

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals
Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ROME AND PERSIA IN LATE ANTIQUITY

The foundation of the Sasanian Empire in AD 224 established a formidable new power on the Roman Empire's Eastern frontier, and relations over the next four centuries proved turbulent. This book provides a chronological narrative of their relationship, supported by a substantial collection of translated sources illustrating important themes and structural patterns. The political goals of the two sides, their military confrontations and their diplomatic solutions are discussed, as well as the common interests between the two powers. Special attention is given to the situation of Arabia and Armenia, to economic aspects, the protection of the frontiers, the religious life in both empires and the channels of communication between East and West. In its wide chronological scope, the study explores the role played by the Sasanians in the history of the ancient Near East. The book will prove invaluable for students and non-specialists interested in late antiquity and early Byzantium, and it will be equally useful for specialists on these subjects.

BEATE DIGNAS is Fellow and Tutor in Ancient History at Somerville College, Oxford. Her recent publications include *Economy of the Sacred in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor* (2002) and she has edited a forthcoming book *Practitioners of the Divine: Greek Priests and Religious Officials from Homer to Heliodorus*.

ENGELBERT WINTER is Professor of Ancient History at the University of Münster. He has participated in numerous field surveys and excavations in Turkey and published many books and articles on Roman–Persian relations and the history and culture of Asia Minor.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals

Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ROME AND PERSIA IN
LATE ANTIQUITY

Neighbours and Rivals

BEATE DIGNAS AND ENGELBERT WINTER



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals
Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

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/9780521614078

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

Originally published in German as *Rom und das Perserreich: Zwei Weltmächte zwischen Konfrontation
und Koexistenz* by Akademie Verlag GmbH, Berlin 2001, and © Akademie Verlag 2001

First published in English by Cambridge University Press 2007 as
Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals

English edition © Cambridge University Press 2007

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

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

ISBN 978-0-521-84925-8 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-61407-8 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external
or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on
such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals

Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of maps</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xiii

Introduction: West and East, friend and foe, counterpart and mirror image . . .	I
---	---

PART I NARRATIVE

1 Rome and Iran to the beginning of the third century AD	9
2 Rome and the Sasanian Empire: A chronological survey	18
2.1 The third century: The origins of Sasanian interests in the West	18
2.2 The fourth century: The conflict escalates under Šāpūr II (309–379)	32
2.3 The fifth century: Détente at the Roman Eastern frontier	34
2.4 The sixth century: The Sasanians renew their expansionist policy in the West	37
2.5 The seventh century: Might and decline of Sasanian power	44

PART II SOURCES AND CONTEXTS

1 Political goals	53
1 Territorial claims of the Sasanians against Rome	53
2 Succession to Achaemenid rule as programmatic foreign policy	56
2 Warfare	63
3 Sasanian armament and tactics	63
3 Military confrontations	70
3.1 The third century: Origins of Sasanian interests in the West	71
4 Earliest Roman–Sasanian confrontations (230–233)	71

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals

Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

Contents

5	Šāpūr I (240–272) at war with Rome	77
6	Galerius defeats Narsē in the year 298	84
3.2	The fourth century: The conflict escalates under Šāpūr II (309–379)	88
7	Fighting during the reign of Constantius II (337–361)	88
8	Julian's Persian War (363)	90
3.3	The fifth century: Détente at the Roman Eastern frontier	94
9	Arcadius (383–408) and Yazdgard I (399–420)	94
10	Persian confrontations with the Hephthalites	97
11	The Sasanian monarchy loses and regains power	98
3.4	The sixth century: The Sasanians renew their expansionist policy in the West	100
12	The first Sasanian–Byzantine War (502–532)	100
13	The second Sasanian–Byzantine War (540–562)	106
14	The third Sasanian–Byzantine War (572–591) and the Persian expansion into South Arabia	109
3.5	The seventh century: Might and decline of Sasanian power	115
15	The advance of Xusrō II Parvēz (602–628)	115
4	The diplomatic solutions	119
16	The peace treaty of 244 between Philip the Arab and Šāpūr I	119
17	The peace treaty of 298 between Diocletian and Narsē	122
18	The peace treaty of 363 between Jovian and Šāpūr II	131
19	The peace treaty of 422 between Theodosius II and Bahrām V Gōr	135
20	The peace treaty of 562 between Justinian and Xusrō I Anōšarvān	138
21	The peace treaty of 628 between Heraclius and Kavādh II Šērōē	148
5	Arabia between the great powers	152
22	Hatra	152
23	Palmyra	155
24	The Arab prince Imru'ulqais between Romans and Sasanians	163
25	'Proxy policy': Lahmids and Gassānids	169
6	Shared interests: Continuing conflicts	173
26	Armenia	173
27	Protection of the frontier	188
28	Economy and trade	195
7	Religion: Christianity and Zoroastrianism	210
29	Religion and kingship in the Sasanian Empire	210
30	The Sasanian kings as patrons of Zoroastrianism	213
31	From Diocletian to Constantine: Religious change in the West and the consequences for Roman–Sasanian relations	216
32	The situation of the Persian Christians during the reign of Yazdgard I (399–420)	221
33	Religion and politics during the sixth and seventh centuries	225

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals

Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

<i>Contents</i>		vii
8	Emperor and King of kings	232
34	Concepts of 'legitimate rule' and the 'family of kings'	232
9	Exchange of information between West and East	242
35	Diplomacy and espionage	245
36	Deportations: Enforced resettlements of prisoners	254
37	Mutual cultural interest	263
<i>Appendix 1 Lists of Sasanian kings and Roman emperors</i>		266
<i>Appendix 2 Chronological table</i>		268
<i>Appendix 3 Glossary</i>		273
<i>Bibliography</i>		282
<i>Index of sources</i>		326
<i>Index of translated sources</i>		332
<i>Index of names</i>		335
<i>Index of place names</i>		339
<i>General index</i>		343

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals

Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Figures*

1	The Achaemenid rock tombs at Naqš-i Rostam and the Kāba-i Zardušt	<i>page</i> 58
2	The three languages of the Šāpūr Inscription (ŠKZ)	59
3	Equestrian statue of Xusrō II at Taq-i Bustan	67
4	Sketch of the relief from Taq-i Bustan	69
5	Coin of Severus Alexander, reverse, 233	76
6	Triumphal relief of Šāpūr I at Bīšāpūr	78
7	Paris Cameo	81
8	Illustration of the Šahnāma representing the victory of Šāpūr I against Valerian – Miniatures of the Berlin manuscript, 1605	83
9	The capture of Valerian. Hans Holbein, Basle, 1521	85
10	Medallion of Galerius, 298	87
11	The Arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki. Detail from the North-East	88
12	Rock relief of Ardašīr II in Taq-i Bustan	93
13–14	Dāra. City wall and watch-tower	102
15	Textile fragment from Antinoë in Egypt	114
16	Coin of Philip the Arab, 244	121
17	Rock-relief at Naqš-i Rostam representing the investiture of Ardašīr I	235
18	The great hall of the palace in Bīšāpūr	257

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals
Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Maps*

1	Asia Minor and the Roman Eastern provinces	<i>page</i> 10
2	Sasanian Iran	20
3	Northern Mesopotamia and adjacent regions	30
4	The Roman–Sasanian Frontier in late antiquity	61
5	Sasanian sites	68
6	The Roman Near East and the Western regions of the Sasanian Empire	72
7	The sphere of contact in the Near East between Iran and the Arabs in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times	III
8	The ‘Trans-Tigritania’	127
9	Palmyra and the Roman East in the second century	157
10	Lahmids and Gassanids along the Roman–Sasanian frontier	166
11	Armenia at the time of the Parthian Empire	175
12	The Caucasus	189
13	The Silk Road from China to the Roman Orient	198
14	The Byzantine–Sasanian borderlands	243

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals

Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface*

In 2001 our *Rom und das Perserreich. Zwei Weltmächte zwischen Konfrontation und Koexistenz* was published by the Akademie Verlag, Berlin. Naturally, comments made by friends and colleagues as well as academic reviews encouraged us to think further about the issues of our book and also about its place among textbooks and scholarly works. We are hoping that *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals*, a revised and expanded translation, is an adequate response to the many suggestions we have received since 2001, among these the observation that our book did not have a counterpart in the English language that would correspond to its scope and format.

Even more than the German volume, the present study of Roman–Sasanian relations has been guided by our attempt to focus on the interests and independent policies of the eastern power. In reaction to the conventional and still prevalent eurocentric perspective of many scholarly works we emphasise the Eastern textual and visual testimonies. We have done so with the help of Ph. Huyse (Paris), who translated crucial passages from the trilingual Šāpūr Inscription (the Parthian text) as well as the inscriptions of the Zoroastrian priest Kartēr (Middle Persian) into English for us. Petra Sijpesteijn (Oxford) helped us with the translation of excerpts from Arabic texts and David Taylor (Oxford) with the Syriac texts. Thank you!

We have expanded our study by including a new chapter on the role of Armenia (26). Here, we are grateful to Tim Greenwood (St Andrew's), who not only translated the Armenian passages but also gave patient advice on the interpretation of the material. Moreover, the new book has chapters on Sasanian warfare (II.2) and on the relationship between rulers (II.8). We have also paid more attention to aspects of diplomacy and religion during the late phase of Roman–Sasanian relations.

It has been a pleasure to work with Cambridge University Press. We would like to thank Michael Sharp for accepting the book for publication,

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals

Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

Preface

and Sarah Parker and Elizabeth Davey for their support and guidance during all stages of the production. Last but not least, Linda Woodward's copy-editing has been thorough, extremely helpful and efficient.

Oxford/Münster

BEATE DIGNAS
AND ENGELBERT WINTER

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals
Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Abbreviations*

<i>AA</i>	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i>
<i>AAG. Ph.-h. Kl.</i>	<i>Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen</i>
<i>AAntHung</i>	<i>Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i>
<i>AAAS</i>	<i>Les annales archéologiques arabs syriennes</i>
<i>AAWW</i>	<i>Anzeiger der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien. Philologisch-historische Klasse</i>
<i>AchHist</i>	<i>Achaemenid History</i>
<i>ActIr</i>	<i>Acta Iranica</i>
<i>AHB</i>	<i>The Ancient History Bulletin</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJPh</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AMI</i>	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran</i>
<i>AnalBolland</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>AncSoc</i>	<i>Ancient Society</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i>
<i>AnTard</i>	<i>Antiquité Tardive</i>
<i>ArOr</i>	<i>Archív Orientální</i>
<i>AW</i>	<i>Antike Welt</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BCHI</i>	<i>Bastan Chenasi va Honar-e Iran. Revue d'archéologie d'art iraniens</i>
<i>BHAC</i>	<i>Bonner Historia Augusta Colloquium</i>
<i>BJb</i>	<i>Bonner Jahrbücher</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BSAC</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte</i>
<i>BSO(A)S</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental (from vol. 10 ff. and African) Studies</i>

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals
Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

List of abbreviations

<i>ByzF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen. Internationale Zeitschrift für Byzantinistik</i>
<i>ByzZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>The Cambridge Ancient History, Volumes I–XIV</i>
<i>CFHB</i>	<i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>CHI</i>	<i>The Cambridge History of Iran, Volumes I–VIII</i>
<i>CHR</i>	<i>Catholic Historical Review</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
<i>CSHB</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>DNP</i>	<i>Der Neue Pauly</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EA</i>	<i>Epigraphica Anatolica. Zeitschrift für Epigraphik und historische Geographie Anatoliens</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i>
<i>EncIr</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>
<i>EOS</i>	<i>Atti del Colloquio Internazionale AIEGL su Epigrafia e Ordine Senatorio: Roma, 14–20 maggio 1981</i>
<i>E&W</i>	<i>East and West</i>
<i>G&R</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>HAW</i>	<i>Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaften</i>
<i>HdO</i>	<i>Handbuch der Orientalistik</i>
<i>IF</i>	<i>Indogermanische Forschungen</i>
<i>IrAnt</i>	<i>Iranica Antiqua</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
<i>JbAC</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>JDAI</i>	<i>Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNG</i>	<i>Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSAI</i>	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>
<i>LMA</i>	<i>Lexikon des Mittelalters</i>
<i>MBAH</i>	<i>Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte</i>

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals
Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

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

xv

<i>MH</i>	<i>Museum Helveticum</i>
<i>NC</i>	<i>Numismatic Chronicle</i>
<i>NZ</i>	<i>Numismatische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>OCP</i>	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
<i>OLP</i>	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
<i>OrChr</i>	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
<i>PLRE</i>	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i>
<i>PSAS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies</i>
<i>QC</i>	<i>Quaderni catanesi di studi classici e medievali</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum. Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der antiken Welt</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Pauly-Wissowa Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des Études Anciennes</i>
<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des Études Byzantines</i>
<i>REtArm</i>	<i>Revue des Études Arméniennes</i>
<i>RevBibl</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RGG</i>	K. Galling, <i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft</i> . 7 vols., 1957–65.
<i>RhM</i>	<i>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</i>
<i>RIC</i>	H. Mattingly, <i>The Roman Imperial Coinage</i> . 10 vols., 1923–94.
<i>RIDA</i>	<i>Revue internationale des droits de l'antiquité</i>
<i>RstorAnt</i>	<i>Rivista storica dell'antichità</i>
<i>SBAW</i>	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i>
<i>ŠKZ</i>	<i>Inscription of Šāpūr I at the Ka'ba-i Zardušt in Naqš-e Rostam</i>
<i>StIr</i>	<i>Studia Iranica</i>
<i>TALANTA</i>	<i>Talanta. Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society</i>
<i>TAPhA</i>	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>TAVO</i>	<i>Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients</i>
<i>TravMem</i>	<i>Travaux et mémoires. Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation byzantine</i>

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-61407-8 - Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals

Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi

List of abbreviations

<i>WJA</i>	<i>Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>YCS</i>	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZKG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>