

102/720 and 105/724. While his father might still have resided in Raqqa,¹ the mint had probably moved to Ḥarrān rather earlier.² The city was situated in a strategically favourable position: it was possible to keep an eye on Syria and on Iraq at the same time and consequently put down rebellious Khārijites such as Daḥḥāk b. Qays much more quickly.³ Above all, Ḥarrān was a centre of the Qays tribes, Damascus having become too dangerous since the Yaman had become Qadarites.⁴ Both places were equally shaped by history; it was at Carrhae that Crassus suffered his defeat against the Parthians in 53 BCE.

2.4.1.1 The Ṣābiāns

The Arabs held the city dear because according to a well-known tradition Abraham was born there.¹ On the other hand they found it an uncanny place because a part of the population followed a late Hellenistic "Chaldaean" celestial religion worshipping in strange temples which stood out because of their uncompromisingly geometrical shapes.² Christianity had not taken root until comparatively late: there does not seem to have been a bishop of Ḥarrān before the fourth century.³ Emperor Julian had been received with great joy when he visited the city during his last campaign, and had sacrificed to the moon god Sin.⁴ Mas'ūdī reported that the heathen of the city did not call him the Apostate like the Christians did, but rather εὐσεβής/Eusebius "the pious one".⁵ In the words of the Church Fathers Ḥarrān was ἡ Ἑλλήνων πόλις, "the heathen city".⁶ Local Christians, too, regarded the worshippers of celestial bodies as *ḥanpē*, heathen, who were furthermore remarkable for their

1 See p. 526 below.

2 For more detail cf. Rotter in: Amer. Numismatic Soc. Mus. Notes 19/1974/166ff., 178 and 198; esp. 168 n. 14. Marwān also moved the treasury from Damascus to Ḥarrān (Pseudo-Dionysius of Tellmahṛē). 46, 11ff./transl. 41f.

3 See p. 524 below.

4 See vol. I 94f. and 125 above.

1 When passing through shortly after 380, the pilgrim Egeria had been shown his house (J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* 118 = cap. 20.3). Of course, the Bible already tells us that Abraham used to live there (Gen. 11:31).

2 Cf. fundamentally D. Chwolson, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, 1–2, Petersburg 1856.

3 Cf. *ibid.* I 423ff. Egeria said that there were no Christians living in the city except a few clerics (Wilkinson 119 = cap. 20.8).

4 *Ibid.* I 426ff.; Segal, *Edessa* 104; Bidez, *Julian der Abtrünnige* 335f.; Tardieu in: *IA* 274/1986/1, n. 4.

5 *Tanbih* 145, ult. f.; also Shboul, *Al-Mas'ūdī and his World* 246f.

6 Thus in the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. Cf. Chwolson I 303 and 438f.; also *ΕΙ*² II 227 b.