THE LAST DAYS OF SALIH

BY

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THE Phylarchate of Saliḥ ¹ which lasted well over a century from the reign of Valens (364-378, A.D.) till the reign of Anastasius (491-518, A.D.) has not received adequate attention from those who have written on the history of the Arabs before Islam. This neglect which the history of Saliḥ has experienced is incommensurate with its importance as a Phylarchate which endured as long as Gassān was to endure and which played a similar role in the story of Arab-Byzantine relations in the fifth century. After Nöldeke ² had accepted the identification of the Ḫṣṣḥ of the Greek sources with the Ḫṣḥ of the Arabic sources and thus provided the necessary starting point for the investigation of the history of Saliḥ, no study has appeared, specifically and solely devoted to this group and employing Nöldeke's well-known technique for dealing with the history of the Arabs before Islam ³, a technique which has been successfully applied to the study of Gassān ⁴, Laḥm ⁵, and Kinda ⁶. It is the aim of this article to con-

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¹ In the interests of euphony the term Saliḥ is chosen in preference to Duqṣum.
³ Salīḥ received a brief treatment at the hands of Moritz in 1915, in the form of a digression from his main theme. He devoted four pages to the Princes of Quḍā'a which included the notice on Saliḥ. See B. Moritz, Der Sinaikult in heidinischer Zeit, in Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse. Neue Folge, Band XVI, N° 2, Berlin, 1916, pp. 50-53.
⁴ Th. Nöldeke, op. cit.
⁵ Gustave Rothstein, Die Dynastie der Lakhmiden in al-Ḥira (Berlin, 1899).
⁶ Gunnar Olinder, The Kings of Kinda, in Lunds Universitets Årsskrift, 1927. These three works on Gassān, Laḥm, and Kinda, however, are due for re-examination.
tribute towards exhuming from obscurity a phase in the history of Salih by investigating the last decade or so of this Phylarchate which began when Gassân, the new group, crossed the Roman limes and which ended when it superseded Salih as the new client of Byzantium in 502 A.D. Specifically, it will address itself to two problems: (1) — The chronological problem of determining the date, precise or approximate, of the crossing of the limes by Gassân, (2) — The elucidation of the various stages of the development of Gassânid-Salihite relations from co-existence, to conflict, to active hostilities in which the Romans took part, until the emergence of Gassân as the new client in 502 A.D. The principle which will guide this investigation will be the acceptance of data from the Arabic sources only when they are inherently valid, and when they cohere with established historical facts in Roman history and authentic statements in the incontestable Greek sources.

The Chronological Problem

The discovery of a new terminus a quo for Gassânid-Byzantine relations, namely, the year 502 A.D., has considerably simplified the present chronological problem inasmuch as the terminus a quo for Gassân happens to be also the terminus ad quem for Salih.1 With the final date of this last stage in the history of Salih decided, it remains to discover the initial one. This has to be sought in one of the years of the last quarter of the fifth century, which coincided with the reign of Zeno (474-491 A.D.) and part of the reign of Anastasius (491-518 A.D.). For determining this initial date, the Arabic sources are the only guide 2. These sources, in matters of chronology, are ordinarily quite useless, but for this particular problem they are unusually helpful and informative. They all tell the same story concerning the crossing of the limes by Gassân, and their unanimity is the first point in favor of their authenticity 3.

1. See the author in Ghassân and Byzantium, A New Terminus A Quo, in Isl., Bd. 33, Heft 3, pp. 232-255.
3. The unanimity of the sources is all the more remarkable in view of