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VANDAL AND BYZANTINE AFRICA

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The period from A.D. 425 to the eve of Islam was a momentous one for North Africa. At its start, what is now seen to have been one of the most prosperous and urbanized of Roman provinces, even if that development came somewhat later than elsewhere, passed without real struggle into Vandal control. The monarchy then established lasted until A.D. 533/4, when a Byzantine force under Belisarius re-established Roman rule, again with surprising speed. The new province established by Justinian's Pragmatic Sanction of 534 endured in theory, if not fully in reality, until the fall of Carthage itself to the Arabs in A.D. 698; even though Arab armies had defeated and killed a Byzantine exarch in 646–7¹ and founded an Islamic city at Kairouan in 662, ties between the province and Constantinople were not entirely broken.

These changes of fortune also implied political, religious and economic changes which have been the subject of much recent discussion. The main stimulus for this re-examination has come from archaeology – first and foremost the important series of excavations conducted by a number of national teams at Carthage during the 1970s under the general auspices of UNESCO; these have provided, in many cases for the first time, reliable information at least about parts of the city and its development during this and other periods, and have stimulated and made possible further important developments in such disciplines as the study of ceramics. In turn, the results of these excavations, even though not all are yet fully published, have contributed to the re-examination of issues such as long-distance trade and its place in the Mediterranean economy in the sixth and seventh century. One result has been that the period of Vandal rule in North Africa is no longer seen as one of severe economic decline; rather, overseas trade continued as before. In assessing the level of this exchange, historians have depended heavily on the recently developed study of late Roman pottery, and in particular of late Roman African slipwares. But recent work on Justinian's fortifications in North Africa, survey evidence and work on some major sites, if as yet only incomplete, is also enabling historians to

revise old views of the impact of Byzantine reconquest. A further important change has been the discarding of the colonial model of interpretation, which had long dominated the study of Roman Africa. Often regarded as 'western', and therefore neglected by Byzantinists, North Africa is at last beginning to be recognized as an area of major importance for the general history of the late sixth and seventh century.²

I. THE VANDAL CONQUEST AND VANDAL RULE (429–534)

Led by their king, Geiseric, the Vandals crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and entered Roman Africa in A.D. 429. Hippo Regius, on the coast near the border between modern Algeria and Tunisia, the site of Augustine's bishopric, was burnt in 431, only months after Augustine's death in late August 429. In 435 parts of Numidia were conceded to the Vandals by treaty, and in 439 they occupied Carthage; a second treaty in 442, hastily agreed after a Vandal fleet had reached Sicily and threatened Italy, gave them Proconsular Africa, Byzacena, Tripolitania and part of Numidia, while plans were set in hand for a marriage between Geiseric's son Huneric and Eudocia, the daughter of Valentinian III.³ A band probably totalling in 429 no more than 80,000, including non-combatants,⁴ thus went almost unchecked by the provincial armies. External attempts to check or overthrow them – in particular, naval expeditions planned by Majorian in 460 and Leo I in 468 – also failed disastrously. Meanwhile, the Vandals had gained control of Corsica, Sardinia and the Balearics, and in 455 even sacked Rome and took the empress Eudoxia and her daughters Eudocia and Galla Placidia prisoners (Vict. Vit. *Hist. Pers.* 1.24; Procop. *Wars* III.5.1–6); Mauretania and Sicily also came under Vandal sway. After 468 there was little chance of further action against them from the west, and they were raiding the coast of Illyricum when the eastern government under Zeno concluded a peace with them in 475;⁵ this peace lasted until Belisarius' expedition. Geiseric was succeeded in 477 by his son Huneric (477–84); after him came Gunthamund (484–96), Thrasamund (496–523), Hilderic (523–30), the son of Huneric and Eudocia, and Gelimer, the last

² See Mattingly and Hirschner (1991) 209–13 for an excellent survey, with rich bibliography; also Duval (1990), (1993). The standard works on Vandal and Byzantine Africa are still Courtis (1955) and Diehl (1896) (on Courtis, see Mattingly and Hirschner (1991) 210; Lepelley (1989) 30). For the literary sources for the Byzantine period see Cameron (1982), an early attempt at a synthesis; Pringle (1981) is a valuable and detailed study of military aspects. Fundamental on the prosperity of late Roman Africa are Lepelley, *Cité* and Lepelley (1989). For methodology, and for the limitations of archaeological evidence, see Roskams (1996).

³ Main sources for the period: Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution* trans. Moorhead (1992); Procopius, *Wars* III.1–9 (on which see Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans* 62–9); Prosper, *Chron.*; Hydatius, *Cont. Chron.*; see also Ferrandus, *Italia Fulgentii* and Victor of Tonnena, *Chron.* In general see Courtis (1955); Diesner (1966); narrative in Bury, *LR* I.1.

⁴ For the number see Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans* 231–4.

⁵ Malchus fr. 5 Blockley.

¹ Gregory, *PL* I: III.154, cf. Pl. Gregory 19.

Vandal king (530–4), who walked as a captive in Belisarius' triumphal procession in Constantinople.⁶

Like barbarian settlers elsewhere in the western empire, the Vandals were greatly outnumbered by the existing population. As the self-appointed chronicler of Catholic persecution by the Arian Vandals, Victor of Vita, who seems himself to have accompanied the Catholic clergy exiled by Huneric, emphasizes the damage done by the invaders and the prosperity that had gone before.⁷ The unpopularity of the landowning class may have meant that the arrival of the Vandals was not unwelcome to some sections of the population,⁸ and the invaders were able to rely on Roman Africans such as Fulgentius, who was later to become bishop of Ruspe and a leader of the Catholic opposition, to maintain their administration. However, much of our literary evidence for the period comes from hostile Catholic churchmen, and the picture is necessarily mixed: moreover, direct Vandal influence was concentrated in the Proconsular province. As a consequence, the so-called *sortes Vandalorum*, the lands which they allocated to themselves and which represented a division between Vandals and Romans, by no means affected all Roman landowners.⁹

According to his biographer, although Fulgentius' grandfather had fled to Italy when the Vandals took Carthage, his father and uncle had succeeded in recovering the family estates near Thelepte in Byzacena, and Fulgentius spent his early life managing the estates and holding the position of *procurator*.¹⁰ The *Tablettes Albertini*, wooden tablets on which are recorded in ink acts of sale from A.D. 493–6, demonstrate the continuance of late Roman landowning practice and indicate that new trees are being planted.¹¹ While it is hard to find evidence of continuing curial patronage after the Vandal conquest, signs of continuity include attestations of a number of *flamines perpetui* and *sacerdotes*, even though Christian, the Roman élite continued to hold the traditional titles, whether the imperial cult had been appropriated by the Vandal kings, who called themselves *reges*, or whether the titles still carried an imperial connotation.¹² A law of Huneric (484) lists the Roman hierarchy in traditional terminology,¹³ while the Vandal kings used the mint of Carthage to issue coins with titulare and iconography derived from imperial usage.¹⁴ By the end of the Vandal period, poets such as Luxorius and Florentinus, whose poems survive in

⁶ Gelmer and his life in exile: Cameron (1989).

⁷ Vict. Vit. *Hist. perse.* 1.3–12, with 11.28, 32; cf. also Possidius, *Vita Augustini* 28. Despite 1.1, which seems to refer to A.D. 488–9, most indications in Victor's work point to 484 as the date of composition: Moorhead (1992) xvi–xvii. ⁸ E.g. Diesner (1966) 51ff.; Frend (1978) 480–2.

⁹ For the *sortes*, see Procop. *Wars* III.5.11–15; Vict. Vit. *Hist. perse.* 1.12–14, both highly coloured (see Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans* 68); Clover (1982a) 667–8. ¹⁰ Ferrandus, *Vita Fulgentii* 1.13, 8–10.

¹¹ Courtis et al. (1952); cf. Bernal and Février (1966–7).

¹² Chastagnol and Duval (1974); Clover (1982a), (1989).

¹³ Vict. Vit. *Hist. perse.* III.3–14. ¹⁴ Clover (1986).

the *Latin Anthology*, were praising Vandal rule in a style reminiscent of imperial panegyric; there was clearly also some cultural and linguistic intermingling, even if on a limited scale.¹⁵ But life under such a regime was not easy: even if there was a semblance of continuity, the curial patronage so amply documented for the period before the Vandal conquest seems to have come to an abrupt end, and there are no public inscriptions from the Vandal period. When the Vandals employed Catholics in the royal palace, the Catholics found it politic to dress like Vandals,¹⁶ and the Roman poet Dracontius fell foul of Gunthamund and was imprisoned for it.¹⁷

The Catholic hierarchy, fresh from its recent harsh measures against the Donatists, soon itself experienced periods of persecution from the Arian Vandals. As a result, it developed a strong sense of identity, defined by opposition, which was to continue into the Byzantine period.¹⁸ Geiseric had made the church a target at first with an eye to its wealth, but his successor Huneric went further and tried to enforce Arianism, calling a council reminiscent of the anti-Donatist Council of 411, and following it with a general edict against Catholics in 483 and 484;¹⁹ Geiseric had left the see of Carthage vacant from 440 to 454, and again from 457 to 481, and forbade ordinations in Zeugitana and Proconsular Africa. The extent to which Victor's evidence can be trusted in detail is uncertain, but the policy of persecution and exile continued under Gunthamund and Thrasamund, in whose reign Fulgentius of Ruspe became a leader of the bishops exiled to Sardinia and elsewhere. On their side, the Catholic hierarchy used pamphlets and propaganda to enhance their sense of living under a tyranny. A bishops' list with additional notations, known as the *Notitia provincialium et civitatum Africae*, whose reliability has been doubted, gives the number of 466 for the bishops attending the conference in 483, with their subsequent fates; most were allegedly exiled, either within Africa itself or in Corsica.²⁰ Fulgentius, who had been exiled himself, later engaged in formal debate with Thrasamund on points of doctrine.²¹ The experience of harassment and exile served to strengthen the resolve of the bishops; at the end of the Vandal period a council held at Carthage in 525 under the more tolerant Hilderic was able to deal with issues internal to the Catholic church in Africa, and prepared some of the ground for the stand it was later to take against Justinian.²² More immediately, however, the Byzantine victory in 534 was accompanied by the public overthrow of Arianism and the reinstatement of the orthodox.

¹⁵ Luxorius: Roscnblum (1962); Florentinus (*Anth. Lat.* 371): Clover (1982b); Clover (1986) 9–10; Cameron (1982) 30. ¹⁶ Vict. Vit. *Hist. perse.* II.8. ¹⁷ Clover (1989) 62–6. ¹⁸ Parsons (1994).

¹⁹ Vict. Vit. *Hist. perse.* 1.29–51; II.23, 39; Huneric as persecutor: Procop. *Wars* III.8.3–5.

²⁰ Parsons (1994) ch. 6.

²¹ Ferrandus, *Vita Fulgentii* 19.21; cf. his *Vita Iulii ad Thrasamundum and Responsiones contra Arianos*, (C.M. 91, 91A. Thrasamund: Procop. *Wars* III.8.8–10. ²² Courtis (1955) 304–10.

The attempt to trace the impact of Vandal rule from the material remains yields ambiguous results, and certain developments perceptible in the fifth and sixth century, such as increased ecclesiastical building and signs of encroachment on traditional public spaces, are common to other areas in late antiquity.²³ The evidence of the archaeological record is inevitably incomplete and often hard to interpret. At Carthage itself, some monuments may have been falling into disrepair or partly destroyed; Victor of Vita claims that the Vandals completely destroyed the odeon, the theatre, the temple of Memoria and the Via Caelestis, and some archaeological confirmation has been found in the case of the circular monument, the odeon, the theatre, the Byrsa and to some extent also for the Theodosian wall, the circular harbour and the circus.²⁴ The fifth and early sixth century have not yielded mosaic floors comparable with those of the fourth-century villas.²⁵ But city life continued, the Vandal kings themselves engaging in building enterprises, and Vandal nobles possessed fine houses and suburban villas with gardens.²⁶ Against Victor of Vita we may cite the fulsome eulogy of Carthage and its buildings by Florentinus in the *Latin Anthology*.²⁷ Church building also continued; the large basilica at Bir el Knissia, Carthage, for example, which underwent substantial alterations in the later sixth century and was still flourishing in the seventh century, was built in the late Vandal period.²⁸ Outside the cities, important recent evidence comes from archaeological surveys, notably (for the central areas) at Segermes and Kasserine, with important results also from Caesarea in Mauretania and the Libyan valleys; not all the final results are as yet published.²⁹ These allow a far broader approach than before to North African agricultural systems – in particular, the effects of water installations; they do not suggest a sharp change in the Vandal period, which continued to benefit from the enormous growth in sedentarization in earlier periods, which brought with it economic growth on a major scale, and from the wealth of Roman Africa in the fourth century. Fortified farms or other small rural buildings, probably private in origin, are a feature which was to develop further in the Byzantine period.

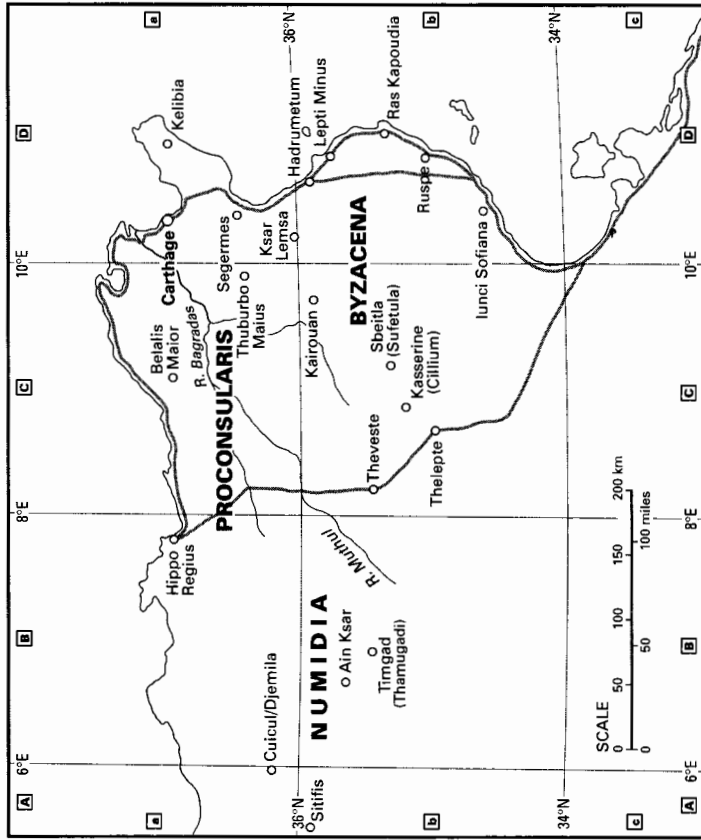
The understanding of the role played by Vandal Africa in general patterns of long-distance Mediterranean trade has been revolutionized in the last generation by the scientific study of African pottery (ARS, African red-slip ware) from this period, beginning with the fundamental work of John Hayes; similar results have been obtained using other evidence

²³ Humphrey (1980); Mattingly and Hitchner (1995) 210. Cities: Brett and Fentress (1996) 79–80.

²⁴ Vict. *Vit. Hist. persic.* 1.8; see Mattingly and Hitchner (1995) 210. ²⁵ Lepelley (1992).

²⁶ Clover (1982b) 13–15; the epigrams of Luxorius make it clear that games and entertainments were still popular: Rosenblum (1962). ²⁷ *Anth. Lat.* 376. ²⁸ Stevens *et al.* (1993).

²⁹ References and general discussion in Mattingly and Hitchner (1995) 189–96; an important kiln survey is also under way.



Map 12 The central provinces of Vandal and Byzantine Africa

– for instance, lamps.³⁰ Far from being cut off from the rest of the Mediterranean, African exports continued throughout the period, and indeed up to the seventh century; interpretation of the evidence remains controversial, but while there is evidence of decline from the mid fifth century, combined with a significant increase in imports of eastern amphorae to the west, the argument is one of scale. Geiseric's aggressive policy against Italy cannot have helped the cause of African exports; yet kiln evidence shows that at Lepti Minus, for example, production was continuous. Indeed, the ending of the *annona* at Rome, which had acted as a stimulus to African production but also deprived the province itself of much of the grain which it produced, may have increased local resources during the Vandal period. It is not clear to what extent the level of long-distance exchange was affected by the substitution for Roman currency exports to North Africa of a local Vandal coinage and the continued use of fourth-century bronze.³¹

³⁰ See *Ibid.* 200–5, with Panella (1989), (1993), in general, Giardina (ed.), *Società romana* 111; Fulford, in Fulford and Pearceck (eds.) (1984). Discussion in Wickham (1988), especially at 190–3; Mattingly (1988).

³¹ References in Mattingly and Hitchner (1995) nn. 386–7.

The study of Vandal and Byzantine Africa, as of Roman Africa, has been dominated in the past by attitudes derived from the modern experience of colonialism, which has indeed provided the researchers and their milieux, as well as their subject matter. Notions of a thin veneer of civilization established by some process of 'Romanization' over a large native population, or ideas of frontiers as protective barriers instead of zones of contact, have been central to this approach. The processes first of recognizing the models applied in older scholarship and then of deciding in what direction to replace them are still in their early stages.³² As yet, neither Vandal nor Byzantine Africa has featured as prominently in this debate as has the Roman period; nor has either been the subject of the same level of discussion about ethnic and cultural definition as have other geographical areas in late antiquity, notably Egypt and the near east. For a variety of reasons, the level of scholarship with regard to North Africa on such questions remains undeveloped, even in relation to topics like Donatism that are comparatively well-studied. But with the impact first of the Arian Vandals and then, with the Byzantine conquest, of the eastern armies and administration, new levels of complexity were added to an already complex situation. In their important survey, Mattingly and Hitchner argue for a move away from the existing models of two cultures, or of resistance and reaction, towards a more integrated and 'African' approach, replacing that of much of the earlier modern literature, which, as they point out, has tended to adopt the bias inherent in the contemporary Roman and Byzantine sources.³³

Outside Vandal territory the picture is varied. Attempts were made to compensate Roman landowners for their losses at the hands of the Vandals,³⁴ and there is evidence for fine houses and mosaics at Cuicul/Djemila and Cherchel, but elsewhere, as at Lepcis and Sabratha to the east, things were less secure. A central phenomenon of the Vandal and Byzantine periods is the increasingly important role played by the Mauri or Berber 'kingdoms' in the mountains of the Aurès and to the south and south-east of the Vandal areas; one of these groups, the Leuathae, still pagan, came from the east, from the area of Cyrenaica, but others – for instance, in Mauretania – were already Christianized, and used Latin. Though the Byzantines were able to win a spectacular success over the Vandals, they found some of these groups more formidable opponents; they feature far more prominently in Arab accounts of the Islamic conquest of Africa in the seventh century than do the Byzantines, and were destined to have a far longer history in the province. Corippus' *Iohannis*, a Latin hexameter poem in eight books praising the campaigns of the Byzantine general John Troglita in the 540s, is a major source of informa-

³² *Ibid.* 169–70, 209; Roskams (1996) 175–80.

³³ See e.g. their comments on the historiography of Donatism, Mattingly and Hitchner (1995) n. 459.

³⁴ *Non Val.* 34 (A.D. 451).

tion about the Berbers, who are as yet imperfectly understood;³⁵ during John's campaigns the heavily-armed Byzantine cavalry met an enemy who were camel-riders and for whom they were unprepared. Pastoralists, and comprising both transhumants and sedentaries, these tribal groups had benefited from the loosening of control during the period of Vandal rule, and the advent of the Byzantines presented a direct challenge to them. Already, before the end of the Vandal period, the Leuathae were established in Byzacena, but it seems unlikely that their importance was appreciated by Justinian and his advisers when they decided to send an army to Africa in 533.³⁶ But by the mid century, and with John Troglita's campaigns, the Byzantines had achieved some success, pushing back the Leuathae and destroying the main cult centre at Ghirza, south of Lepcis.

II. THE BYZANTINE CONQUEST AND BYZANTINE RULE

Whether late Vandal Africa already represented a run-down and struggling province when Justinian decided to invade depends, therefore, on what evidence one chooses to use; it was certainly ripe for the picking. The Byzantine expedition, consisting of some 15,000 infantry and cavalry, set sail from Constantinople in the summer of 533 under the command of Belisarius; after putting in at Sicily and receiving the news that Gelimer was himself away from Carthage, and that most of his army had been sent to Sardinia, the Byzantines landed at Caput Vada (Ras Kapoudia), on the east coast of Tunisia.³⁷ The campaign was a useful distraction after the Nika revolt of the previous year, and hostilities with Persia had recently ended. Besides, Justinian had a pretext: Hilderic, who had been well-disposed towards Byzantium, had been deposed and imprisoned in 530 by Gelimer, who had responded haughtily to Justinian's protest.³⁸ The first encounter took place at Ad Decimum outside Carthage, and on the day after the feast of St Cyprian (14 September) Belisarius led his troops into Carthage, sat on Gelimer's throne and feasted on food prepared for the Vandal king in his palace; among those who were present was the historian Procopius, who is our main source.³⁹ Meanwhile, Gelimer had had Hilderic killed and had fled himself.

The two armies met at Tricamarum in December, and again the Byzantines prevailed. Gelimer fled to the mountains and soon gave himself up: the Vandals were defeated.⁴⁰ A praetorian prefect of Africa was established, to

³⁵ See Friend (1978) 484–5; Pringle (1981) 1.15–16; cf. the series of articles by G. Camps, e.g. Camps (1984), with Modern (1991). Brett and Fentress (1996) puts the subject on a new footing; see especially 1.1.80.

³⁶ The wisdom of the decision was questioned, according to Procop. *Wars* III.10.2–6.

³⁷ For the campaigns that followed, see Pringle (1981) 1.16–22.

³⁸ Procop. *Wars* III.9.5–26.

³⁹ Procop. *Wars* 20.1.

⁴⁰ Justinian assumed the titles of Vandalicus and Africanus as early as 21 November 533, before the battle of Tricamarum; Const. *Imp. maiestatem*, c. II. 1, *Inc.*, XXI, and cf. *CJ* 1.27.1 (A.D. 534).

oversee in addition Sardinia, Corsica, the Balearics and Septem, at the tip of Mauretania Tingitana; the eunuch Solomon was appointed to this position, and was given military powers as well when Belisarius returned to Constantinople with the captive Gelimer to celebrate a great triumph and to answer in person insinuations made against him.⁴¹ In a ruthless and efficient move, the Vandal males were settled in the east and exploited as military manpower, thus effectively destroying the former governing élite.

But almost at once Solomon had to face Berber attacks in Byzacena and Numidia, while the uncertainties surrounding property rights and imperial action on religious matters in the newly restored province led in 536 to serious rebellion within Solomon's army; many soldiers had married Vandal captives, and had an interest in the family property of their wives, while others were Arians, whose religion had been forbidden by a law of 535.⁴² Such was the danger that Solomon and Procopius fled to Sicily, while Carthage was sacked by its own garrison. The situation was only relieved by incisive action by Justinian's cousin Germanus, sent to Africa in 536, and Solomon was reappointed in 539; he was killed at Kasserine in 544.⁴³ The Berbers in Numidia had played an equivocal role as they watched the warring parties; Solomon therefore lost no time in driving them back towards Mauretania and, in doing so, gained control of the old Mauretania Sitifensis, although Byzantine Africa remained smaller in extent than Roman North Africa. Meanwhile, already in 535 a church council had been held in Carthage on the question of whether the former clergy who had converted could be received into the Catholic church, and whether their baptism was valid.

Except on certain ecclesiastical matters, we are poorly informed about internal affairs in North Africa in the sixth and still more in the seventh century. The account in Procopius' *Wars* focuses firmly on the Byzantine army rather than the local population (though he gives a different, if highly coloured, account in the *Secret History* (18.1–21)). At *Wars* viii.17.20–1 (A.D. 533–4) Procopius sums up the story of Byzantine rule to date, admitting the high cost to the country of years of war and mutiny; for most of the period the Byzantines faced rebels within their own army as well as having to fight off Berber attacks. Solomon's nephew Sergius, appointed in 544, utterly mishandled the military situation and was recalled to Constantinople in 545; a new commander, Areobindus, fought unsuccessfully against Guntharis, a further rebel, who thus gained possession of Carthage in the winter of 545–6; Areobindus was treacherously murdered by him, only for Guntharis to be assassinated in turn.⁴⁴ The campaigns of

John Trogita in 546–8, praised in Corippus' *Iohannis*, restored quiet for a time,⁴⁵ but the same poet writing in 566–7 refers to the *miseri Afi*.⁴⁶ In the *Iohannis*, he tells little beyond the sphere of military campaigns, though we learn that he was directing his poem at the *proeres* of Carthage (*praef.*, 1), perhaps as an apologia for the Byzantines and their previous military failures.⁴⁷ Both Procopius and Corippus operate within crude categories which permit little understanding of the real ethnic and cultural circumstances, and both relegate the Berber tribes simply to the realm of barbarians;⁴⁸ neither shows any awareness of the indignant response of the African church to Justinian's religious policy in the 540s (see below).

During the 570s and 580s fighting with the Mauri continued, claiming the lives of several Byzantine generals; however, Gennadius, appointed *magister militum Africae* by Tiberius II in 578, killed their leader, Garmul, and strengthened Byzantine fortifications.⁴⁹ By the end of the century, after the reforms of Maurice (582–602), the province was relatively prosperous and peaceful. A detailed list of towns, bishoprics and metropolitan sees is given in what remains of the *Descriptio urbis Romani* by an early-seventh-century writer, George of Cyprus.⁵⁰ The Armenian-born patrician Heraclius, who became exarch before the deposition of the emperor Maurice in November 602, was able to mint coins, engage mercenaries and despatch a naval force to Constantinople against the tyrant Phocas in 609–10 under his son, also called Heraclius, and an army under his nephew Nicetas. The two-pronged attack was successful, and Phocas was overthrown, whereupon Heraclius the younger became emperor.⁵¹ Little more is known, however, of internal affairs in Africa until the time of Maximus Confessor, who spent two periods in Carthage, culminating in his successful debate there in 646 with the Monothelite Pyrrhus, the former patriarch of Constantinople, after which he left Africa for Rome, where he was the leading mover at the Lateran Synod of 649. Shortly after the debate between Maximus and Pyrrhus, the exarch Gregory seems to have declared himself emperor in a bid against Constans II, only to be defeated and killed by the Arabs near Sbeitla in A.D. 647.⁵² The Byzantine sources tell us little or nothing about Africa in the later seventh century, though this is partly or wholly attributable to their general inadequacy. Although coin hoards from the late seventh century suggest that the government in Constantinople was still interested in North Africa, Byzantine historical sources are reduced to a few laconic notices in the ninth-century chronicles of Theophanes and Nicephorus.

⁴⁵ *PLRE*: iii.644–9, s.v. Ioannes 36, *qui et Trogita*. ⁴⁶ *In laudem Iustini*, *Pan. Anast.* 37.

⁴⁷ So Cameron (1982) 37–9.

⁴⁸ Cameron (1982) 39–40 (Corippus); Cameron, *Procopius* 184–7 (Procopius).

⁴⁹ Pringle (1981) 1.40–1; see Durlauf (1981) no. 28 (Khenchela).

⁵⁰ I. H. Ciezler (ed.), *Geogr. 1890*; see Pringle (1981) 1.42–3. The lists are found today as part of a later compilation. ⁵¹ Sources: *PLRE*: iii.584–7, s.v. Heraclius 3 and 4; see Pringle (1981) 1.43–5.

⁵² Pringle (1981) 1.46–7.

⁴¹ Events: Stein, *Bas-Empire* ii.318–28.

⁴² Just. *Nov.* 37, 6–8; the mutiny of Stotzas: Pringle (1981) 1.22–7.

⁴³ For Procopius' narrative and allusions to internal affairs, see Cameron, *Procopius* 176–8.

⁴⁴ *PLRE*: iii.107–9, s.v. Areobindus 2; iii.574–6, s.v. Guntharis 2.

The end came in A.D. 698 after an unsuccessful attempt by the Byzantines to save Carthage from capture by the Arabs.⁵³

Within a decade of Belisarius' triumph, Justinian's religious policy provoked indignation among the African bishops. Traditionally looking towards Rome, they reacted with shock and concern when they found that, in his anxiety to placate the Monophysites, the emperor was prepared to condemn writings they themselves held in respect. North African bishops including Reparatus of Carthage, Facundus of Hermiane and Primasius of Hadrumetum were among the leaders of the opposition to Justinian's condemnation of the Three Chapters; these and others were summoned to Constantinople after they had formally condemned pope Vigilius in 550 at a council in Carthage, and were given summary treatment in the years that followed.⁵⁴ Those who had not succumbed, meanwhile, were equally staunch in their opposition to Justinian's final theological initiatives in the last year of his life, in the course of which he deposed the patriarch of Constantinople. This protracted struggle between African bishops and Constantinople led to many of the African clergy, including the bishop of Carthage, being deposed and replaced by others who would be more amenable.⁵⁵ As in the case of the Catholics under Vandal persecution, surviving accounts are written to a large degree in order to heroicize the objectors; yet enough of their own theological treatises are preserved and enough is known about the Three Chapters affair and the Fifth Oecumenical Council in 553-4 to show that the general outline is reliable.

Late in the sixth century, fitful light is shed on North African Christianity by some letters of pope Gregory I (590-604) which may indicate the continuing influence of Donatism, unless indeed they tell us more about Gregory's own assumptions and worries.⁵⁶ But the next substantial amount of documentary evidence comes from the seventh century, and tells again of the African church, or parts of it, taking up a stance of opposition towards Constantinople. By then, Greek was the language used by the eastern monk, theologian and religious leader, Maximus Confessor, in his letters to clerics and members of the administration, and in his public debate with Pyrrhus of Constantinople. Maximus spent two periods in North Africa, first in the 620s and 630s and again in the 640s. He influenced a strong North African contingent to follow him to Rome, where the Lateran Synod was held in 649, and he was prominent in its deliberations

⁵³ Coins of Constans II: Guéry, Morisson and Slim (1982); events of A.D. 698: Theoph. *Chron.* p. 370 de Boor.

⁵⁴ Cameron (1982) 46-8. A main source is the *Chronicle* of Victor of Tonnena, who was among those imprisoned. ⁵⁵ Vict. Tunn. *Chron.* s.a.a. 553-5; for the African bishops see Maier (1974).

⁵⁶ Cameron (1982) 49-51, with Markus (1964), (1979). Against the view of Donatism as identifiable with rural resistance (Frend (1952)) see Mattingly and Huchner (1995), works cited in n. 459.

and in the composition of its *acta*.⁵⁷ Maximus' older friend Sophronius, himself the pupil of John Moschus and another link with the Greek monasteries of Palestine (he was to become patriarch of Jerusalem, 634-8), had been in Egypt before it was overrun by the Persians in 617. From there, a stream of refugees fled towards Carthage, which with the rest of North Africa escaped Persian conquest. Eastern monasteries were by now established in the city, and it was from one of them that Maximus wrote during his first stay in Carthage of his disapproval of the emperor Heraclius' order for forced baptism of Jews in 632 and of the new danger from the Arabs. A Christian dialogue, the so-called *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, probably of the late 630s, claims to tell the story of a converted Jew who had been engaged in trade in Carthage.⁵⁸ During the 640s Maximus emerged as the champion of religious opposition to the Monothelete policies of Heraclius (610-41) and his successor, Constans II (641-8), and for a brief period there was intense communication between Rome, Constantinople and Carthage. After the Lateran Synod and the exile and death of pope Martin I (653), Maximus was himself exiled to Thrace (655) and then to Lazica, where he died (662). Although the emperor Constans II spent the last part of his reign in the west, in Italy and Sicily, where he was murdered in 668, little more is heard now of Byzantine North Africa. Maximus' departure for Rome in the late 640s coincided with the defeat and death of the exarch Gregory in battle against an Arab army; the Islamic *maghrib* or garrison-city of Kairouan had been founded by 670, and accounts of the final conquest in Arabic sources are more interested in the mysterious Berber queen, the Kāhina, than they are in the Rūm, as the Byzantines are termed.⁵⁹

Unlike the beginning of Vandal settlement, which had been the result of the arrival of a new population group from outside the province, the Byzantine conquest, it seems, brought soldiers and officials into the province, rather than family groups. To what extent the overall level of population may have changed is unclear; in the early seventh century, while some refugees arrived from the east, there may have been some degree of depopulation.⁶⁰ The departure of Maximus and his supporters for Italy before 649 may itself have been a sign for further emigration in the direction of Sicily and south Italy, where Greek-speaking monks and clergy from the east became an increasingly significant element during the seventh and eighth century.⁶¹

The available evidence does not permit us to trace the full impact of the Byzantine or 'Roman' reconquest as fully as one would like, but some light

⁵⁷ Chadwick (1974); further, Cameron (1993).

⁵⁸ Ed. Deroche in Dagron and Deroche (1991); see also Dagron in *ibid.* ⁵⁹ See Brett (1978).

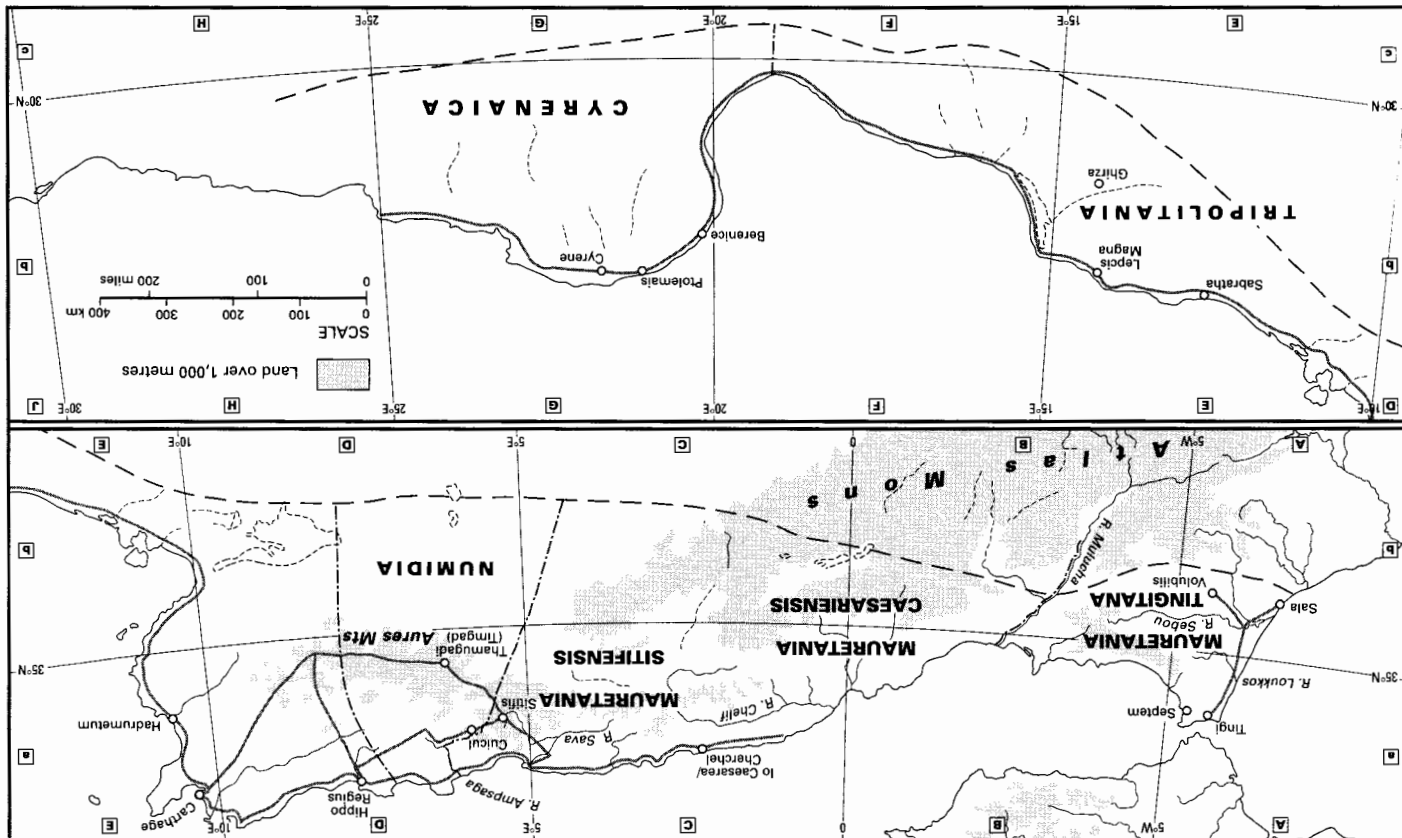
⁶⁰ Settlement: Spörk (1994).

⁶¹ Cameron (1993); Cuvry (1984) 122-72. For evidence of possible depopulation in Byzantine Africa see also Pringle (1981) 1, 114.

can be shed on particular aspects.⁶² The use of Greek and the presence of eastern officials, for example, are attested by their official seals, which survive even though the documents themselves have perished.⁶³ Some Greek names appear among the funerary epitaphs, and eastern saints, who have already begun to feature in the North African evidence, become more numerous; there is evidence of the deposition of their relics at North African sites on a number of occasions in the sixth and seventh century,⁶⁴ though we lack evidence of the cult of images which was now of growing importance in the east. The letters of Maximus Confessor indicate the existence of a number of monasteries, apparently with monks and nuns of eastern origin.⁶⁵ Other scraps of evidence from the late sixth century point to the continuing existence of Latin in monastic life, even if only to attest the carriage of manuscripts and the transplantation of monks from North Africa to Visigothic Spain.⁶⁶ Justinian established a praetorian prefect for North Africa, with responsibility for seven governors in charge of Proconsularis, Byzacena, Tripolitania, Numidia, Mauretania Sitifensis, Mauretania Caesariensis and Sardinia. Solomon, the first prefect, also held the military command, with five military *duces* under him. Some of the territory assigned to the *duces* was more theoretical than real, but they were instructed to attempt to recover as much as possible of the former Roman areas that had been lost under the Vandals.⁶⁷ The restoration of property taken by the Vandals was also decreed, including churches taken over by Arians; this led initially to discontent and even rebellion in the army, as we have seen. By the end of the century an exarch had replaced the *magister militum*, but there was still a praetorian prefect in addition in pope Gregory's day.⁶⁸ A major role of the new imperial administration was naturally to exact taxes from the provincials; this proved highly unpopular at first,⁶⁹ but there is little evidence as to its later impact, and appeals made by African landowners in the later sixth century against Justinian's relaxation of the law pertaining to *adscripticii* show an equal concern with the continued availability of labour.⁷⁰ There is equally little evidence for the survival or renewal of municipal and provincial organization; a *defensor urbis* is attested at Ammaedara, but references to local notables in general, as to the involvement of bishops with urban organization, suggest that towns were increasingly run by the combined influence of the bishop

⁶² See the discussion in Pringle (1981) 1.109–20. ⁶³ Morrisson and Seibt (1982).
⁶⁴ See Duval (1982) 1, nos. 106, 112, 126; II.361ff., 657–70. Funerary epitaphs, largely still Latin: Fimiani (1975), (1982) (Carthage); Prévot (1984) (Maktar); Duval and Prévot (1975) (Haidra); Pringle (1981) 1.116–17, with Cameron (1982) 30–1 and Cameron (1993).
⁶⁵ Maximus' letters are to be found mostly in Migne, *PG* xci.
⁶⁶ Jones, *LRE*: 1.273–4; according to Durlant (1979) the office of *magister militum Africae* came into being only in the late 570s. For detailed discussion of the military and provincial organization as a whole see Pringle (1981) 1.55–89.
⁶⁷ Jones, *LRE*: 1.313; the administrative reforms of Maurice: Pringle (1981) 1.41–3.
⁶⁸ See Procop. *Wars* III.19.3–4. ⁶⁹ Justin II, *Nar.* 6 (A.D. 570); Tiberius II, *Nar.* 12 (A.D. 582).

Map 13 North Africa in Vandal and Byzantine times



and the local *possessores*.⁷¹ A degree of local euergetism evidently continued, both in relation to church building and decoration and to secular monuments, including fortifications.⁷²

The latter constitute one class of material evidence which has been relatively well studied of late, a full survey and gazetteer by Denys Pringle and a corpus of dedicatory inscriptions from works of defence by J. Durliat having appeared in the same year; in addition, Saharan and coastal frontier fortifications have been studied by P. Troussat.⁷³ Procopius' *Buildings* gives a detailed but incomplete description of Justinian's works of defence in North Africa up to the date of its completion in A.D. 533–4;⁷⁴ however, the work is an imperial panegyric, and therefore tends both to exaggerate the degree of imperial achievement and to ascribe everything possible directly to the emperor. Justinian's programme in North Africa had two main aims, the defensive and the religious, the latter including a church of the Virgin at Carthage and another (one of five churches) at Lepcis; in addition, imperial initiatives were directed towards certain prestige urban sites, including Carthage, where building included *stoa*i, a bath and a fortified monastery,⁷⁵ and Lepcis, where the old imperial palace was restored.⁷⁶ City walls whose construction or repair is attributed to Justinian include those of Carthage and Hadrumetum; Procopius names no less than twenty-eight cities which he says the emperor fortified, as well as seven forts,⁷⁷ while J. Durliat's catalogue of inscriptional evidence from works of defence amounts to some thirty-eight items.⁷⁸ However, only two fortresses have been fully excavated (Ksar Lemsa and Timgad).⁷⁹ The size of the army stationed in Africa is difficult to compute from the size and layout of these installations, which vary greatly; Timgad provides the best-investigated example and one of the largest so far (0.75 ha).⁸⁰ The initiative and the responsibility for defensive works were shared: the imperial authorities sought to control and monopolize major defensive building, to the extent that twenty-four inscriptions attest the activity in this regard of Solomon as praetorian prefect, acting on behalf of the emperor.⁸¹ Later, the responsibility lay ultimately with the *magister militum Africae*, although local initia-

⁷¹ See Pringle (1981) 1.117–18; *Trihuni*, attested as the commanders of town garrisons, may also have acquired some civil roles.

⁷² Examples are cited by Pringle (1981) 1.118. Individuals named in inscriptions on defensive works include imperial officials, civilians and bishops; however, the last two groups may also have been acting as agents for funds that came from elsewhere (Pringle (1981) 1.90–3).

⁷³ Pringle (1981); Durliat (1981); Troussat (1985), (1991).

⁷⁴ Procop. *Buildings* vi.2–7, with commentaries by Rubin (1954), Pülhorn (1977); discussion in Cameron, *Procopius* 180–7. ⁷⁵ Procop. *Buildings* vi.5, 8–11. ⁷⁶ Procop. *Buildings* vi.4.5.

⁷⁷ Pringle (1981) 1.80, in the context of a discussion of the garrisoning of the province; for detailed discussion see Pringle's valuable gazetteer of fortified sites (1981) 1.171–313, with corpus of inscriptions at 315–39, and Appendices 2 and 5, pp. 123, 126–7. ⁷⁸ Durliat (1981).

⁷⁹ See Mattingly and Hitchner (1995) 212–12; Pringle (1981) 1.85.

⁸⁰ Discussion: Pringle (1981) 1.83–9. ⁸¹ Durliat (1981) 93–8.

tives were not ruled out.⁸² Similarly, the cost might be found either from central funds or by the local communities or *possessores* or *priores* themselves; a *castrum* at Ain Ksar was erected by local *cives*, at their own expense, in the reign of Tiberius II, with a list of their names inscribed on the stone.⁸³

The actual extent of building attested, whether by Procopius or by the existence of inscriptions, may have been less than it seems: walls represented an important element of what defined a city in ideological terms, and despite Procopius' claim that the Vandals dismantled all existing Roman defensive installations in Africa, they allowed local communities to construct defences against the Mauri;⁸⁴ it is also Procopius' habit to claim building operations as novel rather than as restorations, in order to shed more glory on Justinian. Fortified villas and villages, moreover, owe more to local initiative than to central impetus, and perhaps also to a move towards rural settlement.⁸⁵ Nor is it plausible, even though the literary sources may suggest it, to think of Byzantine fortifications in North Africa in terms of lines of defence designed to keep invaders out;⁸⁶ the Mauri who now posed the principal threat were in fact established well within the restored province, as well as outside its borders.

Justinian's emphasis on churches as well as works of defence⁸⁷ is in a sense indicative of the changing urban topography, here as elsewhere, though generalization is made more hazardous than usual by the fact that it is normally only ecclesiastical and defensive structures that are datable.⁸⁸ Eastern influences have been detected in capitals and mosaics, and church building and restoration continued in several places, as at Sbeitla, and sometimes on a large scale, as in the case of the basilicas at Kelibia and Belalis Maior.⁸⁹ At Sbeitla, however, the churches coexisted with fortified dwellings, and by the seventh century an oil press sat squarely over what had been the main Roman thoroughfare. Procopius claims that the city of Lepcis, deserted and buried in sand, was restored by Justinian, even if not to its former size; Sabratha, too, was fortified and benefited from church building, though its public spaces, like others elsewhere, were overlaid with houses and shops.⁹⁰ 'Encroachment' on to the open spaces and late antique civic areas was a feature of Byzantine Africa, as in other parts of the Mediterranean, and has been detected in a number of the areas excavated

⁸² Durliat (1981) 98–100. ⁸³ Durliat (1981) no. 29.

⁸⁴ See Durliat (1981) 109–11. For the size of the areas enclosed by walls see Pringle (1981) 1.119–20.

⁸⁵ See Mattingly and Hitchner (1995) n. 490.

⁸⁶ So Diehl (1896); see, however, Pringle (1981) 1.94–9. Pringle points out that Diehl's model in fact depended partly on the supposed example provided by the Euphrates frontier; however, the nature of late Roman defences in this area has recently been reassessed itself (see Isaac, *Limits of Empire*).

⁸⁷ See the statement of policy at Procop. *Buildings* vi.2.18–19.

⁸⁸ As remarked by Pringle (1981) 1.118.

⁸⁹ Sbeitla: Duval (1964); for the basilica and the striking inscribed font at Kelibia, see Cintas and Duval (1958); Mahjoubi (1978).

⁹⁰ Procop. *Buildings* vi.4.1–3, 11–13; cf. Mattingly and Hitchner (1995) 212.

at Carthage where, as at other sites, it is accompanied by increasing numbers of burials within the city itself;⁹¹ similar changes can be observed, for example, at Sétif.⁹²

Carthage itself provides an instructive example, even though the archaeological evidence is concentrated in certain areas of the city, thus making a general view difficult. The new administration naturally undertook certain projects in the city, especially in the early years; thus, the Theodosian wall was repaired and a ditch dug there, and building work undertaken at the circular harbour, as well as the north side of the harbour and the island, although there is room for disagreement as to the fit between Procopius' account at *Buildings* VI.5.8–11 and the new archaeological evidence; as yet, the identification of his 'maritime agora', church of the Virgin and 'Mandrakion', described as a fortified monastery near the harbour, remains unclear, and the persuasiveness of his account partly depends on his claims as to the level of destruction or neglect in the Vandal period.⁹³ Nevertheless, the Byzantines were clearly ready to invest, at least in Carthage, in urban construction that was not solely defensive or religious.⁹⁴ Large urban dwellings were still in use during the sixth century, but several of those working in the UNESCO project, especially the University of Michigan and Canadian teams, have reported later subdivision and inhumation within the city.⁹⁵ While some of these developments have been ascribed to an influx of refugees from Egypt in the early seventh century, it is also clear that, irrespective of its particular circumstances as the political and administrative centre, the city of Carthage was experiencing the same changes that were happening on other urban sites.⁹⁶

When the Arabs arrived in North Africa in the middle of the seventh century, they found a province still rich in oil and corn production. Corn was still going from Africa to Constantinople in the reign of Heraclius, although the state bread distribution there was formally ended in A.D. 618; the Persians took Egypt, the main source of grain for this purpose, in the following year.⁹⁷ Goods were still being exported from North Africa to the eastern Mediterranean in the middle of the seventh century, but to a lesser extent than before,⁹⁸ by the second half of the seventh century, imports to the province from the east, which had grown steadily by the end of the sixth

⁹¹ See Humphrey (1980) 113–16.

⁹² Mattingly and Hitchner (1995) 213; further remarks by Pringle (1981) 1.118–20; Cameron (1989) 180–1.

⁹³ Procop. *Buildings* VI.5.1–7; summary and references at Mattingly and Hitchner (1995) 212; on the limitations of 'Justinianic Carthage' see Gros (1985) 124–6; on Procopius, see Cameron, *Procopius* 181–2. ⁹⁴ Roskams (1996) 162–3.

⁹⁵ See Humphrey (1980); reports and other information from the various excavations have been published regularly since 1987 by the Institut National d'Archéologie et d'Art de Tunisie in its *CADAC* Carthage Bulletin.

⁹⁶ Humphrey (1980) 117; cf. Roskams (1996) 163–4 ('settlement shift'), 166–7 ('seventh-century demise'). ⁹⁷ *Chron. Pasch.* p. 711 Bonn, s.a. 618. ⁹⁸ Fulford (1984).

century, now fall off dramatically.⁹⁹ The explanations both for the growth of this extensive long-distance exchange involving North Africa and for its eventual decline, as for the role played by trade and the activities of large landowners, are as yet still unclear; within the space of two centuries African landowners had had to adjust, first, to Vandal occupation and with it the cessation of the grain *annona* and all that it meant in terms of production and costs, and then to a reconquest or 'restoration' of Roman government, with its centre at Constantinople rather than Rome – a restoration, moreover, which reimposed the land-tax and encouraged the development of an axis between North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. After apparent success in the late sixth century, the province experienced a progressive reduction in the degree of Byzantine involvement, a process hastened by the Persian and Arab invasions of the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Anselmino *et al.* (1986) 191–5; cf. Panella (1986) 454–9; Panella (1989) 138–41. North African pottery in the Aegean, sixth to seventh century: Abadie-Reynal (1989) 156–8.

¹⁰⁰ See Wickham (1988) 190–3.