

A Καῖσαρ without a Βασιλεύς: TIBERIUS II CONSTANTINE'S EASTERN POLICY BETWEEN 574-578 CE

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Abstract

The peace treaty concluded in 562 between Emperor Justinian I and the Sasanian ruler Khosrow I was broken in 572 by Justin II (565–578). The war, launched with considerable expectations, turned into a grave disaster for Byzantium with the loss of the strategic frontier city of Dara in 573. Following these developments, Justin II's mental health deteriorated completely, rendering him entirely incapable of governing. The Caesar Tiberius effectively assumed power in the shadow of Empress Sophia and ruled the empire with the title of Caesar until Justin's death in 578. The failure of Byzantium's siege of Nisibis in spring 573, and moreover the loss of Dara, compelled Byzantium to seek an urgent truce with the Sasanians. During this period, Tiberius aimed to maintain peace at any cost until a new army could be established. However, the appointment of Maurice as *magister militum per Orientem* in 578 marked a decisive turning point in this defensive doctrine, enabling Byzantium to regain the initiative on the eastern front. This article focuses on how Tiberius II managed the Sasanian war during the four years he governed the empire with the title of Caesar.

Keywords: *Tiberius II Constantine, Justin II, Khosrow I, Byzantine-Sasanian Wars, Eastern Frontier of Byzantine Empire*

Öz

Basileos'u Olmayan Bir Sezar: MS. 574-578 Arası II. Tiberios Konstantinos'un Doğu Siyaseti

İmparator I. Ioustinianos ile Sâsâni hükümdarı I. Hüsrev arasında 562 yılında imzalanan barış anlaşması, II. Ioustinos (565-578) tarafından 572'de bozulmuş, büyük beklentilerle başlatılan savaş ise 573'te stratejik sınır kenti Dara'nın kaybıyla Bizans imparatorluğu açısından ağır bir felakete dönüşmüştür. Bu gelişmelerin ardından ruh sağlığı tümüyle bozulan II. Ioustinos yönetme yetisini tümüyle yitirince, Kaesar Tiberios imparatoriçe Sophia'nın gölgesinde fiilen iktidarı üstlenmiş, 578 yılında Ioustinos'un ölümüne kadar da Kaesar sıfatıyla imparatorluğu idare etmiştir. 573 baharında imparatorluk ordularının Nisibis kuşatmasındaki başarısızlığı ve akabinde Dara'nın kaybı, Bizans'ı

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Sâsânilerle acilen ateşkes arayışına zorlamış, Tiberios bu süreçte yeni bir ordu kurana kadar barışı her ne pahasına olursa olsun sürdürmeyi hedeflemiştir. Ancak 578 yılında Maurice'in magister militum per Orientem olarak atanması, bu pasif doktrinde köklü bir kırılma yaratmış ve doğu cephesinde inisiyatifin yeniden Bizanslıların eline geçmesini sağlamıştır. Bu makale, II. Tiberios'un Kaesar ünvanıyla imparatorluğu yönettiği dört yıl boyunca Sâsâni savaşını nasıl idare ettiğine odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *II. Tiberios Konstantinos, II. Ioustinos, I. Hüsrev, Bizans-Sâsâni Savaşları, Bizans İmparatorluğu Doğu Sınırı*

Introduction

On 7 December 574, Emperor Justin II selected the young Tiberius as Caesar, bestowed upon him the name Constantine, and effectively ceded the administration of the empire, which he was no longer capable of managing.¹ According to Corippus, Tiberius and Justin had been close since they were children.² He was in his service even before Justin II became emperor, and when Emperor Justinian (527–565) died and Justin became emperor, he chose Tiberius, whom he regarded as his son, to be Comes Excubitorum (κόμης τῶν ἐξκουβιτόρων). This was a strategic position, as it was also the one that made Justin I (518–527) emperor. Our knowledge of Tiberius' life and associates was limited. For instance, he had three children with his wife Ino, who later adopted the name Anastasia; one of them died at a young age, leaving behind two daughters.³

During Tiberius's rule, the political situation in the western and eastern parts of the empire was critical. The Balkans were under threat from two main groups: the Avars and the Slavs. The Avars possessed a robust federative structure, while the Slavs were dispersed into smaller groups and lacked the same level of organisation as the Avars.⁴ Furthermore, the Kutrigurs, who had posed a significant threat, especially during the reign of Justinian, were now subject to the Avars. Each of these groups migrated to the Danube region and established themselves there following the Hun incursions that began in the fourth century and originated from the north of the Black Sea. Emperor Justinian's strategy involved encouraging the Avars to attack their rival tribes, the Utigurs and Cotrigurs, thereby neutralising the Avar threat. However, this policy contributed to their subsequent growth. Following the ascension of Justin II, the Avar envoys who arrived in Constantinople were treated very differently to those who had come under Justinian. Justin II rejected all of their demands⁵, which led to the Avar arrows in the Balkans being directed towards Byzantium once again. During the reigns of Justin II and Tiberius, relations with the Avars in the Byzantine-Avar-Slavic triangle will be characterised by

¹ John of Ephesus 1860, pp. 171-172; Chronicon Paschale 1989, p. 574.

² ... namque illum maximus orbis communis benefactor alens et ab ubere matris suscipiens primis puerum praelegit ab annis, utque pater genitum nutrit, fovit, amavit, paulatimque virum summa in fastigia duxit. hinc est iuvenis tota virtute laborans pro rerum dominis animam vitamque periculis non dubitat praebere suam, vigilatque, fidemque exhibet, et summum meruit dominantis amorem." Corippus 1975, p. 215-220.

³ John of Ephesus 1860, pp. 179-180. See also: Martindale 1992, p. 1323-1324.

⁴ Whitby 1988, p. 80; Dignas and Winter 2007, pp. 41-42.

⁵ See Turtledove 1983, pp. 292-301.

both hostility and alliance at times.⁶ The Lombards constituted the primary threat to Byzantium in Italy, and their raids began in 568. To counter the intense Lombard raids, Byzantium formed an alliance with the Franks against the Lombards, while also trying to reinforce its eastern border by recruiting soldiers from these groups.⁷

Eastern Frontier Between 574-578 CE: Diplomacy or Delaying Tactic

While the situation was thus on the western borders, the fall of Dara, the border city that served as a shield against the Sasanians in the east, in 573 caused Emperor Justin II to lose his sanity, and the war he had launched with great hopes ended in disaster for the Byzantines. Consequently, when the administration was transferred to Empress Sophia and Tiberius, a new chapter was initiated in the diplomatic relations with the Sasanians. The peace negotiations, which began in early 574, continued with the Sassanid ruler Khosrow, who, according to Menander, wanted to end the war, sending an envoy to Constantinople. The envoy (Iakobos), recorded by Menander, was most likely Christian and, again according to the historian, aimed to deliver Khosrow's arrogant letter to Justin. However, upon arriving in the capital, he found Empress Sophia and Tiberius waiting for him.⁸ Empress Sophia and Tiberius were attempting to gain time to prevent the Sasanian advance. To this end, Sophia dispatched Zachariah, one of the court physicians, as an envoy to the Sasanian ruler. While Menander merely records that they hoped Justin would recover his health, Theophylact Simocatta and Evagrius note that Tiberius was recruiting troops from the West in order to form a new army.⁹ In addition, Eusebius, who held the office of *magister militum per Orientem*, was recalled to the capital and replaced by Justinian.¹⁰

According to Menander, in his first mission as ambassador, Zachariah paid the Sasanians 45,000 nomismata and secured a truce agreement that did not include Armenia.¹¹ According to Menander's records, Zachariah was sent to the Sasanians once more at the end of 574, accompanied by Traianos. His objective on this occasion was to negotiate a general peace agreement that would include both Mesopotamia and Armenia. The author notes that the Romans demanded a three-year peace agreement, while the Sasanians demanded a five-year one, and states that both sides ultimately agreed to a three-year agreement. As part of the terms of the peace agreement, Byzantium is agreed to pay the Sasanians 30,000 nomismata on an annual basis.¹² The insistence of the Byzantines on a three-year agreement was part of Tiberius' strategy. He believed that the army would be ready to face the Sasanians again within three years, and that a longer peace would require paying additional tribute. Recognising this, the Sasanians sought a

⁶ On Byzantine-Avar relations in the sixth century see see: Pohl 2018, pp. 21-109; Main 2019, pp. 67-76. Kardaras 2018, pp. 20-60. For Slavs: Main 2019, 76-85.

⁷ See Main 2019, p. 88; Menander 1985, 283.

⁸ Menander 1985, pp. 158-159.

⁹ Theophylact Simocatta, III. 12.3-4; Evagrius 2000, pp. 305-306.

¹⁰ Menander 1985, p. 159; Theophylact Simocatta 1986, p. 91.

¹¹ Menander 1985, p. 159.

¹² Menander 1985, pp. 160-161.

more extensive agreement to secure their annual tribute payments. However, following intensive negotiations, a three-year truce agreement was finally accepted by both sides.¹³

It seems likely that the Sasanians were aware of Tiberius' plan, but the prospect of securing the annual tribute under a formal agreement proved appealing to them. However, they did not wish to give Tiberius the opportunity to regroup his forces. Consequently, approximately a year after the truce, they shifted the hostilities to the Armenian region, which, it seems, remained outside the scope of the agreement. However, prior to this, certain developments in the south had provoked the Sasanians. According to John of Ephesus, in 575, Mundhir, leader of the Ghassanids, Byzantium's ally in the region, had attacked the Lakhmid lands following a meeting with general Justinian in Sergiopolis, pillaging as far as their capital, Hira.¹⁴ In March of this year, Tiberius enacted a law granting tax relief in the provinces of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia, with the aim of restoring the region's economy and infrastructure.¹⁵ Following the ceasefire agreement, there was activity in almost all frontier areas except Mesopotamia. It is understood that Byzantine forces achieved a number of successes on the north-eastern border. During their raids into Albania, they captured prisoners from the Sabirs and Alans under Sasanian command and brought them to Constantinople. According to Menander, Tiberius treated these prisoners as guests and offered them double what the Sasanians had paid them, asking them to serve the Byzantines. Although they initially responded very positively to this offer, the Sabirs later sided with the Sasanians again.¹⁶

Following the acceptance of the peace, Tiberius dispatched another embassy to the Sasanians, ostensibly as a gesture of courtesy. Although Menander states that this was merely a matter of custom and aimed at raising friendly relations to a higher level¹⁷, this move by the Caesar was likely a mission intended either to delay Khosrow's preparations for campaign or to gather intelligence. However, as this second and lower-ranking embassy was approaching, Khosrow left Dara with his army and met the delegation on the road.¹⁸ While Khosrow was receiving the envoys, he was still at the beginning of the campaign he was preparing against the Armenian region, which was outside the scope of the recently concluded agreement. While the Byzantine generals Curs and Theodore were

¹³ Menander states that, during the course of the ongoing negotiations, the Sasanian general Tamkhosrow arrived in the vicinity of Dara and proceeded to set fire to and destroy the area. This strategic manoeuvre was a clear warning from the Sasanians to the Byzantines, urging them to conclude ceasefire negotiations without delay. See: Menander 1985, pp. 161-162. See also: Greatrex and Lieu 2002, p. 152.

¹⁴ John of Ephesus 1860, pp. 378-379. See also: Greatrex and Lieu 2002, p. 153; Whitby 1988, p. 264. Shahid 1995, pp. 373-383.

¹⁵ See: Trombley 2005, p. 10; Schoell 1972, pp. 749-751.

¹⁶ Menander 1985, pp. 163-164.

¹⁷ Menander 1985, p.165: "The Caesar Tiberius sent Theodorus the son of Bacchus as envoy to the Persian king. His apparent purpose was to render thanks for the high honours lavished upon the major Roman envoy, Trajan, when, shortly before, the king had received his embassy. It was a long-standing custom for both states that after major envoys other lesser ones should be sent to give thanks for the receipt and friendly treatment of the major envoys."

¹⁸ Menander 1985, p.165.

engaged with the Alans and Sabirs in the vicinity of Albania via Arresti and Maneptici, Khosrow appeared at Theodosiopolis in the latter part of spring in the years 576-577. It is interesting to note some differences between the sources here. According to Theophylact Simocatta, it appears that Khosrow had followed a similar route to that taken by general Justinian from Mesopotamia, which suggests that Justinian may have arrived here before Khosrow. However, according to Menander, it appears that Justinian had not yet arrived in the region, and it is slightly surprising that the Sasanians had advanced without encountering any resistance throughout Persarmenia.¹⁹ But there was another surprise for the Sasanians:

*"Therefore, since no one opposed him, Khosrow invaded Persarmenia in complete security and without struggle. The peasantry of lesser Armenia did not take to flight and abandon their fields but even brought what supplies they had to the army. When Khosrow advanced further, the peasants of the regions of Makrabandon and the Taranni did not remain, so that nothing, neither man nor animal, was to be seen. For when the enemy king was approaching, all the farmers fled and the whole area was emptied of its population. Even when Khosrow wished to hunt, he could find no game at all."*²⁰

It appears that Khosrow's efforts to find plunder when he arrived in Theodosiopolis may have been unsuccessful, possibly due to prior intelligence that the Sasanians were approaching the region. Although Menander records that Justinian's army had not yet arrived in the region, he notes that a Byzantine unit, whose commander he does not name, had set up camp in the foothills north of the city.²¹ Therefore, as Khosrow approached the city from the south, there was both a Byzantine garrison in the city and another unit stationed to the north. At this time, the envoy Theodoros was with Khosrow. Following a series of military manoeuvres intended to intimidate the enemy in front of the city's southern walls, Khosrow realised that Theodosiopolis was prepared for a siege and could not be captured. This led him to consider the possibility of returning to diplomacy.²²

*"After some intervening incidents the Persian king sent Theodorus away to return to Byzantium, dispatching a letter to the Caesar to the effect that he too wanted peace and, if Theodorus had arrived before he set out, he would not have drawn up his forces, nor would he have ordered them to march. But now that he had set out on campaign, he thought it disgraceful to disband his army, since the men did everything either for gain or out of hope of glory. He said, however, that when he returned home, he would send to the border of the East officials who were close to him to discuss and settle details of the peace with leading men sent by the Romans. This was his message to the Caesar. When Theodorus begged him to abandon the assault, Khosro decided to agree providing that within thirty days a message came to him from the Caesar with the necessary proposals."*²³

¹⁹ See: Theophylact Simocatta 1986, p. 91. Menander 1985, pp. 166-167.

²⁰ Menander 1985, p. 167.

²¹ Menander 1985, pp. 168-169.

²² Menander 1985, pp. 168-169.

²³ Menander 1985, pp. 168-171.

While it is known that in emergencies, news from the eastern border reached the capital in approximately ten days, it is unclear whether Khosrow took into account the speed of the Byzantine postal service or whether the news would arrive in time.²⁴ However, what is certain is that the statements recorded by Menander amount merely to a stratagem employed by Khosrow against Tiberius. Khosrow's next move clearly confirms this. In the letter he sent, Khosrow created the impression that he would remain at Theodosiopolis and await word from the Caesar; yet, after Theodoros departed, he did not stay there but instead advanced further west. From this point onwards, Menander relates the journey of the embassy dispatched by Tiberius to the Turks (the Göktürks) and the meeting between Turxanthos ((Τουρξανθος = Türk Şad) and the head of the embassy, Valentinianus, and he no longer provides information concerning Khosrow's ongoing campaign. It appears that Tiberius sought to invoke the alliance concluded with the Göktürks and to secure support against the Sasanians. However, Valentinianus' embassy turned out to be considerably more unfortunate than expected, and the Byzantine envoys returned empty-handed.²⁵

Menander remains silent regarding Khosrow's ongoing campaign, and John of Ephesus begins to provide details on the subject. It appears that Khosrow understood that capturing Theodosiopolis was not going to be possible. Therefore, according to John of Ephesus, he turned west towards Cappadocia with the aim of capturing Caesarea. Although the author does not provide any information about the route he followed, he

²⁴ Procopius, in his *Anecdota*, notes that the Byzantine postal system of the sixth century involved frequently changing horses along the route, enabling a journey that would normally take ten days to be completed in a single day. See: Procopius 1935, pp. 346-349. This corresponds to approximately 250 kilometres. See also: Mitchell 2014, p. 255. For example, according to the model prepared by Walter Scheidel, 'ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World', a mounted courier travelling from Satala to Constantinople in summer takes six days to arrive. Therefore, Theodosiopolis must be around six and a half or seven days away. See also: Kolb 2000.

²⁵ Valentinianus departed from the capital accompanied by a group of one hundred and six Turks. Travelling by sea, he first arrived at Sinope and then proceeded to Crimea, from where he continued eastwards by land. According to Menander's account, this sizeable Turkish contingent had been residing in Constantinople for some time for various purposes. The delegation showed great courtesy to Turxanthos (Türk Şad) and reminded him of the alliance established during the reign of Justin. Nevertheless, Turxanthos, who was aware of the agreement concluded between the Byzantines and the Avars, was filled with anger: "*When the envoy had made his speech, Turxanthos said, "Are you not those very Romans who use ten tongues and lie with all of them?" As he spoke he placed his ten fingers in his mouth. Then he continued, "As now there are ten fingers in my mouth, so you Romans have used many tongues. Sometimes you deceive me, sometimes my slaves, the Uarkhonitai. In a word, having flattered and deluded all the tribes with your various speeches and your treacherous designs, when harm descends upon their heads you abandon them and take all the benefits for yourselves. You envoys come to me dressed with lies, and he who has sent you deceives me equally. I shall kill you immediately and without delay. To lie is foreign and alien to a Turk. And your Emperor shall pay me due penalty, for he has spoken words of friendship to me while making a treaty with the Uarkhonitai, our slaves (he meant the Avars) who have fled their masters."* Menander 1985, pp. 172-175.

states that he advanced from the north, so it is possible that he may have reached the vicinity of Sebaste via Satala and Colonia, which was the fastest possible route. On this occasion, the Byzantine troops had prepared thoroughly and arrived at the route Khosrow was expected to take earlier, intercepting him in the mountainous terrain:

*“And there they encamped opposite one another for several days, nor would he venture to engage with them in a general battle. And when he saw that they were more numerous and powerful than himself, and that he could not pass by them, and march upon Caesarea, he was greatly disturbed and alarmed, and began to plan how he might, if possible, effect his escape to his own land. But his Magian priests blamed him, and dissuaded him from this course, and at their instigation he wheeled round, and leaving Cappadocia, advanced to attack Sebaste; for though terrified as well as his men at the Roman armies, yet from shame of being ridiculed for not having accomplished any of his plans, he attacked and burned Sebaste with fire. But he could take neither booty nor captives, because the whole land had fled from before him. Crossing next from thence, he began to retreat towards the East, in the hope, if possible, of escaping homewards.”*²⁶

We understand that Sebaste, like Theodosiopolis, possessed intelligence regarding Khosrow's advance and was waiting in a state of readiness. Here too, Khosrow, having failed to find what he had hoped for, fled, whereupon the Roman army began to plunder the Sasanian camp and, according to the author's account, even seized items belonging to Khosrow himself, including his tent. The booty captured was so substantial that some soldiers deserted from the army and were never seen again. At this point, John of Ephesus draws attention to the jealousy and factionalism amongst the Byzantine commanders, criticising the fact that the Sasanian army was not destroyed when the opportunity existed. Evagrius stands out with a different detail. According to him, the Sasanians had quelled the chaos into which they had fallen by nightfall and had reorganised themselves to stand against the Byzantine forces. Although no battle took place after the customary few duels²⁷ between the two armies in the darkness of night, the Sasanians, seeking to exploit the cover of darkness, subsequently launched a surprise attack on the camp of the northern contingent of the Byzantines, who had established their camp in two separate sections:

*“During the night Khosrow, having lit many fires, made preparations for a night assault; and since the Romans had formed two camps, he attacked those in the northern section at the dead of night. On their giving way under this sudden and unexpected (onset), he advanced upon the neighbouring town of Melitene, which was undefended and deserted by its inhabitants, and having fired the whole place, prepared to cross the Euphrates.”*²⁸

The sources provide no information as to the extent of the damage inflicted on the Byzantine army by this raid; however, it is evident that Khosrow's principal intention was to continue his withdrawal. The fact that he attempted to inflict as much damage as possible on the surrounding area while passing in front of Melitene clearly demonstrates

²⁶ John of Ephesus 1860, p. 393.

²⁷ The most detailed example of pre-battle duels between the Byzantines and the Sasanians was provided by Procopius during the Battle of Dara in 530. See: Procopius 1914, pp. 110-113.

²⁸ Evagrius 2000, pp. 305-306.

this. At this stage, differences become apparent among the sources in terms of both the chronology of events and their tone. Whitby also draws attention to this point and, unlike Theophylact Simocatta and Evagrius, whose overall narrative “turns into a piece of Byzantine propaganda”, prefers the relatively plain account of John of Ephesus.²⁹ In summary, there are four significant events. The Romans plundering the Sasanian camp, the battle between the Romans and the Sasanians and the Roman victory, the Sasanians attacking and burning Melitene, and finally the heavy losses suffered by the Sasanian army while crossing the Euphrates. Theophylact Simocatta only records a summary of the battle that took place before the attack on Melitene but does not mention the Sasanian losses.³⁰ In contrast, John of Ephesus makes no mention of any open battle and provides a more detailed account of the events, divided into sections. In conclusion, the following words are recorded by the author with regard to the flight of the Sasanians towards the Euphrates:

*“and at the sight of the Roman army pressing close upon them, they hurried on horseback into the river, and more than half the army sank there, and were drowned. But the king himself and the rest with difficulty swam over to the other side on their horses, and escaped, and marched rapidly into the Roman Armenia: and as they hastened along, he gave orders to set fire to all the villages which came in their way.”*³¹

After Khosrow’s army had been routed and forced to flee, the Byzantine forces, rather than pursuing him in Mesopotamia and launching a counter-offensive there, initiated an operation along the north-eastern frontier. This campaign, which may be interpreted as Tiberius’ reluctance to inflame the conflict in Mesopotamia, saw the army advance deep into the Caucasus, probably in the region of modern Azerbaijan, and reach as far as the shores of the Caspian Sea. Theophylact Simocatta records the following regarding this campaign:

*“And so when the king of the Persians had thus paraded his misfortune in the law, he was at a loss as to what he should do. But the Roman (army) seized on the Persian disasters and marched towards the interior of Babylonia, ravaged and removed everything in their path, and what they encountered became a victim of destruction. Then they became marines on the Hyrcanian Sea and, after great achievements and the infliction of misfortunes on the Parthians, they did not return to their own (territory); for the winter season intervened on their actions, and disaster waxed fat in Persia. With the arrival of spring the Romans retired, carrying off bravery too as travelling-companion.”*³²

Theophylact, with his phrase “towards the interior of Babylonia”, was likely making a Xenophontic allusion in reference to this protracted campaign of the Roman

²⁹ Whitby 1988, p. 266.

³⁰ Theophylact Simocatta 1986, pp. 94-95. On the battle of Melitene see Syväne 2009, 32-64; Mitchell 2015, p. 435.

³¹ John of Ephesus 1860, pp. 397-398. According to Theophylact Simocatta, after crossing the Euphrates, Khosrow returned to his country via Arzanene and, following the disaster he had experienced, enacted a law prohibiting future Sasanian kings from undertaking such a campaign. See: Theophylact Simocatta 1986, p. 95; Sarris 2011, p. 233.

³² Theophylact Simocatta 1986, p. 95.

army, for although the army brought to a swift conclusion a campaign that had begun in the autumn, it was unable to return because winter had set in. Evagrius also provides a brief note concerning this campaign but includes no details. He merely records that General Justinian spent the winter in the region after the campaign and returned at the beginning of summer.³³

After these events, Khosrow resumed negotiations in 577. According to Menander, an embassy led by Nadoes arrived in Constantinople.³⁴ Khosrow was prepared to send higher-ranking officials for a comprehensive peace. Tiberius sent Nadoes back with a cautious reply, while he himself dispatched Theodorus, John, Peter, and Zachariah to the East as Byzantine envoys.³⁵ The envoys who reached Constantina waited to meet with the Sasanian envoy Mebod. Mebod, who had been granted full authority by Khosrow, had a mission to establish a comprehensive peace.³⁶ When Mebod arrived, the first discussion centred on where the talks would take place. Although the Byzantine mission wanted the peace talks to be held in Dara, this request was rejected by the Sasanians. The talks commenced at a location called Athraelon, but the initial phase was marked by disputes among the members of the delegations. According to Menander, both sides claimed that the other had engaged in unjust and criminal acts, violated the treaty, and initiated unjust hostilities.³⁷ Realising that the discussions were leading nowhere, the envoys eventually adopted a more constructive approach. Mebod set out Khosrow's terms to the Byzantine delegation, stating that, in accordance with the agreement concluded during the reign of Emperor Justinian, the Romans were to continue paying thirty thousand nomismata annually, withdraw from Persarmenia and Iberia, and surrender those responsible for the revolt to the Sasanian ruler. Upon hearing these conditions, however, the Byzantine envoys replied that such an arrangement could not be regarded as peace and that any settlement established on this basis would not endure.³⁸ However, they made their first concession shortly afterwards:

*"Immediately both sides entered a long argument on this issue. Initially the Persians did not soften their position but argued that the Romans should either pay the thirty thousand nomismata mentioned above or make one large payment. Finally, however, Mebod decided to show them a letter which had recently been sent to him by his king, which stated that, out of friendship for the Caesar, Khosro was willing to make peace on equal terms without any monetary payment."*³⁹

Subsequent discussions focused in particular about the Christians living in Persarmenia and Iberia. According to Menander, Tiberius was aware that the Sasanians would not relinquish these regions and was prepared to concede them. However, far from agreeing to surrender those who had taken part in the revolt to Khosrow, he proposed

³³ Evagrius 2000, pp. 305-306. See also: Whitby 1988, p. 267.

³⁴ Menander 1985, pp. 178-179.

³⁵ John of Ephesus 1860, pp. 403-404.

³⁶ Menander 1985, pp. 180-181.

³⁷ Menander 1985, pp. 180-184.

³⁸ Menander 1985, pp. 182-183.

³⁹ Menander 1985, pp. 184-185.

instead the condition that the Christians residing there should be allowed to migrate to Roman territory, should they so wish. This request was also accepted by Khosrow, as he assumed that the inhabitants would not abandon their own land and move to a foreign country. Consequently, apart from a few prominent figures involved in the uprising who might seek refuge with the Byzantines, no one else would flee to Roman territory, and control of the region would pass fully into Sasanian hands.⁴⁰ After this matter, it was Dara's turn. According to Tiberius, to prevent any excuse for a future war, Persarmenia should be given to the Sasanians in exchange for the return of Dara to Byzantium. He had even agreed to make a payment for Dara, making concessions for this purpose. However, in the summer or autumn of 577, while the embassy delegation was making progress on many issues, new reports arrived from the armies in the north. The Byzantine forces under Justinian suffered a heavy defeat against the Sasanians under Tamkhosrow. Records of these conflicts can be found in Menander, as well as in Sebeos and Theophylact Simocatta.⁴¹ With these new developments, it appears that the Sasanians wished to prolong the war for a while longer and left the negotiations in abeyance.⁴² According to John of Ephesus, a wing of the Sasanian army under the command of Adarmahan attacked the region of Osrhoene and pillaged the areas around Constantina and Resaina.⁴³

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the conclusions that can be drawn from contemporary sources, after Justin II lost his sanity to the extent that he could no longer govern the empire, Tiberius, who took over the administration as Caesar, aimed to gain time through diplomacy on the Sasanian front until he could assemble a ready army. Indeed, with the prolongation of negotiations between the two states and the ceasefire not being seriously violated, there was no large-scale fighting in the sensitive border region around the province of Mesopotamia from 573 to the end of 577. Thus, Tiberius's objective was largely achieved. However, by the end of 577, we know that he was still attempting to recruit soldiers from the western borders of the empire and from the Germanic tribes⁴⁴, suggesting that he was unable to assemble a sufficient army for the eastern frontier. He would resolve this issue in the late 570s by appointing Maurice to the office of *magister militum per Orientem* instead of Justinian. According to John of Ephesus, Maurice, who was both Tiberius' secretary and close friend⁴⁵, took command of the eastern armies and his first act was to recruit soldiers from the Cappadocia region to gain operational capability in the east. Theophanes recorded the number of recruited soldiers as fifteen thousand, which is quite

⁴⁰ Menander 1985, pp. 184-187.

⁴¹ Sebeos 1999, pp. 11-12. Theophylact Simocatta 1986, p. 96. See also, Whitby 1988, p. 267; Greatrex and Lieu 2002, p. 160.

⁴² Menander 1985, p. 190-191.

⁴³ John of Ephesus 1860, p. 407.

⁴⁴ See. Menander 1985, p. 197.

⁴⁵ See. John of Ephesus 1860, p. 434. According to Menander, he was close enough to Tiberius to be his confidant. See: Menander 1985, p.179.

sufficient for various military manoeuvres to be carried out at the border.⁴⁶ From this point onwards, it is clearly evident in the sources that the fortunes of the Byzantine Empire's eastern border began to turn. Maurice's first campaign in 578 and his subsequent campaigns in 580 and 581 put the Sasanians on the defensive position. By concentrating his attacks on the Arzanene region, which had been in Sasanian hands since the 363 treaty, he shifted the Byzantine Empire's military strategy in the region.⁴⁷ In this vein, he besieged Chlomarion, the region's capital city. Although he failed to capture the city, he seized the castle of Aphoumon, located to the west, thereby establishing a base in this valuable region. Although Maurice's successes brought balance to the border conflicts and accelerated peace negotiations, these talks in 581 also failed to produce a result, and the war continued. In June, Maurice defeated the armies of Tamkhosrow and Adarmahan near Constantia, and Tamkhosrow was killed in battle by a spear thrust, completely shifting the balance on the border in favour of the Byzantines.

Consequently, the Sasanian war during the reign of Tiberius should be examined in two separate periods: before and after Maurice. Indeed, the empire, which had been passive prior to Maurice's appointment as *magister militum per Orientem* and inclined to gain time through diplomatic manoeuvres, abruptly changed its doctrine upon Maurice's arrival, becoming aggressive and launching cross-border attacks in the vicinity of the province of Mesopotamia. Maurice's successes continued after his ascension to the throne following Tiberius' death in 582, culminating in a period of new territorial gains for the first time in a long while, secured through a treaty with the Sasanians in 591.

⁴⁶ Theophanes 1997, p. 373. The author notes that Narses was also appointed as Maurice's assistant, but he is not the same person as the famous general of the Justinian period. For Narses see: Martindale 1992, pp. 930-1.

⁴⁷ See: Stein 1919, p. 89; Whitby 1988, p. 268-275; Greatrex and Lieu 2002, p. 160-166; Daryaei 2009, p. 41; Daryaei 2012, p. 198; Cowe 1991, 265-267.

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