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## "Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross: The Sasanian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and Byzantine Ideology of Anti-Persian Warfare"... : [recenzja]

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Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Particularly worth to be mentioned is the author's scientific workshop. The author is precise in detailed documentation of his theses. Nearly each sentence of the text has been supplemented by footnotes which not only refer to sources or other literature, but which are also a wealth of information on persons, events, terms, as well as on scientific debates about the problems discussed in the book. Paradoxically, it does not make the reading more difficult, just the opposite, in this way the main text has become more "reading-friendly" also to indi-

viduals who are not specialists. At the same time professional scholars will not be disappointed, thanks to the well-developed footnotes. Some of them are themselves mini-articles or encyclopaedic entries.

Unfortunately the English summary (p. 217–220) is very short, which should be regretted, as the book is certainly worth being made popular among non-Polish readers as well.

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**YURI STOYANOV, *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross: The Sasanian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and Byzantine Ideology of Anti-Persian Warfare*, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 2011, pp. 103 [= Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 819, Veröffentlichungen zur Iranistik, 61].**

Byzantinists have long argued about the nature of Heraclius' campaign against the Persians. In particular they have been interested in the question of ideological nature: was the idea of a religious war (crusade) present in the Byzantine political theories?

The reviewed book is composed of three parts and a bibliography. Chapter I (*The Archaeology of the Persian Conquest of Jerusalem in 614 and the Written Sources*, p. 11–24) has been devoted to presenting written sources about the scale of destruction made by Persian invaders in Palestine in 614, which has been confronted with the output of archeological research. The former draw a dark picture indeed. The Persian would exterminate a number of province's inhabitants and devastate the temples. Yet the *in situ* examination have not proven the scale of destruction. The research in particular temples of whose destruction we could read has revealed that in fact they did not suffer that much. This regards both the temples of Jerusalem and in its close vicinity (Church of Gethsemane, Church of St. Stephen, of Eleona, Church of Theotokos, of the Probatika), as well as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the churches in Zion. In none

of them traces of any major reconstruction of the 7<sup>th</sup> century have been discovered. It leads to a conclusion that while Palestine may have suffered due to demographic losses and deportations, there is no evidence of destruction of urban or church infrastructure.

In Chapter II (*Christian Ideology of Warfare in the East Roman/Byzantine World and Sasanian Persia*, p. 25–44) the author presents the process of forming of Christian attitude to war. He is interested in gradual moving from absolute condemnation of violence, through acceptance of a just war, up to creating the idea of a holy war. Much attention has been paid to the differences between East and West. He presents a scholarly debate that has been waged for years on the existence of the ideology of a holy war in the Byzantine Empire. Some scholars tend to perceive such a war in Heraclius' campaign against the Persians and in the operations of Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimiskes against the Arabs. Others, e.g. V. Laurent tend to negate that idea in Byzantium (contrary to the West and the world of Islam). In the debate they have pointed out that some elements of a holy war never occurred in the Empire: e.g. no reli-

gious authority but the emperor himself commenced military operations. On the other hand it has been emphasized that it was the emperor who was Christ's vicar on earth. Y. Stoyanov writes that the current state of research makes it impossible to conclude the dispute (p. 35). He maintains that in the Byzantine conditions the religious factor was important to wage a war but it was not obligatory to make it legitimate.

Y. Stoyanov points out that in the East Roman Empire as far as the attitude to war was considered they took a lot from the pre-Constantinian tradition but they also took much from the Christian tradition of the just war (p. 27). They distinguished between killing during war and voluntary murder (p. 28). The Byzantine Church not infrequently supported and justified military campaign (p. 30). Yet, the clergy were forbidden to participate in the struggle – they ought to keep strict moral standards.

Military handbooks contained passages regarding religious duties of soldiers and priests and they recommended religious services at military camps. Relics of saints and icons were used prior to and during the battle. The cult of warrior saints flourished. Still, while describing the methods of fight against the Persians religious matters were not discussed. Only twice in the whole history of the Empire (in 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century) were the soldiers promised absolution as a reward for martyr's death in the field.

The author emphasizes the influence of Christian (mostly Nestorian) communities in Persia on the Byzantine-Persian relations. The Empire was their natural defender, which was reflected in the treaties concluded with Persia. Also in Armenia religious matters did play an important role.

The Empire happened to make use of religious propaganda in earlier wars with the Persians (e.g. in 421–422). During the struggle the inhabitants referred to the aid of saints and their relics. Justinian, as the commander of the Roman army in 576 in an address to his soldiers, preserved in Theophylact Simocatta, would confront Christianity to the “false religion” of the Persians. It is possible though that it was just a projection of later attitude, considering that Theophylact wrote during the reign of Heraclius.

Chapter III (*Xusraw II's Wartime Persia (603–628): the Religious and Apocalyptic Enemy*, p. 45–76), essential from the point of view of the book's topic, has been devoted to the development of a holy war in Heraclius' times. The author has paid much attention to imperial legislation regarding Jews. He says that their situation was much better than that of Christian heretics, although he has pointed out intensification of anti-Jewish actions after creation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and then during the reign of Justinian the Great (p. 48–49). Knowing that it seems clear that the collaboration of Jews with Persian invaders and assistance in their capture of Jerusalem must have triggered even more anti-Jewish feelings. Pro-Persian attitudes of the Jews, who may have recalled the history of rebuilding of the Temple under the patronage of Darius I also seem easy to understand. Byzantium was perceived as incarnated Edom, the enemy of Israel. In Jewish apocalyptic visions reflected in the work *Sefer Zerubbabel* the Roman ruler is presented as a kind of “anti-Jewish Antichrist” (p. 53).

Y. Stoyanov has paid much attention also to the Christian apocalyptic visions and Byzantine ideology of authority, in which Christ was seen as a co-ruler of the emperor. In its light the Persians could be presented as diabolic beasts, crazy dogs or serpents sent down as the punishment for sins of the inhabitants.

The author says that the Byzantines presented Persia as an enemy of the Christian world and their conduct as ...*a monumental crime against Christianity* (p. 60). Heraclius would mobilize his soldiers dwelling on the anti-Christian outrages of the *enemies of God*, and declaring that his army was under God's protection. Persia was shown as the “world destructor” (*kosmoethron*) and its ruler Chosroes Parwez as a devil. Theophylact Simocatta included in his work a prophecy of his defeat. At the same time Heraclius' operations were compared to those of Alexander the Great – the emperor would then become a *new Alexander*. Virgin Mary herself predicted the emperor would be granted the victories as great as his (p. 63–64). Mobilizing the people to fight was certainly an objective of the Byzantine propaganda. When the victory

became a fact George Pisides compared Heraclius' entrance in Jerusalem to the entrance of Christ on Palm Sunday. The historian compared the war with Persians concluded by peace in the seventh year to the act of Creation by God.

Heraclius himself referred to religious elements by introducing new titles *faithful "basileus" in Christ* instead of *imperator Caesar Augustus* – it was the first invocation to Christ's name in his titulature to legitimize the imperial dignity (p. 66). It also meant a stronger reference to the *Old Testament* ideology of King David. An attempt was also made to tie the successes of Constantine the Great with Heraclius' success. The latter rebuilt the Christian empire created by the former. The recapture of the relics of the Holy Rood and recapture of Jerusalem both opened up a new era. In practice it meant the increase of anti-Jewish feelings and resulted in expulsion of Jews from the Holy City. In 632 the emperor ordered all Jews in the Empire to convert to Christianity.

Based on the analysis of the collected material Y. Stoyanov has concluded that the war of 603–628 brought innovations in the Byzantine-Persian relations on religious field. Patriarch Sergius said in his homily that God Himself fought in defence of the inhabitants of Constantinople. During religious ceremonies the patriarch used the picture of the Holy Virgin to *chase away the devilish* enemy forces. The Sassanian invaders were identified with the enemies of the Christian world. Heraclius went as far as to promise heavenly reward to the soldiers fighting for the brothers in faith (p. 71). What was important, not only Persia was the enemy of Christianity, but Zoroastrianism as well.

Despite this the author says that the above-mentioned religious sentiments did not convert into the idea of a holy war, similar to that devel-

oped in western Europe (p. 73). It did not happen, despite the struggle waged with confessors of Islam, although Nicephorus Phokas briefly resurrected the idea of "military martyrdom". It is difficult not to agree with that remark.

With much recognition to the idea of picking up a subject, important from the point of view of the Empire's history, I must confess that the work has not fully satisfied my expectations. While the author demonstrates the views of his predecessors he seldom expresses his own. Inside the book we will find only few opinions that would not be present in literature. In some of the issues the information delivered by the author is everything but fresh. For example, the author recalls the Edict of Milan of 313, but keeps silent about the two year older Edict of Toleration of 311 (p. 46).

Probably the most impressive part of the work is its bibliography, which comprises more than one fourth of the whole text, and includes a comprehensive source corpus (p. 77–82) and specialist literature. Particularly worth emphasizing is the inclusion of numerous archeological publications, not frequently encountered in works of historians. It should be regretted, though, that Yuri Stoyanov cites mostly western European literature, mainly that of English language. Striking here is almost complete lack of any works in Russian (the only work by N. Kondakov does not make it up at all), Serbian, Bulgarian, or Greek. The reader may easily think that nothing east of the River Elbe and Adriatic has ever been written about Byzantium, Persia, holy war or imperial rule. Also the lack of any division between primary and secondary sources makes the bibliography a bit messy.

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