their own.

# V ARAB ALLIES: A CONTINUATION OF IMPERIAL CLIENT MANAGEMENT

One of the most important factors in the relationship between Rome and Sasanian Persia was the use and involvement of the Arabs. As something of a loaded term, what is meant by 'Arabs' often changes depending on who is using it. For our ancient authors, this could range from a stereotypical label for uncivilised and barbarian nomads, to an ethnic label for 'Arab' polities or kingdoms like the Nabataeans and the Palmyrans.[1] It could simply refer to people from the general area of Arabia, be used as a linguistic distinction, or it could refer specifically to those allied to Rome and Persia.[2] In this latter case, we will see that the meaning of 'Arabs' was dynamic and changed as their relationship of dependence with the two empires developed; reflected in both changes in their literary categorization, and in later centuries, a growing resemblance of 'Arab' *phylarchs* and potentates to Roman elites. The importance of Arab allies to Rome and Persia's relationship, and indeed in their own right, has received increasing recognition by modern scholars in recent years. Therefore in the wake of a number of excellent recent and upcoming publications, it is not felt necessary to give a complete narrative of their actions over the course of our subject period.[3]

Rather, this chapter will be focusing on the position of Arab allies as clients of Rome and Sasanian Persia. This will entail following the major developments of those relationships, and it will be posited that the shift in the relative asymmetry of their relationship with Rome; a move towards greater equality among *foederati*; is a natural development in light of the above established spectrum of patronage and *amicitia*, and its inherently reciprocal nature. It will be demonstrated that not only was patronage still a potent force in Rome's foreign relations, and thus pertinent to Rome's political relationship with Persia, but that their mutual practice of patronage played a part in the

[1] G. Fischer, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 1-2.; B.D. Shaw, "'Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk": the ancient Mediterranean ideology of the pastoral nomad', *AnSoc* 13-14 (1982), pp. 5-31; Amm. 14.1.1.
[2] i.e. the development of the terms 'Saracen' and '*Tāyyayē*', discussed further below.
[3] For example, the seminal contributions of Irfan Shahid in his *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs* (Washington, 1984); *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington, 1995); *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, 2 vols (Washington, 1995, 2002, and 2010). For a comprehensive narrative and nuanced picture of their role in late antiquity, see in particular G. Fischer, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*. The various works of R.G. Hoyland are also particularly informative, and many of his research questions are picked up by Fischer.

constant renegotiation of their respective standing and portrayal in that relationship. The weight of the chapter's focus will fall on the fifth and sixth centuries, as it is then that the Arab allies had the most significant impact on the subject relationship of this thesis.

However, the highly developed relationships between Rome, Persia and their Arab allies, during those later centuries, owed much to the earlier fall of the Parthians and successive events; so it is from there we shall briefly begin. Prior to the rise of the Sasanians, much of the Arab population of Mesopotamia, though ostensibly under Parthian administration, retained a fair amount of autonomy through close contact and association with influential trade centres like Palmyra, Hatra, Hira and Dura Europos.[4] These polities also provided infrastructure and protection for Eastern trade, exerting a level of control over nomadic Arab 'tribes' that neither Rome nor Persia were able to match.[5] Yet in 240 CE Hatra was destroyed by Ardashir I, Dura Europos was destroyed by Shapur I, and in 273 CE Palmyra was conquered by the Emperor Aurelian.[6] The first two cities were never resettled, while Palmyra never regained the same level of economic influence or prosperity.[7] Above all else, the loss of these polities resulted in the demise of established local powers and created a vacuum.[8] Neither Rome nor Persia was initially able to fill this, likely due to sustained conflict with each other throughout the region.[9] Instead, by the fourth century we have reports of increasingly prohibitive tolls levied by nomadic and semi-nomadic Arabs, and the entire area obtained a reputation for being particularly dangerous for travelers and merchants.[10]

It is in this environment that we find the nature of the Arabs relationship with the two empires fundamentally changing in many ways. From serving as minor militias,

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[4] B. Dignas, E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 163-165. All of which also contained a substantial 'Arab' population.
[5] *Ibid*., pp. 163-164; B. Isaac, 'An open frontier', in *Frontièrs d'empire. Nature et signification des frontièrs romaines*, (eds.) P. Brun, S. van der Heeuw, C.R. Whittaker (Nemours, 1985), pp. 114-115.
[6] On the destruction of Hatra see M.-L. Chaumont, 'A propos de la chute de Hatra et du couronnement de Shapur Ier', *AAntHung* 27 (1979), pp. 217-237; J. Wisehöfer, 'Die Anfänge sassanidischer Westpolitik und der Untergang Hatras', *Klio* 64 (1982), pp. 437-47. For Dura-Europos, see M.I. Rostovtzeff, 'Res Gestae Divi Saporis and Dura', *Berytus* 8 (1943), pp. 17-60; F. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 B.C. – A.D. 337. 3rd edn.* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 445-471. For the fall of Palmyra see R. Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire. Zenobia's Revolt against Rome* (Ann Arbor, 1992).
[7] For the disruption of Palmyra's economic influence and prosperity in the third century; G.K. Young, *Rome's Easter Trade: International Commerce and Imperial Policy 31 BC-AD305* (London, 2001), pp. 156-166.
[8] Dignas & Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, p. 164.
[9] For Palmyra's role in maintaining the political *status quo*, see B. Nakamura, 'Palmyra and the Roman East', *GRBS* 34 (1993), pp. 133-150.
[10] E.g. Strabo 16.1.27.

providing the occasional auxiliary recruits and as *hypospondoi*, they are instead increasingly incorporated as pre-existing, semi-autonomous groups, into the Roman and Sasanian military and administrative hierarchies.[11] This, particularly with regards to the Romans, was simply a continuation of their historical practice of imperial client management.[12] Such practice was inherently personal, normally perceived as being between Emperor or Roman noble, and king or local ruler, and it was no different with their Arab allies.[13] Indeed, the very way Romans often conceptualised them, likely required such a relationship to be defined in personal terms between individuals. Whereas a state or city was geographically defined and contained, the very terms Roman authors use to describe Arabs, such as *scenitai* (tent-dwelling), invoked associations with the desert, nomadism and barbarism.[14] While there is no doubt that forging these alliances indirectly extended their influence over and into places like Arabia, our authors' often amorphous ideas about the control Arab tribes exerted over geography made it more practical to forge those alliances with individual leaders, rather than groups, cities or places.[15] Nor in our subject period is this limited to alliances with Arab tribes. As will be explored in a section seven, though the foreign relations of Late Antiquity take place between states, governments and monarchies, there was an essential interpersonal level to both how they were conceived and practised.

A particularly clear example of how Rome and Persia's relationships with Arab allies developed from pre-existing practices of client management, can be seen with the son of 'Amr ibn 'Adi, Imru'ulqais al Bad. Imru'ulqais was a fourth century ruler based at Hira.[16] He was the latest in a line of Lahkmids who had been of importance during the Arsacid period, and exerted control over the surrounding region and Bedouin tribes.[17] It was for this reason his alliance was sought by both Rome and Persia. It seems he was initially given power by the Sasanians, likely as a response to Rome's acquisition of Hatra.[18] Thus in our sources he is incorporated into their administrative

[11] On the presence of *sarakēnoi* in the Roman military, comprising units such as the *Equites Saraceni indigenae*; *Notitia Dignitatum, Or.* 28, 32. For their incorporation as militia; Amm. 23.3.8.
[12] Fischer, *Between Empires*, pp, 73.
[13] *Ibid*., p. 3.
[14] *Ibid*., p. 76. An example of the use of the term '*scenitai*' can be found in, Amm. 22.15.1-2; for its connotations and a discussion of the roots of '*sarakēnoi* see, D. Graf, 'The Saracens and the defense of the Arabian frontier', *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 229 (1978), pp. 14-15.
[15] Fischer, *Between Empires*, p. 119.
[16] Tabarī, *Ta'rī* 1.833-834.
[17] Dignas & Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, pp. 165-169; Fischer *Between Empires*, p. 77;
[18] Though this acquisition is disputed.

structure as a governor under the reigns of Shapur I, Hormizd I, Bahram I and Bahram II.[19] He reportedly ruled over the frontier territory of the Arabs of Rabi'a and a number of Arab tribes in Iraq, the Higaz and Mesopotamia.[20] While Tabarī depicts him as a Sasanian Governor, he was also king [*mlk*] of the Nasr b. Rabi'a and is concurrently depicted as a vassal king.[21] The areas Tabarī asserts he governed would have essentially meant he controlled all the Arabs within the Sasanian Empire.

This latter point is supported by a funerary inscription attributed to Imru'ulqais himself, though it calls other points of Tabarī's account into question. He refers to himself as 'king of all the Arabs' and ruler over the kings of Nizar and al-Azd; yet he claims that his control over various settlements was granted on behalf of both Persia and Rome.[22] While there is no common agreement to explain his dual allegiance, it seems likely that he changed sides at some point, perhaps concurrently with his adoption of Christianity.[23] Interestingly, it seems that as a client king of Rome, he arranged for his 'vice kings' to be appointed the Roman titles of *Phylarch* after his death, yet his funerary inscription does not seem to privilege one empire's patronage over the other's.[24] This fluidity of allegiance and the proactive attempts at gaining it, by both Sasanian Persia and Rome, became a constant feature of their relationships; there are repeated attempts by Roman emperors to gain the allegiance of enemy Arab leaders such as al-Mundhir, and there are any number of defections by both individuals and tribes on both sides.[25]

While the Sasanians had always supported a single powerful Arab family, the Nasrids (or Lahkmids), to deal with any issues in Arab territories, Rome initially provided support to a number of Arab leaders, to whom they gave the above mentioned

[19] Tabarī, *Ta'rī* 1.833-834.
[20] *Ibid.*, 1.833-834; For a translation of Imru'ulqais' famous fumerary inscription at Namāra, see A.F.L. Beeston, 'Nemāra and faw', *BSOAS* 42/1 (1979), p. 1-6.
[21] There are problems with interpreting the precise definition of *mlk*, at least as it was understood by Imru'ulqais' contemporary Arabs. However our Roman authors simply equate the term and its position with βασιλεύς or *Rex*.
[22] Beeston, 'Nemāra and faw', p. 6.
[23] On his adoption of Christianity see, Tabarī, *Ta'rī* 1.833-834.
[24] Dignas & Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, p. 168; F. Altheim, R. Steihl, *Die Araber in der Welt, vol 2* (1965), pp. 316-317; J.A. Bellamy, 'A new reading of the Namārah Inscription', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105 (1985), pp. 34-5, 46. The fact he was buried in the Roman province of Arabia possibly suggests that despite his portrayal, towards the end of his reign he was exclusively siding with Rome.
[25] E.g. Ps.-Joshu. *Chron*. 75; Proc. *BP*. 2.1.12-15; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicle* 86-7.

title of *phylarch*.[26] Initially this title denoted a rather loose form of dependence, nominally giving them a position in a Roman hierarchy, with the responsibility of protecting the frontier and controlling other Arab tribes.[27] Their geographic association in Roman literature is vague, often said to be located somewhere in 'the desert'.[28] By the sixth century however, the Jafnid family rose to prominence and became to Rome much what the Nasrids were to Persia. In place of the vague, literary norm of the 'desert', we start seeing references to 'the land of al-Harith' or the 'land of al-Mundhir'.[29] Their emergence could be seen as a natural progression, encouraged by Rome's practice of dependant relationships. Studies on similar relationships in the western half of the Empire have demonstrated how such a relationship and imperial support often encouraged political cohesion and centralisation among 'barbarians'.[30]

In our sources this is embodied by the personalities of the Roman ally and Jafnid leader, al-Harith, and the Sasanian ally and Nasrid leader, al-Mundhir. Al-Harith was not the first of the Jafnid family to interact or ally with the Roman Empire; his father had appeared in Roman conflicts at the beginning of the sixth century and was referred to as the 'king of the *sny'*.[31] Yet al-Harith does appear to be the first Jafnid, and Arab Roman ally, to attain a significant level of imperial support and recognition.[32] According to Procopius this was in direct response to the success of al-Mundhir (as 'king of all the Saracens in Persia') and Justinian's frustration at the inability of his own *duces* and *phylarchs* to organise a suitable defence; presumably due to a lack of unified organisation or action.[33] As a result, Justinian elevated al-Harith, already considered ruler of the Saracens of Arabia and probably a *phylarch*, to the position of supreme *phylarch*, bestowing on him 'the dignity of king'. The patronage and use of these two competing Arab dynasties, by Rome and Persia, served as a catalyst for change in the

[26] In modern scholarship, Arab dynasties like the Nasrids have become closely associated with names such as Lakhm, which can be potentially misleading. For a full discussion of the issue see, *Between Empires*, pp. 3-7. For the development of the term '*phylarch*' see P. Mayerson, 'The use of the term *phylarchos* in the Roman-Byzantine East', *ZPE* 88 (1991), pp. 291-5.
[27] Proc. *BP*. 1.17.46, 1.19.8-13; Malalas, *Chron*. 445-7.
[28] Joh. Eph. *HE* 178 (3.3.42), 216 (3.4.36); Evag, *HE*. 5.20; Proc. *BP*. 1.17.45-6.
[29] Menander, fr. 9.3.
[30] W. Pohl, H. Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800* (Leiden, 1998); P. Heather, *Goths and Romans, 332-489* (Oxford, 1991), et al.
[31] Fischer, *Between Empires*, p. 96; Joh. Eph. *Vitae* (PO 17, 137-58).
[32] Proc. *BP*. 1.17.46; "…a thing which among the Romans had never before been done".
[33] *Ibid*., 1.17.43-48. In addition to being called a king, Mundhir is also sometimes labeled with the diminutive 'kinglet', which carries connotations of subjection, Theoph. *Chron*. AM 6021/p. 177.

levels of asymmetry and political self-determination within their respective relationships.

For instance, as their role as allies of Rome became more prominent, the traditional term for Arabs in literature mentioned above, *scenitai* (along with any negative connotations), became augmented with terms like *Sarakēnoi* (Saracen), or *Tayyaye* in Syriac.[34] Their actual portrayal also changed. Traditional prejudices remained, such as a perceived inability to mount sieges, a propensity towards treachery, etc., but there emerges a recognition of their military effectiveness, and as we will see below, *fides* becomes a particular sticking point among our authors' treatment of the relationship between individual Arab leaders and Roman Emperors.[35] The very meaning of *phylarch* changed over the course of their relationship; beginning simply as a description of tribal chiefs, then taking on an administrative meaning within the Roman hierarchy and progressively gaining connotations of authority.[36] There is also an increasing engagement by Arab leaders with the activities of the Roman elite; reflected for instance, in Arab dedicatory inscriptions of a Roman style.[37] An inscription near al-Burj (twenty kilometers east of Damascus) not only credits the building of a tower to al-Mundhir, but also refers to him as *patrik*[*ios*] and takes the name of Flavius.[38] Similarly, there is evidence for inscriptions that explicitly acknowledge the authority of leaders like the Jafnid al-Mundhir; one such in al-Hayyat also refers to him as *patrikios* (*πατρικίου*).[39]

This was further enhanced by an increasing reliance on Arab allies to fight in proxy wars and undertake raids on both sides of the frontier.[40] While authors like Procopius often portray them simply as a means to an ends for both Rome and Persia, there emerges from their clashes an increasing sense of autonomy and self-determination. In 539 a dispute between al-Harith and al-Mundhir caused the end of the

[34] See n. 14 above.
[35] E.g. Proc. *BP*. 2..19.12-30; Evag. *HE*. 5.20.
[36] Mayerson, 'The use of the term *phylarchos* in the Roman-Byzantine East', pp. 291-295.
[37] R. Mouterde, *Le limes de Chalcis: organization de la steppe en haue Syrie romaine: documents aériens et épigraphiques*, 2vols (Paris, 1945), I, pp. 194-5; Le Bas, W.H. Waddington (eds.), *Inscriptions grecques et latines recueillies en Grèce et en Asie Mineure*, 3 vols (Paris, 1853-70), 2464.
[38] Wadd. 2562c.
[39] Wadd. 2110.
[40] Procopius gives a comprehensive narrative of their various engagements. For an example in which Arab allies fought each other without any explicit Roman or Persian involvement see Proc. *BP*. 2.28.12-14. See also, Dignas & Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, pp. 169-172.

'eternal peace' between Rome and Persia, established only seven years earlier.[41] It is reported that this was a pretext arranged by Khusrau, and both Emperors and Shahanshahs seem to have used their Arab allies a number of times for similar purposes. Yet interestingly, al-Mundhir claimed that he was not breaking any treaty as he had not been specifically included in it by either party. This would seem indicative of an unwritten assumption, by both empires, that their clients were subject to any treaties they established. Al-Mundhir's claim nominally suggests he was not a direct part of Persia or abjectly subject to its authority. While such notion was likely given tacit approval by Khusrau to provide a veneer of deniability, Arab allies on both sides are specifically included in the treaty of 561/2.[42] It ostensibly makes clear what Rome and Persia had already expected from their clients, that they should abide by any treaties made between the two powers. Yet intriguingly, in it they are referred to as simply 'allies', *σύμμαχοι*, rather than *ὑπόσπονδοι*, which is the more common form for subordinate allies.[43] Nor does this seem simply a polite nod with which Rome and Persia could placate their subordinates. The following year the treaty was broken once again by al-Mundhir's successor 'Amr.[44] Yet whereas at the beginning of the century, when various Arab chiefs were routinely executed by both sides for breaking the peace, 'Amr not only got away with it, but was also able to criticise a Persian Zikh with impunity.[45]

It seems that by the later sixth century, Rome and Persia's Arab allies had gained a marked measure of autonomy, moving from their quite dependant status of the third century to something that held many of the qualities of true allies or *amicitia*, at least in practice. As seen above, in the literature and minds of our contemporaries they continue to be commonly denigrated; though perhaps in some cases this was actually a reaction to their new-found status.[46] So too is there an increase in their participation in embassies and diplomacy. In 567 an embassy was sent by Khusrau to the court of Justinian, in part to gain the cessation of Roman subsidy payments to Sasanian Arab

[41] Proc. *BP*. 2.1.1-15.
[42] Menander fr. 6.1.314-397.
[43] Fischer, *Between Empires*, p. 120; Comparable examples with Goths can be found in, Malchus, fr. 15; Agath. *Hist.* 1.1.6; Menander, fr. 6.1.
[44] John Malalas, *Chron*. 18.148/p. 496.
[45] Menander, fr. 6.1; Ps.-Josh. *Chron*. 88.
[46] On a general move among Rome's *foederati* in the sixth-century towards greater equality see, P. Heather, '*Fodera* and *foederati* of the fourth century', in W. Pohl (ed.), *Kingdoms of the Empire: The Integration of Barbarians in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 57-74.

allies.[47] This embassy was accompanied by a separate one from ‘Amr. Not only is this an example of ‘Amr pursuing his own diplomacy, but he is actually doing so to counter the wishes of his patron. Other examples of diplomacy between Emperor and Arab leaders include the above mentioned exchanges of Justinian and the Nasrid al-Mundhir, as well as incidents in 523-4 and 530, in which the Emperor was required to bypass the Sasanians and directly negotiate with him.[48]

Despite this new-found autonomy and political self-determination, leaders like al-Harith and al-Mundhir did remain inextricably bound to the support of the emperor. For instance, al-Harith was able to choose his own successor, who would rule over his people, yet the final decision to give them the position of supreme *phylarch* remained with the emperor.[49] The close access their relationship gave them to the imperial throne, especially as intermediaries between periphery and centre, often gave them great power. Yet that very closeness also made them vulnerable, for example, in times of leadership change.[50]

The Jafnid al-Mundhir, son of al-Harith, serves as a cautionary example. After succeeding his father he had carried out a successful raid deep into Nasrid territory.[51] On returning, he asked the Emperor Justin for more gold, who promptly ordered his assassination. Justin’s reasoning is disputed, but it seems likely it was either in retaliation for breaking the peace, or a result of religious tension in Constantinople.[52] These scenarios also resulted in authors sometimes portraying Arab leaders as faithful and mistreated, often in pursuit of crticising the actions and personality of an emperor. John of Ephesus very much portrays al-Mundhir as the wronged party at the hands of a perverse and treacherous Justin; rather than attacking Rome as in the account of Bar Hebraeus, he turns around and retires to the desert.[53]

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[47] Menander, fr. 9.3.
[48] John Malalas, *Chron*. 466; Mundhir directly negotiates through a deacon named Sergius. Zach. Rhet. *HE*. 8.3; Evag. *HE*. 4.12; Proc. *BP*. 1.17.43-45; the Romans negotiate with him for the return of hostages.
[49] John Malalas, *Chron*. 18.148.
[50] Fischer, *Between Empires*, p. 116.
[51] Joh. Eph. *HE*. 3.6.3.
[52] I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (Washington, 1995), pp. 348-50.
[53] Bar Hebraeus, *Crhon*. 86-87; Joh. Eph. *HE*. 3.6.3-4; John’s positive portrayal of Mundhir is probably also related to the contemporary Miaphysite/Chalcedonian debate in Constantinople. Both he and Mundhir were prominent supporters of the miaphysite position, while the Emperor Justin had supported the Caledonians. cf. Michael the Syrian, *Chron*. 10.19. Al-Mundhir’s son al-Nu’man, is portrayed similarly with regards to his actions following his father’s arrest, “…pillaging and stealing gold , silver, and everything else; but he did not take people, he committed no murder, and he burned nothing.”

Regardless, it shows how quickly the fortunes of an Arab leader could change on the whims of the emperors. He was later reconciled with Justinian in 575, though fell out with Maurice when the latter was *Magister Militum per Orientum* in the campaign of 581/2.[54] The latter development, which ended in al-Mundhir's arrest, also provides some insight into how Arab leaders forged interpersonal relationships with the Roman 'elite'. Maurice enacted his plans through the aid of a Syrian *curator*, who was both friend and patron to al-Mundhir. The *curator*, Magnus, seems to have been acting as an intermediary between al-Mundhir and the emperor.[55] *Fides*, as in all Roman personal relationships, also seems to hold a strong place in theirs, as al-Mundhir does not initially question Magnus' requests and nominally considers him a 'dear friend'. While John of Ephesus includes the treachery, perhaps in implicit criticism of how Maurice undertook the arrest, authors like Evagrius leave it out. Writing Maurice's eulogy, it is clear he did not consider the manipulated breaking of *fides*, between two individuals of high standing, as an action worthy of remembrance or celebration.[56] Ultimately, though Rome and Persia's Arab allies gained a measure of autonomy, their fundamental reliance on the personal support of Emperors and Shahanshahs demonstrates "the fundamental implications of imperial supremacy for the limits of client power."[57]

They may have gained a measure of political self-determination and autonomy in action, yet in our sources they only have a marginal influence over the actual affairs of the Roman and Sasanian Empires, though this has been variously challenged and supported since Irfan Shahid's seminal work.[58] This brief overview of their relationship is in part intended to demonstrate that the practice of client management was alive and well in the minds of our Roman authors and contemporaries, especially at a time when most of Rome's historical client kingdoms had already been annexed and provinicialised.

Yet though these dependant relationships may have only been marginal to the greater affairs of our Empires, it is possible that the mutual practice of them contributed

[54] Theoph. Sim. 3.16.1-2; Joh. Eph. *HE*. 6.16-17.
[55] *Ibid*., 3.3.40-43; "who would be his agent before the king".
[56] Evag. *HE*. 6.2.
[57] Fischer, *Between Empires*, p. 126; A.G. Grouchevoy, 'Trois "niveaux" de phylarques. Étude terminologique sur les relations de Rome et de Byzance avec les Arabes avant l'Islam', *Syria* 72 (1995) p. 130.
[58] Cf. n. 13 above. M. Whittow, 'Rome and the Jafnids: writing the history of a 6th-c. tribal dynasty', in J.H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research* (Portsmouth, 1995-2002) ii., pp. 207-24. Fischer, *Between Empires*, pp. 10-14.

to how our authors and their contemporaries negotiated their conceptions of their relationship with Sasanian Persia. It is clear that both parties recognised the other's position as a patron of Arab allies. However, recognising that both parties shared and practised similar notions of dependent relationships, at a state level; the practice of empires; immediately put them on a level of equivalency, at least conceptually. This is not to say our authors immediately recognised this, in fact more often than not, they do all they can to paint a picture of the opposite. Yet in combination with constant diplomatic exchange, the constructive effects of which will be explored below, it never the less played an important part in the continued renegotiation of their relationship.

# VI DEPENDENT KINGDOMS: THE PERSISTENCE OF 'PATRONAGE' AND *AMICITIA*

"Those kingdoms which he had gained control of through conquest with few exceptions he either restored to those from whom he had taken them or else joined them to other foreign nations. The kings to whom he was allied he also joined to one another with mutual ties and was always very quick to promote and encourage marriages and friendships among them... He would always treat all of them as integral parts of the Empire."[1]

The quote from Suetonius above describes the complex relationship between Emperor and local kings in the time of Augustus; what was essentially a continuation of a long standing practice from the Republic of forming dependent foreign relationships. Exploring the practice and state of these relationships, with reference to the later period in which Rome and Sasanian Persia interacted, will provide a basis with which to ascribe the influence of notions of patronage and *amicitia* on Roman conceptions of their own inter-empire relationship.

According to early Roman Imperial ideology, these dependent kingdoms were just as much a part of the Empire as administrated provinces and just as subject to Rome's hegemony.[2] They were a way of reconciling expansionist Imperialism with "superfluous conquests" and "unprofitable adventurism".[3] They have been studied under various guises; from 'client-kingdoms' to 'vassal states' and the realms of 'friendly kings', but functionally they represent what has been called a two-level sovereignty.[4] Conventionally in modern scholarship the influence of these dependent kingdoms is confined to the first century CE, after which the kingdoms of Cappadocia, Mauretania, Judaea, Thrace, Armenia Minor, Commagene, Emesa, the territories of Agrippa II and Nabataea were all 'provincialised' by the Empire.[5] Provincialisation generally refers to the gradual process whereby kingdoms beyond the provinces were incorporated into the empire through a number of steps, which could involve the establishment of cities, promotion of religion (i.e. imperial cult), establishment of

[1] Suet. *Div. Aug*. 48.
[2] B. Isaac, 'Eastern Hegemonies and Setbacks, AD 14-96', in (ed.) K. DeVries, *A Companion to Roman Imperialism* (History of Warfare, vol. 81) (Leiden, 2013) p. 237; Strabo, 6.4.2; 17.3.24.
[3] Paus. 1.9.5; 1.8.43; Aristides, *Roman* Oration 70-71; Cass. Dio. 75.3.
[4] Fergus Millar, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East*, vol. 2 (London, 2004), p.229.
[5] *Ibid*., p. 235; respectively in CE 18, 42, 44, 46, 64, 72/73, 70s, 90s, 106.

military garrisons and a shift in governance to more resemble that of Roman cities and provinces.[6]

That many of Rome's dependent kingdoms became provinces by the second century CE is undeniable, yet the widespread process of 'provincialisation' perhaps obscures the continuation of the practice of dependant relationships well into our period in question, at least up until 364 and likely beyond.[7] Though not as widespread as in previous centuries, dependent kingdoms and peoples played a crucial role in the relationship between Rome and Sasanian Persia as intermediaries and sources of conflict. This has already been demonstrated in the above chapter, though the dependency of *phylarchs* is slightly different to that of kingdoms. None the less, they persisted in Armenia and the Caucasus region, and both empires attempted to influence, if not establish such relationships with, kingdoms to the south such as Aksum and that of the Homerites (Ḥimyarites).[8] Though neither was successfully incorporated as such, the fact that both Empires wished to and often depicted them as tributary shows the concept was alive and well.[9] It also suggests the concept of dependent kingdoms remained a useful tool to apply to states beyond the practical reach or influence of the Empires, so as to reinforce concepts of universal hegemony.

Of these later dependent kingdoms, the most influential and important with regards to Rome and Persia was undoubtedly Armenia. Armenia had long served as a point of contention between Rome and Parthia/Persia, initially during the Parthian wars. Its geographical location made it a focal point for the control of economic and military transit from the Near East to Asia Minor, and north through the Caspian Gates in the Caucasus.[10] For most of its existence until the late fourth century CE, it was ruled by a

[6] Isaac, 'Eastern Hegemonies and Setbacks', pp. 247-248.
[7] The Kingdom of Bosporus remained autonomous until the fourth century. 363 CE marks the partitioning of Armenia by Rome and Persia, which saw the eventual replacement of its monarchy and nominal annexation by Rome.
[8] Tabari, I, 945/235-52; Theoph. Byz. 3 (FHG IV.270-1); H. Turtledove, 'Justin II's observance of Justinian's Peace Treaty of 562', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 76 (1983), p. 298; I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (Washington, 1995), pp. 364-372.
[9] G. Fischer, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2011), p. 182.
[10] T. Daryaee, 'The Persian Gulf Trade in Late Antiquity', *Journal of World History* 14, 1 (2003), p. 5; R. N. Frye, 'Byzantine and Sasanian Trade Relations with Northeastern Russia', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972), p. 267. Amm. Marc. 25.7.9-14; et al. Its importance for the movement of armies and strategic control is attested to by its continued contention by Rome and Sasanian Persia throughout the centuries.

king who governed over an often fractured, hereditary, nobility.[11] From the first century BCE it had been subject to a complicated history of influence from both Rome and Parthia, and later Persia. The Roman-Parthian war of 58-63 resulted in an effective stalemate, which saw an Arascid Prince on the Armenian throne, approved and crowned by the Roman Emperor.[12] Increasing Parthian influence during the rest of the century ended with the Emperor Trajan officially annexing and provincialising the kingdom. Yet by 118 his successor, Hadrian, had given Armenia up as a province and reinstalled Parhamaspates as a client king, who was promptly deposed by the Parthians.[13] Similar scenarios repeat themselves throughout the following centuries as it remained a strategic asset that neither Rome nor Sasanian Persia could allow the other to completely control.[14] This was often encouraged and exacerbated by opposing political factions within Armenia, who would approach Rome or Persia for help against unwanted attention from one power or the other.[15]

Armenia's importance to the empires is further revealed by how it remained a point of contention in diplomatic negotiations between the two powers. Jovian's peace for instance, negotiated from a position of weakness on the part of the Romans, initially stopped the Emperor Valens from directly helping the Armenians against Shapur in 364.[16] However by 371 he dispatched an army under Arinthaeus to retake and occupy it, finally considering the Armenians to have suffered enough, or perhaps realising how much of a threat a Sasanian Armenia would pose to Rome, regardless of any peace treaties.[17] It also features in the treaties of 244 and 298.[18] Armenia essentially remained a dependent kingdom, contested by Rome and Persia, until 363 when both signed a treaty dividing Armenia into two unequal parts, though it had to be reinforced by another, ca. 387.[19] It was not until ca. 390 that the Romans replaced the Armenian king

[11] B. Dignas, E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 176; R.W. Thomson (trans.), *The Armenian History According to Sebeos, Part 1* (Liverpool, 1999), p xiii-xiv.
[12] Suet. *Ner*. 13; Cass. Dio. 68.17.1; M.-L. Chaumont, 'Armenia and Iran II', *EncIr* II (1987), p. 424.
[13] P. Edwell, 'Trajan: Imperialism Victorious and Frustrated', in (ed.) K. De Vries, *A Companion to Roman Imperialism* (History of Warfare, vol. 81) (Leiden, 2013), pp. 259-261.
[14] e.g. Faustas, III. 21; N. H. Baynes, 'Rome and Armenia in the Fourth Century', *The English Historical Review* 25 (1910), p. 627.
[15] Faustas, IV. 20; Amm. 27.12.5-9, 27.12.10-13; Proc *BP*. 2.15.1-30.
[16] Amm. 25.7.12; R. C. Blockley, 'The Division of Armenia between the Romans and the Persians at the End of the Fourth Century A.D.', *Historia Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte* 36 (1987), pp. 223-224.
[17] *ibid*., p. 225; Amm.. 27.12.10-13.
[18] Euagr. *HE* 5.7; Amm. 25.7.9; Zos. 3.31-2; Petr. Patr. frg. 14.
[19] Blockley, 'The Division of Armenia between the Romans and the Persians', pp. 222-234; G. Greatrex. 'The background and aftermath of the partition of Armenia in AD 387', *AHB* 14 (2000), pp. 35-48.

Arsaces with a civilian governor titled *comes Armeniae*.[20] Even then, the new *Armenia Maior* retained internal autonomy and simply had to pay tribute and provide soldiers to the East Roman Army.[21] Similarly, the various satrapies to the south which had been under Roman influence since 298 were fully autonomous principalities, in which the local Armenian *nakharar* was fully sovereign.[22] In the Sasanian controlled partition the monarchy was left intact as a client king until finally being replaced with a Sasanian *marzban* in 428.[23]

Similar to Armenia, various peoples in the Caucasus region such as in Albania, Lazica and the Kingdom of Iberia had been in contact with Rome since the first century BCE, a number nominally becoming clients.[24] Iberia enjoyed significant autonomy, and its relationship with Rome went through a number of phases; shifting from a dependent kingdom, to a more autonomous ally, before becoming tributary to Sasanian Persia and later returning to Rome as a client in 298.[25] Peter the Patrician in the sixth century, tells of how the king of Iberia had to receive the symbols of his rule from the Emperor.[26] While much of the area became provincialised or divided between the two Empires by the mid fourth century, the kingdom of Lazica, emerging in the Colchis region, established and maintained a dependent relationship with Rome and Persia from 470 till as late as 523.[27]

The competition over these dependent kingdoms, besides for obvious strategic benefits, also served as an ideological field with which both empires could promote their own dominance and hegemony. While many of those kingdoms became provincialised, it does not seem to have constituted a unanimous imperial 'policy' as such; particularly not in the first century or two CE.[28] When it did happen the reasons for it were quite *ad hoc*; a response from emperors when a king died, a child claimant

[20] Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, pp. 185-186.
[21] A. Kazhdan (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantine* (Oxford, 1991), p. 175.
[22] *Ibid*., p. 1846; Proc. *Aed*. 3.1.24. They were finally stripped of their sovereignty in 485, after a revolt against the Emperor Zeno.
[23] C. Foss, 'The Persians in the Roman Near East (602-630 AD)', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Third Volume* 13 (2003), p. 154; Blockley, 'The Division of Armenia between the Romans and the Persians', p 224; G. Greatrex, S. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars: Part II AD 363-630* (London, 2002), p. 30; *Narratio de rebus Armeniae*, 10-12.
[24] Isaac, 'Eastern Hegemonies and Setbacks, AD 14-96', p. 246.
[25] Much of their autonomy likely stemmed from their proximity to the Caspian Gates and control of access to northern nomadic peoples.
[26] Petr. Patr. fr. 14.
[27] Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, p. 38. For tension with Rome in region form the 460s see Priscus, frg 33.1-2, 41.1.3-27.
[28] Isaac, 'Eastern Hegemonies and Setbacks, AD 14-96', pp. 247-248.

acceding to a throne, regional instability, a need to reinforce a frontier with a more direct military presence, and so on.[29] It did form a significant element of some Emperors' reigns, such as Vespasian and Trajan. Vespasian's reorganisation of the eastern frontier, including the annexation of Commagene, was likely an attempt at strengthening Rome's military presence on the eastern frontier.[30] Trajan's annexation of various territories fell in line with his pursuit of an *imperium sine fine* and the necessity of supporting a heavy military presence on the empire's fringes.[31]

Seeing the provincialisation of Rome's dependent kingdoms as more *ad hoc* than 'policy' is not intended to downplay its importance. There is no doubt that it became a long-term trend for the Roman Empire.[32] Its absence as unanimous policy or practice, however, suggests that it was not a conscious, fundamental, rejection of the practice or ideology of framing foreign relationships in terms of monarchical dependency. Rather, it was implemented for practical reasons of control or defence. Rome continued to engage Sasanian Persia in competition over dependent kingdoms well into the fourth and fifth centuries CE. They maintained dependent relationships with Arab *phylarchs* and kingdoms in the Caucasian region, well into the fifth century. They continued to apply the concept of dependency or label of tributary on peoples geographically outside of their practical control for purposes of imperial ideology. The continued prevalence of the idea and practise of this state dependency, whether framed in terms of client or asymmetrical *amicitia*, must have had an impact on the conceptions of contemporary Romans when they were constructing and negotiating a political relationship with Sasanian Persia. Just as it was ideologically applied to distant peoples and nations, perhaps it helped reconcile Imperial notions of universal hegemony with a Sasanian Persia which consistently refused to be physically subjected.

[29] *Ibid*., p. 248; Tac. *Ann*. 2.42, 2.56; cf. Cass.Dio. 59.8.2, 60.8.1. Tiberius annexed Commagene and incorporated it into the province of Syria. Caligula returned it to the rule of Antiochus IV, and reversed a number of similar measures.
[30] Jos. *BJ*. 7.220-225; B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1992), pp. 39-40.
[31] Edwell, 'Trajan: Imperialism Victorious and Frustrated', p. 261.
[32] Isaac, 'Eastern Hegemonies and Setbacks, AD 14-96', p. 248.

# VII INTERPERSONAL AND INTERSTATE RELATIONS, INTERTWINED

It has been stressed in previous chapters that the nature of how Romans conceived of Sasanian Persia and their two empire's relationship was dynamic. Historical conceptions of Parthia and their transposition onto Sasanian Persia were explored as an integral part in the initial stages of that relationship. It was posited however, that those historical influences were only one element in their conceptual negotiation, and served as the foundation from which later conceptions were built. So too, in exploration of Arab allies as a continuation of imperial client management and the role of dependant states, have we seen both the scope of power wielded by individuals (rather than groups of people) and the preferred propensity among Romans, Sasanians, Arab dynasties and satellite states, to create interstate relationships with individuals.[1]

It remains, however, to explore the later stages of Rome and Sasanian Persia's relationship. This is a period which sees a transition away from the triumphal, often bellicose competition in ideology, iconography and diplomacy of the first three centuries; or at least its augmentation. Instead we see the creation and culmination of a shared diplomatic discourse, increasing recognition of mutual legitimacy and emerging notions of a divinely ordained 'family of kings'.[2] The driving forces for this change are many, from large-scale hostilities on other frontiers and the stabilising payment of subsidies, to a concurrent move towards an emphasis on political rather than military action in external affairs.[3] Some of these will only receive a tangential treatment or overview throughout; our focus will remain on the ensuing conceptions of Sasanian Persia, and importantly, the role and influence personal relationships played in forging them. We will explore the importance of sustained diplomatic exchange, through embassies and the agency of associated individuals. So too, will the propensity for the defection of individual 'elites' between the two powers be examined, and the cross-

[1] G. Fischer, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2011), p. 3.
[2] For further discussion of the theme of a 'family of kings' see E. Winter, 'Legitimität als Herrschaftsprinzip: Kaiser und "König der Könige" im wechselseitigen Verkehr', in (eds.) H.-J. Drexhage and J. Sünskes, *Migratio et Commutatio. FS Th. Pekáry* (1989), pp. 72-98.
[3] R.C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (Leeds, 1998), pp. 113-114. For a more in depth discussion of the role played by subsidies see, R.C. Blockley, 'Subsidies and Diplomacy: Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity', *Phoenix* 39.1 (1985), pp. 62-74.

cultural personal relationships that encouraged it. Finally the personal nature of the relationship between Emperor and Shahanshah will be examined in light of these elements and the persistence of patronage as central to the Roman cultural and ideological experience.[4] Ultimately, we will see how the political relationship of Rome and Persia, and conceptions thereof, were inherently bound to the practice of personal relations, especially patronage and *amicitia*.

As touched upon above, the emergence of diplomacy in lieu of war, rather than in conjunction with it, required the re-conception of the traditional view of 'outsiders as barbarians'.[5] This re-conception primarily appears in the late fourth century, when Rome first began to recognise the permanence of settlements in certain treaties with Sasanian Persia (territorial claims), which in turn promoted the future successful use of political action.[6] In Roman literature, the traditional view of barbarians as "savage", "uncivilised", "untrustworthy", and so on, generally accompanied, preceded, or followed contact with those people through force.[7] The emerging persistence of diplomatic contact between our two subjects is thus accompanied by new portrayals of Persians in both literature and iconography. It is doubtful anyone would call Ammianus Marcellinus overly sympathetic in his description of barbarians; to him, barbarians like the Avars and Huns were sub-human, fickle, nomadic and inherently savage.[8] By contrast, in a long digression on the Persian Empire and its society (which admittedly still contains many derogatory topoi), we see a different side emerge. Along with their vices, Ammianus' Persians are moral, moderate in drink and banquets, gallant warriors, have an enviable system of judges, and if not for domestic and foreign wars would have conquered many other peoples.[9] In effect, this portrayal divests Persia of its status and quality as an 'unknown other', providing recognisable and even enviable traits that enable it to be considered as more than just a military target by Romans.[10]

By no means does this new conception of Persians extend to giving them status as a completely 'civilised' people, a notion further complicated by the late antique

[4] A. Wallace-Hadrill (ed.), 'Patronage in Roman society: from republic to empire', in *Patronage in Ancient Society* (London 1989), pp. 65, 85.
[5] cf. above, §III, p. 23; Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, p. 114.
[6] *Ibid*., p. 363.
[7] *Ibid* ., p.114.
[8] Amm. 31.2.
[9] Amm. 23.6.75-85.
[10] Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, p. 115. Even in recounting conflict, author's like Procopius often praise the restraint of Persian armies; Proc. *BP*. 1.9.16-22.

Roman practice of equating the term 'barbarian' with any non-Christians.[11] They do obtain, however, a kind of semi-civilised status and more importantly, a recognition of their legitimacy as a *politeia*.[12] In our sources, the resultant dissonance between traditional views and these new conceptions is often reconciled through the use of individual personalities. Recognition of the Sasanian Empire as a *politeia* could be contrasted with criticism or judgement of particular Sasanian Shahanshahs, at least in literature, if not in direct diplomatic exchanges.[13] Therefore, Theophylact Simocatta could recognise the legitimacy of Sasanian Persia as a *politeia*, yet be suspicious of individual Sasanian Shahanshahs and the Persian people.[14] Similarly, an author like Procopius could portray Persia fairly consistently as Rome's eternal enemy and rival, but could change his portrayal of individual Shahanshahs as his literary purposes required. In the initial stages of book one Khusrau is portrayed as generally honourable, open to negotiation and releasing hostages, if slightly prone to a desire for war and quick to anger.[15] Yet by the latter half of Procopius' *Persian Wars*, Khusrau is overcome by avarice, unfaithfulness, and ruthlessness.[16] This is despite his actual actions remaining little changed. Focusing on these particular qualities enabled Procopius to avoid explaining the poor state of the Roman East's defence after 540-544.[17]

The changing nature of iconography also reflects this new caution in the emperors' and shahanshahs' portrayal of each other and recognition of sovereignty. This is perhaps most prominent in the obfuscation of individuals in triumphant imagery. From the fourth century there is a progressive tendency from both Empires to depict any triumphal imagery (a recognised and critical practice for both sovereigns) in

[11] K. Lechner, *Hellenen und Barbaren im Weltbild der Byzantiner* (Munich, 1954), pp. 96-98; D. Obolensky, 'The Principles and Methods of Byzantine Diplomacy', *Actes du XIIe congrès international d'études byzantines (Ohrid 1961)* 1 (Belgrade, 1963), pp. 53-6.
[12] P. Schreiner, 'Theophylaktos Simokates und das Perserbild der Byzantine im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert', *ZDMG* Suppl. 5 (1983), pp. 301-306; B. Dignas, E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 238.
[13] The inverse could also be true; such as criticising elements of the Sasanian Empire, such as Zoroastrianism, while complimenting an individual Shahanshah like Yazdgerd I for personal qualities (i.e. a support of Christianity). In effect, it could be used by authors to posit an opinion in as diplomatic a way as possible, and justify diplomacy with a Shah or Persia they were otherwise critical of.
[14] Theoph. Simoc. 4.13.1; Schreiner, 'Theophylaktos Simokates', pp. 301-6.
[15] Proc. *BP*. 1.22.11-15; 1.23.14; 2.4.13.
[16] *Ibid*., 2.6.20; 2.11.27-29; 2.13.4-13; 2.21.30.
[17] A. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (Berkeley, 1985), p. 164.

increasingly abstract and general terms.[18] The mid-fourth century saw the last triumphal representations that overtly represented individual sovereigns in scenes of defeat or subjugation.[19] This speaks to the perceived importance that was placed on those very individuals with regards to diplomacy and what was considered a personal relationship between rulers.

Two examples which clearly demonstrate this are Theodosius I's obelisk in the hippodrome of Constantinople and Justinian's equestrian statue. Thedosius' obelisk is a monument to dynasty and Imperial victory over usurpers.[20] It portrays all the triumphal imagery one would expect, including a subordinate eastern-enemy, Persian envoys performing *proskynēsis* before the Roman Emperor. Yet the subordinate portrayal of these Persians is not the purpose of the monument, rather they are delegated to a position alongside other 'barbarians' as a persisting, expected, part of Roman visual culture, with which Theodosius could emphasise himself as *victor omnium gentium*.[21] Perhaps most importantly, all images pertaining to Persians were located on the obelisk's western face. Situated in the hippodrome, this monument made full use of its location as a centre of ceremony and occasion. Yet the western face would not have been visible to any Sasanian envoys, who would have been situated in the *kathisma* with the emperor.[22] Justinian's statue presents a further example, providing an image of victory over Persians that is so subtle that its specific triumphal meaning must be inferred by those who view it.[23] Overall, these changes reflected a growing recognition of a new political reality in which both empires needed to coexist, one that was encouraged by the persistent exchange of embassies and envoys.

This exchange further encouraged the re-conception of Persians by Roman authors and contemporaries. As an alternative to war they became one of the most important channels of communication between Rome and Persia; they were sent on the ascension and death of emperor's and shahanshahs, to settle conflicts, gather

[18] M.P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, 2009), p. 107.
[19] *Ibid*., p. 107. For instance, the rock relief at Tāq-e Bostān I commemorating the defeat of Julian
[20] *Ibid*., p. 111-113.
[21] S. McCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity,* Transformation of the Classical Heritage 1 (Berkeley, 1981), pp. 55–6.
[22] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, pp. 114, 168.
[23] Procopius, *Aed*. 1.2.4-12. i.e. it is not a depiction of a shah, but a triumphal emperor. Procopius simply ascribes the triumph to being over the Persians.

intelligence and carry letters.[24] By the sixth century, the resources each empire spent on the lavish reception and hosting of these embassies would have been staggering, and in effect they became a central spectacle of Constanipolitan urban life.[25] It was not solely the frequency of these embassies that fostered a change in conceptions and the creation of a shared diplomatic discourse however.

Often one of the most important factors for a conducive exchange was who was actually sent. These were exchanges between two empires, but in a less abstract and more immediate sense they were carried out by the interaction and agency of individuals. In some cases, directly involving an Emperor or Shahanshah at court for example, individual agency played less of a role. Strict ritual often choreographed an exchange and demanded that an envoy give up much autonomy of speech and action.[26] Yet in the literature, emphasis is often placed on individual envoys. In part this could be a stylistic choice; Procopius, for instance, tends to present interstate conflict and exchange as a matter of personal rivalries.[27] While exhibiting the character and motive of those involved certainly makes for more dramatic fare than discussing anonymous transactions of diplomacy, it would be a mistake to discount it as simply a literary device.

In contrast to embassies received at court involving a sovereign, those between respective representatives at a place of neutrality make the effect individuals could have in exchanges demonstrably clear. In 524/525 the emperor Justin responded to a request from Kavadh I to send "men of repute" in order to establish peace with him.[28] Taking into account the status of who was used as an envoy was standard protocol for both courts. Embassies were further broken down into "great" or "lesser" categories, men of

[24] A.D. Lee, *Information and Frontiers: Roman Foreign Relations in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1993), p.169; Lee, 'Embassies as Evidence for the Movement of Military Intelligence between the Roman and Sasanian Empires', in (eds.) P. Freeman, D. Kennedy, *The Defense of the Roman and Byzantine East*, British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara 8, BAR International Series 297 (Oxford, 1986), pp. 455-61. Theoph. Simoc. 8.15.2-7.
[25] C. Eilers (ed.), *Diplomats and Diplomacy in the Roman World* (Leiden, 2009), p. 3; Sen. *Cons. Ad Helv* 6.2; Tac. *Ann*. 16.5.1 Euseb. *VC* 4.7.1-2; *De Cer*. 89-90 (398-410).
[26] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 145; al-Jāhiz, *Le livre de la couronne*, (trans.) C. Pellat (Paris, 1954), p. 97.
[27] M. Whitby, 'Byzantine Diplomacy: good faith, trust and co-operation in international relations in late antiquity', in (eds.) P. De Souza & J. France, *War and Peace in Ancient and Medieval History* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 131.
[28] Proc. *BP*. 1.11.17-33.

high standing normally accompanying the former as a sign of respect and with greater powers of deliberation.[29]

In this instance Justin chose Hypatius, the General of the East and nephew to the late emperor Anastasius, and Rufinus, a man of note among the patricians.[30] Not only were both men of high standing, but they were apparently already personally known to Kavadh by way of their fathers. On the Persian side were two men of equally high standing, Seoses and Mebodes. Ultimately the negotiations were a failure and both sides left empty-handed. Yet interestingly, Mebodes and Rufinus later accused Seoses and Hypatius of colluding to frustrate the peace talks, Hypatius reportedly disenchanted with the actions of his own emperor.[31] It is impossible to tell how true these accusations were, but the fact that both emperor and shahanshah took them seriously speaks to the likely hood that similar actions were not unheard of.[32] Not only does it demonstrate personal interaction between 'elites' across cultures, but it shows the potential impact the motives and ambitions of individual envoys could have on the conduct of diplomacy.

The treaties of 298, 422, 562 and 628 also show that many envoys had a personal relationship with their sovereign and could leave a lasting impact on the sovereign they were treating with.[33] The influence of individuals and personal relationships is also seen in more irregular exchanges between the empires, such as by non-official representatives or men from one empire serving in the other.[34] The most influential example of the latter was likely the Persian Eunuch Antiochus. He first appears in the events surrounding the alleged adoption of Theodosius II by Yazdgerd

[29] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 129. Menander, frag. 18.6.1-10.
[30] Proc. *BP*. 1.11.24.
[31] Proc. *BP*. 1.11.28-33.
[32] Incidentally, Justinian went so far as to torture Hypatius' associates before eventually finding him innocent. Seoses was not so lucky and was executed after numerous enemies added to the accusations against him.
[33] Peter the Patrician, frg. 13 – in 298, the Persian envoy Apharaban is a close friend to Narse. John Malalas 14.23 – in 422, the Shahanshah Bahram is reportedly so impressed by the daring and brave actions of Procopius, *magister militum per Orientem* and envoy, that he turned from war and granted terms of peace. Menander Protector, frg. 6.1 – in 562 the respective envoys were Peter the Patrician, *magister militum praesentalis* & Yazdgushnasp Zich, chamberlain to the Sasanian king. Both had been long serving diplomats and were well known to each other and their respective sovereigns. Chr. Pasch, a. 628; Theophanes, *Chronographia I*, p. 327 – in 628, the envoys were Persian Commander and *a secretis* Phaiak, and Heraclius' own brother, Theodore.
[34] Officially, and not as a result of defection; though the role played by defection will be examined below.

I.[35] Initially an emissary, he became tutor to the young Theodosius and held the rank of *cubicularius*.[36] Despite being both a eunuch and a Persian he receives high praise from Theophanes as "a most remarkable and highly educated advisor and instructor".[37] This is also likely because he was a zealous Christian, who "wrote many things on behalf of the Christians" and lobbied Yazdgerd on behalf of Christians from Persia.[38] A letter from Synesius, conventionally dated to around 404/405, also tells of Antiochus' influence and his personal support of a *comes sacrarum largitionum*, for whom he does "whatever he can; and Antiochus can do whatever he wishes".[39] He eventually obtained the post of *praepositus* and distinction of *patricius*; the proximity this gave him to Theodosius, along with their history, ensured him considerable influence over the emperor until 439, even after Antiochus' departure from the office and palace in 413/414.[40] In addition to this general influence, it is likely Antiochus' personal actions and career had a discernible effect on the development of Roman law. In 439 Theodosius, probably influenced by the eunuch Chrysaphius, a rival of Antiochus, passed a law forbidding ex-*praepositus* from becoming *patricii*.[41]

A further example of the personal character and relationship between individuals impacting diplomacy can be found with the Christian Bishop Marutha of Martyropolis. It is known that Marutha was around the Persian court in 399/400, when a Roman embassy led by Anthemius was negotiating a treaty with Yazdegerd I.[42] It is possible that he was part of the embassy, but was unlikely one of its leaders and it seems his primary mission was to gain relief for Christians in Persia.[43] Yet in the end, the success of Athemius' mission is largely attributed to Marutha establishing a personal relationship, even *amicitia*, with Yazdgerd, primarily through the use of his medical skills.[44] This successful relationship resulted in both Arcadius and Yazdgerd

[35] He is first mentioned with reference to the adoption by Theoph. AM. 5900 (80.8-24); while he is left out by Procopius. It's been suggested by G. Greatrex, that his relative absence from most contemporary sources is explicable by the subsequent hostilities between Rome and Persia in 420-422. It seems likely he actually arrived at court by 402, on business unrelated to Theodosius' adoption.
[36] He had previously served under 'Narses the Persian', who could be the minister Mihr-Nerseh under Yazgerd I.
[37] Theoph. AM. 5900 (80.8-24).
[38] G. Greatrex, J. Bardill, 'Antiochus the "Praepositus": A Persian Eunuch at the Court of Theodosius II', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 50 (1996), p. 173.
[39] Synesius, ep. 110, in (ed.) A. Garzya, *Synesii Cyrensensis Epistolae* (Rome, 1979), pp. 195-197.
[40] Greatrex and Bardill, 'Antiochus the "Praepositus', pp. 190-191, 197.
[41] *Ibid*., p. 197; Theophanes, A.M. 5936.
[42] Socr. *HE*. 7.8; Jo. Chrys. *Ep. Ad Olymp.*14.5; Theophanes. A.M. 5906.
[43] *Chron. Seert* 1.66 p. 317f.
[44] Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, pp. 48-49.

using him as an intermediary on a number of occasions and he gained a reputation as a "mediator of peace and concord between East and West".[45] He also seems to have pursued his own goals as a Bishop, such as convincing Yazdgerd to authorise a synod in 410.[46] In the end, Maruthra's influence in diplomacy stemmed from his personal relationships, forged from his character and ability, rather than from simply holding the position of envoy or Bishop.

Diplomacy between the two empires was further impacted by the lateral movement of individual 'elites' between them, namely through defection and hostage taking. There are countless examples of the former in the literature of the period, and it was a fairly common phenomenon of the ancient world. While most sources focus on generals and aristocrats, there were also frequent defections by clergymen and philosophers.[47] The frequency and ease with which these defections took place suggests the close contact and presence of communications between men on both sides, such as military commanders, probably beyond the official state level exchanges most often portrayed. They could also be self-propagating. A few brief examples will help elaborate. In 363 the emperor Julian laid siege to a well defended Persian fort at Anatha.[48] Rather than sacrifice men in taking it, he arranged for the defenders to surrender. They would only do so on the assurances of Hormisdas, son of the deposed Hormisdas II. Hormisdas had fled to the Romans in 323 and received the protection and patronage of either Licinius or Constantine.[49] He served as a cavalry commander, accompanied the emperor to Rome in 357, led the army from Constantinople to Antioch in 363, and took part in Julian's 'Persian expedition'.[50] Libanius claims Julian intended

[45] *Syn. or*. p. 255.
[46] Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, p. 54; O. Braun, 'De sancta nicaeana synodo', in *Kirchengeschichtliche Studien* 4.3 (Münster, 1898), p. 8; J. Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse sous la dynastie sassanide (224-632)*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1904), p. 88f.
[47] M.P. Canepa, 'Distant Displayes of Power: Understanding Cross-Cultural Interaction Among the Elites of Rome, Sasanian Iran, and Sui-Tang China', *Ars Orientalis* 38 (2010) p. 123. For further discussion of the role of hostages in the diplomacy of Rome and Persia see, A.D. Lee, 'The Role of Hostages in Diplomacy with Sasanian Persia', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 40.3 (1991), pp. 366-374. Unlike in examples of Rome's other foreign relations, the use of 'political hostages', i.e. the sons of nobles etc, is much less prominent in Rome and Sasanian Persia's diplomatic interaction. When they do feature, it is generally as part of a short term exchange to guarantee a truce. Much more common was the taking of 'prisoners of war', entire populations relocated to cities in Persia or used as strong political leverage. In the latter case they became a term of treaties, rather than guarantors of them; e.g. Peter the Patrician, frg. 13; Amm. 25.7.9-14.
[48] Amm. 24.1.7; Zos. *HN*. 3.14.4.
[49] Joh. Ant. fr. 178; Zos. 2.27, 3.13.
[50] Amm. 16.1.16; Zos. 3.2.3. Also see A.H.M. Jones, *The Prospography of the Later Roman Empire, vol. I A.D. 260-395* (London, 1971), p. 443.

to place him on the Persian throne and it is clear that he was integrated into the Roman military with minimal difficulty.[51] The same is true for the Persian commander of the fort, Pusaeus, who was awarded the rank of tribune and later appears as a Roman general in Egypt.[52]

Around 527/528, the Persarmenian brothers Narses and Aratius, both Persian commanders, also defected to the Romans.[53] They had taken part in (and won) previous engagements against the Roman generals Sittas and Belisarius, so were likely in some form of communication with them, and on their defection they were received by the Emperor's steward Narses because he too was a Persarmenian. This may suggest they had been in specific contact with him, but what is interesting is that their personal bond was likely a large influence in them deciding to desert together. This is even clearer when their younger brother Isaac also deserts and gives the Romans a fortress at Bolum, reportedly upon hearing his brothers had received a large monetary reward. While one's immediate reaction might be to cynically ascribe his desertion to a desire for wealth, there are other considerations to take into account. No doubt money was an important factor in his decision, yet his familial relation likely played just as important a role. Duty to his family aside, he was the brother of two deserters who, if other accounts are of any indication, were likely reviled by his fellow commanders.[54] As a result, he was likely under heavy scrutiny and suspicion; the fact that Narses and Artius took their mother with them probably indicates they were fearful of reprisal. Therefore Isaac may have also deserted for just that reason, forced by way of his own personal relationships into a change of allegiance that cost Persia an important strategic asset. All three brothers proceeded to serve in the Roman military.

The fact that these men were integrated so seamlessly into the hierarchy of the Roman military, suggests that Rome and Persia had become closer in more than simply a competitive court culture and the formation of imperial identity.[55] It suggests a reconceptualising and recognition of Persians by leading Roman contemporaries, somewhat at odds with historiographically determined depictions.[56] 'Roman' and 'Persian' towns on opposite sides of the frontier often resembled each other much more

[51] Libanius, *Ep*. 1402.
[52] Amm. 24.1.7.
[53] Proc. *BP*. 1.15.-26-32.
[54] Amm. 24.2.15.
[55] Canepa, 'Distant Displayes of Power', p. 144.
[56] Cf. above §III.

than their own major cities like Constantinople or Ctesiphon.[57] Similarly, the Roman and Persian aristocracy and military leaders probably resembled each other much more than they did some of their provincial subjects. Personal relationships and communications between individuals played a large part in facilitating this, both in official exchanges, but also in casual contact across the frontier. For instance in 357 a leading civilian official, Musonianus, unofficially suggested to the Persian area commander Tamsapor that they should begin to negotiate terms for peace, while there is also evidence of opposing area commanders visiting and sharing meals with one-another across the frontier.[58] In many ways the integration of opposing elites resembles the development of *clientelae* between provincial elites and senatorial aristocracy of the Principate and Late Republic.[59]

The cross-cultural interaction and integration of elites from the respective empires was probably encouraged by the development of a personalised relationship between Emperor and Shahanshah. The impact of their contact and individual relationships goes hand-in-hand with the competitive formation of a shared, sacral, imperial identity at their respective courts. This stemmed from the ideologies of universal hegemony examined in the above chapter on historical conceptions. Both emperor and shahanshah were considered of divine nature by their subjects, their role, to impose cosmological order on the world.[60] The dualism of Zoroastrian cosmology and to a lesser extent Christianity, allowed them to variously portray each other as either enemies of divine order or "fundamental elements in its maintenance".[61] The latter became much more prominent by the fourth century and in practice is represented by hierarchical notions of dependent relationships and divinely ordained world orders. The Constantinople based Roman emperors had already developed a hegemonic 'family of kings' with 'barbarian' Christian rulers in the West; initially on the adoption of Theodoric by the Emperor Zeno.[62] R.C. Blockley and A. Grabar have argued that the

[57] P Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 26; P.S. Wells, *Culture, contact and cultural change: Early Iron Age central Europe and the Mediterranean* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 8; Proc. *Aed*. 3.1.10-11.
[58] R.C. Blockley, 'War and Diplomacy', in (ed.) A. Cameron, P. Garnsey, *The Late Empire, A.D. 337-425* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 422-426.
[59] J.L.L Castro, 'The Spains, 205-72 BC', in (ed.) K. DeVries, *A Companion to Roman Imperialism* (History of Warfare, vol. 81) (Leiden, 2013), pp. 77-78.
[60] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, pp. 100-101; F. Kolb, *Herrscherideologie in der Spätanike: Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian 284-565 n. Chr.* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 3.6) (Munich, 1989), p. 221.
[61] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 103.
[62] Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, p. 123.

Byzantine model of a hierarchical 'family of kings' differs from Rome's relationship with Persia due to the relatively equal standing of the latter.[63] The fraternal portrayal of their relationship in records of diplomacy was also likely more of an initial influence from Sasanian Persia, which had a much greater history and dependence on hereditary succession.[64]

Yet despite fraternal language, both emperor and shahanshah continued to use hierarchical concepts to inform their interaction. There are abundant examples which demonstrate the use of familial language; both emperors frequently refer to each other as brothers, in dualistic terms like 'sun and moon', or in cosmic metaphors like 'eyes in the controlling head of a body'.[65] However whenever the empires are at tension or conflict with each other this familial language is dropped and replaced with more traditional notions of direct dependency.[66] Notably in these cases, the sovereignty of the opposing emperor or shahanshah is never questioned, just their relative status in the relationship. Does this suggest that their familial portrayal was simply a convenient diplomatic euphemism, the polite 'double-speak' that Burton so rails against?[67]

Their recognition of mutual sovereignty would suggest not. However while at highpoints in their relationship they might present a semblance of equality, more often than not there is a coercive element of competition. In more careful examples it appears as a modification on the fraternal theme, by an emperor of shahanshah portraying themselves as 'the father' and their opposite 'their son'.[68] In times of extreme conflict on the other hand, as late as the seventh century, they refer to each other disparagingly as servants, clients or slaves.[69] So too in their use of official titles do they shun any overt recognition of dominance; the emperor often depicted by Persia as first among

[63] *Ibid*., p. 233 n. 71; A. Grabar, 'God and the "Family of Princes" Presided over by the Byzantine Emperor', *Harvard Slavic Studies* 2 (1954), p. 120.
[64] Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, p. 101; P. Pourchariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London, 2008), pp. 27-30, 49. e.g. the major offices of the Sasanian state were hereditarily held by seven 'Great families', whereas while Roman emperors may have been able to develop a *familia Caesaris*, it was a largely conceptual exercise.
[65] Amm. 27.5.3, 27.5.10; Theoph. Simoc. 4.2.2; Corripus, *In laud. Iust*. 2.185-270.
[66] E.g. Sebeos, trans. Thompson, pp. 79-80. For tension between Heraclius and Khusru II.
[67] P. Burton, *Friendship and Empire: Roman Diplomacy and Imperialism in the Middle Republic (353-146 BC)* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 6-15.
[68] Menander, frag. 10.1.1-15; Theoph. Simoc. 4.2.11.
[69] Sebeos, trans. Thompson, pp. 79-80; Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 127.

subject kings, or the Romans indirectly translating shahanshah as *basileus ton Person*.[70] The latter was even adopted by Khusrau II when seeking Roman goodwill, yet the fact remains that it was simply a polite concession and not a fundamental recognition of equality.[71]

Rather than simply representing contradictory conceptions of their relationship or diplomatic niceties that neither side truly believed, the dynamic nature of these conceptions is indicative of the constant state of negotiation their relationship was in. Thus even in their exchange of gifts, as demanded by diplomatic protocol and the necessities of *amicitia*, was there a constant practice of misrecognition and misidentification.[72] In this sense their relationship resembles that of 'partner-opponents', outwardly displaying equality and friendship while each constantly seeks to gain greater symbolic capital than the other. On a personal level, this most often equates to a "collectively maintained and approved self-deception" that keeps reciprocity going. On the interstate level, it allowed Rome and Persia to maintain political exchange without automatically regressing into military conflict, whilst perpetuating asymmetry.[73]

While familial portrayal might not simply be polite euphemism, it does not indicate equality. The majority of instances in which an emperor or shahanshah makes such assertions are when they are in a comparatively weak position.[74] Even the use of fraternal language is not necessarily equitable. According to the Iranian national epic tradition, the Sasanians likely considered both sovereigns literally related through mythical sons of Frēdōn, the last ruler of an undivided world.[75] These brothers were enemies and Canepa makes an interesting point in suggesting that the Sasanian contemporary use of the term was likely tinged with historical notions of deceit,

[70] *Ibid.*, 127; Z. Rubin, 'Roman Empire in the *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* – The Mediterranean World in Sasanian Propaganda', in (ed.) E. Dabrowa, *Ancient Iran and the Mediterranean World* (Krakow, 1998), pp.181-182; E.K. Chrysos, 'The Title Βασιλευσ in Early Byzantine International Relations', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 32 (1978), p. 35. i.e. the use of *basileus ton Person* negating his claim of being a king over kings. The Shahanshah also kept a symbolic arrangement of chairs around his throne, one for each subject king, a physical representation of their status and dependence.
[71] Theoph. Simoc. 4.11.
[72] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, pp. 30-31; *De cer*. 1.89, pp. 406-407; cf. Burton, *Friendship and Empire*, p. 161.
[73] *Ibid*., p. 162.
[74] E.g. Khusrau II after being deposed by Bahram Cobin. Theoph. Simoc. 4.2.2-11.
[75] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 126; T. Daryaee, 'Sasanians and Their Ancestors', in (eds.) A. Panaino, A. Piras, *Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranolgica Europaea, Held in Ravenna, 6-11 October 2003*, vol. I (Milan, 2006), pp. 287-293.

fratricide, and vengeance; thus, a fraternal Rome could also be morally compromised or unequal.[76] Therefore, underlying these familial notions was the constant, asymmetric, presence of patronage and *amicitia* that both empires practised with other neighbours and contemporaries. It is true that at times both courts attempted to create actual adoptions or guardianship agreements between sovereigns, building on the perception of a father son relationship. In both cases however, Theodosius II to Yazdgerd I, and Khusrau I to Justin, their fathers were attempting to secure the rule of their young sons by ensuring their protection and legitimacy.[77] It does speak to a close relationship between sovereigns, but not equality between empires.

In discussing emperor and shahanshah, till now we have primarily been discussing royal identity, which is slightly different than individual identity, though the transposition of the qualities of personal relationships onto them by contemporaries means they can effectively be treated in a similar way.[78] Yet both royal identity and individual identity are distinct from the identity of an empire. While emperor and shahanshah could be considered in familial terms, the Roman and Sasanian empires could be, only in the most abstract of senses. Instead, when referring directly to the relationship of the empires' (rather than emperor and shahanshah), contemporaries had to fall back on ideas and practices of dependence, namely the spectrum of patronage and *amicitia*. It should be argued that the use of familial language was primarily a result of both emperors and shahanshahs seeking to legitimise their sovereignty, and not a practice in establishing notions of Imperial equality; a distinction not made by Dignas and Winter.[79]

It does seem that the personal relationship between emperors and shahanshahs, as individuals as opposed to their over-arching imperial identities, could have a profound effect on the relations of the two empires. For instance the actions the Emperor Maurice took in supporting Khusrau II over Bahram Cobin were met with resistance from his own court.[80] They and the public wanted an opportunity to finally defeat their eastern enemy. Maurice's decision came down to supporting the idea of

[76] Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, p. 126.
[77] Proc. 1.2.1-10; 1.11.1-9.
[78] Canepa, 'Distant Displayes of Power', p. 127.
[79] Dignas and. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, pp. 232-241. An otherwise excellent discussion legitimate rule and their mutual recognition of sovereignty.
[80] Firdausi, trans. J. Mohl, *Le livre des Rois I-VII*, vol. 7 (Paris, 1838-55), pp. 109-39; M.J. Higgins, 'International relations at the close of the sixth century', *CHR* 27 (1941), p. 310, n. 88.

legitimate rule, yet his subsequent relationship with Khusrau as Shahanshah seems closer than one based on treaty alone.[81] Likewise, on Maurice's usurpation, Khusrau claimed Maurice's son had fled to Ctesiphon where he was crowned as rightful emperor, using it as a pretext to go to war against Phocas.[82] Enforcing the idea of legitimate rule upon usurpations is not practised consistently however, and seems to come down to individual attitude and circumstances at the time. When the general Sahrbaraz killed Ardashir III he was apparently supported by Heraclius, who even provided him with soldiers, clearly looking to internally destabilise Persia.[83]

The changing nature of how Romans conceived of their relationship with Sasanian Persia was intimately bound to the interaction and practice of personal relationships. As seen above, diplomacy between the two powers was demonstrably affected by the personal motives and actions of individuals on both sides. The casual contact across frontiers (beyond official state exchanges) and the ease with which elites could move into the hierarchy of the opposing empire, suggests that neither remained a foreign 'other' to contemporaries. Rather, the cross-cultural interaction between individuals, courts and sovereigns seems to have been facilitated by similar practices and concepts of *amicitia* and dependent relationships. The creation of a shared culture of diplomatic discourse was accompanied by a mutual recognition of sovereignty aimed at maintaining imperial identity in both empires. Despite the use of familial terms to ostensibly portray a relationship of equality, both empires remained deeply committed to establishing a hierarchical order in which the other was subordinate. While familial language between the two was not simply polite euphemism, it was primarily directed at reinforcing sovereignty rather than recognising equality between empires. The discrepancy between portrayals suggesting equality, such as familial language or assertions of *amicitia,* and terms of dependency in times of conflict, does not just indicate underlying tensions in the conception of their relationship.[84] It speaks to its constantly dynamic nature, and the Roman recognition thereof. This was not simply a conceptual dualism constantly at tension with itself. Just as Roman contemporaries recognised personal relationships could shift between patronage and *amicitia*, they

[81] Dignas and. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity*, p. 240.
[82] Theoph. Simoc. 5.2.7-3.9.
[83] *Chr.* 724, 147.18-24; G. Greatrex, S.N.C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, Part II AD 363-630* (London, 2002), pp. 226-227.
[84] E.g. in *De cer.* 1.94, 431-432; their relationship is asserted by Peter the Patrician as a being a 'perfect friendship', i.e. equal. Implicit in the passage is a recognition that could change.

recognised an interstate relationship could shift between varying gradations of *amicitia,* dependency, and enmity. Ultimately Rome and Persia's inability to recognise each other as true equals stemmed from fundamentally incompatible Imperial claims to universal rule.

# VIII CONCLUSION

As the crux of an epoch, Rome and Sasanian Persia's relationship was one of great complexity and continual growth. This is demonstrated nowhere clearer than in the dynamic nature of how contemporaries conceived and portrayed it. Initially these conceptions and the relationship itself developed from the historical experience of Romans and Persians with the near and distant past. Viewing polities like Rome and Sasanian Persia as aggregations of individuals gives this further support, providing weight to contingent factors such as shared history and social practice with respect to foreign relations, while also helping to account for varying traditions of thought present in the literature. Over the first two centuries of their relationship the manipulation of historical memory provided a conceptual battlefield alongside the real one. Romans continued to equate Sasanian Persia with their Parthian predecessors and the vying traditions of depicting them as both rivals and subjects. Yet unlike Parthia, Sasanian Persia developed and maintained a military and cultural influence that came to consistently rival that of Rome.

In the face of assertions, like those of Severus Alexander, portraying them as the next in line to the subject Parthian kings, the Sasanians undermined the legitimacy of their predecessors through tools like the *Daray I Darayan*. Strengthening their own claims, they simultaneously made Roman claims of historically legitimated dominance untenable in their current form. As contact and exchange between the two empires expanded beyond the purely military realm, both were continually forced to adopt and adapt to each other. From a somewhat denigrated Achaemenid legacy, perhaps first emphasised by Roman authors, Sasanian Persia managed to appropriate and develop a universal ideology which challenged and forced a reshaping of Rome's own. Crucial to this reshaping was the practice and concept, historical and contemporary, of patronage and *amicitia*. These asymmetrical personal relationships were intimately bound to the creation of a diplomatic discourse between the two empires, both on a personal level between envoys, elites, emperors and shahanshahs, but also as transposed onto broader concept of foreign relations. The contemporary practice of such relationships is epitomised by Rome and Persia's use of Arab allies and the constant importance of and competition over Armenia and the Caucasus between the two powers.

Notions of indirect dependency allowed Rome and Persia to develop a mutual recognition of sovereignty while preserving the fundamental asymmetry implicit in conflicting ideologies of universal hegemony. In diplomacy between the two, this is visible as a hierarchical model of a 'family of kings', fraternal language and symbolic adoptions. This was not simply polite euphemism, but had a demonstrable effect on the actions of individual emperors and shahanshahs, particularly around issues involving questions of legitimate rule, such as usurpations. Yet while individual emperors and shahanshahs could be ostensibly considered in familial terms, the Roman and Sasanian Empires continued to be considered in historical terms of dependency. Such depictions of dependency were not static however, and could shift between *amicitia* and *clientela* as the political situation demanded. It is also clear that the practice of patronage and *amicitia* acted as a cross-cultural mediator, encouraging and enabling the lateral movement of individual 'elites' between the two empires. This was also accompanied by a re-conception of the 'outsider' and 'eastern barbarian', as they came to no longer represent such an 'unknown other' to contemporary Romans.

The creation and constant negotiation of Rome and Sasanian Persia's political relationship was influenced by a myriad of factors, of which the practice of patronage and *amicitia* was only a small part. Yet among these, their practice played a crucial role in the shaping of imperial identity and reconciliation of ideologies. It allowed Roman authors to express their own place and that of Rome in a constantly changing world, and in a relationship whose impact and influence would resonate for centuries to come.

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