

Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa

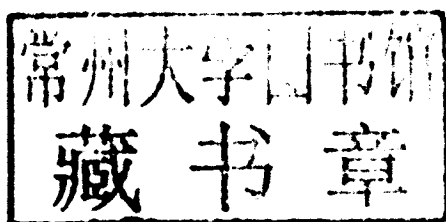


WALTER E. KAEGI

CAMBRIDGE

MUSLIM EXPANSION AND BYZANTINE COLLAPSE IN NORTH AFRICA

WALTER E. KAEGI



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Acknowledgments

This investigation began to take form in 1996 even though my interests in North Africa date back to graduate work at Harvard in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and even before, to my last two years as an undergraduate at Haverford College 1957–8, when I first honed my interests in Algeria (Kaegi 1958). North Africa also attracted the attention and commitment of my wife Louise, who served in the US Peace Corps in Sousse, Tunisia, for two years in the middle 1960s, before we first met and then married. Although I am not an Africanist, one of my first-year graduate school papers at Harvard involved Byzantine North Africa, and I have published on some other aspects of Byzantino-Africana (Kaegi 1965; 1984). In an earlier book *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (1992, 1995) I sought to make some connections between fields in investigating Muslim conquests in Byzantine Syria, Palestine, and upper Mesopotamia. I attempt to make connections again here even though North Africa is not Syria or Palestine or Anatolia. I have also now written a shorter essay on problems in Byzantine Egypt at the time of its subjugation by Muslims (Kaegi 1995, 1998). Moving westward in the Mediterranean, by undertaking this investigation I am returning to the area of some of my earliest historical studies and interests, on Byzantine North Africa. I am grateful for previous advice on North African and Byzantine and Early Islamic topics from former teachers, students, colleagues, and critics.

I have tried to make extensive elaborations and revisions to the manuscript over the course of years. This was possible only by having access to many excellent research libraries and by having the free time to consult the primary sources and journals in their respective collections. Indispensable aid came from discussion with Islamicists concerning issues of criticism of sources and historiography. I am very grateful to the Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC) and the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle North Carolina, under whose joint auspices and through whose resources I started this research in 1996. I likewise owe

much to the following institutions: Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Centre d'études maghrébines à Tunis (CEMAT, now called The Center for Maghrib Study in Tunis) and its former director the late Jeanne Mrad and her successor Jim Miller, the Carthage Museum and its library (where on the often windy and history-rich Byrsa Hill I have spent many hours reading and reflecting) and its very helpful librarians, and the staff members of the Institut National du Patrimoine in Tunis for their initial generous hospitality during 1996 and 1997 as well as in 2004–5. I thank the US Department of Education for an invaluable Fulbright–Hays Fellowship for 2004–5, as well as the respective staffs of the US Embassies in Tunis and Algiers and the Moroccan–American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange (MACECE) in Rabat. I thank Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian host institutions and specifically the Ministry of Higher Education of the Democratic and Popular Algerian Republic and University Mentouri-Constantine in Algeria for giving me affiliation and use of facilities and access to highly informed and welcoming specialists in 2004–5. In particular, the inclusion in this Fulbright–Hays Fellowship of a privileged award to Algeria enabled me to develop insights that I otherwise would have lacked. IBLA (Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes, Tunis), the library of the Institut National du Patrimoine in the madina of Tunis, and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Tunis gave me, which I deeply appreciate, renewed and warm hospitality and advice in 2004–5. I thank Saadia Maski and David Casewit and the MACECE, Rabat, Morocco for invaluable assistance in Morocco. A two-week trip to Algeria in March 2007 broadened and deepened my knowledge of Algerian sites and topography. The September 2007 meeting of the Société d'études et de recherches sur l'Aurès antique at Compiègne and subsequent conversation with Yves Modéran further aided my understanding. My gratitude goes to The University of Chicago Division of Social Sciences for Divisional Research Grants and the Oriental Institute for many other forms of support during the long period of my researches, and to the Harvard Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies for access to indispensable bibliographical, numismatic, sigillographic, and human resources. Likewise I appreciate the extensive opportunities given to me by the Oriental Institute, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at The University of Chicago, The University of Chicago Workshop on Late Antiquity and Byzantium, the University of Bologna, the University of Bologna Sede Ravenna, the Province of Oristano in Sardinia, the Byzantine Studies Conference, the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies (London), the University

of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Sfax Department of History, and Professors Al Moudden and Khalil Saadani respectively in the College of Letters, University of Mohammed V Rabat-Agdal and Université Hassan II at Casablanca for giving me opportunities to read and discuss sections of this material before critical scholarly audiences. I am deeply indebted to the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education, to the Faculty of History, College of Letters, University Mentouri-Constantine, Algeria, and its Chair, Professor Boubba Mejani, and especially to History Professor Youcef Aibeche, and Dean Ahmed Sari and History Professor Amara Allaoua of the Abd el Kader Islamic University of Constantine, Algeria for warm hospitality and critical suggestions and many forms of assistance. Vice-Recteur Abd al-Halim Aissaoui of the Centre Universitaire of the University of Khenchela, Algeria, and colleagues in the Société d'études et de recherches sur l'Aurès antique and its President M. Pierre Morizot provided me with a much better understanding of the north slope of the Aures and adjacent regions of southern Numidia.

Many other hands contributed to this book. Without these institutional structures and aids and the human assistance of individuals such as two anonymous readers, and Salvatore Cosentino, Renate Holod, Cécile Morrisson, Irfan Shahid, Edward Villalta, Mike Clover, Michael Allen, Susan Stevens, Ann-Marie Yasin, Paul M. Cobb, Bruce Hitchner, Fred M. Donner, Nathan Leidholm, Peter Simons, and my students in my courses at the University of Chicago on "North Africa Late Antiquity to Islam" and "Byzantium and Islam" this book would not have taken its present form. At Cambridge University Press my editor Michael Sharp, my production editors Elizabeth Hanlon and Sarah Roberts, and my rigorous copy editor Anna Oxbury improved the final manuscript, while at The University of Chicago Rana Mikati diligently verified my Arabic references. Thanks are also due to Bruce Tracy for compiling the index. Tunisian colleagues Professors Abdulhamid Fehri and Jamal Abduli, both of whom are members of the faculty of history in the University of Sfax, gave me valuable comments. I owe much to Professor Mohamed Benabbès of Tunis (Université 9 Avril), who generously shared his important dissertation with me. I also learned much from critiques and from my conversations with my Africanist colleague Ralph Austen. Chris Winters of The University of Chicago Regenstein Library Map Collection helped significantly with cartographic challenges. Roberto Marques provided the crucial expertise for electronic resolutions of visual challenges. I am very grateful to these and to all of the unnamed others who assisted me. I thank my wife Louise for her patient help and understanding throughout

all of the diverse challenges that confronted us in completing this inquiry and preparing it as a book.

I acknowledge and am grateful to ESRI for materials for Maps 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10. For those listed maps I use background topography derived from global shaded relief files published in *ESRI data & maps 9.3, media kit* (Redlands, CA: ESRI, 2008). I am grateful to Google Earth Pro for the use of material for Map 6.

As a North American of Swiss-American descent I lack ethnic identification with the Maghrib or with its former colonial rulers. That limits me but provides some distance in interpretation, although historical research and perspectives from a base in North America bring many problems and challenges of their own. There is still other baggage. As a member of the final cadre of graduate students, and the only one who was a Byzantinist, who took courses with and prepared for and took oral examinations with H. A. R. Gibb at Harvard in the early 1960s, and for whose learned instruction I am very grateful, I have mixed opinions about accusations of “Orientalism.”

Travels in Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, the western desert of Egypt, Sardinia, Majorca, and Corsica over the course of years since 1996 have improved my knowledge, especially with respect to North Africa, of terrain, archaeological sites, and routes where decisive events and processes took place in the middle and late seventh and early eighth century. But I have also learned much from modern scholarship of and discussions with Maghribi historians and archaeologists. I appreciate their advice even though I cannot acknowledge each of them by name. I have learned to try to understand events and processes from a Maghribi as well as from a European or Transatlantic perspective. There is no one coherent Maghribi perspective; events seen from Morocco can and do differ from viewpoints in Tunisia or Algeria. I try to take account of that. I am conscious of the opinion of some social scientists that historians need to write history more reflexively and that they should remain more conscious “positionally” of themselves during their investigations and composition of their exposition. I may not be able to achieve their standards. Much of this manuscript took form during my residence as a Senior Fulbright–Hays Fellow in Salammbô/Carthage and in Constantine, Algeria. Living in those very different sites, one on the Mediterranean and the other in the interior and capital of what was the province of Numidia, provides some valuable insights as well as many indelible memories.

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|--|
| <i>AA</i> | <i>Antiquités Africaines</i> |
| <i>AABSC</i> | <i>Abstracts, Annual Byzantine Studies Conference</i> |
| <i>AASS</i> | <i>Acta Sanctorum</i> |
| <i>AB</i> | <i>Analecta Bollandiana</i> |
| <i>ACO</i> | <i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i> |
| <i>AHR</i> | <i>American Historical Review</i> |
| <i>ANSMN</i> | <i>Museum Notes, American Numismatic Society</i> |
| <i>AT</i> | <i>Antiquité Tardive</i> |
| <i>BAR</i> | <i>British Archaeological Reports</i> |
| <i>BASOR</i> | <i>Bulletin, American Schools of Oriental Research</i> |
| <i>BCTH</i> | <i>Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques</i> |
| <i>BF</i> | <i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i> |
| <i>BGA</i> | <i>Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum</i> |
| <i>BGMS</i> | <i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i> |
| <i>BN Cat</i> | <i>Catalogue des monnaies Byzantines de la Bibliothèque Nationale</i> |
| <i>BS/EB</i> | <i>Byzantine Studies/Etudes Byzantines</i> |
| <i>BSFN</i> | <i>Bulletin de la Société française de Numismatique</i> |
| <i>BSOAS</i> | <i>Bulletin, School of Oriental and African Studies University of London</i> |
| <i>BZ</i> | <i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i> |
| <i>CA</i> | <i>Cahiers Archéologiques</i> |
| <i>CC</i> | <i>Corpus Christianorum</i> |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| CFHB | <i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i> |
| CHGRW | <i>Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare</i> |
| CIL | <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> |
| CMH ₂ | <i>New Cambridge Medieval History</i> |
| CSCO | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> |
| CSCO SS | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri</i> |
| CSHB | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae</i> |
| DO Cat | <i>Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore collection</i> |
| DOP | <i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i> |
| EB | <i>Encyclopédie Berbère</i> |
| EHR | <i>English Historical Review</i> |
| EI | <i>Encyclopedia of Islam</i> , 1st and 2nd edns. |
| HTR | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i> |
| ILAlg | <i>Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie</i> |
| JRA | <i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i> |
| JRS | <i>Journal of Roman Studies</i> |
| JSAI | <i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i> |
| MEFRA | <i>Mélanges, Ecole française de Rome: Antiquité</i> |
| MGH AA | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi</i> |
| MGH SRL | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum</i> |
| MGH SRM | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum</i> |
| MIB | <i>Moneta Imperii Byzantini</i> |
| OCA | <i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i> |
| ODB | <i>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> |
| OLA | <i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta</i> |
| PG | <i>Migne, Patrologia Graeca</i> |
| PL | <i>Migne, Patrologia Latina</i> |
| PLRE | <i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> |
| PMBZ | <i>Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, Abt. 1</i> |

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| <i>PO</i> | <i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> |
| <i>RE</i> | <i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> |
| <i>REB</i> | <i>Revue des Etudes Byzantines</i> |
| <i>Rec. Const.</i> | <i>Recueil des Notices et Mémoires de la Société Archéologique Historique et Géographique du Département de Constantine</i> |
| <i>REI</i> | <i>Revue des Etudes Islamiques</i> |
| <i>RIC</i> | <i>Roman Imperial Coinage</i> |
| <i>RN</i> | <i>Revue Numismatique</i> |
| <i>RT</i> | <i>Revue Tunisienne</i> |
| <i>TAVO</i> | <i>Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients</i> |
| <i>TM</i> | <i>Travaux et Mémoires (Paris)</i> |
| <i>TU</i> | <i>Texte und Untersuchungen</i> |

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