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A ROMAN-LAZI WAR IN THE *SUDA*: A FRAGMENT OF PRISCUS?*

Suda τ 134: Ταρσοὶ καλάμων. οἱ δὲ Λαζοὶ βόθρους ὀρύξαντες καὶ δόρατα τοῖς βόθροις ἐγκαταπέξαντες ταρσοῖς καλάμων καὶ ὕλη μὴ βεβαίαν ἐχούση βάσιν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ ἐπιφερόμενον ἄχθος ὀλισθαινούση, τὰ στόματα τῶν ὀρυγμάτων ἐκάλυψαν· καὶ χούνη ἐπιβαλόντες τὰ τε παρ' ἐκάτερα χωρία γεωργήσαντες καὶ πυροὺς σπείραντες ἐτροπώσαντο τοὺς Ῥωμαίους. Ταρσοὶ καλάμων παρ' Ἡροδότῳ ἢ τρασιά (πρασιά mss), οὗ ἐξήραινον τὴν πλίνθον.¹

Frames of reeds. 'The Lazi, having dug pits and securely fixed spears within them, concealed the openings of the holes with frames of reeds and material that has no firm foundation but would give way to any load placed upon it; and having thrown earth on top and tilled the ground to either side and sewn wheat, they put the Romans to flight.' Frames of reeds in Herodotus are the drying-rack, where they used to dry bricks.

This entry in the *Suda* comprises three elements. First, the lemma Ταρσοὶ καλάμων, compared with the usual format of the lexicon, is atypical (though not unparalleled) both in being a two-word phrase and in lacking an explanatory gloss. The word ταρσός most frequently denotes various artefacts with a flat and/or interwoven structure, such as screens, baskets and mats, and by extension is used figuratively of surfaces that resemble wickerwork or basketry.² The phrase ταρσοὶ καλάμων or καλάμου is otherwise attested, with somewhat different meanings, in only three ancient authors: Herodotus, Thucydides and Aeneas Tacticus.³ Second, an anonymous extract from an unidentified historical work supplies a sample usage of the headword phrase, in this instance a military ruse in which wicker screens are instrumental in concealing pits dug by the Lazi prior to an engagement with the Romans. The historical setting, the style and language of the extract, along with the known sources and methodology of the compiler(s) of the *Suda*, indicate that the quotation belongs to a classicizing historian of Late Antiquity. These issues will be examined below. Third, as testimony to an alternative meaning of ταρσοὶ καλάμων, the compiler adduces a gloss on Herodotus' *Histories*, which he drew from an earlier glossary of Herodotean usages.⁴ Here two problems

* The research for this paper was primarily undertaken during the author's tenure of a Humboldt-Forschungsstipendium für erfahrene Wissenschaftler, hosted by Prof. Dr Albrecht Berger at the Institut für Byzantinistik, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich, 2009–11.

¹ A. Adler (ed.), *Suidae Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1928–38; repr. Stuttgart, 1967), 4.505.

² LSJ s.v. ταρσός. The compiler of the *Suda* has previously defined ταρσός at τ 130.

³ Hdt. 1.179.2: reed matting used to strengthen brickwork in the walls of Babylon; Thuc. 2.76.1: baskets filled with clay used in the construction of a siege mound; Aen. Tact. 32.2: wickerwork screens against missiles. Cf. also Hsch. τ 210 (Cunningham/Latte), where the accusative plural lemma ταρσοὺς καλάμων is clearly cited from Herodotus. The passage of Thucydides is cited three times in the *Suda* at ε 1282; ε 109; τ 130, whence ps.-Zonar. *Lex.* 640.26–8, 746.8–10.

⁴ For the compiler's dependence on an older Herodotean glossary see Adler (n. 1), 1.xviii. An extant recension of this glossary (*codex Coislinianus* 345) is edited under the title Ἡροδότου

arise. The definition of a drying-rack for bricks indicates that the original glossarist (and in turn the *Suda* compiler) did not in fact understand Herodotus' technical description.⁵ In any case, the reading *πρασιά*, transmitted in all codices of the *Suda*, and accepted by Adler, should undoubtedly read *τρασιά*.⁶

The focus of interest will be the second component of *Suda* τ 134. This excerpt from a late antique classicizing historian has had a chequered and oddly inconsistent history. The first to comment on its possible provenance was Gottfried Bernhardt, in his annotations to Thomas Gaisford's edition of the *Suda* in 1853, where he expressed the view that the excerpt derives from the historical work of Priscus of Panion. Bernhardt offered no argumentation, though subsequent scholarship on the *Suda* has shown that his intuition is not to be taken lightly.⁷ This proposal had no immediate impact. It appeared too late for consideration in Karl Müller's influential edition of Priscus in the *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* (1851).⁸ However, on Bernhardt's authority, Ludwig Dindorf admitted the excerpt into his collection of fragmentary Greek historians for the Bibliotheca Teubneriana (1870), in which it is one of three excerpts from the *Suda* assigned to Priscus by 'incerta coniectura'.⁹ Subsequently, Ada Adler noted Bernhardt's ascription of the excerpt to Priscus in the apparatus to her magisterial edition of the *Suda* (1935).¹⁰ Adler neither endorsed nor denied the attribution, though major advances in understanding the compositional history of the *Suda* since Bernhardt's day now permitted confidence that, whoever its author might be, this fragment had found its way into the *Suda* via the *Excerpta Constantiniana* (see below). When Fritz Bornmann prepared a new edition of Priscus (1979), he included *Suda* τ 134 among the 'fragmenta dubia' (n° 67*), citing Bernhardt (via Adler) but not

λέξεις in H. Stein (ed.), *Herodoti Historiae* (Berlin, 1869–71), 2.441–82; repr. in K. Latte and H. Erbse (edd.), *Lexica Graeca minora* (Hildesheim, 1965), 191–231.

⁵ While Hdt 1.179.2 employs *ταρσοὶ καλάμων* in connection with the manufacture of bricks for the walls of Babylon, he applies this phrase not to a drying-rack but to reed matting inserted at regular intervals to bind the brickwork together: καὶ διὰ τρήκοντα δόμον πλίνθου ταρσοὺς καλάμων διαστοιβάζοντες. Given that *ταρσοὶ* are more frequently attested as wicker surfaces used for drying diverse items (e.g. Homer, *Od.* 9.219; Theoc. 11.37; Poll. 1.251; 7.173), it seems that the author of the gloss misconstrued Herodotus' text and imposed the more common meaning of *ταρσοὶ* on to his account of Babylonian brick making.

⁶ According to the received text, *Suda* τ 134 states that in Herodotus the phrase *ταρσοὶ καλάμων* refers to ἡ *πρασιά*, οὗ ἐξήραινον τὴν πλίνθον. Although not impossible, a *πρασιά*, 'garden-plot' or 'allotment', is an unlikely place 'where they used to dry bricks'. The close palaeographical resemblance to *τρασιά*, a wicker frame or crate commonly used to dry bricks, figs, corn or cheeses (see LSJ s.v. *τρασιά*) leaves little doubt that the text transmitted in the MSS of the *Suda* arose from a misreading of TP- as PIP- in a majuscule ancestor. In fact, the reading *τρασιά* is found in the same gloss in the Ἡροδότου λέξεις (see n. 4) at 1.48, τ 2: *ταρσοὶ δὲ καλάμων. τρασιάν ἐν ἧ ἐξήραινον τὴν πλίνθον* (Stein 452, 470; Latte/Erbse 200, 218). That this was the original reading in the *Suda* is also confirmed by Gregory of Corinth, *De dialectis* 4.643 (Schäfer): *ταρσοὺς δὲ καλάμων, τὴν τρασιάν, οὗ ἐξήραινον τὴν πλίνθον*, which derives from the *Suda* or a common source.

⁷ T. Gaisford (ed.), *Suidae Lexicon*, with annotations by G. Bernhardt (Halle/Brunswick, 1853), 2².1037–8, annot. line 12: 'οἱ δὲ Λαζοῖ] Fragmentum opinor a Prisco repetendum.'

⁸ C.W. and T. Müller (edd.), *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum* (Paris, 1841–72), vol. 4 (1851), 69–110; vol. 5¹ (1870), 24–6. The excerpt is not found in the previous collection of fragments of Priscus in I. Bekker and B.G. Niebuhr (edd.), *Dexippi, Eunapii, Petri Patricii, Prisci, Malchi, Menandri historiarum quae supersunt* (CSHB 6) (Bonn, 1829), 139–228.

⁹ L.A. Dindorf (ed.), *Historici graeci minores* (Leipzig, 1870–1), 1.351–2, 'Prisci fragmentis incerta coniectura annumerata sunt haec Suidae ... [n° 2] Prisco locum tribuit Bernhardt'. The other two excerpts are from *Suda* θ 389 and τ 635.

¹⁰ Adler (n. 1), 4 (1935), 505, app. font. See also Adler's list of attributions to Priscus at 5.122.

Dindorf.¹¹ Despite its current inclusion in the canon of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, Bornmann's edition never enjoyed popularity and is otherwise rarely cited. Around the same time, but independently, Barry Baldwin (1980) was tempted to agree with Bernhardy in assigning the fragment to Priscus on the grounds of language, style and content, but conceded that these criteria were not decisive, at least in isolation.¹²

Up to as recently as 1980, therefore, the excerpt in *Suda* τ 134 had consistently featured in scholarship on Priscus, even if no study had assessed all aspects of the attribution. Thereafter, this fragment suffered a kind of editorial *damnatio memoriae*. Bornmann's edition was almost immediately overtaken, at least in anglophone scholarship, by Roger Blockley's more accessible presentation of the texts (a compilation of older editions) and English translations of fourth- and fifth-century fragmentary historians (1981–3). *Suda* τ 134 does not occur among the Priscan fragments assembled by Blockley, nor is it listed in his concordance of previous editions. Blockley briefly notes that he has excluded *Suda* τ 134, citing without further comment an earlier study by Edward Thompson.¹³ On further inspection, one finds that Thompson (1947) had brusquely rejected the three *Suda* entries appended to Dindorf's edition, but without offering a word of explanation or argument.¹⁴ The excerpt is also omitted from the most recent edition of Priscus by Pia Carolla (2008), which is in other respects the most comprehensive and learned. *Suda* τ 134 is nowhere mentioned and does not even find a place in Carolla's long conspectus of 'fragmenta dubia', despite her familiarity with Bornmann's contribution to Priscan scholarship. In a brief review of previous editions, Carolla implies that she largely followed Blockley's judgement on this matter.¹⁵ Accordingly, since the historical excerpt in *Suda* τ 134 has been included in some editions of Priscus (Dindorf, Bornmann) and excluded or passed over in silence by others (Blockley, Carolla), while the merits of its ascription to Priscus have never been scrutinized, the issue justifies investigation. Furthermore, this excerpt appears to have gone unnoticed in historical scholarship, even in specialist studies of Roman-Lazi relations or warfare in Late Antiquity, and the opportunity to signal its existence to historians, regardless of its possible or likely provenance, provides an additional justification for this enquiry.¹⁶

¹¹ F. Bornmann (ed.), *Prisci Panitae Fragmenta* (Florence, 1979), 124, fr. 67*, with Italian trans. at 200. Bornmann's edition contains an error of accentuation: τάρσοις for ταρσοῖς. At 124 Bornmann notes: '67* = *Suid.* s.v. Ταρσοὶ κολόμων I, 4 pp. 505 s. Ad[er] Prisco attr. Bernhardy. Cfr. Procop. Bell. I 13, 13-14 qui fortasse ex Prisco hausit.' I can see no direct relevance to this passage of Procopius.

¹² B. Baldwin, 'Priscus of Panium', *Byzantion* 50 (1980), 18–61, at 60: '... it may be tempting to agree with Bernhardy, but Priscus had no monopoly on this sort of thing'.

¹³ R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, 2 vols. (Liverpool, 1981-3). The fragments of Priscus are at 2.221-400. See the brief discussion of Priscus-derived material in the *Suda* at 1.118, with n. 42 (167), 'Thompson ... rightly rejects the three *Suda* articles which Dindorf includes as Priscan'; additional general remarks on the *Suda* at 2.viii.

¹⁴ E.A. Thompson, 'Notes on Priscus Panites', *CQ* 41 (1947), 61–5, at 65: 'Those who read Pr.[iscus] in Dindorf's text should reject all the uncertain fragments printed on pp. 351.24-352.31. They are none of them by Pr.'

¹⁵ P. Carolla (ed.), *Priscus. Excerpta et Fragmenta (Bibliotheca Teubneriana)* (Berlin, 2008). See the conspectus of 'fragmenta dubia' at 83–111, indexed at 132–7 (with *Suda*-derived material listed at 137). See xxxi, where Carolla indicates: 'Editio mea ei [sc. Blockley] multum debet, quantum ad fragmenta dubia pertinet', with following remarks.

¹⁶ To the present author's knowledge, the excerpt has not previously been noted or discussed in historical literature.

The excerpt describes how a Roman military intervention in Lazica suffered defeat on account of a stratagem employed by the Lazi. The author explains that the Lazi dug pits (βόθροι) and embedded spears within them (δόρατα ... ἐγκαταπήξαντες), presumably projecting from their floors and/or walls, and then concealed the openings of the pits with 'frames of reeds' (ταρσοῖς καλάμων) and other unspecified flimsy material (ῥύλη), which they covered over with soil (χοῦν ἐπιβαλόντες). Beyond the lexical curiosity of ταρσοῖς καλάμων, the vocabulary and phraseology are generic and furnish neither technical information nor criteria diagnostic of authorship. The preserved text does not elaborate on the size or number of the pits, but the expedient of 'tilling the ground to either side and sowing wheat' (τά τε παρ' ἐκάτερα χωρία γεωργήσαντες καὶ πυροῦς σπείραντες) in order to erase all trace of their existence implies both a large-scale enterprise and sufficient forewarning of the route and timing of the Roman approach. If the success of this ruse depended on crop growth sufficient to conceal the terrain, then an obstacle or defensive barrier prepared at least six to eight weeks in advance should be envisaged; if, however, the objective was merely to give a uniform impression of land under cultivation, then a couple of weeks might have sufficed. The author's specification of 'wheat' (πυρός), if an authentic detail, rather than a faster-growing cereal such as millet, may suggest that rate of maturity was not crucial, but the numerous variable and imponderable factors—agrarian, environmental and military—caution against over-reading the text.

The excerpt does not clarify how exactly these pits enable the Lazi to 'put the Romans to flight' (ἐτροπώσαντο τοὺς Ῥωμαίους).¹⁷ Fifth- and sixth-century historical narratives and military treatises provide sporadic reports of similar traps and ambushes involving concealed pits and trenches prepared in advance on the battlefield, primarily as a means of disrupting or halting the attacks of opposing cavalry.¹⁸ The most famous episode is the defeat and death of the Sasanian shah Pērōz at a battle against the Ephthalites in Gurgān in 484, as variously recorded in East Roman and oriental sources, which broadly concur that the Ephthalites destroyed the Sasanian cavalry by luring them into a giant concealed trench or, in one version, pits or ditches. The most detailed and well-known account in Greek is that of Procopius, who relates that the Ephthalite king selected a plain which the invading Sasanian army would have to cross and there 'made a deep trench of sufficient breadth ... and by placing reeds over the trench and heaping earth upon the reeds, he thereby concealed it on the surface'.¹⁹ In the following century, Gregory of Tours reports that, prior to a major battle near the River Unstrut in 531, the

¹⁷ See below nn. 58-9, 61 for the possibility that this concluding phrase may be the excerptor's abridgement.

¹⁸ I distinguish here between, on the one hand, concealed pits or trenches designed to ensnare the enemy, and, on the other hand, visible ditches or fieldworks constructed as tactical or strategic barriers to deter enemy attacks, though the distinction is not always clear-cut. For an earlier example of Roman forces employing the former category see Cass. Dio 75.6.3-6 on the battle of Lyons in 197: '... having in front of them concealed ditches and pits covered with earth on the surface' (κρυπτάς τάφρους ἔχοντες πρὸ αὐτῶν καὶ ὀρύγματα γῆ ἐπιπολαίως κεκαλύμμένα).

¹⁹ Procop. *BP* 1.4, quoting §§7-8 (τάφρον εἰργάσατο βαθειάν τε καὶ εὐρύουσαν ἰκανῶς ἔχουσαν ... καλάμους τε τῇ τάφρῳ ὑπερθεῖν ἐπιθείς καὶ γῆν ἐπὶ τοὺς καλάμους συναμνησάμενος, ταύτη ἐπιπολῆς ἔκρυψεν). Procopius was the source for Theophanes, *Chron.* 122.31-123.11 (de Boor), and thence Cedrenus, *Hist. comp.* 1.623.1-13 (Bekker). For other accounts of the nature of the obstacle: Lazar P'arpec'i, *History* 155-6 (trans. R.W. Thomson) alludes to a single trench; Agath. 4.27.4 refers to 'pits and ditches' (βόθροις καὶ διώρυξι); Tabarī, *Tarikh* 1.876-7, 879 (de Goeje) describes a large trench. See also briefer notices without details in ps.-Josh. 11; ps.-Zach. 7.3; Theoph. Byz. fr. 1.3 (*FHG* 4.270).

Thuringi sought to impede the Frankish cavalry: 'in the field where battle was to be joined they dug ditches, the openings of which they covered over with closely-packed turf and made the field appear level.'²⁰ Maurice's *Strategicon*, completed in the 590s, prescribes several stratagems for engineering the terrain of the battlefield in advance of an all-cavalry engagement. Some of these broadly resemble the contrivance outlined in the excerpt in form, implementation and/or purpose. Maurice observes that some peoples in the past have dug a large ditch and 'covered this with thin timber, grass and soil, so that the appearance of the ditch was as one and the same with the adjacent ground and in no way differed from it, nor indeed did they leave the excavated soil lying beside it, lest anything should seem amiss'; he cites the fate of Pērōz as an *exemplum* and this appears to be his primary inspiration.²¹ A closer analogy can be drawn with Maurice's subsequent specifications for 'round pits called "horse-breakers" (ἵπποκλάσται) dug here and there, which have a diameter of around one foot and a depth of two or three feet, and with sharp stakes inserted inside them. These are dug in alternate rows and not in straight lines, positioned about three feet apart from one another on all four sides ... for the full length of the battle line'.²² Maurice also recommends the construction of such 'small pits fitted with pointed stakes' as part of the defences of encampments.²³ The closest ancient parallel to Maurice's 'horse-breakers' is the so-called *lilia*, which Caesar employed in his perimeter defences during the

²⁰ Greg. Tur. *HF* 3.7: *in campum enim, quo certamen agi debebant, fossas effodiunt, quarum ora aperta denso cispete planum adsimilant campum*; see B.S. Bachrach, *Merovingian Military Organization 481–751* (Minneapolis, 1972), 135–6; id., 'Animals and warfare in Early Medieval Europe', in *L'uomo di fronte al mondo animale nell'Alto Medioevo* (= *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 31) (Spoleto, 1984), 707–51, at 731.

²¹ Maurice, *Strat.* 4.3.2–20 (Dennis), quoting lines 3–7 (σκεπάσαντες τε ταύτην [sc. φόσσαν] ξύλοις λεπτοῖς, χόρτω τε καὶ χώματι, ὅστε ἠνωμένην καὶ ὁμοίαν τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν τοῦ ὀρύγματος εἶναι τῇ ἐγγιζούσῃ αὐτῷ γῆ καὶ κατὰ μὴδὲν ἐναλλάττειν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ μὴδὲ τὸ ἐπαρθεὶς χῶμα ἐάσαντες παροκείσθαι αὐτῷ, ἵνα μὴ ἐμφαίνῃ τινα ξενοπρέπειαν). This passage was later rephrased by Leo, *Tactica* 14.39 (Dennis). See also Maurice's later remarks on the importance of thorough reconnaissance for detecting any 'ditches' (φόσσαι) and other traps which an unspecified enemy might prepare in front of their battle line: 7.B.12.17–23, 13.11–15, 16.20–4 (cf. 12.B.11.14–16). A detailed commentary will be provided in P. Rance, *The Roman Art of War in Late Antiquity: The Strategicon of the Emperor Maurice, a translation with commentary and textual studies* (Birmingham Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Monographs) (Aldershot, forthcoming).

²² Maurice, *Strat.* 4.3.52–72, quoting lines 52–8 (στρογγύλων ὀρυγμάτων τῶν λεγομένων ἵπποκλαστῶν ὀρυσομένων σποράδην, ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ποδὸς τὸ ἔμφωτον ἐχόντων, καὶ βάθος δύο ἢ τριῶν, καὶ πάλων ὀξέων καταπειρομένων ἐν αὐτοῖς, τούτων δὲ παραλλὰξ ὀρυσομένων καὶ μὴ ἐπ' εὐθείας, ἀπὸ τριῶν ποδῶν ἀλλήλων κατὰ τέσσαρα μέρη ἀφεσηκτότων ... μῆκος δὲ πρὸς τὸ τῆς παρατάξεως διάστημα). This passage was rephrased by Leo, *Tactica* 14.42.

²³ Maurice, *Strat.* 12.B.22.6: φόσσαις μικρὰς ἐχούσας σκόλοπας. Although Maurice does not use the term here, these pits around the encampment appear to be identical to the 'horse-breakers' he previously describes at 4.3.52–8. Indeed, the tenth-century Ambrosian paraphrase of the *Strategicon* substitutes elsewhere: λάκκοι, ποδάγραι ἢ ἵπποκλάσται λεγόμενοι, 'pits, foot-traps or so-called horse-breakers'; see B. Leoni (ed.), *La Parafraresi Ambrosiana dello Strategicon di Maurizio: L'arte della guerra a Bisanzio* (Milan, 2003), 417.12–13. Furthermore, other tenth-century Byzantine military authors, independently drawing on the same lost source on castrametation as Maurice used in *Strat.* 12.B.22, apply the same terminology to these camp defences: *De re militari* 2.21–6: λάκκοι οἱ λεγόμενοι ποδοκλάσται, ed. G.T. Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* (CFHB 25) (Washington, DC, 1985), 262; *Apparatus bellicus* 75/76.89–90: φόσσαις μικρὰς ἐχούσας ἐνδοθεν σκόλοπας, ποδάγρας ἢ ἵπποκλάστας λεγομένας, in C. Zuckerman (ed.), 'Chapitres peu connus de l'*Apparatus Bellicus*', *T&MByz* 12 (1994), 359–89, at 368; Nicephorus Uranus, *Tactica* 176: λάκκοι οἱ λεγόμενοι ἵπποκλάσται, in Zuckerman (this note), 381, 12.B.22. Cf. similarly *Sylloge tacticatorum* 22.5, ed. A. Dain (Paris, 1938), which derives from Leo, *Tactica* 11.13 and 14.42 (= Maurice, *Strat.* 4.3.52–6).

siege of Alesia in 52 B.C.—these comprised eight rows of pits, which were likewise three feet deep, fitted with a stake and placed obliquely in a quincunx pattern, three feet apart. The only significant difference appears to be that *lilia* were also ‘covered with osiers and brushwood to conceal the trap’.²⁴ Pits of similar design and serial alignment have been identified at several sites on the northern frontiers of Roman Britain.²⁵ In general, these spiked pits resemble *trous de loup* or ‘wolf holes’ variously used as anti-cavalry devices, defensive obstacles or mantraps in European warfare from the Middle Ages to the mid nineteenth century, and in the Far East into the late twentieth century. The military context of the concealed spiked pits prepared by the Lazi—whether as traps on a battlefield or defences of a stronghold—is not known, though the implied setting of tillable cropland arguably better suits the former scenario.²⁶ In any case, while this survey makes no claim to comprehensiveness, the configuration and objective of the Lazian pits seem consistent with a range of tactical expedients documented in different martial cultures of Late Antiquity, which in turn have distant antecedents in the classical period.

The events described in the excerpt in *Suda* τ 134 are not otherwise recorded, but the circumstances allow confidence with regard to the period and context. The Lazi are infrequently attested from the first century A.D. as one of the constituent tribes of the Colchians. Originally inhabiting the south-western coastal strip of Colchis, by the fifth century the Lazi had subsumed or subjugated the neighbouring peoples and emerge as the dominant kingdom of the western Transcaucasus. The creation of Lazian hegemony appears to date back to the fourth or possibly late third century, but its development and chronology cannot be reconstructed in detail.²⁷ In Roman sources from the fifth century onwards, the terms *Lazi/Λαζοί* and *Lazica/Λαζική* supersede *Colchi/Κόλχοι* and *Colchis/Κολχίς* as the contemporary ethnic and political-geographic designations, though the older terminology persists as archaizing synonyms in classicizing literature. In the wider context of Roman-Sasanian rivalry for control of the Black Sea coast throughout the later fifth and sixth centuries, Roman military and diplomatic initiatives centred upon Lazica as their main regional client and a strategic bridgehead, even if the Lazi periodically sought short-term advantage by shifting allegiance from the Roman to the Persian sphere.²⁸ During the five centuries between the first impact of Roman

²⁴ Caes. *B.Gall.* 7.73.5-9: ... *ad occultandas insidias uiminibus ac uirgultis integebatur*. See archaeological evidence in M. Reddé and S. von Schnurbein, *Alésia. Fouilles et recherches franco-allemandes sur les travaux militaires Romains autour du Mont-Auxois (1991-1997)* (*Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 22) (Paris, 2001), 1.504-6, 539-50. Cf. also Auct. *B. Afr.* 31: *extra uallum stili caeci mirabilem in modum consiti*, ‘concealed stakes outside the rampart, marvellously well planted’. At an earlier date, c. 200 B.C., Philo Mech. *Parasceustica* 69-70 (84.43-50) may describe a similar contrivance.

²⁵ See P. Bidwell, ‘The system of obstacles on Hadrian’s Wall: their extent, date and purpose’, *Arbeia Journal* 8 (2005), 53-76 citing older literature; D.J. Woolliscroft, ‘Excavations at Garnhall on the line of the Antonine’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 138 (2008), 129-76, at 142-5, 162-3.

²⁶ In contrast, Baldwin (n. 12), 60 interprets the excerpt as ‘apparently a siege description’.

²⁷ See D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia 550 BC-AD 562* (Oxford, 1994), 63-5, 274-6, 278-81, 313-14; E.L. Wheeler, ‘*Notitia Dignitatum*, Or. 38 and Roman deployment in Colchis: assessing recent views’, in B. Cabouret, A. Gros Lambert and C. Wolff (edd.), *Visions de l'Occident romain. Hommages à Y. le Bohec* (Paris, 2012), 2.621-76, at 632-4, with bibliography.

²⁸ For Roman-Sasanian rivalry in the Caucasus in the fifth and sixth centuries see E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, trans. J.-R. Palanque (Paris, 1949-59), 1.352-3, 357; 2.267-71, 303-4, 492-4, 504-21; Braund (n. 27), 268-314; G. Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War: 502-532* (Leeds, 1998), 124-5, 139-48; G. Greatrex and S.N.C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, Part II AD 363-630* (London, 2002), 56-9, 115-22.

imperialism in 65 B.C. and the mid fifth century A.D., direct Roman military presence in Colchis/Lazica was restricted to coastal garrisons, seemingly abandoned c. 258 A.D. and only selectively reoccupied from the Tetrarchic period.²⁹ Thereafter the heightened threat posed by Sasanian territorial ambitions occasionally required Roman forces to penetrate the interior, though such operations were infrequent and their opponents were typically Persian expeditionary armies. Hostilities between the Romans and the Lazi themselves occurred in only two brief periods: in the mid 450s and 541-8/9 (see below). We are therefore searching for a fragmentary classicizing historian of the fifth or sixth century, with an interest in events in western Transcaucasia.

Scholarship on the sources and compositional history of the *Suda* provides a basis for identifying anonymous citations or at least permits a narrowing of the field.³⁰ It has long been recognized that the compiler of the *Suda* (c. 1000) derived its numerous quotations from historical authors not by first-hand acquaintance with their original works but rather through intermediary compilations. In particular, Carl de Boor's extensive *Quellenforschungen* of the *Suda* demonstrated that the most common category of historical excerpt, clearly distinct in form and character from historical data transmitted via earlier lexica, scholia or biographical dictionaries, was drawn from the *Excerpta Constantiniana*, the 53 thematic volumes of historical extracts recently compiled at the direction of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–59), with the overwhelming majority of texts quoted anonymously. Adler endorsed and expanded de Boor's analysis, and subsequent studies of the textual traditions of individual authors have provided additional corroboration and refinements. There is no reason to suspect that *Suda* τ 134 is the result of different source materials, selective criteria and/or methodologies.³¹ The compiler of the *Suda* made use of only a small number of volumes of the *Excerpta*. Of those fully or partly preserved, he drew material from *De uirtutibus et uitiiis* and *De legationibus*, but not *De insidiis* or *De sententiis*. In addition, he had

²⁹ See C. Zuckerman, 'The Early Byzantine strongholds in eastern Pontus', *T&MByz* 11 (1991), 527–53, esp. 527–40, and now Wheeler (n. 27), citing extensive bibliography.

³⁰ See the methodology in e.g. T.M. Banchich, 'An identification in the *Suda*: Eunapius on the Huns', *CPh* 83 (1988), 53; A. Favuzzi, 'Su due frammenti storici adespoti della *Suda*', *AFLB* 42 (1999), 119–27, esp. 125–7; id., 'La storia romana nel lessico della *Suda*: due nuove acquisizioni', in P. Desideri, M. Moggi, M. Panni with A. Lazeretti (edd.), *Antidoron. Studi in onore di Barbara Scardigli Forster* (Pisa, 2007), 173–84; P. Rance, 'Hannibal, elephants and turrets in *Suda* Θ 438 [Polybius Fr. 162^B] – An Unidentified Fragment of Diodorus', *CQ* 59 (2009), 76–96.

³¹ The dependence of the *Suda* on the *Excerpta Constantiniana* was first observed by H. Valesius (ed.), *Polybii, Diodori Siculi ... Excerpta ex Collectaneis Constantini Augusti Porphyrogenitae* (Paris, 1634), unpag. pref., and known to subsequent commentators, including Bernhardt (n. 7), but the nature and extent of the relationship was demonstrated by C. de Boor, 'Suidas und die Konstantinische Exzerptsammlung', *BZ* [pt. 1] 21 (1912), 381–424; [pt. 2] 23 (1914–19), 1–127, and previously exemplified in ead., 'Die Chronik des Georgius Monachus als Quelle des Suidas', *Hermes* 21 (1886), 1–26. See also J. Becker, *De Suidae Excerptis Historicis* (Bonn, 1915); Adler (n. 1), l.xix–xxi; reiterated in id., 'Suidas (Lexikograph)', *RE* 4A.1 (1932), 675–717, at 679, 700–706; P. Lemerle, *Le Premier Humanisme Byzantin. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle* (Paris, 1971), 285–7. See more recently G. Zecchini (ed.), *Il Lessico Suda e la memoria del passato a Bisanzio. Atti della giornata di studio (Milano 29 aprile 1998)* (Bari, 1999), with review article by U. Roberto, 'Note sulla memoria e sull'uso della storia antica nel Lessico della *Suda*', *MedAnt* 4.1 (2001), 249–70; also U. Roberto (ed.), *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta ex Historia chronica (TU 154)* (Berlin, 2005), lxxix–ci; A.L. Chávez Reino, 'Ecos de Theopompo en la *Suda*', in G. Vanotti (ed.), *Il lessico Suda e gli storici greci in frammenti. Atti dell'incontro internazionale, Vercelli, 6–7 novembre 2008* (Tivoli, 2010), 207–66, esp. 252–9; V. Fromentin, 'Les fragments de Denys d'Halicarnasse dans la *Souda*: pour une restitution des *Excerpta Constantiniana* perdus', in Vanotti (this note), 429–52.

at his disposal volumes of the *Excerpta* that have not survived but are known through cross-references in the extant volumes. The *Suda* is therefore an indirect and selective witness to the contents of these lost volumes.³² Among these de Boor identified material likely to have derived from the second half of *De uirtutibus*, as well as the *Περὶ στρατηγημάτων*, *Περὶ ἐκκλησιαστικῶν* and *Περὶ ἀνδραγαθιμάτων*, and possibly one other volume concerned with warfare.³³ As the quotation in *Suda* τ 134 is not found in the extant volumes of the *Excerpta*, it must come from a historical work that was excerpted in one of the lost volumes.³⁴ The subject matter of a military ruse points to the *Περὶ στρατηγημάτων*, even if any attempt to reconstruct the scope and content of this volume is necessarily conjectural.³⁵

The canon of authors selected for excerption in the *Excerpta Constantini* has been constructed from the *indices auctorum* affixed to extant volumes (*De legationibus* I, *De uirtutibus*) or, where the prologue is missing, identified from their contents (*De legationibus* II, *De insidiis*, *De sententiis*) or, for lost volumes, reconstructed from entries in the derivative *Suda*.³⁶ For present purposes it is sufficient to observe that, for the fourth to sixth centuries, the excerptors of Constantine VII utilized a sequence of classicizing histories that provided a continuous narrative of these three centuries. If we eliminate from this selection those authors whose works are fully extant (Procopius, Agathias, Theophylact Simocatta) and thus demonstrably not the source

³² The potential value of the *Suda* in reconstructing lost volumes of the *Excerpta Constantini* is explored most recently by Chávez Reino (n. 31), 258-9; Fromentin (n. 31), esp. 446-52.

³³ For the cross-references in the extant *Excerpta* to the lost *Περὶ στρατηγημάτων* see below, n. 35. For cross-references to the *Περὶ ἐκκλησιαστικῶν*: *EV* I 145.18; *Περὶ ἀνδραγαθιμάτων*: *EV* I 338.7, 354.4; II 120.6; *EI* 33.8. There are several candidates for the other volume(s) with military content: *Περὶ συμβολῆς*: *EV* I 99.9; *Περὶ συμβολῆς πολέμων*: *EI* 207.34 (if the last two are indeed different); or *Περὶ νίκης*: *EL* II 390.3; *Περὶ ἀνακλήσεως ἡττης*: *EV* I 9.20; *Περὶ ἡττης*: *ES* 210.15.

³⁴ Accordingly, Adler (n. 1), 4.505 (marg.) marks the source of τ 134 as 'E' = 'Excerpta Constantini Porphyrogenitae quae hodie non exstant' (cf. Adler I.xix).

³⁵ The most detailed analysis of the evidence for the *Περὶ στρατηγημάτων* remains de Boor (n. 31 [1914-19]), esp. 38-43, who argues that this volume comprised material broadly relating to generalship rather than a collection of 'stratagems' in a narrower sense. There are eight cross-references to the *Περὶ στρατηγημάτων* in the *Excerpta de legationibus*, *de uirtutibus et uitiiis*, *de insidiis* and *de sententiis*. In each case, the cross-reference occurs at the end of an excerpt and serves to inform the reader that the text continues as a separate excerpt in the *Περὶ στρατηγημάτων*, in effect a 'continued at ...' notice. Unfortunately, only one of these cross-references refers to an extant and independently transmitted text: *EL* II 379.26 occurs at the end of an excerpt from Zosimus' *Historia noua* (5.36.1 to the middle of 5.36.3) and indicates that the subsequent passage, concerning Alaric's march on Rome in 410, is to be found excerpted in the *Περὶ στρατηγημάτων*. In the other seven cases, however, the extant volume of the *Excerpta* is itself the sole witness to an excerpt from a fragmentary or lost historical work, and we cannot therefore know what the subsequent passage contained beyond its general historical context: *EL* I 14.26 (following Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 19.6.3), *EL* I 62.31 (Polyb. 38.10.13), *EV* I 335.19 (Nic. Dam. *FHG* 90 F10.32), *EV* II 116.19 (Polyb. 9.24.7), *EV* II 123.26 (Polyb. 10.22.10 = *Suda* φ 409), *EI* 222.3 (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 15.4.6) and *ES* 131.28 (Polyb. 6.2.7). I have argued elsewhere that *Suda* θ 438 contains a fragment of Diodorus likewise transmitted via the *Περὶ στρατηγημάτων*; see Rance (n. 30). I hope in a future study to provide a more comprehensive examination of this complex subject.

³⁶ For detailed argumentation see C. de Boor, 'Zu den Exzerptsammlungen des Konstantin Porphyrogenetos', *Hermes* 19 (1884), 123-48; id. (n. 31 [1912]), esp. 408-14; T. Büttner-Wobst, 'Die Anlage der historischen Encyclopädie des Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos', *BZ* 15 (1906), 88-120, esp. 96-100; summarized in Adler (n. 1), I.xix-xx. The most convenient summary of the shape and composition of the *Excerpta Constantini* remains P. Lemerle (n. 31), 280-8; recently affirmed and elaborated by B. Flusin, 'Les *Excerpta* constantiniens, logique d'une anti-histoire', in S. Pittia (ed.), *Fragments d'historiens grecs autour de Denys d'Halicarnasse* (CEFR 298) (Rome, 2002), 537-59; É. Parmentier-Morin, 'Les fragments de Denys d'Halicarnasse attribués à Nicolas de Damas: recherches sur la composition des *Excerpta* constantiniens', in Pittia (this note), 461-79.

of the excerpt in *Suda* τ 134, half a dozen fragmentary candidates remain: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus, Candidus, Malchus and Menander Protector. To this list one could add the *Chronicle* of John of Antioch, though for fourth- and fifth-century events John's work is a derivative compilation, and thus merely represents an indirect (and now fragmentary) tradition to authors previously listed.³⁷

The possibilities are further reduced when we consider which of these authors wrote or might have written about warfare in Lazica. The results are in fact the same whether the inquiry is limited to this selection or encompasses all extant late antique classicizing historiography. In the fifth century, only Priscus meets this criterion. In the sixth century, Procopius and Agathias devote much space to military and diplomatic events in this region, but their works, preserved in full, of course offer no parallel.³⁸ The singularity of Priscus in this respect must be stressed. No other classicizing historian of the fifth century is known to have so much as mentioned the Lazi or Lazica, or shown the slightest interest in or knowledge of events on this geographical and cultural periphery.³⁹ This conclusion is based not merely on their extant fragments, an inevitably incomplete and unreliable guide, but also on the detailed summaries of their works in Photius' *Bibliotheca* and in other indirect witnesses.⁴⁰ Furthermore, even if we extend the search to include other genres of Greek historical writing in Late Antiquity (chronicles, church history, hagiography), instances of the terms of Λαζοί and Λαζική, and references to this region in general, are strikingly rare.⁴¹ In contrast, a survey of the remnants of Priscus' work, which is generally agreed to have covered the period c. 433/4 to c. 474, suggests that he treated Roman-Lazi relations at length and in some detail, and had at his disposal good sources of information.⁴² Four fragments concern military and diplomatic events relating to the Lazi in the 450s and 460s, for the most part unrecorded in any other source. In particular, Priscus is the unique witness to a Roman invasion of

³⁷ On the sources used by John of Antioch see most recently Roberto (n. 31 [2005]), cxxv-clvii; S. Mariev, *Ioannis Antiocheni fragmenta quae supersunt (CFHB Series Berolinensis 47)* (Berlin/New York, 2008), 32*–41*.

³⁸ For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that Menander Protector, fr. 6.1 (Blockley), a long and detailed document-based report on Roman-Persian diplomatic negotiations in 561, contains references to Lazica, where a truce had been in force since 557 (lines 2, 143–7), and to the neighbouring Suani, including retrospective details about their previous relations with the Lazi (lines 241–87, 435–517, 546–603); cf. likewise fr. 9.1 (lines 5–16, 95–119). See Greatrex and Lieu (n. 28), 119 n. 26 for dating and bibliography. In addition, Theophylact Simocatta (*Hist.* 3.6.6–7.19) briefly describes a campaign in 589 in which the Romans used Lazica as a base of operations for invading Albania (Azerbaijan) in response to Persian attacks on the Suani.

³⁹ Blockley (n. 13), 1.61–2.

⁴⁰ Photius' *Bibliotheca* supplies lengthy and detailed summaries of the historical works of Candidus (cod. 79) and Olympiodorus (cod. 80), and more briefly Malchus (cod. 78); there is no suggestion that their contents ever touched upon events in the Caucasus. In the case of Eunapius, at least according to Photius (77), the structure and content of his work are closely replicated in the extant *Historia noua* of Zosimus, which again never treats this region.

⁴¹ Aside from sources previously cited, see Λαζοί: Gelasius, *HE* 3.10; Malalas, *Chron.* 17.9, 18.4; George Syceota, *Vita S. Theodori Syceotae* 120; Theophanes, *Chron.* 309.14, 310.21 (de Boor); *Vita S. Danielis Stylitae* 51 (169.7, 25). Λαζική: Malalas, *Chron.* 18.26, 147; Theophanes, *Chron.* 219.15, 315.15, 316.5. I exclude references in later chronographic literature which simply derive from the sources cited here or from Procopius or Agathias.

⁴² For the chronology, form and scope of Priscus' historical work, citing older literature, see Baldwin (n. 12); Blockley (n. 13), 1.49–52; U. Roberto, 'Prisco e una fonte romana del V secolo', *Romanobarbarica* 18 (2003), 117–59; with summaries in R.C. Blockley, 'The development of Greek historiography: Priscus, Malchus, Candidus', in G. Marasco (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2003), 289–315, at 293–300; W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York, 2007), 96–102.

Lazica during a Roman-Lazi war in the reign of Marcian (see below).⁴³ Furthermore, Priscus states that he was himself involved in negotiations following this conflict, apparently in an official capacity, a role consistent with his extensive diplomatic experience. In this instance, he specifies that the Roman response to the Lazian envoys was formulated by Euphemius, *magister officiorum*, ‘who engaged Priscus the writer as a partner in the responsibilities of his office’ (ὄς καὶ Πρίσκον τὸν συγγραφέα τῶν τῆς ἀρχῆς φροντίδων ἐδέξατο κοινωνόν). Priscus probably served as Euphemius’ *assessor*.⁴⁴ His participation and autopsy therefore fulfilled the ideal qualifications for a classicizing historian, and also brought him into contact with documentation (treaties, official correspondence, memoranda) and well-placed informants.⁴⁵

Moving from historiography to history, the evidence again points to Priscus. The excerpt in *Suda* τ 134 reports an occasion on which the Lazi secretly devised concealed obstacles on a battlefield of their choice, apparently some time in advance of a Roman attack, and thereby defeated the Romans and forced them to flee. The historical record supplies only one plausible context for the events described. As previously observed, from Pompey’s incursion into the Caucasus in 65 B.C. until the end of antiquity there are only two known episodes of hostility between the Roman Empire and the Lazi.⁴⁶ First, around the early to mid 450s a war broke out, in which Roman forces invaded Lazica and fought the Lazi, it seems unsuccessfully or inconclusively, whereupon the Romans withdrew and resorted to diplomatic means to compel the Lazi to submit (see below). Second, in 541 the Lazi grew disaffected with Roman suzerainty and invited the Persians to invade Lazica, though the more oppressive overlordship of the shah subsequently prompted the Lazi to revert to their former allegiance to the emperor in 548/9.⁴⁷ The evidence is overwhelmingly against locating our fragment within this second period of Roman-Lazian estrangement. The entire course of the protracted Lazic War (541–62), an extension of Roman-Sasanian conflict, is reported in great detail by Procopius and Agathias, whose historical narratives contain no trace of the incident described in *Suda* τ 134. Moreover, a Roman defeat at the hands of the Lazi is not consistent with the conduct or nature of this mid-sixth-century conflict. During the period in which the Lazi sided with the Persians against the Romans, military operations in Lazica occupied barely a few weeks of 541, during which a Persian expeditionary army expelled the Roman garrison from Petra. Whether the Lazi themselves participated in this siege is not stated but, in any case, there is no record of Roman forces taking the field or of their defeat in an engagement, or indeed of any combat between Romans and Lazi.⁴⁸

In contrast, the military, historical and historiographic circumstances of the Roman-Lazi war in the 450s easily accommodate our excerpt. This war and related events are usually assigned to c. 456, but the original basis of this chronology is no longer valid and the conflict can be dated no more precisely than the reign of

⁴³ Priscus, fr. 33.1-2, 44, 51.1 Blockley = exc. 25, 26, 34, 41 Carolla.

⁴⁴ Priscus, fr. 33.2 Blockley = exc. 26 Carolla. See *PLRE* 2.424, Euphemius¹; 905, Priscus¹; Baldwin (n. 12), 25; Blockley (n. 13), 1.48; 2.337 n. 144.

⁴⁵ For the general character of Priscus’ sources, mostly oral and archival, see Blockley (n. 13), 1.68-9.

⁴⁶ I exclude here an isolated instance of the Lazi raiding Roman territory during the chaotic circumstances of c. 603/4, as uniquely reported by George Syceota, *Vita S. Theodori Syceotae* 120, who implies that the Lazi withdrew without confronting the Roman army.

⁴⁷ Procop. *BP* 2.15, 2.17, 28.17-30, 28.29-30, with the critique of Procopius’ presentation of events by Braund (n. 27), 287-98.

⁴⁸ Procop. *BP* 2.17 with Braund (n. 27), 295-6.

Marcian (450-7).⁴⁹ The causes of the war and the Roman objectives remain unclear. In subsequent peace negotiations the Romans objected to the joint kingship of Lazica shared by Gobazes I and his son. The nature of the dispute is obscure, but it seems that the Romans did not trust Gobazes and perhaps feared his defection to the Persians. Whatever the provocation, the threat to Roman interests was deemed sufficiently serious to prompt the first military intervention in Lazica in five hundred years.⁵⁰ Our knowledge of this war and its aftermath depends entirely on four fragments from Priscus' history. It is possible that, in consequence, the Priscus-derived portion of John of Antioch's *Chronicle* also reported this conflict, but whether or not John chose to include this episode cannot be determined, as the section of John's work relating to eastern events under Marcian has in turn not survived.⁵¹ All four of the Priscan fragments are preserved as excerpts in the *Excerpta de legationibus* and, in this context, were obviously selected for their diplomatic interest. In the absence of external sources, it is not possible to know if this thematic focus accurately reflects the actual importance of diplomacy in these events or the relative space and significance accorded to diplomacy in Priscus' work. It is clear, however, that there are several and significant gaps in the episodic historical narrative into which the excerpt in *Suda* τ 134 might be inserted. A brief survey of the fragments is instructive. The first (33.1 Blockley/25 Carolla) begins by reporting that Roman forces had recently invaded Lazica, engaged in combat operations with the Lazi, and then withdrawn in order to plan a second campaign. For this new offensive the East Roman government considered alternative invasion routes, including a point of entry through Armenia that would require Persian permission or acquiescence. At the same time the Lazi appealed to the shah for assistance, but the Persians, then preoccupied with Hunnic incursions, appear to have valued peaceful relations with the Romans, even to the point of expelling Lazian refugees. It remains unclear whether the second Roman invasion actually occurred or was merely threatened.⁵² The second

⁴⁹ The date *c.* 456 pervades the secondary literature, e.g. Stein (n. 28), 1.352–3; C. Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, DC, 1963), 363; Blockley (n. 13), 1.120, 170 n. 59. This dating depends solely on Mommsen's fanciful restoration of an alleged lacuna in Hydatius, *Chron.* 177 (s.a. 456): *Orientalium naues Hispalim uenientes per Marciani exercitum caesos Laz>as nuntiant*; see T. Mommsen, *Chronica minora* 2 (MGH AA XI) (Berlin, 1894), 29. The emendation has had far-reaching implications for the wider chronology of the period. In consequence, Euphemius' tenure as *magister officiorum* is dated to *c.* 456; see *PLRE* 2.424, Euphemius¹, with *fasti* at 1258. Similarly, the reign of Gobazes I of Lazica traditionally begins in *c.* 456; see *PLRE* 2.515, Gobazes (on the authority of Hydatius, *Chron.* 177). Mommsen's emendation has since been shown to have no historical or textual foundation: see R.W. Burgess, 'A new reading for Hydatius *Chronicle* 177 and the defeat of the Huns in Italy', *Phoenix* 42.4 (1988), 357–63, esp. 358, 'groundless and unsupported'. All that can be said with confidence is that the war occurred under Marcian (450–7), in whose reign Priscus, fr. 33.2 (lines 8–10) appears to place the peace negotiations. See below n. 54 for additional chronological considerations. For Priscus' portrayal of Marcian's reign in general see D. Brodka, 'Priskos von Panion und Kaiser Marcian. Eine Quellenuntersuchung zu Procop. 3,4,1–11, Evagr. HE 2,1, Theoph. AM 5943 and Nic. Kall. HE 15,1', *Millennium* 9 (2012), 145–62.

⁵⁰ For discussion of the evidence see Stein (n. 28), 1.352–3, 357; Toumanoff (n. 49), 362–4; Braund (n. 27), 271–3; Greatrex and Lieu (n. 28), 56–8.

⁵¹ For the derivative character and sources of John of Antioch's *Chronicle* in general see above, n. 37. The surviving fragments of John's *Chronicle* suggest that he used Priscus' work as his principal source for the period between Theodosius II and Leo I. John's debt to Priscus is both historical and stylistic-lexical, to a degree that de Boor (n. 31 [1912]), 400 termed 'sklavisch'; see a more detailed analysis in A. Köcher, *De Ioannis Antiocheni aetate fontibus auctoritate* (Bonn, 1871), 34–7; P. Sotiroudis, *Untersuchungen zum Geschichtswerke des Johannes von Antiocheia* (Thessalonikē, 1989), 135–9; A.F. Norman, 'An identification in Suidas', *CQ* 47 (1953), 171–2; Blockley (n. 13), 1.114; Roberto (n. 31 [2005]), cxliv–cxlvi.

⁵² Priscus, fr. 33.1 Blockley = exc. 25 Carolla (= *EL* I 152.8-20).

fragment (33.2 Blockley/26 Carolla) reveals that Gobazes sent envoys to the Romans to sue for peace, presumably soon after the Persians had rebuffed his appeal. It is in this context that Priscus reports his personal involvement in the events. He provides details of the negotiations and Roman preconditions, whereby Gobazes agreed to stand down in favour of his son.⁵³ A subsequent fragment (44 Blockley/34 Carolla) reports a visit by Gobazes to Constantinople, apparently *c.* 465/6, which implies his eventual rehabilitation and a normalization of Roman-Lazian relations.⁵⁴ A further fragment (51.1 Blockley/41 Carolla), though brief and textually corrupt, reports a Lazian request for Roman military assistance *c.* 467 to curtail the depredations of the Suani, a tributary people to the north, whose separatism was supported by the Persians.⁵⁵

For the present purposes, the first of these fragments is the most promising and should be examined in more detail. The excerpt begins:

ὅτι τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐς Κόλχους ἐλθόντων καὶ συμβαλόντων πόλεμον πρὸς Λαζούς, ὁ μὲν Ῥωμαϊκὸς στρατὸς ἐς τὰ σφέτερα ἐπανέζηυξεν, καὶ οἱ ἄμφι τὰ βασιλεία πρὸς τὴν ἐτέραν μάχην παρεσκευάζοντο βουλευόμενοι, πότερον τὴν αὐτὴν ἢ τὴν δι' Ἀρμενίας τῆς Περσῶν χώρας προσοίκου πορευθέντες ὁδὸν τὸν πόλεμον ἐπάξουσι, πρότερον πρεσβεῖα τὸν μόναρχον τῶν Παρθυαίων πείσαντες· κατὰ γὰρ θάλατταν ἄπορον αὐτοῖς πᾶν ἐνομίζετο τὰς δυσχωρίας παραπλεῖν, ἀλμμένου τῆς Κόλχου τυγγανούσης.⁵⁶

After the Romans had gone into Colchis and waged war against the Lazi, the Roman army returned to its own territory, and the staff of the imperial palace set about preparing plans for another battle, deliberating whether in their prosecution of the war they should proceed by the same route or by one through the part of Armenia bordering on Persian territory, having first by diplomacy obtained the consent of the ruler of the Parthians; for they deemed it entirely impracticable to sail past the rough terrain by sea, as the land of the Colchians is without harbours.

The excerpt then proceeds to its main theme of the Roman embassy to the Sasanian court. This passage is clearly a summary of the previous course of the war for the

⁵³ Priscus, fr. 33.2 Blockley = exc. 26 Carolla (= *EL* II 584.14–34).

⁵⁴ Priscus, fr. 44 Blockley = exc. 34 Carolla (= *EL* II 587.15–21). Gobazes' trip to Constantinople is also reported in *Vita S. Danielis Stylitae* 51, ed. H. Delehay, *AB* 32 (1913), 121–214, at 169–70. The chronology is potentially deceptive: at the end of fr. 33.2 the emperor commands Gobazes to cross over into Roman territory, whereupon Gobazes requests that a former Roman envoy to Lazica, Dionysius (*PLRE* 2.364, Dionysius⁸), be sent to him to give assurances of his safety. In fr. 44 Gobazes visits Constantinople, accompanied by Dionysius. In fact, a substantial temporal and textual interval must separate the two excerpts: in fr. 33.2 (lines 8–10) Euphemius, *magister officiorum*, is said to have given wise counsel to Marcian (450–7), while fr. 44 begins: ὅτι μετὰ τὸν ἐμπρησμόν τῆς πόλεως τὸν ἐπὶ Λέοντος, 'after the burning of the city in the reign of Leo', that is, the great fire at Constantinople traditionally dated 2–6 Sept. 465 but now redated to 464. Even if, as Carolla (n. 15) 73.6 plausibly suspects, the wording of this preliminary dating formula belongs to the Constantinian excerpt and not to Priscus, the *Vita S. Danielis Stylitae* confirms that Gobazes visited the city during the reign of Leo and after the fire. See remarks on chronology by Stein (n. 28), 1.352–3, 357; Toumanoff (n. 49), 363; Baldwin (n. 12), 25; Blockley (n. 13), 1.120–1, 170 nn. 59, 63. In contrast, M. Biró, 'On the presence of the Huns in the Caucasus. To the chronology of the "Ovs" raid mentioned in Juanšer's Chronicle', *AOrientHung* 50 (1997), 53–60, at 57–9 prefers to compress all these events—the war and subsequent negotiations—into the early 460s, following C.D. Gordon, *The Age of Attila* (Ann Arbor, 1961), 11.

⁵⁵ Priscus, fr. 51.1 Blockley = exc. 41 Carolla (= *EL* II 590.11–591.2). The textual difficulties are noted by Blockley (n. 13), 2.359 n. 177, but see Zuckerman (n. 29), 543 nn. 55–6, for criticism of Blockley's editorial method and decisions. D. Braund, 'Priscus on the Suani', *Phoenix* 46.1 (1992), 62–5 offers the most plausible interpretation. Dating: Blockley (n. 13), 122, 171 n. 65 makes a plausible case for 467; Carolla (n. 15), 77 (marg.) prefers 468.

⁵⁶ Priscus, fr. 33.1 Blockley (1–8) = exc. 25 Carolla (65.6–14) (= *EL* I 152.8–15).

purposes of introduction and context. This raises the possibility, indeed likelihood, that the text provides a precis of events already described in more detail in an earlier section, under a preceding year or campaigning season. Certainly this extremely cursory sketch of the start of the war and the Romans' first offensive into Lazica seems incongruous in comparison to Priscus' extensive treatment of its diplomatic conclusion, even taking into account his personal involvement in the latter stage. Such a preliminary recapitulation would also be consistent with the view of some scholars that Priscus ordered his narrative annalistically, collocating eastern and western events of each year, as evidenced in apparently split accounts of other topics or connected events.⁵⁷ Furthermore, we cannot exclude here the possible influence of the Constantinian excerptors, whose editorial interventions are typically most apparent at the beginnings and ends of excerpts, where they sought to tie up contextual and linguistic loose ends arising from the process of excerption. Blockley draws attention to other excerpts of Priscus in the *Excerpta de legationibus* in which a preceding 'narrative of military activities has been reduced by the excerptor to brief notices' in order to provide prefatory context to a diplomatic episode.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the language of this section is beyond doubt that of Priscus.⁵⁹ This seems, therefore, to be either Priscus' own or the excerptor's résumé of the historian's preceding account of the initial Roman invasion. The location, route and objectives of this campaign are unknown, though recent scholarship on the Roman military presence in the eastern Black Sea region suggests that in this period Roman bases along the north-western coast of Lazica (at Pityus, Sebastopolis/Dioscurias and Ziganne) offered the most likely bridgeheads for military interventions in the western Caucasus.⁶⁰ In any

⁵⁷ Blockley (n. 13), 1.50-1 with older bibliography.

⁵⁸ Blockley (n. 13), 1.113. See e.g. fr. 6.1 Blockley = exc. 2 Carolla (= *EL* II 575.1-13); fr. 31.1 Blockley = exc. 24 Carolla (= *EL* I 151.17-18). See general remarks on Priscus-derived material in the *Suda* in Bormmann (n. 11), xxx-xxxii; Baldwin (n. 12), 27, 57-61. On the methodology of the excerptors see recently U. Roberto, 'Byzantine collections of late antique authors: some remarks on the *Excerpta historica Constantiniana*', in M. Wallraff and L. Mecella (edd.), *Die Kestoi des Julius Africanus und ihre Überlieferung* (*TU* 165) (Berlin/New York, 2009), 71-84. See also A. Luciani, 'Manipolazione strumentale e decontestualizzazione della fonte negli Excerpta Historica constantiniani', *RCCM* 45 (2003), 143-7.

⁵⁹ The introductory passage to fr. 33.1 exhibits clear linguistic parallels with other fragments of Priscus: e.g. the phrase οἱ ἀμφὶ τὰ βασίλεια, which occurs also in three other Priscan fragments, is unique to Priscus: cf. fr. 91.1(7), 11.2(37-8), 44(3) Blockley = exc. 3.2 (8.11), 8.9 (17.12-13), 34 (73.8) Carolla. See also in fr. 33.1(2-3): ἐς τὰ σφέτερα ἐπανεζευξεν, cf. fr. 47 Blockley (13-14) = exc. 37.2 Carolla (74.23-4): τῆς σφετέρας φρουρᾶς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, πάλιν ἄπρακτοι ἐπανεζευξαν; fr. 23.1 Blockley (1-2) = exc. 19 Carolla (59.14-15): ἐπὶ τὰ σφέτερα ἀναζεύξας.

⁶⁰ See Zuckerman (n. 29), 535-40 for the routes and points of access open to Roman troops entering Lazica and neighbouring Iberia, with additional archaeological data and insights provided by Wheeler (n. 27), esp. 635-57. Bíró (n. 54), esp. 56-9 seeks to connect the first Roman campaign with events reported in the late eighth-/early ninth-century *History of Vaxt'ang Gorgasali* ascribed to Juanšer, later incorporated into the so-called *Georgian Chronicles*. This heroicizing epic briefly mentions a Roman invasion launched south-eastwards from Abkhazia, which took possession of lands from 'the River Egris as far as the Castle of Goji' (= Archaeopolis; mod. Nokalakevi), apparently for a period of at least five years; see R.W. Thomson, *Rewriting Caucasian History. The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles. The Original Georgian Texts and the Armenian Adaptation* (Oxford, 1996), 161-2, 172. Internal evidence dates this invasion to c. 449. The chronology and historicity of this episode remain unclear, but the long-term seizure of a large swathe of territory is not consistent with the allusion to the first Roman campaign in Priscus, fr. 33.1 Blockley = exc. 25 Carolla. For alternative attempts to synchronize the contemporary East Roman and later Georgian sources see Toumanoff (n. 49), 362-4; B. Martin-Hisard, 'Le roi géorgien Vaxt'ang Gorgasal dans l'histoire et dans légende', in *Temps, mémoire, tradition au Moyen-Âge. Actes du XIIIe Congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'Enseignement supérieur public* (Aix-en-Provence, 1983), 205-42, esp. 212-14.

case, there can be little doubt that the first Roman invasion of Lazica, which implicitly involved combat operations (or literally a ‘first battle’), had been unsuccessful or at least indecisive. This is clear from the Roman army’s withdrawal to its own territory; the need for palace officials to draw up new plans for a second offensive; the deliberations concerning the difficulties of terrain and an alternative line of invasion by a more inland route, which by implication points to a failure or shortcoming of the previous attempt to penetrate the hinterland; and finally a resort to diplomacy and the highly unusual step of requesting assistance from the Sasanians in bringing the Lazi to heel. These historical and textual circumstances easily accommodate the excerpt in *Suda* τ 134, in which the Lazi go to great lengths to bar the passage of invading Roman forces, inflict a defeat upon the Romans and force them to retreat.

Turning to stylistic and linguistic features, the brevity of the excerpt in *Suda* τ 134 obviously permits little scope for analysis, and again we cannot be sure of the extent to which the Constantinian excerptor and/or the compiler of the *Suda* reworded or abridged the original text.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the evidence permits some observations. Baldwin drew attention to the influence of classical models, in particular Herodotus.⁶² Although Herodotus (1.179.2) employs the key phrase *ταρσοὶ καλύμων* in a different context—reed matting layed in the interstices of brickwork—this well-known passage remains the most likely source of lexical inspiration.⁶³ Certainly the language of the excerpt hints at the author’s broader debt to Herodotus’ text.⁶⁴ This is of potential significance inasmuch as numerous Herodotean echoes in the securely identified Priscan fragments show the ‘father of history’ to have been one of Priscus’ main stylistic models.⁶⁵ Beyond sharing a literary model, the excerpt does not exhibit any striking verbal parallels with fragments of Priscus, though this may simply reflect the one-off specificity of the vocabulary required to describe this stratagem. However, one mundane linguistic feature again points to Priscus. The phrase *τά τε παρ’ ἐκότερα χωρία*, ‘the ground to either side’, inserts the prepositional phrase *παρ’ ἐκότερα* between the noun and its article.

⁶¹ Bernhardt (n. 7), 1037–8 annot. line 12 suspected that the concluding clause of the excerpt (... ἐτροπώσαντο τοὺς Ῥωμαίους) is an abridgement by the compiler of the *Suda*, on the grounds that this terse phrase fails to explain the operation of the stratagem or the cause of the Roman defeat. The most thorough analysis of Priscus’ style remains J. Kuranc, *De Prisco Panita rerum scriptore quaestiones scaetae* (Lublin, 1958), 65–82, which in this case is of no assistance.

⁶² Baldwin (n. 12), 60: ‘The extract is partly modelled on Herodotus 1.179; it may be suggestive that the *Suda* actually goes on to adduce Herodotus by name in the next and final sentence of the present notice. The passage also displays verbal effects from Homer, *Od.* 10, 517; Thuc. 2, 90 and Herodian 1, 13. Clearly a literary *flosculus*.’

⁶³ For the wider influence of Hdt. 1.179.2 in late antique and Byzantine lexical literature see nn. 3 and 6.

⁶⁴ *Suda* τ 134: ... ὀρύξαντες καὶ δόρατα τοῖς βόθροισ ἐγκαταπέξαντες ταρσοῖς καλύμων καὶ ὄλη μὴ βεβαίαν ἐχοῦση βάσιν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ ἐπιφερόμενον ἄχθος ὀλισθανουόση, τὰ στόματα τῶν ὀρυγμάτων ἐκάλυψαν; Hdt. 1.179.1-2: ὀρύσσοντες ἅμα τὴν τάφρον ἐπλίθον τὴν γῆν τὴν ἐκ τοῦ ὀρυγματος ἐκφερομένην, ἐλάκυσαντες ... ταρσοὺς καλύμων διαστοιβάζοντες.

⁶⁵ R. Benedicty, ‘Die historische Authentizität eines Berichtes des Priskos’, *JÖBG* 13 (1964), 1–8; G. Moravcsik, ‘Klassizismus in der byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung’, in P. Wirth (ed.), *Polychronion. Festschrift für Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag* (Heidelberg, 1966), 366–77, at 374–5; F. Bornmann, ‘Osservazioni sul testo dei frammenti di Prisco’, *Maia* 26 (1974), 111–20; id., ‘Note a Prisco’, in N. Caffarelli (ed.), *Archaeologica. Scritti in onore di Aldo Neppi Modona* (Florence, 1975), 37–9; Blockley (n. 13), 1.52, 54–5; Blockley (n. 42), 302–5; D. Brodka, ‘Pragmatismus und Klassizismus im historischen Diskurs des Priskos von Panion’, in A. Goltz, H. Leppin, H. Schlange-Schöninggen (edd.), *Jenseits der Grenzen. Geschichtsschreibung in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter* (Berlin/New York, 2009), 11–24. See also Carolla (n. 15), 127–8: *index locorum* (Herodotus).

This construction, regardless of case, number or gender, is extremely rare in classical and late antique historiography, to the extent that only two other instances can be identified: one in the famous fragment of Priscus concerning his mission to the court of Attila, the other in a Constantinian excerpt attributed to John of Antioch, but clearly derived from an earlier source, possibly Candidus.⁶⁶ In terms of the subject matter of the excerpt, the relatively small quantity of military material in the surviving witnesses to Priscus' work has led some scholars to form a low opinion of Priscus as a military historian, even accepting that the survival and content of the fragments are conditioned by their transmission via the *Excerpta de legationibus*.⁶⁷ Whatever the validity of this assessment, the extant portion of Priscus' work contains sufficient instances of military stratagems to infer his interest in and inclusion of such episodes, though whether to a greater or lesser degree than other late antique classicizing historians is impossible to determine.⁶⁸

To conclude: while in such cases of anonymous and decontextualized excerpts some doubt will inevitably linger, the attribution of the excerpt in *Suda* τ 134 to Priscus is very far from being a guessing game. The compositional history and *Quellenforschung* of the *Suda* narrowly limit the possibilities, while within late antique classicizing historiography the known chronology, content and geographical scope of Priscus' work alone offer a plausible setting for this excerpt. In particular, the securely attributed Priscan fragments uniquely relate a Roman-Lazi war during the reign of Marcian (450–7), the only such conflict recorded, except for brief hostilities in the 540s, which are fully reported by Procopius and not compatible with the circumstances described in the excerpt. More specifically, one fragment of Priscus (33.1 Blockley/25 Carolla) alludes to an initial Roman attempt to invade Lazica that had apparently met with a rebuff, to such a degree that the Roman forces withdrew entirely and the East Roman government was forced to devise a completely new and unusual strategy for a second offensive. No other victory of the Lazi over the Romans is documented in any other source or period. Finally, though stylistic criteria cannot be decisive, Herodotean influences in the excerpt are typically Priscan, while one linguistic peculiarity is consistent with another specimen of Priscus' diction. Accordingly, the excerpt in *Suda* τ 134 should be located in Priscus' work, in which it describes the defeat of Roman forces in their first attempt to invade Lazica in the Roman-Lazi war of the

⁶⁶ Priscus, fr. 11.2 Blockley (376) = exc. 8 Carolla (32.24-5): τῶν παρ' ἑκάτερα γυναικῶν. John of Antioch, fr. 307 Roberto (526.6) = fr. 238 Mariev (444.7-8) (= *El* 99): ἐν τοῖς παρ' ἑκάτερα οἰκίσκοις. On Candidus see now U. Roberto, 'Sulla tradizione storiografica di Candido Isaurico', *MedAnt* 3 (2000), 685–727, summarized in Roberto (n. 31 [2005]), cxlvii–cxlix.

⁶⁷ See the, in my view overly harsh, assessment by Blockley (n. 13), 1.60-1, 64-5, 69, partly following the opinion of Thompson. In addition, Blockley ([n. 13], 1.113-14) argues that Jordanes' description of the battle of the Catalaunian Fields (*Getica* 191–218), given its quite different characterization of Attila and its obviously Gothic perspective, cannot be derived from Priscus. See, however, D. Brodka, 'Attila, Tyche und die Schlacht auf den Katalaunischen Feldern. Eine Untersuchung zum Geschichtsdenken des Priskos von Panion', *Hermes* 136 (2008), 227–45, esp. 237–42, who identifies likely Priscan elements and considers the possibility that Jordanes' account ultimately draws on both Priscus' work and an independent Gothic tradition.

⁶⁸ Stratagems: fr. 49 Blockley = exc. 39 Carolla: Aspar against Huns and Goths; fr. 5 Blockley = exc. 1a Carolla: Valips at Noviodunum c. 434/5–42 (dating in Blockley [n. 13] 2.229 n. 8). See also fr. 6.1 Blockley = exc. 2 Carolla: an allusion to a previously reported Scythian trick, which resulted in heavy Roman casualties and the capture of an unnamed city; see remarks by Blockley (n. 13), 1.113, 2.231 n. 9. More broadly stratagemic, see also fr. 41.3 Blockley = exc. 33 Carolla: a tale of diplomatic trickery, whereby the shah Pērōz reportedly tried to substitute a commoner for a royal princess promised in marriage to the ruler of the Kidarites.

450s. Alternative scenarios require us either to posit a second account of the same war by a different but entirely unknown historian or to hypothesize another, otherwise undocumented Roman-Lazi war, in which the Lazi likewise inflicted a significant defeat on the Romans. Both options are not only intrinsically unlikely but also hard to reconcile with scholarship on the *Excerpta Constantiniana*, the *Suda* and/or late antique classicizing historiography. Assignment of this excerpt to Priscus would indicate that his account of the Roman-Lazi war, and potentially other fifth-century conflicts, perhaps entailed a more developed and detailed military narrative than the majority of the fragments, transmitted via the *Excerpta de legationibus*, might otherwise suggest. Given the thematic selectivity of this collection and its proportional significance in the fragmentary survival of Priscus' work, diplomacy necessarily looms exceedingly large in the extant sample, but Priscus' inclusion of other stratagems and episodes of rusé behaviour allows for the possibility that this textual wreckage gives an unbalanced impression of his interests or capabilities as a 'military historian'. In any case, at the very least, this excerpt should be readmitted to future discussion of Priscus, from which it has been prematurely excluded, so that its importance and implications can be evaluated.

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