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GILBERT DAGRON

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CHALCIS AD BELUM AND ANASARTHA IN BYZANTINE SYRIA¹

by Glen W. BOWERSOCK

Résumé : La Syrie centrale à l'époque byzantine — le *limes de Chalcis* d'après Poidebard — tenait une place capitale du point de vue économique et militaire entre la Mésopotamie et la plaine d'Antioche. Chalcis ad Belum était un centre d'hellénisme traditionnel entretenant des liens économiques et culturels avec Beroia (Alep), comme le révèle la Vie syriaque de Rabbula. Ses fortifications témoignent des menaces sassanides. Plus au sud, à Anasartha, une grande inscription de la citadelle (*JGLS* II, 288), d'interprétation difficile, apporte des éléments essentiels à notre connaissance d'une ville chrétienne qui conservait ses traditions helléniques. Le nom de Magnus (*PLRE* III, Magnus 2) est à restituer dans cette inscription.

According to the chronicle of John Malalas (295-6 Bonn) the Persian king Shapur invaded Syria in the middle of the third century by traversing the *limiton Chalkidos* on his way to Antioch. This unique reference to the *limes* of Chalcis in the surviving testimony from antiquity provided a title for the pioneering study of R. Mouterde and A. Poidebard, *Le Limes de Chalcis. Organisation de la steppe en haute Syrie romaine*, published in Paris in 1945. The photographic record compiled by Poidebard for that publication remains of great value today,² even if the concept of a late antique defense system that the term *limes* was understood to imply has now been revised beyond recognition. It has been amply and repeatedly demonstrated by Malavolta, Isaac, Liebeschuetz, and myself that the word *limes* (or *limiton* in Greek)

1. A much shorter version of this paper was presented at a colloquium on central Syria at Hama in the Syrian Arab Republic on 29 September 1999. A fuller version was presented to the annual Finnish colloquium on Late Antiquity, held on 20 October 2001 at Tvärminne. I am grateful for discussion on both occasions, particularly for comments from Traianos Gagos and Erkki Sironen at Tvärminne. Christopher Jones has also given me valuable observations and, as will be seen, contributed a palmary conjecture. Constantin Zuckerman has commented most helpfully on this paper. It is a great joy to be able to publish this contribution in honor of Gilbert Dagron as an expression of friendship and admiration.

2. On Poidebard's photographs and career see the exceptionally rich, illustrated account in *Aux origines de l'archéologie aérienne: A. Poidebard (1878-1955)*, ed. L. Nordiguian and J.-F. Salles, Beirut [Université Saint-Joseph] 2000.

denotes a frontier zone, not a line or lines of defense.³ All that Malalas meant by his use of the word with reference to Chalcis was the territory for which that city was the urban center. This was the region known to Pliny in his *Natural History* (5. 81) as the *Chalcidene*, which he described as the most fertile (*fertilissima*) region of Syria.

The plain of Chalcis lay south of Beroea, the ancient city on the site of modern Aleppo (Halab), and it extended to the marshes of al-Matkh, at the edge of which stood the Acropolis of Chalcis itself. The acropolis was protected from the north wind of winter by the Jabal Nabî 'Isa that lay directly across the divide in which the citizens of the city had placed their necropolis. The great plain that stretched out before Chalcis provided access to the neighboring plain of Antioch through the gap between the Jabal Bârîshâ and the Jabal Simân. The Roman highway from Antioch to Beroea passed this way, descending to the south from Immae to Chalcis before heading northwards to Beroea. A magnificent stretch of this road, paved with limestone blocks, has survived north of the Jabal Bârîshâ.⁴ Jerome had taken this route in 375 as he tells us in his life of Malchus: *Pervenit tandem ad heremum Chalcidos, quae inter Immas et Beroeam magis ad austrum sita est (Vit. Malch. 3)*. It is obvious that the Shah-in-Shah from Persia, crossing from Mesopotamia over the middle Euphrates, would have had to pass through the region of Chalcis to make an assault on Antioch, whether in the third century or in any other.

Chalcis also lay astride the route south from Beroea (Aleppo) to Hama and Emesa (Homs). Situated, as it was, in good agricultural land with an abundant supply of water and monitoring traffic both from east to west and north to south, it was inevitably a major city of north-central Syria, replaced ultimately by Aleppo itself a little to the north. But the traditional name for the site in modern times, Eski Halab (Old Aleppo), proclaims the parallel roles of the two places. The current name in Arabic, Qinnasrîn, is the same as its Semitic name in antiquity – Qennishrîn in Syriac. Greek and Roman authors knew it by the name of Chalcis, or more precisely Chalcis ad Belum, to distinguish it from Chalcis ad Libanon. This important city has been briefly surveyed but never excavated.

Yet in 1925 Pierre Monceaux and Léonce Brossé published an article in the journal *Syria* reporting on a visit to Qinnasrîn and commenting favorably on the opportunities for excavation.⁵ Their article has the merit of providing a tolerable sketch-map of the site along with a survey of surface remains. Previously Howard Crosby Butler and William Kelly Prentice had gone to Chalcis during their work with the American Archaeological Expedition to Syria at the turn of the century. Their account of the

3. M. MALVOLTA, *Dizionario epigrafico s.v. limes*, col. 1347; B. ISAAC, "The Meaning of 'Limes' and 'Limitanei' in Ancient Sources," *JRS* 78, 1988, pp. 125-47; W. LIEBESCHUETZ, "The Defences of Syria in the Sixth Century," *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms II*, Vorträge des 10. internationalen Limeskongresses in der Germania Inferior, Köln 1977, pp. 487-9; G. W. BOWERSOCK, "Limes Arabicus," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 80, 1976, pp. 219-29, reprinted in ID., *Studies on the Eastern Roman Empire*, Goldbach 1994, pp. 93-101.

4. H. C. BUTLER, *Publications of an American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899-1900*, Part ii: *Architecture and Other Arts*, New York 1903, pp. 57-9.

5. P. MONCEAUX and L. BROSSÉ, "Chalcis ad Belum. Notes sur l'histoire et les ruines de la ville," *Syria* 6, 1925, pp. 339-50.

site was by no means so detailed as the one provided by the French, but Prentice made great progress with the inscriptions he found there. These texts have now taken their place in the second volume of the *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*.

It was the Hellenistic ruler Seleucus Nicator who founded Chalcis ad Belum among his Syrian cities.⁶ The protected acropolis at the edge of the great fertile plain made it an obvious choice for a foundation, and it is probable that Seleucus built on the site of an earlier settlement. Despite its importance Chalcis is a city with almost no history throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods. It extends the notorious silence that envelops Syria in the Hellenistic age well into the time of the Roman Empire. Apart from the allusion to Shapur's invasion in the third century, we know only that Chalcis minted coins of its own in the period from Trajan to Antoninus Pius under the name of Flavia Chalcis.⁷ This name, together with an era that has been deduced to start from A.D. 92 would suggest that Domitian accorded recognition or privilege to the city at that time. Such favor may conceivably have been connected with the economic crisis in the East in the early nineties, reflected at Pisidian Antioch in an inscription of Antistius Rusticus and precisely in Syria in an inscription of the procurator Claudius Athenodorus at Hama.⁸ The agricultural potential of the Chalcidic region might have seemed particularly precious at that time. The Hama document speaks of the exhaustion of provinces and the unjust removal of farmers from their soil to serve as guides for the Roman *cursus publicus*.

The extant texts, inscriptions, and physical remains for Chalcis provide the most powerful illumination for the city in late antiquity. This may well reflect its increased size and significance from the fourth to the early seventh centuries. Ammianus Marcellinus⁹ reports that the emperor Julian removed the entire population of Anatha on the Euphrates to Chalcis, and in view of the strategic location of their new home it would be difficult to consider this some kind of punishment. Anatha had surrendered without a struggle, and Julian's transference of the people was accomplished, according to Ammianus, *humaniore cultu*. It looks as if Julian seized the occasion to strengthen Chalcis. Jerome's visit there a few years later may also indicate its growing role in the region. But the principal literary evidence for life here in late antiquity occurs in an utterly neglected source, the Syriac *Life of Rabbula*, a work probably of the mid-fifth century with a narration of events only a few generations earlier.¹⁰ The holy Rabbula was born to a family in what the Syriac author naturally calls Qennishrîn, in other words Chalcis ad Belum.

6. APPIAN, *Syriaca* 57, where it is not clear which Chalcis is meant, and AGAPIUS, *Histoire universelle* 1. 2, p. 237 (Vasiliev) [PO XI, p. 109], where Seleucus is explicitly connected with the foundation of Qinnasrîn. I owe the latter reference to Getzel Cohen, who will provide a discussion of the Hellenistic foundation of Chalcis in his forthcoming work on Hellenistic Settlements in the Near East. The volume will complement his *Hellenistic Settlements in Europe, the Islands, and Asia Minor*, Berkeley 1995.

7. *BMC Syria*, pp. liv-lv (Wroth).

8. *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 55 (1924), pp. 5-20 (Pisidian Antioch); *IGLS V*. 1998 (Hama).

9. Ammianus Marcellinus 24.1.9: *humaniore cultu ad Syriacam civitatem Chalcida transmissi sunt*.

10. See G. W. BOWERSOCK, "The Syriac Life of Rabbula and Syrian Hellenism," in *Greek Biography and Panegyrics in Late Antiquity*, eds. T. Hägg and P. Rousseau, California 2000, pp. 255-71. The Syriac text was published for the first and only time in full by J. J. Overbeck in *S. Ephraemi Syri*

Since no English translation currently exists of this *vita*,¹¹ it may be useful to have a brief citation of the most relevant part: "The blessed Rabbula was a pagan from his childhood, because his father was also a pagan and a priest. Through him the apostate Julian dedicated, as they say, his spirit to demons while he was on his way to fight with the Persians. But the mother of Rabbula was a believer, and she struggled with her husband to make him turn to the fear of the Messiah. Although she labored unceasingly, she was unable to convert his tyrannical will to the truth... Rabbula's mother gave him over for breast-feeding to a believing wet-nurse. As he grew up, he was educated in the books of the Greeks, inasmuch as he was the son of rich magnates of the city, Qennishrîn. His mother took part constantly in efforts to persuade him to change from the paganism of his father to belief in the Messiah, but these did not persuade him. Indeed, he was strengthened by a distinguished honorary office that was assigned to him by the emperor. A beautiful thing called him to betake himself to the lands that belonged to him..."

On family property in the territory of Qennishrîn Rabbula then meets the recluse Abraham and hears about monks living there. The hagiographer's narration of his saint's childhood is full of revelations about Chalcis society. His family was clearly affluent and, as such, thoroughly hellenized. We are told that it was because of his parents' wealth that he was educated "in the books of the Greeks." Furthermore, his father was evidently a priest of the imperial cult and took part in rites with the emperor Julian as he was on his way against the Persians. We know from a letter of Julian himself that the emperor stopped and sacrificed at Beroea.¹² Although he will undoubtedly have reached Beroea by way of the road through Chalcis, Rabbula's father may have gone up to Beroea with him to participate in the rites held there. But equally a ceremony could have been performed in Chalcis as well. The closeness of the whole family to the imperial house is made plain by the honorary office Rabbula received from Julian – perhaps an honorary proconsulate or consulate. Rabbula's family, wealthy, hellenized, and strongly pagan, emerges, on his father's side, as an exemplar of the support that Julian needed and received as he made his way across Syria to the Euphrates on his fateful journey.

It is worth remarking that the otherwise unexplained enlargement of the population of Chalcis through the addition of the inhabitants of Anatha, as recorded by Ammianus, may have been another part of Julian's favoring the city through his regard for the family of Rabbula. Certainly it has never been noticed before that there is a clear link between Julian and Chalcis that might be invoked to explain the decision to place a substantial number of new residents in it.

Rabulae Episcopi Edesseni Balaei Aliorumque opera selecta, Oxford 1865, pp. 159-221. An abridged and slightly emended version appeared in C. BROCKELMANN, *Syrische Grammatik*, Berlin 1899, pp. 69*-101*.

11. An inadequate German rendering may be found in G. BICKELL, *Ausgewählte Schriften der syrischen Kirchenväter Aphraates, Rabbulas und Isaak von Ninive*, Kempten 1874, pp. 166-211. Robert Doran is currently at work on a complete English translation.

12. JULIAN, *Epist.* 98, 399b-402b, pp. 180-4 (Bidez). See BOWERSOCK, *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), p. 261.

Rabbula's encounter with holy men of the desert on the properties that belonged to his family outside the city illustrates the landholding pattern of the region. Later in the life, when he renounces all his worldly possessions to follow God, the hagiographer describes how he sold off his lands (the Syriac word here is a transliterated form of Greek *chôrai*) and distributed his earnings from these properties to the poor. He is said subsequently to have separated himself not only from his mother, wife, children, friends, and lands, but also from the villages that were dependent on him (*me'klâtâ*) – another indication of the seigniorial system of the plain of Chalcis. As for the dependents within his household, we learn that Rabbula sold off all his slaves, who are explicitly described as being in part born in the house and in part bought with money. Rabbula's grand renunciation of his life at Qennishrîn allows us to think back to what his life was like before he took that step. It was a life of Greek learning, of slaves, of wealth, of extensive landholding, of dependent villages, and of conspicuously high prestige with the imperial family.

More than anything else the *Life of Rabbula* hints at the teeming reality of late antique Chalcis, as Jerome presumably saw it in 375. We are left with a few passages in Procopius and two inscriptions for glimpses of the city in the century after Rabbula. It is obvious that Justinian in his reorganization of the eastern provinces attached importance to the Chalcis region. In his work on Justinian's buildings Procopius refers twice to the restoration of the city's walls as among the most notable of the improvements in Syria. "He restored," says Procopius, "the circuit-wall (*peribolos*) of the city of Chalcis, which had been faultily built in the first place and had been wrecked by the years. He restored it along with outerwork (*proteichisma*) and rendered it much more defensible than before, and he gave it the form which we see now (*Aed.* 2.11.1)." A later passage in the same chapter obviously refers to the same construction work: "He restored the circuit-wall of the city of Chalcis, which had fallen down to the ground and was in any case unsuited to defense, by means of exceptionally stout masonry, and he strengthened it with outerworks (*Aed.* 2.11.8-9)."

Two inscriptions dated to 550-1 record extensive rebuilding of the Chalcis walls from the foundations (ἐκ θεμελίων) and have naturally been seen as documenting the record in Procopius.¹³ The texts show the engineer Isidore as in charge of the project, and they honor the ex-prefect and ex-consul Longinus for fostering it. The work must be seen in the context of the constant threat from Persia throughout most of the sixth century, and, as Procopius observed, it was part of a broader scheme of strengthened fortification that Justinian implemented in Syria. The special attention he and his deputy gave to Chalcis reflects the strategic importance of the city.

But since any aggressor had to pass over a considerable area of the Syrian steppe after crossing the Euphrates before reaching Chalcis, Justinian had also decided to create another major urban settlement in the intervening area. This was Anasartha, the modern Khanâşîr, a site at the southern end of the Jabal al-Ḥaṣṣ that dominated the area between Dibsi Farâj on the Euphrates, Chalcis, and Taroutia. The city was

13. *JGLS* II. 348 and 349.

named for Theodora, but the local name Anasartha prevailed.¹⁴ It has preserved one of the most unusual and enigmatic inscriptions of late antique Syria, a text that for a long time had been ascribed to Chalcis itself.¹⁵ Richard Pococke in the middle of the eighteenth century had recorded it as seen at the citadel of "Conossera" in the vicinity of Aleppo. The name is transparently an 18th-century rendering of Khanâsîr. Kirchoff, following Pococke, carelessly assigned the inscription to Aleppo itself, whereas Waddington, also following Pococke, erroneously inferred that Conossera was Qinnasrîn (Chalcis).¹⁶ His opinion was perpetuated by Monceaux and Brossé as late as 1925 in their paper on Chalcis,¹⁷ even though by then both Sachau and the American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899-1900 had reported autopsy of the stones at Khanâsîr.¹⁸ They were fragments of a large lintel block at the entrance to the citadel of the ancient Anasartha. The old name provided the basic elements of the Arabic name for the modern village. The inscription offers a highly remarkable look at life in the central Syrian steppe at some point in the sixth century.

The layout of the stone is best described by Prentice under no. 318 in the third volume (1908) of the American Expedition. Although, curiously, it was unknown to Monceaux and Brossé in 1925, Prentice's text was fundamental for the edition of the inscription in the second volume of the *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* (no. 288). The lintel had broken apart into three large pieces, of which the extreme left one is lost. The large central fragment survived in place at the entrance to the citadel, and not far away from it the right fragment lay upon the ground.¹⁹ Prentice speculated that the original location of the lintel had been on a city gate adorned on top with the statues that are enumerated in the text. In what follows I have indicated by a straight line where the fallen right fragment begins.²⁰

14. MALALAS, *Chron.*, p. 440²⁰⁻²² Bonn.

15. *IGLS* II. 288.

16. R. POCOCKE, *Inscriptionum antiquarum Graecarum et Latinarum liber*, London 1752, p. 65, no. 1; A. KIRCHHOFF in *CIG* 8712, with extravagant conjectures on the text. W. WADDINGTON's edition with brief commentary appeared in his *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, Paris 1870, no. 1832.

17. See note 5 above.

18. E. SACHAU, *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, Leipzig 1883, p. 121; W. K. PRENTICE, *Publications of an American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899-1900*, Part iii: *Greek and Latin Inscriptions*, New York 1908, no. 318. See also L. HARTMANN, *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 23, 1900, 107 with reference to Sachau's edition (prepared by Neubauer), and V. CHAPOT, *BCH* 28, 1902, 190-1, no. 37. Although Khanâsîr was known to R. DUSSAUD when he published his invaluable *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale*, Paris 1927, he was wholly unacquainted with the publications of the American Archaeological Expedition to Syria and hence missed its detailed account of the remains. This expedition of 1899-1900, although involving E. Littmann and Princeton University scholars, was nevertheless entirely different from the subsequent Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions of 1904-5 and 1909, with which Dussaud was familiar.

19. Chapot, in the article cited in the preceding note, published part of the text on the right side of the large central fragment from a squeeze made by H. Pognon. He gave the environs of Aleppo as a provenance and clearly had no knowledge of earlier publications. What is so puzzling about the Pognon squeeze is that it includes only a small part of the text on the central block. How he could have missed the rest of the inscription is hard to imagine.

20. The Pognon squeeze (see the preceding note) encompasses the last four lines on the right of the running text before the break. This squeeze and Chapot's article (note 18 above) were unknown to Prentice.

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Ἰησοῦ[ς | |
|]οις τῆς βασιλείας | | [πόλις] δωρήμασιν |
| κα]ταφρονούσα βαρ | S Q U A R E | [βάρων] καταδρομῆς |
| ἐν τα]ῖς πύλαις ἴστησιν | Ἐμμανουήλ | [τοὺς] εὐεργέτας |
| σωτ]ήρα Χριστὸν | CROSS | κ[αλ]λινίκους δεσπότας |
|]νον πανεύφημον | in circle | ὑπάρχους πραιτορίων |
|]η τὸν ἀγιότατ' | | αὐτῆς ἐπίσκοπον] |
|] ἐνδόξ' μηχανικ' | | μηνὶ Γορπιδίῳ τοῦ ζω ἔτου[ς] ἰνδ' ιγ |
| | [ἐπὶ] πάντων θ[ς] | |

The lines run continuously from one side of the central square to the other. The square itself contains a cross in a circle and the word "Emmanuel." The word "Jesus" stands above and the phrase "God over all" below. The continuous text may be translated as follows, "Through the gifts of the sovereign government [the city],²¹ scorning an invasion of barbarians, erects on the gates (statues) of the benefactors, Christ the savior, the victorious emperors, the all-blessed ..., the commanders of the praetorians, the holiest ..., its bishop, the eminent engineer, in the month Gorpiaios of the year 806 in the 13th indiction."

Unfortunately the date provided at the end of the text contains irreconcilable numbers for a year of the Seleucid era and an indiction. Hence, as Prentice explained in his commentary, on various assumptions the text could give us a choice of A.D. 494-5, 504-5, 578-9, or 594-5. The late fifth-century date, as transcribed (Seleucid year 806), is ruled out by the impossibility of finding a plausible explanation for the clear rendering of the 13th indiction. We would need the 3rd indiction. If one were to assume that the stonemason had accidentally dropped out an iota, the resultant ζω would produce 504-5 with the correct indiction, but this seems a desperate measure. Similarly desperate is the assumption that the stonemason had misread an original *sampi* as an *omega*. This assumption (ζω) would produce the Seleucid year 906, hence 594-5. But Prentice showed that the number taken to be ζ (6) before ω (800) could as well be a variant form of the number ϑ (90). The shape is similar, with a right-facing curve at the top and a long tail downwards. We have therefore the Seleucid year 890, which is 578-9. Prentice opted prudently for this year. The month specified in the inscription is Gorpiaios (September). It would have fallen in 579 since the Seleucid year had started the previous October. September of 579 happens to be the only month in the Seleucid year 890 to have occurred within the 13th indiction, which itself began September 1st. This solution still seems by far the most reasonable. In the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* Margaret Mullett took over 594 without argument, while suggesting that the engineer Isidore, who had been working at Chalcis in 550-1, also worked at Anasartha in 594 – a speculation that the probabilities

21. The restoration of πόλις in line 1 seems to be imposed by [κα]ταφρονούσα in the next line. But this leaves a problem with βασιλείας, which one would expect to be an adjective meaning "imperial." I have taken it as a noun indicating the ruling power. Prentice translated it as the "majesty" of the emperor, but perhaps, as Erkki Sironen points out, we might understand "empress," as in *IG IX. 1, 721* and *SEG 12. 545a*.

of human longevity would quickly eliminate.²² In fact we have no way of knowing who the engineer at Anasartha was, only that one such person was obviously named (μηχανικόν).

The text is not a simple building document. As Waddington observed and Prentice agreed, its author was trying to write iambic trimeters.²³ It documents the erection of statues on or in "the gates." Prentice assumed, as we have seen, that the reference was to a city gate, but he did not address the issue of the plural form of the noun. It would be difficult to believe that these statues were distributed among several city gates. A brilliant suggestion from Traianos Gagos that the plural may indicate the Byzantine ecclesiastical term for the nave of a church would provide an intriguing, if not wholly unproblematic, alternate interpretation.²⁴

The inscription commemorates statues of far more than those persons immediately involved in the construction. It is a most remarkable group — benefactors, Jesus Christ, emperors, a distinguished unknown, the praetorian prefects, the bishop, and the engineer. This is an utterly unparalleled conjunction of honorands. It seems unlikely that the named individuals are listed in apposition with "the benefactors," since Christ has his own epithet as savior. It would, in any case, be difficult to conceive of him as a city benefactor, and the other named persons are clearly included by virtue of their high office. The benefactors are presumably a few local worthies similar to Rabbula's father at Chalcis. The placement of Christ between civic benefactors and the emperors gives a striking indication of the relative appreciation of the founder of Christianity in this obviously hellenized community. The inscription mentions imperial grants in the first line and a barbarian invasion in the second. In the context of so many state and ecclesiastical eminences the invasions must refer to Persian raids, not to nomadic incursions. The Persians had long been called barbarians in the Roman Near East, as in the speeches of Libanius and the famous inscription from Ma'ayan Barukh, where Julian is described as *barbarorum extincor*.²⁵ By contrast the nomads, when they are mentioned in late antiquity, appear by tribal name or under the general rubric of Saracens (or *Taiēnoi*, representing the Syriac *tayyāye*).

22. M. MULLETT, *ODB* I, p. 406.

23. The meter appears to peter out with the last line, containing the dating formula. I assume, with earlier editors, that the principal verb (ἵστησιν) describes the erection of statues. Cyril Mango had supposed a reference here to a painting or mosaic: "Épigrammes honorifiques, statues et portraits à Byzance," *Ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Νίκο Σβορώνο* I, Rethymno 1986, reprinted in *Id.*, *Studies on Constantinople*, Aldershot 1993, no. IX, p. 29, n. 2. But his only example of ἵστημι, which is standard for statues, as used for a picture is *AP* 16. 36 (Agathias), where it clearly alludes back to statues (l. 2) for which the painting is a substitute.

24. It was at Tvärminne that Dr. Gagos raised the interesting possibility that the πύλαι in this inscription might refer to a church. Cf. the πύλαι βασιλικαί and ὠραῖαι in Byzantine churches. Du Cange's treatment of this topic is still fundamental: *Glossarium ad Scriptores mediae et infimae Graecitatis*, Lyons 1688, cols. 1272-4. The commemoration of the engineer would, however, make more sense in a reference to city gates. Dr. Gagos also suggested that the eta recorded at the beginning of the antepenultimate line has been misread and should be a nu.

25. G. W. BOWERSOCK, *Julian the Apostate*, London 1978, pp. 123-4. Erkki Sironen, who is preparing a corpus of inscribed epigrams from Late Antiquity tells me that βάρβαροι appear rarely in his corpus. But he refers me to *SEG* 38. 532.

In September of 579 an allusion to victorious emperors makes excellent sense. The most recent Persian invasion of the region had occurred only a few years before (in 573), and Justin II and Tiberius II had ruled jointly since 574. In 579 Justin was *only recently dead, and a commemoration of the two or, as C. Zuckerman suggests, of the reigning couple (Tiberius and Anastasia) would have been entirely appropriate in the context of barbarian threats and strengthened fortifications. This context seems much more attractive than the reign of Maurice and furnishes a natural sequence to the work in Chalcis twenty-five years earlier. Furthermore, Christopher Jones now offers the splendid suggestion that the unknown person at the beginning of the antepenultimate line of the text is Magnus, a well documented and important figure in Syria in the later sixth century.*²⁶ Hence he restores [Μόγ]vov. In 581 Magnus is known to have been resident not far away in the region of the Jabal Bârîshâ as *curator domus divinae rerum Hormisdæ*, and he appears there on an inscription (IGLS II. 528) precisely with the epithet of πανεύφημος, which is the word that survives after]vov on the Anasartha stone. Magnus was Syrian by origin, an honorary consul, and *comes domesticorum*.

The Anasartha inscription, apart from the allusion to Persians, shows a Christian community deeply imbued with hellenic traditions. The position of Christ and the attention to benefactors suggests that the polytheist traditions that were still overt in the time of Rabbula at Chalcis had not altogether died out. They had simply been incorporated into the dominant Christian culture. This is very much the culture that one meets elsewhere in Syria, where pagan mime continued to flourish along with the pagan mythology it celebrated. The mosaics now at Ma'arat an-Nu'mân, with their depictions of Heracles, Romulus and Remus,²⁷ and personification of Immortality, although undoubtedly earlier in date, nonetheless illustrate a deeply rooted Syrian culture that lasted throughout late antiquity. Chalcis and Anasartha both entered the seventh century in strength and pride, but the reappearance of Persian forces and subsequently the Battle of the Yarmuk were soon to change all that.

26. The suggestion came from Professor Jones in an e-mail comment on an earlier draft of this paper. For Magnus, see the long article on him in *PLRE* 3, Cambridge 1992, pp. 805-7 (Magnus 2).

27. See the color images in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, eds. G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown, and O. Grabar, Cambridge, Mass. 1999.