MUSLIM EXPANSION AND BYZANTINE COLLAPSE IN NORTH AFRICA

Who “lost” Christian North Africa? Who won it and how? Walter E. Kaegi takes a fresh look at these perennial questions, with maps and on-site observations, in this exciting new book. Persisting clouds of suspicion and blame overshadowed many Byzantine attempts to defend North Africa, as Byzantines failed to meet the multiple challenges from different directions which ultimately overwhelmed them. While the Muslims forcefully and permanently turned Byzantine internal dynastic and religious problems and military unrest to their advantage, they brought their own strengths to a dynamic process that would take a long time to complete – the transformation of North Africa. An impartial comparative framework helps to sort through identity politics, “Orientalism” charges and counter-charges, and institutional controversies; this book also includes a new study of the decisive battle of Sbeitla in 647, helping readers to understand what befell Byzantium, and indeed empires from Rome to the present.

WALTER E. KAEGI is Professor of History at the University of Chicago, where he has been teaching Byzantine, Late Antique, Early Islamic, and military history since 1965. He is the co-founder of the Byzantine Studies Conference and the President of the US National Committee for Byzantine Studies. Previous books include Army, Society and Religion in Byzantium (1982); Some Thoughts on Byzantine Military Strategy (1983); Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests (Cambridge, 1992); and Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium (Cambridge, 2003).
MUSLIM EXPANSION AND
BYZANTINE COLLAPSE
IN NORTH AFRICA

WALTER E. KAEGI
To Louise, for her constant presence and indispensable support for the creation of this book
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2  Solidus of Constans II. Constantinople. Date: 651–4.  

3  Solidus of Constans II with young son Constantine IV.  
   Constantinople. Date: 654–9. DO Cat 2,2 no. 27b BZC 48/17.2183.  
   © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.  

4  Silver PAX issue. Constans II obverse, with PAX on reverse.  
   Carthage Mint. Date 647 or shortly thereafter.  

   © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.  

   © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.  

7  Solidus of Constans II with Constantine IV. Syracuse, Sicily.  
   Date 659–61. DO Cat 2,2, no. 161c BZC 1960.120.D2009.  
   © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.  

8  Solidus of young Constantine IV. Constantinople. Date 668–73.  
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9 Solidus of young Constantine IV. Constantinople. Date 681–5.

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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
Acknowledgments

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Acknowledgments

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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, 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
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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td><em>Antiquités Africaines</em></td>
</tr>
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<td>AABSC</td>
<td>Abstracts, Annual Byzantine Studies Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASS</td>
<td><em>Acta Sanctorum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td><em>Analecta Bollandiana</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACO</td>
<td><em>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</em></td>
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<td>AHR</td>
<td><em>American Historical Review</em></td>
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<td>ANSMN</td>
<td><em>Museum Notes, American Numismatic Society</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td><em>Antiquité Tardive</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAR</td>
<td><em>British Archaeological Reports</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td><em>Bulletin, American Schools of Oriental Research</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCTH</td>
<td><em>Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BF</td>
<td><em>Byzantinische Forschungen</em></td>
</tr>
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<td>BGA</td>
<td><em>Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum</em></td>
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<td>BGMS</td>
<td><em>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</em></td>
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<td>BN Cat</td>
<td><em>Catalogue des monnaies Byzantines de la Bibliothèque Nationale</em></td>
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<td>BS/EB</td>
<td><em>Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines</em></td>
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<td>BSNF</td>
<td><em>Bulletin de la Société française de Numismatique</em></td>
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<td>BSOAS</td>
<td><em>Bulletin, School of Oriental and African Studies University of London</em></td>
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<td>BZ</td>
<td><em>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td><em>Cahiers Archéologiques</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td><em>Corpus Christianorum</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFHB</td>
<td>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHGRW</td>
<td>Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIL</td>
<td>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMH2</td>
<td>New Cambridge Medieval History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCO</td>
<td>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</td>
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<td>CSCO SS</td>
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<td>EHR</td>
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<td>EI</td>
<td>Encyclopedia of Islam, 1st and 2nd edns.</td>
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<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILAlg</td>
<td>Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRA</td>
<td>Journal of Roman Archaeology</td>
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<td>JRS</td>
<td>Journal of Roman Studies</td>
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<td>JSAI</td>
<td>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEFRA</td>
<td>Mélanges, Ecole française de Rome: Antiquité</td>
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<td>MGH AA</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi</td>
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<td>MGH SRM</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum</td>
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<td>MIB</td>
<td>Moneta Imperii Byzantini</td>
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<td>OCA</td>
<td>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</td>
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<td>ODB</td>
<td>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</td>
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<td>OLA</td>
<td>Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>Migne, Patrologia Graeca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Migne, Patrologia Latina</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLRE</td>
<td>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMBZ</td>
<td>Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, Abt. 1</td>
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<td>PO</td>
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<td>RE</td>
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<td>Revue Tunisienne</td>
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<td>TAVO</td>
<td>Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients</td>
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