



Original paper



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The Eschatological Background of the Islamic Conquests and the Statement of the Eras in the Christendom and the Judaism

Abstract

The Hijra era, in the context of Islam, begins the countdown of a new era in the history of mankind. But few people remember that in the same 7th century, two more eras came into use, which soon became the main ones for the eastern and western parts of the Christendom. There is reason to believe that both of these eras — from the creation of the world “according to the *Rhomaioi*” and after the Nativity of Christ according to Dionysius — came into use in order to respond to the “eschatological” challenge associated with the transition of the world to the 7th (“Sabbatical”) millennium (years 6000–7000 from Adam) according to the chronology of the Septuagint at the turn of the 5th–6th centuries and the subsequent period of instability. Both eras were based on the concept of the “Christian Millennium” — a period of world history dedicated to God, mystically comparable to the last day of Creation. A little later, already as a response to the Christian idea, the Jewish era of Creation came into use, based on the brief chronology of the Pentateuch, accepted in the Rabbinic tradition.

Keywords:

Chronology, Eschatology, Apocalyptic, Era, Christianity, Judaism

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Christian eschatological context of the 6th century

It is well established that Christianity is fundamentally an eschatological religion. According to the teachings of the Gospels, Christ – the Messiah, Son of God and God-Man – came to earth to proclaim the Good News (εὐαγγέλιον) of the imminent arrival of a new era characterized by the direct reign of God over a transformed humanity. The essence of this message is encapsulated in a succinct formula: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). Essentially, Christ’s teaching centers on guiding humanity – initially the “chosen people” and, after their apostasy, the “New Israel” composed of Gentiles – towards this Kingdom. The First Coming of the Son of God, from the Incarnation to the Ascension, marked the beginning of this pivotal phase in world history, while the Second Coming will complete it and inaugurate eternal life in the Age to Come. Believing Christians, anticipating the Second Coming, lived in a state of heightened expectation for a sudden transition from the temporal (and temporary) final segment of world history to the supra-temporal meta-dimension of the Kingdom of God. This imbues the Christian epoch with a vectorial character, the terminal segment of which was traditionally understood as culminating in an imminent *eschaton* – and only

recently has this endpoint become conceptualized as an indefinite continuum. The attenuation of the intense eschatological spirit characteristic of ancient and medieval Christianity can be partly attributed to the “chronological temptations” inherent in the tradition. Despite Christ’s explicit prohibition (Acts 1:6–7), people across the centuries have repeatedly attempted to calculate the date of the eschaton (end of the world). When these predictions failed, the intense eschatological tension often gave way to skepticism and doubt, leading to a moral relaxation with profound consequences. Several such eschatological thresholds occurred in Christian civilization’s history, typically aligned with “round” dates such as the years 6000 and 7000 since Creation, or the *anni Domini* 500, 1000, 1500, and 2000.

It must be noted that Christianity, as a universal religion transcending ethnic and state boundaries, was arguably the first to confer a genuinely global dimension to human history. This enabled the construction of panoramic narratives of universal history “threaded” onto a unified chronological scale (era). This temporally oriented approach stood in stark contrast to ancient philosophies of history, which tended to be atemporal and typological in nature. One of the last pagan apologists, Eunapius of Sardis (d. ca 420), famously questioned the utility of chronology for wisdom: “What benefit will chronology bring to Socrates in wisdom, to Themistocles in genius?”¹ Indeed, outside the eschatological context and the associated vector concept of history, absolute dating tied to a single temporal scale may appear irrelevant or distracting, undermining the “eternal” wisdom of historiography.

However, within the Christian context, dates assume a critical and sometimes self-sufficient function. First, they impose a linear structure upon time, which otherwise tends to be cyclical, given the cyclical nature of astronomical and climatic phenomena used for its measurement. Second, they permit an understanding of “historical progress”: it must be remembered that the very notion

¹ Византийские историки: Дексипп, Эвнапий и др. Рязань: Александрия, 2003. С. 77.

of progress and developmental effort from worse to better has a Christian origin (and is actively employed, for instance, in ascetics). Humanity literally moves forward – towards the inexorable approach of the eschaton – and this approach is especially discernible when using two eras: from the creation of the world (or Adam) and from the Incarnation (or Nativity) of Christ.

It should be immediately noted that no era is explicitly used in the Biblical texts, and the chronological data they contain are fragmented and often contradictory among different manuscripts. This indicates that the Holy Scripture, as a divinely inspired text, does not confer mystical significance on chronology, and all calculations based on the Old Testament numerical data are subjective and speculative in nature. Nevertheless, the persistent human desire to predict the future, combined with the enthusiasm for systematic knowledge of the Late Antiquity, led from the 3rd to the 7th centuries to the production of numerous historical treatises on universal chronology based on biblical data. It was found that summing chronological intervals derived from the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), in conjunction with data on Persian and Ptolemaic reigns, yielded a total number of years from Adam to Christ of approximately 5500. This number was immediately ascribed mystical significance as the “midpoint of the sixth day of the Lord”, since according to the Apostle Peter, citing David the Psalmist, “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8–9). Given that the sixth – and final – day of creation was marked by the creation of man (Rev. 1:27), the sixth millennium “day”, punctuated (in its middle!) by the appearance of the Son of Man, was convincingly perceived as the world’s last day.

Already in apostolic times, the permanent expectation characteristic of early Christianity gave way to a more stable condition among Christian communities, oriented towards a longer perspective. The Apostle Paul, who encouraged the Thessalonians with the nearness of the Second Coming (“we who are alive, who remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who

have fallen asleep” — 1 Thess. 4:15), later clarified that the day of Christ would not come, “unless there comes a rebellion first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition”, who “sits in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God”; and though “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work”, the Anti-christ would not appear “until the one who now restrains is removed” (2 Thess. 2:3–4, 7).

This clarification appeased fervent minds. Although exegetes diverged on the meaning of the “restrainer” (ὁ κατέχων), most Christian writers inclined to identify it with the Roman Empire. “Who else but the Roman state [could it be] (*quis, nisi Romanus status*)?” — rhetorically asked the apologist Tertullian in the early 3rd century². A century later, Lactantius counseled: “while the city of Rome remains it appears that nothing of this kind is to be feared. [...] It is that city, that only, which still sustains all things”. Yet he was also convinced that the six-thousandth year had not yet been completed; “when this number was fulfilled, the end would inevitably come — and the human condition would improve”³.

In discussing the crisis of Antiquity, it must always be borne in mind that Christianity triumphed within the Roman Empire and spread extensively across the Near East precisely in the atmosphere of an impending eschaton. Neither the first Christian emperor Constantine the Great (a disciple of Lactantius), nor his successors — the Christian emperors of the 4th to 6th centuries — could fail to realize that their reign unfolded in a ‘countdown’ situation, as numerous chroniclers by that time had calculated that less and less time remained until the year 6000.

It was universally known that Christ had lived during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, whose historical eras had been well documented. In the Roman Empire, years were counted by consuls, but for longer periods, the so-called *Aera Augusti* was

² *Tertullianus*. De resurrectione carnis, 24 [PL. T. 2. Paris, 1879. Col. 876; *Тертуллиан*. Избранные сочинения / Общ. ред. А.А. Столярова. М., 1994. С. 208].

³ *Lactantius*. Divinae institutiones, VII, 14–15, 25 [PL. T. 6. Paris, 1844. Col. 779–784, 784–790].



Revelation of St. John the Theologian
(fresco, Osogovo Monastery, North Macedonia).
From open sources

sometimes used, beginning in 30 BCE (the conquest of Egypt)⁴. By this era, the founding of Constantinople — the first Christian capital in history — occurred in its 362nd year⁵. This date is attested by Hesychius of Miletus, a high-ranking official, theologian, and historian writing at the turn of the 5th and 6th centuries —

⁴ Traces of this era are preserved, in particular, in “Хронографии” Иоанна Малалы (кн. XVIII, гл. 8): *Ioannes Malalas. Chronographia* / Ed. H. Thurn. Berlin, 2000. (CFHB; 35). P. 357.

⁵ *Suda lexicon* / Ed. A. Adler. Pars III. Stuttgart, 1967. P. 176, 177.

precisely at the time when the era of Augustus had entered its 520s. Moreover, since the Nativity of Christ was reckoned to the 28th year of Augustus⁶, it was during these years that the five centuries separating the First Coming from the year 6000 — the beginning of the sacramental “seventh day of the Lord”, analogous to the last day of creation — were coming to an end. On the seventh day God “rested from all His works” (Gen. 2:2), and in remembrance, according to the fourth commandment of Moses, every Sabbath day is to be dedicated to the Lord God, “who blessed and sanctified it” (Exod. 20:8–11). Just as the appearance of the New Adam — Christ — in the sixth millennium inaugurated the renewal and redemptive healing of man created on the sixth day, so too the completion of the world’s creation on the seventh day was expected by the authors attempting to unveil the “mysteries of Providence” to manifest as a mystical renewal of the entire cosmos in the seventh millennium. The precise unfolding of these events was left to speculation, but the texts of the Revelation of John and apocryphal apocalypses warned of significant upheavals — primarily political⁷.

Table 1. Calculations of the sacramental date of the year 6000 of the world by writers of the 2nd–6th centuries (converted to CE).

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Theophilus of Antioch (2nd century) | 485 |
| Clement of Alexandria (year 200) | 406 |
| Julius Africanus (212) | 498 |
| Hippolytus of Rome (235) | 499 |

⁶ *Clemens Alexandrinus*. Stromateis, I 145 [Климент Александрийский. Строматы. Т. I: Книги 1–3 / Подготовка к изданию, пер. и коммент.: Е.В. Афонсин. СПб., 2003. P. 150].

⁷ See: *Magdalino P.* The Year 1000 in Byzantium // *Byzantium in the Year 1000* / Ed. P. Magdalino. Leiden, 2003. P. 233–269 (espec. P. 238). A fine overview of eschatological moods in the Middle East on the eve of the Hijra: *Shoemaker S.J.* The Apocalypse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam. Philadelphia (PA), 2018.

| | |
|--|-------|
| Anatolius of Laodicea (277) | 500 |
| Eusebius of Caesarea (326) | 800 |
| Andrew of Byzantium (353) | 395 |
| Panodorus (400) | 506 |
| Annianus of Alexandria (412) | 507 |
| Prosper of Aquitaine (455) | 799 |
| Andronicus (6 th century) | 517 |
| Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor (570) | 589 |
| Aeas of Alexandria (6 th century) | 508/9 |

Jewish Eschatology in the Talmudic Era

It is important to remember that the Christian eschatological framework is rooted in the Hebrew Bible⁸. Jesus Christ Himself presents His mission as the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Isaiah (Yeshayahu), who lived in Judah at the turn of the 8th–7th centuries BCE. The biblical Book of Isaiah contains numerous prophecies concerning the coming of the Kingdom of God: “Thus says the Lord: Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed” (Isaiah 56:1); “In the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established at the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it” (Isaiah 2:2); “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create” (Isaiah 65:17–18).

However, with regard to universal chronology, the rabbinic Jewish tradition — as codified in the chronicle *Seder Olam Rabbah* (2nd century CE) — diverges from the numerical data found in the Septuagint. It is based on an alternate recension of the Pentateuch in which the ages in the genealogies of both antediluvian and postdiluvian patriarchs are systematically

⁸ See: Daniélou J. *Théologie du judéo-christianisme*. Paris, 1958. P. 341–366.

shortened by 100 years. As a result, the total span of years from Adam to the era of Augustus is approximately 1,750 years shorter than in the computations of Christian chroniclers (alternative short chronologies are preserved in the Book of Jubilees and in Samaritan tradition)⁹. In the modern Jewish calendar, the year conventionally identified as the birth of Christ (1 BCE, or “year zero” in astronomical reckoning) corresponds to the year 3760 from creation. Thus, this approach undermines the Christian symbolic chronology: according to rabbinic reckoning, the sixth millennium began only in 1239/1240 CE (and is ongoing), while the first “Sabbatical” year — the year 6001 from creation — is expected to occur in the autumn of 2240. Accordingly, any mystical or chronological link between the historical Jesus and the Torah’s prophetic timetable is effectively severed, undermining Christian claims to messianic fulfillment in the person of Jesus. According to rabbinic teaching, the Messiah (*Mashiach*) is yet to come.

Nevertheless, the Old Testament contains another explicit chronological marker of the eschaton — found in Chapter 9 of the Book of Daniel¹⁰. The main figure of this book is a noble Judean named Daniel (*Dani’el*), famed for his wisdom at the courts of Babylon and Persia in the 6th century BCE. In addition to interpreting famous visions — such as the colossus with clay feet, the four beasts, and the conflict of the goat and the ram — Daniel was granted a vision concerning the end times and the resurrection of the dead. In this context, the archangel Gabriel conveys the following message:

“Seventy weeks (שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים) are determined for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end

⁹ See: Кузенков П.В. Христианские хронологические системы. М., 2014. P. 33–39, таб. 1–2, сх. 1–2.

¹⁰ See: Рождественский А.П. Откровение Даниила о семидесяти седмицах. СПб., 1896; Сысов Д.А., *свящ.* Толкование книги пророка Даниила. М., 2013. A curious example of an actualizing “historicist” approach is found in: Бессонов И.А. Пророчества книги Даниила: происхождение, история экзегетики, толкование. Царство святых Всевышнего и мировая история. СПб., 2019.

of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince (עֲדָת־מָשִׁיחַ נְגִיד), there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. [...] And after the sixty-two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off (יִכָּרֵת מְשִׁיחַ), but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come (עַם נְגִיד) shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. [...]

Then he shall confirm a covenant (מְשִׁיחַ) with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate” (Daniel 9:24–27)¹¹.

Here, the Greek term *Christos* (χριστός) translates the Hebrew *Mashiach* (מְשִׁיחַ), meaning “anointed one” — a common biblical title for the king of Israel. It is not difficult to discern that the “weeks” refer to seven-year periods used in reckoning the so-called jubilees (*yobel*) — 49-year cycles after which mortgaged lands were returned and slaves were freed (Leviticus 25:9). The chronological countdown begins with the “command to restore Jerusalem”. The Bible records two such edicts issued by the Persian king Artaxerxes: the first to the Judean priest Ezra in the 7th year of Artaxerxes’ reign (1 Ezra 7:7–11), and the second to the Jewish nobleman Nehemiah in the 20th year (Nehemiah 2:1). Assuming Artaxerxes I reigned from 465 to 424 BCE, basic arithmetic confirms that the period of 70 weeks — 490 years — points to the first half of the 1st century CE. Calculating from the 7th year of Artaxerxes I (458 BCE) leads to the year 33 CE — the most probable historical date for the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth in Jerusalem under the Roman governor Pontius Pilate and the high priest Joseph Bar-Caiaphas¹².

¹¹ The Hebrew text is cited from: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Stuttgart, 1997. P. 1404–1405.

¹² On the historical dates of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, see: Кузенков П.В. Христианские хронологические системы... P. 43–45.



Michelangelo. The Last Judgment.
 Sistine Chapel, Vatican Museums, Vatican.
From open sources

The authority of the Book of Daniel precluded the outright dismissal of its chronology, even though the book was later relocated in the Jewish canon from the “Prophets” to the “Writings” (*Ketubim*)¹³. However, the spiritual heirs of the scribes and Pharisees — those who delivered the King of the Jews to crucifixion with the declaration “we have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15) — could not accept its implications. As a result, considerable effort was devoted to reinterpreting the prophetic timeframes encoded in Daniel’s “weeks”¹⁴. Ultimately, the Babylonian Talmud (5th century CE) presents the following teaching (Gemara to *Megillah*, 3a):

¹³ On the basis that Daniel always communicated with God through angels.

¹⁴ See: Бессонов И.А. Деление седмиц в Дан. 9, 25: происхождение версии перевода Феодотиона и ее отношение к масоретскому тексту // Вестник ПСТГУ. Сер. III: Филология. Т. 52. 2017. № 3. С. 36–47.

“Rabbi Yirmeya said (some say it was Rabbi H̄iyya bar Abba): [...] Jonathan ben Uzziel¹⁵ composed the *Targum*¹⁶ of the Prophets.¹⁷ He sought to translate the Writings as well, but a heavenly voice called out and said: “You have done enough!” Why? Because in them is knowledge of the end and the coming of the Messiah (דְּרֵאִית בֵּיה קִץ מְשִׁיחַ)”. William Davidson’s English commentary explains that the Book of Daniel contains a veiled reference to the end times, and had it been fully translated, the time of the end would have been revealed to all¹⁸.

In the end, it was acknowledged that all the prophesied dates for the arrival of the *Mashiach* had long since passed, and that Israel must now wait patiently for his coming¹⁹.

In everyday life, Jews used the Seleucid Era (beginning in 312/311 BCE) and the era dating from the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE). However, from the 8th century CE onward, new dating systems emerged – counting years from the Creation or from Adam (differing by one year). Gradually, the Era of Creation became the most authoritative within the Jewish world, and it is officially recognized in modern Israel: the year 2025 corresponds to 5785 (with 5786 beginning on 23 September). The reasons for the adoption of this era in the 8th–9th centuries remain unclear. The prevailing theory cites the decline of Hellenistic traditions in the Middle East; however, this is questionable, as Syriac Christians continued using the Seleucid Era until the 19th century. It is plausible that the emergence of the Christian Era of Creation triggered the increased use of a Jewish equivalent – a topic that will be discussed in the following section.

¹⁵ Jewish scribe (*Tanna*) of the 1st century CE.

¹⁶ Translation into colloquial Aramaic.

¹⁷ The Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) is divided into 3 parts: the Five Books of Moses (Torah), the Prophets (*Nevi'im*), and the Writings (*Ketuvim*).

¹⁸ Babylonian Talmud: The William Davidson Edition // Sefaria. URL: <https://www.sefaria.org/Megillah.3a.9?lang=bi> (accessed 01.07.2025).

¹⁹ Babylonian Talmud. Sanhedrin, Ch. 11. 97ab. Ibid. <https://www.sefaria.org/Sanhedrin.97a?lang=bi> (accessed 01.07.2025).

Mounting tension and attempts at resolution

By the 6th century CE — the time of the birth of Muhammad — eschatological tension in the Near East had reached an acute level²⁰. It was this atmosphere of apocalyptic expectation, rather than idle scholastic debates among theologians or the “national liberation struggles” of Eastern peoples against “Roman domination”, that underlay the drama of ecclesiastical schisms culminating in the so-called anti-Chalcedonian communities (Copts and Ethiopians, Syrian Jacobites, Armenians). In such a charged context, the unity of the Church could not be preserved — neither through repression, nor conciliatory dialogue, nor the theological initiatives of Emperor Justinian. The sackings of Rome by the Goths in 410 CE and the Vandals in 455 CE, followed by the disappearance of imperial authority in the West in 478 CE, resounded throughout the *oikoumene* as ominous “signs of the end”. While these events did not mark the fall of the Roman Empire (which would continue in New Rome — Constantinople — for nearly a millennium), the catastrophe that befell the “Eternal City” left a lasting impression. As noted above, Lactantius had linked the end of the world with the downfall of Rome.

Expectations surrounding the onset of the “Sabbatical” seventh millennium became intertwined with the eschatological vision of the Book of Revelation, where an angel binds Satan for a thousand years, and a millennial reign of Christ with the holy martyrs precedes the Last Judgment (Revelation 20:4). The concept of a thousand-year kingdom was interpreted in a variety of ways, only one of which — the vulgar and hedonistic doctrine of Cerinthus — was condemned by the Church as heretical chiliasm

²⁰ On the eschatological views of the Persian Shahanshah Khosrow II, see: Кузенков П.В. Эра Юбилеев у Бируни и пророчество Хосрова II у Феофилакта: астрология и эсхатология в эпоху хиджры // Ближний Восток и Северная Африка: от доисламской эпохи к Новому времени. История. География. Общество / Отв. ред. Д.Е. Мишин. М., 2023. P. 44–53. See also: *Shoemaker S.J.* The Apocalypse of Empire... P. 100–115.

(millenarianism)²¹. In more orthodox and ascetic forms, the idea gained broad traction in ancient Christianity²² and continues to be influential today²³.

The apocalyptic revelation of John could not be ignored, given the canonical status of the book and its attribution to St. John the Theologian. Thus, various Church Fathers offered competing interpretations of this mystical text in an effort to calm the faithful. In the West, St. Augustine felt compelled to compose a comprehensive treatise, *De Civitate Dei*, where he refuted both pagan superstitions and chronological-millenarian speculations. The great Latin Doctor of the Church asserted that the Kingdom of God (*Civitas Dei*) had existed on earth since the dawn of history, just as the opposing mundane state of the devil (*civitas terrena*) had had its origin with the Cain's fratricide, Cain being its first citizen. As for the reign of the saints with Christ, Augustine argued that it had begun at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit — sent by the Father at the promise of the Son — had descended upon the faithful disciples, offering *paraklesis* (παράκλησις, “consolation”) to them and all true members of the Holy Apostolic and Catholic Church²⁴. Interestingly, a similar interpretation of John's Apocalypse as a “Christian millennium” was proposed by Augustine's theological opponent, the Donatist Tyconius²⁵.

Closely linked to Augustine's concept was the idea of dating years from the beginning of the Christian era: initially from the Annunciation (March 25), and later from the Nativity (Decem-

²¹ Евсевий Кесарийский. Церковная история. СПб., 2013. Р. 148–149 (III 28).

²² See: Войтенко А.А. Идеи миллениаризма в Египте I–IV вв. // Диалог со временем. Т. 33. 2010. С. 86–109.

²³ It is notable that one of the latest apologies of chiliasm and a critique of these ideas were written by clergy and published by the same publisher (“Алетейя”): Кирьянов Б., свящ. Полное изложение истины о Тысячелетнем царстве Господа на Земле: Богословие Мужей Апостольских. СПб., 2001; Ким Н., свящ. Тысячелетнее Царство: Экзегеза и история толкования XX главы Апокалипсиса. СПб., 2003.

²⁴ See: Амвросий (Полянский), еп. Учение о Царстве Божиим по сочинению блаженного Августина “О Граде Божиим”. Тверь, 2003.

²⁵ Небольсин А.Г. Тихоний Африканский — толкователь Апокалипсиса // Вестник ПСТГУ. Сер. III: Филология. 2016. Вып. 3 (48). С. 102–107.

ber 25). Although several variants of the year of the Annunciation circulated²⁶, the Easter table of Dionysius Exiguus gained particular prominence. It dated Christ's birth and annunciation to the year 752 from the founding of Rome (1 BCE), and by the 7th–8th centuries, this system of Christian dating became the standard across Western Europe. From that point onward, Western Christian eschatology shifted its chronological focus from cosmic time to “round” numbers linked to Christ's life²⁷. One can easily identify dramatic and even pivotal historical events in the West tied to the years 1000/1033 and 1500/1533, while the apocalyptic intensity surrounding the years 2000/2033 can be assessed from the readers' personal experience.

In the Greek East during the 6th century, a new historiographical synthesis emerged. The idea of the apocalyptic thousand-year reign of saints inaugurated by Christ's First Coming was combined with mystical world chronology by situating Christ's Ascension in the year 6000 from Creation. This framework appears in the writings of Hesychius of Miletus and in the authentic *Chronographia* of John Malalas (preserved only in Slavic fragments)²⁸.

However, the apparent artificiality of this chronological scheme — which conflicted with known historical data — necessitated further refinement. And a more coherent solution was eventually found. On the eve of the Arab conquests, during the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610–640 CE), an anonymous author — whose name was lost with the first page of the manuscript — composed a detailed world chronicle. This text was synchronized not only with the historical data known at the

²⁶ For example, in the popular Latin universal chronicle of Jerome, the 1st year of the Lord (*annus Domini*) is taken as 2 BCE. In the continuation of Jerome's chronicle by Prosper of Aquitaine, the era from the Resurrection is used, where year 1 corresponds to the 30th year of Christ (28 CE).

²⁷ Regarding the calculation of the years of the world, Western medieval authors demonstrate a surprising variety of opinions. Thus, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle places the 6000th year of the world in 806, the Annals of Ulster in 1796, and Bede the Venerable in 2048 CE (!).

²⁸ See: Кузнецков П.В. Христианские хронологические системы... Р. 281–288.

time but also with the 19-year lunisolar cycle underlying the Alexandrian Paschal calendar. This work, later known in scholarly tradition as the *Chronicon Paschale*, dated the creation of the world to Sunday, March 18, 5509 BCE, placing the creation of the celestial bodies on Wednesday, March 21 — the spring equinox and the “natural” boundary of the year. Soon thereafter, based on this chronology, a new dating system emerged and took root: the so-called Byzantine Era, beginning on September 1, 5509 BCE²⁹.

This chronological system was known in sources as the *Roman Era*, reflecting its association with the Roman Empire — which survived the crises of the Augustan monarchy in which Christ had been born, lived, and resurrected, and was renewed by Constantine the Great as a Christian polity with a new capital. By the 7th century, this state — now conventionally referred to as the Byzantine Empire — bore little resemblance to Rome of the Julio-Claudian dynasty or even Diocletian’s dominion. Latin had largely fallen out of use and was replaced by Greek even in legal and military spheres. The title of emperor, rather than the classical *αὐτοκράτωρ*, had become the familiar Eastern *βασιλεύς* (king). The state’s administrative, financial, and military systems underwent substantial transformation. The West had largely fallen under Germanic rule, the Balkans were overrun by barbarians, and the prosperous eastern provinces had been ravaged by Persian invasions. Nevertheless, the Empire endured, even emerging victorious from what seemed a lost war with Iran. In February 628 CE, a coup in Ctesiphon resulted in the assassination of Khosrow II, and the weak new shahanshah, Kavadh II, hastily concluded peace with Byzantium. At the end of that year, Heraclius celebrated a triumph in Constantinople, bringing to a close the 27-year war. It was in this atmosphere that the author of the *Paschal Chronicle* composed his work (which breaks off in the manuscript precisely at the events of 628 CE). By 638 CE, we find the first attestation of the Era of *Rhomaioi* (Byzantines) in a paschal treatise by a cer-

²⁹ See: Кузенков П.В. Христианские хронологические системы... Р. 321–330.

tain monk and presbyter named George³⁰, who described it as the most popular and convenient chronological system³¹. However, the earliest known instances of its practical use date to the late 7th century: e.g., the 3rd canon of the Quinisext Council (January 15, 4th indiction, year 6199 = 691 CE), tomb inscriptions from Kerch (year 6200 = 691/692 CE), and Athens (October 15, Wednesday, 7th indiction, year 6202 = 693 CE)³².

What distinguished the Byzantine Era (of *Rhomaioi*) from other creation-based chronological systems was its incorporation into practical usage. Earlier systems — including the Alexandrian Era, popular among monastics and dating creation to March 25, 5492 BCE — remained largely confined to theological and historiographical works. Dates continued to be recorded by consular years and imperial reigns (mandatory from 537 CE)³³. Only in the 7th century did the Byzantine world begin to widely adopt a calendar reckoning years from Creation. Given the broader historical context, it may be inferred that this shift toward using creation-based dating was a societal response to the prevailing “eschatological hysteria” in Eastern Christian circles — much like the simultaneous Western move to reckon years from the birth of Christ. Both systems, in their own ways, aimed to neutralize apocalyptic anxiety. However, while the Western Christian era dispensed with any consideration of the world’s age, the Byzantine world era made it clear to all that the symbolic year 6000 had passed without cataclysm and that humanity had entered the seventh millennium — a “Sabbath” era, in which a special role was assigned to those devoted to God. The Christian emperors viewed this as a divine affirma-

³⁰ See: Кузенков П.В. Георгий (1-я пол. VII в.), монах и пресвитер // Православная энциклопедия. Т. 11. М., 2006. Р. 28.

³¹ Diekamp F. Der Mönch und Presbyter Georgios, ein unbekannter Schriftsteller des 7. Jahrhunderts // Byzantinische Zeitschrift. Bd. 9. 1900. S. 14–51.

³² See: Виноградов А.Ю., Кузенков П.В. Эпиграфические свидетельства введения эры “от сотворения мира” // Звучат лишь Письмена. К юбилею Альбины Александровны Мединцевой. М.: ИА РАН, 2019. Р. 89–100.

³³ See: Кузенков П.В. Концепт “царства” (βασιλεία) в 47-й новелле Юстиниана Великого (537 г.) // Византийский временник. Т. 107. 2023. С. 67–92.

tion of their rule³⁴. It is no coincidence that, beginning in the 7th century, imperial titulature adopted the formula πιστὸς ἐν Χριστῷ (faithful in Christ)³⁵, and Byzantine coins began to depict Christ as *Rex Regnantium* (King of Kings)³⁶. The Byzantine Empire, in effect, became the embodied representation of a new era, nearly reaching the year 7000 (1492 CE) and presenting itself as the world's only true Christian kingdom – leading faithful humanity toward the Second Coming.

However, the Byzantine claims to universal spiritual and political leadership soon encountered a new, even more striking expression of total societal devotion to God³⁷. The adherents of this movement, emerging from the sands of Arabia and within decades sweeping across Western Asia and North Africa, referred to themselves as *mu'minīn* (the faithful) and *muslimūn* (those who submit). Their faith and submission were directed toward the same one Creator God who had sanctified the seventh day and whose coming Kingdom had been foretold by the biblical prophets. Muslims also await the Day of Judgment – but the Qur'an forbids speculation on the exact timing of the End even more sternly than the Gospels³⁸.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.

³⁴ The Byzantine “imperial eschatology” is explored in the monograph: Podskalsky G. Byzantinische Reicheschatologie: Die Periodisierung der Weltgeschichte in den vier Grossreichen (Daniel 2 und 7) und dem Tausendjährigen Friedensreiche (Apok. 20): Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung. München, 1972.

³⁵ This formula, already found in the Apostle Paul (Eph. 1:2; Col. 1:2), was introduced into the imperial title under Justinus II (565–578) and from the time of Heraclius became standard. See: Rösch G. Ὄνομα βασιλείας: Studien zum offiziellen Gebrauch der Kaisertitel in spätantiker und frühbyzantinischer Zeit. Wien, 1978. S. 62–63.

³⁶ Christ appears on the obverse of *Justinian II's* coins in 692. See: Бутырский М.Н. Христос – comes Augusti: к вопросу о нумизматической иконографии Юстиниана II // АДСВ. Т. 49. 2021. P. 55–69.

³⁷ See: Shoemaker S.J. A Prophet Has Appeared: The Rise of Islam Through Christian and Jewish eyes: A Sourcebook. Oakland (CA), 2021.

³⁸ Коран. Аль-Араф, 187.



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