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978-0-521-19677-2 - Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa

Walter E. Kaegi

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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).

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978-0-521-19677-2 - Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa
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Frontmatter
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521196772

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First published 2010

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Kaegi, Walter Emil.

Muslim expansion and Byzantine collapse in North Africa / Walter E. Kaegi.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-19677-2

1. Africa, North—History—To 647. 2. Byzantine Empire. I. Title.

DT172.K34 2010

961'.022—dc22

2010034895

ISBN 978-0-521-19677-2 Hardback

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Walter E. Kaegi

Frontmatter

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To Louise, for her constant presence and indispensable support
for the creation of this book

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19677-2 - Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa
Walter E . Kaegi
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of maps</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>List of figures</i>	xii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiv
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xviii
1 Challenges of the subject and the sources	I
Objectives and methodology	2
The historical and geographical scope	3
Disciplinary perspectives	6
Table 1 Muslim expeditions and Byzantine actions: an overview	11
2 Historiographical hurdles	16
Comparisons and cautionary observations	16
Colonialist frames of reference	20
Deficiencies within anti-colonial critiques	24
A word about Muslim, Byzantine, and Latin sources	29
3 Fragmented geographical and logistical realities	41
Diversity of regions: an overview of micro-regions	48
Demographic and economic conditions	64
Ethnic and cultural affinity and conflict	66
4 Christian contexts in seventh-century North Africa	69
Pious hopes and anxieties	69
Monotheletism, Monophysitism, and orthodoxy	71
Trauma, hopes, and anxieties amid crisis	78
Impediments from religious scapegoating	83
5 The military heritage of Heraclius on the eve of Muslim military operations	92
Heraclius' familial ties with North Africa	94
Changing strategic culture	97

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
	Rotation of military officers between North Africa and the east	100
	Byzantine raids, fortifications, and resistance	105
	Status of Byzantine defenses in southern Tunisia 641–7	107
	Apprehensions	113
6	The shock of Sbeitla	116
	The setting and strategic structures 642–7	116
	The battle: first raids and contested memory at Sufetula (Sbeitla)	123
	Autochthonous participation: the Mauri	126
	Enduring geographic and strategic significance of Sbeitla	128
	Rout and destruction: what we don't know	131
	Insights from the <i>Strategikon</i>	135
	Hypotheses about the location of the battle	140
	Consequences: humiliating terms and shattering of the Byzantine myth	143
7	Options for offensives and resistance	145
	Lapse and restoration of Byzantine authority in North Africa 647–65	146
	Puzzle of the <i>PAX</i> coinage	151
	Needed and wanted: help from Byzantium	152
	Byzantine interests	155
	Unrest among local and autochthonous North Africans	158
	Strategic options 641–65	160
8	The riddle of Constans II	166
	Constans II in historiography	167
	Imitation of his grandfather Heraclius	171
	Economic, military, and religious impediments	174
	Challenges for gathering intelligence	176
	New wave of shocks: Gigthis, Jirba	179
	Possible motives for assassination of Constans II	182
	Interrelationship of events	185
	Reevaluation of Constans II	186
	Constans II and controversies about Byzantine military institutional reforms	195
9	Muslim interests, calculations, and leadership	200
	Significance of Egypt and its failure to provide a model	201
	Formation of Early Islam and emerging perspectives on the struggle with Byzantium	202
	Islamic strategic culture and strategic options	206
	Mu'awiya's aggressive strategy	207
	Identifying the turning point: historiographical debate	210
	Assessing Muslim military leadership in North Africa: the campaigns of 'Uqba b. Nāfi' and Abū'l Muhājir	215

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-19677-2 - Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa
 Walter E. Kaegi
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

<i>Contents</i>		ix
10	The shift to tribal resistance 669–95	220
	Collapse of Byzantine authority: imperial responsibility	221
	Campaigns of Abū'l Muhājir	226
	'Uqba b. Nāfi's replacement of Abū'l Muhājir and his expedition of 682/3	229
	Significance of resistance to 'Uqba b. Nāfi	237
	Contested memories of tribal leader Kasila	242
11	The fall of Carthage and its aftermath 695–711	247
	'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, Hassān ibn al-Nu'mān, and the capture of Carthage	247
	The emergence of Kāhina	249
	Mūsā b. Nuṣayr pushes westward	253
	The Balearic Islands, Spain	257
	Termination of Byzantine resistance	261
12	The failures of two cities of Constantine	266
	Comparative analysis of conditions in North Africa and in the east	266
	North Africans' memories	274
	Fragmented resistance	278
	Failure to establish convincing identity of interests with North Africans	281
	Enduring constants	287
	Interrupted development?	295
	<i>Select bibliography</i>	301
	<i>Index</i>	335

Maps

1	<i>The Byzantine Empire in 630, on the eve of the Islamic Conquests.</i> © Walter E. Kaegi.	page 5
2	<i>The Byzantine Empire c. 645, soon after the death of Heraclius.</i> © Walter E. Kaegi.	42
3	<i>Principal geographic features of North Africa.</i> Background topography derived from global shaded relief files published in <i>ESRI data & maps 9.3, media kit</i> (Redlands, CA: ESRI, 2008).	43
4	<i>Byzantine North Africa with selected key features.</i> Background topography derived from global shaded relief files published in <i>ESRI data & maps 9.3, media kit</i> (Redlands, CA: ESRI, 2008).	47
5	<i>Carthage region with Cape Bon.</i> Background topography derived from global shaded relief files published in <i>ESRI data & maps 9.3, media kit</i> (Redlands, CA: ESRI, 2008).	57
6	647 Sbeitla campaign and battle site of Mammas 688. Background topography derived from global shaded relief files published in <i>ESRI data & maps 9.3, media kit</i> (Redlands, CA: ESRI, 2008).	118
7	<i>Google Earth Pro view of possible site of Battle of “Sbeitla.”</i> Google Earth Pro. ©Google 2009. Location: 35° 22’ 03” N. 9° 28’ 06” E. Accessed 9/27/09.	141
8	<i>Aures region of Numidia.</i> Background topography derived from global shaded relief files published in <i>ESRI data & maps 9.3, media kit</i> (Redlands, CA: ESRI, 2008).	230

List of maps xi

- 9 *Numidian sites of probable initial route and final return of ‘Uqba b. Nāfi’ (683) and probable site of death of Kāhina (698–703?)* Background topography derived from global shaded relief files published in *ESRI data & maps 9.3, media kit* (Redlands, CA: ESRI, 2008). 233
- 10 *Northwest North Africa, with supposed route of ‘Uqba b. Nāfi’ in far west, and his return in 683.* Background topography derived from global shaded relief files published in *ESRI data & maps 9.3, media kit* (Redlands, CA: ESRI, 2008). 238

All map scales are approximate.

Figures

1	Hexagram of Constans II. Constantinople. Date: 654–9. <i>DO Cat</i> 2,2 no.55.3 BZC 60.125.1118.D2209. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.	page 82
2	Solidus of Constans II. Constantinople. Date: 651–4. <i>DO Cat</i> 2,2 no. 23b BZC 1961.8.D2009.bw. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.	122
3	Solidus of Constans II with young son Constantine IV. Constantinople. Date: 654–9. <i>DO Cat</i> 2,2 no. 27b BZC 48/17.2183. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.	122
4	Silver <i>PAX</i> issue. Constans II obverse, with <i>PAX</i> on reverse. Carthage Mint. Date 647 or shortly thereafter. <i>DO Cat</i> 2,2 no. 132.1 BZC 56.23.164.D2009. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.	151
5	Solidus of Constans II with young Constantine IV. Syracuse, Sicily. Date 654–9. <i>DO Cat</i> 2,2 no. 158a.2 BZC 1957.70.D2009. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.	181
6	Solidus of Constans II with young Constantine IV. Syracuse, Sicily. Date 654–9. <i>DO Cat</i> 2,2 no. 156b BZC 1958.14.D2009. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.	181
7	Solidus of Constans II with Constantine IV. Syracuse, Sicily. Date 659–61. <i>DO Cat</i> 2,2, no. 161c BZC 1960.120.D2009. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.	181
8	Solidus of young Constantine IV. Constantinople. Date 668–73. <i>DO Cat</i> 2,2 n. 4.1 BZC 48.17.2293.D2009. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.	222

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19677-2 - Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa
Walter E. Kaegi
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

	<i>List of figures</i>	xiii
9	Solidus of young Constantine IV. Constantinople. Date 681–5. <i>DO Cat</i> 2,2 n. 14c BZC 48.17.2303.D2009. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.	222
10	Solidus of Justinian II from the Carthage mint. Date ?695/6? <i>DO Cat</i> 2,2 no. 28 BZC 48.17.2359.D2009. © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC.	275

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19677-2 - Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa

Walter E. Kaegi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19677-2 - Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa

Walter E. Kaegi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Acknowledgments*

xv

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

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19677-2 - Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa

Walter E. Kaegi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19677-2 - Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa

Walter E. Kaegi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Acknowledgments*

xvii

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>

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19677-2 - Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa

Walter E. Kaegi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*List of abbreviations*

xix

<i>CFHB</i>	<i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>CHGRW</i>	<i>Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CMH₂</i>	<i>New Cambridge Medieval History</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
<i>CSCO SS</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri</i>
<i>CSHB</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>DO Cat</i>	<i>Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore collection</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EB</i>	<i>Encyclopédie Berbère</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Islam</i> , 1st and 2nd edns.
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>ILAlg</i>	<i>Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSOI</i>	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>
<i>MEFRA</i>	<i>Mélanges, Ecole française de Rome: Antiquité</i>
<i>MGH AA</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi</i>
<i>MGH SRL</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum</i>
<i>MGH SRM</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum</i>
<i>MIB</i>	<i>Moneta Imperii Byzantini</i>
<i>OCA</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
<i>ODB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i>
<i>OLA</i>	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Migne, Patrologia Graeca</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Migne, Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>PLRE</i>	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i>
<i>PMBZ</i>	<i>Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, Abt. 1</i>

xx	<i>List of abbreviations</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>