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**Arabia, Greece and Byzantium**  
**Cultural Contacts in Ancient**  
**and Medieval Times**

Vol. II

*Editors*

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# **Arabia, Greece and Byzantium**

## **Cultural Contacts in Ancient and Medieval Times**

*Proceedings of the:*  
*International Symposium on the Historical Relations between Arabia the Greek and*  
*Byzantine World (5th century BC-10th century AD)*  
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*“Early majolica plate with a scene of a Byzantine ship with two masts and triangular sails. About A.D. 1200. Corinth, Archeological Museum C-38-521”*

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## **Forward**

### **In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful**

I would like, first, to express my thanks to King Saud University for hosting this conference, to the organizing sponsors and, in particular, to the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities and the Institute for Graeco-Oriental and African Studies.

It is a historical commonplace that, due to its strategic geographical position at the crossroads of the ancient world, the Arabian Peninsula has had, by way of interest and necessity, close political, cultural and economic relationships with ancient states, empires and civilizations.

Historical accounts have recorded a multitude of events reflecting the close interaction between Arabia and other parts of the world with the ensuing influence each side has exerted on the other. Historical accounts also point to direct and indirect commercial links having existed between Arabia and Ancient Greece and Byzantium. There have equally been tensions and frictions between the two realms, made all the more normal by factors of geographical proximity.

In this regard, I expect the present conference to shed light on the various aspects and limitations of such historical relationships, which would be of significant importance both at the scholarly level and in view of the lessons that can be learnt from them. I am confident that the different contributions scheduled in the two-day proceedings of this conference would be quite informative thereupon.

Studying the historical relationships among ancient states and civilizations, at this crucial time in human history, is both an important and a necessary endeavour. This is because of the various and multi-faceted tensions currently witnessed among the different civilizations, religions and cultures in today's world. Communications, cooperation and dialogue have been crucial in the past to resolve conflicts and overcome their causes. They remain no less important today in order to face the various challenges to world peace. In that respect, Saudi Arabia has inherited, just like its neighbours of the Arabian Peninsula, a rich legacy of historical and cultural bonds with other nations, is still faithful to that legacy and keen to preserve it. In this connection, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah's call for the promotion of dialogue among world cultures and religions comes at a propitious moment of our history to help improving the relationships between the different peoples and nations of our world. This can be achieved, not by dwelling on our differences, but rather on the common historical factors that bring us together.

In the context of the present conference, we are called upon to recount the illustrious Greek civilization and its rich intellectual heritage that is still of limitless benefit to all humanity. No one today can speak of subjects like state, philosophy, government or ethics without having to quote an ancient Greek philosopher. We have also to recall the unique cultural interaction that has occurred between the

ancient Arab and Greek civilizations, and has been decisive in laying the foundations of Western Renaissance.

Such historical truths play a significant role in promoting strong and fruitful relationships between the inheritors of Ancient Greece and Byzantium and the different states of the Arabian Peninsula. Preserving such a valuable legacy is the joint responsibility of us all, the peoples of Saudi Arabia and Greece.

To conclude, I would like to express my best wishes of success to the proceedings of this conference, and look forward to more activities that contribute to deeper and ever stronger ties between our two countries.

## Introduction

Scholars share the awareness of a lack in studying the history of the Arabian Peninsula. The need to shed light on past relations between the Arabian Peninsula and its neighbors as well as to investigate different fields such as political, cultural and commercial contacts gave birth to the idea of organizing a relevant International Symposium by King Saudi University. Its focus was on the relations with Greeks, Romans and Byzantines. Due to the importance of the issue, national and foreign research centers have cooperated in organizing the event.

The Department of History at King Saud University held the “*International Symposium on the Historical Relations between Arabia the Greek and Byzantine World (5th century BC-10th century AD)*”, which took place in *Riyadh, 6 - 9 December 2010 AD*. The King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies, the Institute of Graeco-Oriental and African Studies (Athens) and the Greek Embassy in Saudi Arabia were partners in convening and organizing a meeting of Arab and foreign scholars from fifteen countries specialized in the research of the history of the Arabian Peninsula and its neighbors.

A wide range of sources were studied to offer contributions for the publication; archaeological findings, literary sources (including papyri, archive materials and epigraphic documentation), the study of flora and fauna jointly with the research of trade goods, navigation and shipbuilding as testimony to the fervent communications around the Mediterranean, all together shed light on a fascinating past that Arabs and Greeks have developed in the culture of the Mediterranean.

Fernand Braudel’s vision and his profound analysis of the Mediterranean culture and its legacy to world civilization opened new horizons to modern historic research. The Mediterranean Sea is in reality many seas at once, a "vast, complex expanse" within which men operate; the sea articulates with the plains and islands. Interactions – both cultural and economic – influenced the history of the regions and peoples around the Mediterranean from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages and modern history.

Scholars raise the question whether the Mediterranean is more than a geographical unit and the interconnectivity of the Mediterranean people is properly stressed. As it has been pointed out, in short the Mediterranean displays: “the unity in multiplicity that is certainly an attractive model... as a globalization laboratory in a distant historical perspective”.<sup>1</sup>

Despite religious and linguistic differences which separated Byzantine and Islamic civilizations, striking similarities in their cultures can be perceived. These

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<sup>1</sup>. GERHARD WOLF, Fluid Borders, Hybrid Objects. Mediterranean Art Histories 500-1500, Questions of Method and Terminology, in: ed. JAYNIE ANDERSON, *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence, The Proceedings of the 32nd International Conference in the History of Art* (Comité International d’Histoire de l’Art, CIHA), The University of Melbourne, 13-18 January 2008, Melbourne 2009, 134f.

similarities are highly particular and so definite that they seem to mock the linguistic, religious and political differences.

All scientific approaches and research which contributed to this book deal with important elements which link the history and culture of the Arab world with the Greek civilization, its Roman and Byzantine continuation.

Common elements which define the relationship between Greek and Arab civilizations in ancient and medieval times have been thoroughly scrutinized and hidden aspects of the contacts between Arabs and Greeks have been revealed. An active interaction between the two cultures has been unfolded and scholars touched upon all details, in order to answer questions such as: What was the nature of relations between the two civilizations? Which were the effective elements in these relations? How did these relationships develop?

The scientific approaches employed several different viewpoints conducive to some answers. Political and economic relations were the main fertilizers of the interaction between the Arab and the Greek cultures during the pre-Islamic and the Islamic era. Miscellaneous information about the Arabian Peninsula has been preserved through the Greek culture. Also, Muslim Arabs were aware of the culture and progress of other nations when they started the translation movement from the Greek language, which became part of the heritage and the assets of the Near East civilizations.

Political relations were not the only way of interaction between the two civilizations. Trade routes of the Arabian Peninsula – first and foremost the incense route – were famous. Products and exports of the region constituted a major attraction for the consumers of the ancient world. The Arabian Peninsula was thus of vital interest for the major powers in the Near East, from Alexander the Great to the Byzantine Empire. Interest in the Arabian Peninsula motivated military and exploratory campaigns and gave impetus to several writings about the Arabian Peninsula and its inhabitants. At a closer look interaction between these two elements becomes obvious: elements of civilization such as international trade and military campaigns are linked in important ways not apparent at first sight.

Relations between the Arabs and Achaemenid Persians during the era of Cambyses II were discussed on the basis of information recorded in Herodotus' *History*; aspects of the political and social life of the Arabs as pictured by the "father of history" were another topic touched upon (Gad, Al-Sinany). Information about human sacrifice spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula which included in literary sources is an impressive occurrence linked with the Greek mythology, and it marks a different level of cultural contacts during the first millennium BC (Elsheikh). Classical sources also provide information about gold and silver in the Southern Arabia (Raslan).

Later Arab historians' interest in the Greeks and their history mirrors Herodotus' one concerning the Arabs. The history of Greece in al-Ma'sūdī's writings provides many interesting hints in this respect (Al-Helabi).

The Roman attempts to control the Arab Gulf appear to mark the beginning of the Roman-Persian competition over this important trade sea route (Al-Turky). The story of the Roman Emperor Philip the Arab presents us with an

example of acculturation in the Roman world and a critical study of the sources' information revisits the emperor's historical portrait (Abdel-Ghani). Byzantine presence in the Arabian Gulf is a later development. It stresses the significance of the region and highlights the political relations between Arabs and Byzantines (Seray). The Byzantine-Persian conflict on the southern part of the Silk Road during the reign of Justinian is perhaps the more striking expression of a centuries-old antagonism in the area (Abdelrahman).

While the sea and land transportation routes have received outstanding interest in the contributions of the Symposium, researchers also studied and presented diplomatic and military relations in the region, in particular the role of the Tanūkh confederation as an important regional player (Mahmoud). Diplomatic contacts, for instance, are reflected, in parallel to belligerence with the Roman Empire, in Omar Bin Hind's Embassy to the court of Emperor Justin II (Al-Naim).

Ceramic Ostraca found in Egyptian ports and Nikanor's Papyri archives provide an important source for the study of trade on both sides of the Red Sea (Salem). The *Ayka* "the Dwellers of the Wood", mentioned in the Holy Quran could be linked with Red Sea's trade data (Al-Ansary). The subject was further investigated in relation with the trade routes in the east of Egypt and their role in the trade between the ports of the Red Sea in the Roman era (Simsin). Information by Classical authors on the trade of the Arabian Peninsula has been extensively discussed and scrutinized, especially regarding technical aspects and data about volumes of goods transported (Al-Abduljabbar).

The entirety of the Arab peninsula, including modern Yemen in Greek, Roman and Byzantine times, never ceased to be an active player in international relations. Similarities in the linguistic traditions, which define the development in South Arabia and its neighbouring regions, were investigated on the basis of inscriptions discovered in the area; some of them were in Greek language (Voigt). Inscriptions bear witness to the role of the Kingdom of Himyar as well as their subjects the Kings of Kinda. Information based on these inscriptions reveals the history of those Arabs and their contribution to the power struggle for supremacy in the region between Byzantium and Persia (Robin).

The impact of a Greek art School on the artifact production in Yemen has also been studied (Al-Aidarous); the influence of the Greek coinage in the coins minted in the Arabian Peninsula's kingdoms constituted the subject of a specific paper (Abd-Allah). Related questions have been addressed in the study of a gradual Arabisation movement in relation to the Byzantine dinar traded in the Arabian Peninsula at the beginning of Islam (Ramadan).

Egyptian manuscripts remain essential for the study of the Hellenistic civilization and papyri provide useful information for the research of the social and economic life in Egypt; from its Greek past until the first centuries of the Muslim history of the country. Three documents commented upon in a paper, yield information about Egyptian society and the uninterrupted continuation of its social and economic life through centuries (Hanafi).

Furthermore, the early Christian mission in the region was studied (Berger); information from later Byzantine authors about Arabia and especially

Arabia Felix provided abundant material for contributions to this book. Byzantine writers introduce a fascinating picture of the legendary Arab production of perfumes and cosmetics as well as the admirable world of Arab animals, nature's diversity and people's wealth which has been recorded and admired by Greek and Roman authors (El-Nowieemy, Yannopoulos, Koutrakou, Leontsini, Kountoura Galaki). Special attention has been drawn on the information about the Palm tree in classical and ancient Arabic sources (Okab).

Greek and Arab travelers delivered ample information on seafaring in the Red Sea and the Arab Gulf and their descriptions can be used as basis to evaluate navigation and shipbuilding in the region. Modern interdisciplinary research – especially insightful knowledge from submarine archaeology and ship wrecks – supplement the information of the narrative sources (Ginalis, Tarek). The Mediterranean Sea united people inhabiting its borders and was the primary factor which brought about similarities denoting a common cultural past. In order to travel through the waters of the Mediterranean specialized knowledge, maps and navigational instruments and information were essential. Medieval traditions reflect such information and navigation manuals record useful elements in cartography until the Ottoman times (Tsoutsos-Teazis).

Information on trade and commodities was not the only one transmitted by such travelers. Additionally unique data about animals of that time, impressive and deemed worth-recording by the authors, were in some cases included and even depicted in their writings (Christides).

Contacts between people, in peace or in war, created the basis for acculturation, improved mutual understanding and supported a fruitful use of cultural elements represented by the other side. Exchanges of prisoners of war followed formal patterns but were, at the same time, a means to get a better understanding of the Other's way of life. Moreover, traders contributed to their clients' becoming acquainted with the goods exchanged, as well as with the culture they represented. In this context religious concepts could be received and transformed in a different environment and different styles of social life could peacefully coexist in a cosmopolitan atmosphere (Healy, Shroman, Patoura, Mansouri, C. Hillenbrand).

Horses, especially as cavalry, were an important innovation in war tactics and the Arabs, famous in this respect, were prominent actors, playing a vital role as auxiliaries for both Byzantium and Persia in their wars. The fact that the Arabs were familiar with ancient Greek equine medicine manuscripts represents another aspect of the cultural contacts between the two civilizations (McCabe).

Islamic civilization differentiated from its Byzantine sources even while continuing to draw on them. "The Dome of the Rock the and Umayyad Great Mosque of Damascus seen together showed that the Muslims were fully capable of wielding the symbolic language of Byzantine architecture and its ornament for their own purposes, and that they could build creatively on the early Christian and Byzantine traditions, and the still earlier Roman tradition, instead of merely copying them" (R. Hillenbrand).



As strange as it may seem, international contacts also expanded to distant parts of the world. Chinese sources provide useful testimony on Arabia and its history. The relevant trade was operated in Arabia by land and sea and contacts with China are discussed in two papers. Silk, for instance, was highly appreciated by the Arab society and the Byzantine aristocracy and its role has been more than adequately researched (Lin Ying –Yu Yusen, Kordoses).

More than sixty researchers presented their papers during the Symposium. Its published Proceedings in two parts include elaborate versions of forty-one contributions, in Arabic, English and French, with summaries in English for the Arabic and in Arabic for the English/French papers respectively.

International scientific Symposia usually focus on specific topics without in-depth analyses. Such a comprehensive in depth examination of the past and the historical relations between the Arab world, Greece and Byzantium is still a desideratum. This Symposium aims at laying the basis for future cooperation among scholars worldwide in order to promote the research of the common past which the Arab and Greek civilizations share.

The editors have limited their interventions solely in technical issues that did not affect the views of the authors. Contributions have been reviewed by specialized Readers and in some cases authors have been asked to make necessary improvements. Apart from some necessary exceptions, uniform editorial guidelines have been followed in this publication and the abbreviations used, if not otherwise specified, are those current in scientific reviews (*Année Philologique*).

## **The editors**



## **Contributions**



# Language, Script and Society in South Arabia and on the Horn of Africa

RAINER VOIGT

## 1. The old Semitic world and South Arabia

The old Semitic world can broadly be divided into three regions: the Fertile Crescent in the North, the South-Arabian/Ethiopian cultural sphere in the South and the inhospitable Arabian Desert/Steppe that lies between the two first-mentioned areas. The oldest witnesses of a Semitic language are found in the North, and this is also where one must assume the original home of the Semites was located. Setting off from the Northern Syrian Steppe they first entered into history as Akkadians (Babylonians and Assyrians) in Southern and Northern Mesopotamia, then as Proto-Sinaites and Proto-Canaanites – if one was to name these peoples after the (Proto-Sinaitic and Proto-Canaanite) inscriptions, and as Amorites and Ugarites in Western Syria.

It is likely that at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC the first Semites set off from the Fertile Crescent to their destination in South Arabia. This migration of peoples is connected to the emergence of the so-called Sea peoples who caused a widespread crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC, the fall of Ugarit, and the fall of the Hittite Empire as well as that of the Mycenaean Empire. The chaos that ensued in the Near East resulted in the displacement of tribes from their tribal lands, further aggravated by climate change, with one tribe forcing the other to drift in front. These Semitic migrations were made up of that of the Hebrews, of the Aramaeans who now enter history for the first time, and – what is of special interest to us – the migration of the South Arabians, or rather the people who were later to become the South Arabians. This people had to go a long distance to reach Southern Arabia, perhaps lured by a rumour of a rich country in the South.

There they encountered a culture (like the Sabir Culture) that had already developed irrigation, a technology on which later the Sabaean Empire and other empires were to found their prosperity beside their trade with incense. This explains the name *Arabia Felix* “Happy Arabia” in contrast to *Arabia Deserta* “Deserted Arabia”. Phenotypically, i.e. from their appearance, the original inhabitants of South Arabia seem to have had contacts with the inhabitants of the Horn of Africa. Perhaps this similarity is due to migration of South Arabians to the Horn of Africa. Be that as it may, there is a genetic connection between the people in the Horn of Africa and South Arabia that was forged during contacts spanning millennia.

Although the linguistic evidence to which I will come later still needs to be worked on further, one can possibly draw the conclusion that there must have been two different languages in prehistoric South-Arabia, the language of the OSA inscriptions and the precursor-language of today's modern South-Arabian languages. This linguistic difference may also mirror two different population groups, the Proto-Modern-South-Arabians (whose modern language is still spoken in the area) and the Old South-Arabians (whose language has been preserved in the

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inscriptions). Since the Old South-Arabians immigrated from the North at ca. 1000 BC (or even before), presumably the Proto-Modern South-Arabians had already settled there some time before as the result of another, older wave of immigrants from the North. For the Axumite Empire as the Western-most outpost of the South-Arabian–Abyssinian cultural sphere this means that we also have to think of two population groups, the one group whose language we know from the Epigraphic South-Arabian inscriptions, and the other group whose language is related to the Modern South-Arabian languages. Both groups must have entered the East African Plateau at roughly the same time, but it is impossible to make any precise guesses whether the numerical strengths of the two groups were the same as back home in their Asiatic mother country. Be that as it may, the speakers of the language of the inscriptions do not appear to have been too numerous or prestigious enough, since it was their language that became extinct in the end.

GARBINI as well assumes that there were two different population groups. According to him the members of the first group (the “Sabir” culture) migrated into South-Arabia between the 12th and 10th centuries - which is in opposition to the view that the second group, constituting the Sabaeans, were supposedly the last South-Arabian group to have entered Yemen, “towards 700 BC”.<sup>1</sup> His evidence relies on archaeological and script-historical arguments for positing such a late date which in my view is perhaps too late. I think that both our views, though proceeding from different evidential bases, could possibly be combined, but at the moment it is too early to say. In any case, I am not the only one to suggest two separate Semitic immigration waves into South-Arabia.

## 2. The linguistic evidence

In my present contribution I would like to limit myself solely to the linguistic evidence which on the one hand is provided by the inscriptions and on the other hand by the languages that are still spoken in that region today. So what is the actual data-base that is available to us?

- the many thousands of Old (or: Epigraphic) South-Arabian inscriptions that range from the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC to the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, which therefore already had ceased decades before Islam,

- the few hundred of Old South-Arabian inscriptions that were found in the Horn of Africa,

- the Old South-Arabian inscriptions from Southern Arabia, written on palm-leaf sticks and wood and composed in a different alphabet, the South Arabian miniscule script which can be considered as a cursive form of the monumental script (leaving aside the question which came first),

- the languages of the modern Yemenites and Omanis who speak a Modern South-Arabian language, e.g. Mehri, Ḥarsusi, Šheri, Soqoṭri, etc.,

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<sup>1</sup>. *Origins* 2004.

- the inscriptions found on both sides of the Red Sea which might represent other languages or dialects - see the famous Hymn of Qāniya rhyming in *-hk* so far not properly understood that is characterized by an prefixed definite article *hn-* (e.g. *hn-bḥr*, sea, land<sup>c</sup>, otherwise suffixed in ESA),<sup>2</sup>

- the Himyarite languages which we can derive from the information that has come down to us from indigenous Arabic authors concerning Yemen and its culture and language (b. Aḥmad al-Hamdāni, Našwān b. Saʿīd al-Ḥimyarī),

- the coinage in South Arabia and in Abessinia,

- the Ethio-Semitic languages together with Old Ethiopic (pre-axumite and axumite inscriptions and the literary language Geʿez) and the modern languages Amharic, Tigrinya, Tigre, Gurage et al.

It is important to point out that all these languages and written records are restricted to the South-Arabian and Abyssinian regions. Although it is true that the South-Arabian script was also used further north (like e.g. in Qaryat al-Fāw) for writing Arabic, and even further north than that (as far as Syria) for writing Ṣafāʿitic, Liḥyanite and Thamudic inscriptions, it is assumed that this spread of the South-Arabian script was a later development that originated from South-Arabia. It is not seen as a proof of the early use of the South-Arabian script by North-Semites.

Of the language that was spoken in South Arabia prior to the coming of the Semites we know nothing. In time, the script which had been taken from the north to the south was used for writing Old South-Arabian. This language fragmented into by and large not too divergent dialects in accord with the immigrants' penetration of the area from a region to the west of the (Yemenite and Abyssinian) Highland on to Ḥaḍramaut. The most salient difference is seen in the Proto-Semitic morpheme *s*<sup>1</sup> which occurs in the causative morpheme and the (independent and suffixed) personal pronouns. This morpheme *s*<sup>1</sup> is spirantized in Sabaic into *h* (as in Hebrew) but is preserved as *s*<sup>1</sup> in the other dialects/languages.

	Sabaic	Qatabanic etc.
basic stem	𐩦𐩣𐩪 <i>qny</i> 'he acquired'	
causative stem	𐩦𐩣𐩪𐩥 <i>hqny</i> 'he dedicated'	𐩦𐩣𐩪𐩥 <i>s</i> <sup>1</sup> <i>qny</i> 'id.'
Personal pronoun 3rd m. sg.	𐩮𐩥- <i>-hw</i> 'his'	𐩥- <i>-s</i> <sup>1</sup> , 𐩮𐩮𐩥- <i>-s</i> <sup>1</sup> <i>ww</i> 'id.'

Since Sabaic is spoken farthest to the west (and from there has impacted also on the Horn of Africa) it could be called the dialect that lies nearest to the assumed entrance portal to South Arabia. However, this is contradicted by the situation of the smaller tribe/people of the Minaeans who settled north of the Sabaeans and whose language did preserve the *s*<sup>1</sup>-morpheme. Could this be considered as a hint of their more Eastern origin? One must be aware that all Eastern dialects, like Qatabanic and Ḥaḍramitic, preserve *s*<sup>1</sup> which gives them an archaic character. This would go well with the assumption that quite a different

<sup>2</sup>. STEIN: "Ḥimyaritic", 2008.

Semitic group was already settled in the East of the South-Arabian region, who had migrated to the area possibly via a different route at a different time, i.e. before the time when those South-Arabians arrived whose language is found in the inscriptions. In other words I posit two different population groups in South Arabia:

- the group whose language is documented in the Old South-Arabian inscriptions, and
- the ancestors of today's Modern South-Arabian languages whose documentation only started in the 19th century (the remarks found in the reports of medieval Arab geographers and historians merely mention only very few forms).

The first group are more documented in the West of the South-Arabian/Abyssinian cultural sphere, the second group are found in recent times in the Eastern parts of the region, i.e. in Eastern Yemen and in Western 'Omān as well as Soqotrā. Even though one can assume that these languages were spoken in the Western parts as well, their distribution points clearly to an Eastern origin, i.e. the Eastern immigration of the ancestors of the New South-Arabian languages.

### 3. Ḥadramitic

Ḥadramitic can be seen as a linguistic and historical bridge between these two disparate groups of languages, i.e. it is the Eastern-most South-Arabian dialect and it is the one that differs most strongly from Sabaic. Thus we find the following agreements:

#### 1. Special sound shifts

ሁ- *h-* 'for' = Sabaic *l-* if not to be derived from *k-* which is documented together with many particles, see *kl-*, *kn-*, *bkn-*, *kd-*, *km-*, *kḏm-*, etc.<sup>3</sup>

ሁሁ *hn* 'from' = Sabaic ḥ1 *ln*

It is quite possible that *l* has become *h*. On the other hand *h-* could be a weakened form of *k-* which is common in Amharic preposition and conjunction *kä-* 'from, at, on; since, after' and in Tigrinya as conjunction *kə-* '(so, in order) that' and. This could support the idea of a special Modern South Arabian and Ethio-Semitic connection to which I will come back soon.

#### 2. *h* as glide or mater lectionis

A strange word-internal *h* is found in places not to be expected in Old South Arabian as well as in modern South Arabian. In the inscriptions the following cases can be distinguished:

- Dual of the determinate state with the termination ḥḥḥ- *-nhn* which can be interpreted as *-ā/ēn<sup>V</sup>-han* with the article *-han*. In the singular this article is reduced to ḥ- *-n* [*-ān*]. The manifold forms of the determinate dual<sup>4</sup> do give hint to the current (or later) pronunciation:

ሁሁሁሁ- *-yn-hn* [*-ayn<sup>V</sup>-han*, *-ēn<sup>V</sup>-han*, *-ēn<sup>V</sup>-ān*],

ሁሁሁሁሁ- *-yn-hyn* [*-ēn<sup>V</sup>-hen*, *-ēn<sup>V</sup>-(h)ēn*],

ሁሁሁሁሁ- *-yny-hn* [*-ēne-ha/en*],

<sup>3</sup>. *Sabaic Dictionary* 1982, 75.

<sup>4</sup>. BEESTON, *Sabaic* 1984, 29.



ኅዮኅዮኅዮ- *-yny-hyn* [-*ēne-hēn*].

From these and other forms we learn that (a) a vowel has to be posited between the proper dual termination and the suffixed article (cf. Arabic *-āni*, *-ayni*), (b) an 'Imālah (*a > e* or *ā > ē*) has taken place (cf. the form *-hyn*), and (c) possibly the *h* already served as *mater lectionis*.

More often used is this *h* in Minaic, in pronouns, particles and noun terminations, but not in verbal forms, v. the external fem. pl. form with ጸኅ- *-ht*, which could be read as [-*ahat*, *-ahāt*] or simply as [-*āt*].

Of special importance is the *h* attached to a singular and plural form in a 'genitive' construction, e.g. ቋሶሃወታዮሶ ኅበ *bn* 'ydwh-s<sup>1</sup>m 'from (*bn*) their (-s<sup>1</sup>m) hands'<sup>5</sup> which can be rendered as ['*aydiwah*<sup>V</sup>-s<sup>1</sup>um], from the nominal form '*afilat*<sup>V</sup> (or should we posit here a nominal form '*afulat*<sup>V</sup>?). In Arabic a slightly different nominal form is used: '*ayd*<sup>in</sup> < \*'*ayduy*<sup>um</sup>, with article *al-*'*aydī* < *al-*\*'*ayduy*<sup>u</sup>, from the nominal form '*aful*<sup>um</sup>. There are two ways of explaining this form.

The form 'ydwh- could be considered as coming from \*'*ydw*t ['*aydiwat* or '*ayduwat*]; probably we have to assume a vowel after the dental in order to explain its aspiration to *h*, i.e. the genitive ending *-i*. Then the approximate reading of *bn* 'ydwh-s<sup>1</sup>m would be [*bin* '*aydiwahi*-s<sup>1</sup>um].

Contrary to this I tend to consider the *h* in this form not as a reflex of the feminine *-t* but as the representation of a long twin-peak vowel. Then its nominal form could be '*aful*<sup>um</sup>, i.e. '*ayduw*<sup>V</sup> or rather '*afāl*<sup>um</sup> i.e. '*aydāw*<sup>V</sup>. The long vowel after the third radical could be the element *-ī* added in Classical Ethiopic to plural nouns before possessive suffixes (e.g. '*dāw-ī-hōmū* 'their hands'). Thus we get the form '*aydu/āw-ihī-s*<sup>1</sup>um. In this case the *h* would indicate a lengthened vowel (*-ī*) which has been realised as a twin-peak vowel (*-ihī-*). If this consideration was correct, *h* would not only appear at the 'Zerdehnung' (i.e. stretching out) of a long *ā*, as one could have assumed on the basis of the feminine plural form *-ht* as well as of the following examples: ጸኅኅዮ *bynht* [*baynahat* or *baynāt*] 'between', ኅቋሃ፩ *ihnm* [*tahamān* or *tāmān*] 'eight', ጸኅኅበ *bhnt* [*bahanāt* or *bānāt*] 'daughters' (cf. Arabic *banāt*).<sup>6</sup> It is not clear which vowel should be posited in the case of ኅበ *bhn* 'sons'.

Similar cases of this strange *h* can be found in Qatabanic and Ḥaḍramitic as well.

In modern South Arabian there are several cases of an intrusive *h* that does not exist in the respective form of other Semitic languages, as Mehri *šhəlīṭ* 'three' (cf. Sabaic ፩ *s<sup>2</sup>lt*, Classical Ethiopic m. *śālāstu*, f. *sālās*), Soqotri *idehen* 'ear'.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to determine the original form in this case. For Mehri *šhəlīṭ* the form to be considered is *śīlēt* (*yūm*) 'three (days)'.<sup>8</sup> This form has a long vowel in its first syllable which was later 'zerdehnt' (i.e. stretched out) (*ī* > *ihī* > (ə)hə). A

<sup>5</sup>. Ibid., 61.

<sup>6</sup>. Ibid., 60.

<sup>7</sup>. LESLAU, *Soqotri* 1938, 53.

<sup>8</sup>. JOHNSTONE, *Mehri* 1987, 380.

comparison of the Soqotri form *idehen* with Mehri *ḥəyḏēn*,<sup>9</sup> i.e. *ḥə-yḏēn*, suggests also the existence of a long vowel in the second syllable which was later ‘zerdehnt’ (i.e. stretched out) (*ē* > “*ehe*”).

The occurrence of this *h* was already explained by RHODOKANAKIS<sup>10</sup> by the emergence of a “twin-peak accent” („zweigipfliger Akzent“) of an long stressed vowel. LESLAU adopts this theory and speaks about an “*h* parasite”.<sup>11</sup>

Summing up we can say that there are two scenarios that would explain the parallelity of this phenomenon in the epigraphic document as well as in the modern languages. The cases of the intrusive *h* in Old South Arabian are either

a) real consonants pronounced as [*h*] and to be explained as a realization of a markedly long and stressed vowel with two peaks, e.g. with the *a*-vowel: *á*: > *áá* > *áhá* - phonetically it is a kind of diphthongization -,

b) a sign for noting the long *ā*-vowel, i.e. a *mater lectionis*. In this case the resemblance would be a mere chance.

Unfortunately the occurrences of this phenomenon are not so wide spread and regular that a consistent theory could be set up.

### 3. Personal pronouns

A very specific feature is found in Ḥaḏramitic where the personal pronouns of the 3rd sg. display a different sibilant in the masculine and feminine endings which is in contrast to all other epigraphic South Arabian dialects:

	Ḥaḏramitic	Qatabanic	Sabaic
sg. 3. m.	ḥ- -s <sup>1</sup> , ⊕⊕ḥ- -s <sup>1</sup> ww, his'	ḥ- -s <sup>1</sup> , ⊕⊕ḥ- -s <sup>1</sup> ww	⊕ḥ- -hw, ḥ- -h
f.	ḥ- -s <sup>3</sup> , ḥ- -t̄ 'her'	ḥ- -s <sup>1</sup> , ⊕ḥ- -s <sup>1</sup> yw	ḥ- -h, ⊕ḥ- -hw, ḥḥ- -hy
pl. 3. m.	ḥḥ- -s <sup>1</sup> m 'their'	ḥḥ- -s <sup>1</sup> m	⊕ḥḥ- -hmw

In the 3rd persons singular the pronouns show a tendency to fall together graphically. Most probably these forms were distinguished by different vowels:

sg. 3. m. -s<sup>1</sup> [-sū], -h [-hū]

f. -s<sup>1</sup> [-sā], -h [-hā]

The situation in Sabaic is a little more complex than the often identical spelling suggests. Although it is conceivable that the masculine and feminine forms of the 3rd person singular collapsed into one form, there are indications of this not being the case: one way of distinguishing could be that the feminine form was simply read with a different vocalisation as \*-*hiwa*, \**hīwa* (as opposed to m. [-

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>10</sup> Studien 1915.

<sup>11</sup> In his *Lexique soqotri*, Paris 1938, 22.

*huwa*, *-hūwa*]. But furthermore there is also a graphically distinct variant used exclusively for the feminine form *-hy* [*-hiya*, *-hīya*] which seems to indicate that gender at least in some dialects was clearly marked.

Also difficult to explain is the vocalisation of the long Qatabanic forms:

sg. 3. m. *-s<sup>1</sup>ww* [*-suwaw*, *sūwaw*]  
f. *-s<sup>1</sup>yw* [*-siyaw*, *-sīyaw*]

The different sibilants in the Ḥaḍramitic forms of the 3rd sg. corresponds quite surprisingly to a different form in the personal pronouns of Modern South-Arabian ('he' as opposed to 'she').

	m. sg.	f. sg.
Proto-Semitic	*s <sup>1</sup> ūwa	*s <sup>1</sup> īya
Šḥeri	šɛ(h)	sɛ(h)
Soqoṭri	<sup>h</sup> ye	se
Ḥarsūsi	ha(h)	se(h)
Mehri	ha(h)	se(h)

This agreement between Epigraphic and Modern South-Arabian<sup>12</sup> is the more astonishing as the personal pronouns of the 3rd person in Semitic always share the same initial sound (as e.g., sg. 3rd. m. : f. Akkadian *šū'a* : *šī'a*, Hebrew *hū'* : *hī'* and Arabic *huwa* : *hiya* based on the Proto-Semitic forms.

Could one therefore assume that this group had immigrated into South Arabia (not necessarily earlier) via the East Arabian region (al-Ḥasā', classical Arabic al-'Aḥsā'). The Ḥasā'itic inscriptions belong to the Old North Arabian inscriptions, written in the South Arabian script and composed in a slightly different Arabic dialect. These inscriptions do not represent the epigraphic remainder of the South Arabian alphabet that had come from the North. But it is conceivable that – similar to earlier migrations from the East Arabian region – special relations existed with al-Ḥasā' which led in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to a back-migration of the alphabet, an alphabet that had earlier presumably taken the Western route to the South. Even in later times there was a special relationship with the al-Ḥasā' region. Let me remind you of the Ismā'īlīyah 'sect' of the Qarmatians (al-Qarāmiṭah) who called themselves 'Abū Sa'īdīs, who had their centre in al-Ḥasā' to where for two decades they had carried off the holy stone of Mecca (930–951). They also had a strong community in Yemen.

<sup>12</sup>. VOIGT, Personalpronomina 1988.

#### 4. Greek language and culture

The Hellenism which culturally influenced so many countries from North Africa to India, from the Crimea to East Africa was received and adopted to different degrees in the South-Arabian-Abyssinian region. Abyssinia was decidedly shaped by Hellenistic culture whereas South Arabia participated in this process of modernisation only in some measure. Influence here is defined as the foundation of cities, minting and language. Thus the foundation of Axum, later to be the city of kings, came about through Hellenistic influence just as its minting activity did.

Hellenistic influence reached its climax with the Ezana inscriptions. But Greek inscriptions do exist which date from pre-Axumitic times. Thus as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC Ptolemaios III Euergetes I (247-221 BC) erected in Adulis a marble throne that had a Greek inscription on it. When Cosmas Indicopleustes ('India-voyager') visited Adulis in 524 he copied the now lost inscription together with another later, possibly post-Christian, inscription. In it conquests are mentioned and also the countries Ethiopia and Kasu ('Kush = Meroe') unless the latter needs to be emended to Sasu; the god Ares is invoked who also later finds mention in 'pagan' inscriptions. Unfortunately the name of the Ethiopian king is not stated. In their volume *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie* by DREWES, SCHNEIDER and BERNARD 20 Greek inscriptions are collected among them some quite long ones.

Greek coinage is found from the last quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. AD until the mid of the 7<sup>th</sup> cent. AD. So far twenty names of kings have been found on coins starting from Endybis bisī Dahy (ENDYBIC BICI DAXY) 'Endybis, the man of Dachu' (a clan name) until Arməḥa 'Armah'. The titles used on the coins were in Greek ΒΑCΙΑΕΥC ΑΞΩΜΙΤΩΝ 'King of the Axumites' and in classical Ethiopic script and language nəgūsā 'Aksūm 'King of Axum', thus the traditional transliteration. The Greek rendering 'King of the Axumites' demonstrates that 'Aksūm' was originally a plural name referring to the inhabitants of this city.

#### 5. Inscriptions of 'Ezana

The fifth in this list of kings given on the coins is AEIZANAC / ʿĒzānā with the clan name *bisi Ḥalēn*. ʿĒzānā is responsible for two fundamental and crucial decisions: the introduction of Christianity and the development of an own script and literature. This policy is to be seen as an *imitatio imperii Romani* (i.e. "in imitation of imperial Roman / East Roman habits") which includes a high esteem for the Greek language; consequently the royal inscriptions of King Ezana were issued in Greek but also in Epigraphic South Arabian, the language of the Old South Arabian kingdoms. ENNO LITTMANN, the famous German scholar and leader of the *Deutsche Aksum-Expedition (DAE)* in 1905/06, excavated and edited these inscriptions in his monumental work entitled: *Sabaische, griechische und altabessinische Inschriften* (1913). In these inscriptions three scripts are used:

- the Sabaic script,

- the Greek script in capital letter form, but with ω instead of Ω,
- the Ethiopic script (which had been developed from the Sabaic script with some modifications, as Sabaic 𐩮 *m* > 𐩪 *mā*, 𐩮 *ś* > 𐩪 *śā*, but see 𐩪 *b* > 𐩪 *bā*).

As to the languages used, DAE 4, 6/7 shows the following picture:

The text, written carefully in Sabaic script running from right to left, represents - concerning the language itself - not a form of Sabaic, but the transliteration of the Old Ethiopic text. Therefore the text has been labelled pseudo-Sabaic. There are only very few Sabaic elements found in the text, like the use of the word 𐩮𐩪 *mlk* ‘king’ instead of Ethiopic 𐩬𐩪: *nəguś*, and the imitation of the Sabaic *tamyīm* ‘mimation’ as in 𐩮𐩪𐩬𐩪𐩬𐩪 *’kswmm* (‘*Aksūm-Vm*). This demonstrates clearly the high status of the Old South-Arabian language although its practical knowledge appears not to have been very high. The claim to still belong to the South Arabian civilization is clearly expressed in the imperial titles: ‘Ezānā, the King of ’Aksum and Ḥimyar and Raidān and Ḥabaśat and Saba’ and’ etc.

- The Greek text is carefully written in *scriptio continua*. It appears that the (pseudo-) Sabaic and Greek texts represent *the* most important official imperial documents.

- The Old Ethiopic text running from left to right does not appear to be written in a carefully constructed form. The consonantal characters show already the Ethiopic shape, however they are still unvocalized.

This text (DAE 7) had been written before the important decision by the royal court or by King ‘Ezana himself to create a national script together with the introduction of Christianity. This is in accordance with many other parallel developments in the Near East. In the same way as the Coptic script was created for the Christian Egyptians, the Armenian Script for the Armenian Christians and the Arabic script for the Arab Christians, the vocalized Ethiopic script was created from the unvocalized Ethiopic script. This step can be seen in another inscription of King Ezana which is fully vocalized, i.e. DAE 9 and 10. In these inscriptions ‘Ezana considers himself as *wäldä-Māhrəm zä-’i-yətmäwwa* ‘son of Maḥrem who will not be defeated’ and presents the God Maḥrem a thank-offering. This seems to contradict the above-mentioned observation that the introduction of Christianity is necessarily accompanied by the introduction of a national script. The reason for this discrepancy is the fact that the introduction of Christianity and the introduction of a national script are - when such decisions have taken place - two different administrative procedures that are implemented separately within a time-span of several years, first by working on the elaboration of the new script and then by taking the measure of introducing a new religion.

Some years later (around 350 AD according to LITTMANN) the fully vocalized Ethiopic inscription DAE 11 of King ‘Ezana stops referring to pagan gods and exhibits instead references to the Lord of Heaven or the Lord of the earth:

“Through the might of the Lord of heaven, who is victorious in Heaven and on earth over all!”

“Through the might of the Lord of the earth”

This expression (*'Ēgzi'a-bəhēr*) has become the current word for God in many Ethio-Semitic languages in Ethiopia and Eritrea. It could still be considered as hinting at a kind of monotheism which later became Christianity. But we do have a clear Christian inscription, still by king 'Ezana, this time in Greek (*RIÉ 271*), in which not only the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned but also reference is made to several Christian doctrines.

The development of the unvocalized Ethiopic script into the vocalized one is a unique feature in the whole of the Semitic world. The basic consonantal sign *C*, e.g.  $\Omega$ , taken over from Sabaic (Epigraphic South Arabian)  $\Pi b$  (with any vowel), is read as *bä* (or *ba* according to the transliteration system); it is interpreted as having the simplest unmarked vowel. By extending or shortening dashes, and adding dashes and squiggles, basic *C* was so far modified that new signs resulted with the reading *CV*, e.g.  $\Omega \cdot b\bar{u}$ ,  $\Omega$ ,  $b\bar{i}$ ,  $\Omega b\bar{a}$ , etc.

The idea to vocalize an existing consonantal script, where vowels are not written at all, in this unusual way for Semitic scripts was taken over from the Indian script system. It is only in Indian scripts that the basic form of the sign, just as it was originally adopted from Aramaic, is read with the vocalization *a*, while the other vowels were indicated by adding diacritical strokes or some other modification of the basic sign. The structural similarity of the two writing systems, Indian and Ethiopic, cannot be explained other than by historical influence. The very close relations that Ethiopia and the island of Soqoṭra had with Southern India exclude any other explanation than adoption from an older Indian script.

## 6. Hellenism in South Arabia

Examining the Hellenistic influence on South Arabia, it is clear that minting in the Sabaeen and Himyarite Empires was strongly influenced by Greek coinage. The earliest coins from the 4th/3rd centuries BC consist of imitations of Athenian money. Some of them bear South Arabian characters. In the 2nd century BC the Athenian drachma served as model for the coinage of the Sabaeans.

Greek inscriptions are very rare in South Arabia.

(1) Much work has been done recently on a very short and fragmentary bilingual Latin-Greek inscription from Barāqiš (the ancient Yaṭīll):

[P.] CORNEL[IUS .....]  
 EQUES . M [...]  
 ΠΟΥΒΑΙC KOPN[HAIOC ...]

It is very tempting to see a connection with the unsuccessful expedition by Aelius Gallus in 25/24 BC to Marib. This consideration leads to the following reading and complementation:<sup>13</sup>

[P.] Cornel[ius .....]  
 eques m[issicius legio ...]  
 Πούβλις Κορν[ήλιος ...]

---

<sup>13</sup>. MAREK, *Römische* 1994, 187.

[ἵππεὺς τῆς λεγιῶνος ...]

Thus *equus* is interpreted as riding soldier. There have been other proposals for completing the inscription. E.g. *eques* has been interpreted as a personal name.

According to COSTA<sup>14</sup> in the inscription a Roman merchant called Publius Cornelius is mentioned who during his visit to the Jawf left a dedication in a temple. This is in contrast to other deliberations to recognize here a funerary inscription.

(2) Another Greek inscription was found in Bi'r ʿAlī (Qāni' oder Qana') - with five uncomplete lines:

[ΕΙC] ΘΕΟCΟΒΟΛΘΟΝΚΟC[ΜΑ] ?  
 [Κ]ΑΙΟΑΓΙΟCΤΟΠΟCΤΟΥ [ ]  
 [C]ΥΝΟΔΙΑΓΙΝΗΜΟΙΗ [ ]  
 [Π]ΛΟΤΑΗΝΑΙΑΠΑΓΗ[ΤΑΙ]  
 [Ε]ΡΓΑΚΑΙ Μ[ ]

‘Almighty, helping Kosmas (?), and this Holy place is ... let my caravan be kept safe ... let it (the sea?) be safe for a ship, let him lead (?) ... the matters and ...’<sup>15</sup>

Here is the inscription in traditional polytonal Greek spelling:

[Εἶς] Θεὸς βοαθὸν Κοσμ[ῶ ?]  
 [κ]αὶ ὁ ἅγιος τόπος τοῦ [---]  
 [σ]υνοδία γίνη μοι ἡ []  
 [π]λοτὰ ἡ ναί, ἀπάγητ[αι ]  
 [ἔ]ργα καὶ || .... Μ [-----]

‘Dieu unique, qui aide Kosmas (?), et cette place sacrée ... Que la caravane soit pour moi ... que (la mer ?) soit favorable pour le voyage du navire, que guide (?) ... les affaires et ...’<sup>16</sup>

Whereas VINOGRADOV assumed it to be a Christian inscription, BOWERSOCK proved that it was Jewish. The building from which the inscription came turned out to be a synagogue.<sup>17</sup>

(3) A further small inscription, a dipinto, was found during excavations in Bi'r ʿAlī (Qana') (4th century).

†ΝΕΑΙΠΡΩΘΟC

The question is whether one is dealing with two names (Νέα and the wrongly spelt Πρωτοc) or a compound name. The cross depicted at the beginning of the inscription prove it to be Christian.

When speaking of Greek influence on South Arabia one must not forget JACQUELINE PIRENNE,<sup>18</sup> who more than anyone else supposed there was Greek

<sup>14</sup>. Further 1986.

<sup>15</sup>. BOWERSOCK, New 2010.

<sup>16</sup>. VINOGRADOV, Inscription 2010.

<sup>17</sup>. MÜLLER, W.W., Review *Qāni'*.

<sup>18</sup>. Grèce 1955.

influence on the South Arabian culture (and architecture). This is connected to the different theories concerning the Old South Arabian chronology. PIRENNE defended a short chronology, i.e. a late date for the inscriptions. However, an early chronology as proposed by H. VON WISSMANN seems more convincing.

(4) The Greek signature of the sculptor on a bronze statue found in Nahlat al-Ḥamrā': ΦΟΚΑΣΕΠΟΙΕΙ (i.e. Φωκᾶς ἐποίηι).<sup>19</sup> The short note in Greek stands beside a Sabaic inscription that contains a Sabaic name (*La-Hayy-<sup>c</sup>amm hans<sup>3</sup>aga*). This is a remarkable case of some cooperation between an indigenous and a Greek artist.

(5/6) In Nağrān a Christian Graffito is documented: Κύριε βόηθεσόν με<sup>20</sup>

Finally I like to draw attention to the Minaic-Greek bilingual inscription that was found in Delos.<sup>21</sup> In this text the name of the island Delos is written  $\text{ϛ}\text{ϛ}\text{ϛ}\text{ϛ}$  *Dlt*, which clearly shows that the character  $\text{ϛ}\text{ϛ}$  was in Minaic no longer read as interdental (*θ*) at that time.

After the Minaic text consisting of three lines: (... Hāni' and Zaid-'Il, the (two men) from  $\text{ϛ}\text{ϛ}\text{ϛ}\text{ϛ}$ [TN] erected the altar of (the god) Wadd and of the gods from Ma<sup>c</sup>in in Delos') is followed by the Greek text with four words in four lines:

ΟΑΔΔΟΥ  
ΘΕΟΥ  
ΜΙΝΑΙΩΝ  
ΟΑΔΔΩ

In traditional polytonal Greek spelling the text runs as follows:

Ὅδδου                    '[Altar] of Wadd,  
θεοῦ                     the God  
Μινναίων             of the Minaeans.'  
Ὅαδδω                 '[Dedicated] to Wadd.'

This inscription is from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>22</sup>

In my view we are here not dealing with one but two inscriptions. The first inscription comprises the first three lines. The second inscription, consisting only of the word: Ὅαδδω 'To Wadd', was written by someone else, as can be seen in the differing spellings (O... as opposed to OA...) and the fact that the word is not directly aligned with the other lines above, and furthermore it was written inclining to the right.

In this context it may be worth mentioning an inscription found in the Farasān Islands located at some distance offshore from the coastal town of Jizan (Ġaizān). Although not written in Greek but in Latin, this inscription, consisting of seven lines, names a certain Pontifex maximus Antoninus Pius, during whose rule a *vexill(atio) leg(ionis) II Tr(aianae) Fortis* 'a temporary task force (*vexillatio*) of the Second Legion Traiana Fortis' and its auxiliary troops were stationed by the Red Sea. Due to differing readings and ideas about how abbreviated words ought to be

<sup>19</sup> MÜLLER, *Inscriptions* 1979.

<sup>20</sup> BEAUCAMP – ROBIN, *Christianisme* 1981.

<sup>21</sup> MÜLLER, D. H., *Minäisch-griechische* 1909.

<sup>22</sup> See the photo in ROBIN, *Quelques*, 61.



written out in full it is uncertain whether the *praefectus/o* is expressly named (as Castricius Aprinus). What is important in this context is the mention of *Ferresani portus* (?), i.e. the place, which is documented in Greek as Φαρράν, Φαρσάν, as well as of *Pont(i) Herculis*, i.e. the ‘Sea (?) of Hercules’. The difficulties of reading this inscription should not distract from the fact that it can be wonderfully precisely dated to 143/144 AD.

## 7. De-Hellenisation in South Arabia and Ethiopia

The de-Hellenisation in the 1st millennium AD affects South Arabia and Abyssinia in the same way but with different outcomes. In South Arabia one sees the beginning of an arabisation which puts an end to Greek influence as well as the South Arabian heritage, even before the Islamic conquest proper (this can be seen in the titles the ruler uses amongst which the word *ʿarāb* is already found). And in Abyssinia the relocation of the centre of the Empire to the South – possibly triggered by the pressure from the Bejas in the North – led to the development of a distinct culture and state. Axum, the centre of power, loses its urban character but it remained the place of coronation for the Ethiopian Empire until recent times. Minting coins and erecting inscriptions now ceases. A cultural hiatus as in South Arabia, where only certain memories of the old South Arabia remain, does not occur in Ethiopia. In Geʿez (Old Ethiopic), from which later the modern Ethio-Semitic languages were to develop, some elements of the Greek influence survive, like

- writing left to right – in contrast to the right to left direction of South Arabian.
- Many cultural loans like Αἰθιοπία > ኢትዮጵያ: *ʾĪtyōpyā* ‘Ethiopia’, τράπεζα > ጠረጴዛ: *ṭäräpēzā* ‘table’, θερμός > ጠርመስ: *ṭärmūs/z* ‘glass bottle’ etc.
- many personal names, as Πέτρος > ጴጥሮስ: *Pētrōs* ‘Peter’, Ἰωάννης > ዮሐንስ: *Jōhannəs* ‘John’,
- Greek numerals, e.g. ΑΒΓΔ (the first to fourth character of the alphabet) > ፩ ፪ ፫ ፬ ‘1, 2, 3, 4’.

Thus two and a half thousand years of shared history of the South-Arabian – Abyssinian region from the end of the 2nd millennium BC until the 7th century AD seemed to have come to an end. Yet one uniting element remains: the modern South Arabian languages show a special relationship with the Ethio-Semitic languages. This can be explained that as in South Arabia so in Abyssinia there had been two different population groups, the representatives of the Epigraphic South Arabian civilization as well as the speakers of a different Semitic language. In South Arabia as in Abyssinia only the descendants of the latter have survived, in Abyssinia the Ethio-Semites and in South Arabia the modern South Arabian languages.

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## Between Rome and Arabia: the Aramaic Interface

JOHN F. HEALEY

Much of the discussion on the interface between East and West in antiquity is framed on the basis of direct contacts. Undoubtedly there frequently were direct contacts. One can cite as examples of direct contact the export of the alphabet to the Aegean world by Phoenician traders, probably in the ninth century BCE, the fact that the Achaemenid Persian Empire reached to the very borders of Greece in the fifth century BCE, and the deep Roman involvement in the formation of Roman provinces in the Middle East, especially in Syria, Palestine and Arabia in the early centuries of the Common Era.

But *indirect* contact also played a significant role and the purpose of this paper is to discuss the central role played by the Aramaeans, the Aramaic-speaking peoples, in the contacts between the Roman Empire and Arabia proper in the first century CE and after.

The Aramaeans, or speakers of Aramaic, had inhabited most of the Fertile Crescent from about 1200 BCE, though their political impact was limited. Already in about 1100 BCE they are regarded by the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser I as a nuisance factor. They disturbed the trade-routes and restricted the Assyrian westward expansion. They came to inhabit small city-states, centred on cities like Damascus and Hama and Aleppo. They never achieved the level of political power which would allow them to create a serious threat to Assyrian power, though they did join in short-lived alliances with each other and with other states in the area in the attempt to resist Assyrian hegemony. Such was the alliance designed to confront Shalmaneser III in the mid ninth century, an alliance which included the Israelite kingdom based in Samaria. In this they failed: the Aramaean kingdoms (along with Israel) were subdued. Culturally, however, the Aramaeans were more successful.

The Assyrians (and later the Babylonians and Achaemenid Persians) had to administer the western part of their empires and they did so through the Aramaeans' language, Aramaic. The Assyrian reliefs from the time of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sennacherib in the eighth and seventh centuries (Nimrud and Nineveh) show Aramaic scribes alongside cuneiform scribes taking inventories of captured goods, while the Bible tells us that the Assyrians used Aramaic in their dealings with besieged Jerusalem c. 700 BCE (2 Kings 18).

Indeed, Assyria and, even more, southern Mesopotamia around Babylon underwent a process of Aramaization. The defeated Aramaeans began to take over through the importance of their language, and eventually Aramaean élites also took charge in Babylon itself (sixth century). The term "Chaldaean" is used to describe this dynasty.

The inheritance left to future generations from this era was what could be termed the "Aramaean Crescent", by which I mean the "Fertile Crescent" largely inhabited in the period 500 B.C. to A.D. 500 by Aramaic speakers. Over a number of centuries Aramaic pushed out the use of Babylonian and its complex cuneiform script, which became extinct around the turn of the Christian Era. (There is even a

Arabia, Greece and Byzantium: Cultural Contacts in Ancient and Medieval Times, ed. Abdulaziz Al-Helabi, Dimitrios Letsios, Moshalleh Al-Moraekhi, Abdullah Al-Abduljabbar, Riyadh 2012 / AH 1433, Part II, pp. 37-41.

notable example of Aramaic being written in the cuneiform script, in the inscription from Uruk of the fourth century BCE.)

The Aramaeans of this Aramaean Crescent lived peacefully under the Achaemenid Persians, whose local governors conducted their business in Aramaic (note extensive surviving material from Egypt, Palestine and elsewhere in the Empire). But when the Persians succumbed to the armies of Alexander the Great and his successors (the Seleucids eventually in Syria and Mesopotamia), a diglossic situation developed. Greek came to be used as an élite language and the language of the Seleucid court and its arms, while Aramaic continued as the main language of the people themselves. And in fact already by this time there was great variety in the Aramaic which had extended in usage from southern Egypt to northern India.

New cities were built by the Seleucids, with a veneer of hellenization. But most of the inhabitants of cities like Edessa (Sanliurfa in Turkey), Palmyra (Tadmur in Syria) and Hatra (al-Hadr in Iraq) were cultural and linguistic heirs to a long-standing Aramaean/Aramaic heritage. Other groups appear to have adopted Aramaic and Aramaean cultural traditions, even if they had roots in northern Arabia: the Nabataeans provide the clearest example, with their adoption of Syrian deities like Baalshamin and their exclusive use of Aramaic for writing, despite the fact that they were of north-west Arabian origin (whence came their attachment to deities like Dushara and al-‘Uzza, as well as Arabian-type personal names). The spread of Aramaic even reached the Arabian Gulf, as surviving inscriptions from the southern Gulf demonstrate. Again it appears that Aramaic was seen as the language of sophisticated culture, the language of Mesopotamia and Syria, the language to be adopted for public display.

This process constituted a further cycle of Aramaization: by the last centuries BCE Aramaic, in its various dialects, was totally dominant in the Fertile Crescent.

As we move into the period of the eastern expansion of the Roman Empire (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE), we can see the Roman encounter with these Aramaic speakers: from Nabataea to Palmyra to Edessa and Hatra. The encounter is fascinating and it is interesting to compare the process with similar processes elsewhere in the Roman Empire and, indeed, in the formation of other world empires, like the British Empire, especially in India.

The Romans dominated the Middle East as far as the Euphrates (and occasionally went beyond it into upper Mesopotamia and even to Seleukia-Ctesiphon, the Parthian stronghold in lower Mesopotamia during the reign of the Emperor Trajan in the early second century CE). But a number of local Aramaic-speaking dynasties emerged, such as the dynasty of Edessa, which made alliance with the Romans, and became buffer states, i.e. intermediaries between the Romans and the world beyond the Romans' control. Trade flourished in this period and these fringe states, tied to the Romans in various ways, facilitated that trade. This is the age of the "caravan city", to use the term coined by ROSTOVITZ in the 1930s. Petra, Palmyra and Edessa were long-term friends of the Romans, flourishing on the international trade for which the Romans had an insatiable appetite.

Local élites were co-opted, through trade benefits into “buying in” to the *pax Romana*. Even in Seleucid times these élites had seen the advantages of western-style education: if you wanted your son to do well in the public life of Antioch, you would have to send him to a Greek-speaking school and get him to behave in a western way. In the Roman period this trend was reinforced. But the underlying cultural values of the populations are still discernible.

In Petra (to which I will return below) the temple buildings imitate Pompeian style following the example of Alexandria; but the inscriptions are all in Aramaic and the culture clearly Semitic, not Roman. In Palmyra the main temple is a wonderful example of western-influenced architecture; but most of the religious inscriptions are in Aramaic and the god worshipped in the temple, Bel, is a local version of the Babylonian god Marduk — that his mythology was still current is clear from the relief on the façade of the temple. Little remains of the Edessa of this period; but the inscriptions, all in Aramaic, make it clear that the Mesopotamian gods Nabu (of Borsippa) and Bel-Marduk (of Babylon) and Sin (of Ur, later of Harran and Tayma’) were still worshipped despite hellenization. Hatra has several Hellenistic-style temples; but the gods worshipped are Semitic (Shamash, Nergal and others) and the inscriptions are in Aramaic.

It may be useful to add a separate word about Jerusalem. The Temple of Herod had strong hellenistic features; but the religion of that temple was purely Jewish. The Judaeen population at large had been heavily Aramaized by this time. The use of the old Hebrew script had been abandoned in favour of the Aramaic script, even for copying the Hebrew Bible (the Torah and associated books); the people mostly spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew (as we know from the New Testament: Jesus clearly spoke Aramaic). The Bible began to be translated into Aramaic.

Returning to Petra, there, and to some degree also in Palmyra, we can see the traces of the next chapter of the story, since one of the processes in operation in the centuries before and after the birth of Christ is the assimilation of the Arabs into the Aramaean Crescent.

It has long been held that the élite of the Nabataean Kingdom were in fact people from Arabia: they had personal names and gods which have their best parallels in Arabia, probably the Hijaz. When these people established their kingdom at Petra (certainly by 312 BCE), they began to assimilate to the Aramaic-based culture already established there earlier — “earlier” Aramaization in this region is well represented by the lengthy Aramaic inscription from Deir ‘Alla in Jordan dated around 800 BCE. In the Greek and Roman period this process involved the Arabs too, who wrote their inscriptions in Aramaic and incorporated distinctively Aramaean gods like Baalshamin into their pantheon and adopted traditional Aramaic legal formularies. The same process is visible at Palmyra, though there the Arabs were probably a minority until after 270 CE.

It thus becomes clear that the Arabian contact with the Greek and Roman world was very largely (not exclusively) mediated by the Aramaean Crescent. And this did not cease in the Byzantine Era, when Christianity came to dominate the Aramaean Crescent. The first inscription of any length which can be described without dispute as being in Arabic, in the Namarah inscription of the king Imrulqais

("King of the Arabs") dated 328 CE: and it is written in the Nabataean Aramaic script.

Edessa became the cultural focus of the Christianity of the Middle East. It always claimed to be the first Christian kingdom, i.e. the first pagan state to be converted lock, stock and barrel to Christianity. According to church legends this occurred already in the first century CE, though a stronger case can be made on historical evidence for the second century CE, and even then the conversion was not one hundred percent.

When Arab tribes came into contact with Christianity — I am referring especially to the Ghassanids/Jafnids in Syria and the Lakhmids in southern Iraq — it was mainly with Syriac Christianity that they came into contact. (The settled populations of places like Petra and Bosra were in direct contact with Greek Christianity.) When, under the Emperor Justinian (527-65), a bishop were appointed to care for the Arab tribes (specifically the Ghassanid Christian Arabs), the bishop appointed, Theodore, came from the Syrian Orthodox tradition associated with Edessa (and still strong in south-east Turkey). The Syrian Orthodox were Syriac-speakers. The only version of the Bible in any Semitic language available to these Arab Christians was in Syriac.

This brings me to the end of the main part of this paper, the part which has had the specific aim of demonstrating the major role the Aramaeans and Aramaic had in the history of civilization in the Middle East and of demonstrating how the spread of this Aramaean/Aramaic culture throughout the Fertile Crescent led to its becoming the conduit of contact between the West and the Arabian world. There is, however, an important historical footnote.

The mediating role of the Aramaic speakers in the Fertile Crescent did not come to an end with the arrival of Islam and the Arabs. It is especially noteworthy in their activity as translators of Greek authors into Syriac and later from Syriac into Arabic. Already in the fourth and fifth centuries many theological works were translated into Syriac, but soon there was an extension of this activity to the translation of medical works (such as those of Galen, translated by Sergius of Resh'ayna [d. 536]) and philosophical texts (such as the works of Aristotle). This translation movement (as it is often called) came to its high point in the Abbasid period and is particularly associated with Hunayn ibn Ishaq (809-73) and his family and Thabit ibn Qurra (c. 836-901). Both (the first a Christian, the second a Harranian Sabian) were speakers of Syriac and they translated many Greek scientific and philosophical works into Arabic (via Syriac): Hippocrates, Rufus of Ephesus, Oribasius, Dioscurides, Paul of Aegina, Euclid, Archimedes, Nicomachus, etc. All this in response to the Abbasid caliphs' thirst for Greek learning. In a sense this is the final flourishing of the Aramaean Crescent's contribution to world civilization.



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# The Assimilation of Dushara - ʔwšara in Greco-Roman Period

ZEYAD MUSTAFA AL-SHORMAN

In antiquity, a tribe could not exist without its tribal god or goddess, who gathered the tribe for her or his feasts, led the tribe into war and guaranteed its existence and coherence. The tribal god of the Nabataean was Dushara “the one of eš-šara”. Although there are several places called eš-šara on the Arabian Peninsula and although it has been suggested that “šara” in this name is not a geographical designation at all, Dushara, therefore, is the indigenous god of the area, which became the heart of the Nabataean empire and the location of their later capital.

Dushara is the most Nabataean of the pantheon: the national deity, the patron of the tribe, of the ruling family, and of the state. His very name “The one of ash-Shara” defines the core of the Nabataean realm as his home: the mountains of Petra his sacred precinct, where the tribe gathered and worshiped long before any Nabataean ruler thought of building a Hellenistic city in its heart, given political nature of Dushara.

MOUTSOPOULOS believes that Δουσάρης, according to the Greek authors, was the supreme god of the Nabataeans, and they adopted him from the Edomites. To them, the name of the main god comes from two words: Dhu means “Lord”, and Shara means frequent appellation of mountains. In this case, this name refers to the chain of Petra, Djebel esh-Sharat. Their god then corresponded to Zeus of the Greek Olympian pantheon.<sup>1</sup> Shara is also the same word as Seir by which the district was known in the Old Testament. Incidentally, it is to be noted that Yahweh the god of the Hebrews was like Dushara, said to be “He of Seir”.

Dushara was symbolized by a block of stone frequently squared in some way. The symbol of Dushara in Petra was within a magnificent temple, a black square stone four feet high and two feet wide, on which the blood of the victims was poured, but later on he was also represented as a human figure. In order to understand the religion of nearly the people of the ancient near east and the Middle East it is necessary to appreciate the crucial position that (Rock) or (stone) held in their theology. Unlike the Egyptians and the Mesopotamians, the early Israelites, and presumably the people of the “other side of Jordan” as well, were too inartistic to make their idols as representations of the human figure and form. The rock concept was known in Mecca at the time of the prophet Mohammed, when the pre-Moslem Arabs had an extensive pantheon consisting of 360 different tribal and local idols.

At Petra, Dushara has a temple which the pilgrims visit; it was the parallel of Ka'bah for the pre-Islamic Arabs. And the Nabataeans worshiped their idol Dushara who was represented by a rectangular black stone: Τὸ δὲ ἄγαλμα λίθος ἐστὶ μέλας, τετράγωνος, ἀτύπωτος. Then he became the god of the wine, and it

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<sup>1</sup>. N. C. MOUTSOPOULOS, Observations sur les représentations du panthéon nabatéen, *Balkan Studies* 33(1992), 6.

must have been imported to the Nabataeans during the Hellenistic period, and he acquired the same attributes of the wine gods, Dionysus and Bacchus.<sup>2</sup> Also at Khirbit-Tannur, the chef god of the Nabataeans has a temple, and this is šamaš himself.

After the reorganization of the Nabataean kingdom in conjunction with several adjacent cities of Decapolis as the Roman Province of Arabia, the cult of Dushara continued to prosper. And the coins of the major cities of the province in the imperial age bear eloquent witness to the strength of the appearance of Dushara that appeared on a coin from Bostra dating about 177 A.D.

The Greek and Latin authors called the god Dushara "Δουσάρης, Dusares" and he was identified among the Greeks and the Romans with Bacchus. This identification confirmed the solar character of these mountain-gods. Suidas has regarded him as identical comparable with the god Mars, Θευσάρης τουτέστι θεός Ἄρης, but this etymological equation that included Suda-Lexicon in the 10th century is without any value.<sup>3</sup>

The exact nature of the deity is a mountain or solar god; some scholars identified him as the god of sun, and others knew him as the star of morning. The second identification depends on a funerary inscription from Madain Šalih, dated to the 1st century, which invoked the curse of a god "who separate the night from the day". Generally, Dushara, in the Roman period, assimilated with Sol Invictus, but if we examine the documents of the Roman period, we can observe that no text identified Dushara with Helios bluntly, and the epithet ἀνίκητος that was given to Dushara in an inscription from Souweida in the Ḥauran is frequently applied by Nonnos to Dionysus and to other divinities, and can't prove to the solar nature of the god whom it qualified.<sup>4</sup>

When the Nabataeans had taken root as a sedentary people, their tribal god was identified with the Semitic god "Ba'al", Thus an eventual identification of Dushara, either totally or in some related sense, appears to have been made with Hadad, Ba'alshamin, and other Semitic deities. In a funerary inscription from Madain Šalih dated to the third century, there was a mention of a god called mr'Im' "lord of the world", a title that frequently applied to Ba'alshamin, but in a late period several gods were given the title *κοσμοκράτωρ*.

In Hellenistic-Syrian interpretation, he was Zeus-Hadad, as a sun god and Dionysus. The evidence that proves the identification of Dushara with Dionysus is mentioned by Herodotus: Δουσάρης τὸν Διόνυσον Ναβαταῖοι.<sup>5</sup> The ancient relative Syrian rites of wine are attached to Dionysus, and the great god of vegetation with the Syro-Palastinian Arabs assimilated early to Dionysus. This agricultural cult knows a big success in the rich Ḥauran of viniculture. So this is Dionysus, as he is

<sup>2</sup> Y. QOZI, Remarques sur une inscription nabatéenne de Mada'in Šalih/ Al-Ḥigr, *Aram* 2(1990), 1&2 First International Conference the Nabataean, University of Oxford, 26-29 Septembre 1989, 119.

<sup>3</sup> CH. VOGÜEE, *Syria centrale. inscriptions sémitiques*, Paris 1868-77, 121.

<sup>4</sup> D. SOURDEL, *Les cultes du Ḥauran à l'époque romaine*, Paris 1952, 65.

<sup>5</sup> D. SOURDEL, op. cit., 63.

known in the inscription finished by the words: προνοία κυρίου κτίστου Διονύσου. These interpretations reflect his various functions: as head of the Nabataean state, he was a sun god and Zeus, as guarantor of fertility caused by rain, he was Hadad, as patron of royal drinking societies, he was Dionysus and wine was his favorite offering, this equation of Dushara with Dionysus is appeared in Pseudo-Homeric hymn, and Nyssa the mythical birth-place of Dionysus is thus placed in Arabia.<sup>6</sup>

The iconography of Dushara yields little information about the Nabataean god, who protected his people on their journeys and took care of the vegetation when they chose to lead a settled life. He was considered a god like the protector of the cities, and at the same time an agricultural god, more particularly a god of the wine, he represents the live forces of the vegetation at the moment of the maturity of the fruits, he is the god of crops, and we know from the texts of Ras Shamra, in the states of Edom, the wine played for a long time a ritual role. He is from the first side, identified with Dionysus, and from the other, he is the protector of the villages of the Auranitide and the Batane.

The Hellenistic Nabataeans of Petra, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, may not have succeeded to find an image for Dushara who corresponded to all the attributions of the god who is in the same time Zeus, Dionysus, Helios and Ares. They preferred to conserve his *betylic* form without success to give him the accepted attributes for all the people.<sup>7</sup>

The central position of Dushara in the Nabataean pantheon leads easily to the identification with Zeus, which is corroborated by Nabataean inscriptions. Greek inscriptions call him simply θεός ἅγιος Αραβικός.

Dushara appeared in many Nabataean, Greek and bilingual inscriptions, and some of these inscriptions have Greek influence as we will see below. The following bilingual inscription mentioned Dushara.<sup>8</sup>

Bilingual inscription (Nabataean and Greek), discovered at Saida, on a bloc of marble, dedication, today in the museum of A. Parent.

d<sup>o</sup> rb<sup>o</sup>t dy .....  
 'srtg<sup>o</sup> br zwf<sup>o</sup>l.....  
 ldwšr<sup>o</sup> 'lh<sup>o</sup> byrh ..... šnt]  
 5 lhrtt [mlk nbṭw.....

[Θεῶ Δουσάρη ὁ δεῖνα Ζ}ώλου στρατηγός [ἀνέστη]σεν.

“This is the shrine which the leader son of ... for Dushara the god. in the month ... in the year 5 of the lhrtt, the king of the Nabataeans”.

The Nabataean word 'srtg<sup>o</sup> = στρατηγός in Greek.

The Nabataean inscriptions that mentioned Dushara was various and numerous.<sup>9</sup> In two inscriptions, the first was published by R. SAVIGNAC and J.

<sup>6</sup> E. A. KNAUF, Dushara and Shai'al-gaum, *Aram* 2: 1 & 2 First international Conference of the Nabataean, University of Oxford, 26-29 September, 1989, 175-76.

<sup>7</sup> T. TAM TINH, Remarques sur l'iconographie de Dusares, *Petra and the Caravan Cities*, Amman 1990, 107-111.

<sup>8</sup> *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* (CIS), Pars II, vol. 2, 160.

STARCKY<sup>10</sup> and the other was published by Negev<sup>11</sup> the formula *ldwšra 'lh gy'* (for the god Dushara, the god of *gy'*), Dushara was characterized as a chef of a region or a particular place, before he became the protector of the royal house. This was a constant habitude of Semitic people who called their divinities by epithets or by proper names, and in this case Dushara was identified with Zeus as a dynastic god, like Zeus Olympios of the Seleucids. Dushara was venerated as a local deity at Gaya with the epithet "god of Gaya"; a locality in the vicinity of Petra (the first Nabataean capital, and nowadays Wadi Musa). The name *gy'* has hitherto been found in composite only as: - 'bd'lg', 'bdlg', 'mt'lg'. A man named Ἀβδάλγος is also mentioned in unpublished Greek inscriptions from 'Avdat of the third century A. D.<sup>12</sup>

In a dedication inscription, found in Tell esh-Shuqifia, with reference to the year 63/62 B.C., we have the formula: *ldwšra' 'lh' dy bdfn' mšryt* (to the god who is in *dfn'* in Egypt). *Dfn'* is the ancient city Daphanae (Δάφνη) in the eastern Delta, identified with modern tell ed-Defenna.

The appearance of the cult of Dushara in Egypt indicate probably that there was a syncretistic identification of Dushara with Dionysus. Osiris, in later periods, became associated with many gods and especially with Dionysus. Thus a syncretistic comparison of Dushara of the Nabataeans and Osiris of the Egyptians can be proposed. Other factors can be suggested on the basis of the primacy of those gods in their respective nations. In addition, the laurel or bay tree, Daphanae, was sacred to Osiris, Dionysus and Apollo.

The identification of Osiris with Dushara is not totally certain, but there is a certain degree of assimilation of some Osirian (Dionysus, Apollo) attributes by Dushara, understandably expected in the case of Nabataean colonists in Egypt. Other factors include the role of Dushara as patron of Caravaneers. The nature of Dushara, his attributes and the original characters of Dushara, as found in his homeland Nabataea and Petra, would be somewhat more conservative than in highly syncretistic Hellenized areas like Egypt, where the fusion and absorption of attributes of other deities by Dushara would be easier. In Nabataea proper, especially in the Ḥauran, such syncretistic absorption would tend to occur later in the Roman period.

However, it is possible that the chief god of the Nabataeans was assimilated with same major deity of the Delta, Osiris or Sarapis, but it is not

<sup>9</sup>. See *CIS* II nos. 157, 197, 198, 199, 206, 208, 209, 211, 217, 218, 224, 338, 350, 401, 442, 443, 912, *RES* nos. 83, 90, 676, 1124, 1130, 1171, 1195, 1401, 1427, 1432, 2025, ARNA no.54, JONES ET AL. 1988, 47, JS. 201, LITTMANN no. 2, MILIK1958, 231; no.2, MILIK and STARCKY 1975, 127, NEGEV 1963, 113, SAVIGNAC and STARCKY 1957,196, STARCKY 1985, 181.

<sup>10</sup>. R. SAVIGNAC et J. STARCKY, Une inscription nabatéenne provenant du Djaf, *Revue Biblique* 64 (1957), 196.

<sup>11</sup>. A. NEGEV, Nabatean Inscriptions from 'Avdat (Oboda), *Israel Exploration Journal* 13 (1963), 113-115.

<sup>12</sup>. A. NEGEV, op. cit., 115.

prudent to assume that the cult of the god was more conservative in his homeland, since we know that he was identified at Petra with Dionysus, Ares and Zeus.<sup>13</sup>

As Dushara was characterized as a chef of a region or a particular place, he was also the lord of the royal house, and the ancestral god of the Nabataean dynasty, as the inscriptions mentioned him during the periods of Aretas IV, which called him “god of our Lord”.<sup>14</sup> Also he was mentioned under the name “god of our lord Rabel”, in a dedicatory inscription, published by MILIK,<sup>15</sup> found nowadays in the museum of Sweidia: *ldwšr’ ʾlh rbʾl h mlk nbṭw*, “for Dushara the god of rbʾl ... king of the Nabataean”. We have the same dedication: “to *dwšra Aʾrʾ*, god of rbʾl our lord, in Boštra”,<sup>16</sup> in the inscription dated in the year 70/71 A.C. The topical specification “who is in Boštra” appears in two other inscriptions dedicated to the same divinity, one of them was found at Boštra,<sup>17</sup> the other at Umm-Eljemal with the Greek transcription: *Δουσάρη Appa*.<sup>18</sup>

Aʾra (*Appa*) is another name of Dushara, the name Aʾra is explained as equivalent to *abundantia* or *Ops*, and it is the specific name of the god, since Dushara is merely a local epithet, signifying “Lord of šara”, and Aʾra = Oʾro with the first element in the name of the ancient Arabian god *Opotaλ* mentioned by Herodotus. Most recently, it is suggested that the name is to be connected with *يفر* the rough stone idol of a god, which was smeared, with the blood of victims.

The Aramaic form ʾrʾ is compared with the Hebrew (ʿšr) according to Gen. XXXVI, 21, one of the sons of Seir, who personified the mountain region situated between the Dead sea and the Red sea. This mountain region was divided in two principal parties: the Shera in the south for which correspond the god Dushara, and Gheba in the north where ʿšr could be the protector divinity.

ʾr in the Aramaic may be ʾr which probably corresponds with the Arabic *عوض* which designs the prosperity, and it is good to translate ʾrʾ therefore in Latin “*Abundantia, Ops*”. There is also the Arab root *عاض* “to aid, to assist”, and the Aramaic equivalent will be ʿd, which relates very strong to the divinity.<sup>19</sup>

Dushara carries the epithet (*appa*) in Greek, and (ʾrʾ) in Nabataean, and that's clear in the following inscription<sup>20</sup>:

bilingual inscription (Nabataean and Greek), Umm Idj-djimal, on an altar, dated to the first century or in the early second century A.D. 1.40×30 cm.

msgdʾ	MACE	μασε
dy ʿbd	XOCA	χος Α

<sup>13</sup>. F. ZAYADINE, The Pantheon of the Nabataean Inscriptions in Egypt and Sinai, *Aram* 2 (1990), 1&2 First International Conference the Nabataean, University of Oxford, 26-29 September 1989, 157.

<sup>14</sup>. *CIS* II 208, 209, 211, 350.

<sup>15</sup>. J. T. MILIK, Nouvelles inscriptions nabatéennes, *Syria* 35 (1958), 231, no.2.

<sup>16</sup>. *Répertoire d'Épigraphie Sémitique* (RES) 83.

<sup>17</sup>. *RES* 676.

<sup>18</sup>. *RES* 1096.

<sup>19</sup>. R. SAVIGNAC, Chroniques inscriptions grecques et latines, *Revue Biblique* 2 (1905), 594.

<sup>20</sup>. *CIS* II 190, *RES* 1096, *CIS* II 218, *RES* 1152.

mšk w	OYEIA	ουειδ
br 'wy	ANOY	ανου
d' ldw	ΔOYC	Δουσ
šra	APEIA	απει A
A'r'	APPA	αppα

“This is the cult-stone which was made mšk w son of 'wyd' for dwšra A'r'”.

This inscription offers a proof that 'r' is another name of Dushara in addition to the Nabataean dedication to dwšra A'r'.

The chief interest of this inscription lies in the rendering of 'r' by Appa. This was probably the true name of Dushara whereas dwšra *نور الشرى* was probably only his cognomen. LITTMANN<sup>21</sup> accepts the theory that Appa is an exact transliteration of Arabic *agharru* which is derived from the fact that Dushara was the god of light. It would be an excellent identification because at Petra Dushara was considered the god of the sun. But Dushara, undoubtedly, was more commonly identified with Bacchus-Dionysus than with Helios and especially in the Ḥauran region traces of worship of Dionysus are very frequent.

The inscription<sup>22</sup> that described the god of Rabel as “who is at Boštra” is a text in honor of the local deity of Boštra 'r' who had assimilated with the Nabataean god Dushara, and hence became dwšra-A'r'.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, Rabel is described as “our lord who is at Boštra” on an inscription from A.D 39. The formula “who is in Boštra” indicates that the god follows the king, and it is a simple evidence that Rabel II has made Boštra his capital or at least his place of residence. The transference of the capital to Boštra had been long coming and was a reflection of ever increasing sedentarization of the Nabataean in the north as the commercial role of Petra was diminished.

The name of the god Dushara is widespread in Greek epigraphy, and dedications to him are frequently found.

Greek inscription,<sup>24</sup> discovered in Susita Saddle in the year 1974, on a basalt fragment, the length of the fragment is 1m and 38cm height.

#### ΔOYCAPEI

The word θεῶν was supposed to be incised on the other half of the stone. The cult of Dushara, the chief Nabataean god, was later brought to the city of Boštra and to other cities in center of the vine cultural region in the Ḥauran. In the Roman period, his cult was widespread in the Ḥauran.

<sup>21</sup>. E. LITTMANN, Semitic inscriptions, Division 4, Section A, Nabataean Inscriptions from the Southern Hauran, publication of the Princeton University Archaeology Expedition to Syria in 1904-1904 and 1909, Leyden, E. J. Brill, 35.

<sup>22</sup>. R. DUSSAUD et F. MACLER, *Voyage Archéologique au Šafa et dans le Djebel ed-druz*, Paris, 1901, 167-170.

<sup>23</sup>. For the epithet "'r'" see also: RES 83 & 676.

<sup>24</sup>. A. OVADIAH, Was the Cult of God Dushara-Dusares practiced in Hippos-Susuta?, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 113 (1981), 102.



Dushara was identified with Dionysus and generally depicted by vine-trellis. Although he is identified with Zeus Hadad, he was considered the founder of the city Dionysus, present-day Suweida in the Ḥauran.

Among the Nabataean merchants, Dushara retained his character as the god of the caravans. In Pozzuoli in Italy, two golden camels were dedicated to him.<sup>25</sup> His consort was Allat who is connected and identified with Atargatis.

In the above inscription, which sheds new light on the existence of a Semitic-Nabataean cult in the city Susita during the Roman period, Dushara's cult penetrated Susita; it should be attributed to the general cultural influence over the region especially after the spread of Nabataean culture in Ḥauran. Certainly this process was furthered by trade relations between this city and those of Ḥauran (Adraa, Boṣtra, Suweida and others) where the cult of Dushara existed. In Susita, some sort of identification is also established between Dushara and Allat from the first side, and Zeus and Hera from the other side that are depicted on the coins of the city, thus creating a limited syncretism between Semitic-Nabataean gods and western-Greek gods. Among the cities of Decapolis, the cult of Dushara was apparently common in Gerasa and two inscriptions were found in this city: *θεὸς Ἀραβικὸς* which identified with Dushara-Dionysus.

In the following text, each line contains a signal word, and the first three lines of this inscription<sup>26</sup> are gods' names. The name APAC (Απες) does not have orthographical difficulty. The name Θεάνδρος appears consistently as *Θεάνδριος*.

APAC  
ΘΕΑΝΔΡΟΣ  
ΔΟΥΚΑΦΗ  
ΝΟΥΑΕΜΙΘ  
ΗΠΑΚΘΗ  
ΠΑΒΟΝ

If we correct the third name to *Δουσάρη[ς]*, the Greek form of the Nabataean Dushara, the names appear on the gem in the nominatives. The god Theandrios points specifically to the region of the Ḥauran, and Dushra, the chief god of the Nabataeans.

The third god is the Arabian Ares, who was regularly assimilated in Syria and Transjordan to the camel-riding war god Arṣu, and he appears as camel-rider on the coinage of Boṣtra, and as a warrior he dominates the coinage of Areopolis (Rabbathmoab), whose Greek name reflects the assimilation of Ares/Arṣu with the eponymous god of Ar.

At Boṣtra the capital of *provincia Arabia* and the most important city of Ḥauran during the time of the province, the Nabataean Dushara was the recipient of a major cult that had its origin under the Nabataean kings. Under the Hellenistic Roman rule, a handsome Semitic face was created for Dushara, at least from the age of Commodus onward. We may conclude from this inscription that at least in the

<sup>25</sup> CIS II 157.

<sup>26</sup> W. BOWERSOCK, An Arabian Trinity, *Harvard Theological Review* 79 (1986), 20.

Roman Hauran the Arabs worshipped the traditional Nabataean deity Dushara as part of a trinity.

Greek inscription,<sup>27</sup> discovered at Wadi-Musa in the opposite of Qasr el-Bint, on an altar of “ordinary Roman type”.

ΔΗΑΓΙΩ

ΩΤΙΚΩ

ΔΕΥΣΑΡΙ

Δὲ ἀγίω...Δ(ο)υσάρι[ος ἀνέθηκεν]

The epithet ἄγιος was found always side by side with the name Zeus in the Orient.

Zeus designs, in the Orient, the head of a local pantheon: he designs Hadad in Damascus, Baal-Saphon (Zeus Casios) or Baal-Carmel (Zeus Carmel) in Palestine. In Nabataean Zeus designs Dushara who is assimilated with Dionysus by the mythologists.

PARR says that Zeus Hagios (Δὲ ἀγίω) is known elsewhere in the Semitic world, for example at Tripoli in Phoenicia during the imperial period.<sup>28</sup>

Bilingual inscription,<sup>29</sup> found at Miletus near the temple of Apollon Delphinios, on a fragment found in the excavation of the German mission, dedication of šullai the minister of the king Obada III.

[Συλλ]αῖος, ἀδελφὸς βασιλ[έως] Ὀβόδα, υἱὸς Θαΐμου, ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας αὐτοῦ ἀνέθηκε Δὲ Δου[σάρι, μηνὶ Αὐθυναίω ἔτους ιο.

The Nabataean inscription does not have the gods' name.

The role of Dushara as a supreme deity in the Nabataean pantheon receives its official acknowledgement in the inscriptions accompanying the offerings made by Syllaios, the prime minister of Obodas II, in the sanctuaries of Miletus and Delos. Syllaios (whose real title was “the brother of the king”) visited these sanctuaries on his way to Rome, where eventually he was put to death by Augustus.<sup>30</sup>

Greek inscription,<sup>31</sup> from <Azin, on a lintel.

Ἐποίησαν τῷ θεῷ Δουσάρι ο[ἱ] ἐκ κοιν[οῦ] αὐτῶν ἱπεύσαντες ἔτους δεκάτου Ἀντωνίνου καίσαρος Αὐθο[ς] Μ[α]σάχο[υ] Αὐθος Ἀνέμου Αὐθος Θαΐμου Ἄνναμος Κάδου [οἱ]κοδόμο(ς).

Every four years, the Nabataeans of Petra and Bostra celebrated the *Actia Dusaria* in an annual festival assembled the Bedouins of the Negev in honor of Venus-al-‘Uzza, the goddess of Elusa.<sup>32</sup> The Roman administration commemorated

<sup>27</sup>. M. SARTRE, *ibid.*, 54, no.21.

<sup>28</sup>. P. J. PARR, Recent Discoveries at Petra, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 89 (1957), 13-14.

<sup>29</sup>. RES 675.

<sup>30</sup>. J. TELXIDOR, *The Pagan God*, Popular Religion in Greco Roman Near East, Princeton 1977, 83.

<sup>31</sup>. R. DUSSAUD et F. MACLER, *Mission dans les régions désertiques de la Syrie moyenne*, 28 (1903), 277, no.109.

<sup>32</sup>. F. ZAYADINE and Z. FIEMA, Roman Inscriptions from the Siq of Petra, *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 30 (1986), 203.

the chief local god and honored him in the union of anionic and anthropomorphic representation of the Hellenistic Syrian and Greek in Bostra to celebrate the *Actia Dusaria*. Dushara the god of the Arab Nabataeans profited from the celebrity had played thus Jupiter-Ammon. The solar character of the two divinities facilitates the identification. The cult of Dushara-Ammon is closely limited to the region inhabited by the Nabataeans and the same about Bostra, and this confirms the identification which was represented by the Roman administration.<sup>33</sup>

Greek inscription<sup>34</sup>, discovered in the Souleim region, on a lintel over a window.

Θεῶ Δουσάρ[ε]ι Τάνιος  
Σεουηριάνος ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων.

Among male deities, the god Dushara in the Nabataean pantheon was addressed in Greek texts and depicted as Zeus. The inscriptions of Zeus in the Nabataean pantheon are<sup>35</sup>:

Greek inscription, discovered at the Siq of Petra, on a grand altar, found in the year 1980, dedication, conserved now in the museum, dated to 2nd century, 34×67×33 cm.

Θεῶ Ἀγίῳ  
Ἐπηκόῳ  
Οὐκτωρίνος

β(ενε)φ(ικιάριος) εὐξάμενος ἀνέθηκεν

“To the saint god, who hears prayers, Victorinus, beneficiaries, as an exvoto dedicated”.

The epithet saint, which is of oriental origin, is attached to Zeus in the Phoenician cities. At Petra, an altar with the Greek inscription: “To saint Zeus” was discovered on the hill north of Qasr el-Bint temple.

The epithet Ἐπηκόωι in the 2<sup>nd</sup> line which means, “who listens, who hears prayers” is another epithet applied to Zeus. It is likely that the dedication in this inscription is made to Zeus-Dushara.

Bilingual inscription,<sup>36</sup> found at Petra, on a cartouche, 41×12.5cm.

.....K[-] ΠΗΚΩΔΟΥ  
.....] ΣΟΛΦΙΟΣ  
.....] ΩΝ[-]ΚΤΩΝ  
.....] ΤΩ  
2 lines in Nabataean

The Greek part reconstructed as follow:

[θεῶ ἁγίῳ ἐ]πηκ(ό)φ Δου-  
[σάρη.....] Ὀλφιος  
[.....ἐ]κ τῶν

<sup>33</sup>. R. DUSSAUD, Le culte de Dusarés d'après les monnaies d'Adraa et de Bostra, *Revue Numismatique* IV, série 8 (1904) 172-73.

<sup>34</sup>. M. DUNAND, Nouvelles Inscriptions du Djebel Druz et du Hauran, *Revue Biblique* XLI (1932), 565, no. 80.

<sup>35</sup>. F. ZAYADINE and Z. FIEMA, op. cit., 203.

<sup>36</sup>. M. SARTRE, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, Tome XXI, inscriptions de la Jordanie. Tome VI- Pétra et la Nabatéenne Méridionale. Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, Paris 1993, 60, no. 28.

[ιδίων.....] τῶ

The epithet ἐπήκοος seems already to have been attached in Greece to the “healing” or “saviour” gods, in particular Asklepios and his subordinates Telesphoros and Hygieia, as well as Artemis and Apollo, Aphrodite and Herakles. The word rarely occurs, however, in Greece proper; it’s found much often in the isles of the Aegean which formed a bridge between Greece and the Orient. There it is applied usually to oriental gods, whether called by their proper name or distinguished in Greek form. In Delos especially we find it applied to oriental god, or is used for a Greek god by oriental dedicators. The worship of the θεὸς ἐπήκοος continued in Commagene in the first century A.D. It was perhaps applied in Egypt to the god of Israel in a dedicatory inscription: θεῶ μεγάλῳ ἐπήκῳ. In the first, and still more in the second century A.D. the epithet ἐπήκοος seems to have been reserved with a few exceptions, for the great divinities of the Orient.

Greek inscription,<sup>37</sup> found in the centre of Damit Il-‘Alya, on an altar 50×37 cm.

Ἐπηκόῳ  
 Διὶ φα-  
 ινησί-  
 ῳ εὐχ-  
 η]ν (Σ)έ(λ)-  
 (ε)υκος  
 Ὀχορα-  
 (ν)οῦ [ε-  
 ὑσε (β)ῶ]ν.

“To Zeus of Phaina, hearer of prayer, Seleukos (son) of ‘Akaran, fulfils in Piety”.

Φαινήςιος is the ethnic adjective of Phaina-Mismiyeh. The god is, then, the local Ba‘al of Phaina. In the same way Ζεὺς Ἡλιοπολείτης at Ba‘albek, and Ζεὺς Σαφαθηνός was invoked at Bosra. The formula: Διὶ φαινήσιῳ (To Zeus of Phaina) in this inscription depicted Zeus as a god of a region or a particular place as many Nabataean inscriptions depicted the god Dushara. The following inscription is another example for this phenomenon<sup>38</sup>:

Bilingual inscription (Greek and Nabataean), found in the ruins of Zizeh to the east of Madaba in the south of Jordan, discovered in 1909.

1- .....	CEΛΛΗΝ..	[Δήμ]ας Ἑλληνη[ος]
2- ..	ΜΟΥΜΗΝΟC[W]	[πανά]μου μηνός [ῶ]-
3- ΚΟΔΟΜΗCEN[ΤΟ]		κοδόμησεν [τὸ]
4- ΙΕΡΝΤΟΥΔΙΟ[CT]		ιερόν τοῦ Διός τ]-
5- ΟΥΕΝΒΕΕΛΦΕ[WP]		οῦ ἐν βεελφε[ωρ]
6- ΚΑΙΤΟΝΝΑΟΝ[A]		καὶ τὸν ναόν [ἄ]-

<sup>37</sup>. E. LITTMANN; ET. AL., *Greek and Latin Inscriptions in Southern Syria*, Division III, Section A. part 6, Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904-1905 and 1909. Leiden 1907-21, no.800/1.

<sup>38</sup>. P. GATIER, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie, Inscriptions de la Jordanie*, Tome 2, région centrale (Amman-Hesban-Madaba-Main-Dhiban), Paris 1986, 180-81.

7- [ΦΙΕΡW]CENC... . [φιέρω]σεν σ[...]

“Demas son of Ellen, in the month of Panemos, constructed the sanctuary of Zeus who is in Beelfegor, and consecrated the temple ...”.

ΒΕΛΛΦΕ (line 5) must be complete βεελφε[ωρ] or βεελφε[γορ] or βεελφε[γορ] the grand divinity of Moab. Ba'alfegor signify the Ba'al of Fegor or of the fegor. Here it is considered as a name of a place, the place with the mountain over which it was honored. In accordance with the Bible data, the mountain of Fegor is situated near the Jordan Valley, today Tell er-Rameh. The cult of Ba'alfegor or of Zeus Ba'alfegor became Zeus of Ba'alfegor.<sup>39</sup>

The Nabataean inscription is not included here because it hasn't the god name.

The name of Zeus Obadas, which appears in the following three inscriptions<sup>40</sup> from the Negev in the Nabataean realm, may be a deity of the city rather than Obadas (Ὀβαδας) as Zeus.

Greek inscription, discovered at Negev in the north of the acropolis, on a hard limestone in a building, 32×22 cm.

Ἀγαθῆ τύχη Ζεῦ  
Ὀβαδα  
μνησθῆ Ἀβδο-  
μάνος καὶ Ἀβδο-  
μαῖος καὶ  
Σουαῖδος καὶ Ο-  
ὔαλλος καὶ Σααδ-  
άλλος καὶ...

“In good luck! Zeus Obada remember Abdomanos, and Abdomaios and Soaidos and Ouallos, and Saadallos and ...”.

Greek inscription, found at Negev in the north of the acropolis, on a hard limestone in a building, 20×16,5 cm.

[Ζε]ῦ Ὀβαδα  
[μνησ]θῆ Ἄμμου  
[.....] ὁ οἰκο-  
[δόμος..] ΝΠΗΡΟΔΟΝ  
.....ΣΒΥ  
.....χασέτου  
.....Γαράμου

“Zeus Obada, remember Ammos ..... the builder (son) of chaster ... (son) of Garamos”.

The Obadas mentioned in these inscriptions is the long deceased king Obadas II who was buried in the town of Obada. These inscriptions, in which Obada is mentioned, refer to a local Zeus, the god of the town of Obada. Zeus has

<sup>39</sup>. A. JAUSSIN et R. SAVIGNAC, *Mission Archéologique en Arabie*, Paris, Publications de la société des fouilles Archéologiques, Ernest Leroux, réédition-le Caire 1997, Institut française d'archéologie orientale. Toms 1,2, 651.

<sup>40</sup>. A. NEGEV, *The Greek Inscriptions from the Negev*, Jerusalem 1981, nos. 3, 4, 13.

long been identified by the Nabataeans with Dushara, the Nabataean national god. To the same late Roman period belong a few inscriptions found in Arabia, and in various other places in the Roman world, in which local cults of Zeus are mentioned. Thus we hear of the existence of a Zeus cult at es-Safa in the eastern Ḥauran where Zeus Saphatenos was worshiped. A similar cult existed at Baalpegor in Moab. It thus seems that our inscriptions refer to a cult of a local Zeus rather than to a cult of king Obadas, whose memory is preserved in the name of the city.

Greek inscription, discovered at Negev in the southern end of the late Roman town, lintel of a hard limestone, 34×27 cm.

Ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ  
 Ζεῦ Ὀβαδα βοήθει  
 Εἰρηναίῳ οἰκοδο-  
 μούντι ἐπ' αἰσίοις  
 Τὸν πύργον ἔτ(ους) ΡΠΗ

Διὰ Οὐαέλου οἰκοδόμου Πετραίου καὶ Εὐτυχοῦς

“In good luck! Zeus Obada, gives help to Eirenaios who built this tower in good omen, in the year 188, with (the assistance of) the builder Wailos from Petra and Eutiches”.

Greek inscription,<sup>41</sup> found at Beth Shean, on a limestone altar, dedication, discovered during the excavation 1980-1986, dated to 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D, the altar is 46×80 cm.

ΑΓΑΘΗ	Ἀγαθῇ
ΤΗΧΗ	τύχῃ
ΔΙΙ ΑΚΡΑΙΩ	Διὶ Ἀκραίῳ
ΕΘΓΕΝΗ	Θεογένῃ
ΤΩΒΙΟΥ	Τωβίου
ΑΝΕΘΗ	ἀνέθη-
ΚΕΝ	κεν

“In good fortune, Theogene, daughter of Tobias, dedicated [it] to Zeus Akraios”

Zeus Akraios is “Zeus of the High Mountain”, and the name of the dedicator is clearly Greek, her father’s name Tobia is Semitic in origin. The inscription represents a manifestation of the process of Hellenization among the inhabitants of this area in the Roman era.

Greek inscription,<sup>42</sup> found at the temple of Dushara at si’, on a fragment of a temple, discovered in 1909, 17,5×18-20 cm.

Διὶ (?) κυρι[ῶ  
 ...ο βουλ(ευτήης)  
 καὶ ...]νω[ῆς  
 ἑκατόντα[ρ(χος)  
 σπείρης ἀν[γ(ούστης)

<sup>41</sup>. Y. TSAFRIR, Further evidence of the cult of Zeus Akraios at Beth Shan (Scythopolis), *Israel Exploration Journal* 39 (1989), 76.

<sup>42</sup>. E. LITTMANN ET. AL., op. cit., no. 769.

“To the Lord Zeus... .. councilor, and ..., centurion of the Augustan cohort”.

Greek inscription,<sup>43</sup> found at Msekeh, on two blocks, used now as a lintel of a door in a tower, the upper block 117×41 cm, the lower block 212×51 cm.

Ἰούλιος Μάξι-  
μος (σ)τρατιώτ[ης  
Λεγ(ιῶνος) γ' Γαλλ(ικης)] καὶ  
Ῥοῦφος ἀδελφὸ-  
ς ἀνέστησαν Διὶ πα-  
τρῶι θεῶ εὐσε-  
βείας χάριν  
Ἀγου(β)ηνός(?)

“Julius Maximus, soldier of the third legion, Gallica and Rufus (his) brother, built this to Zeus, their ancestral god, as a mark of piety. Agoubenos”.

Greek inscription,<sup>44</sup> found at Qasr El-Bint, on an inscribed marble base, dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D, 7, 5 cm high.

[Δία]ς ὕψ[ιστος]  
“Zeus Hypsistos”

This poorly preserved inscription is the first testimony of the god venerated in the Qasr. Zeus Hypsistos or Heavenly Zeus is the equivalent of Ba'alshamin or Dushara. And as a conclusion a Roman imperial phase is now confirmed by this fragmentary Greek inscription.<sup>45</sup> At Palmyra this appellation Zeus Hypistos designed the god Ba'alshamin, who may be identified in Nabataean with the ancient Edomit god Qos, with whom the god Dushara had some similarities.<sup>46</sup>

Greek inscription<sup>47</sup>, found at Petra, in a rocky chapel, dedication to saint Zeus.

ZEYA  
-?-] ΝΟΓΙΡΙΤΑ  
ΤΕΚΝΑ  
ΙΕΡΩΝΥΜ

Ζεῦ ἅγιε σ[ῶ]τερ, τὰ τέκνα Ἱερωνύμου

“To saint Zeus Soter (?), the children of Hieronymos”.

SARTRE hasn't any doubt that Zeus in this inscription is the great god of Shar, Dushara. The epithet σωτήρ in the Syrian epigraphy was a qualification of the dynastic Zeus of the Seleucid; meanwhile in Sweida Zeus Soter and phosphoros is identified by SOURDEL with Ba'alshamin<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>43</sup>. E. LITTMANN ET. AL., *ibid.*, no. 795.

<sup>44</sup>. M. SARTRE, *op. cit.*, 56, no.23.

<sup>45</sup>. F. ZAYADINE, Recent Excavation and restoration at Qasr El Bint of Petra, *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 29(1985), 245.

<sup>46</sup>. D. TARRIER, Ba'alshamin dans le monde Nabatéen: A propos de découvertes récentes. *Aram* 2: 1&2 First International Conference the Nabataean, University of Oxford, 26-29 September 1989 1990, 201.

<sup>47</sup>. M. SARTRE, *ibid.*, 59-60, no.27.

<sup>48</sup>. D. SOURDEL, *op. cit.*, 27.

Greek inscription<sup>49</sup>, from Hauran, on an altar.

Ζεῦ Σαφαθηνέ  
προκοπήν Ἀρχελάω  
Ἰουλίου

This dedication is graved at Bostra. Archelaus and his father Ioulios were, without doubt, Arabs from Şafa who lived in the capital of the Roman Province of Arabia.

ΔΙΙΜΕΓΙΣΤΟΚΑΝΑΤΗΝΩ<sup>50</sup>

Διὶ μεγίστῳ κανατηνῶν ὀ[δῆμος]

κανατηνῶν = Kanata or Kanatha which is according to some scholars Kerak now in Jordan.

Greek inscription,<sup>51</sup> found at El-Mismiye (Phaena), graved on a socle carry a divine bust, 54×31cm.

Δ Ι Ι Μ Ε Γ Ι Σ Τ Ω	Διὶ μεγίστῳ
Υ Ψ Ι Σ Τ Ω Σ Ο Α Δ Α	ὑψίστῳ Σοαδα-
Α Δ Ε Ι Ο Υ Τ Ο Υ Τ Ο Υ Κ Α Ι	αδείου τούτου και
Κ Α Λ Λ Ο Υ Ε Υ Σ Ε	καλλοῦ, εὔσε-
Β Ε Ι Α C X Α Ρ Ι Ν	βείας χάριν

Greek inscription,<sup>52</sup> Rasun in Jordan, second or third centuries A.D., dedication inscription, small altar.

Θεῷ ὑψίστῳ  
Αἰτανὸς  
τῆς κόμης  
Ῥησοῦς ἐν-  
θάδε ἀνέθη-  
κεν

This inscription was firstly published by N. ATALLAH.<sup>53</sup> In his article ATALLAH compiled a set of references to Zeus Hypsistos in the Near East, and he said that Theos Hypsistos (Θεῷ ὑψίστῳ) and Zeus Hypsistos (Διὶ ὑψίστῳ) were interchangeable. But BOWERSOCK sees that no one would contest the possible identification of Highest Zeus with one or another local god (such as Dushara or Ba'alshamin). Nor is it possible for the same god to be called both Highest Zeus and Highest God. But the unnamed Theos must be considered separately from Zeus. And the numerous inscriptions that mention Theos Hypsistos often do not permit a clear identification of the deity, and it is possible that the term can be applied, like Zeus Hypsistos, to a local god. But the two names (Theos and Zeus) cannot simply be equated.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup>. R. DUSSAUD et F. MACLER, op. cit. (1901), 192, no. 74.

<sup>50</sup>. R. DUSSAUD et F. MACLER, op. cit. (1901), 198, no. 81 bis.

<sup>51</sup>. R. DUSSAUD et F. MACLER, op. cit. (1903), 238, no. 2.

<sup>52</sup>. W. BOWERSOCK, The New Inscription from Rasun in Jordan, *Syria* 76 (1999), 223.

<sup>53</sup>. N. ATALLAH, Une inscription Grecque de la région de <Aj'loun-Rasun, *Zeitschrift fuer Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 121 (1998), 145-48.

<sup>54</sup>. W. BOWERSOCK, op. cit., 223-24.



The following four inscriptions were published by W. K. PRENTICE and carrying the name of Zeus.<sup>55</sup>

Greek inscription, Kanawat / temple of Zeus, Stone, 1.44×0.34 m.

Τιτ. Ἀντίοχος φιλοτιμησάμενος Διὶ μεγίστῳ ἐκ τῶν [ιδ]ίων ἀνέσ[τησ]εν

“Titos(?) Antiochos, in devoted service to Zeus most high, at his own expense set up (this column)”.

Greek inscription, Kanawat / same temple, base of a column, WADDINGTON 2339.<sup>56</sup>

Πούπλιος Αἴλιος Γ[ε]ρμανὸς βουλευτῆς Πουπλίου Αἰλίου Φιλίππου υἱός, τῶν βεννάθης, φιλοτιμησάμενος Διὶ μεγίστῳ ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων εὐσεβῶν ἀνέστησεν.

“Puplios Ailios Germanos councilor son of puplios Ailios Philippus, of the (clan?) of Bennathe, in devoted service to Zeus most-high, at his own expense, in piety set up (this column)”.

Greek inscription, Si' (Petra) on a Temple Gate, two stones of a pilaster, 89cm×40 cm.

ΠΡΟΝΟΙ  
ΙΟΥΛΙΟΥ  
ΡΑΚΛΙΤΟ  
ΥΔΗΗ  
ΚΤΙΘΗ  
ΝΑΙΟΥ  
ΚΑΙΤΟ  
ΕΡΙΒΟ  
ΛΟΝ

Προνοί[α] Ἰουλίου [Η]ρακλίτου Δ(ι) ἐκτίσθη[σα]ν αἱ θῦ[ραι] καὶ τὸ [π]ερίβολον.

“By provsion of Iulios Heraklitos to Zeus were built these gates and the wall about them”.

Greek inscription, Si' /the same Gateway, three fragments of architrave, fragment A is 76 cm long, fragment B is 34,5 cm long.

[Ἰούλιος Ἡράκλιτος φιλοτιμησάμενος Διὶ μεγίστῳ τὸν πύλον ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων [ἔκτισεν].

“Iulios Heraklitos in devoted service to most mighty Zeus erected this gateway at his own expense”.

The structure of the above inscription is purely hypothetical.

Finally, the following three inscriptions<sup>57</sup> are carrying the god name Zeus with the epithets, κυρίῳ, ἐπηκόῳ and Μεγάλῳ.

Greek inscription, found at Si', on an altar, made of Basalt, now in the museum of Sweida, high of the altar is 1.20 cm.

<sup>55</sup>. W. K. PRENTICE, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions: Northern Syria*, Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904-1905, Leiden 1908, 320, 321, 329, 330.

<sup>56</sup>. W. H. WADDINGTON, *Inscriptions grecques et Latines de la Syrie*, Recueillies en Grec et en Asie Mineure, t III, Paris 1870.

<sup>57</sup>. M. DUNAND, *Mission archéologique au Djebel Druz, Le musée de Soueida*, inscriptions et monuments figurés, Paris 1934, 21, 26, 99.

Διὶ κυρίῳ εὐχὴν Λο[ύ]κι[ς]  
 ...ώνις βενεφικιάρις  
 λεγεῶνος ἰ' φρετησίας

The formula Διὶ κυρίῳ εὐχὴν here is address without doubt to Dushara-Dionysus. The Xe legion Frentensis is very good known at Aila on the Red Sea.

Greek inscription, found at Si', on an altar, made of basalt,  
 now in the museum of Sweida, high of the altar 70 cm.

Διὶ ἐπήκοῳ  
 Ἰουλιανὸς  
 Ζηνᾶ ἱπεύς  
 κατ' εὐχὴν  
 ἀνέθηκεν

At Palmyra we have frequently the Formula Ζεὺς ὕψιστος καὶ ἐπήκοος to design Ba'alshamin. Ἐπήκοος is frequent and commonly associated with Zeus.

Greek inscription, found at †alkhad, on an altar, made of basalt,  
 now in the museum of Sweida, high of altar is 88 cm.

Διὶ Μεγά-  
 λῳ τῷ Κυρίῳ  
 Ὑπέρ σωτηρίας  
 Μονίμου βα-  
 σιλίσκου κ[υρ]-  
 ου.  
 Ἴανος οἰκοδό-  
 μος εὐσεβῶν ἐποί-  
 ησε

We have always the formula Διὶ κυρίῳ, sometimes θεῷ μεγάλῳ as at Nazala and at Palmyra. Βασιλίσκου is the Arabic name Mulaik.

Greek political and cultural forms were imported on a grand scale. The Greek language was used, alongside Semitic, Babylonian and Aramaic, for official and unofficial purposes. For religious purposes, Greek forms tended with local ones. The invaders brought with them their own religion, with its own set of deities, beliefs and practices, well documented in the Greek homeland, and different again from those of western Asia. By the time Alexander the Great, in fourth century B.C., there had been a mixture of old and more recent nature, regional, tribal, sky and social deities including Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Apollo, Artemis, Dionysus (or Bacchus), etc. Religion development in the Hellenistic period included the rise to permanence of certain among these cults. Dionysus, Aphrodite, Helios, Apollo, Heracles and Tyche (Fortune) were frequently represented in art. The Greek rulers also adapted the old western Asiatic practice of having the king worshipped as a god, along with the ancestors. This was *Syncretism*, the finding of correspondences between the deities of the Greek and Oriental pantheons. The syncretism between Greek and Semitic religion that occurs in the Roman period implies that this process similarly had origin in the Hellenistic period.

# Les rois de Kinda <sup>1</sup>

CHRISTIAN JULIEN ROBIN

## A. Les premiers rois de Kinda

1. « Rabī‘at fils de Mu‘āwiyat du lignage de Thawr<sup>um</sup> roi de Kiddat et de Qaḥṭān » (vers 220)
2. Les banū Baddā’
  - a. « Mālik<sup>um</sup> b. Baddā roi de Kiddat et de Madhḥig<sup>um</sup> » (vers 240)
  - b. « Mālik<sup>um</sup> b. Mu‘āwiyat roi de Kiddat et de Madhḥig<sup>um</sup> » (vers 290-295)

## B. Les Ḥujrides ou banū Ḥujr ou banū ‘Amr b. Mu‘āwiya

1. Ḥujr Ākil al-murār b. ‘Amr
2. ‘Amr al-Maqṣūr b. Ḥujr
3. al-Ḥārith al-Malik b. ‘Amr
4. Les fils d’al-Ḥārith al-Malik
5. L’énigmatique Qays descendant d’al-Ḥārith (en grec Kaĩsos, descendant d’Arethas)
  - a. Kaĩsos identifié avec le poète Imru’ al-Qays b. Ḥujr b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik
  - b. Kaĩsos identifié avec Qays b. Salama b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik
  - c. Kaĩsos, issu des banū Kabsha ?
6. Les banū ‘Amr de l’inscription Murayghān 1

## C. Les rameaux secondaires

1. Les Āl al-Jawn
2. Les banū Kabsha
3. Les banū Walī‘a
4. Les banū Jabala
5. Autres Kindites occupant des positions élevées
  - a. Abīgabr (*‘bgr*), qui commande une colonne de l’armée d’Abraha
  - b. ‘Abd al-Masīḥ b. Dāris al-Kindī, gouverneur (*‘āqib*) de Najrān
  - c. Ukaydir b. ‘Abd al-Malik al-Sakūnī

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<sup>1</sup>. Joëlle Beaucamp, Michael Lecker et Jérémie Schiettecatte ont eu l’obligeance de relire ce texte et de me faire part de leurs remarques. Les traductions de Malalas et de Photios (Nonnosos) sont de Joëlle Beaucamp.

## D. Les rois légendaires

## E. Les Ḥujrides et leurs suzerains ḥimyarites

1. Les suzerains ḥimyarites mentionnés par la Tradition arabo-islamique
2. Les expéditions ḥimyarites en Arabie déserte
  - a. Tha'rān Yuhan'im (c. 324-c. 375)
  - b. Abīkarib As'ad (c. 375-c. 445) et son fils Ḥaśśān Yuha'min
  - c. Shuriḥbi'l Yakkuf (c. 468-c. 480)
  - d. Ma'dīkarib Ya'fur (c. 519-522)
  - e. Abraha (c. 535-c. 565)
3. Le changement de titulature des rois ḥimyarites correspond-il à l'installation des princes kindites ?
4. L'implicite dans les inscriptions ḥimyarites : le cas des rois de Kinda
5. Quel était le titre officiel des princes kindites ?
6. Kinda, Qaḥṭān et Ḥimyar

Grâce à leur épopée au cœur de l'Arabie déserte et aux poètes qui ont célébré leurs exploits sur les champs de bataille, grâce aussi au destin tragique de l'un d'entre eux, lui-même poète, les rois préislamiques de la tribu arabe de Kinda ont conservé une place à part dans l'imaginaire arabe. Longtemps, il a été malaisé de reconnaître dans quelle mesure les données dont nous disposions avaient un fondement historique. L'exploration archéologique de la péninsule Arabique le permet désormais.

La première tentative moderne de rédiger une histoire de Kinda remonte au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. En 1847-1848, le Français ARMAND PIERRE CAUSSIN DE PERCEVAL publie un ouvrage étonnamment ambitieux intitulé *Essai sur l'histoire des Arabes avant l'islamisme, pendant l'époque de Mahomet, et jusqu'à la réduction de toutes les tribus sous la loi musulmane*, dans lequel Kinda occupe naturellement une place importante. C'était la première fois qu'un savant essayait de reconstruire une telle histoire, de façon systématique et organisée chronologiquement. L'ouvrage, qui a forcé l'admiration par sa clarté, l'élégance de son écriture et la maîtrise de son sujet, se fondait principalement sur le fameux *Livre des chansons* (*Kitāb al-Aghānī*), uniquement accessible alors sous forme de manuscrit. Mais CAUSSIN ne disposait pas encore des outils méthodologiques nécessaires pour surmonter les innombrables contradictions de la Tradition arabo-islamique, notamment celles concernant la chronologie ; par ailleurs, il n'avait pas un accès aisé à une source essentielle, la poésie préislamique et les nombreux commentaires qui l'éclairent, alors inédits. Son œuvre est donc un magnifique inventaire des données de la Tradition arabo-islamique, toujours utile aujourd'hui ; mais ses reconstructions chronologiques ne sont, comme l'indique le titre de l'ouvrage, qu'un premier « essai ».

En 1887, l'Allemand THEODOR NÖLDEKE réalise un progrès méthodologique important dans son étude sur les princes jafnides de Syrie (appelés communément, de façon inappropriée, « ghassānides »). Pour disposer d'une chronologie solide, il fait appel aux sources externes ; par ailleurs, il hiérarchise les sources arabes en considérant que la poésie contient les données les moins altérées.<sup>2</sup> Dans les décennies qui suivent, la même méthode est mise en œuvre par l'Allemand GUSTAV ROTHSTEIN pour les Naṣrides d'al-Ḥīra (appelés à tort « Lakhmides »).<sup>3</sup>

L'intérêt du monde savant se focalise pour la première fois sur les seuls « rois de Kinda »<sup>4</sup> quand le chercheur suédois GUNNAR OLINDER leur consacre successivement deux études fondatrices intitulées *The Kings of Kinda of the Family of Ākil al-murār* (1927) et « Āl al-Ġawn of the Family of Ākil al-Murar » (1931). Je me fonderai naturellement sur ces deux excellentes publications dès qu'il s'agira des sources arabes.

<sup>2</sup>. *Die Ghassānischen Fürsten aus dem Hause Gafna's*.

<sup>3</sup>. *Die Dynastie der Laḥmiden in al-Ḥīra. Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, 1899.

<sup>4</sup>. Cette appellation est empruntée à la Tradition arabo-islamique : voir par exemple Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, pp. 368-370.

Enfin, une nouvelle étape s'ouvre avec la découverte de nombreuses inscriptions préislamiques en Arabie, à partir des années 1950. Quatre rois de Kinda sont désormais attestés épigraphiquement. Par ailleurs, quelques textes ḥimyarites datés donnent de précieux repères chronologiques et des informations souvent précises sur la situation politique. Mon propos va être de tenter d'articuler toutes les données tirées des inscriptions avec celles dont on disposait depuis longtemps grâce aux textes narratifs, notamment ceux de la tradition arabo-islamique.

## A. Les premiers rois de Kinda (Tableau 1)

Les inscriptions sabéennes et ḥimyarites enregistrent les noms de trois rois dont la titulature comporte le nom de Kinda en première place.<sup>5</sup>

### 1. « Rabī'at fils de Mu'āwiyat du lignage de Thawr<sup>um</sup> roi de Kiddat et de Qahṭān »<sup>6</sup> (vers 220)

Les premières mentions d'un roi de Kinda (et de la tribu Kinda elle-même) datent de 220 environ de l'ère chrétienne.<sup>7</sup> Elles se trouvent dans deux inscriptions sabéennes rapportant des opérations militaires du roi Sha'r<sup>um</sup> Awtar (c. 210-c. 230) contre l'oasis de Qaryat<sup>um</sup> dhāt Kahl<sup>um</sup> (*Qryt<sup>m</sup> dt Khl<sup>m</sup>*, l'antique Qaryat al-Fāw, à quelque 300 km à l'est-nord-est de Najrān).<sup>8</sup> On peut en déduire que Kinda avait alors son centre dans cette oasis.

La première inscription (Ja 635) précise notamment que le roi faisait la guerre à deux tribus de Sahrāt<sup>um</sup> (le versant occidental de la chaîne yéménite) nommées Ash'arān et Baḥr<sup>um</sup>, aux Abyssins de la région de Najrān et « à Rabī'at du lignage de Thawr<sup>um</sup>, roi de Kiddat et de Qahṭān, et aux citoyens de la ville de Qaryat<sup>um</sup> ». <sup>9</sup>

La seconde (DAI-Bar'ān 2000-1), dont l'auteur est le roi Sha'r<sup>um</sup> Awtar en personne, donne une liste un peu différente des ennemis : « Khawlān, Ash'arān, Yrf<sup>n</sup>, Dhīr<sup>n</sup>, un certain nombre des 'ydw S'whr<sup>n</sup>, Kiddat et Qaryat<sup>um</sup> » — noter

<sup>5</sup>. Dans les inscriptions sabéennes et ḥimyarites, l'arabe Kinda s'écrivait *Kdt* et se prononçait probablement Kiddat, avec assimilation du *nūn*.

<sup>6</sup>. Les citations des inscriptions sudarabiques conservent la graphie d'origine : Kiddat (pour Kinda), Madhḥig<sup>um</sup> (pour Madhḥij) etc., avec notamment la *mīmation* et le « g » (pour l'arabe « j »).

<sup>7</sup>. Les spéculations sur de plus anciennes attestations de Kinda dans les sources externes (BUKHARIN 2009) reposent sur des bases très fragiles.

<sup>8</sup>. Pour la localisation des toponymes, se reporter à la carte ROBIN-BRUNNER 1997, à compléter avec la carte, Figure 1.

<sup>9</sup>. Ja 635 / 25-28 : « ... et jusqu'à la ville de Qaryat<sup>um</sup> dhāt Kahl<sup>um</sup> — deux campagnes contre Rabī'at du lignage de Thawr<sup>um</sup>, roi de Kiddat et de Qahṭān et contre les citoyens de la ville de Qaryat<sup>um</sup> », ... *w- 'dy hgr<sup>n</sup> Qryt<sup>m</sup> dt Khl<sup>m</sup> tty ḏb 't<sup>n</sup> b- 'ly Rb 't ḏ- 'l |Twr<sup>m</sup> mlk Kdt w-Qhī<sup>n</sup> w-b- 'ly | 'b 'l hgr<sup>n</sup> Qryt<sup>m</sup>*.

l'absence de Qaḥṭān ; elle ajoute que le roi « a ramené Rabī'at fils de Mu'āwiyat du lignage de Thawr<sup>um</sup> roi de Kiddat et de Qaḥṭān dans la ville de Ṣan[ī'a' ... ».<sup>10</sup>

Ces textes comportent trois indications capitales pour notre propos. Rabī'at porte le titre de « roi de Kiddat et de Qaḥṭān ». Il appartient au lignage de Thawr<sup>um</sup>, anthroponyme qui serait, selon Ibn al-Kalbī, le nom personnel de l'éponyme de la tribu Kinda.<sup>11</sup> Enfin, Rabī'at est vaincu, capturé et amené par le roi sabéen dans sa capitale.<sup>12</sup>

Le titre de « roi de Kiddat et de Qaḥṭān » est une nouveauté. Nous connaissons un roi de Qaryat<sup>um</sup> dhāt Kahl<sup>um</sup> un peu plus ancien (II<sup>e</sup> siècle de l'ère chrétienne ?), qui se déclare « Qaḥṭānite » et dont le titre était : « roi de Qaḥṭān et de Madhḥij ». Il régnait donc sur Qaḥṭān (probablement la tribu de Qaryat<sup>um</sup> dhāt Kahl<sup>um</sup>) et Madhḥij (tribu peut-être installée entre Qaryat al-Fāw et Najrān).<sup>13</sup>

Ce changement de titulature révèle incontestablement une évolution dans l'organisation politique des tribus arabes qui gravitent aux marges de Saba'. Le petit royaume dont Qaryat<sup>um</sup> dhāt Kahl<sup>um</sup> est la capitale est dominé tout d'abord par Qaḥṭān (qui contrôle également Madhḥij).

À la suite d'événements dont nous ignorons tout, vers le début du III<sup>e</sup> siècle, Kinda s'impose à Qaryat<sup>um</sup> dhāt Kahl<sup>um</sup> et une nouvelle dynastie — sans doute kindite — prend le pouvoir : le titre du souverain est désormais « roi de Kiddat et de Qaḥṭān ». On peut supposer que, aux habitants de Qaryat<sup>um</sup> dhāt Kahl<sup>um</sup> appartenant à Qaḥṭān, se sont adjoints des éléments de Kinda (dont on ignore l'origine). Si le nom de Madhḥij n'apparaît plus dans la titulature, cela ne signifie pas que cette tribu a retrouvé son indépendance comme la suite va le démontrer.

Il ne semble pas que Rabī'at fils de Mu'āwiyat puisse être identifié avec l'un des trois personnages homonymes qu'on relève dans les généalogies de Kinda,

<sup>10</sup>. DAI-Bar'ān 2000-1 : *w-h'tw Rb't bn M'wyt d-l Twr<sup>10</sup>l<sup>m</sup> mljk Kdt w-Qh<sup>n</sup> 'dy hgr<sup>n</sup> Ṣ(n)<sup>11</sup>[w ...*

<sup>11</sup>. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Nasab Ma'add*, p. 136 : « 'Ufayr b. 'Adī ... b. Kahlān b. Saba' engendra : Thawr, qui est Kinda » (*fa-walada 'Ufayr b. 'Adī ... b. Kahlān b. Saba' : Thawr<sup>um</sup> wa-huwa Kinda*). Voir aussi Tableaux 3 et 4 ; CASSEL 1966-I, tableau 176 ; SHAHĪD 1995-1, pp. 148-160.

<sup>12</sup>. Au III<sup>e</sup> siècle de l'ère chrétienne, les rois de Saba' ont deux résidences : le palais Ghumdān à Ṣan'ā' et le palais Salhīn à Marib.

<sup>13</sup>. ANSARI 1979 (ou bien ANSARY 1981, p. 144) : « Mu'āwiyat b. Rabī'at du lignage de ..., le Qaḥṭānite, roi de Qaḥṭān et de Madhḥij », *M'wyt bn Rb't d-(l M.t) [q]/hṭny<sup>n</sup> mlk Qh<sup>n</sup> w-Mdhg*. Aucune identification avec un homonyme des généalogies arabes [voir Mu'āwiyat b. Rabī'a dans CASSEL 1966-I, tableaux 101, 104, 107, 126, 163, 164, 234 (Kinda), 237 (Kinda / Mu'āwiyat al-Akramūn), 240 (Kinda / al-Sakūn), 260 (Madhḥij / al-Ḥārith b. Ka'b), 288] ne semble possible. Concernant la localisation de Madhḥij vers cette époque, nous ne disposons que de maigres indices. Dans l'inscription d'al-Namāra (= Louvre 205), le Naṣrīde Imru' al-Qays b. 'Amr déclare qu'il « fit la guerre à Madhḥij jusqu'à frapper<sup>3</sup> de sa lance aux portes de Nagrān, la ville de Shammar » (... *w-ḥrb M(d)hgw 'kdy wg<sup>3</sup> b-zg-h fy rtg Ngrn mdynt Ṣmr*). Par ailleurs, la tribu des banū 'l-Ḥārith b. Ka'b qui domine Najrān à la veille de l'islam est un rameau de 'Ula, fraction de Madhḥij (voir Tableau 4).

deux dans la fraction Mu'āwiya et un dans al-Sakūn.<sup>14</sup> C'est donc un roi dont la tradition n'a pas retenu le nom, probablement parce que sa descendance était éteinte quand les traditionnalistes ont collecté les généalogies.

## 2. Les *banū Baddā'*

Deux rois peuvent être réunis (de manière quelque peu hypothétique) sous l'appellation *banū Baddā'*, comme nous allons le montrer.

a. « Mālik<sup>um</sup> fils de Baddā roi de Kiddat et de Madhḥig<sup>um</sup> » (vers 240)

Une vingtaine d'années plus tard (aux alentours de l'année 240), les rois sabéens Iīsharāḥ Yaḥḍub et Ya'zil Bayān (qui règnent ensemble de c. 236 à c. 255) ont un sérieux différent avec Mālik<sup>um</sup> roi de Kiddat et les grands de la commune<sup>15</sup> dans la ville de Marib (l'une des deux capitales des rois de Saba'); ils s'en emparent jusqu'à ce que leur soit livré un certain Imru' al-Qays roi de Khaṣāṣātān.<sup>16</sup> La cause de la querelle n'est pas clairement indiquée.

Une inscription qui date approximativement de la même époque (sans qu'on puisse établir si elle est antérieure ou postérieure) mentionne l'envoi par les deux rois sabéens d'un ambassadeur auprès de ce même Mālik<sup>um</sup> dont elle donne la titulature complète : « Mālik<sup>um</sup> fils de Baddā<sup>17</sup> roi de Kiddat et de Madhḥig<sup>um</sup> ». <sup>18</sup> Elle nous apprend incidemment que le titre du roi de Kinda a changé : c'est désormais « roi de Kiddat et de Madhḥig<sup>um</sup> ».

<sup>14</sup>. Voir CASHEL 1966-I :

— tabl. 235 : Rabī'a b. Mu'āwiya al-Akramūn b. al-Ḥārith al-Aṣghar b. Mu'āwiya b. al-Ḥārith al-Akbar ;

— tabl. 234 : Rabī'a b. Mu'āwiya b. Ṣuraym b. Tha'laba b. Bakr b. Imru' al-Qays b. al-Ḥārith al-Aṣghar b. Mu'āwiya b. al-Ḥārith al-Akbar ;

— tabl. 240 : Rabī'a b. Mu'āwiya b. Ja'far b. Usāma b. Sa'd b. b. Ashras b. Shabīb b. al-Sakūn b. Ashras b. Kinda.

Dans ROBIN 2005, avant la publication de l'inscription DAI-Bar'ān 2000-1 qui a donné le patronyme de Rabī'a, j'avais identifié ce dernier avec Rabī'a b. Wahb b. al-Ḥārith al-Akbar (un « cousin germain » de Mālik b. Baddā') : cette hypothèse est désormais à écarter.

<sup>15</sup>. Le terme « commune », qui rend le sabéen *s<sup>2</sup>b*, désigne une tribu sédentaire. Il est remarquable qu'il soit utilisé ici à propos de Kinda.

<sup>16</sup>. Voir Ja 576 / 2-3, notamment à la ligne 2 : « parce qu'Almaqah leur a accordé la faveur de se saisir de Mālik<sup>um</sup> roi de Kiddat et de la commune de Kiddat, concernant la réparation que Mālik<sup>um</sup> a faite à Almaqah et aux deux rois, à savoir Mar'alqēs fils de 'Awf<sup>um</sup>, roi de Khaṣāṣātān, en retenant ce Mālik<sup>um</sup> et les chefs de Kiddat dans la ville de Marib, jusqu'à ce qu'ils livrent ce jeune Mar'alqēs », *w-l-ḏt hws<sup>2</sup>-hmw ('lmqh b-'ḥd) Mlk<sup>m</sup> mlk Kdt w-s<sup>2</sup>b<sup>n</sup> Kdt b-ḥfrt ḥḥfr Mlk<sup>m</sup> 'lmqh w-m(l)k(nhn) Mr'lqs' bn 'w<sup>f</sup>m mlk Ḥṣṣt' w-'ḥd-hw hwt Mlk<sup>m</sup> w-'kbrt Kdt b-hgr<sup>n</sup> Mrb 'dy hgb'w hwt ḡlm<sup>n</sup> Mr'lqs'*.

<sup>17</sup>. Concernant la vocalisation de Baddā' (saba'ique *Bd*), voir ROBIN 2001, p. 573 (pour *Bdy*, voir Ir 16 / 1 et 3, et pour *Bd*, Ja 2110 / 9).

<sup>18</sup>. Ja 2110 / 8-9 : *Mlk<sup>m</sup> bn Bd mlk Kdt w-Mdhg<sup>m</sup>*.



b. « Mālik<sup>um</sup> fils de Mu‘āwiyat roi de Kiddat et de Madhḥij<sup>um</sup> » (vers 290-295)

Vers la fin du III<sup>e</sup> siècle, un roi qui se nomme « Mālik<sup>um</sup> fils de Mu‘āwiyat roi de Kiddat et de Madhḥij<sup>um</sup> »<sup>19</sup> fait l’offrande d’une statue de bronze dans le temple Awām, le grand sanctuaire de Saba’, consacré au dieu Almaḡah Thahwān, « quand il s’est mis en route et est venu se soumettre à la main de leur seigneur Shammar Yuhar‘ish, roi de Saba’ et de dhu-Raydān, fils de Yāsir<sup>um</sup> Yuhan‘im, roi de Saba’ et de dhu-Raydān, dans la ville de Marib ».<sup>20</sup>

Ce document officialise le passage de Kinda sous le contrôle de Ḥimyar. On peut le déduire du fait que seuls les Sabéens sont admis dans le temple Awām. Or, en se soumettant, Mālik<sup>um</sup> b. Mu‘āwiyat devient Sabéen, puisque le roi de Ḥimyar est d’abord « roi de Saba’ ».<sup>21</sup>

Shammar Yuhar‘ish, le souverain de Ḥimyar (c. 287-311), n’ajoute pas les noms de Kinda et de Madhḥij à sa titulature. Cependant, vers la même époque, sa titulature se modifie : Shammar Yuhar‘ish, qui était « roi de Saba’ et de dhu-Raydān », prend le titre de « roi de Saba’, de dhu-Raydān, du Ḥaḡramawt et du Sud (*Ymnt*) ». L’ajout de « Ḥaḡramawt » résulte clairement de la conquête de Shabwat, capitale du Ḥaḡramawt. On peut donc se demander si l’ajout de l’énigmatique *Ymnt* ne serait pas dû à l’annexion de vastes territoires du *sud* de l’Arabie déserte — et non du *sud* du Ḥaḡramawt comme on l’estime d’ordinaire.

L’autorité que les rois de Kinda exercent sur Madhḥij, attestée au III<sup>e</sup> siècle par le titre des rois Malik<sup>um</sup> fils de Baddā et Malik<sup>um</sup> fils de Mu‘āwiyat, n’est pas remise en cause par le souverain ḥimyarite. On peut le déduire de la composition des troupes auxiliaires que les tribus arabes fournissent aux armées ḥimyarites. En effet, chaque fois que l’on a mention d’un contingent de Kinda, on relève, immédiatement après, la mention d’un contingent de Madhḥij (ou des tribus de Sa‘d et ‘Ula qui en relèvent) (voir E.4. « L’implicite dans les inscriptions ḥimyarites : le cas des rois de Kinda »).

Deux autres indices vont dans la même direction. Un Kindite est le gouverneur (*‘āqib*) de Najrān à l’époque de Muḡammad (ci-dessous C.5.b. « ‘Abd al-Masīḥ b. Dāris al-Kindī »). Par ailleurs, la seule inscription mentionnant un Ḥujride se trouve dans une région qui, comme Najrān, appartenait à Madhḥij (ci-dessous B. 1. « Ḥujr Ākil al-murār b. ‘Amr »).

<sup>19</sup>. Le nom du roi, incomplet à la l. 1 ([*Mlk<sup>m</sup> bn M‘w]yt mlk Kdt w-Mḡḥg<sup>m</sup>*), est restitué d’après la l. 11.

<sup>20</sup>. MB 2006 I-54 : *b-kn mz<sup>5</sup> w-nfṣ l-s’tlmn b-yd mr<sup>6</sup>-ḥmw S<sup>2</sup>mr Yhr‘s<sup>2</sup> mlk<sup>7</sup> S<sup>1</sup>b<sup>7</sup> w-ḡ-Ryd<sup>n</sup> bn Ys‘r<sup>m</sup> 8 Yhn‘m mlk S<sup>1</sup>b<sup>7</sup> w-ḡ-Ryd<sup>n</sup> b-hgr<sup>n</sup> Mrb*. Je remercie vivement M. Mohamed Maraqtan d’avoir bien voulu me donner une copie de ce texte capital.

<sup>21</sup>. Pour la période des I<sup>er</sup>-IV<sup>e</sup> siècles, les offrandes qui sont faites par des personnes dont l’appartenance à Saba’ n’est pas évidente sont très peu nombreuses : on peut citer celles des rois de Ḥimyar Yāsir<sup>um</sup> Yuhan‘im et Shammar Yuhar‘ish (Ir 14 = SHARAF 29 ; SHARAF 35), peut-être celle des banū dhu-Thāt (Ja 661, du règne de Shammar Yuhar‘ish) et celles d’Arabes (MB 2006 I-54 ; Ir 16 dont les auteurs appartiennent à la tribu Ḥadā‘ān / al-Ḥadā’, serviteurs du roi Shammar Yuhar‘ish).

La date à laquelle Mālik<sup>um</sup> fils de Mu'āwiyat se soumet à Shammar Yuhar'ish peut être fixée de manière assez précise vers 290-295. Elle est antérieure à l'adoption de la « titulature longue » (« roi de Saba', de dhu-Raydān, du Ḥaḍramawt et du Sud ») qui résulte de la conquête du Ḥaḍramawt vers 296. Par ailleurs, elle se situe sans doute dans la seconde partie du règne du roi Shammar Yuhar'ish portant encore la titulature courte (« roi de Saba' et de dhu-Raydān », c. 287-c. 296). On sait en effet que Kinda est encore indépendante au début du règne puisqu'elle porte assistance au Ḥaḍramawt déjà menacé par Ḥimyar (BR-M. Bayhān 5).

Selon cette dernière inscription, Shammar Yuhar'ish charge le commandant de sa cavalerie « de surveiller et prendre en embuscade les secours de Kiddat quand ceux-ci portaient secours au Ḥaḍramōt et il les prit en embuscade à Arak »;<sup>22</sup> plus loin dans le même texte, l'auteur se félicite que le dieu lui ait accordé « de surprendre ces deux expéditions de secours et de se saisir des personnes et de ce qu'elles apportaient ».<sup>23</sup>

Le soutien que Kinda apporte au Ḥaḍramawt montre que ces deux tribus ont déjà noué des liens étroits ; il s'explique peut-être par le fait que certains groupes de Kinda sont déjà installés dans le Ḥaḍramawt occidental (où ils sont attestés au VI<sup>e</sup> et au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle).

Les rois Mālik<sup>um</sup> fils de Baddā' et Mālik<sup>um</sup> fils de Mu'āwiyat, qui portent le même titre, sont séparés par une cinquantaine d'années. En outre, ils ont le même nom, comme souvent un grand-père et son petit-fils (par les premiers-nés). Il est donc tentant de faire l'hypothèse que Mālik<sup>um</sup> b. Mu'āwiyat est le fils de \*Mu'āwiyat<sup>24</sup> b. Mālik<sup>um</sup>, lui-même fils de Mālik<sup>um</sup> b. Baddā'. Cette dynastie peut être dénommée les « banū Baddā' » (Tableau 1).

<sup>22</sup>. BR-M. Bayhān 5 : *l-ršd w-ttbn<sup>7</sup> zbd Kdt brtn zbdw Ḥdrmt w-twṭb-h/mw b-'rk*.

<sup>23</sup>. BR-M. Bayhān 5 : *w-ḥmr-hmw mr'-hmw 'lmqh-Ṭh<sup>9</sup>w<sup>n</sup>-b'l-'wm b-wrd b-hmt zbdnhn w-'h<sup>10</sup>d-hmw w-zbd-hmw*.

<sup>24</sup>. L'étoile qui précède l'anthroponyme Mu'āwiyat signifie que ce personnage n'est pas attesté directement.

Tableau 1

**Les rois de Kinda, Madhḥij et Qaḥṭān mentionnés dans les inscriptions**

<i>Date</i> <sup>25</sup>	<i>Rois de Qaḥṭān</i>	<i>Rois de Kiddat / Kinda</i>
c. II <sup>e</sup> s.	1. Mu‘āwiyat fils de Rabī‘at (roi de Qaḥṭān et Madhḥij)	
c. 220		1. Rabī‘at fils de Mu‘āwiyat (roi de Kiddat et de Qaḥṭān)
c. 240		<b>LES BANU BADDĀ’</b> 1. Mālik <sup>um</sup> (roi de Kiddat) Mālik <sup>um</sup> fils de Baddā (roi de Kiddat et Madhḥij <sup>um</sup> )
c. 270		[*Mu‘āwiyat fils de Mālik <sup>um</sup> ]
c. 290-295		2. Mālik <sup>um</sup> fils de Mu‘āwiyat (roi de Kiddat et Madhḥij <sup>um</sup> )
IV <sup>e</sup> -VI <sup>e</sup> s.		<b>LES ḤUJRIDES</b> 1. Ḥuḡr fils de ‘Amr <sup>um</sup> (roi de Kiddat)

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<sup>25</sup>. D’après les seules données de l’épigraphie.

Si nous examinons maintenant ce que la Tradition arabo-islamique a retenu des généalogies de Kinda, nous trouvons de fait un lignage appelé « banū Baddā' » dans la descendance d'al-Ḥārith al-Akbar (b. Mu'āwiya b. Thawr b. 'Amr / Muratti' b. Mu'āwiya b. Kinda), l'ancêtre de toutes les dynasties kindites (Tableaux 2 et 3).<sup>26</sup> Deux membres de ce lignage,

— Mālik b. Baddā',

— Mālik b. Mu'āwiya (dhū 'l-'Aynayn) b. Mālik b. al-Ḥārith b. Baddā' (postérieur de trois générations) (Tableau 2),

peuvent être identifiés avec les rois de Kinda du III<sup>e</sup> siècle que nous venons de voir :

— Mālik b. Baddā' (*Mik<sup>m</sup> bn Bd* : Ja 576 / 2 et Ja 2110 / 8-9), vers 240 ;

— Mālik b. Mu'āwiya (*Mik<sup>m</sup> b. M'wyt* : MB 2006 I-54), vers 290-295.

Non seulement les noms et les patronymes sont identiques, mais encore l'écart de quelque 55 ans correspond approximativement à trois générations.

On notera cependant une petite différence avec notre hypothèse de départ (Mālik b. Mu'āwiya fils de Mu'āwiya b. Mālik, lui-même fils de Mālik b. Baddā') :

— Mu'āwiya n'est pas le petit-fils, mais l'arrière petit-fils de Baddā' ;

— il n'est pas le fils de Mālik b. Baddā', mais le petit-fils de son frère al-Ḥārith b. Baddā'.

Il faut encore observer que les descendants de ces banū Baddā' qui, à l'époque islamique, étaient établis à al-Buṣra, ne semblent pas avoir retenu que certains de leurs ancêtres avaient régné. Mais ils prétendaient, si l'on en croit Ibn al-Kalbī, que la mère de Mālik b. Baddā' était issue de l'un des plus nobles lignages himyarites, les Āl dhī Yazan.<sup>27</sup>

Enfin, si la paire nom-patronyme Mālik b. Baddā' est fort rare (puisqu'Ibn al-Kalbī n'en mentionne qu'un seul exemple),<sup>28</sup> il n'en est pas de même de Mālik b. Mu'āwiya, dont on a quinze attestations.<sup>29</sup>

Malgré ces réserves, les convergences remarquables entre les données de l'épigraphie et celles de la Tradition arabo-islamique paraissent déterminantes. Elles nous conduisent à restituer au III<sup>e</sup> siècle — avec évidemment un part d'hypothèse — une séquence de règnes organisée selon la généalogie suivante :

<sup>26</sup>. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Nasab Ma'add*, pp. 178-179 ; CASSEL 1966-I, tableau 233.

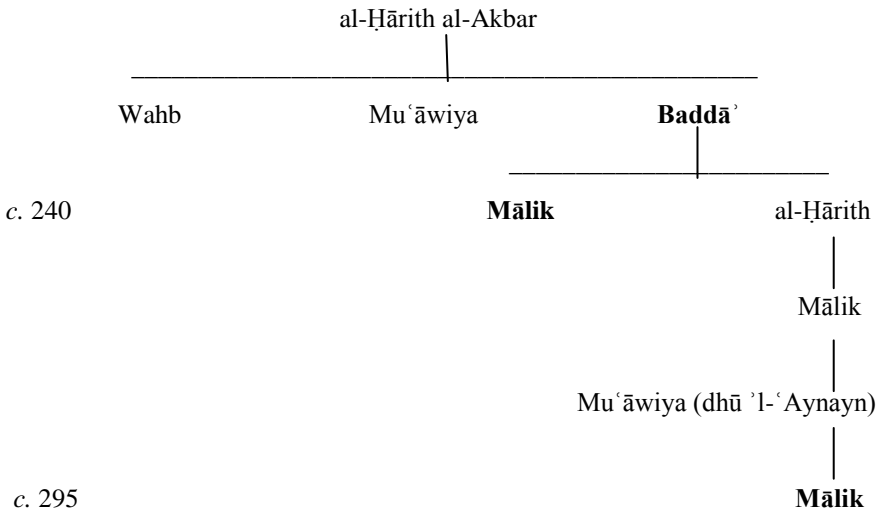
<sup>27</sup>. *Nasab Ma'add*, p. 178.

<sup>28</sup>. Précisément celui dont nous traitons, CASSEL 1966-I, tableau 233 (Kinda).

<sup>29</sup>. CASSEL 1966-I, tableaux 87, 97, 103, 105, 163, 229, 230, 230, 233 (Kinda), 234 (Kinda), 242 (Kinda / al-Sakūn), 258 (Madhḥij), 268 (Madhḥij / Sa'd al-'Ashīra), 269 (Madhḥij / Sa'd al-'Ashīra), 280.

Tableau 2

Les rois de Kinda au III<sup>e</sup> siècle de l'ère chrétienne (épigraphie et traditions)<sup>30</sup>



<sup>30</sup>. Tableau généalogique d'après Ibn al-Kalbī (*Nasab Ma'add*, pp. 178-179 et CASHEL 1966-I, tableau 233), avec les seuls noms significatifs pour notre propos.

## B. Les Ḥujrides ou banū Ḥujr ou banū ‘Amr b. Mu‘āwiya<sup>31</sup>

Les premiers rois de Kinda sont attestés grâce aux inscriptions. Leurs successeurs, les Ḥujrides, ne sont guère connus que par la Tradition arabo-islamique.

Outre Baddā’, al-Ḥārith al-Akbar (b. Mu‘āwiya b. Thawr b. ‘Amr / Muratti’ b. Mu‘āwiya b. Kinda), l’ancêtre de toutes les dynasties kindites comme je l’ai dit, est également le père de Mu‘āwiya qui aurait eu lui-même trois fils. Deux d’entre eux comptent des rois parmi leurs descendants : ‘Amr (b. Mu‘āwiya) qui est le père de Ḥujr Ākil al-murār (l’ancêtre des Ḥujrides dont il est question dans ce chapitre) et d’al-Ḥārith al-Wallāda (l’ancêtre des banū Walī’a, ci-dessous, C.3.) ; et al-Ḥārith al-Aṣghar (b. Mu‘āwiya) qui est l’ancêtre des banū Jabala (ci-dessous, C.4.) (Tableau 3).

C’est parmi les Ḥujrides que se trouvent les rois dont le souvenir est encore vif dans la mémoire arabe. On dispose sur eux de sources particulièrement abondantes. Cette dynastie règne pendant quatre ou cinq générations, avec deux règnes marquants, ceux de Ḥujr Ākil al-murār et d’al-Ḥārith al-Malik.

### 1. Ḥujr Ākil al-murār b. ‘Amr

Ḥujr b. ‘Amr, surnommé « le mangeur d’herbes amères » (Ākil al-murār)<sup>32</sup> est le fondateur de la dynastie kindite qui régna sur une vaste confédération tribale de l’Arabie déserte appelée Ma‘add.<sup>33</sup> J’ai donné à cette dynastie le nom de

<sup>31</sup>. CASSEL 1966-I, tableau 238 ; OLINDER 1927 ; ROBIN 1996 ; ROBIN 2008 a.

<sup>32</sup>. OLINDER 1927, pp. 37-46.

<sup>33</sup>. Selon MICHAEL ZWETTLER (2000), aucune source ne prouve que le nom de « Ma‘add has ever been used, in the course of recorded history, to designate a “tribe” or “confederation” as such ». Ma‘add serait plutôt une « collective entity : namely, the general population of predominantly camel-herding Arab bedouins and bedouin tribal groups — irrespective of lineage or place of origin — who ranged, encamped, and resided throughout most of the central and northern peninsula (including the southern Samāwa desert) and who had come to adopt the *ṣadād*-saddle and also, by the third century, to utilise it so effectively as a means of developing and exploiting within a desert environment the superior military advantages offered by horses and horse cavalry » (pp. 284-285). S’il est vrai que les sources ne qualifient pas explicitement Ma‘add de « tribu » ni n’évoquent certaines institutions qui permettraient de reconnaître une formation tribale (chef, assemblée, culte commun etc.), des expressions comme « le Pays de Ma‘add<sup>um</sup> » (*’rd M’d<sup>m</sup>*, Ma’sal 1 = Ry 509 / 5-6) ou « les Arabes de Ma‘add<sup>um</sup> » (*’rb M’d<sup>m</sup>*, Murayghān 3 / 4) sont utilisées d’ordinaire avec des noms de tribu. Par ailleurs, l’histoire tribale de l’Arabie offre plusieurs exemples d’une évolution en trois étapes, commençant avec une simple tribu, se poursuivant avec un vaste agrégat de groupes fédérés autour de cette tribu sous le même nom, s’achevant enfin avec des éléments dispersés (sans chef commun, sans capitale et sans territoire continu) toujours appelés de même. C’est au Yémen qu’on trouve les exemples les plus clairs : Saba’, Ḥimyar, Ḥaḍramawt, Kinda, Madhhij ou Murād ; il en va probablement de même avec Ghassān, Nizār, Muḍar, Ma‘add ou Tanūkh (attestées dans l’épigraphie) ou Quḍā’a. Il est vrai que WERNER CASSEL qualifie

« Hujrides ». Dans les sources arabes, on parle de descendants de Ḥujr ou de ‘Amr b. Mu‘āwiya (banū Ḥujr ou banū ‘Amr b. Mu‘āwiya).

La Tradition n’indique pas comment Ḥujr a accédé au pouvoir dans la tribu de Kinda. Mais elle précise qu’il a été fait roi des tribus de Ma‘add par Tubba‘ (le roi de Ḥimyar). Ce dernier est parfois identifié plus précisément : ce serait Ḥassān b. Tubba‘ ou Tubba‘ b. Karib « qui revêtit la Ka‘ba d’une *kiswa* ». <sup>34</sup> Une seule source, al-Ya‘qūbī, précise la durée du règne de Ḥujr : 23 ans.

Les données sur l’extension du royaume de Ḥujr sont assez maigres. Il gouverne Ma‘add, mais aussi Rabī‘a — notamment Bakr qui en est la principale tribu — en Arabie du nord-est. Avec Rabī‘a, il lance des expéditions contre al-Bahrayn en Arabie orientale et contre Lakhm en Arabie du nord-est. De façon assez logique, Ibn al-Athīr conclut qu’il est le « roi des Arabes dans le Najd et au voisinage du ‘Irāq ».

Les liens que Kinda noue alors avec Rabī‘a semblent avoir été solides : quelques traditions rapportent que Kinda et Rabī‘a logeaient et effectuaient les rites aux mêmes emplacements pendant le pèlerinage à Makka ; certains prétendaient même que Kinda se rattachait à Rabī‘a. <sup>35</sup>

Les traditions expliquent le surnom « le Mangeur d’herbes amères » (*Ākil al-murār*) de diverses manières : il aurait mangé une herbe amère appelée *murār* ou ressemblerait à un chameau dont la gueule écume après en avoir brouté. Elles insistent sur ses exploits militaires, racontant notamment comment il a poursuivi et tué un chef tribal des marches de la Syrie qui avait enlevé sa femme.

Les sources prétendent que Ḥujr résidait à Ghamr dhī Kinda (à une soixantaine de kilomètres au nord-nord-est de Makka) <sup>36</sup> ou qu’il avait installé son camp à Baṭn ‘Āqil (carte 1), <sup>37</sup> à quelque 320 km au nord-ouest de la moderne al-Riyāḍ. Il serait mort de vieillesse après un règne long et heureux. C’est à Baṭn ‘Āqil qu’il serait enterré.

Ghassān de « fiktive Gemeinschaft » (CASKEl 1966-II, pp. 35 et 273) ; mais, à mon avis, il commet une erreur de perspective, oubliant que la troisième étape qui est bien documentée, a été précédée par deux autres.

<sup>34</sup>. OLINDER 1927, p. 39.

<sup>35</sup>. KISTER-PLESSNER 1976, pp. 58-59. Il est vrai que de telles affirmations peuvent être dictées par les circonstances. Le même article en donne deux exemples. Le premier est l’affirmation par la délégation de Kinda qui se rendit auprès de Muḥammad que les banū Ākil al-murār (la dynastie kindite) se rattachaient aux banū ‘Abd Manāf (le clan qurayshite auquel appartenait Muḥammad). Le second exemple est que ‘Abbās et Abū Sufyān se réclamaient d’une ascendance kindite quand ils se rendaient au Yémen.

<sup>36</sup>. OLINDER 1927, p. 34. al-Jāsir 1981 (pp. 351-352 et n. 1, p. 352) identifie Ghamr dhī Kinda avec Bustān al-Ghumayr, qui domine Nakhlat al-Shāmiyya, à 21 miles à l’ouest de dhāt ‘Irq (voir aussi pp. 603-604 et n. 2, p. 603). Comme dhāt ‘Irq se trouve à 90 km au nord-nord-est de Makka, Ghamr dhī Kinda serait donc à une soixantaine de kilomètres au nord-nord-est de cette dernière. Pour la géographie de cette région, voir aussi Lecker 1989, pp. 37 et suiv.

<sup>37</sup>. Les poètes préislamiques font souvent référence à ‘Āqil : voir THILO 1958, p. 29, qui donne quinze références.

Le caractère historique de Ḥujr b. ‘Amr est confirmé par un graffiti rupestre (Gajda-Ḥujr, Figures 1 et 2) qu’il a gravé sur un rocher, dans une zone désertique, à une centaine de kilomètres au nord-est de Najrān:<sup>38</sup>

« Ḥujr b. ‘Amr<sup>um</sup> roi de Kiddat »

(*Hgr b. ‘mr<sup>m</sup> mlk Kdt*)

Ce texte, qui n’est pas daté, présente une graphie caractéristique des derniers siècles avant l’Islam, de sorte que l’identification paraît assurée, même si les généalogies de Kinda connaissent trois Ḥujr b. ‘Amr.<sup>39</sup>

On notera que Ḥujr se donne le simple titre de « roi de Kiddat ». Il ne mentionne ni Madhḥij ni Ma‘add. La référence à Kinda me paraît significative : elle implique que Ḥujr règne toujours sur la tribu-mère (au Yémen), même s’il a reçu d’autres responsabilités dans les territoires conquis par les Ḥimyarites en Arabie centrale. Il en va certainement de même des deux premiers successeurs de Ḥujr. Mais, à une date antérieure à 547, le pouvoir sur la tribu-mère passe aux banū Kabsha, descendants de ‘Amr al-Maqṣūr b. Ḥujr, (ci-dessous, C.2. « Les banū Kabsha »).

L’absence de Madhḥij dans le titre de Ḥujr ne semble pas impliquer que ce dernier ne règne plus sur cette tribu (ci-dessus A.2. « Les banū Baddā’ »). En effet, l’endroit où le graffiti Gajda-Ḥujr a été gravé se trouvait probablement en territoire madhḥijite.<sup>40</sup>

On peut enfin se demander si ‘Amr, le père de Ḥujr, a régné. Dans la pratique sudarabique, un souverain ne mentionne le nom de son père que si ce dernier a occupé le trône. Il n’est pas sûr, cependant, que les mêmes règles soient suivies par les princes arabes. De fait, selon la Tradition arabo-islamique, Ḥujr aurait succédé non à ‘Amr, mais à Wahb, qui appartenait à un autre rameau de la famille (Tableau 3, et ci-dessous D. « Les rois légendaires »).

## 2. ‘Amr al-Maqṣūr b. Ḥujr

Ḥujr aurait eu deux fils, ‘Amr b. Ḥujr, surnommé « le Limité » (al-Maqṣūr)<sup>41</sup> qui hérita du trône et Mu‘āwiya al-Jawn qui reçut la Yamāma (où ses descendants sont attestés jusqu’à la fin du royaume de Kinda : voir C.1. « Les Āl al-Jawn »). Le surnom « al-Maqṣūr » viendrait de l’échec de ‘Amr soit à conserver le royaume de son père soit à l’égaliser au regard de la postérité.

On ne sait rien de la durée et des événements du règne. Une tradition que GUNNAR OLINDER rattache à Kalb rapporte qu’un roi ḥimyarite, Marthad b. ‘Abd Yankuf, aurait envoyé une grande armée pour soutenir ‘Amr, mais que ce fut en vain. ‘Amr aurait été vaincu et tué par ‘Āmir al-Jawn à la bataille de Qanān.

<sup>38</sup>. Il se trouve précisément à Nafūd Musammā, à quelque 25 km au nord-ouest de Kawkab.

<sup>39</sup>. CASSEL 1966-I, tableaux 235 et 238 : le fondateur de la dynastie, Ḥujr Ākil al-murār b. ‘Amr b. Mu‘āwiya ; son petit-fils Ḥujr b. ‘Amr al-Maqṣūr b. Ḥujr ; un personnage plus obscur, Ḥujr b. ‘Amr b. Abī Karib (dans la descendance de Mu‘āwiya al-Akrāmūn).

<sup>40</sup>. Voir n. 13 ci-dessus.

<sup>41</sup>. OLINDER 1927, pp. 47-50.



D'autres récits font mourir 'Amr b. Ḥujr dans un combat contre un prince de Ghassān.

La tradition sudarabique donne d'autres détails. 'Amr b. Ḥujr aurait reçu certaines responsabilités du souverain ḥimyarite Ḥassān b. Tubba'. Puis il aurait été au service de 'Amr b. Tubba', le frère et l'assassin de Ḥassān. 'Amr b. Tubba' lui aurait même donné en mariage l'une de ses nièces, fille de Ḥassān, apparemment pour humilier les descendants de ce dernier et non pour honorer le prince kindite.

### 3. *al-Ḥārith al-Malik b. 'Amr*

Le successeur de 'Amr b. Ḥujr est son fils al-Ḥārith b. 'Amr, surnommé « le Roi » (al-Malik). Il est la figure la plus marquante de la dynastie, avec un règne particulièrement long, qui aurait atteint 40 ans selon certains ou 60 ans selon d'autres. Le surnom « al-Malik » qui confirme l'éclat de ce souverain, se trouve notamment dans un vers de son petit fils, le fameux poète Imru' al-Qays b. Ḥujr b. al-Ḥārith :

*« Puisse après al-Ḥārith le Roi fils de 'Amr  
qui régna sur le 'Irāq aussi loin que le 'Umān ... ».*<sup>42</sup>

On ne sait pas grand-chose de son accession au pouvoir. Selon la tradition sudarabique, al-Ḥārith aurait été investi du commandement d'une grande armée pour marcher contre Ma'add, al-Ḥīra et les régions adjacentes, par son oncle maternel Tubba' b. Ḥassān b. Tubba' b. Malkīkarib b. Tubba' al-Aqran. Le même Tubba' en fit le roi de la tribu Bakr b. Wā'il. La tradition bakrite donne une version un peu différente : il aurait été porté au pouvoir par la tribu elle-même qui voulait se venger des rois d'al-Ḥīra.

On trouve aussi des récits fort divergents. Selon al-Dīnawārī, al-Ḥārith aurait été investi de la royauté sur Ma'add par un usurpateur ḥimyarite, Ṣuhbān b. dhū Ḥarb (le successeur de 'Amr b. Tubba'). Ce Ṣuhbān se serait rendu dans la Tihāma pour mettre de l'ordre parmi les descendants de Ma'add, qui lui demandaient un roi ; il aurait choisi al-Ḥārith parce que, par sa mère (qui était issue des banū 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a), il était apparenté à Ma'add.

Les traditions qui s'intéressent aux relations d'al-Ḥārith avec al-Ḥīra et la Perse sāsānide sont particulièrement nombreuses, surtout si on les compare avec celles relatives à Ghassān et à l'Empire romain. Elles impliquent qu'al-Ḥārith a étendu son pouvoir non seulement sur la région d'al-Ḥīra, mais aussi au-delà de l'Euphrate dans le sud de la Mésopotamie. Mais l'abondance des sources ne nous éclaire qu'à demi, à cause de multiples ambiguïtés et contradictions. OLINDER pense pouvoir distinguer deux périodes pendant lesquelles al-Ḥārith l'emporte face aux rois d'al-Ḥīra et s'installe même dans leur capitale.

Un premier groupe de traditions rapporte qu'al-Ḥārith a envahi le 'Irāq durant le règne du prédécesseur d'al-Mundhir (qui règne 49 ans si l'on en croit Ibn al-Kalbī, de c. 505 à 554). Le nom de ce prédécesseur fait débat. Ce pourrait être al-

<sup>42</sup>. *Ab 'ada 'l-Ḥārithi 'l-maliki bni 'Amr<sup>m</sup> | la-hu mulku 'l-'Irāqi ilā 'Umāni.*

Nu‘mān (le père d’al-Mundhir ou un homonyme) ou encore un roi nommé Abū Ya‘fur b. ‘Alqama qui s’intercalerait entre le règne d’al-Nu‘mān et celui d’al-Mundhir.

D’autres traditions prétendent que le règne d’al-Mundhir fut interrompu par celui d’al-Ḥārith. Elles rapportent que le roi sāsānide Qubād avait demandé à al-Mundhir, son gouverneur à al-Ḥīra et dans les territoires voisins, d’embrasser comme lui la doctrine de Mazdaq. Mais al-Mundhir avait refusé et avait été déposé. al-Ḥārith, en revanche, qui avait accepté, avait reçu comme gratification le trône d’al-Ḥīra. C’est seulement après l’accession au trône d’Anūshirwān — le fils et successeur de Qubād — qu’al-Mundhir avait pu rétablir sa situation. al-Ḥārith avait alors été contraint de s’enfuir et s’était réfugié dans la tribu Kalb, en Arabie du nord-ouest, abandonnant ses biens et 48 membres de sa famille qui furent massacrés.

La mort d’al-Ḥārith est toujours associée à Kalb, mais avec de nouvelles divergences : il aurait été tué par la tribu Kalb, ou y serait décédé de mort naturelle, ou encore aurait péri au cours d’une chasse après avoir dévoré un foie brûlant.

Après tous ces récits de guerre entre al-Ḥārith et al-Mundhir, une dernière donnée de la Tradition pourrait surprendre : al-Ḥārith donna sa fille Hind en mariage à al-Mundhir, sans doute à une époque où les deux hommes entretenaient de bonnes relations. Cette Hind est la mère du successeur d’al-Mundhir (appelé ‘Amr b. al-Mundhir, mais aussi ‘Amr b. Hind). Elle était tenue en grande estime à al-Ḥīra, malgré la brouille qui opposa la famille de son père à celle de son mari. Elle y fonda un couvent qui portait sur sa façade une inscription arabe dont Yāqūt et al-Bakrī ont transmis une copie commençant ainsi :

*« a construit cette église Hind fille d'al-Ḥārith b. ‘Amr b. Ḥujr la reine, fille des rois et mère du roi ‘Amr b. al-Mundhir, servante du Messie ... ».*<sup>43</sup>

Le caractère historique du roi al-Ḥārith al-Malik est incontestable parce que les données de la Tradition arabo-islamique sont recoupées par une source indépendante. L’ambassadeur byzantin Nonnosos que l’empereur Justinien (527-565) envoya en Arabie et en Éthiopie après la conquête de Ḥimyar par les Aksūmites, probablement vers 540,<sup>44</sup> mentionne dans son rapport que son grand-père — dont il ne donne pas le nom — avait déjà conclu une alliance au nom de l’empereur Anastase (491-518) avec un chef arabe nommé Arethas :

*« Justinien, à cette époque, régnait sur l’Empire romain. Le chef des Saracènes était Kaïsos, descendant d’Arethas, qui avait été chef lui aussi, et auprès de qui le grand-père de Nonnosos avait été envoyé en ambassade par Anastase alors empereur, et il avait négocié une paix ».*<sup>45</sup>

L’identité de cet Arethas ne fait pas de doute parce que son descendant, Kaïsos, « est à la tête des Chindènes [Kinda] et des Maadènes [Ma‘add] ». Arethas

<sup>43</sup>. Banat hādhihi ‘l-bī‘a Hind bint al-Ḥārith b. ‘Amr b. Ḥujr al-malika bint al-amlāk wa-umm al-malik ‘Amr b. al-Mundhir amat al-Masīh...

<sup>44</sup>. Voir ROBIN « à paraître ».

<sup>45</sup>. Photios, *Bibliothèque*, 3 = HENRY 1959, p. 4.

est donc un chef kindite qui peut être identifié avec al-Ḥārith al-Malik b. ‘Amr b. Ḥujr.

La « paix » évoquée par Nonnosos signifie qu’Arethas se met au service de Byzance et qu’il reçoit des subsides en contrepartie de la fourniture de troupes (cavaliers et chameliers). Elle signale également qu’Arethas jouit d’une grande autonomie, puisqu’il conclut directement un traité.

Une deuxième mention de cet Arethas se trouve probablement dans la chronique de Jean Malalas, qui rapporte sa capture et son exécution :

*« Cette année-là, il advint qu’un conflit éclata entre le duc de Palestine, Diomède, silencieux, et le phylarque Arethas. Arethas prit peur et se dirigea vers le limes intérieur en direction du territoire indien. En l’apprenant, Alamoundaros [al-Mundhir], le Saracène des Perses, attaqua le phylarque des Romains ; il le captura et le tua, car il avait 30 000 hommes ».*

Malalas ne précise pas qui est cet Arethas. Mais la suite du texte nous apprend que ce n’est pas le Jafnide al-Ḥārith fils de Jabala, puisque ce dernier participe à l’expédition punitive :

*« En apprenant cela, l’empereur Justinien écrivit aux ducs de Phénicie, d’Arabie et de Mésopotamie et aux phylarques des provinces de se porter contre lui et de le poursuivre, avec son armée. Partirent aussitôt Arethas le phylarque, Gnouphas [probablement Jafna], Naaman, Denys, duc de Phénicie, Jean, duc d’Euphratésie, et le chiliarque Sébastien avec leurs troupes ».*

En conséquence, l’Arethas qui est tué est très probablement le chef kindite. Malalas ne donne pas la date de sa mort, mais celle du retour de l’expédition punitive :

*« Ils s’en retournèrent en territoire romain, victorieux, au mois d’avril de la 6<sup>e</sup> indiction ».*<sup>46</sup>

L’expédition revient donc en avril 528. La mort d’Arethas se situe dans les mois qui précèdent, probablement fin 527 ou début 528.

L’endroit où Arethas est capturé et tué n’est pas très clair. Le phylarque (c’est-à-dire le « chef de tribu ») s’enfuyait « vers le limes intérieur, en direction du territoire indien ». L’une des interprétations de « territoire indien » peut être le territoire de Ḥimyar : en effet l’Arabie se partage alors entre les Saracènes indiens (= Ḥimyar), les Saracènes des Romains et les Saracènes des Perses. Mais il est difficile de déterminer l’extension de Ḥimyar vers 527-528 : si au début du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, Ḥimyar s’étendait sans doute jusqu’aux oasis du Ḥijāz en Arabie du nord-ouest et jusqu’aux abords de l’Euphrate en Arabie du nord-est, après la conquête aksūmite, les choses ont vraisemblablement changé. Il est possible aussi que « territoire indien » désigne tout simplement l’Arabie au-delà du limes.

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<sup>46</sup>. Malalas, XVIII.16 ; trad. JEFFREYS *et alii* 1986, p. 252. Voir aussi la version abrégée de la chronique de Théophane le Confesseur, éd. DE BOOR, p. 179 ; trad. MANGO *et alii*, p. 271 (année du Monde 6021 ; année de l’Incarnation 521). Concernant les dates de Théophane, voir n. 48.

De manière très hypothétique, Arethas pourrait avoir été tué vers Dūmat al-Jandal. Partant de Palestine — sans doute du sud de la Jordanie actuelle si on suppose qu'il s'agit de la Palestine III —, Arethas avait le choix entre deux directions : le sud-sud-est vers Tabūk et Taymā', ou l'est vers Dūmat al-Jandal. Mais c'est seulement dans cette dernière oasis, à mi-chemin entre le golfe d'al-'Aqaba et le Bas-Euphrate — qu'il était à portée d'Alamoudaros. Si Arethas a bien été tué vers Dūmat al-Jandal, qui dépendait de Kalb,<sup>47</sup> il y aurait ici un certain accord avec la Tradition arabo-islamique qui associe Kalb à la mort d'al-Ḥārith.

Nonnosos et Malalas donnent d'Arethas un portrait bien différent de celui de la Tradition arabo-islamique :

— c'est un allié majeur des Romains, ce qui lui vaut d'être appelé le « phylarque des Romains » et d'être vengé par une expédition punitive ;

— la querelle qui l'oppose au duc de Palestine suggère qu'il est chez lui dans cette province byzantine.

Il n'est nullement question de ses états de service dans l'empire sāsānide.

La chronologie fait également difficulté. Nous avons vu que, selon certaines traditions, c'est Anūshirwān — le fils et successeur de Qubād — qui chasse al-Ḥārith du trône d'al-Ḥīra et le remplace par al-Mundhir. Or Khosraw Anūshirwān ne serait associé au trône par son père que vers 528 ; quant à son règne, il commence en 531.

Nombre de chercheurs du passé qui se sont intéressés à la chronologie des rois de Kinda ont également identifié al-Ḥārith al-Malik avec un chef arabe nommé Arethas qui conclurait une paix avec Byzance vers 502. À notre avis, cette identification doit être abandonnée, de même que le repère chronologique qui en découle.

La source est Théophane le Confesseur selon lequel, en 496-497,<sup>48</sup> un général romain défait et repousse de Palestine un chef arabe nommé Gabala. En 497, un autre chef arabe, Ôgaros, fils d'un certain Arethas, nommé « enfant de la Thalabanê », est capturé avec de nombreux autres guerriers. Quatre années plus tard, soit sans doute en 501, Badicharimos, « après la mort d'Ôgaros, son frère », lance des expéditions contre la Phénicie, la Syrie et la Palestine. Théophane laisse ainsi entendre qu'Ôgaros est mort peu après sa capture, probablement en détention. Enfin, l'année suivante, c'est-à-dire probablement en 502, « Anastase conclut un traité avec Arethas, le père de Badicharimos et d'Ôgaros, appelé (fils) de la Thalabanê, et dès lors toute la Palestine, l'Arabie et la Phénicie jouirent de la tranquillité et de la paix ».

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<sup>47</sup>. Voir L. VECCIA VAGLIERI, « Dūmat al-Jandal », dans *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, deuxième édition.

<sup>48</sup>. Théophane date l'événement de 5989 dans l'ère du Monde (et implicitement de 490 dans l'ère de l'Incarnation puisque 5989 correspond à la 6<sup>e</sup> année du règne d'Anastase qui commence en 484 de l'Incarnation). L'équivalent dans notre comput serait 496-497 parce que les deux ères utilisées par Théophane sont décalées d'un peu plus de 7 ans (traduction MANGO et *alii*, pp. lxiv-lxv ; voir aussi OLINDER 1927, pp. 53-54).

Les inscriptions ḥimyarites indiquent que, vers la même époque, Muḍar est sous la tutelle de Ḥimyar (et de Byzance) et que ses chefs s'appellent les banū Tha'labat : la vraisemblance est donc grande que cet Arethas « enfant de la Thalabanê » soit un Tha'labatide, non issu de Kinda, mais d'une tribu d'Arabie occidentale, probablement Ghassân.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. *Les fils d'al-Ḥārith al-Malik*

Selon la Tradition arabo-islamique, après la mort d'al-Ḥārith, ses quatre fils se partagent le royaume. La répartition serait la suivante :

- Ḥujr b. al-Ḥārith : Asad et Kināna,
- Ma'dīkarib b. al-Ḥārith : Qays 'Aylān,
- Shuraḥbīl b. al-Ḥārith : Bakr b. Wā'il et une partie de Tamīm,
- Salama b. al-Ḥārith : Taghlib b. Wā'il et al-Namir,

avec d'importantes divergences entre les traditions, résultant en partie de multiples révoltes et renversements d'alliance.

Le conflit le plus aigu oppose Shuraḥbīl et Salama, qui règlent leurs comptes lors de la première bataille de Kulāb (le fameux *yawm Kulāb I* de la Tradition) ; Shuraḥbīl y perd la vie.<sup>50</sup> Dès lors, le pouvoir kindite en Arabie centrale se délite inexorablement. À la génération suivante, Imru' al-Qays b. Ḥujr, le célèbre poète préislamique déjà évoqué, un petit-fils d'al-Ḥārith, n'est plus qu'un proscrit errant d'une tribu à une autre.<sup>51</sup> Les descendants de Ḥujr Ākil al-murār se réfugient au Ḥaḍramawt après une ultime bataille perdue, le *yawm Jabala*.

#### 5. *L'énigmatique Qays descendant d'al-Ḥārith (en grec Kaïsos, descendant d'Arethas)*

Les sources byzantines font un récit différent. Après la mort du Kindite Arethas (al-Ḥārith al-Malik b. 'Amr b. Ḥujr) vers la fin de 527 ou au début de 528 (voir ci-dessus), l'un de ses descendants, nommé Kaïsos [Qays], est le candidat de Byzance pour la succession.

Nous disposons de deux sources différentes sur ce personnage. L'historien Procope nous éclaire sur le contexte politique et militaire en Arabie au moment où Justinien envoie une ambassade en Éthiopie et en Arabie du Sud, au printemps 531.<sup>52</sup> L'empereur enjoint à l'ambassadeur Ioulianos d'obtenir d'Aksūm et de Ḥimyar qu'ils s'engagent aux côtés de Byzance dans la guerre contre la Perse. Cet ambassadeur a aussi pour instruction de demander au souverain ḥimyarite d'« établir (Kaïsos) comme phylarque sur les Maddènes ». Cette démarche nous informe que, pour Byzance, Ḥimyar est toujours l'autorité légitime en Arabie centrale.

<sup>49</sup>. ROBIN 2008, pp. 176-178.

<sup>50</sup>. LYALL 1906.

<sup>51</sup>. OLINDER 1927, pp. 70 et suivantes.

<sup>52</sup>. Procope, *Guerres*, I.20.9 et suiv. ; BEAUCAMP 2010.

Ce Kaïsos qui est issu d'« une famille de phylarques » est « extrêmement doué pour la guerre ». C'est sans doute pour cela que les Romains le choisissent. Mais il présente un inconvénient sérieux : il est un « fugitif » (*Kaison ton phygada*), en mauvais termes avec le roi ħimyarite dont il a « tué un des parents » de sorte qu'il vit « en exil sur une terre complètement vide d'hommes ».

La seconde source est le rapport d'un autre ambassadeur, Nonnosos, qui nous est connu grâce au résumé qu'en a rédigé le patriarche Photios.<sup>53</sup> La Mission de Nonnosos est postérieure à celle de Ioulianos : Kaïsos, « chef des Saracènes » est alors « à la tête de deux tribus des plus en vue parmi les Saracènes, les Chindènes et les Maadènes », c'est-à-dire Kinda et Ma'add. Nonnosos nous indique le lien de parenté qui relie Kaïsos à Arethas, « chef lui aussi » : il en est le « descendant » (*apogonos*).

Un « traité de paix » lie Kaïsos à l'Empire. Il a été négocié par « le père de Nonnosos, avant la désignation de ce dernier comme ambassadeur .... sur l'ordre de Justinien ». Une clause de ce traité a été l'envoi du « propre fils de Kaïsos qui s'appelait Mauïas ... auprès de Justinien à Byzance ».<sup>54</sup>

Quant à Nonnosos, il a pour mandat de « ramener si possible Kaïsos auprès de l'empereur et (de) parvenir jusqu'au roi des Axoumites (Elesbaas était alors le maître de cette peuplade) et, en outre, (de) pousser jusque chez les Amérites ».

Kaïsos ne se rend pas immédiatement aux raisons de Justinien. Il faut « une seconde ambassade », dirigée cette fois par Abramês, le père de Nonnosos pour que Kaïsos accepte de se rendre à Byzance, après avoir partagé « sa propre phylarchie entre ses frères Ambros et Iezidos ». Il reçoit alors de l'empereur « le commandement sur les Palestines ; il amenait avec lui beaucoup de ses sujets ».<sup>55</sup>

Nous apprenons ainsi que Kaïsos, « descendant » (et non fils) d'Arethas, a des frères qui se nomment Ambros ('Amr) et Iezidos (Yazīd) et un fils qui s'appelle Mauïas (Mu'āwiya).

Le gouvernement de ce Kaïsos / Qays, qui se situe au début du règne de Justinien, dure suffisamment de temps pour que trois ambassades lui soient envoyées. Il s'achève par une émigration en Palestine, à une date inconnue, qui pourrait se situer vers 540, au moment où la guerre entre Byzance et la Perse se rallume.

L'identification de Kaïsos / Qays n'est pas facile. De longue date,<sup>56</sup> on l'a assimilé avec le Qays mentionné dans l'une des célèbres « odes suspendues » (*mu'allaqāt*), celle d'al-Ĥārith b. Ḥilliza, poète issu de la tribu Bakr b. Wā'il, qui avait été choisi comme porte-parole dans un conflit porté devant le souverain naṣride 'Amr b. Hind (554-569). La partie adverse, la tribu Taghlib b. Wā'il, avait pour héraut le poète 'Amr b. Kulthūm (le futur assassin du roi 'Amr).

Dans son poème, al-Ĥārith fait valoir les mérites de Bakr, notamment au service des Naṣrides. Il rappelle ainsi le rôle joué par sa tribu dans la défaite d'un

<sup>53</sup>. Photios, *Bibliothèque*, 3 = HENRY 1959, pp. 4-5.

<sup>54</sup>. ROBIN « à paraître ».

<sup>55</sup>. Ce texte de Photios est cité *in extenso* ci-dessous, C. 2. « Les banū Kabsha ».

<sup>56</sup>. Voir déjà CAUSSIN 1847-II, p. 92, n. 1.

certain Qays qui, à la tête de Ma'add, attaqua les Naşrides et fut écrasé à Thahlān, en Arabie centrale, à quelque 300 km à l'ouest de la moderne al-Riyāḏ :

« Ô toi qui nous calomnies auprès de 'Amr, mettras-tu un terme à tes fausses imputations ?

Nous avons à sa bienveillance trois titres que personne ne saurait nous contester.

L'un, nous l'avons acquis à l'orient de Shaqīqa,<sup>57</sup> lorsque parurent avec leurs drapeaux de nombreuses tribus issues de Ma'add, se pressant autour de Qays, fortes de la présence de ce héros du Yémen, à l'aspect imposant ».

al-Hārith ne précise pas que Qays est un prince kindite. Mais deux indices le laissent supposer : le fait que Qays soit à la tête de Ma'add et l'étrange qualificatif de *kabsh qarazī*, mot-à-mot « bélier tannifère », qui renverrait au Yémen — d'où le « héros du Yémen » dans la traduction de CAUSSIN DE PERCEVAL.<sup>58</sup>

Le problème est maintenant de savoir si on peut identifier Kaïsos / Qays avec un personnage connu. Deux petits-fils d'al-Hārith al-Malik ont été proposés.

*a. Kaïsos identifié avec le poète Imru' al-Qays b. Ḥujr b. al-Hārith al-Malik*

Pour CAUSSIN DE PERCEVAL et nombre d'autres chercheurs,<sup>59</sup> le Kaïsos de Procope et Nonnosos (identifié avec le Qays d'al-Hārith b. Ḥilliza) ne peut être que le fameux poète Imru' al-Qays b. Ḥujr b. al-Hārith al-Malik. Deux arguments plaident en ce sens : ils sont l'un et l'autre des petits-fils d'al-Hārith al-Malik et font le voyage de Constantinople.<sup>60</sup> Mais le nom ne correspond pas exactement : GUNNAR OLINDER fait justement remarquer que l'anthroponyme Imru' al-Qays est attesté en grec sous la forme *Amorkesos*.<sup>61</sup>

*b. Kaïsos identifié avec Qays b. Salama b. al-Hārith al-Malik*

Une solution qui paraît meilleure a été proposée par GUNNAR OLINDER :<sup>62</sup> Kaïsos serait le prince nommé Qays b. Salama b. al-Hārith al-Malik qui guerroya contre le naşride al-Mundhir si l'on en croit Yāqūt (entrée « Dayr Banī Marīnā »).<sup>63</sup>

Il est possible aujourd'hui d'apporter quelques compléments à cette hypothèse, grâce à la publication de nouvelles sources. Les généalogies d'Ibn al-

<sup>57</sup>. Ce toponyme est inexpliqué. Il rappelle le nom de la mère ou de l'aïeule du roi naşride al-Mundhir (voir ROBIN 2008, p. 185).

<sup>58</sup>. ROBIN 2008, pp. 176 et n. 58. L'arabe *qaraz* signifie « feuilles du bois *salam* employées dans la préparation des cuirs » (KAZIMIRSKI, qui ajoute : « *Bilād al-Qaraz*, surnom du Yémen, de l'Arabie Heureuse).

<sup>59</sup>. Voir en dernier lieu MUMAYIZ 2005.

<sup>60</sup>. CAUSSIN 1847-II, pp. 302-303, 311-312.

<sup>61</sup>. OLINDER 1927, p. 115 ; LETSIOS 1989.

<sup>62</sup>. OLINDER 1927, pp. 114-117.

<sup>63</sup>. OLINDER 1927, p. 117.

Kalbī confirment que Salama b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik a un fils nommé Qays.<sup>64</sup> Quant à Ibn Ḥabīb, il nous apprend incidemment que ce Qays a un frère appelé Yazīd — tout comme Kaïsos en a un nommé Iezidos — dans une énumération des « grands guerriers du Yémen » (*al-jarrārūn min al-Yaman*) : « Ḥujr b. Yazīd b. Salama le Kindite et Qays b. Salama le Kindite ». <sup>65</sup> Salama aurait donc eu au moins trois fils : Qays (Ibn al-Kalbī dans CASKEL 1966-I, tabl. 238 ; Ibn Ḥabīb), Mālik (Ibn al-Kalbī dans CASKEL 1966-I, tabl. 238) et Yazīd (Ibn Ḥabīb).

*c. Kaïsos, issu des banū Kabsha ?*

Une troisième identification de Kaïsos paraît possible : un membre des banū Kabsha. Elle part du constat que le Kindite qui se révolte contre Abraha au Ḥaḍramawt en 547 s'appelle Yazīd b. Kabshat (*Yzd bn Kbsʿt*). Or ce Yazīd peut être identifié avec un frère de Kaïsos : Nonnosos nous apprend en effet que, avant son départ pour Byzance, Kaïsos divise son pouvoir entre ses frères Ambros [ʿAmr] et Iezidos [Yazīd].

À l'appui de cette hypothèse, on peut rappeler qu'al-Ḥārith b. Ḥilliza qualifie curieusement son Qays de *kabsh qarazī*. Ce terme de *kabsh* pourrait être une allusion à l'appartenance aux banū Kabsha.

Cette hypothèse se heurte cependant à deux difficultés. Tout d'abord, les banū Kabsha ne sont pas les descendants d'al-Ḥārith al-Malik, mais ceux de son frère Imruʿ al-Qays. Pour la retenir, il faudrait supposer que Nonnosos a employé « descendant » [*apogonos*] dans un sens vague. Par ailleurs, Ibn al-Kalbī ne mentionne aucun Qays parmi les banū Kabsha (ci-dessous C.2. « Les banū Kabsha »).

Dans l'état actuel de la documentation, il est difficile de trancher même si l'identification de Kaïsos avec Qays b. Salama b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik conserve un léger avantage.

## **6. Les banū ʿAmr<sup>um</sup> de l'inscription Murayghān 1**

L'inscription Murayghān 1 = Ry 506, qui porte la date de septembre 552 (*ḡ- l<sup>n</sup> 662 ḥim.*) commémore une victoire d'Abraha, « quand il a lancé contre Maʿadd<sup>um</sup> une quatrième expédition, au mois de dhū-thābatān (= avril), alors que s'étaient révoltés tous les banū ʿAmr<sup>um</sup> ». <sup>66</sup> Les opérations militaires sont décrites de façon assez précise :

<sup>64</sup>. CASKEL 1966-I, tabl. 238. Noter qu'al-Ḥārith al-Malik a également un fils nommé Qays, mais ce Qays n'est pas un bon candidat à l'identification avec Kaïsos : on imagine mal Nonnosos — qui a rencontré personnellement Kaïsos — qualifier ce dernier de « descendant » d'Arethas s'il avait été son fils.

<sup>65</sup>. Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar*, p. 252. OLINDER savait pourtant qu'un cousin du poète Imruʿ al-Qays b. Ḥujr b. al-Ḥārith al-Mālik s'appelait Yazīd, et que ce Yazīd était peut-être un fils de Salama (1927, pp. 108 — où ce Yazīd est appelé « Yazīd b. al-Ḥārith » — et 117).

<sup>66</sup>. *k-ḡ(z)yw<sup>3</sup> Mʿd<sup>m</sup> ḡzwt<sup>n</sup> rbʿt<sup>n</sup> b-wrḥ<sup>n</sup> ḡ-tbr<sup>n</sup> k-qsʿdw kl bny-ʿmr<sup>m</sup>.*



« ... le roi a envoyé Abīgabr avec Kiddat et 'Ula, et Bishr<sup>um</sup> fils de Ḥiṣn<sup>um</sup> avec <sup>5</sup> Sa'd<sup>um</sup> et Mu[rād<sup>um</sup>]; (ceux-ci) ont combattu à la tête de l'armée contre les banū 'Amr<sup>um</sup>, Kiddat et 'Ula dans le wādī Murākḥ, et Murād<sup>um</sup> et Sa'd<sup>um</sup> dans le wādī <sup>6</sup> à l'aiguade de Turābān, et ils ont massacré, fait des prisonniers et pillé abondamment ... ». <sup>67</sup>

JACQUES RYCKMANS avait proposé d'identifier les *bny-'mr<sup>m</sup>* avec une grande tribu d'Arabie occidentale : les banū 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a. <sup>68</sup> Cette hypothèse, qui avait été acceptée unanimement depuis lors, notamment par A. F. L. BEESTON, M. J. KISTER, 'ABD AL-MUN'IM SAYYID ou MICHAEL ZWETTLER, avait conduit à supposer que l'armée d'Abraha affrontait deux coalitions tribales et donc qu'elle se divisait en deux formations : les auxiliaires arabes (constituant eux-mêmes deux colonnes) contre les banū 'Āmir en Arabie occidentale et l'armée royale contre Ma'add en Arabie centrale. Un argument convaincant semblait être qu'une bataille décisive se situait à *mnhl Trbn*, identifié avec le wādī et la ville de « Turaba » à 130 km à l'est d'al-Ṭā'if. Or, selon al-Bakrī, Turaba relevait des banū 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a. <sup>69</sup>

J'ai démontré ailleurs <sup>70</sup> que cette interprétation de Murayghān I ne s'accordait pas avec les données du texte qui commémore explicitement une expédition contre Ma'add<sup>um</sup> à la suite de la révolte de « tous » les *bny-'mr<sup>m</sup>*. Il n'est nullement question de deux coalitions tribales, mais d'une seule (Ma'add<sup>um</sup>) dont les chefs (les *bny-'mr<sup>m</sup>*) se révoltent. Il n'y a pas deux théâtres d'opérations, mais un seul, comme l'implique une seule mention de butin et de prisonniers. Les deux colonnes fermées par les auxiliaires arabes attaquent les *bny-'mr<sup>m</sup>* qui subissent de lourdes pertes de sorte que Ma'add<sup>um</sup> se soumet et remet des otages. Cette hypothèse s'accorde avec une pratique rédactionnelle constante dans les inscriptions du Yémen antique : une appellation commençant par *bnw / bny* désigne toujours un lignage (qui se définit par la référence à un ancêtre réel ou fictif), mais jamais une tribu, dont le nom n'est jamais un anthroponyme.

Il reste à identifier qui sont ces *bny-'mr<sup>m</sup>*. Ce sont évidemment les descendants de 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya, le père de Ḥujr Ākil al-murār. Plusieurs traditionnistes arabes appellent effectivement banū 'Amr (ou banū 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya) la famille royale de Kinda. Il en va ainsi d'Ibn al-Kalbī qui intitule le paragraphe dans lequel il traite des rois de Kinda « Voici les banū 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya » ; <sup>71</sup> on peut encore mentionner al-Balādhurī et al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī. <sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup>. ... w-dky mlk' 'bgbr b-'m Kdt w-'l w-Bs<sup>2</sup>r<sup>m</sup> bn-Ḥiṣn<sup>m</sup> b-'m <sup>5</sup> S'<sup>d</sup> w-M(r)[d<sup>m</sup>]w-(hḏ)rw qdmy gys<sup>2</sup> 'ly bny-'mr<sup>m</sup> Kdt w-'l b-wd(..)Mr(h) w-Mrd<sup>m</sup> w-S'<sup>d</sup> b-wd(.) <sup>6</sup> b-mnhl Trb<sup>n</sup> w-hrgw w-'s<sup>3</sup>rw w-ḡnmw d-'s'm ...

<sup>68</sup>. RYCKMANS J. 1953, p. 341.

<sup>69</sup>. al-Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, Entrée « Turaba » : « c'est un lieu dans le pays des banū 'Āmir » (*wa-huwa mawḏi' ft bilād banī 'Āmir*).

<sup>70</sup>. ROBIN « à paraître ».

<sup>71</sup>. *Nasab*, p. 168 : *wa-hā'ulā'i banū 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya*.

<sup>72</sup>. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 109 : « Se réunirent contre lui [Ziyād b. Labīd] les banū 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya b. al-Ḥārith al-Kindī » (*wa-jumi'a la-hu banū 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya b. al-Ḥārith al-*

Mais peut-on mettre des noms précis derrière l'expression « tous les banū 'Amr<sup>um</sup> » ? Le « tout » implique que plusieurs rameaux du lignage se sont révoltés. Cela peut être les deux frères auxquels Kaïsos (Qays) a confié son domaine (sources byzantines) quand il est parti vers les Palestines. On peut penser également aux fils et aux petits-fils d'al-Ḥārith al-Malik (Tradition arabo-islamique). On ne saurait exclure enfin les Āl al-Jawn de la Yamāma ni même les banū Kabsha (du Ḥaḍramawt ?) (voir ci-dessous C.1 et C.2).

Les indices dont nous disposons ne permettent pas de trancher. On peut supposer que les frères de Kaïsos et au moins un descendant d'al-Ḥārith al-Malik (le poète Imru' al-Qays b. Ḥujr b. al-Ḥārith) sont engagés de façon plus ou moins déterminée dans l'alliance byzantine, tout comme Abraha. En sens inverse, il ne faut pas oublier que les descendants d'al-Ḥārith al-Malik sont apparentés à 'Amr, le fils du naṣride al-Mundhir et le petit-fils d'al-Ḥārith par sa mère Hind. Or 'Amr b. Hind (ou b. al-Mundhir), qui succède en 554 à son père, a apparemment joué un rôle important dans les affaires de l'Arabie déserte avant son accession au trône. On rapportait par exemple qu'il avait patronné un traité de paix entre Bakr et Taghlib au marché de dhū 'l-Majāz, à 35 km à l'est de Makka.<sup>73</sup> Par ailleurs, Abraha, dans les deux inscriptions qu'il grave à Murayghān, se félicite d'avoir expulsé 'Amr b. al-Mundhir de l'Arabie centrale.<sup>74</sup> Il est vraisemblable que la parenté qui liait 'Amr aux Ḥujrides ont conduit certains de ces derniers à s'allier aux Naṣrides et, par leur intermédiaire, aux Sāsānides.<sup>75</sup>

Mais, si certains princes sont plutôt alignés sur Byzance et d'autres sur la Perse, rien n'interdit de supposer que des lignes de fracture existent également à l'intérieur de chaque coalition.

### C. Les rameaux secondaires

Plusieurs rameaux secondaires des Ḥujrides jouent également un certain rôle dans les affaires de l'Arabie déserte.

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*Kindī*) (traduction HIRTI, p. 153) ; al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl* VIII, p. 90 : « Tarīm est l'endroit des rois issus des banū 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya » (*wa-Tarīm, mawḍi' al-mulūk min banī 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya*) (*idem* dans al-Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, « Tarīm », p. 311) ; al-Hamdānī, *Sifa*, 88 / 25-89 / 1-2 : « ce sont les banū Mu'āwiya b. Kinda dont sont issus les rois portant le diadème (*mutawwajūn*), soixante-dix dit-on, les premiers, Thawr et Murti', les deux fils de 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya, et le dernier, al-Ash'ath b. Qays al-Kindī b. Ma'dī Karib ». Dans ce dernier texte, la formulation d'al-Hamdānī est inexacte : si Thawr et Murti' (ou Muratti') sont effectivement les premiers rois de Kinda, ils ne sont pas « les deux fils de 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya », mais deux ancêtres (voir CASHEL 1966-I, tableau 233). Voir aussi al-Hamdānī, *Sifa*, 88 / 24.

<sup>73</sup>. LECKER 2005-XI, p. 39.

<sup>74</sup>. Murayghān 1 = Ry 506 (réinterprétée dans ROBIN « à paraître ») et Murayghān 3.

<sup>75</sup>. Voir l'histoire du ḥujride Abū 'l-Jabr b. 'Amr b. Yazīd b. Shuraḥbīl b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik qui sollicite l'aide de Kisrā (le suzerain des Naṣrides) pour lutter contre d'autres Ḥujrides (ci-dessous, C.5. « Autres Kindites occupant des positions élevées »).

### 1. Les Āl al-Jawn<sup>76</sup>

Le domaine de Ḥujr Ākil al-murār aurait été partagé entre ses deux fils, ‘Amr al-Maqṣūr, qui aurait joui de la primauté, et Mu‘āwiya al-Jawn auquel aurait échu la Yamāma. Les Āl al-Jawn règnent sur la Yamāma jusqu’à leur expulsion d’Arabie centrale, après la bataille de Jabala (*yawm Jabala*), et se replient au Ḥaḍramawt.

### 2. Les banū Kabsha<sup>77</sup>

‘Amr al-Maqṣūr (fils de Ḥujr ākil al-murār) aurait eu deux fils, al-Ḥārith al-Malik et Imru’ al-Qays. Les descendants de ce dernier sont appelés banū Kabsha, d’après le nom de leur mère.

L’un d’entre eux, appelé Ibn Kabsha, est mentionné dans plusieurs fragments poétiques se rapportant à la bataille de dhū Najab (*yawm dhū Najab*), qui serait postérieure d’une année à la bataille de Jabala (qui mit fin au règne des Āl al-Jawn en Arabie centrale). Cet Ibn Kabsha, dont le nom complet serait Ḥassān b. Kabsha, ou Ḥassān b. Mu‘āwiya b. Ḥujr, serait « l’un des rois du Yémen » ou un « roi de Kinda ». <sup>78</sup>

C’est à ce même lignage qu’appartient Yazīd b. Kabsha (*Yzd bn Kbs²t*), gouverneur (*hlft*) qu’Abraha aurait nommé à la tête de Kinda et qui se révolte en 547 (*CIH* 541 / 10-11, daté de mars 548).

Il semblerait donc, même si la Tradition n’en fait pas mention de façon explicite, que, vers le milieu du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, le pouvoir sur la Kinda du Yémen soit exercé par les banū Kabsha. L’accession de ceux-ci au pouvoir peut être mise en relation avec une information transmise par l’ambassadeur byzantin Nonnosos :

*« Kaisos [Qays], après une seconde ambassade d’Abramès auprès de lui, vint à Byzance ; il partagea sa propre province (phylarchie) entre ses frères Ambros [‘Amr] et Iezidos [Yazīd] et il reçut lui-même de l’empereur le commandement sur les Palestines ; il amenait avec lui beaucoup de ses sujets ».* <sup>79</sup>

Une identification de « Iezidos » avec Yazīd b. Kabsha n’est nullement exclue malgré les difficultés que cette hypothèse soulève (ci-dessus, B.5. « L’énigmatique Qays descendant d’al-Ḥārith »).

### 3. Les banū Walī‘a<sup>80</sup>

À la veille de l’Islam, les membres de cette dynastie semblent jouir de la primauté sur Kinda. Ils descendent d’al-Ḥārith al-Wallāda (b. ‘Amr b. Mu‘āwiya), le frère de Ḥujr Ākil al-murār (Tableau 3).

<sup>76</sup>. OLINDER 1931.

<sup>77</sup>. CASSEL 1966-I, tableau 238.

<sup>78</sup>. OLINDER 1931, pp. 225-228. Se fondant sur la généalogie d’Ibn Kabsha, OLINDER confond les lignages de Kabsha et d’al-Jawn (comme le fait ensuite KISTER, à propos d’Abū ‘l-Jabr).

<sup>79</sup>. Photios, *Bibliothèque*, par. 3.

<sup>80</sup>. CASSEL 1966-I, tableaux 238 et 239 ; Lecker 1994, pp. 336-337.

Les sources mentionnent quatre frères (Mikhwas, Mishraḥ, Abḍu‘a et Jamd) qui se seraient rendus auprès de Muḥammad à Médine, auraient apostasié et auraient été tués.

« Les banū ‘Amr b. Mu‘āwiya b. al-Ḥārith al-Kindī se rassemblèrent pour le [Ziyād b. Labīd] combattre. Ce dernier, à la tête des musulmans, les attaqua durant la nuit et en tua beaucoup, parmi lesquels se trouvaient Mikhwas, Mishraḥ, Jamd et Abḍu‘a fils de Ma‘dī Karib b. Walī‘a b. Shuraḥbīl b. Mu‘āwiya b. Hujr al-Qarid (qarid dans leur dialecte signifie une « personne généreuse ») b. al-Ḥārith al-Wallāda b. ‘Amr b. Mu‘āwiya b. al-Ḥārith. Ces quatre frères étaient en possession de si nombreuses vallées qu’ils étaient appelés “les quatre rois”. Avant cela, ils s’étaient présentés eux-mêmes devant le Prophète, mais avaient apostasié par la suite ».<sup>81</sup>

#### 4. Les banū Jabala<sup>82</sup>

Ils sont issus de Mu‘āwiya al-Akramūn (b. al-Ḥārith al-Aṣḡhar b. Mu‘āwiya b. al-Ḥārith al-Akbar ; voir Tableau 3). Trois se succèdent au pouvoir : Ma‘dīkarib, son fils Qays et son petit-fils al-Ash‘ath,<sup>83</sup> ce dernier contemporain de Muḥammad.

al-Ash‘ath et ses descendants jouent un rôle politique important dans l’Empire islamique. Son petit-fils, Ibn al-Ash‘ath,<sup>84</sup> prend en 699-702 la tête d’une révolte contre al-Ḥajjāj qui ébranle le trône de l’umayyade ‘Abd al-Malik.

#### 5. Autres Kindites occupant des positions élevées

a. Abīgabr (‘bḡbr), qui commande une colonne de l’armée d’Abraha<sup>85</sup>

L’armée d’Abraha chargée de réprimer la révolte des banū ‘Amr en 552 comporte deux colonnes. Le commandant de la première, Abīgabr (ci-dessus B.6. « Les banū ‘Amr de l’inscription Murayghān 1), est à la tête des contingents de Kinda et de ‘Ula. Le texte n’indique pas explicitement qu’Abīgabr est kindite, mais

<sup>81</sup>. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* (éd. Riḍwān, p. 109 ; trad. Hitti, pp. 153-154) : *wa-jama‘a la-hu banū ‘Amr b. Mu‘āwiya b. al-Ḥārith al-Kindī fa-bayyata-hum fī-man ma‘a-hu min al-muslimīn fa-qatala min-hum bashar<sup>am</sup> fī-him Mikhwas wa-Mishraḥ wa-Jamd wa-Abḍu‘a banū Ma‘dī Karib b. Walī‘a b. Shuraḥbīl b. Mu‘āwiya b. Hujr al-Qarid « wa-‘l-qarid » al-jawād fī kalāmi-him b. al-Ḥārith b. [sic.] al-Wallāda b. ‘Amr b. Mu‘āwiya b. al-Ḥārith wa-kānat la-hā ‘ulā ‘i ‘l-ikhwa awḍiya yamlikūna-hā fa-summū ‘l-mulūk al-arba‘a. wa-kānū wafadū ‘alā ‘l-nabī ṣ thumma ‘rtaddū.*

<sup>82</sup>. CASSEL 1966-I, tableaux 234, 235 et 236 ; LECKER 1995, pp. 639-642.

<sup>83</sup>. Voir aussi H. RECKENDORF, « al-Ash‘ath », dans *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, deuxième édition.

<sup>84</sup>. Voir L. VECCIA VAGLIERI, « Ibn al-Ash‘ath », dans *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, deuxième édition.

<sup>85</sup>. KISTER 1965, pp. 434-436 ; voir aussi CASSEL 1966-II, p. 251 ; GAJDA 2009, p. 141.

c'est une possibilité. La Tradition arabo-islamique connaît en effet deux Kindites nommés Abū Jabr ou Abū 'l-Jabr :

— Abū 'l-Jabr b. 'Amr b. Yazīd b. Shurahbīl b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik b. 'Amr al-Maqṣūr b. Ḥujr Ākil al-murār b. 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya (CASSEL 1966-I, tableau 238 ; ci-dessous, Tableau 3).

C'est avec lui que M. J. KISTER propose d'identifier le *'bgr* d'Abraha. Abū 'l-Jabr appartenait à la famille royale kindite. En conflit avec certains membres de cette dernière, il aurait sollicité l'aide de Kisrā, le souverain sāsānide,<sup>86</sup> qui lui aurait accordé une petite force prélevée sur ses troupes montées (*al-Asāwira*). À peine arrivés dans le désert, ces hommes, pour rentrer chez eux au plus vite, auraient mis du poison dans sa nourriture. Abū 'l-Jabr, affaibli par la souffrance, les aurait laissés partir et leur aurait même donné une lettre de congé. Il aurait finalement survécu au poison, serait allé se faire soigner à al-Ṭā'if, mais serait mort peu après.

al-Hamdānī mentionne incidemment ce personnage à propos d'une bourgade du Ḥaḍramawt : « Yatrab, ville au Ḥaḍramawt dans laquelle Kinda s'installa ; Abū 'l-Jabr [dans le texte Abū 'l-Khayr] b. 'Amr y résida ». <sup>87</sup>

— Abū 'l-Jabr b. Wahb b. Rabī'a b. Mu'āwiya (al-Akramūn) b. al-Ḥārith al-Aṣghar b. Mu'āwiya (CASSEL 1966-I, tableau 237 ; ci-dessous, Tableau 3).

Il reste à examiner si l'un de ces deux Abū 'l-Jabr est un candidat sérieux à l'identification avec *'bgr*. Le premier se situe à la 8<sup>e</sup> génération après l'ancêtre commun (Mu'āwiya) et le second à la 5<sup>e</sup>. Le premier, si sa généalogie est exacte, est un arrière-petit-fils du prince Shurahbīl b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik, qui meurt au combat lors du premier *yawm Kulāb* (probablement postérieur à 528, date de la mort d'al-Ḥārith al-Mālik). Son grand-père Yazīd appartient à la même génération que le grand poète Imru' al-Qays (b. Ḥujr b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik). Il semble donc peu vraisemblable que cet Abū 'l-Jabr ait l'âge de commander une armée en 552. Le second, en revanche, appartient à la même génération que le prince Shurahbīl b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik. Il peut être un homme d'âge mûr en 552.

On peut ajouter que le premier Abū 'l-Jabr descend de 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya (le père de Ḥujr Ākil al-murār), tandis que le second est issu d'un frère de ce même 'Amr (qui s'appelle al-Ḥārith b. Mu'āwiya) dont descendent également les derniers rois de Kinda à l'époque de Muḥammad.

Abū 'l-Jabr b. Wahb b. Rabī'a b. Mu'āwiya (al-Akramūn) apparaît comme un meilleur candidat à l'identification avec *'bgr*, le chef des Kindites de l'armée d'Abraha pour des raisons chronologiques et parce qu'il n'appartient pas aux banū 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya (identifiés aux *bny-'mr'*) qu'il est chargé de combattre.

*b. 'Abd al-Masīḥ b. Dāris al-Kindī, gouverneur ('āqib) de Najrān*

<sup>86</sup>. Selon CASSEL, Khosraw I (531-579).

<sup>87</sup>. *Ṣifa*, p. 87 / 12-13 : *wa-Yatrab madīnat bi-Ḥaḍramawt nazalat-hā Kinda wa-kāna bi-hā Abū 'l-Jabr b. 'Amr*. Voir aussi al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl* II, p. 18, et *al-Iklīl* VIII, p. 90 (qui précise qu'Abū 'l-Jabr demande l'aide de Kisrā contre les banū 'l-Ḥārith b. 'Amr b. Mu'āwiya, à savoir les descendants d'al-Ḥārith al-Wallāda, le frère de Ḥujr Ākil al-murār) ; Lecker 1994, p. 336 et nn. 4 et 8.

Il faut encore mentionner le Kindite gouverneur (*'āqib*) de Najrān à l'époque de Muḥammad. Selon la *Vie exemplaire* d'Ibn Hishām, la délégation des Najrānites qui se rend auprès de Muḥammad à al-Madīna est conduite par trois personnages importants : le *'āqib*, investi de l'autorité politique ; le *sayyid*, en charge du commerce et des affaires locales ; enfin l'évêque, chef de l'Église et responsable de l'enseignement. Les diverses traditions s'accordent sur le nom du *'āqib*, un Kindite manifestement chrétien : 'Abd al-Masīḥ b. Dāris al-Kindī.<sup>88</sup> Le nom de ce personnage n'apparaît pas dans les généalogies de Kinda : on ignore donc de quelle fraction il est issu. Le *'āqib* est d'ordinaire le représentant d'un pouvoir central. Même si nos sources ne le disent pas, 'Abd al-Masīḥ b. Dāris pourrait être, à Najrān, l'agent du pouvoir sāsānide qui domine le Yémen depuis les années 570. Le fait qu'un Kindite soit investi de hautes responsabilités à Najrān peut être mis en relation avec l'appartenance de Madhḥij à un ensemble tribal dominé par Kinda (voir ci-dessus A.2. « Les banū Baddā' »).

c. *Ukaydir b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Sakūnī*<sup>89</sup>

L'inventaire ne serait pas complet si je ne mentionnais pas encore Ukaydir b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Kindī al-Sakūnī qui, en 9 de l'hégire, régnait sur l'oasis de Dūmat al-Jandal. Ukaydir appartenait à la fraction d'al-Sakūn appelée banū Shukāma (ou banū Ghāḍira d'après le nom de leur mère).<sup>90</sup> La tradition s'accorde à le considérer comme chrétien. On ignore comment il est devenu le maître de l'oasis.<sup>91</sup> Peut-être fut-il à la tête d'une troupe de mercenaires au service de Byzance ou des Sāsānides et sut-il tirer parti des désastres militaires des uns et des autres pour se tailler un domaine personnel en Arabie du Nord. Il est en tout cas le seul prince kindite qui n'appartienne pas à la fraction Mu'āwiya.

La plupart de ces princes sont appelés « rois » : il ne faut pas accorder trop d'importance à ce titre. Comme le remarque le texte d'al-Balādhurī déjà cité (ci-dessus C.3. « Les banū Walī'a »), il suffit d'être en possession de « nombreuses vallées » pour être reconnu comme tel. Ces rois sont avant tout des chefs de tribu. Si l'autorité de certains peut s'exercer sur un vaste territoire, c'est en tant que gouverneur ou représentant d'un véritable souverain (celui de Ḥimyar ou d'al-Ḥīra).

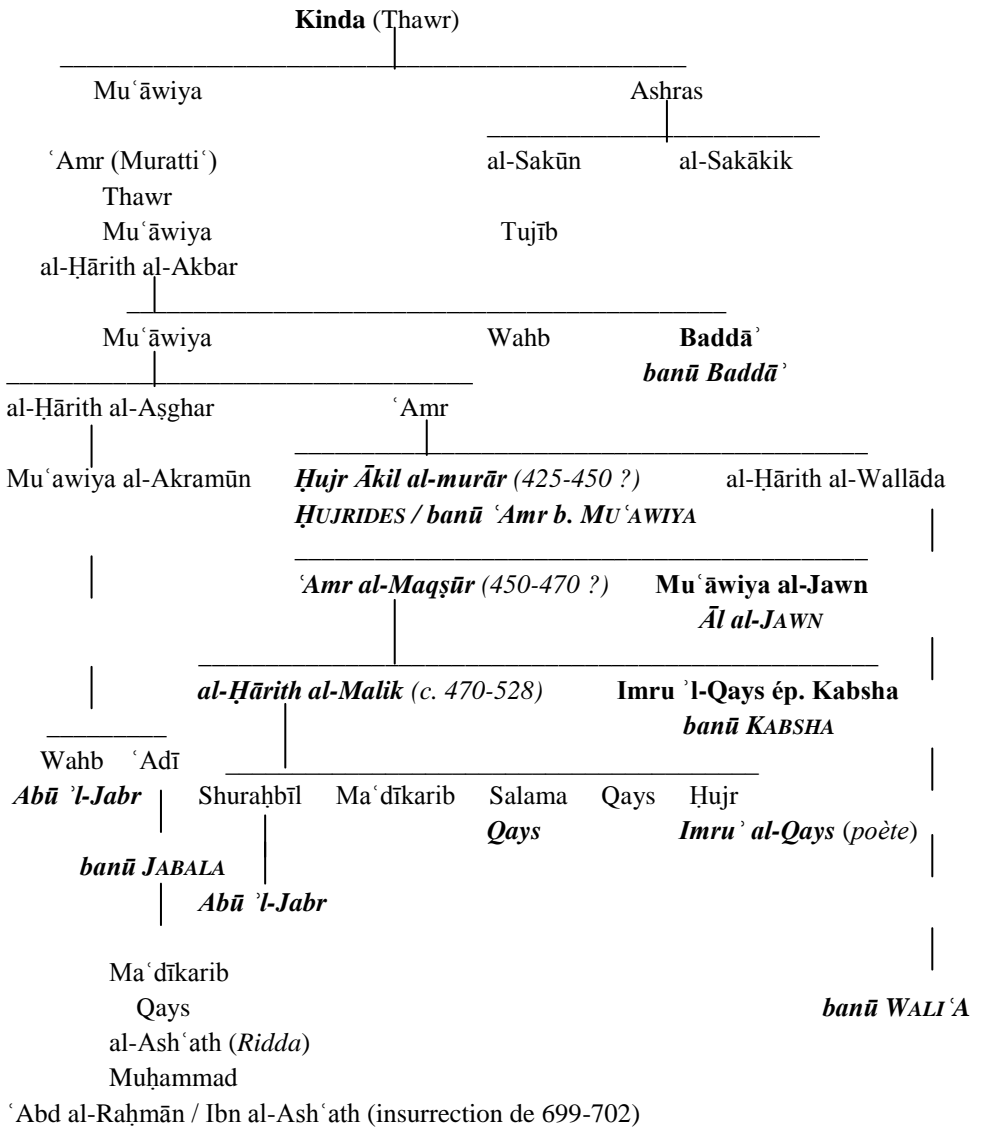
<sup>88</sup>. CAETANI 1907 (*Annali dell'Islam*, II / I), p. 350 ; Massignon 1943, p. 12. Il convient donc de distinguer le *'āqib* 'Abd al-Masīḥ du prince homonyme de Najrān appartenant aux Āl 'Abd al-Madān, qui reçoit al-A'shā.

<sup>89</sup>. Voir L. VECCIA VAGLIERI, « Dūmat al-Jandal », dans *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, deuxième édition ; CASKEL-1966, I, tableau 241, et II, p. 566-567.

<sup>90</sup>. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Nasab Ma'add*, p. 190.

<sup>91</sup>. On ne saurait exclure qu'al-Ḥārith al-Mālik ait dominé l'oasis (comme le suppose CASKEL 1966-II, p. 329), mais ceci n'explique nullement la présence d'un prince kindite près d'un siècle plus tard.

Tableau 3  
Les dynasties royales de Kinda



**D. Les rois légendaires**

Les cinq descendants en ligne directe de Mu‘āwiya b. Kinda (Thawr) (Tableau 3) sont eux aussi considérés par les traditionnistes comme des « rois ».

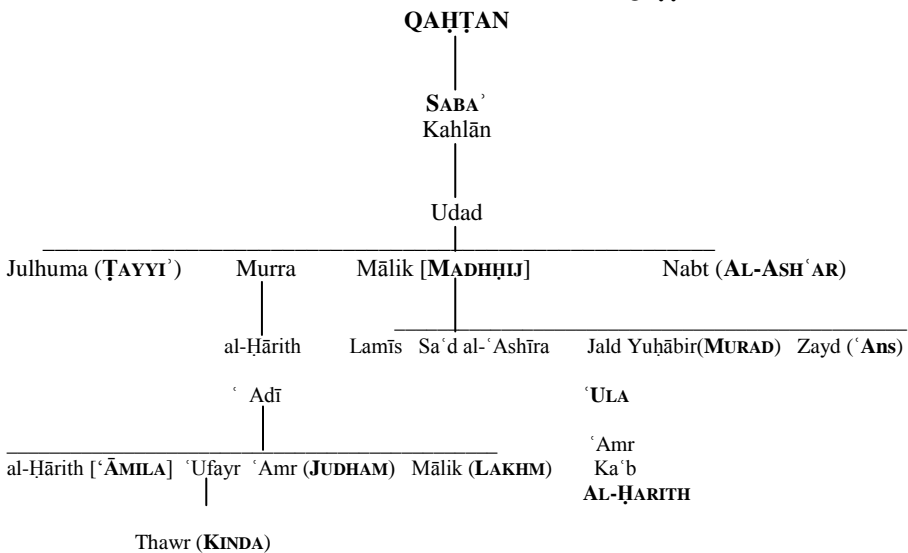
Kinda, originaire du Ḥaḍramawt, aurait été contrainte à l'exil, à la suite d'une défaite. Elle se serait alors réfugiée au cœur de l'Arabie déserte, dans le pays de Ma‘add, à Ghamr dhī Kinda, à deux jours de marche de Makka. C'est au cours de cette migration que la tribu se serait donné un roi pour la première fois.

Si l'on en croit al-Ya‘qūbī, cinq rois se succéderaient alors en ligne directe à la tête de Kinda : de père en fils, Murti‘ b. Mu‘āwiya b. Thawr (auquel on attribue un règne de 20 ans), Thawr b. Murti‘, Mu‘āwiya b. Thawr, al-Ḥārith al-Akbar b. Mu‘āwiya (40 ans) et Wahb b. al-Ḥārith (20 ans). C'est alors qu'une nouvelle branche accèderait au pouvoir.<sup>92</sup>

al-Ḥārith al-Akbar, le père du dernier roi de cette dynastie, est manifestement un personnage-clé dans l'histoire de Kinda puisque toutes les dynasties historiques prétendent descendre de lui.

Tableau 4

**Kinda dans la descendance de Qaḥṭān**



<sup>92</sup>. OLINDER 1927, pp. 34-35, 38.



## E. LES ẖUJRIDES ET LEURS SUZERAINS ẖIMYARITES

Pour préciser ce que fut le royaume kindite et la chronologie de ses rois, il faut encore examiner ce que nous savons de la domination ẖimyarite sur l'Arabie déserte.

### 1. Les suzerains ẖimyarites mentionnés par la Tradition arabo-islamique

Les traditionnistes savent parfaitement que les « rois » kindites ne sont pas de véritables souverains, mais de simples agents des rois ẖimyarites. Pour être plus précis, cette dépendance des princes de Kinda par rapport aux rois de ẖimyar n'est soulignée que par une partie de la Tradition, celle que G. OLINDER appelle la « tradition sud-arabique ». En revanche, selon les informateurs originaires de la grande tribu de Bakr en Arabie du Nord-Est, cette tribu et ses rois kindites agiraient indépendamment, sans avoir besoin du soutien de ẖimyar ou de la Perse.<sup>93</sup> Le célèbre compilateur des « Combats des Arabes » (*Ayyām al-'Arab*), cependant, n'est pas dupe : il se rend compte que les princes ẖujrides ne sont pas de vrais rois, mais de simples « possesseurs de biens » (*dhawū amwāl*).<sup>94</sup>

Les traditions sudarabiques rapportent que les rois kindites sont placés sur le trône par des souverains ẖimyarites dont elles donnent parfois le nom. On relève notamment que :

- ẖujr est intronisé par Tubba', Ḥassān b. Tubba' ou Tubba' b. Karib ;
- 'Amr reçoit le soutien de Marthad b. 'Abd Yankuf ; on rapporte également qu'il est au service de Ḥassān b. Tubba' puis de 'Amr b. Tubba' ;
- al-Ḥārith est investi par son oncle maternel Tubba' b. Ḥassān b. Tubba' b. Malkīkarib b. Tubba' al-Aqran ou bien par un usurpateur nommé Ṣuhbān b. dhū Ḥarb (le successeur de 'Amr b. Tubba').

Parmi ces noms, certains peuvent être identifiés de manière assurée ou vraisemblable (Tableau 6). Il est sûr que Ḥassān b. Tubba' est Ḥaššān Yuha'min fils d'Abīkarib As'ad. Tout d'abord Ḥaššān est le seul souverain connu à porter ce nom. Par ailleurs Tubba' est le surnom habituel d'Abīkarib As'ad (c. 375-c. 445). Il semblerait que Ḥaššān accède brièvement au trône vers 445-450.

Tubba' est probablement Abīkarib As'ad comme je viens de le dire, mais il n'est pas exclu que ce soit n'importe lequel des rois de la dynastie ẖimyarite puisque tous peuvent être surnommés ainsi.

Tubba' b. Karib est vraisemblablement Abīkarib As'ad b. Malkīkarib Yuha'min, avec une graphie amputée du patronyme.

'Amr, selon les traditions, serait un frère de Ḥassān. Il aurait assassiné ce dernier pour être roi à sa place. Une identification avec Shuriḥbi'l Ya'fur fils d'Abīkarib As'ad et frère de Ḥaššān, qui règne de c. 450 à c. 468, semble plausible.

<sup>93</sup>. OLINDER 1927, pp. 21-23.

<sup>94</sup>. LECKER 2003, pp. 57, n. 103.

Le nom de Marthad b. ‘Abd Yankuf ne correspond à aucun roi connu. Tout au plus peut-on observer que le successeur de Shuriḥbi’īl Ya‘fur s’appelle Shuriḥbi’īl Yakkuf (arabe Yankuf). Ce dernier fonde une nouvelle dynastie qui règne une vingtaine d’années. Lui-même occupe le trône de c. 468 à c. 480. Quant à Marthad, ce nom se retrouve dans celui de deux rois, Marthad’īlān Yun‘im petit-fils de Shuriḥbi’īl Yakkuf (c. 480-485) et Marthad’īlān Yanūf (c. 500-c. 515), mais rien n’autorise une identification. Il reste enfin Ṣubbān b. dhū Ḥarb dont on ne sait rien.

Le seul souverain ḥimyarite qui jette quelque lumière sur la chronologie est Ḥaśśān. Ḥujr Ākil al-murār est intronisé par lui. ‘Amr b. Ḥujr est à son service et à celui de son frère. Enfin al-Ḥārith b. ‘Amr b. Ḥujr est investi par un fils de Ḥaśśān.

Ḥaśśān est apparemment le fils aîné d’Abīkarib As‘ad qui disparaît vers 445 à un âge très avancé. Il commence donc sa carrière bien avant cette date. L’installation de Ḥujr Ākil al-murār peut donc intervenir à une date quelconque pendant la première moitié du v<sup>e</sup> siècle. De façon hypothétique, nous situons le règne de Ḥujr (23 ans selon al-Ya‘qūbī) entre 425 et 450.

‘Amr al-Maqṣūr serait le contemporain de Ḥaśśān et de Shuriḥbi’īl Ya‘fur (= le roi ḥimyarite ‘Amr). Son règne peut être placé vers 450-470. Enfin, si nous faisons commencer le règne d’al-Ḥārith al-Malik vers 470, ceci s’accorde avec le fait que ce prince soit investi par un fils de Ḥaśśān et qu’il gouverne pendant soit 40 ans soit 60 (selon les sources).

## 2. *Les expéditions ḥimyarites en Arabie déserte*

Pour mieux appréhender ce que fut le pouvoir des Kindites sur l’Arabie déserte, il faut analyser maintenant le point de vue ḥimyarite.

Le royaume de Ḥimyar commence à s’immiscer dans les affaires de l’Arabie déserte vers 345, peu après la conquête du Ḥaḍramawt. Je vais présenter les phases que l’épigraphie nous révèle en me référant au souverain régnant (voir Tableau 6).

### a. *Tha’rān Yuhan‘im (c. 324-c. 375)*

Le texte le plus ancien<sup>95</sup> — c’est aussi le plus long et le plus détaillé, même s’il est en partie illisible — relatant des expéditions ḥimyarites dans l’Arabie déserte date du règne de Tha’rān Yuhan‘im. Ce n’est pas le roi lui-même qui en est l’auteur, mais un prince du Ḥaḍramawt (Malshān Aryam dhu-Yaz’an) qui commémore notamment ses exploits ainsi que ceux de ses fils (Khawliy<sup>um</sup>, Shuriḥbi’īl, Ma’dīkarib et Marthad<sup>um</sup>) et d’un petit-fils (Barīl<sup>um</sup> fils de Ma’dīkarib). Malshān est le fondateur d’une principauté qui, sous la tutelle des souverains ḥimyarites, va dominer le Yémen oriental pendant près de trois siècles.

L’inscription, qui porte la date de juin 360 (dhu-madhra’ān 470 de l’ère ḥimyarite), se compose de deux parties. La première relate douze campagnes militaires que dirigent ou auxquelles participent les Yaz’anides. La seconde détaille

<sup>95</sup>. ‘Abadān 1.

une longue liste de constructions ou d'aménagements réalisés pendant la même période.

Ce sont les campagnes militaires qui nous intéressent ici. Elles sont dirigées contre 'Akk<sup>um</sup> (littoral septentrional du Yémen sur la mer Rouge, campagne n° 11) ; Sahratān (versant occidental des montagnes du Yémen et du 'Asīr, campagnes n° 2 et 10) ; Mahrat (extrême-est du Yémen, campagnes n° 4, 5 et 9) et Yabrīn (Arabie orientale, à 250 km au sud-ouest de l'actuel Qaṭar, campagne n° 4) ; Asdān (al-Asd ou al-Azd, dans le 'Asīr, campagne n° 7) ; Iyādh<sup>um</sup> (Iyād, tribu de l'Arabie du nord-est dont le sayyid est capturé, campagne n° 6) ; enfin l'Arabie centrale (campagnes n° 8 et 12) — je vais revenir sur ces 6<sup>e</sup>, 8<sup>e</sup> et 12<sup>e</sup> campagnes.

On peut supposer que la dernière campagne (n° 12) est juste antérieure à la date de l'inscription, 360. Pour estimer combien de temps sépare la première et la dernière campagne, nous ne disposons que d'indications indirectes : l'inscription donne la liste des princes qui conduisent chaque campagne et signale si un prince participe aux combats pour la première fois (*tbr*) ou s'il vient de quitter le service armé (*htqf*). Or la 1<sup>e</sup> campagne est dirigée par Malshān et son fils Khawliyy<sup>um</sup> qui participe à une expédition pour la première fois ; or ce même Khawliyy<sup>um</sup> cesse de porter les armes lors de la 11<sup>e</sup> campagne. L'inscription indique encore que Ma'dīkarib et Marthad<sup>um</sup> entrent dans le service actif à l'occasion de la 5<sup>e</sup> et de la 6<sup>e</sup> campagne respectivement. Enfin, Shuriḥbi'l, le deuxième fils de Malshān, se retire du service actif lors de la 12<sup>e</sup> campagne, à laquelle participe pour la première fois un fils de Ma'dīkarib (Barīl<sup>um</sup> b. Ma'dīkarib).

1	Malshān	*Khawliyy <sup>um</sup> *			
3		Khawliyy <sup>um</sup>	*Shuriḥbi'l*		
5	Malshān	Khawliyy <sup>um</sup>	Shuriḥbi'l	*Ma'dīkarib*	
6		Khawliyy <sup>um</sup>	Shuriḥbi'l	Ma'dīkarib	*Marthad <sup>um</sup> *
11		#Khawliyy <sup>um</sup> #	Shuriḥbi'l	Ma'dīkarib	
12			#Shuriḥbi'l#	Ma'dīkarib	Marthad <sup>um</sup> + *Barīl <sup>um</sup> * fils de Ma'dīkarib

\*\* Participation à une campagne pour la première fois

## Fin du service armé

Il s'écoule donc un laps de temps un peu supérieur à une génération entre la 1<sup>ère</sup> et la 12<sup>e</sup> campagne, soit une trentaine d'années.

L'inscription de 'Abadān jette quelque lumière sur les rapports entre une principauté dirigée par des princes (*qayl*) et le souverain. Il est notable que ce dernier ne soit pas invoqué à la fin de l'inscription, comme c'est la règle : les princes Yaz'anides se considèrent sans doute comme les égaux du roi.<sup>96</sup> Huit des douze

<sup>96</sup>. L'absence d'invocation au roi se trouve surtout dans les inscriptions des Yaz'anides : voir

campagnes sont conduites par les Yaz'anides, sans aucune allusion à une injonction du souverain. Dans les quatre dernières, cependant, il est explicitement signalé que les Yaz'anides combattent sous ses ordres. C'est le roi Tha'rān Yun'im en personne qui commande les 2<sup>e</sup> et 7<sup>e</sup> campagnes, dirigées contre Sahratān et le Pays d'Asdān ; ce sont les « rois » Tha'rān Ayfa' et Dhamar'alī Ayfa' — personnages mal identifiés qui seraient des parents de Tha'rān Yun'im déjà âgé — dans les 10<sup>e</sup> et 11<sup>e</sup> campagnes (à nouveau contre Sahratān et contre 'Akk<sup>um</sup>). Il est remarquable que les quatre campagnes royales ne dépassent pas la périphérie du Yémen. Les aventures lointaines sont commandées par les seuls Yaz'anides.

Il reste à examiner les 6<sup>e</sup>, 8<sup>e</sup> et 12<sup>e</sup> campagnes qui se déroulent en Arabie déserte, au-delà des régions proches du Yémen. Elles peuvent être datées respectivement de c. 345, de c. 350 et des années qui précèdent 360.

La 6<sup>e</sup> campagne, dont le texte est incomplet, est dirigée par les princes Khawliyy<sup>um</sup>, Shuriḥbi'l et Ma'dikarib, auxquels se joint Marthad<sup>um</sup> qui part au combat pour la première fois. Les forces mobilisées sont fournies par « [... ...], Murād<sup>um</sup>, Mashriqān, Dayfatān et les Arabes du Ḥaḍramawt ». <sup>97</sup> Lors d'un engagement dont le détail est perdu « Khawliyy<sup>um</sup> capture Tha'labat b. Salūl<sup>um</sup> sayyid de Iyādh<sup>um</sup> » ; <sup>98</sup> on observera que, dans la généalogie d'Iyādh transmise par Ibn al-Kalbī, un personnage se nomme justement Tha'labat b. Salūl, <sup>99</sup> sans grand risque d'homonymie du fait de la rareté du patronyme. <sup>100</sup> L'énumération du butin se termine avec la mention de 2 500 chameaux et de 9 chevaux (capturés ou tués). Deux indices suggèrent que cette campagne se déroule en Arabie du centre ou du nord-est : la mobilisation d'auxiliaires arabes (Murād<sup>um</sup> et les Arabes du Ḥaḍramawt) — or seules les 6<sup>e</sup> et 12<sup>e</sup> campagnes mentionnent de tels auxiliaires — et la capture du chef d'une grande tribu dont l'habitat est proche du Bas-Euphrate.

La 8<sup>e</sup> campagne est placée sous le commandement de « Khawliyy<sup>um</sup> et de ses frères, les fils de Malshān ». Les forces mobilisées proviennent de la commune des Yaz'anides (Mashriqān et Dayfatān), de Marib, de la commune Shaddād<sup>um</sup> et de la commune Khawlān dhu-Ḥabāb ; elles comptent 300 cavaliers. Les Yaz'anides ont pour objectif Gawwān (arabe al-Jaww) et Khargān (arabe al-Kharj). L'identification de Khargān avec la ville d'al-Kharj à 80 km au sud-est de la moderne al-Riyāḍ dans le Najd est assurée. Quant à Gawwān, ce peut être une bourgade de l'oasis d'al-Kharj, mais d'autres identifications sont possibles. La conviction que cette campagne se déroule bien en Arabie centrale est confirmée par la mention de Ma'add : les Yaz'anides « combattent 'ḥms<sup>m</sup> Hrgt et une tribu de

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MAFRAY-Abū Thawr 4 (juin 486) ; MAFYS-Ḍura' 3 = RES 4069 (août 488), BR-Yanbuq 47 (avril 515). Dans RES 5085 (octobre 450), les Yaz'anides invoquent « leurs seigneurs les rois, maîtres de Raydān » (*w-b-rd' 'mr'-hmw 'mlk' 'b'l Rd<sup>m</sup>*), sans donner leurs noms.

<sup>97</sup>. [...] *w-(M)rd<sup>m</sup> w-M(s<sup>2</sup>)rq<sup>n</sup> w-Dyft<sup>m</sup> w-'rb Ḥḍrmt*.

<sup>98</sup>. *w-(')s<sup>2</sup>r Ḥwly<sup>m</sup> T'ibt bn S<sup>3</sup>l<sup>m</sup> s<sup>4</sup>yd 'yḡ<sup>m</sup>*.

<sup>99</sup>. Voir CASSEL 1966 I, tabl. 174.

<sup>100</sup>. Dans l'index de CASSEL 1966 (II, p. 509), on ne relève que sept occurrences de l'anthroponyme Salūl.

Ma'add<sup>um</sup> ». <sup>101</sup> De l'énumération du butin, il subsiste la mention de « cent captifs, 3.200 chameaux et 25 chevaux capturés ou tués ».

La 12<sup>e</sup> campagne est également significative. Elle est placée sous le commandement des princes « Ma'dikarib et Marthad<sup>um</sup>, après que leur frère Shurihbi'l eut été libéré de ses obligations », et elle accueille le prince Barīl<sup>um</sup> fils de Ma'dikarib qui combat pour la première fois. Cette campagne est explicitement dirigée contre Ma'add. Les forces mobilisées proviennent de la commune des Yaz'anide (Mashriqān et Dayfatān) et d'auxiliaires arabes fournis par les tribus de Kinda, Madhḥij et Murād; <sup>102</sup> elles comptent 2 000 hommes et 160 cavaliers. Les Yaz'anides « se heurtent à la tribu 'Abdqaysān (arabe 'Abd al-Qays) à Siyyān (arabe al-Siyy) aux eaux du puits de Sigah (arabe Sijā) entre le Pays de Nizār<sup>um</sup> et le Pays de Ghassān et combattent contre la tribu Shann<sup>um</sup> et les banū Nukrat et les banū Ṣabirat ». <sup>103</sup> Le bilan n'est pas négligeable. Les princes Marthad<sup>um</sup> et Barīl<sup>um</sup> capturent chacun deux combattants et Barīl<sup>um</sup> en tue un au combat. Les officiers et la troupe tuent ou font prisonniers 150 combattants, tuent ou capturent 18 chevaux et enfin s'emparent de 400 captifs, 4 000 chameaux et 12 000 moutons. Les ethnonymes et toponymes renvoient tous vers l'Arabie occidentale (Nizār, Ghassān, al-Siyy), <sup>104</sup> centrale (Sijā) <sup>105</sup> et orientale ('Abd al-Qays, sa fraction Shann ainsi que les banū Nukrat et Ṣabirat qui en sont probablement les lignages dirigeants). <sup>106</sup>

L'inscription 'Abadān nous apprend donc que la conquête de l'Arabie centrale commence un peu avant 350 par des raids lancés à l'initiative de princes du Ḥadramawt, avec l'aide de tribus arabes, Kinda, Madhḥij et Murād.

*b. Abīkarib As'ad (c. 375-c. 445) et son fils Ḥaśśān Yuha'min*

Abīkarib As'ad est le petit-fils de Tha'rān Yuhan'im. Ses inscriptions et celles de ses sujets, peu nombreuses, ne font jamais allusion à des opérations militaires ou à des faits d'armes, pas même Ma'sal I = Ry 509, gravée à Ma'sal al-Jumḥ, au cœur du Najd.

Dans ce dernier texte, le roi Abīkarib As'ad et son fils Ḥaśśān Yuha'min rapportent qu'ils sont venus dans le Pays de Ma'add, en ont pris possession et y ont établi diverses communes sudarabiques. <sup>107</sup>

<sup>101</sup>. *w-ḥrbw 'hms<sup>m</sup> Hrgt w-'s<sup>2</sup>r<sup>m</sup> bn M'd<sup>m</sup>*.

<sup>102</sup>. *Kdt w-Mdhg<sup>m</sup> w-Mrd<sup>m</sup>*.

<sup>103</sup>. *w-hwkbw 's<sup>2</sup>rt<sup>n</sup> 'bdqys<sup>m</sup> b-S'y<sup>n</sup> 'ly mw b'r<sup>n</sup> S'gh bynn 'rd Nzr<sup>m</sup> w-'rd Ġs<sup>m</sup> w-ḥr<sup>30</sup>bw 's<sup>2</sup>rt<sup>n</sup> S<sup>2</sup>n<sup>m</sup> w-bny Nkrt w-bny (Ṣb)rt*.

<sup>104</sup>. Selon al-Bakrī, *Mu'jam*, al-Siyy se trouve à trois étapes de Makka, entre dhāt 'Irq et Marrān, soit à quelque 100-220 km à l'est-nord-est de Makka.

<sup>105</sup>. Les puits de Sijā / Sajā se trouvent à 380 km au nord-est de Makka.

<sup>106</sup>. 'Abd al-Qays est une grande tribu de Rabī'a (CASSEL 1966-I tableaux 141 et 168) ; Shann est l'une de ses principales fractions. Les banū Ṣabirat peuvent être rapprochés de Ṣabira b. al-Dīl b. Shann b. Afṣā b. 'Abd al-Qays ou de Ṣabira b. Nukra b. Lukayz b. Afṣā b. 'Abd al-Qays ; quant aux banū Nukrat, ils se retrouvent dans la généalogie d'Ibn al-Kalbī sous la forme Nukra b. Lukayz b. Afṣā b. 'Abd al-Qays.

<sup>107</sup>. Les rois « ont gravé cette inscription dans le wādī | Ma'sal Gumḥān, quand ils sont venus

Les participants à cette expédition sont :

— des communes sudarabiques : « Ḥaḍramawt et Saba' — les fils de Marib —, les cadets de leurs qayls, les (plus) jeunes de leurs officiers, leurs agents, leurs chasseurs et leurs troupes » ;<sup>108</sup>

— des tribus arabes : « Kiddat, Sa'd, 'Ulah et (H)... »,<sup>109</sup> à savoir Kinda, Madhḥij (puisque Sa'd et 'Ula sont des fractions de Madhḥij) et une tribu non identifiée.

Cette inscription a manifestement un caractère fondateur du fait de sa localisation et de son contenu : non seulement les deux souverains prennent possession de nouveaux territoires, mais ils inaugurent une nouvelle titulature (ci-dessous E.3. « Le changement de titulature des rois ḥimyarites correspond-il à l'installation des princes kindites ? »).

La date de l'expédition n'est pas donnée par le texte. Elle se situe de manière sûre entre *c.* 400 et 455, peut-être vers 440 (si on se fonde sur une nouvelle titulature qui ne serait pas encore en usage en 433). Il est sûr en effet qu'elle est antérieure à janvier 456, date d'une inscription dont l'auteur est Shuriḥbi'l Ya'fur, fils d'Abīkarib As'ad, régnant seul.<sup>110</sup> On peut dire également qu'elle se situe après l'accession de Ḥaššān Yuha'min à la corégence, *c.* 400 (Tableau 6). Il est vraisemblable enfin — mais non assuré — qu'elle est postérieure à août 433 (date d'une inscription dans laquelle un prince hamdānide invoque les souverains en leur donnant l'ancienne titulature).<sup>111</sup>

Si l'expédition date effectivement de *c.* 440, Abīkarib As'ad, sur le trône depuis plus de 50 ans, est un homme très âgé. Il est douteux qu'il ait participé effectivement à l'expédition. Ceci pourrait expliquer que la plupart des traditions attribuent l'intronisation de Ḥujr Ākil al-murār en Arabie centrale à son fils Ḥaššān.

Cependant, dans la Tradition arabo-islamique, Abīkarib As'ad, sous le nom d'Abū Karib As'ad le Parfait (al-Kāmil), est bien un héros conquérant, menant ses armées jusqu'à l'Asie centrale et l'océan Atlantique. On prétendait également qu'il fut le premier souverain à reconnaître la sainteté du sanctuaire mecquois (qu'il revêtit d'une *kiswa*) et qu'il introduisit le judaïsme au Yémen. Dans le commentaire de sa *Qaṣīdat al-Dāmigha*, al-Hamdānī le définit ainsi : « Tubba' le Moyen [b.] Kalīkarib, qui est As'ad Abū Karib, dont la *kunya* est Abū Ḥaššān, à savoir dhū Tabbān, 680 ans, alors qu'il est dit : 326 ans. Ensuite régna son fils Ḥaššān, qui fit

et ont pris possession du Pays | de Ma'add<sup>um</sup> lors de l'installation de certaines de leurs tribus ... », ... *raqdw ḡn mraqd' b-wd'y' M's'l Gml'h' k-s'b'w w-ḥllw 'rq' M'd'm (b-)mw nzl'm bn 's'2'b-hmw ...*

<sup>108</sup>. ... *w-b-s'2'b-h'7mw Ḥḍrmwt w-S'1b' [w-]bny Mrb w-'ṣ(ḡ)rt' 8 'qwl-hmw w-(ḡ)lm [kl] mqtwt-hmw w-'9ly-hmw w-ṣyd-hmw w-qbd-hmw ...*

<sup>109</sup>. *w-b-'rb-h'10mw Kdt w-S'1(')d w-(')lh w-(H).[?]*. Des deux premières lettres du dernier mot, il ne subsiste que la partie supérieure ; la première lettre est un *H* ou un *H̄*, et la seconde un *alif*, un *d*, un *s'*, un *f* (?), un *q* ou un *n* (avec une petite préférence pour le *alif*).

<sup>110</sup>. *CIH* 540.

<sup>111</sup>. Voir Ry 534 + Rayda 1.

une expédition contre Ṭasm et Jadīs ... ».<sup>112</sup> La conquête de l'Arabie centrale est sans doute à l'origine de ces développements légendaires.

*c. Shuriḥbi'īl Yakkuf (c. 468-c. 480)*

Shuriḥbi'īl Yakkuf, qui ne donne jamais de patronyme, inaugure une nouvelle dynastie vers 468. Une seule inscription, découverte récemment à Ma'sal,<sup>113</sup> évoque des opérations militaires. Elle est malheureusement en grande partie érodée, de sorte qu'on ne lit guère que le nom du roi et de ses corégentes, une année (584 de l'ère ḥimyarite, soit 475 de l'ère chrétienne) et quelques mots qui permettent de penser que le texte commémorait des exploits guerriers. Dans ce texte, le royaume d'al-Ḥīra est mentionné sous le nom de Tanūkh.<sup>114</sup>

*d. Ma'dīkarib Ya'fur (c. 519-522)*

On ne connaît que deux inscriptions remontant à ce règne, toutes deux rédigées par le roi. La première (Ma'sal 2 = Ry 510) a été gravée en juin 521 à Ma'sal al-Jumḥ en Arabie centrale ; la seconde (Ja 2884), qui se trouve à Ḥamḍa, à 180 km environ au nord-nord-ouest de Najrān, est postérieure de deux mois (août 521). On devine aisément que ces deux textes ont été composés au retour d'une expédition militaire.

De fait, Ma'sal 2 = Ry 510 commémore une campagne contre le Bas-<sup>ʿ</sup>Irāq, avec le soutien d'Arabes alliés de Byzance.<sup>115</sup> En bref, Ma'dīkarib Ya'fur prétend avoir soumis les Arabes qui s'étaient révoltés, malgré les attaques de « Mudhḥir<sup>um</sup> » (à savoir al-Mundhir, roi d'al-Ḥīra). Mais il ne nomme pas ces Arabes et ne mentionne aucun résultat concret (nombre d'ennemis tués, captifs, butin etc.). On peut donc supposer qu'il n'y a pas eu de véritable bataille et donc que la campagne a été une simple démonstration de force sans effet durable. Le seul détail topographique est la mention de 'rq Kī', que nous avons identifié avec la partie du 'Irāq dont Kūthā (ville située à mi-chemin entre l'Euphrate et le Tigre sur le canal de même nom, à 35 km au sud-sud-ouest d'al-Madā'in) est le centre.

Les forces mobilisées sont :

— les communes du royaume ḥimyarite : « Saba', Ḥimyar<sup>um</sup>, Raḥbatān, Ḥadramawt et le Sud (?) »<sup>116</sup> ;

— les auxiliaires arabes : Kiddat et Madhḥi[g]<sup>um</sup>;<sup>117</sup>

— des alliés arabes : les banū Tha'labat, Muḍar et S'(..).<sup>118</sup>

<sup>112</sup>. Pp. 534 / 19-535 / 1.

<sup>113</sup>. Ma'sal 3.

<sup>114</sup>. ROBIN 2008, p. 190.

<sup>115</sup>. Ma'sal 2 = Ry 510.

<sup>116</sup>. *w-s'ḇ'w b-s'ḇ-hmw S'ḇ' w-Ḥmyr<sup>m</sup> w-Rḥb<sup>7</sup>t<sup>n</sup> w-H(d)rmt w-Y(m)n*. La lecture et la signification de *Y(m)n* sont hypothétiques : la traduction par « Sud » repose sur l'hypothèse que *Y(m)n* est une graphie défective de *Ymnt*, « Sud » : comparer avec *Hgy* (Ry 512 / 1) et *Hgyt* (Ja 1031 a / 1).

<sup>117</sup>. *w-b-'m 'rb-hmw Kdt w-Md<sup>8</sup>ḥ[g]<sup>m</sup>*.

<sup>118</sup>. *w-b-'m bny T'ḇt w-Mdr-w-S'.(h)*.

Une différence importante distingue les alliés des auxiliaires : c'est la mention de leurs chefs, les banū Tha'labat (ce qui implique leur autonomie).

Deux textes syriaques appartenant à une même tradition indiquent que ce roi (qu'elles appellent Ma'dikarim ou Ma'dōkarim) a été placé sur le trône par les Aksūmites et qu'il est chrétien.<sup>119</sup> Ceci s'accorde bien avec le fait que le prince kindite Arethas (al-Hārith al-Malik), en charge de l'Arabie centrale, a conclu une alliance avec l'empereur byzantin Anastase (491-518) (ci-dessus B.3. « al-Hārith al-Malik b. 'Amr »).

*e. Abraha (c. 535-c. 565)*

Trois inscriptions d'Abraha jettent un peu de lumière sur la fin de la dynastie kindite. La première est *CIH* 541 (déjà évoquée à propos de Yazīd b. Kabshat) qui date de mars 548 (*d-m'n* 658 ḥim.).

Ce texte fort long, réalisé avec soin, est gravé sur un pilier qui se dressait sur la colline à l'ouest du môle septentrional de la Digue de Marib, à côté d'un pilier semblable qui portait l'inscription *CIH* 540 du roi Shuriḥbi'l Ya'fur (c. 450-468), commémorant une importante réfection de la Digue. Il est manifeste que, dans ce texte, Abraha cherche à se présenter comme l'émule et le continuateur d'un grand roi ḥimyarite, auquel il se réfère explicitement.<sup>120</sup> Il a besoin de cet illustre patronage parce que la légitimité de son accession au trône a été contestée aussi bien par certains de ses sujets (Kinda et d'autres groupes)<sup>121</sup> que par son suzerain aksūmite.

Dans *CIH* 541, Abraha relate tout d'abord sa campagne contre Kinda au Ḥaḍramawt et la soumission des révoltés ; il détaille ensuite les travaux qu'il a effectués sur la Digue ; il mentionne enfin de façon incidente que, toujours à Marib, il a consacré une église et réuni (à l'automne 547) une conférence diplomatique avec des représentants de Rome, de l'Éthiopie, de la Perse et de trois princes arabes.

Le deuxième texte, Muryaghān 1 = Ry 506 (déjà mentionné), porte la date de septembre 552 (*d-'l'* 662 ḥim.). Dans cette importante inscription rupestre, gravée près des puits de Murayghān, Abraha commémore des opérations militaires dans l'Arabie déserte, qualifiées de « quatrième expédition ». Deux colonnes d'auxiliaires arabes qui razzient Ma'add, engagent le combat contre les banū 'mr<sup>m</sup> et sont victorieuses, faisant du butin et des prisonniers. Les deux batailles, dans « le wādī Murākh » et « le wādī à l'aiguade de Turābān », peuvent être localisés (sans certitude) à 250 km au nord-ouest et à 335 km à l'ouest de la moderne al-Riyāḍ. Le roi Abraha se rend alors à Ḥalībān (à 275 km au sud-ouest d'al-Riyāḍ) où la tribu de Ma'add fait acte d'allégeance et remet des otages. Ce succès d'Abraha à Ḥalībān a frappé les contemporains, puisqu'il a laissé des échos dans la poésie arabe

<sup>119</sup> BEAUCAMP *et alii* 1999, pp. 75-76 ; ROBIN 2010 b, pp. 72-73.

<sup>120</sup> Voir *CIH* 541 / 98 (*Y'fr*) ; voir aussi DAI GDN 2002 / 20, ll. 14-15 (*[S'rḥb] 'l Y'fr*), texte qui est une ébauche de *CIH* 541.

<sup>121</sup> L'inscription *CIH* 541 / 14-18 mentionne « les princes de Saba', les Saḥarides Murrat, | Thumāmat, Ḥanash<sup>um</sup> et Marthad<sup>um</sup>, ainsi que Ḥalīb<sup>um</sup> dhu-Khalīl et les Yaz'anides, les princeps Ma'dikarib fils de Sumūyafa' et Ha'ān et ses frères banū Aslam ».



préislamique. Comme nous l'avons vu (B.6. « Les banū 'Amr de l'inscription Murayghān 1 »), il s'agit d'une guerre contre Ma'add et leurs princes, « tous les banū 'Amr » (à savoir les Ḥujrides). Vers le milieu du VI<sup>e</sup> s., des princes kindites ont donc encore des positions de pouvoir en Arabie centrale. À la suite de cette guerre, le Naṣride 'Amr b. al-Mundhir se rend à Abraha et remet son fils en otage.<sup>122</sup>

La troisième inscription d'Abraha se trouve également à Murayghān. Elle complète la précédente en rapportant que 'Amr b. al-Mundhir a été expulsé d'Arabie centrale<sup>123</sup> et que toute une série de régions et de tribus en Arabie orientale, septentrionale et occidentale font leur soumission :

« ... et (Abraha) a soumis tous les Arabes de Ma'add<sup>um</sup> [Ha]gar<sup>um</sup>, Khaṭṭ, Tayy<sup>um</sup>, Yathrib et Guzām (ar. Judhām ?) ». <sup>124</sup>

Hagar<sup>um</sup> (Hajar) et Khaṭṭ sont dans la région du golfe Arabo-persique, Tayy<sup>um</sup> en Arabie du Nord, Yathrib (aujourd'hui al-Madīna) et Judhām en Arabie du Nord-Ouest.

Cette inscription encore inédite qui a reçu le sigle Murayghān 3 n'est pas datée. Elle développe les conséquences de la soumission de Ma'add et de la reddition de 'Amr fils d'al-Mundhir : de ce fait, elle semble légèrement postérieure à Murayghān 1 = Ry 506, sans qu'on puisse dire s'il s'agit de semaines, de mois, ou même d'une année ou deux.

### 3. Le changement de titulature des rois ḥimyarites correspond-il à l'installation des princes kindites ?

Dans l'inscription de Ma'sal al-Jumḥ (Ma'sal 1 = Ry 509) qui commémore l'annexion de Ma'add, on constate que les souverains ḥimyarites ont modifié leur titulature. Depuis la conquête du Ḥaḍramawt, un peu avant 300 de l'ère chrétienne, ils s'intitulaient :

« roi de Saba', de dhu-Raydān, du Ḥaḍramawt et du Sud ». <sup>125</sup>

Ils ajoutent dès lors la mention des Arabes. La nouvelle titulature se lit tout d'abord (Ma'sal 1 = Ry 509) :

« roi de Saba', de dhu-Raydān, du Ḥaḍramawt et du Sud, et des Arabes du Haut-Pays et du Littoral ». <sup>126</sup>

<sup>122</sup>. « A la suite de cela, s'est livré à lui (Abraha) 'Amr<sup>um</sup> fils de Mudhdirān (= al-Mundhir) <sup>8</sup> qui lui a remis en otage son fils alors qu'il (= 'Amr<sup>um</sup>) l'avait établi comme gouverneur sur Ma'add<sup>um</sup> », w-b'dn-hw ws<sup>3</sup>-hmw 'mr<sup>m</sup> bn Mḍr<sup>m</sup> <sup>8</sup> w-rhn-hmw bn-hw w-s'thlf-hw 'ly M'd<sup>m</sup>. Concernant notre interprétation de ce passage crucial, voir ROBIN « à paraître ».

<sup>123</sup>. Murayghān 3 / 3 : « et il a chassé 'Amr<sup>um</sup> fils de Mudhdirān », w-ṭrdw 'mr<sup>m</sup> bn Mḍr<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>124</sup>. Murayghān 3 / 3-4, w-s'<sup>4</sup>tqdw 'rb M'd<sup>m</sup> [w-H]gr<sup>m</sup> w-Ht w-Ṭy<sup>m</sup> w-Yṭrb w-Gz<sup>(m)</sup>.

<sup>125</sup>. mlk S'b' w-d-Ryd<sup>m</sup> w-Ḥḍrmwt w-Ymnt.

<sup>126</sup>. mlk S'b' w-d-Ryd<sup>m</sup> w-Ḥḍrmwt w-Ymnt w-'rb Ṭwd w-Thmt. Le texte fragmentaire BynM 17 présente une variante intéressante : (')bk(r)[b 'js'<sup>1</sup>(d)[ w-bny-hw H]|s<sup>3</sup>n Yh'imn w-M[dkrb Yn'm 'j]|mlk S'b' w-(d-)[Ryd<sup>m</sup> w-Ḥḍrmwt w-] Ymnt w-T[wd w-Thmt ... ...]. Comme

Peu après, lors de l'accession au trône de Shuriḥbi'īl Ya'fur, elle subit un petit changement, avec le remplacement de « et des Arabes du Haut-Pays et du Littoral » par :

« ... et de leurs Arabes dans le Haut-Pays et sur le Littoral ». <sup>127</sup>

Ensuite, elle ne varie plus jusqu'à la disparition du royaume de Ḥimyar. Sa dernière attestation est datée de novembre 558.

Dans cette titulature, l'adjectif possessif « leurs » (dans « leurs Arabes ») renvoie à « Saba', dhu-Raydān, Ḥaḍramawt et le Sud », c'est-à-dire à Ḥimyar.

L'ajout de la mention des Arabes – ou plutôt de certains Arabes – dans la titulature ḥimyarite a une importance politique capitale : pour la première fois, les Arabes sont considérés comme des acteurs majeurs, d'une dignité égale aux tribus royales de l'Arabie méridionale. <sup>128</sup>

La question qui se pose est de savoir si l'adoption de la nouvelle titulature correspond à la désignation de Ḥujr comme représentant du roi de Ḥimyar dans le Pays de Ma'add. C'est possible sans être sûr. Ḥujr a pu être investi de cette responsabilité à une date antérieure. C'est cette dernière option que nous avons retenue ci-dessus (Tableau 3) en supposant que Ḥujr aurait reçu le pouvoir sur Ma'add vers 425.

#### **4. L'implicite dans les inscriptions ḥimyarites : le cas des rois de Kinda**

Aucune des inscriptions royales ḥimyarites ne mentionne explicitement que le pouvoir sur les tribus de l'Arabie déserte est délégué aux princes kindites. On peut deviner cependant qu'il en est bien ainsi. C'est la composition des armées ḥimyarites qui le suggère.

Les forces sur lesquelles les souverains ḥimyarites s'appuient pour contrôler l'Arabie déserte se composent systématiquement de deux ensembles : des troupes recrutées au Yémen même et des auxiliaires fournis par les tribus arabes de la périphérie.

Selon Ma'sal 1 = Ry 509, lors de la prise de possession du Pays de Ma'add<sup>um</sup> (vers 440), ce sont :

— une armée constituée de troupes régulières recrutées dans deux des composantes de Ḥimyar, le Ḥaḍramawt et Saba', ainsi que de personnages de rangs divers ;

— des auxiliaires recrutés dans les tribus arabes de Kinda, Sa'd al-'Ashīra et 'Ula.

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il s'agit d'une copie provinciale malhabile de la liste officielle des rois, on peut se demander si la titulature restituée « S'b' w-d-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥḍrmwt w-Ymnt w-Ṭwd w-Thmt » — sans mention des Arabes — reflète une titulature effectivement portée par les rois ou si elle abrège librement la formulation officielle.

<sup>127</sup>. ... w-'rb-hmw Ṭwd<sup>n</sup> w-Thmt.

<sup>128</sup>. ROBIN 2006.

Dans les textes postérieurs, commémorant d'autres opérations de Ḥimyar dans l'Arabie déserte, il en va de même. D'après Ma'sal 2 = Ry 510, en 521, les troupes du roi Ma'dīkarib Ya'fur se composent d'une part des « tribus Saba', Ḥimyar<sup>um</sup>, Raḥbatān, Ḥaḍramawt et Sud » (ll. 6-7), d'autre part des auxiliaires arabes « Kiddat et Madhḥi(g)<sup>um</sup> », ainsi que des « banū Tha'labat, Mu(ḍa)r et S' ... » (ll. 7-8).

Une trentaine d'année plus tard, en 552, Abraha dépêche deux colonnes d'auxiliaires arabes, commandées par « Abīgabr, avec Kiddat et 'Ula, et Bishr<sup>um</sup> fils de Ḥiṣn<sup>um</sup>, avec Sa'd<sup>um</sup> et Murād<sup>um</sup> » (Murayghān 1 = Ry 506 / 4-5).

Il faut encore évoquer le texte fragmentaire Gajda-al-'Irāfa 1 / 3 qui mentionne la tribu arabe de Madhḥi<sup>um</sup> (arabe Madhḥij).

Lors de leurs expéditions en Arabie déserte, les armées des princes Yaz'anides se composent de même de troupes ḥimyarites et d'auxiliaires arabes (ci-dessus E.2.a. « Tha'rān Yuhan'im, c. 324-c. 375 »).

En bref, quand ils interviennent militairement dans l'Arabie déserte, les Ḥimyarites demandent régulièrement le soutien de quelques tribus arabes installées à la périphérie du Yémen, entre le Ḥaḍramawt (Kinda), le nord du Jawf (Murād) et la région de Najrān (Madhḥij et ses fractions Sa'd [al-'Ashīra] et 'Ula) :

Tableau 5

**Les tribus arabes fournissant des auxiliaires aux rois ḥimyarites  
lors de leurs expéditions en Arabie déserte**

	IV <sup>e</sup> s.	c. milieu du V <sup>e</sup> s.	Ma'dīkarib (521)	Abraha (552)
Kinda ( <i>Kdt</i> )	'Abadān 1	Ma'sal 1	Ma'sal 2	Murayghān 1
Madhḥij ( <i>Mdhg<sup>m</sup></i> )	'Abadān 1	al-'Irāfa 1	Ma'sal 2	
Sa'd ( <i>S'd</i> )		Ma'sal 1		
Sa'd ( <i>S'd<sup>m</sup></i> )				Murayghān 1
'Ula ( <i>'l</i> )				Murayghān 1
'Ula ( <i>'lh</i> )		Ma'sal 1		
Murād <sup>um</sup> ( <i>Mrd<sup>m</sup></i> )	'Abadān 1			Murayghān 1
'rb Ḥḍrmt'	'Abadān 1			
H.[?]		Ma'sal 1		

On peut observer que le nom de Madhḥij se trouve dans trois inscriptions. Dans deux autres (Ma'sal 1 = Ry 509 et Murayghān 1 = Ry 506) où il manque

curieusement, il est remplacé par celui des tribus *ʿl / ʿlh* et *Sʿd<sup>m</sup> / Sʿd* qui sont précisément deux fractions de Madhḥij : Saʿd al-ʿAshīra b. Mālik [Madhḥij] et ʿUla b. Jald b. Mālik [Madhḥij] selon les généalogies d'Ibn al-Kalbī.<sup>129</sup> Les auxiliaires arabes des rois ḥimyarites sont systématiquement recrutés dans trois tribus : Kinda, Madhḥij (qui dépend des rois de Kinda) et Murād.

Au moment de l'enregistrement des généalogies, vers les débuts de l'époque islamique, la tribu de Murād est une fraction de Madhḥij (Tableau 4). Nous supposons qu'il en était de même avant l'islam. Quant à la tribu de Madhḥij, elle est la sujette du roi de Kinda au III<sup>e</sup> siècle (A.2. « Les banū Baddā' ») et il en va vraisemblablement de même par la suite, au moins jusqu'à la fin de la dynastie ḥujride (C.5.b. « ʿAbd al-Masīḥ b. Dāris al-Kindī »). Nous présageons donc que le roi de Kinda a autorité sur Kinda, mais aussi sur Madhḥij et sur Murād. Le fait que Kinda, Madhḥij et Murād soient toujours énumérées dans cet ordre semble confirmer cette supposition.

Si tout ceci est bien exact, il apparaît que le pouvoir ḥimyarite sur l'Arabie déserte repose avant tout sur les tribus de Kinda, de Madhḥij et de Murād. Pour un lecteur attentif et critique des inscriptions, ces tribus ont un chef qui joue manifestement un rôle éminent.

### 5. *Quel était le titre que portaient les princes kindites ?*

Au III<sup>e</sup> siècle, les inscriptions sabéennes et ḥimyarites donnent volontiers le titre de « roi » aux chefs de Kinda et à ceux de quelques autres tribus arabes. Mais aucune de ces inscriptions n'est postérieure à la conquête de l'Arabie déserte par Ḥimyar, qui commence après le règne de Shammar Yuḥar'ish (mort vers 315). On peut en déduire que les Ḥimyarites cessent de reconnaître comme « roi » les chefs des tribus qui passent sous leur autorité.

Le graffite « Ḥuḡr fils de ʿAmr<sup>um</sup> roi de Kiddat », <sup>130</sup> qui date très probablement du V<sup>e</sup> siècle comme non l'avons vu (ci-dessus B.1. Ḥujr Ākil al-murār b. ʿAmr), ne contredit pas cette conclusion. Il ne s'agit pas d'une inscription monumentale exposée dans une ville, à savoir d'un document dont les autorités peuvent contrôler le contenu, mais d'un graffite hâtivement incisé sur un rocher du désert. Ce graffite n'en est pas moins intéressant : il montre que, même si les Ḥimyarites ne reconnaissent plus le titre royal que portaient certains chefs tribaux, ces derniers continuent à s'en prévaloir.

Quant au titre officiel que portaient les princes kindites en charge des affaires de l'Arabie déserte, on peut supposer que c'était « représentant (du roi) » (*hlft*, à vocaliser probablement *khalīfat*) ? Ce sont deux inscriptions d'Abraha qui le donnent à penser :

— CIH 541 / 9-13 :

<sup>129</sup> CASHEL 1966-II, tableau 258.

<sup>130</sup> Gajda-Ḥujr : *Ḥgr bn ʿmr<sup>m</sup> mlk Kdt*.

« Il a écrit cette inscription après que se soit révolté et ait violé son serment Yazīd b. Kabshat, son **gouverneur**, qu'il avait nommé sur Kiddat, alors que (cette tribu) n'avait pas de gouverneur. Il s'est révolté ... »

(w-s'trw ḏn ms<sup>3</sup>nd<sup>n</sup> k-q<sup>10</sup>s'd w-hḥlf b-gzm<sup>n</sup> Yzd<sup>11</sup> bn Kbs<sup>2</sup>t ḥlft-hmw ḏ-s<sup>12</sup>thlfw 'ly Kdt w-d' kn<sup>13</sup> l-hw ḥlft<sup>n</sup> w-qs'd ...);

— Murayghān 1 = Ry 506 / 7-8 :

« à la suite de cela, s'est livré à lui (Abraha) 'Amr<sup>um</sup> fils de Mudhdhirān (= al-Mundhir)<sup>8</sup> qui lui a remis en otage son fils alors qu'il (= 'Amr<sup>um</sup>) l'avait **établi comme gouverneur sur Ma'add<sup>um</sup>** »

(w-b'dn-hw ws<sup>3</sup>-hmw 'mr<sup>m</sup> bn Mḏr<sup>n</sup><sup>8</sup> w-rhn-hmw bn-hw w-s'thlf-hw 'ly M'd<sup>m</sup>).

## 6. Kinda, Qaḥṭān et Ḥimyar

La fédération tribale réunissant Madhḥij et Murād sous la direction de Kinda, que divers indices conduisent à restituer, est le bras armé des Yaz'anides et des rois de Ḥimyar dans toutes les opérations militaires en Arabie déserte. Elle a manifestement une grande familiarité avec ce terrain difficile, qui fait défaut aux montagnards du Yémen. Il est logique, de ce fait, que les rois de Kinda aient une part importante dans l'administration des territoires conquis et que le nom des Arabes apparaissent finalement dans la titulature ḥimyarite.

Les princes kindites en tirèrent un grand prestige, comparable à celui des Mecquois à la veille de l'Islam. Ceci pourrait expliquer pourquoi on en trouve à la tête de principautés diverses, en Arabie orientale, à Najrān ou à Dūmat al-Jandal. Il n'est pas impossible que certains aient été sollicités d'exercer le pouvoir par les tribus elles-mêmes comme certains le disaient de Bakr b. Wā'il (voir B. 3 « al-Ḥārith al-Malik b. 'Amr ») : un étranger présentait de meilleures garanties de neutralité dans la gestion des affaires locales ; par ailleurs le choix d'un Kindite facilitait les relations avec Ḥimyar. Ce schéma n'est pas sans rappeler comment Muḥammad se fit confier le pouvoir par Aws et Khazraj à Yathrib.

La position éminente des Kindites dans l'Arabie préislamique a des prolongements après l'Islam : al-Ash'ath joue un rôle éminent à la cour de Médine et son petit-fils, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath, dit « Ibn al-Ash'ath », prend la tête d'une révolte contre al-Ḥajjāj qui ébranle dangereusement le pouvoir de l'umayyade 'Abd al-Malik en 699-702. Les princes kindites sont alors les porte-drapeau naturels des Arabes du Sud dans les luttes politiques aux premiers temps de l'Islam. Ils ont définitivement supplanté les Sabéens, les Ḥimyarites ou les Hamdānites.

On aurait pu s'attendre, dès lors, à ce que Kinda / Thawr soit choisi comme l'ancêtre éponyme des Arabes du Sud dans la généalogie arabe. Ce n'est pas le cas sans qu'on sache pourquoi.. On lui a préféré la petite tribu de Qaḥṭān, supplantée par

Kinda au début du III<sup>e</sup> siècle et sans doute disparue. L'origine d'une telle tradition ne peut être que kindite.<sup>131</sup>

### Conclusion

Grâce aux inscriptions sabéennes et ḥimyarites, l'histoire ancienne de Kinda et de ses rois commence à se préciser. On racontait que Kinda, obligée de quitter le Yémen, avait migré avec ses rois jusqu'à Ghamr dhī Kinda, puis en Arabie centrale. Chassée de celle-ci, elle se serait finalement réfugiée au Ḥaḍramawt. Il est clair aujourd'hui que ces récits, qui cherchent expliquer pourquoi certains princes kindites, manifestement yéménites, règnent en Arabie centrale et orientale, ne reflètent que très imparfaitement le passé.

En fait, Kinda a toujours été une tribu puissante de la périphérie du Yémen, qui a réussi à fédérer Qaḥṭān, Madhhij et probablement Murād. Qui que soient les princes sous l'autorité desquels elle combat (Yaz'anides ou souverains ḥimyarites), c'est toujours elle qui fournit les auxiliaires arabes nécessaires à la conquête de l'Arabie déserte. Et ce sont les rois de cette tribu (de la dynastie ḥujride) qui ont administré les régions conquises.

La chronologie de la dynastie ḥujride se fondait précédemment sur deux mentions d'al-Ḥārith al-Malik dans les sources externes (Malalas et Nonnosos), plus sur une troisième qui renvoie en fait à un autre personnage (Théophane le Confesseur). On savait donc que ce prince arabe avait conclu une paix avec Anastase (491-518) et qu'il était mort peu avant avril 528.

Il faut ajouter désormais les trois expéditions commémorées à Ma'sal al-Jumḥ, que les rois ḥimyarites conduisent en Arabie déserte :

- vers 440, Abikarib As'ad (en corégence avec son fils Ḥaṣṣān Yuha'min : Ma'sal 1 = Ry 509) ;
- en 474-475, Shuriḥbi'l Yakkuf (Ma'sal 3) ;
- en juin 521, Ma'dīkarib Ya'fur (Ma'sal 2 = Ry 510).

En articulant ces données avec celles de traditions dont la valeur est souvent incertaine, les dates de règne des trois principaux souverains ḥujrides pourraient être :

- Ḥujr Ākil al-murār (425-450 ?)
- 'Amr al-Maqṣūr (450-470 ?)
- al-Ḥārith al-Malik (c. 470-528).

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<sup>131</sup>. On sait que, pour la généalogie de Kinda, le principal informateur d'Ibn al-Kalbī et de son père est Abū 'l-Kannās Iyās b. Aws b. Hāni' (Ibn al-Kalbī, *Nasab Ma'add*, p. 142, avec la lecture Abū 'l-Kayyās ; Caskel 1966-I, tableau 236, avec la lecture Abū 'l-Kubās ; Lecker 1995, p. 640, n. 24, qui donne la préférence à Abū 'l-Kannās, en se fondant sur le *Fihrist* d'Ibn al-Nadīm). Cet Abū 'l-Kannās appartient au lignage des banū Jabala, comme al-Ash'ath (voir ci-dessous C.4 « Les banū Jabala »), mais non au même rameau.

Contrairement à une hypothèse que j'avais formulée en 1996, il n'y a pas de lien évident entre les expéditions ḥimyarites et l'accession au trône des princes kindites. Mais il apparaît vraisemblable que chacun de ces princes a reçu la visite et éventuellement un soutien militaire occasionnel des rois de Ḥimyar.

Il subsiste cependant bien des points importants qui ne sont pas élucidés. Je me contente d'en lister quelques-uns :

— Quand al-Ḥārith al-Malik devient-il roi d'al-Ḥīra et pour combien de temps ?

— Quelle est l'attitude d'al-Ḥārith al-Malik quand le roi ḥimyarite Yūsuf As'ar Yath'ar se révolte contre son suzerain aksūmite en 522 ? Adhère-t-il à la politique de Yūsuf ou bien demeure-t-il fidèle à son alliance avec Byzance (et avec son allié aksūmite) ?

— Comment concilier les deux versions de la succession d'al-Ḥārith al-Malik, celle des sources byzantines qui mentionnent le seul Kaisos (Qays) et celle de la Tradition arabo-islamique qui se focalise sur les quatre fils d'al-Ḥārith (Ḥujr, Ma'dīkarib, Shuraḥbīl et Salama) ?

— Qui sont nommément « tous les banū 'Amr » qui se révoltent contre Abraha ?

— Enfin, où les phylarques kindites Arethas (al-Ḥārith al-Malik) et Kaisos (Qays) reçoivent-ils les ambassadeurs byzantins qu'on leur envoie ? Ne serait-ce pas dans l'oasis de Dūmat al-Jandal qui est proche de Byzance, ce qui expliquerait le fait qu'Arethas ait une querelle avec le duc de Palestine (Malalas, XVIII.16) et une présence kindite à Dūma jusqu'à l'aube de l'Islam ?

Tableau 6  
 LES ROIS DE ḤIMYAR DES IV<sup>e</sup>, V<sup>e</sup> ET VI<sup>e</sup> SIECLES

*Premières expéditions dans l'Arabie déserte*

**La dynastie de Dhamar' alī Yuhabirr**

[c. 321-c. 324]

**1. Dhamar' alī Yuhabirr TL**

*Dmr'ly Yhbr mlk S'b' w-d-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Hḍrmwt w-Ymnt*

- **a. Règne solitaire** : Ir 31 (Ma'rib ; ibn *Mrhb<sup>m</sup>*) et Ir 32 (Ma'rib ; ibn Gadan<sup>um</sup>), conquête de Saṣīrān (wādī Ḥaḍramawt)

- **b. Corégence Dhamar' alī Yuhabirr + fils Tha' rān Yuhan'im TL** : Schmidt-Ma'rib 28 + Ja 668 (Ma'rib ; « la commune Saba' Kahlān »), même conquête de Saṣīrān ; Garb SF V (Zafār) (... *Y]hb[r... / ... T]'<sup>n</sup> Y[...]*) ; Graf 5 (...*] -hw T]'<sup>n</sup> Yhn'im[...]*)

[c. 324-c. 375]

**2. Tha' rān Yuhan'im RSR / TL** (fils de Dhamar' alī Yuhabirr)

*T]'<sup>n</sup> Yhn'im mlk S'b' w-d-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Hḍrmwt w-Ymnt bn Dmr'ly Yhbr*

[c. 324-c. 365]

**a. Règne solitaire**

**RSR**

DJE 25 (Maṣna'at Māriya, [banū Yuhafri' ?]) ; DhM 201 ([auteurs ?])

<c. 340-345>

<Ambassade romaine de Théophile l'Indien auprès du roi de Ḥimyar>

<351 / 352

461 ḥim.>

<MQ-Ma'rib 1 (sans mention de roi)>

**Sans titulature**

Juillet 360

*d-mḍr<sup>m</sup>* 470 ḥim.

'Abadān 1 / 5 et 16 (*'lht Yaz'an*)

Mention également du « roi **Tha' rān Ayfa'** » ('Abadān 1 / 24) et du « roi **Dhamar' alī Ayfa'** » ('Abadān 1 / 26), sans doute des parents de Tha' rān Yuhan'im



- <361-370 47[1]-47[9] him.> <ZM 700 (Zafār ; fragment sans mention de roi)>
- b. Corégence hypothétique Tha'rān + fils Malkīriyām TL** : Veerman 2 = BynM 1 (al-Baydā' du Jawf, banū dhu-Wd<sup>om</sup> qayls de la commune Wd<sup>om</sup>) (*T'*/*r*<sup>n</sup> w-bny-hw Mlkrym)
- [c. 365-c. 370] **c. Corégence Tha'rān Yuhan'im + fils Malkīkarib (Yuha'min)**
- TL**
- Ja 669 (Ma'rib ; banū 'bl<sup>m</sup> w-Qtr<sup>n</sup> 'tw<sup>n</sup>) ;  
Ja 670 (Ma'rib ; banū Sukhaym<sup>um</sup> ; épidémie à Zafār) ; Ja 671 + 788 (Ma'rib ; banū Sukhaym<sup>um</sup> ; rupture et réparation de la Digue de Marib)
- RSR**
- Khaldūn-Ballās 1 inédit (banū Mqr)
- [c. 370-c. 375] **d. Corégence Tha'rān Yuhan'im + fils Malkīkarib Yuha'min et Dhamar'alī Yuhabirr TL**
- DhM 204 (Hakir ; ibn dhu-Ḥagar<sup>um</sup>) ; MQ-Minkath 1 (*[T](')*<sup>n</sup> Yhn'im [w-bny-hw Mlkk|*r*](b) Yh'mn w-[Dmr'ly Yhbr] | [*'mlk JS'b' (w-d-)*][Ryd<sup>n</sup>... etc.)
- Août [37]3 *d-hrf<sup>n</sup>* [48]3 him. YM 1950 (Bayt Ghufir ; [banū Bata', qa]yls de la commune Sam'ī, fraction dhu-Ḥumlān ; monothéiste) (*T'*/*r*<sup>n</sup> Yhn'im w-bny-h[w Mlkkrb Yh'mn ...])
- <372-373 482 him.> <Khaldūn al-Harūj 1 (sans mention de roi)>

[c. 375-c. 400]

**3. Malkīkarib Yuha'min TL** (fils de Tha'rān Yuhan'im)*Mlkkrb Yh'mn*

[c. 375-c. 376]

**a. Corégence hypothétique Malkīkarib Yuha'min + fils [Abīkarib As'ad] TL :**Ja 856 = Fa 60 (Ma'rib, construction d'un *mkrb*)

[c. 376-c. 400]

**b. Corégence Malkīkarib Yuha'min + Abīkarib As'ad et Dhara'amar Ayman TL**Janvier 384 *ḡ-d'w<sup>n</sup>* 493 ḡim.Garb Bayt al-Ashwal 2 et RES 3383 (Zafār ; construction des palais Shawḡaṡān et *Kl[n]<sup>m</sup>* ; premières inscriptions royales monothéistes)Juin 377 *ḡ-qyṡ<sup>n</sup>* 487 ḡim.**c. Invocation à Abīkarib As'ad et Dhara'amar Ayman TL :** Shu'lān-Shibām K. (inédit) (Kabīr [Aqyān<sup>mm</sup>] ?)**d. Invocations à Dhara'amar Ayman TL :** Khaldūn-'Albaj 1 inédit (banū dhu-*Mdrh<sup>m</sup>*, polythéiste) ; Garb Bayt al-Ashwal 1 (Zafār ; Yahūda' Yakkuf) ; MAFY-Bayt Ghufr 1 ([banū Bata']) ; al-Sayla al-Bayḡā' 1 (*'lht S<sup>2</sup>nṡ<sup>m</sup>*)***Ḥimyar annexe une grande partie de l'Arabie déserte***

[c. 400-c. 445]

**4. Abīkarib As'ad TL / TTL1** (fils de Malkīkarib Yuha'min)*'bkrb 's'd***a. Règne solitaire ?**Ja 516 (Dahr), [Abīkarib A]s'ad (TTL ?)

&lt;402-403 512 ḡim.&gt;

&lt;MAFY-Banū Zubayr (sans mention de roi), inscription polythéiste datée la plus tardive&gt;

**b. Corégence Abīkarib As'ad + (frère) Dhara'amar Ayman + (fils) Ḥaṡṡān Yu'min, Ma'dīkarib Yun'im et Ḥuḡr Ayfa' TL :** Garb Minkath 1 ; YM 327 = Ja 520 (Dahr) ; Garb Framm. 7 (Zafār)

**c. Corégence Abīkarib As‘ad + (fils) Ḥaśśān Yu‘min et Ma‘dīkarib Yun‘im [ou : + (fils) Ḥaśśān Yu‘min, Ma‘dīkarib et Ḥuḡr] TTL1bis**

BynM 17 : (‘)bk(r)[b ‘]s‘(d)[ w-bny-hw H]/s<sup>3</sup>n Yh‘mn w-M[‘dkrb Yn‘m ‘]/mlk S‘b’ w-(d-)[Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥdrmw<sup>t</sup> w-]/Ymnt w-Ṭ[wd w-Thmt ...]

**d. Corégence Abīkarib As‘ad + Ḥaśśā[n Yu]ha‘min, Ma‘dīkarib Yuhan‘im, Marthad‘ilān Yaz‘an et Shuriḥbi‘il Ya‘fur TL**

Février 432 *q-hlt<sup>n</sup>* [5]42 ḥim.

ZM 5 + 8 + 10 (Zafār ; invocation aux rois sans les nommer)

Août 433 *q-hrf<sup>n</sup>* 543 ḥim.

Ry 534 + MAFY-Rayda 1 (ibn Hamdān et Su‘rān)

**e. Corégence Abīkarib As‘ad + Ḥaśśān Yuha‘min TTL1 (fils de Ḥaśśān Malkīkarib Yuha‘min TL) : Ry 509 (Ma‘sal al-Jumḥ)**

**f. Mentions du roi Ma‘dīkarib (sans titulature) ?**

439 / 440 549 ḥim.

Ph 124a+g = P 79+80 (Najrān) : *b-mlk M‘dkrb*

439 / 440 549 ḥim.

Ph 130a+147+130c = P 50+49+51 (Najrān) : *b-mlk M‘dkrb*

<Graffite au nom de Ḥuḡr fils de ‘Amr<sup>um</sup> roi de Kinda (*Hḡr bn ‘mr<sup>m</sup> mlk Kdt*) : Ḥujr-Gajda (Nafūd Musammā, à quelque 25 km au nord-ouest de Kawkab ; sans mention de roi ; date incertaine)>

[? 445-450 ?]

**5. [Ḥaśśān Yuha‘min TTL2] (fils d’Abīkarib As‘ad) ?**

[Hs<sup>3</sup>n Yh‘mn]

**Corégence hypothétique [Ḥaśśān Yuha‘min] + frère Shuriḥbi‘il Ya‘fur TTL2 : Garb Framm. 3 (Zafār) : [Hs<sup>3</sup>n Yh‘mn w-] (‘)h-hw S<sup>2</sup>rḥb‘l Y‘\|fr ... ;**

<Septembre 448 *q-d'ln* 558 him.>

Octobre 450 *z-šrb<sup>n</sup>* 560 him.

**[c. 450-c. 468]**

Janvier 456 *q-d'w* 565 him.

Mai 456 *q-mbkr<sup>n</sup>* 566 him.

Décembre 462 *q-l'* 572 him.

<Août 463 *q-hrf* 573 him.>

<Janvier 465 *q-d'w<sup>n</sup>* 574 him.>

465-466

**La dynastie de Shuriḥbi'īl Yakkuf**

**[c. 468-c. 480]**

Avril 470 *q-ṭbt<sup>n</sup>* 580 him.

Février [47]5 *q-ḥlt<sup>n</sup>* [58]5 him.

—

RES 4105 (Zafār) : [*Hśn Yh'mn w-'h-h*]w  
*S<sup>2</sup>rḥb' l Y'jfr* ...

<Barrett-Beeston (Baynūn ; stèle funéraire sans mention de roi)>

RES 5085 (Habbān ; *'lht Yaz'an* ; invocation aux rois, sans les nommer)

**6. Shuriḥbi'īl Ya'fur TTL2** (fils d'Abīkarib As'ad)

CIH 540 (Marib ; réfection de la Digue)

Dostal 1 (wādī 'l-Sirr, al-Qamā'a ; [... qayls de la commune Ṣirwāḥ], Khawlān *H[d<sup>m</sup> ...]* ; roi sans patronyme)

ZM 1 = Garb Shuriḥbi'īl Ya'fur (Zafār ; construction du palais *Hrgb*)

<CIH 6 (Ṣan'ā', dhu-*Qwl<sup>m</sup>* ; sans mention de roi)>

<Ry 520 (Ḍula' ? ; dhu-Kabsiy<sup>um</sup> ... qayls de la commune Tan'im<sup>um</sup> etc. ; sans mention de roi)>

575 him. Khaldūn-al-Basāfīn 1 (inédit) (roi sans patronyme)

*CIH 45 + 44* (Ḍāf ; [*S<sup>2</sup>rḥb' l Y'jfr*])

**1. Shuriḥb'īl Yakkuf TTL2**

*S<sup>2</sup>rḥb' l Ykf*

**a. Règne solitaire**

ZM 2000 (Zafār ; banū *Hry<sup>n</sup>*) (*S<sup>2</sup>rḥb' l mlk S'b' w-d-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Hḍrmwt*)

CIH 644 (*Jb' l Ykf mlk S'b' w-d-l*)

Gl 1194 (Na'd) (*Jrḥb' l Ykf*) ; RES 4298 (...*Jkf mlk S'b'* etc.)

*Martyre guèze d'Azkār* : Sarābhīl (variantes : Sarābhēl / Sarābhēl) Dānkəf

**b. Corégence de Shuriḥbi'īl Yakkuf + (fils) Abishammar] Nawf<sup>um</sup>, Laḥay'at Yanūf et Ma'dikarib Yun'im TTL2**

Août 472 *ḡ-hṛf<sup>n</sup>* 582 ḡim.

*RES 4919 + CIH 537 = L 121 ('mlk<sup>n</sup> S<sup>2</sup>rḡb|l' Ykf w-bny-hw 'bs<sup>2</sup>mr] Nwf<sup>m</sup> w-Lḡy't Ynwf w-M'dkrb Yn'm 'mlk S'b' etc.) ; RES 4969 = Ja 876 ([... 'mr'-hmw | S<sup>2</sup>rḡb'l] Ykf [w-'bs<sup>2</sup>mr Nwf | w-Lḡy']t Ynf w-M'dkrb Yn['m 'mlk S'b' w-ḡ-Ryd<sup>n</sup> | w-Ḥḡrmw]t w-Ymnt w-'rb-h[mw Ṭwd<sup>m</sup> w-Thmt] ; le monogramme de droite donne à penser que l'auteur principal se nomme Ma'ḡkarib).*

**c. Corégence de Shuriḡbi'l Yakkuf + fils Abishammar Nawf et Laḡay'at Yanūf TTL2**

474-475 584 ḡim.

Ma'sal 3 (inédit) (*S<sup>2</sup>rḡb'l Ykf w-bny-hw 'bs<sup>2</sup>mr Nwf w-Lḡy't Ynf | 'mlk S'b' w-ḡ-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥḡrmwt w-Ymnt w-'rb-hmw Ṭwd<sup>m</sup> w-Thmt*)

[c. 480-c. 485]

**2. Marthad'ilān Yun'im TTL2** (fils de [Laḡay'a]t Yanūf TT2 fils de [Shuriḡbi'l Yakkuf TT2)

*Mrḡd'l<sup>n</sup> Yn'm*

—

CIH 620 (Zafār) (...]n'm m[lk ... | ...]t Ynf ml[k ... | ... S<sup>2</sup>rḡb'l Ykf m[...]; YM 1200 (*Mrḡd'l<sup>n</sup> Yn'm m[... ... ]||mw Ṭwd<sup>m</sup> w-Thm[t ... ... Ḥḡ]/rmwt w-Ymnt w-[... ... Yk]f mlk S'b[ ...]*)

**Interrègne ?**

[? 485-500 ?]

<Juin 486 *ḡ-qyḡ<sup>n</sup>* 596 ḡim.>

<MAFRAY-Abū Thawr 4 ('lht Yaz'an ; sans mention de roi)>

<Février 486 *ḡ-hl<sup>n</sup>* 596 ḡim.>

<MAFRAY-Quṭubīn 37 et 47 (dhu-Rs'm<sup>m</sup> ; sans mention de roi)>

<Décembre 487 *ḡ-l<sup>n</sup>* 597 ḡim.>

<Robin-Najr 1 (sans mention de roi)>

<Août 488 *ḡ-hṛf<sup>n</sup>* 598 ḡim.>

<MAFYS-Ḍura' 3 = RES 4069 ('lht Yaz'an ; sans mention de roi)>

<Juin 490 *ḡ-ḡyḡ<sup>n</sup>* 600 ḡim.>

<MAFRAY-Banū Ṣā' 2 (ibn *Yḡm'l*; sans mention de roi)>

### *Ḥimyar tributaire d'Aksūm et allié de Byzance*

#### **Le règne de Marthad'ilān Yanūf**

[c. 500-c. 515]

Juillet 504 *ḡ-mḡr<sup>m</sup>* 614 ḡim.

Mars 509 *ḡ-m'n* 619 ḡim.

—

—

<Juillet 507 ou 509

*ḡ-mḡr<sup>m</sup>* [6]1[7 / 9]>

#### **Marthad'ilān Yanūf TTL2**

*Mrḡd'l<sup>n</sup> Yn(w)f*

<Première expédition du règne de Kālēb en Arabie, commandée par Ḥayyān (*RIÉth* 191) ?>

Fa 74 (*Mrḡd'l<sup>n</sup> Ynf* TTL2) (Marib ; membres de la commune Saba' Kahlān)

Garb Ant Yem 9 d (*mlk<sup>n</sup> Mrḡd'l<sup>n</sup> Ynwf*) (Zafār ; palais construit par des « ambassadeurs » au nom peut-être aksumite)

*CIH* 596 + 597 + *RES* 4157 + 4158 (...)*mlk<sup>n</sup> Mrḡd'l<sup>n</sup> Ynf* | [*mlk S'b' w-ḡ-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥḡḡrmwt w-Ymnt w-'[rb-hmw Ṭwd<sup>m</sup> w-T]hmt*]

DhM 287 (al-Ḥadā') (l. 7, [*Mrḡd'l<sup>n</sup> ]Ynf mlk S'b' w-ḡ-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥḡḡrmwt w-Ymnt [w-'rb-hmw Ṭwd<sup>m</sup>w-Thmt*] ; l. 8, *mlk<sup>n</sup> Mrḡd'l<sup>n</sup>*)

<Garb NIS 4 (Zafār ; dhu-*G'n<sup>n</sup>* ; sans mention de roi)>

#### **Interrègne ?**

[? 515-519 ?]

<Avril 515 *ḡ-tbt<sup>n</sup>* 625 ḡim.>

<Yanbuq 47 (*'lht Yaz'an* ; sans mention de roi)>

<Mai 519 *ḡ-mbkr<sup>n</sup>* 629 ḡim.>

<Robin-Viallard 1 (Zafār ; dhu-*Ṣrf* banū *S<sup>2</sup>ddy<sup>n</sup>* ; sans mention de roi)>

**Le règne de Ma'dikarib Ya'fur**  
[c. 519-522]

<c. printemps 519>

Juin 521 *ḡ-qyẓ<sup>n</sup>* 631 ḥim.

Août 521 *ḥrf<sup>n</sup>* [63]1 ḥim.

**Ma'dikarib Ya'fur TTL2**

*M'dkrb Y'fr*

<Deuxième expédition du règne de Kālēb en Arabie, commandée par le roi lui-même, mentionnée par Kosmas Indikopleustēs>

Ry 510 (Ma'sal al-Jumḥ)

Ja 2484 (*M'dkrb Y'fr mlk | S'b' w-ḡ-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥḡrmt | w-Ymnt w-'rb-hmw Ṭwd<sup>m</sup> w-Thm[t]*) (Ḥamḍa)

**La révolte de Yūsuf**

[522-525 / 530]

Juin 523 *ḡ-qyẓ<sup>n</sup>* 633 ḥim.

Juillet 523 *ḡ-mḡr<sup>m</sup>* 633 ḥim.

Juillet 523 *ḡ-mḡr<sup>m</sup>* 633 ḥim.

<Novembre 523>

<Entre 525 et 530>

**Yūsuf As'ar Yath'ar, roi de toutes les communes**

*Y(w)s'f 's' 'r Yṭ' r mlk kl 's<sup>2</sup>'b<sup>n</sup>*

Ry 508 / 2 (*mlk<sup>n</sup> Ys'f 's' 'r*) (Kawkab)

Ry 507 / 1 (... ..] 's<sup>2</sup>'b<sup>n</sup>) (Ḥimā)

Ja 1028 / 1 (*mlk<sup>n</sup> Yws'f 's' 'r Yṭ' r mlk kl 's<sup>2</sup>'b<sup>n</sup>*) (Ḥimā)

<Massacre des chrétiens liés à Byzance, principalement à Nagrān>

<Troisième expédition du règne de Kālēb en Arabie, commandée par le roi lui-même>

**[Bref interrègne avant 531 ?]**

<Février 530 *ḡ-ḥlt<sup>n</sup>* 640 ḥim.>

<CIH 621 (Ḥuṣn al-Ghurāb ; mention de la mort violente du « roi de Ḥimyar »)>

*L'Arabie aksūmite***Le règne de Sumūyafa' Ashwa'***[c. 531-535]*

&lt;Printemps 531&gt;

**La dynastie d'Abraha***[c. 535-565]*Février 548 *d-ḥlt<sup>n</sup> 'ḥ(r)[<sup>n</sup>]* 658Mars 548 *d-m 'n* 658 ḥim.Septembre 552 *d-'l<sup>n</sup>* 662 ḥim.Novembre 558 *d-mhlt<sup>n</sup>* 668 ḥim.

&lt;559-560 669 ḥim.&gt;

*[c. 565-568]***Sumūyafa' Ashwa' T[TL2]***S'myf<sup>c</sup> 's<sup>2</sup>w<sup>c</sup>*Ist 7608 bis + Wellcome A 103664 (Dāf)*(...n]fs' qds' S'myf<sup>c</sup> 's<sup>2</sup>w<sup>c</sup> mlk S'[b' ...)*

&lt;Ambassade de Ioulianos&gt;

**1. Abraha TTL2***'brh*

&lt;Quatrième et cinquième expéditions du règne de Kālēb en Arabie&gt;

DAI GDN 2002 / 20 (*mlk<sup>n</sup> 'b(r)h Zb|ymn* TTL2)CIH 541 (*'brh 'z|y mlk<sup>n</sup> 'g'zy<sup>n</sup> Rmḥs<sup>3</sup> Zbymn* TTL2)ll. 82-83 : Aksūm dhu-Ma'āhir fils du roi (*'ks'm d-M'h|r bn mlk<sup>n</sup>*)

ll. 87-92 : conférence diplomatique à Marib à l'automne 547 avec des représentants de Rome, de l'Éthiopie, de la Perse et de trois princes arabes

Murayghān 1 = Ry 506 (*mlk<sup>n</sup> 'brh Zybmn* TTL2)Murayghān 2 = Sayyid *PSAS* 1988, p. 136 (dhu-Dharāniḥ) (*mlk | 'brh*) (même date que la précédente)Murayghān 3 (*mlk<sup>n</sup> 'brh Zybmn* TTL2) (date légèrement postérieure à Murayghān 1)Ja 544-547 (Ma'rib ; dhī *Ms<sup>2</sup>'r<sup>n</sup>*) (*mlk<sup>n</sup> 'brh mlk S'b' w-[d-Rd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥḍrmt w-Ymnt w-'rb-hmw Ṭd<sup>n</sup> | w-Thmt Rmḥs<sup>3</sup>*)

&lt;CIH 325 (sans mention de roi)&gt;

**2. [Aksūm]** (fils d'Abraha)



Connu par les traditions arabo-islamiques ; aucune attestation épigraphique du règne ; mentionné comme « fils du roi » en 658 ھim. (CIH 541 / 82-83 : 'ks'm d-M'h|r bn mlk<sup>n</sup>).

[c. 568-570]

### 3. [Masrūq] (fils d'Abraha)

Connu seulement par les traditions arabo-islamiques.

Sigles : voir MÜLLER 2010 ; à défaut K.A. KITCHEN, *Bibliographical Catalogue of Texts* (Documentation for Ancient Arabia, Part II) (The World of Ancient Arabia Series), Liverpool (Liverpool University Press), 2000.

Sigles soulignés : textes officiels, qui ont le(s) souverain(s) ھimyarite(s) pour auteur(s).

TL : titulature longue, « roi de Saba', dhu-Raydān, Ḥaḍramawt et Yamnat » (*mlk S<sup>l</sup>b' w-d-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥḍrmwt w-Ymnt*)

TTL1 : titulature très longue du type *mlk S<sup>l</sup>b' w-d-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥḍrmwt w-Ymnt w-'rb Ṭwd w-Thmt*, « roi de Saba', dhu-Raydān, Ḥaḍramawt et Yamnat, ainsi que des Arabes de Ṭawd et Tihāmat »

TTL1 bis : titulature attestée uniquement de manière fragmentaire, peut-être un abrègement libre de TTL1 : 'j|*mlk S<sup>l</sup>b' w-(d-)[Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥḍrmwt w-]Ymnt w-Ṭ[wd w-Thmt ... ...]*

TTL2 : titulature très longue du type *mlk S<sup>l</sup>b' w-d-Ryd<sup>n</sup> w-Ḥḍrmwt w-Ymnt w-'rb-hmw Ṭwd<sup>n</sup> w-Thmt*, « roi de Saba', dhu-Raydān, Ḥaḍramawt et Yamnat, ainsi que de leurs Arabes, de Ṭawd et Tihāmat »

TTL (?) : titulature très longue en partie restituée, de sorte qu'on ignore si elle est du type 1 ou 2

Début de l'ère ھimyarite (ou de Mabḥūḍ b. Abḥaḍ) : probablement avril (?) 110 è. chr.

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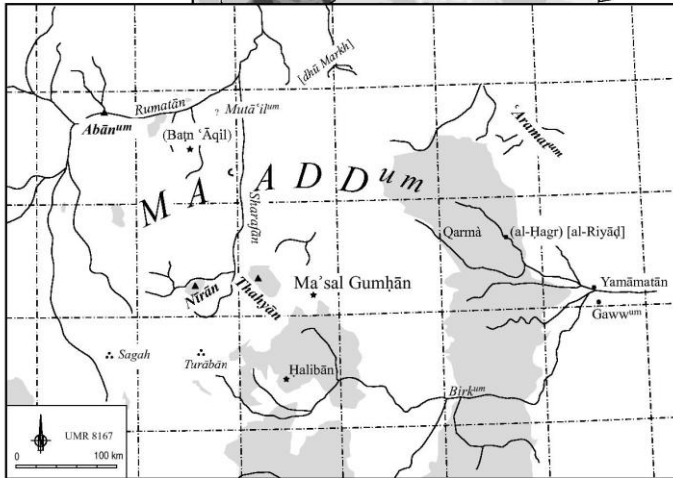
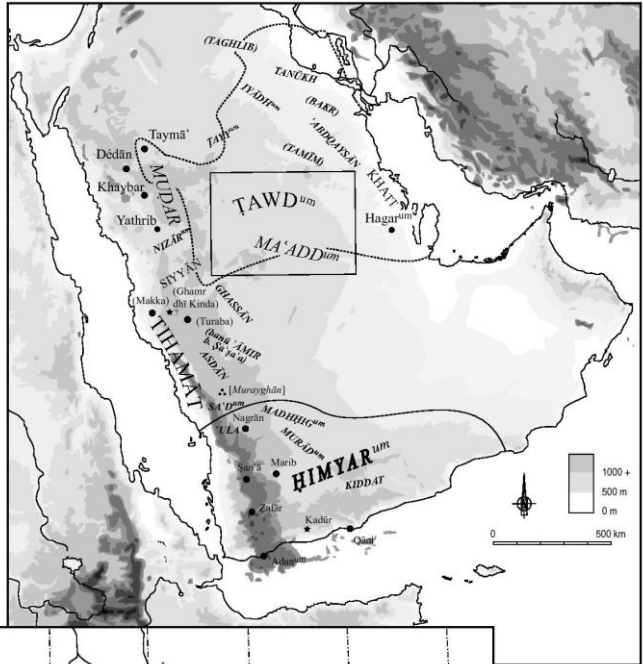
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**Légende**

Yathrib, Nīrān, SIYYĀN, TĀY<sup>um</sup>  
 (Baṭn 'Āqil), (BAKR)  
 [Murayghān]

Bourgs (villes, résidences royales, forteresses), toponymes (lieux-dits, puits, vallées, montagnes, plateaux), régions, tribus, mentionnés par les sources antiques  
 Bourgs et tribus antiques, connus par les seules sources arabes  
 Bourgs et lieux-dits contemporains

- Villes
- Résidences royales, forteresses
- ▲ Montagnes
- ⦿ Puits, points d'eau

..... Limite des territoires qui furent, à un moment ou à un autre, sous l'autorité d'un Kindite (d'après TAVO B VI 7)

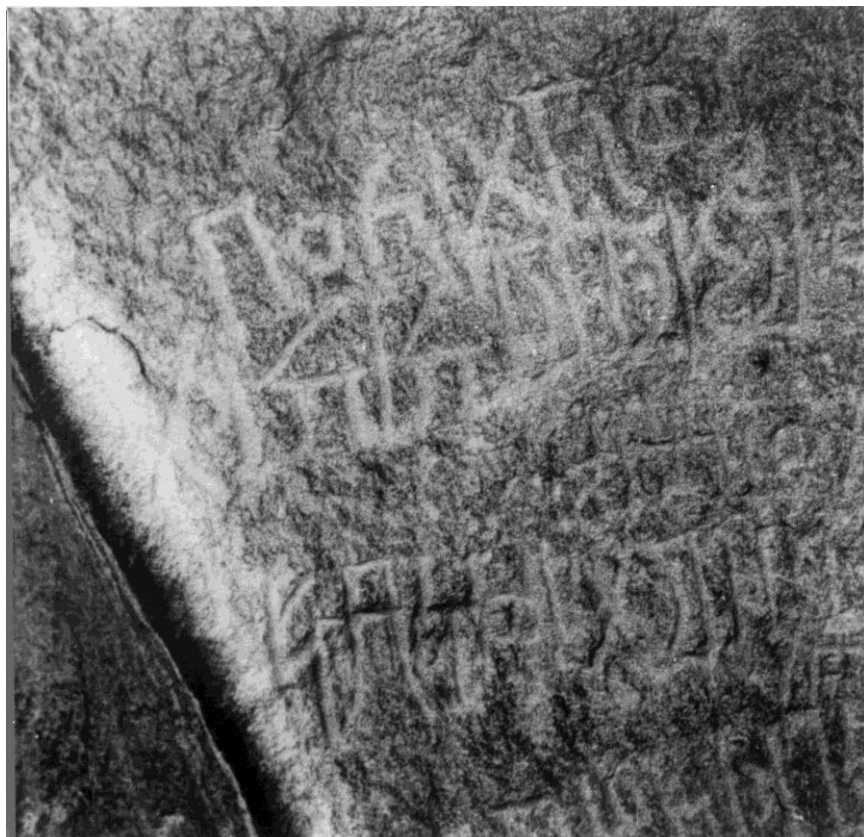


Fig. 1 : Le graffite Ḥujr-Gajda mentionnant « Ḥujr b. ʿAmr roi de Kinda », *Ḥgr bn ʿmr<sup>m</sup> mlk Kdt* (partie gauche) (Nafūd Musammā, à quelque 25 km au nord-ouest de Kawkab et à une centaine de kilomètres au nord-est de Najrān).





Fig. 2 : Le graffite Hujr-Gajda mentionnant « Hujr b. 'Amr roi de Kinda », *Hgr bn 'mr<sup>m</sup> mlk Kdt* (partie droite).



# Arabia in Roman Sources: The Evidence of Latin Poetry<sup>1</sup>

MAGDA EL-NOWIEEMY

In this paper I try to make the point that Arabia was ever present in ancient Roman thought, because it contributed to the social and economic aspects of ancient Roman life.

Scholars in modern times tend to focus on classical prose writings that dealt with Arabia. A case in point is Strabo and Pliny the Elder. I believe that more emphasis should be given to the poetic treatment of Arabia, since the Roman poets, especially of the Augustan age, made use of poetry for expressing valid views about the so-called *Arabia Felix*.

My design in the present paper is to deal with such poems as evidence of a very different kind of classical sources<sup>2</sup> than any of those which modern historians who work on Arabia have been considering.<sup>3</sup>

Roman poets' sayings about Arabia had apparent bearing upon Rome's relationships with Arabia and the Arabs. The Roman poets appeared to have taken absorbing interest in Rome's affairs with Arabia. With this as my starting point, I have set out to illustrate three points in the Roman poetical treatments:

**Firstly:** The persistent idea about the wealth of Arabia, and this is the heart of the matter.

**Secondly:** Arabia's contribution to the social and economic aspects of the Roman life.

**Thirdly:** The expedition of Aelius Gallus on Arabia.

I shall start my paper with a quotation from one of the older generation of the Arabian specialists; it is from G. W. BOWERSOCK, who contributed much to the

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<sup>1</sup>. It is my pleasure to acknowledge here my profound gratitude to more than one person. This paper could not have come out to light without the good will and co-operation of Professor Vasilis Christides. I should like to take this opportunity to thank him for the very special encouragement he has provided. With equal warmth I should also thank Ambassador Dr Demetrios Letsios for giving me the opportunity of being in this conference. I would like to express my gratitude for Dr Abdullah Abd Al-Jabbar for so many facilities he most sincerely and kindly offered me. A word of thanks is due to Mrs Abby Laurance of the Greek Embassy in Riyadh, who has been kind enough to keep in touch with me in order to update me with the conference info.

<sup>2</sup>. It is significant to see the interesting relations between history and literature through HABINEK'S following words: T. HABINEK, *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity, and Empire in Ancient Rome*, Princeton 1998, 5: "But for all that literature is part of history, it seems important to recognize that history can be part of the pleasure of literature".

<sup>3</sup>. G. W. BOWERSOCK, *Roman Arabia*, London 1983, 4, argues: "There was no Arab Polybius, no Arab Josephus. It was essential, therefore, to build the history from scattered references in ancient authors, in conjunction with the surviving monuments and inscriptions, viewed within the context of the land itself. In the twentieth century more scholars returned in search of new evidence and greater familiarity with the terrain".

In this context, I would argue, it is worthwhile to shed light on the evidence of Latin poetry.

Arabia, Greece and Byzantium: Cultural Contacts in Ancient and Medieval Times, ed. Abdulaziz Al-Helabi, Dimitrios Letsios, Moshalleh Al-Moraekhi, Abdullah Al-Abduljabbar, Riyadh 2012 / AH 1433, Part II, pp. 131-142.

field. He prefaced his admirable and highly readable study of *Roman Arabia*,<sup>4</sup> published in 1983, by stating:

“When I began work on Roman Arabia some fourteen years ago, there seemed to be relatively little interest in the subject. I was aware that the material, both archaeological and textual, was as rich as it was challenging; and I knew that it would take time to master the necessary languages and acquire a sufficient familiarity with the land about which I was writing. To my surprise and undisguised pleasure, a preliminary report on the status of studies on the Arabian province, which I published in the *Journal of Roman Studies* in 1971, evoked considerable response and set several young scholars on the path of research and excavation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. ... This book has gained from the recent work, and it is my hope that it will provide assistance to those who will be pursuing Arabian projects within the context of Roman history in the years ahead”.<sup>5</sup>

BOWERSOCK'S studies have ever been stimulating to me to figure out my topic, but with completely different shifts of emphasis. The field surveyed is a vast one, and my present paper does not pretend to cover fully such a very wide field. Most of the information and arguments supplied in my paper comes from both Latin poetry and historical literary sources. One may need to see, I suppose, more clearly the matter from the viewpoint of the Roman poets, especially of the Augustan Age, in which new chances of peace and prosperity arose in Rome.

Considerations of space force me to omit so many examples and to give room only to some of the most revealing. Some of the views are repeated several times in many poems as the changing context demanded.

The Roman poets devoted a good deal of space to the wealth of the Arabs in the land of frankincense and perfumes in the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, which was known as the kingdom of Sabaa (Sabaea), and known to the Romans as *Arabia Felix*,<sup>6</sup> the gateway to the far East. Those southern Arabs were intermediaries of the sea-trade between India and Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

The Roman poet Horace (65-8 B.C.) starts one of his poems<sup>8</sup> by talking about the treasures of the Arabs, calling it: *beatis ...gazis* (*Odes*, I. 29. 1-2), which

<sup>4</sup> See M. P. SPEIDEL, book review of G. W. BOWERSOCK, *Roman Arabia*, London 1983, in: *CPh* 81, (1986) 262, who evaluates BOWERSOCK'S book as follows: "for here one of the finest scholars of the Empire has turned to the study of a province, toiled for a decade and a half over its rich archaeological, textual, and geographical sources, and come forth with a wide-ranging, insightful, and reliable history of that country."

<sup>5</sup> BOWERSOCK, *Roman Arabia*, ix.

<sup>6</sup> See Pliny *HN*, 5.12.65; 6. 31. 38; 12. 30. 51. Text edition used here is: Pliny, *Natural History* ed. with an English transl. H. RACKHAM, 10 vols. [LCL], Harvard University Press 1986-1999.

<sup>7</sup> For the Arabian merchants as intermediaries, see M. ROSTOVITZ, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Oxford 1926, 91-92.

<sup>8</sup> The text edition used here is: Horace, *The Odes and Epodes*, ed. with an English transl. C. E. BENNETT, London and New York 1925.

means "the happy treasures". The adjective "happy" has the acknowledged sense of *Arabia Felix*, as known from Pliny the Elder.<sup>9</sup>

In a similar sense, Horace in (*Odes*.III. 24.1-2) invites an unnamed wealthy Roman reader to imagine himself "richer than the untouched treasures of the Arabs" (*intactis...thesauris Arabum*). The Roman, who covers with his buildings all the land and the sea which is a common property of all, is compared by Horace to the wealthy Arabs. Arabia, here as elsewhere in Roman minds, is proverbially celebrated for its untold wealth. The poet's aim was to attack Roman lifestyle of luxury and the decline of morals that accompanied it. He assures that far better than Roman luxury is the life of the nomads, simple but virtuous and pure.

*Arabia Felix* was celebrated for its rare and precious perfumes, frankincense, and spices;<sup>10</sup> therefore it was spoken of by the classical writers as "wealthy".<sup>11</sup> In another poem, Horace calls it: *plenas ...Arabum domos* (*Odes*, 2. 12. 24), i.e. "the lands of the Arabs which were full of wealth". That is why in another context (*Odes*, 1.35. 38-40) the same poet expresses his profound wish that Roman Arms should be directed against the Arabs.

Frankincense was a key product which Rome imported from Arabia. It was a necessity which Roman religion, as well as other ancient religions, could not do without.

Frankincense was part of birthdays' celebrations in the Roman society. The Roman poet Tibullus (c. 55-19 B.C.), in a birthday poem<sup>12</sup> explains the process of festivities and rituals by saying:

*Urantur pia tura focis, urantur odores  
Quos tener e terra divite mittit Arabs.  
(Tib., 2. 2. 3-4)*

"Holy frankincense is burnt in fire, fragrances are burnt, which the soft Arab sends from his rich land."

The Roman poet Vergil (70-19 B.C.) says in his *Georgics*:<sup>13</sup>  
*...Solis est turea virga Sabaeis.  
(Verg. Georg. 2. 117)*

"...to the Sabaeans alone belongs the frankincense tree".<sup>14</sup>

This statement goes well with what we know from Pliny the Elder (*HN*, 12. 29. 51-52) that the frankincense tree is found in no other place except Arabia

<sup>9</sup>. See above n. 6.

<sup>10</sup>. For a detailed study, see: S. Z. BASSIOUNY, Theophrastus and the Plants of Arabia, *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University* 38(1990), 723-749.

<sup>11</sup>. See Strabo, XVI. 4. 19; 16. 4. 22; Text edition used is: Strabo, *The Geography*, ed. with an English transl. H. JONES, 8 vols. [LCL], Harvard University Press 1917- 1967. See also Pliny *HN*, 5. 12. 65; 6. 32. 161-162; 12. 30. 51; 12. 41.82.

<sup>12</sup>. Text edition used here for Tibullus is: Tibullus, in: *Catullus, Tibullus, Pervigilium Veneris*, ed. with an English transl. J. POSTGATE, [LCL], Harvard University Press 1968.

<sup>13</sup>. Text edition used here is: Virgil, *The Eclogues and Georgics*, ed. with commentary R. D. WILLIAMS, Macmillan 1987.

<sup>14</sup>. Cf. Verg. *Georg.* 1. 57.

(*tura praeter Arabiam nullis*), and not in Arabia as a whole (*ac ne Arabiae quidem universae*), but in Sariba in Sabaa.

The Sabaeans were famous for their commerce not only in frankincense, but also in perfumes and spices, either home-grown or from the East. They depended upon the commercial activities of the Nabataeans to bring these products by an overland route, down to the Mediterranean,<sup>15</sup> then to Rome, the receiving end in the West.

Excessive display of wealth was shown in Rome especially in the first century B.C., and the first century of our common era. The reign of the Emperor Augustus was the period of greatest prosperity for the Romans; this is why my citations come mainly from this period. Perfumes, cosmetics, and silk dresses represented extravagant luxury, which the Roman women used. Consequently, the most highly luxury products were those of India, China, Arabia and Africa. Imports of perfumes, pearls, silk, and other luxuries moved from these places via the Red Sea,<sup>16</sup> or overland routes<sup>17</sup> in their final passage to Rome via the Mediterranean.<sup>18</sup>

Roman women of the Empire aimed at looking smart, they favoured nature embellished and elaborated.<sup>19</sup> It is more to the point to observe what Ovid (43 B.C.-17 A.D.) says:<sup>20</sup>

*Tot tibi tamque dabit formosas Roma puellas,  
"haec habet " ut dicas " quicquid in orbe fuit."  
(Ov. Ars 1.55-6)*

"Rome will give you so many girls and so beautiful that you would say "this (city) has all what is in the world ".

The Roman poet Propertius (c. 54-16 B.C.), in a poem that ranked among his best (3.13), assumes the persona of a satirist, starting by an attack on the vanity

<sup>15</sup> . For the powerful monopoly of the traffic in perfume and spices the Nabataeans had achieved, see BOWERSOCK, *Roman Arabia*, 12 ff.; 46 f.

<sup>16</sup> . Cf. Strabo, *Geog.* XVI. 4.24. The Red Sea was important as a channel for the trade between Rome and the Eastern seas. Luxury products came from Africa, Arabia, India, and China to the ports of Berenice, Leukos Limen, and Myos Hormos on the Red Sea, to be transmitted to Alexandria, then across the Mediterranean to Rome. See: M. GRANT, *From Alexander to Cleopatra. The Hellenistic World*, New York 1982, 40; BOWERSOCK, *Roman Arabia*, 47, 64; P. JONES et al., *The World of Rome. An Introduction to Roman Culture*, Cambridge 1998, 201; A. DALBY, *Empire of Pleasures*, Routledge 2000, 174 f.; R. HOYLAND, *Arabia and the Arabs*, Routledge 2003, 73.

<sup>17</sup> . For the overland routes, see: BOWERSOCK, *Roman Arabia*, 12 ff., 46 f.; DALBY, *Pleasures*, 183.

<sup>18</sup> . For the course of trading operations, see LIONEL CASSON, *The Ancient Mariners*, New York 1959, (reprint Princeton University Press 1991), 157 ff., 200 ff.

<sup>19</sup> . In the words of MARIA WYKE: "woman is constructed and constructs herself as a physical appearance, an object to be gazed upon by men ". See MARIA WYKE, *Woman in the Mirror: The Rhetoric of Adornment in the Roman World*, in: *Women in Ancient Societies*, ed. L. ARCHER et al., Macmillan 1994, 138.

<sup>20</sup> . Text edition used here is: Ovid, *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, ed. with an English transl. J. MOZLEY [LCL], Harvard University Press 1947.

of Roman women, their passion for luxuries<sup>21</sup> and excessive ornamentation. He addresses imaginary readers saying:<sup>22</sup>

*quaeritis, unde avidis nox sit pretiosa puellis,  
et Venere exhaustae damna querantur opes.  
Certa quidem tantis causa et manifesta ruinis:  
luxuriae nimium libera facta via est .*

(Prop .3.13.1-4)

"You ask, why the night of greedy girls is costly, and why our monetary resources, which have been drained by the goddess of love, complain of shortage. The cause of such great ruin is indeed certain and clear: the road of luxury has become too much free".<sup>23</sup>

These lines reflect the Augustan climate of life and patterns of social behavior which committed the love-poets to expending a considerable amount of money on women's luxury.<sup>24</sup>

Then, Propertius enumerates (3.13.5-8) four main luxury imports from the East:<sup>25</sup> gold from India;<sup>26</sup> pearls from the Red Sea;<sup>27</sup> Tyrian purple;<sup>28</sup> last but not

<sup>21</sup>. For the extravagance of Roman women, see the speech of Cato in: Livy (XXXIV. iii- iv). Text edition used here is: Livy, *From the Founding of the City*, ed. with an English transl. B. FOSTER et al., 14 vols. [LCL], Harvard University Press 1976-1983. See C. EDWARDS, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*, Cambridge 1996, 80, who points out to the fact that luxury itself was especially associated with women who were thought highly susceptible to its attractions.

<sup>22</sup>. Text edition used is: Propertius, *Elegies*, ed. with an English transl. G. GOOLD, [LCL] Harvard University Press 1990.

<sup>23</sup>. Livy, *Praefatio*, 11-12, lamented the ruinous effects of Rome's increased luxury on the morals of the Roman citizens. He believed that the less wealth they possessed, the less desires they had.

<sup>24</sup>. Roman love poets often refer to the presents they offered their girls to support their case in making their advances to them, see for example: Tibullus, 1.5.60; Propertius, 2.8.11; Ovid, *Amores* 2.15.1ff. Text edition used here is: Ovid, *Heroides and Amores*, ed. with an English transl. G. SHOWERMAN, [LCL], Harvard University Press 1947. For the gifts given to Roman girls as an integral part of courtship, see: J. GRIFFIN, *Latin Poets and Roman Life*, Bristol 1994, 112 ff. GRIFFIN shows how the elegists constantly denounce the venality of the age and the conquest of love by money. For gifts in the erotic discourse, see A. SHARROCK, *Womanaufacture*, *JRS* 81(1991) 43ff.

<sup>25</sup>. For the extravagant luxury that came to Rome from the East, see J. GRIFFIN, *Augustan Poetry and the Life of Luxury*, *JRS* 66 (1976) 93.

<sup>26</sup>. Cf. Pliny, *HN*, XI. 111.

<sup>27</sup>. For Eastern pearls, see Tibullus, 2.2.15f.; 2.4.30. Cf. Horace, *Epistles*, 1.6.5f.; text edition used here is Horace, *Epistles Book I*, ed. with introduction and commentary R. MAYER, Cambridge 1994; *Satires*, 2.3.239-242; text edition used here is *Horace, Satires*, ed. with notes A. PALMER, Macmillan 1971; Pliny, *HN*, 1X.114; Martial, 5.37; 9.2.9; 9.12.5f. 10.17.5; 10.38.5; text edition used here is *Martial, Epigrams*, ed. with an English transl. D. SHACKLETON BAILEY, 3 vols. [LCL], Harvard University Press 1993.

<sup>28</sup>. Tyrian purple was a unique Phoenician product, to which no other one appeared to have stood as rival. It became a symbol of wealth and luxury in the Roman world. See MAGDA EL-

least Arab fragrances and perfumes. These are some of the greatest gifts that the East was to give to the west. Then he adds:

*Haec etiam clausas expugnant arma pudicas*  
(Prop. 3. 13. 9)

"These weapons storm even chaste women shut up (in their homes)".

This means that luxury products threatened the old habits of the Romans.<sup>29</sup>

Propertius emphasizes the Roman matrons' response to these products. Then an attack on the venality of Roman women comes. The poet sets an interesting comparison between the venality of the greedy Roman women contrasted with the faithfulness of Eastern women, who were untouched by corruption. Consequently the poet argues the case for the Eastern women against the Roman. Finally, he concludes by predicting that:

*frangitur ipsa suis Roma superba bonis.*  
(Prop.3.13.60)

"Proud Rome herself is being destroyed by her own wealth".<sup>30</sup>

That is a great lesson to be learnt from Propertius' stimulating poem, even if it is not a heartfelt plea<sup>31</sup>. The poet seems to epitomize his moralizing verdict on the Roman trade with the East.<sup>32</sup>

In the same line of thought, but in another context, the same poet (Propertius) cites (2.3.9ff.) elements of female beauty, amongst them silk clothes from Arabia (*Arabo...bomyce* 15). Arabia, being proverbially a source of luxuries, stands here for the East generally. Propertius puts Arabian silk on the same level as beauty of face, attractively falling hair, and ensnaring eyes.

NOWIEEMY, The Image of Phoenicia in Roman Poetry, in: *Palestine in the Light of Papyri and Inscriptions*, ed. ALIA HANAFI, Ain Shams Center of Papyrological Studies and Inscriptions, Cairo 2000, 133-135. For purple as signifying glamour and wealth like gold, see F. DUPONT, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, transl. C. WOODAL, Blackwell 1992, 260.

<sup>29</sup>. One of the fairly frequent themes which many Roman poets of the Augustan Age concerned themselves with, was that of the life of luxury. See for example, Horace, *Odes*, 2.15; 2.18; 3.6; 3.16; 3.24; Tibullus, 1.2; 2.3; 2.4. The growing wealth of Rome was due to the expansion of the Empire. For the mutual accusations of luxury and immorality, see A. HADRILL, *Mutatio Morum: The Idea of a Cultural Revolution*, in: *The Roman Cultural Revolution*, ed.T. HABINEK et al., Cambridge 1997, 7 ff.

<sup>30</sup>. Cf. Cato's speech in Livy, XXXIV. iv. 2-3. Cato says that the state is suffering from two evils: avarice and luxury (*avaritia et luxuria*) which have been the destruction of all great empires. Livy, *Praefatio*, 12, points out that lately riches has brought in avarice, and excessive pleasures have brought in the longing to carry luxury and lust to the point of personal ruin and universal destruction.

<sup>31</sup>. L. RICHARDSON, *Propertius Elegies I – IV*, ed. with introduction and commentary, Oklahoma 1977, 371, thinks that the persona of the satirist ill suits Propertius. The denunciations of the moral failure of his generation tend to ring false in the mouth of a self-confessed aesthete and devoted admirer of women.

<sup>32</sup>. EDWARDS, *Politics of Immorality*, 80, argues that elements in the life of luxury had come to Rome owing to the corrupting influence of Greece and Asia.



Other Augustan poets as well had much to say of Eastern perfumes. The same point is evidenced by the Roman poet Tibullus. A reworking of the same idea is found in one of the poems attributed to him (3. 8), where he talks about a girl whom he greatly admires. He describes how she fires the heart, and then adds:

*sola puellarum digna est cui mollia caris  
velleret det sucis bis madefacta Tyros,  
possideatque, metit quidquid bene olentibus arvis  
cultor odoratae dives Arabs segetis,  
et quascumque niger rubro de litore gemmas  
proximus Eois colligit Indus aquis .*

([Tib.] 3.8.15-20)

“She alone of all girls who deserves that Tyre should give soft wool twice soaked in costly juice,<sup>33</sup> and that she may possess what the rich Arab, cultivator of the perfumed land, sends from the nice smelling fields, and whatever gems from the Red Sea shore, which the nearest black Indian collects from Eastern shores”.<sup>34</sup>

This is how Arab fragrances were graded, as well as other luxury products. Implicit in Tibullus view is the concept of the high value of Eastern production. The best way to pay a girl for love is to offer her Eastern products as a present. From the East came much of value.

From the Roman women's point of view, there was a pressing need to use perfumed oils and the like.<sup>35</sup> They believed that there is a connection between love and the care of the body.<sup>36</sup> The point was fully developed by the poet Ovid, who gave instructions to young women on how to make the best of themselves in order to become a pleasing sight for men<sup>37</sup>. Ovid gives an outstanding lead to feminine

<sup>33</sup>. The costly juice is the purple dye, which was the prestige product of the Phoenicians. For its costliness, see EL-NOWIEEMY, *Phoenicia*, 147 n. 60.

<sup>34</sup>. Most likely the pearl divers in the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and in the Arabian Gulf are meant here. It is worth noting that Tacitus (*Agricola*, 12) holds a comparison between British divers and the Red Sea divers. He states with evidence that the British lack skill. Text edition used is Tacitus, *Agricola, Germania and Dialogus*, ed. with an English transl. M. HUTTON and W. PETERSON, [LCL], Harvard University Press 1996.

<sup>35</sup>. For the excessive use of perfumes, see Seneca, *Ep.* 86.13. Text edition used here is Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, ed. with an English transl. R. GUMMERE, [LCL], Harvard University Press, 1996.

<sup>36</sup>. O. KIEFER, *Sexual Life in Ancient Rome*, London 1976, 163-164, refers to the process of mixing oils with various floral perfumes to anoint the body as a change consciously dictated by erotic developments. For the association of perfumed oils with love, see L. HOLMES, Myrrh and Unguents in the *Coma Berenices*, *CPh* 87(1992) 47-50. Myrrh was one of Arabia's most famous exports. As for myrrh, applied as an unguent, or blended with a variety of other ingredients to make ointments, perfumes etc., see HOYLAND, *Arabia*, 103 ff.

<sup>37</sup>. All of these can be traced within the poetry of Ovid, in particular his *Amores*, *De Medicamine Faciei Femineae*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Remedia Amoris*. See: T. HABINEK, The Invention of Sexuality in the World-City of Rome, in: *The Roman Cultural Revolution*, ed. T. HABINEK et al., Cambridge 1997, 23ff.

*cultus*<sup>38</sup> at Rome. He pays frequent and close scrutiny to details of female bodily appearance. In his words:

*Cura dabit faciem; facies neglecta peribit,*  
(Ov. *Ars* 3.105)

"Care will give beauty; beauty neglected will perish."

Roman women paid attention to their skin, and treated it with some sort of Arabian cosmetics to make it more beautiful. We know from Ovid that Roman women of his day were in the habit of anointing their bodies with Eastern fragrant perfumes and oils, which came mainly from Arabia:

*corpora si veteres non sic colvere puellae,*  
*nec veteres cultos sic habuere viros;*  
(Ov. *Ars* 3.107-108)

"If the girls of old have not so taken care of their bodies, (that is because) the girls of old had not men so cultivated."

Any account of Roman feminine adornment (*cultus*) would be incomplete without reference to how Roman women cared for their hair, as Roman men were charmed by hair when thick and beautiful.<sup>39</sup> So Roman women had their hair dressed and anointed with Eastern oils as well, to make it shine softly and glitter brilliantly. In his *Heroides*,<sup>40</sup> Ovid depicts one of his miserable heroines expressing her feelings in a letter, after her lover deserted her. As a sign of her misery, she says:

*Non Arabum noster dona capillus habet.*  
(Ov. *Her.* XV. 70)

"My hair misses the gifts of the Arabs."

Propertius also stresses this practice by saying:  
*aut quid Orontea*<sup>41</sup> *crines perfundere murra,*  
(Prop.1.2.3)

"Or for what to sprinkle your locks with Eastern perfume"

The adjective *Oronteus* means Syrian or oriental. Owing to the competition between Ptolemaic Egypt and Nabataea in pre-Roman times, large quantities of perfumes and spices had taken the overland route from Leuke Kome,

<sup>38</sup> . The Latin word *cultus* includes the daily cultivation of the female form before a mirror, wearing make-up, perfumes, and external embellishment of jewellery. It also includes the care of the body, in the words of DUPONT, *Daily Life*, 262-263, it is "the culture of the body". For an excellent survey of this issue, see: A. RICHLIN, *The Ethnographer's Dilemma and the Dream of a Lost Golden Age*, in: *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, ed. N. RABINOWITZ et al., Routledge 1993, 291 ff. RICHLIN argues that Roman women had a subculture of their own in the broadest sense of the term, if we read the ancient texts optimistically.

<sup>39</sup> . Ovid made comments on hair-dressing in his *Ars*, 2.304; 3.137-168. Cf. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, II. 8. Text edition used here is Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, ed. with an English transl. W. ADLINGTON, [LCL], Harvard University Press 1947.

<sup>40</sup> . Text edition used here is Ovid, *Heroides and Amores*, ed. with an English transl. G. SHOWERMAN, [LCL], Harvard University Press 1947.

<sup>41</sup> . *Orontes* is the principal river in Syria.

the Nabataean Red Sea port, by caravans to Petra, then through Syria to the Mediterranean. That is why some perfumes are called Orontean or Syrian.<sup>42</sup>

The expense of Eastern trade of fragrances and other luxury products was one of the main obligations of the state budget. But the prosperity of the Roman Empire was able to bear this burden. In a much quoted passage, Pliny the Elder (*HN*, XII.41.84) recorded that it costed the state 100 million sesterces a year to import perfumes and other luxuries from India, China and Arabia.<sup>43</sup> He declared that this was what luxury and women costed them.

To all the examples cited above can be added a handful of references to the Eastern trade of luxury products. Much of Rome's luxury, as we have seen, came from the East: perfumes, silk, and other cosmetics, precious stones, and pearls were all imported from Arabia, Africa, India and China. The life of luxury especially in connection with Roman women,<sup>44</sup> as described by the Augustan poets, was not simply a literary convention, but was based on Roman reality attested by other sources. Thus the view of the Augustan poets derives some support from other historical texts. Archaeological finds as well, as evidence, can add substance to those literary references.<sup>45</sup>

At the time of the momentous transformation of government in Rome, laying the foundations of the Roman Empire, the Emperor Augustus showed interest in imperial expansion to protect imperial frontiers and interests. He dispatched military expeditions to distant frontiers. In this context he put Arabia on the map of his considerations.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup>. For this point, see DALBY, *Pleasures*, 183; M. DE MIEROOP, *A History of the Ancient Near East*, Blackwell 2004, 214.

<sup>43</sup>. There are many comments made by different scholars on Pliny's statement. See, for example, E. GRAY, book review of J. MILLER, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire*, Oxford 1969, in: *JRS* 60 (1970) 223, who thinks that the dispatch of large quantities of gold and silver coins to the East in the early Principate is not merely evidence of an initial lack of reciprocity in the luxury trade. The Roman government, in GRAY's view, was financing a great new venture, expending capital to establish and maintain foreign agencies, to create local currencies, to build up Roman prestige overseas. Cf. WYKE, *Woman*, 141; EDWARDS, *Politics of Immorality*, 80; M. ABD EL GHANI, *Arabia, Egypt, and Ancient Eastern Trade*, Alexandria: El-Maktab El-Gameie El-Hadith, 1999, 55-56.; W. BALL, *Rome in the East. The Transformation of an Empire*, Routledge 2001, 123.

<sup>44</sup>. The connection between empire and wealth is explored through consideration of female adornment, as we have already seen. See T. HABINEK, Ovid and Empire, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. P. HARDIE, Cambridge 2002, 50.

<sup>45</sup>. See: KIEFER, *Sexual Life*, 153-154. See also under The Women of Pompeii, in: E. FANTHAM et al., *Women in the Classical World, Image and Text*, New York and Oxford 1995, 330ff.

<sup>46</sup>. See G. W. BOWERSOCK, A Report on Arabia Provincia, *JRS* 61 (1970) 227. In the context of Augustan policy toward the Arabs, BOWERSOCK points out that the campaign of Aelius Gallus has always been something of a mystery but it is quite clear that Augustus had some kind of expansionist interest at that stage in controlling the rich trade in spices and perfumes. Cf. ROSTOVITZEFF, *Social and Economic*, 91, who explains that the expedition was partly

Augustus dispatched an expedition, headed by Aelius Gallus, the prefect of Egypt, to the Arabian Peninsula, in about 26 B.C.,<sup>47</sup> with the support of the Nabataeans. According to Strabo (*Geog.*XVI. 4. 22), Augustus was encouraged by the promise of the friendly Nabataeans to help him in every way.

We have a relatively detailed account of Aelius Gallus' expedition, written by:

- 1- Mainly the geographer Strabo (*Geog.*XVI. 4. 22-24), who was an intimate friend of Aelius Gallus, the leader of the Arabian expedition. Strabo is considered our main source for the expedition.<sup>48</sup>
- 2- Pliny the Elder in his *Historia Naturalis* (VI. xxxii. 160-161).
- 3- The Historian Dio Cassius (LIII.29).
- 4- "The Achievements of the Divine Augustus" (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 26.5).

The expedition aimed at the Kingdom of the Sabaeans, in the south west corner of the Arabian Peninsula, the so-called *Arabia Felix*. According to Strabo (*Geog.*XVI. 4. 22) Augustus intended either to win the friendship of the Sabaeans or to subdue them: either to deal with wealthy friends or to subjugate wealthy enemies.<sup>49</sup>

The Arabian expedition turned out to be a failure for more than one reason.<sup>50</sup> Strabo (*Geog.* XVI. 4. 23-24) suggests that the Nabataean guide, Syllaeus, deliberately deceived and misled the Roman force.<sup>51</sup> But Strabo claimed that the Sabaeans became vassals of Rome.<sup>52</sup>

dictated by the necessity of protecting the growing trade with Arabia. See also M. CARY et al., *A History of Rome*, Macmillan 1986, 332-333.

<sup>47</sup>. For a well-documented argument of the dating of the Arabian expedition, see SHELAGH JAMESON, Chronology of the Campaigns of Aelius Gallus and C. Petronius, *JRS* 58(1968) 71-84. Although Dio dates the Arabian expedition to 24 B.C. (LIII, 29, 3ff.), text edition used here is, Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, ed. with an English transl. EARNEST CARY, vol. 3 [LCL], Harvard University Press 1982-1995, JAMESON argues, convincingly, that the expedition began in spring or summer 26 and finished in autumn 25.

<sup>48</sup>. See ABD EL-LATIF A. ALI, *Egypt and the Roman Empire in the Light of Papyri*, Cairo: Dar El-Nahda El-Arabeya 1965, 63-64.

<sup>49</sup>. There were other reasons as well, that led Rome towards Arabia, See L. A. YAHIYA, *The Arabs in Ancient Times*, Alexandria, Dar El-Maarefa El-Gameeya 1999, 208, 426 ff.

<sup>50</sup>. For a good analysis of the reasons set by Strabo in (*Geog.*XVI. 4. 23-24) for the failure of the Arabian expedition, see BOWERSOCK, *Roman Arabia*, 48-49; L. A. YAHIYA, Arabia in Classical Sources, in: *Sources for the History of Arabia*, A. T. AL-ANSARY, Riyadh 1979, University of Riyadh Press, 62 with n. 40.

<sup>51</sup>. BOWERSOCK, A Report, 227, believes that Syllaeus' subsequent ambitious intrigues make this possible.

<sup>52</sup>. On the results of the Arabian expedition, see ROSTOVITZEFF, *Social and Economic*, 53, who argues that the expedition was not a complete success, but at any rate it secured good harbours for Roman traders on their way from Egypt to the ports of India.

The Roman poets of the Augustan age concerned themselves with this military warfare. Hence the Roman poet Horace, in one of his poems, addresses his friend Iccius by these words:

*Icci, beatis nunc Arabum invides  
Gazis et acrem militiam paras  
Non ante devictis Sabaearum  
Regibus, ...?*

(Hor. *Odes*. I.29. 1-4)

"Now, Iccius, do you envy the happy treasures of the Arabs? And do you prepare for the strong military campaign on the kings of Sabaa, who were unconquered before...?"

It is noticeable that Horace here uses the phrase: *non ante devictis*, which means "unconquered before".

Horace, at the outset of another poem (*Odes*.III. 24.1-2), uses the word *intactis* "untouched", when he talks about the treasuries of the Arabs, as we have seen.

In the same line of thought, the Roman poet Propertius, while enumerating Augustus' campaigns, refers to Arabia by saying:

*Et domus intactae te tremit Arabiae;*  
(Prop. 2. 10. 16)

"The land of untouched Arabia fears you, Augustus".

The date of these two poems cannot be fixed exactly. One of the clues to a proper understanding of these verses is the word *intactis*, "untouched", used by both poets. It is perhaps doubtful whether these poems were written before the Arabian campaign. The word can mean "unrifled before", either by a Roman or non-Roman force. Or it might be alluding simply to the mystery that surrounded *Arabia Felix* for the Romans.

If we make the very reasonable assumption that these poems were written before the campaign, this makes sense. But if they were written after, the poets assuredly had in mind the failure of Aelius Gallus campaign while they were writing. But it would be unlikely for the poets to write in defiance to the Emperor Augustus who ordered the expedition, and boasted himself by saying:<sup>53</sup>

*Meo iussu et auspicio ducti sunt duo exercitus eodem fere tempore in Aethiopiam et in Arabiam quae appellatur Eudaemon, magnaue hostium gentis utriusque copiae caesae sunt in acie et complura oppida capta. ... in Arabiam usque in fines Sabaearum processit exercitus ad oppidum Mariba".*

(*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 26. 5)

"At my command and under my auspices two armies were led almost at the same time into Ethiopia and into Arabia which is called happy and blessed; great forces of the enemy of both peoples were cut down in battle and many towns captured. ....in Arabia the army advanced into the territory of the Sabaeans to the town of Mariba".

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<sup>53</sup>. Text edition used is: *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, ed. P. A. BRUNT and J. M. MOORE, Oxford University Press 1967.

*(The Achievements of the Divine Augustus, 26.5)*

In any case the expedition was set by historians in the context of the commercial profits of Rome. Accordingly it was set in the context of Roman poetry.

To conclude, Latin poetry is thus set within the wider context of the overall trade of the Roman Empire, and Arabia became more and more deeply embedded in Roman awareness, so long as the seaborne Eastern commerce played such a great role in Roman life.

So it is perhaps unfair to concentrate criticism on poetry, as usually the case. It has much of value to say about the status quo of the time, as we have already seen. It seems to mirror what had happened, and sometimes it even contains some new insights.

## Some Greek and Arabic Documents

ALIA HANAFI

### 1- List of persons with their ages\*

P. Cairo Mus. C. G. 10677, Inv. S. R. 1652  
Provenance unknown, 13.2 x 9.6 cm., II c. AD

This papyrus is a fragment. It is broken off at all sides, and suffers from some wormholes. There are three surviving sections. Section two and three; each contains four lines. Lines 4-7 and 8-11 are separated from the preceding part by a blank space (ca. 1.5 cm). The traces of perhaps two letters that are written at the bottom preserve an interlinear space. The document is written on the recto. The writing on the recto runs along the fibers. The verso is blank.

The hand is a ligatured cursive typical of the second century<sup>1</sup>. It is clear that the document preserves middle sections of several lines. What survives records the names and the ages of some people, who are slaves (cf. lines 4, 8 δούλος). So, we have here only a small fragment of a larger register which falls into the category of a register of people. Not much can be gleaned concerning the nature and the purpose of such a registration. It may be a census declaration. Usually, poll tax fell on all adult males, including slaves, but there were exempt categories such as all Alexandrian citizens and their slaves<sup>2</sup>. Anyhow, the text was subdivided into sections, each of which beginning with a line where name and age of a person were recorded.

The format of sections two and three is of some interest. Data are listed in a standard schema for this register; (L.1) contains name of a person in nominative case recorded with his age as a slave, (L.2) name of a person in genitive case recorded also as a slave (?), (L. 3) bears a number, then a month and afterwards the preposition *παρά* and perhaps a name of a person, and (L.4) bears two epithets in genitive case.

The main interest of the text lies in line 7 which mentions to the Alexandrian tribe and *deme* Ἀνξισπορείου τοῦ καὶ Ἄλ[θαίω]ς. The first epithet

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\*This papyrus was primarily prepared by my student the late Tarek Rashad from Suhaj' University for his PhD dissertation under my supervision but the fate did not give him a time to complete it. So, I accomplished this document for publication, hoping that may Allah have mercy on him.

<sup>1</sup>. H. IDRIS BELL and C. H. ROBERTS, *Catalogue of the Greek papyri in the collection of Wilfred Merton* (= PMert) I 18 (7 August 161 AD) and PMert I 23 (late second century) may be a good parallel.

<sup>2</sup>. See L. 7 where there is mentioning to Alexandrian *deme* and tribe.

contains the name of the tribe, the second that of the *deme*.<sup>3</sup> It is noticeable that, on the one hand a person called Πάταλος occurs in Arsinoite in 140 AD,<sup>4</sup> on the other hand a person called Diodoros belongs to Αύξιπορείου τοῦ καὶ Αλ[θαιέω]ς occurs also in Alexandria? in 138 AD.<sup>5</sup> The date of both documents is very near, this may suggest that the provenance of our document is Arsinoite or at least it belongs to Fayûm.

## Recto

- 1 — ]εἰδ[  
 ] .θ ιε( Θώϑ [ παρά + name?  
 ]του Απολλοδώ[ρου  
 vac.  
 Πρ[άκτικος (ἐτῶν) κβ( δοῦ`λ(ος)  
 5 ]δου `τουῦ' καὶ Ἐρμῖου δού`λ(ου) μιν[  
 ] .ν ιδ( Χοιάκ παρά Αμ[  
 ] vac. Αύξιπορείου τοῦ καὶ Ἀλ[θαιέω]ς  
 vac.  
 ἐπικεκλ]ημένος Πάταλος (ἐτῶν) ιε( δοῦ`λ(ος)  
 ]... Σωτηρίχου τοῦ καὶ . . [ ] δού `λ(ου)[  
 10 ] .(Παχών παρά .[ name?  
 ] . Χαιρήμον[ος]. τοῦ .[  
 vac.  
 ] .[  
 Ll. 4 L (pap.) = (ἐτῶν) et passim, δουλ (pap.) et passim.

## Commentary

Line 1 ]εἰδ[: This line may be the second line of the first section. It perhaps contains a name of person in genitive case recorded also as a slave (cf. lines 5 and 9).

<sup>3</sup> See P. A. FRASER, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (1972), III, 153; *Dizionario* 12, 272 apud HERBERT VERRETH, A Survey of Toponyms in Egypt in Graeco-Roman Period, *Trismegistos* II, Köln <sup>10</sup>2008, 39, and the note on line 7.

<sup>4</sup> G. ZERETELI, O. KRÜGER, P. JERNSTEDT, *Papyri Russischer und Georgischer Sammlungen* (= Ross-Georg), Tiflis 1925–35, vol. II 18, Fr. B, v. 21 II 18, Fr. B, v. 21.

<sup>5</sup> F. G. KENYON and H. I. BELL, *Greek papyri in the British Museum* (= PLond), vol. III, London 1907, vol. III 1222, 2.



Line 2 ]θ ιε( ΘώϞ [παρά + name?]: Regarding the sequence of the text section, it seems likely that we should extend [παρά + name?] in the missing part of this line (cf. lines 6 and 10).

Line 3 Ἀπολλοδώ[ρου: It seems likely that we should extend Ἀπολλοδώ[ to Ἀπολλοδώ[ρου. Here, we may have the patronymic of the person who owns the slaves, whom perhaps their names are cut off at the top of the papyrus (cf. lines 4, 5, 8 and 9).

Line 4 Πρ[άκτικος: This name did not appear in F. PREISIGKE, *Namenbuch*, or D. FORABOSCHI, *Onomasticon*, but given by PAPE.<sup>6</sup> It is attested before twice in the papyrus documents; as a slave in a contract for the dividing up of slaves belonging to the estate of the deceased Tiberius Julius Theon, between his two sons.<sup>7</sup> The provenance of this document as well as the place name Cercethyris (in l. 14) proves that they had estates in Oxyrhynchite Nome; and the presence of a slave in the Arsinoite (in l. 11) and another ἀπὸ Κουσσῶν (in l. 11) suggests property in Fayûm and the Hermopolite also. This suggests that perhaps this name appears in Fayûm. In the second document,<sup>8</sup> he appears as a freedman in a fragment of a register. These two documents proved that the name Πράκτικος is a name of a slave.

δο[ῦλ(ος): For reconstruction cf. line 8.

Line 5 ]δου `τοῦ' καὶ Ἐρμῖου δοῦλ(ου) μον[: The reading of the last three letters are doubtful. Since the age of the slave is does not written after the name Ἐρμῖου the word δοῦλ(ου) should be in genitive case as Ἐρμῖου as explicative apposition.

Line 6 παρά Αμ[ :Perhaps this is a name of an Alexandrian citizen, because it followed by his deme Ἀξισπορείου and his tribal name Ἀλ[θαίεω]ς in the next line (cf. l. 7 and its note).

Line 7 Ἀξισπορείου τοῦ καὶ Ἀλ[θαίεω]ς, this pair of epithets is added to the name of the individual, besides the statement of his parentage; the first epithet is the name of the *tribe*, the second is that of the *deme*.<sup>9</sup> By the mid-first century AD, male Alexandrian citizens began to style themselves by both tribe and deme, and continued to the Byzantine era. The first attestation of Ἀξισπόρειος ὁ καὶ Ἀλ[θαίεος was in 127/128 AD.<sup>10</sup> At Alexandria, an innovation provided an opportunity to flatter emperors by adoption of new tribal names created in honor of Nero and his successors. Likewise, when Antinoopolis was founded during the reign of Hadrian, tribal names honoring members of the imperial family were adopted and

<sup>6</sup> Cf. W. PAPE, *Wörterbuch der Griechischen Eigennamen*, Neu Bearbeitet von G. E. BENSELER, Braunschweig 1884, sv.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. B. P. GRENPELL, A. S. HUNT *et al.* *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (= POxy), London 1898–2010, vol. XLIV 3197, 14 (Oxy. 111 AD).

<sup>8</sup> See POxy, vol. XL 2936. ii. 14 (Oxy. 271/2 AD).

<sup>9</sup> See F. G. KENYON, Phylae and Demes in Graeco-Roman Egypt, *Archive für Papyrusforschung* 2(1903), 70 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. C. WESSELY, *Studien zur Paläographie und Papyruskunde* (Stud. Pal), Leipzig-Amsterdam 1983, vol. XXII. 4. III 8-9 (Soknopaiou Nesos 127/8 AD).

citizens embraced the Alexandrian practice of styling themselves by tribe as well as deme. Therefore, heredity and geography may have been contributing factors in the organization of Alexandrian tribes and deme.<sup>11</sup>

Αὐξισπόρευτος is translated as “He who makes the seed grow,” with reference to the Nile. Nevertheless this phrase is also an appropriate tribute to all emperors since they assumed the responsibility of ensuring peace and prosperity throughout the empire.<sup>12</sup>

Among the Alexandrian *demes*, Αλ[θαιεύς is mentioned in the treatise on the *demes* of Alexandria by Satyros who resided in Alexandria from the mid-third through the early second century BC, and the popularity of this deme continued well into the fourth century.<sup>13</sup>

Male citizens were enrolled in *tribes* and *demes* upon attaining fourteen years of age and meeting specific qualification. Parents were required to submit declarations of birth for their children to secure the privileges of Alexandrian citizenship for their offspring. These declarations sufficed to secure the citizen status of female issue, whereas males underwent a formal ἐπίκρισις at fourteen years of age before enrollment in *tribes* and *demes*.<sup>14</sup>

Line 8 ἐπικεκλ]ημένος: It seems likely that we should extend ]ημένος to ἐπικεκλ]ημένος (*surnamed, also called*). ἐπικεκλ]ημένος + name + δοῦλος is attested elsewhere in the papyri documents.<sup>15</sup>

Πάταλος :This name occurs only five times in the papyrus documents, all of them are the Roman period.<sup>16</sup>

δοῦλ(ος): Slavery is known in Egypt in the Ptolemaic era and in the following periods.<sup>17</sup> Though slavery was a prevailing feature of all Mediterranean

<sup>11</sup>. D. DELIA, *Alexandrian Citizenship during the Roman Principate*, Atlanta, 1991, 49-50; J. S. TRAILL, *The Political Organization of Attica: A study of the demes, trittyes, and phylae and their representation in the Athenian council*, Princeton 1975. On territorial organization of tribes and demes, see G. BUSOLT, *Griechische Staatskunde*, Göttingen, 1920, I, 257 and 262-3.

<sup>12</sup>. D. DELIA, *op. cit.*, 66.

<sup>13</sup>. Apud ADRIAN TRONSON, Satyros the Peripatetic and the Marriages of Philip II, *JHS* 104(1984), 117, and R. S. BAGNALL and THOMAS DREW-BEAR, Documents from Kourion. A Review Article Part 2: Individual Inscriptions, *Phoenix* 2 (1973), No. 3, 217.

<sup>14</sup>. D. DELIA, *op. cit.*, 69.

<sup>15</sup>. See e.g. POxy, vol. XIV 1648. 6 (Oxy; late II AD), and vol. XLI 2951. 22 and 29 (Oxy; 267 AD).

<sup>16</sup>. Cf. PGorn 001 XI 4 (II AD?) apud ROBERT K. SHERK, *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian, translated documents of Greece and Rome*, vol. 6, 2007 Cambridge 2007; PRoss-Georg II 18. fr. r. H. xlvi. 209 (Arsinoite 140 AD); Berliner Leihgabe griechischer Papyri, herausgegeben vom griechischen Seminar der Universität Uppsala durch T. KALÉN, (= *PBerl.Leihg.*), vol. I 17, 2 (Thead. 164/5 AD), Uppsala 1932; Berliner griechische Urkunden (*BGU*), (Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin), Berlin 1895–1983 (15 vols.), [1–9 Milan 1972]), vol. I 116, r. 2,5 (Arsinoite 189 AD); and Greek Papyri from the Cairo Museum (= *P. Cair. Goods.*), vol. XII 2,15 (Herm. 340 AD), ed. E. J. GOODSPEED, Chicago 1902.

countries in antiquity, the Romans had more slaves and depended more on them than any other people. In Roman Egypt, the evidence from papyri suggests that slaves in Egypt probably never rose much above 10% of the population and in poorer areas there dropped to as low as 2%.<sup>18</sup> The most important sources of slaves are the war and piracy,<sup>19</sup> besides the raising of foundlings as slaves is well documented, especially in wet-nursing contracts.

However, Roman Egypt has produced some documentary evidence that supports some statistical analysis of actual conditions of slave in deferent locales by the census returns. According to the census returns, papyrus texts that were drawn up every fourteen years have listed members of individual households including the slaves. 11.6% of 1,108 persons recorded in some surviving texts from (mostly) Middle Egypt are slaves. Slaves were more common in district capitals (14.6%) than in villages (8.4%). A separate census register from one city in Upper Egypt yields a lower urban rate of 7%.<sup>20</sup> Levels of slave ownership may well have been higher in the provincial capital of Alexandria but remain unknown due to the lack of papyrological evidence.<sup>21</sup> A large number of Jews enslaved as a result of the crushing of the Jewish rebellion by Vespasian and Titus (AD 66-70), and after the Jewish revolt led by Bar-Cochba in AD 132-35 a large amount of Jews were sold as slaves in the East. Roman soldiers involved in frontier wars and rebellions would have had many chances to buy prisoners of war as slaves at disposal auctions. This can be deduced from papyri which reveal slaves in the ownership of soldiers and veterans in Egypt.<sup>22</sup>

Slave males were in the majority where work was difficult and weighty in building, mining, industry, agriculture and in a wide variety of services such as loading and unloading at docks, portage, transportation, etc. Small landowners would have to be content with whatever slaves were available irrespective of their sex, while large landowners would undoubtedly have needed some female slaves e.g. for weaving, cloth making, cooking.<sup>23</sup> In Roman Egypt, BIEZUNSKA-MALOWIST says that male slaves were not more numerous than females.<sup>24</sup> An Oxyrhynchus papyrus provides evidence of a big urban slave *familia* in Roman Egypt. It belonged

<sup>17</sup>. See H. A. RUPPRECHT, *Introduzione alla Papirologia*, A cura di Livia Migliardi Zingale, Marburg 1998, 101.

<sup>18</sup>. Cf. JOHN MADDEN, Slavery in the Roman Empire. Numbers and Origins, in: *Classics Ireland* 3(1996), 109-11; and W.L. WESTERMANN, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity*, Philadelphia 1955, 84 ff.

<sup>19</sup>. WESTERMANN, op. cit., 63-69.

<sup>20</sup>. BAGNALL, FRIER and RUTHERFORD, *The Census Register P.Oxy. 984: The Reverse of Pindar's Paean*, Brussels 1997, 98.

<sup>21</sup>. BIEZUNSKA-MALOWIST, *L'esclavage à Alexandrie dans la période gréco-romain I*, in : Actes du colloque 1973 sur l'esclavage, 291-312, Paris 1976; cf. P.Oxy 44. 3197.

<sup>22</sup>. JOHN MADDEN, op. cit., 113.

<sup>23</sup>. For recording fifty-nine slaves as belonging to one land owner in Oxyrhynchus see, JOHN MADDEN, op. cit., 115.

<sup>24</sup>. See BIEZUNSKA-MALOWIST, *L'Esclavage dans l'Égypte Gréco-Romaine*, II, Breslau 1977, 21.

to the wealthy Titus Julius Theon in Alexandria (died 111 AD) and of fifty-nine slaves (at least) recorded as belonging to it a mere two were female. This evidence suggests that there too male slaves were more numerous.<sup>25</sup>

Child exposure is securely documented for Roman Egypt, where two graphic phrases from the papyri deserve mention. The first is the legal description of the practice; "to rescue from the dung-pile for enslavement".<sup>26</sup> The second, the infamous advice of a husband in a letter to his wife in the first century BC.: "*If you do give birth, if it is male, let it live, if it is female, expose it*".<sup>27</sup> Needless to say, not all Egyptian-Greek couples thought like the husband here; infant boys too were abandoned there.<sup>28</sup>

Lines 9 and 11 Σωτηρίχου and Χαϊρήμου[ος]: These two names were very common in Egypt in the Roman period especially in Fayûm in the second century AD.<sup>29</sup>

## 2- List of Arabic Names

P. ACPSI s. r. no 20 r. (= P. Ragab 20)

Provenance unknown, 14 x 9 cm., 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AH / 8<sup>th</sup> c. AD

This papyrus belongs to the collocation of the late Dr Hasan Ragab. It is yellowish-brown, tolerably fine papyrus, and has margins at all the side except at the bottom. There is a margin of 1.5 cm. at the top, 2.8 cm. at the right hand side. The papyrus has been folded three times parallel to the lines, and the widths of the successor's folds become from top to bottom: 2.9, 4, and 1.5 cm.

On paleography ground, the document may be dated in 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AH / 8<sup>th</sup> c. AD.<sup>30</sup>

On the recto, there is a list of names, arranged in two columns, in ten lines, in black ink, and in a handsome. All of them are Muslims' names, while on the verso there is a private letter written by another hand. The diacritical points are rare.

<sup>25</sup>. See JOHN MADDEN, op. cit., 115.

<sup>26</sup>. See BGU IV 1107, 9; 5, 41.

<sup>27</sup>. POxy, 744, 8-10.

<sup>28</sup>. W. V. HARRIS, Child-Exposure in the Roman Empire, *JHS* 84(1994), 1-22. For statistical analysis of the conditions of slaves in Roman Egypt, in general, see WALTER SCHEIDEL, The Roman slave supply, in: *The Cambridge world history of slavery*, 1: The ancient Mediterranean world, eds. KEITH BRADLEY and PAUL CARTLEDGE, Princeton 2007.

<sup>29</sup>. See e.g. *Papyri in Honour of E G Turner* (= PTurner), 1981, 1 21, 7 (Thead. 131 AD) BGU I 111. 19 (Arsinoite 138/9 AD); PCorn 001 15, 21 (Thead. 128-129 AD); BGU I 70. 10 (Arsinoite 131 AD); PLond III 1170. r. vi, 215 (Arsinoite 144 AD); FORABOSCHI, DANIELE, P. Kron. 46 = P. Mil. Vogl. 2 89, Gesamtverzeichnis der griechischen Papyrusurkunden Ägyptens, Heidelberg 1971, I 46. 4 (Tebt. 153 AD).

<sup>30</sup>. Cf. ADOLF GROHMANN, *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library* (APEL), vol. 3, 147, pl. II, (Rabî I, 91 AH / 7th January to 6th February, 710 AD), Cairo 1930.

The purpose of this list is unknown. It might perhaps have been drafted in connection with the assessment of a tax.<sup>31</sup> Most of the names are doubled, the second being usually that of the father.

Recto

	1- بِ[اسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
مجاهد مولى ح[	2- محمد[د؟ بن الليث وأخوه
[ كزاز	3- أبو[ دعامة
أبو فضيل ]	4- ± 4 [ خديجة أبي بن
أبو عبد الله ]	5- دحيه بن عاصم
عبد الرحمن ال[حس[ن؟	6- عماره أبو الفهد
أبو جويوه ؟ ال[	7- عبد العظيم الشيباني
يحيى بن يزيد	8- أبو معاذ
على بن قيس	9- سعيد بن يحيى
.....	10- أبو نويه

### noitalsnarT

1- In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful	
2- Muḥjam]ad b. al-Layth and his brother	Mijāḥed, the freedman of H[
3- Abu ]Du'amah ?	Kazāz
4- Ibn Abī Khadījah	Abu Fuḍayl[
5- Dāḥyah b. 'Aṣem	Abu Abdullah[
6- Ammārah Abu al-Fahd	Abdur-Raḥmān al[-Ḥasan?
7- Abdul-'Aḍcem al-Shībānī	Abu Jabbūiah
8- Abu Mu'ādh	Yaḥyā b. Yazīd
9- Sa'īd b. Yaḥyā	'Aly b. Qayys
10 – Abu Nubah	

### Notes

Line 1 [أحم[د or [محم[د may be restored.

Line 3 أبو[ دعامة: At the start of the line, there is a trace of a letter; it may be *dāl*. The name *دعامة* is not registered in Ad-Dahabī, *al-Mushtabah*,<sup>32</sup> but appears in Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*.<sup>33</sup> The name *دعامة* (meaning: he is the pillar of his family and tribe). Usually, the Arabs name their children with a name

<sup>31</sup>. Cf. APEL IV 255 (2nd / 3rd c, AD / 8th / 9th c. AD), Cairo 1952.

<sup>32</sup>. al-Dhababī (d. 748/1347), *Kitāb al-Mushtabah fī asmā al-rijāl*, 1958, Cairo.

<sup>33</sup>. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229), *Kitāb Mu'jam al-buldān*, ed. Anonymous, 1965, Teheran, 90.

signifying the power or honor such as *مصعب* (meaning: he is difficult for his enemy) or *منعب* (meaning: he puts his enemy in trouble). If the restoration of *دعامه* is acceptable the three lost letters in the beginning of the line may be *أبو*.

*كُرَّاز* or *كرار* may be read.<sup>34</sup>

Line 4 *فضيل* or *فضيل* may be read.<sup>35</sup>

Line 5 *دَحْنَه* or *دَحْيَه*: For the name.<sup>36</sup> For the name *دحيه*.<sup>37</sup>

Line 6 *عَمَّارَه* or *عَمَّارَه* or *عَمَّارَه* may be read.<sup>38</sup>

*بن-الحس* may be restored. The last letter of this name descends till line 7.

Line 7 *جوبيل*: The first part of the name *جو* has diacritical points which is rare in this document then either *bāʿ* or *tāʿ* or *thāʿ* or *yāʿ* or *nūn* after that the last letter looks like the letter *kāf* or *lām*,<sup>39</sup> I can not suggest a name like *جوبيل* but I found in Ad-Dahabī the name *جَبْوِيَه*.<sup>40</sup> One may suggest that there is a stereotype in this name and the name should be *جوبيل* (meaning the little mountain), so, *أبو جوبيل* may be accepted.

Line 10 *أبو نُوبِه*: For the name, see Ad-Dahabī.<sup>41</sup>

### 3- A private letter

P. ACPSI s. r. no 20 v. (= P. Ragab 20)

Provenance unknown, 14 x 9 cm., 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AH / 8<sup>th</sup> c. AD

For the description of the papyrus see the previous document (List of Arabic Names). The letter has been written on the verso of this list, in ten lines, in black ink by another hand.

### Verso

- 1- [بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم]
- 2- [حفظك الله وعافاك]
- 3- [ك وأمتع بك] وأبقا]
- 4- [ والحمد لله -4 [ كتبت إليك وأنا بخير ]
- 5- [ -5 [ وصل إلى كتابك فعرفقتي ]
- 6- [ -6 [ خـبـرك ]

<sup>34</sup>. See Al-Dahabī, op. cit., 545.

<sup>35</sup>. See Ad-Dahabī, op. cit., 407.

<sup>36</sup>. Ad-Dahabī, op. cit., 234.

<sup>37</sup>. See APEL IV 255, Li. 9, 11 (2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> c, AH / 8<sup>th</sup> / 9<sup>th</sup> c. AD).

<sup>38</sup>. See Ad-Dahabī, op. cit., 470, 471.

<sup>39</sup>. Cf. I. 4 فضيل

<sup>40</sup>. Ad-Dahabī, op. cit., 139, and 260.

<sup>41</sup>. Ad-Dahabī, op. cit., 39.

- 7- وفهمت الذى ذكرت  
 8- والذى رجوت به  
 9- كتابك إلى أبى عمرو  
 ----- 10

## Translation

- 1- [In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful]  
 2 - May Allah protect you and may He give you health,  
 3- ]and preserve you, and may He cause (me) to profit by you.  
 4- ] I write to you while I am good[  
 5- ] you letter has arrived to me[ Verily, you informed me  
 6- ]of your news[  
 7- and I have already understood what you mentioned  
 8- and what you hoped by  
 9- your letter (that you wrote) to Abī 'Amr  
 10- -----

## Commentary

Lines 1-2, since the top of the papyrus has cut off, the first two lines of this letter may be reconstructed as follows:

- 1- [بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم]  
 2- [حفظك الله وعافاك]

Line 2-3 [حفظك الله وعافاك وأبقاك] / [وأمتع بك]: The formula of praying after al-basmalah is common in Arabic papyri.<sup>42</sup> After وأمتع بك, a name in vocative case may be followed as<sup>43</sup> "حفظك الله وعافاك وأبقاك / وأمتع بك يا ر[م]انة أطال الله بقاءك" *"May God protect you and give you health, / and may He cause me to profit by you, O Rummana, may Allah prolong your life"*. Al-Qalqashandi says that the opening formula of a letter written from an employee to highest official such as for a Minister or the Chief of judges etc. must begin with *"May Allah protect you and may He give you health, and preserve you, and may He cause (me) to profit by you"*, and the writer must use *kaf al-mukhatab*,<sup>44</sup> so, this document may be addressed to a high official.

<sup>42</sup>. Cf. APEL VI 305, 2 (3<sup>rd</sup> c. AH / 9<sup>th</sup> c. AD) (cf. APEL VI 305, 2 (3<sup>rd</sup> c. AH / 9<sup>th</sup> c. AD).

<sup>43</sup>. Cf. PERF no. 638 v, Ll. 2-3 (2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AH / 8<sup>th</sup> / 9<sup>th</sup> c. AD) apud A. GROHMANN, *From the World of Arabic Papyri*, Cairo 1952, and P. Vindob. I A 1621, 1, II A 319, 2, P. Louvre inv. E 7361, 2 v. apud Yûsuf Râgîb, *Marchands d'Etoffes du Fayyûm d'après leurs Archives* (Actes et Lettres, V/I Archives de trois Commissionnaires, Le Caire 1996).

<sup>44</sup>. See al-Qalqashandî (d. 821/1418). 1903. *Subh al-a'shâ fî Sinâ'at al-Inshâ*, vol. 2, chap. 6, Cairo, 1248 ff.

Line 4- [كتبت إليك وأنا بخير] والحمد لله: Usually in Islamic letter after the expression وأنا بخير the praise of Allah should be written. So, والحمد لله may be written at the end of the line in the lacuna as "كتبت إليك وأنا فى عافية والحمد لله".<sup>45</sup>

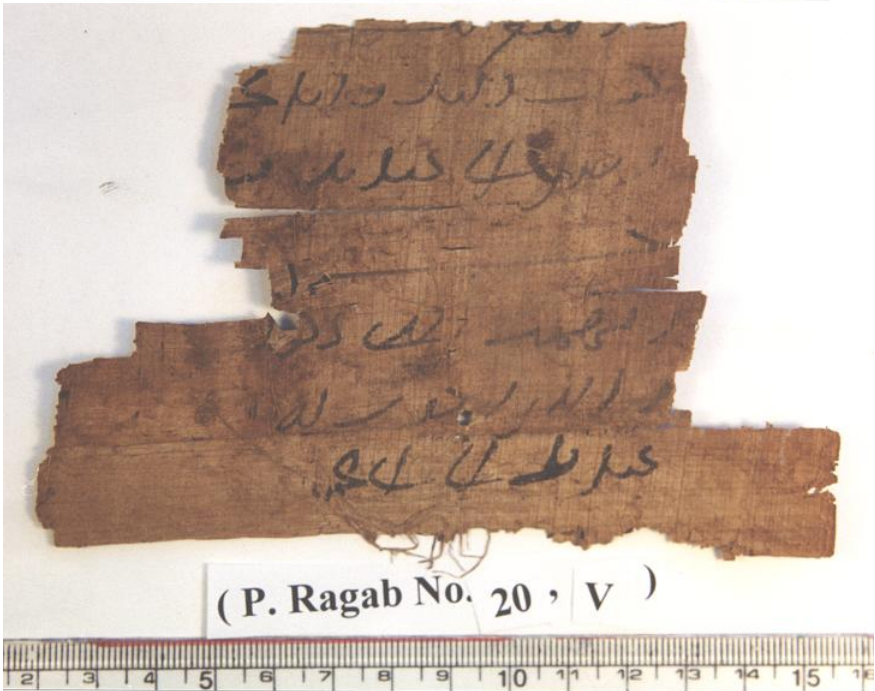
Lines 5-6- فع[رفتنى] خيرك- may be restored.<sup>46</sup>

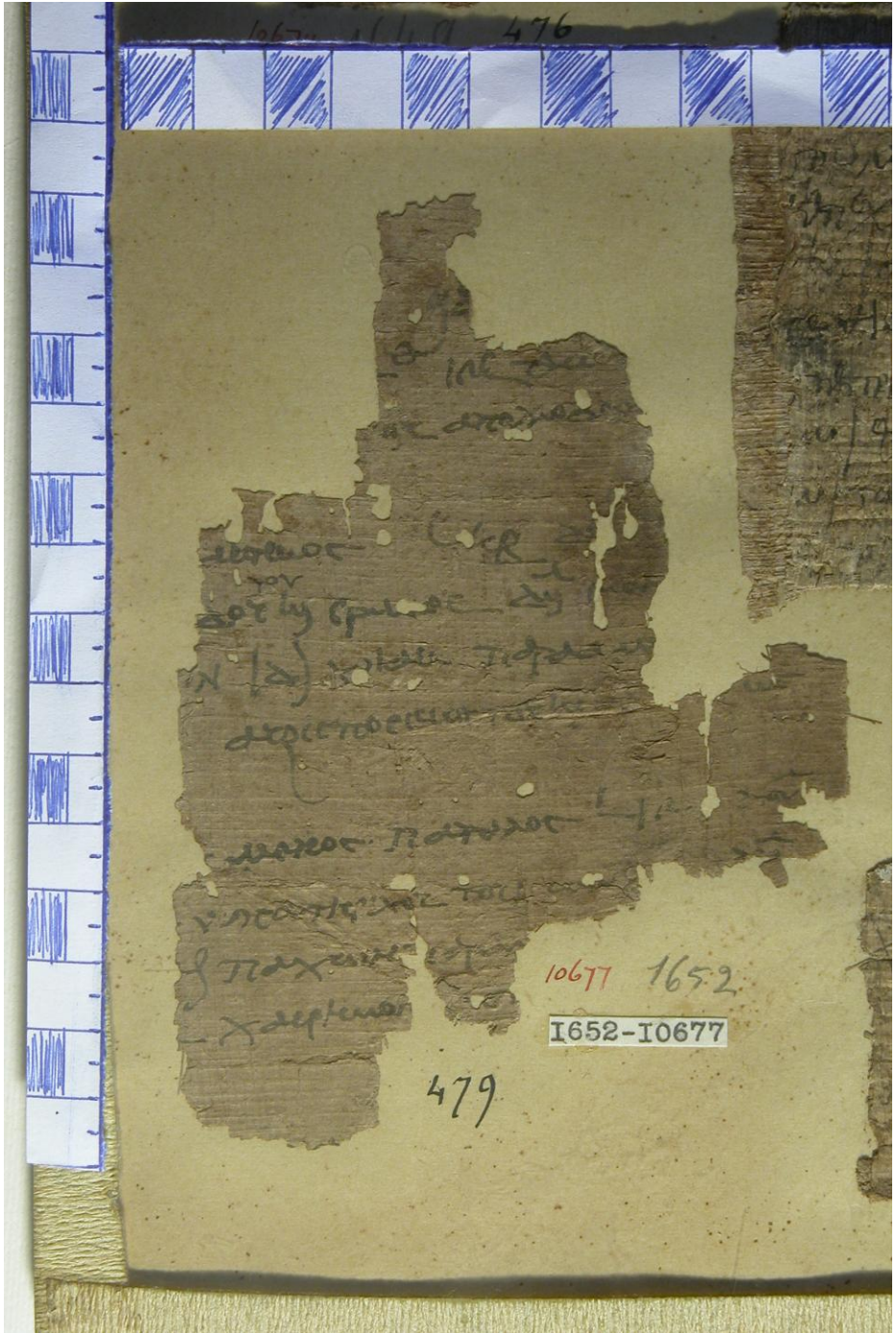
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<sup>45</sup>. Cf. APEL vol. IV no. 305, 3 (3rd c. AH / 9th c. AD), and P. Louvre inv. E 7351, 2 apud Yûsaf Rāġib, op. cit., 11.

<sup>46</sup>. For the restoration see APEL vol. IV no. 332, 5 "وتعرفنى خيرك"







# Christianity in South Arabia in the 6th Century AD – Truth and Legend

ALBRECHT BERGER

Arabia, as it is known, was in no way uniform concerning its religion in pre-Islamic times: while most inhabitants of the peninsula adhered to old Arabic cults, there was also a minority of Jews and of Christians, mainly in the kingdom of Himyar in modern Yemen and the adjoining regions of Saudi Arabia, and within this kingdom, concentrated in the city of Nağrān.<sup>1</sup>

The scope of the present paper is to investigate one particular facet of this problem, namely the issue of Christian missions. As it seems, a Christian mission on a greater scale was attempted in Yemen only two times in history, first by a missionary named Theophilus in the mid-fourth,<sup>2</sup> and then again, after an Ethiopian military expedition in the early sixth century.

It is difficult to tell from the sources available how successful this second attempted mission was. But let us begin with a quote from one of the principal sources, about an event which took place probably in the year 522 of the Christian era:<sup>3</sup>

“In the days of Ioustinos, emperor of the Romans, and Elesboam, king of Ethiopia, and Dounaas, king of the Homerites, and Proterios, pope of Alexandria, the king of the Homerites Dounaas who, regarding his faith, was a Jew, took by treachery Negra, the town that lies down in the south. And this vainglorious man invited all inhabitants of the town to deny our Lord Jesus Christ and to embrace the veneration according to the law. When they all spoke up against his edict, the most impious king became furious, and giving order to light a very strong fire for a sufficient time, he turned that innumerable multitude of people there to ashes and destroyed them; some of them he also choked by strangling, and the eminent ones among them he executed by the sword. Among them he also had the venerable head of their most worthy ruler cut off by the sword, a greyhaired man called Arethas, after a considerable number of discussions he had with him. And the end of the story: Having scattered everything there like dust, this cursed one returned to his palace, writing also to the powers around him, and not only to these, but also to the

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<sup>1</sup>. The term “Yemen” will be used in this paper in its historical sense, including the regions now belonging to Saudi Arabia.

<sup>2</sup>. See I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, Washington DC 1984, 86-104, and most important: G. FIACCADORI, *Teofilo Indiano*, Ravenna 1992 (first in *Studi classici e orientali* 33 [1983] 295-331; 34 [1984] 271-308); see also J. RYCKMANN, *Le christianisme en Arabie du Sud préislamique*, in: *L'Oriente cristiano nella Storia della Civiltà*, Rome 1964, 413-453.

<sup>3</sup>. See below, note 6.

king of the Persians, to remove completely the race of the Christians from his kingdom, ‘just in the way’, he said, ‘in which I also have done it’.”

The king Dounaas of this text is Dhū Nuwās who had taken the name Yūsuf at his conversion to the Jewish faith; the conquered city of Negra is Nağrān, and the Christian leader Arethas is, in Arabic, Hārith ben Ka‘b. So far for the quote.

After his victory, Dhū Nuwās tried to establish an alliance with the Sasanids in Iran, the result of which would have been that the important trade route from Egypt to India, via Ethiopia and Yemen, was blocked for Roman merchants. The Ethiopian Christian king Elesboam – called also Kaleb – led an expedition to Yemen, which crossed the Red Sea by the help of a Roman fleet. Dhū Nuwās was overthrown and executed, and a new Christian king installed in Zafār by the Ethiopians.

These events are known from a number of Greek and Syriac sources, a part of them contemporaneous, such as the History of Prokopios of Kaisareia<sup>4</sup> and, as far as the immediate events in Nağrān are concerned, a report about the martyrism of Arethas.<sup>5</sup> Another important, though much later source is the Life of Gregentios, the supposed missionary sent to Yemen by the patriarch of Alexandria on the request of the Ethiopian king. It is from this text that I have just taken my quote.<sup>6</sup>

The events following the Ethiopian conquest of Yemen are told by these sources in two versions: One group, which includes also Prokopios, reports that first a Christian king called Sumyafa’ Ašwa’ – in Greek, Esimiphaios – was installed on the throne by the Ethiopians, but was overthrown after some years by an officer called Abrēhā, who was also of Ethiopian origin. The other group, instead, omits the person of Sumyafa’ Ašwa’ entirely and claims that Abrēhā was appointed immediately by the Ethiopians. It is evident that the second version is a later invention and was propagated by the court of the Homerites.

Abrēhā reigned in Yemen for a long time and also led, around 549, a military expedition to the North which brought him almost as far as Mekka.<sup>7</sup> After

<sup>4</sup> Prokopios, *Bella* 1.19-20.

<sup>5</sup> M. DETORAKI (ed.) and J. BEAUCAMP (transl.), *Le Martyre de saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons (BHG 166)* [Centre de recherche d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance, Monographies 27], Paris 2007; and the essays collected in: J. BEAUCAMP, F. Briquel-Chatonnet and CH. ROBIN (eds.), *Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux Ve et VIe siècles: regards croisés sur les sources* [Centre de recherche d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance, Monographies 32], Paris 2010.

<sup>6</sup> *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, ed. A. BERGER. With a contribution by G. FIACCADORI [Millennium Studies 7], Berlin 2006 (quoted as: Gregentios ed. Berger), Bios c. 9, 1-12 = ed. p. 383 f. On this text, see also V. CHRISTIDES, The Himyarite-Ethiopian War and the Ethiopian Occupation of South Arabia in the Acts of Gregentios (ca. 530 A.D.), *Annales d’Éthiopie* 9 (1972) 115-146.

<sup>7</sup> On this expedition, see M. J. KISTER, The Campaign of Hulubān. A New Light on the Expedition of Abraha, *Le Muséon* 78 (1965) 425-436: 427f; A. G. LOUNDINE, Sur les rapports entre l’Éthiopie et le Himyar du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, in: *Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici (Roma, 10-15 apr. 1972)* [Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Problemi attuali di Scienza e di Cultura 191], Rome 1974, I 313-320: 319 f; J. BEAUCAMP, F. BRIQUEL-CHATONNET and CH.

his death, his two sons followed him as rulers. But their Ethiopian dynasty, being a foreign rule, was finally overthrown around 570 by a revolt of local noblemen. Since then, Yemen was ruled by a governor from the Sasanian empire, until its conquest by the armies of Islam in 628.<sup>8</sup>

Nağrān, as we have seen, was already a Christian town before the expedition of 522, and it seems that Christianity had been brought into the region from Egypt via Ethiopia, and was therefore monophysitic in its faith.<sup>9</sup> Although the Greek life of Arethas was later reworked in the Byzantine empire with a certain orthodox tendency, it is clear that the Christians of Nağrān were actually Monophysites. This is also true for the Ethiopians who conquered the city in 522 and established their rule, not only there, but also in the whole country. A result of this was that the Ethiopians had to build up a complete church organisation in the whole Yemen which previously had not existed. This, however, turned out to be a difficult task, as we can see from a monophysitic source, the Church History of John of Ephesos, which was originally written in Syriac but is transmitted to us only in a Greek translation.

John tells us<sup>10</sup> that the new Ethiopian king of Yemen asked the patriarch of Alexandria for a bishop, and indeed a certain Ioannes Paramonarios was sent who sat on the throne for a while, but died soon. In Alexandria, meanwhile, the monophysitic patriarch had been deposed in 536 on the pressure of the orthodox government in Constantinople. King Abrēhā, himself apparently a Monophysite, therefore had no other choice than to ask for a new archbishop in Constantinople instead of Alexandria. But Emperor Iustinianos refused to send a Monophysite to Yemen, while the Yemenites refused to accept an orthodox candidate. The result was that the seat of the archbishop remained vacant for a long time, until the Homerites finally appointed a monophysitic bishop by themselves, whose name is not mentioned by John of Ephesos. Such an appointment without the approval of a patriarch, however, was uncanonical. The new bishop, therefore, had little authority, and the South of Arabia soon became a sort of romping place for a variety of Christian sects, some rather strange ones included.

If we read this report, it remains unclear how big the proportion of Christians was at all among the population of the region. The impression prevails that the Christian kingdom in Yemen was, in reality, supported by a relatively thin

ROBIN, La persécution des chrétiens de Nağrān et la chronologie Ĥimyarite, *ARAM* 11-12 (1999-2000) 15-83: 73 and note 211; and Gregentios ed. Berger 67.

<sup>8</sup>. On this period, see J. S. TRIMINGHAM, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, London 1979, 305 and notes 48, 50; I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, I/1, Washington 1995, 364-366 and note 198, 369-372, with literature; G. GREATREX and S. N. C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian War*, II. AD 363-630, London and New York 2002, 137 and note 15 (280); and Gregentios ed. Berger 67.

<sup>9</sup>. See, for example, FIACCADORI in Gregentios ed. Berger 77-79.

<sup>10</sup>. John of Ephesos, in: *Incerti auctoris Chronicon vulgo Pseudo-Dionysianum dictum II*, ed. I.-B. CHABOT [Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium 101, 4/Syr. 53], Paris 1933, 68,27-69,5 and 111,12-112,20.

upper class of immigrated Ethiopians. Most of the local population were no Christians, but either Jews or, probably the majority, adherers of older traditional religions. This becomes clear from the reports about the Islamic conquest in 628, for later Arabic sources state that there were almost no Christians except in the city of Nağrān.<sup>11</sup> The inhabitants of Nağrān, however, were deported only ten years later, in 638, and settled near al-Kūfah in Mesopotamia where they continued to live as Christians for several centuries. And these Christians of Nağrān were neither orthodox nor Nestorians, as it has been assumed, but clearly Monophysites.<sup>12</sup>

Now it is strange to see how one Byzantine source, the already mentioned Life of Saint Gregentios, describes the history of Christianity in Yemen in a completely different manner.<sup>13</sup> In this text, the Ethiopian king asks the archbishop of Alexandria to send a missionary to Yemen. The archbishop ordains Gregentios, who just happens to be in town, and sends him to Yemen together with the returning Ethiopian ambassadors. And if we believe this text, all Jews living in Southern Arabia in this time were converted and absorbed into the other population which was already predominantly Christian.

If we look closer on the Life of Gregentios, however, we soon understand that this text was written much later, and so has to be used as a source for the events in the sixth century with extreme caution. The archbishop, for example, who sends Gregentios to Yemen, is called Proterios and thus bears the name of the last orthodox archbishop of Alexandria who had been murdered by Monophysites in 457, long before the Ethiopian expedition against Dhū Nuwās. The actual archbishop of Alexandria in 522 was the Monophysite Timotheos II, that is, exactly the man who sent John Paramonarios to Yemen.<sup>14</sup> And as the life of Gregentios claims that he acted there as bishop – or archbishop – for thirty years, it is clear that his person replaces not only John Paramonarios, but also fills the long vacancy of the throne after his death.

The Life of Gregentios, in addition to that, is just one of a group of closely related texts which form together a kind of corpus about this saint. The Life

<sup>11</sup>. FIACCADORI in Gregentios ed. Berger 71; for the region further to the East, see M. LECKER, Judaism among Kinda and the *Ridda* of Kinda, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115 (1995) 635-650.

<sup>12</sup>. FIACCADORI in Gregentios ed. Berger 77-79.

<sup>13</sup>. Gregentios ed. Berger Life c. 9 and Dialogue c. E 709-745 = ed. p. 383-405, 798-815).

<sup>14</sup>. A. VASILIEV, *Justin the First. An Introduction to the Epoch of Justinian the Great* [Dumbarton Oaks Studies 1], Cambridge/Mass 1950, 298; N. FIGULEVSKAJA, *Byzanz auf den Wegen nach Indien* [Berliner Byzantinistische Arbeiten 36], Berlin and Amsterdam 1969, 334; I. SHAHĪD, *The Martyrs of Najrān. New Documents* [Subsidia hagiographica 49], Brussels 1971, 227; V. CHRISTIDES, The Martyrdom of Arethas and the Aftermath: History vs. Hagiography, in: *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Graeco-Oriental and African Studies, 30 April-5 May 1996*, ed. V. Christides and Th. Papadopoulos, Nicosia 2000 [= *Graeco-Arabica* 7-8 (1999-2000)], 51-91: 66 f and notes 72 f. On the replacement of Timotheos by Proterios and its possible reasons see G. FIACCADORI, Proterio, Asterio e Timoteo patriarchi. Note di storiografia alessandrina, *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 3 (1980) 299-315; also, FIACCADORI in Gregentios ed. Berger 72.

describes how Gregentios, after long travels in the Roman Mediterranean, finally goes to Yemen and converts the Jewish population to Christianity.<sup>15</sup> The second text of the corpus is a Lawbook for the Yemenites which was supposedly written on divine inspiration by Gregentios, and then decreed by king Abrêhâ.<sup>16</sup> The third text is a fictitious Dialogue of five full days between Gregentios and a Jewish rabbi called Herban about the true faith, in which at the end, of course, Gregentios wins and Herban is converted.

A lot of scholarly work has been done about these texts since the one part of them, the Dialogue, was published in 1586.<sup>17</sup> But the complete text of the Life, the Lawbook and the Dialogue was in fact not accessible before my edition which appeared in 2006, and only now, having the full texts at hand, we can understand how they are actually related to each other.

It had been assumed already for a very long time by some scholars that the Life and the other texts of the corpus cannot be original texts from the sixth century, while others have, until our days, defended their authenticity.<sup>18</sup> If I may summarise the results of my research, I think to have demonstrated definitely that all three parts were written by the same author; that this author wrote first the Life, then the Dialogue, and finally inserted it into the Life shortly before its end; and finally, that he wrote the Lawbook still later and repeated the same procedure, that is, inserted it at a fitting place shortly before the conversion of Herban and the other Jews.<sup>19</sup>

The most important part of this long text was certainly, for both the author and the Byzantine reader, the Dialogue between Gregentios and Herban, and this is the reason why the Dialogue is often transmitted by manuscripts separately. But, in this case, the Dialogue is always extracted from the complete corpus, so that the conclusion of the Life with Gregentios' peaceful and blessed death stands at its end.<sup>20</sup>

But if the corpus of Gregentios is not a sixth-century work, when was it written, and where? The complete Dialogue, as we have it now, does not show traces of different text layers which could point to subsequent changes and additions, and a number of theological topics is discussed which simply did not exist yet in the sixth century, such as the veneration of icons and the procession of the Holy Ghost.<sup>21</sup> If we look on the Lawbook, we notice, on the one hand, a strongly christian and philanthropical character, on the other hand, the prescription

<sup>15</sup>. On the alleged youth of Gregentios and his itinerary until his arrival in Egypt, see Gregentios ed. Berger 17-39.

<sup>16</sup>. Gregentios ed. Berger 82-91, with older literature.

<sup>17</sup>. *S. patris nostri Gregentii archiepiscopi Tephrensensis, Disputatio cum Herbano Iudaeo*, ed. N. GULONIUS, Paris 1586.

<sup>18</sup>. The Life quotes, among other sources, the ninth-century Life of Gregorios of Agrigentum (on which see below note 26) and contains allusions to persons and events in mid-tenth century Constantinople, see Gregentios ed. Berger 40-43. On the Laws and the Dialogue, see below.

<sup>19</sup>. Gregentios ed. Berger 109-113.

<sup>20</sup>. Gregentios ed. Berger 110.

<sup>21</sup>. Gregentios ed. Berger 95; on the allusions to Islam, see *ibid.*, 97-100.

of severe punishments, especially for sexual offenses, and often punishments by mutilation which were not yet in use in the Roman empire by the sixth century. So this text must either have actually been composed in Arabia,<sup>22</sup> and therefore propagates traditional Arabian concepts of legislation, or it is younger and from a time in which mutilation punishments had become customary in the Byzantine empire too.<sup>23</sup> For both parts of the corpus, it becomes clear that it cannot be older than, let's say, the late ninth or early tenth century.

If we look on the Life of Gregentios, we realise that the greatest part of this text is not much more than a rather abstruse sequence of hagiographical stereotypes, full of anachronisms and geographical absurdities, and compiled from various sources which were apparently written between the sixth and the mid-tenth century.<sup>24</sup> But this changes radically as soon as Gregentios leaves Egypt for Yemen, for the report about the massacre of Nağrān is plausible and corresponds quite well to what we know from sources contemporary to the event. Evidently, an old source has been used for this part of the story, a source which contained not only the story of the Nağrān massacre, but went on with an itinerary through the kingdom of the Homerites, also including a list of churches which king Elesboam built in the various towns of his empire.

The person of Gregentios, however, is still an imaginary component of the Life. No person called Gregentios is attested in any other source before the Life and very rarely thereafter,<sup>25</sup> and it seems that the name was formed as a portmanteau word which alludes to two other orthodox saints, Gregorios of Agrigentum and Vikentios of Augustopolis: although these persons are not mentioned by name in the Life, they are introduced indirectly by visits of Gregentios in their home towns.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup>. As claimed, for example, by PIGULEVSKAJA, *Byzanz*, 205-207.

<sup>23</sup>. Also the Laws clearly allude to the urban topography of Constantinople and to the legislation of emperor Leon VI (886-912) and his successors, see Gregentios ed. Berger 82-91. An older date has still been defended by A. PΑΡΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΥ, «Οι «Νόμοι των Ομηριτών» [Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte 7], Athens & Komotene 1994; and idem, *Homeritarum Leges. An Interpretation, Proche-Orient Chrétien* 46 (1996) 27-71, who suggested that a sixth-century text was reworked in the ninth century.

<sup>24</sup>. The sixth-century text on the Christian mission in Yemen, which will be discussed below, is in fact the oldest of them. The much longer first part of the Life is mainly drawn from 1) a lost report on a pilgrimage from Ljubljana in the "country of the Avars" to Milan, 2) the Life of Gregorios of Agrigentum (on which see below note 26), 3) a pilgrim's guide of Rome and surroundings, and 4) other minor sources; see Gregentios ed. Berger 14-28, 31-40.

<sup>25</sup>. Two 19th century monks, who lived on Mount Athos in the monastery of Vatopedi and the skete of Saint Anna respectively, had chosen Gregentios as their monastic name; see Gregentios ed. Berger 29-30; a photograph of the latter's skull in the bonehouse appeared in the *National Geographic* 164 (1983), 741.

<sup>26</sup>. The ninth-century Life of Gregorios of Agrigentum (Leontios Presbyteros von Rom, *Das Leben des heiligen Gregorios von Agrigent*, ed. A. BERGER [Berliner Byzantinistische Arbeiten 60], Berlin 1995) is, in fact, one of the main sources for the Italian episode in Gregentios' Life, while Vikentios, actually a martyr from Augustopolis (Zaragoza) in Spain, is erroneously connected here to Augustopolis in Istria (Koper in modern Slovenia); see Gregentios ed. Berger 23-25 and 29.



Gregorios of Agrigentum is a historical person of the early seventh century, but his life, which is quoted here, was only written in the ninth.<sup>27</sup> A person called Gregentios can therefore in no way have been mentioned in an original sixth-century source about the events in Yemen.

Another problem is that in Gregentios' life the mission in Yemen is, contrary to historical reality, described as orthodox. But this impression is achieved only by mentioning some names of orthodox persons, such as the patriarch Proterios, and since these names may have crept into the text long after its composition, it is difficult to understand whether the orthodox tendency was present there from the beginning, or is the result of a later reworking.

But let us now have a look on the itinerary of Saint Gregentios as described by his *Life*, a part of the text which is probably taken over, without major changes, from a much earlier source.<sup>28</sup> After leaving Egypt, Gregentios first uses the old Roman merchants' route through the Red Sea. He first goes to Aksum in Ethiopia, whose name appears in the text in a rather distorted form as Amlem – that means, although nothing is said in the text, he disembarks from the ship at Adulis in present-day Eritrea and travels overland to Ethiopia. Then, presumably after returning to Adulis, he crosses the Straits at the southern end of the Red Sea and then travels to Zafar, the capital of Ḥimyar, where the Ethiopian king is still present. The king ordains him as a bishop, Gregentios talks five days with Herban and baptises the Jews, before he goes on to his round tour through the kingdom in order to consecrate the churches already built there by the king.

Up to this point, we might assume that the source of the *Life* of Gregentios uses a common source with the *Martyrium* of Arethas. But while the *Martyrium* ends with Arethas' execution and the subsequent Ethiopian expedition, the *Life* of Gregentios goes on, listing the towns of the kingdom and their newly built churches.

The churches mentioned are in Naḡrān a church of the Resurrection, a church of the Mother of God, and a memorial church for Arethas, or Ḥārith ben Ka'b, and the other victims of the massacre, in his former house.<sup>29</sup> The churches in Zafar are a cathedral of the Holy Trinity, a church of the Mother of God, and one of the Apostles.<sup>30</sup> The third big city in the Ḥimyarite kingdom was, according to the *Life*, Akana, that is Qāni' in Ḥaḍramawt. There, three churches were built, one of the Resurrection, one of John the Baptist, and one of Saint Thomas.<sup>31</sup>

The chapter closes with a summary list of other places where churches were built, namely Atarph, Legmia, Azaki and Iouze. Unfortunately, this is a good example for the well-known phenomenon that the names of foreign towns and persons are often heavily corrupted in the tradition of texts, that is, exactly the

<sup>27</sup>. See Leontios Presbyteros, *Das Leben* ed. Berger 23-53.

<sup>28</sup>. FIACCADORI in *Gregentios* ed. Berger 48-51.

<sup>29</sup>. FIACCADORI in *Gregentios* ed. Berger 52-54; I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium in South Arabia*, *DOP* 33 (1979, pub. 1980) 23-94: 38-42.

<sup>30</sup>. FIACCADORI in *Gregentios* ed. Berger 54 f; SHAHĪD, *Byzantium in South Arabia* 42-47.

<sup>31</sup>. FIACCADORI in *Gregentios* ed. Berger 55 f; SHAHĪD, *Byzantium in South Arabia* 49-51.

information we are most interested in. Only Atarph can be identified with some probability as *Zufār* in the *Ḥa ḍramawt* region, while for the remaining towns of *Legmia*, *Azaki* and *Iouze* a number of different explanations has been offered which are all based on the supposed misreadings either in an Arabic or in a Greek source.<sup>32</sup>

This leads us to the question by which way the informations about southern Arabia and especially the list of towns and churches have found their way into the *Life of Gregentios*, a late tenth-century text very probably composed in Constantinople. The most plausible assumption is that the original information comes from a pre-Islamic, Christian source in Arabic. Irfan Shahîd, on the basis of a thorough investigation of single names and their possible distortions, reached the conclusion that the immediate source of the *Life* must have been a translation of an old Arabic text into Syriac.<sup>33</sup> Gianfranco Fiaccadori, on the contrary, argued in his contribution to my edition that all these word forms can also be explained, if the Greek version was done immediately from the Arabic.<sup>34</sup> In both cases, it would be plausible that this source was translated into Greek in an Islamic country with a Christian minority, such as Syria or Palestine, and came to Constantinople later, perhaps by monks who emigrated into the Byzantine empire at a later date.

It is tempting, however, to follow Fiaccadori's argument also in assuming that the place of origin of this mysterious source was neither in Syria nor Palestine, but rather *al-Kūfah* in Iraq, the place to which the Christians of *Nağrān*, as I have mentioned before, had been deported to shortly after the Islamic conquest of their native city in 638.<sup>35</sup> This would mean that the original text described a mission which was actually monophysitic, but the dogmatical background did probably not play a prominent role in it, and so this tendency went unnoticed by the translators and later readers, until finally, by adding orthodox components such as the name of *Proterios* of Alexandria, the whole text became orthodox.

The *Life of Gregentios*, therefore, cannot be regarded as a proof that the mission in Yemen in the years after 523 was orthodox and achieved by a person with this name. To the contrary, we get the impression that this forced mission was done by the Ethiopians, perhaps with the help of Monophysitic clerics from Egypt, but, as said before, with little success. The churches built in the country may actually have served the needs of the Ethiopian occupation forces, and it is unknown what happened to them after the overthrow of the dynasty around 570. In other words, the Christian mission in Yemen was mainly the product of the author's imagination, and Christianity may never have been dominant in any Arabian city except *Nağrān*, and ended almost completely on the peninsula with the expulsion of its inhabitants and their resettling at *al-Kūfah*.

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<sup>32</sup>. FIACCADORI in *Gregentios* ed. Berger 56-58.

<sup>33</sup>. I. SHAHÎD, *Byzantium in South Arabia* 91-94.

<sup>34</sup>. FIACCADORI in *Gregentios* ed. Berger 52-58.

<sup>35</sup>. See above, note 12.

# Reflections on the Mosaics of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus

ROBERT HILLENBRAND

Like many great masterpieces, the Umayyad Great Mosque of Damascus can be interpreted in several different ways, and it sends out many distinct messages. This polyvalence goes far to explain why this mosque has fascinated observers for so many centuries. This paper will reflect in particular on some aspects of its wall mosaic decoration. By way of introduction, it will be convenient to consider briefly the wider context of this mosque in earlier Umayyad religious architecture by outlining its links with the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

## The connection with the Dome of the Rock

The Great Mosque of Damascus cannot be fully understood without reference to the Dome of the Rock. These two masterpieces of Umayyad religious architecture relate to each other on various levels. First, there is the personal dimension. For the caliph al-Walid I, the building most intimately associated with his father was surely the Dome of the Rock, whose multiple connections with the sacred city of Jerusalem, and with its ancient tradition of pilgrimage, lent it quite special prestige (fig.1). It would not be strange if that should spur him to emulation. If emulation was indeed his aim, this was the building to beat. To equal that achievement in that same city was manifestly impossible.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. It might be argued that the Aqsa mosque would be the obvious site to develop. But the Umayyad history of the Aqsa mosque remains deeply contested in modern scholarship, so much so that the alleged contributions of 'Abd al-Malik and al-Walid, let alone earlier or later caliphs, are impossible to identify with absolute certainty in the present state of knowledge. The archaeological evidence suggests a sequence of at least three campaigns before the later 8th century, but their dating presents major problems, not least because of the well-nigh seamless continuity of style and technique in stone carving in 7th-8th century Syria. Thus dating controls based on ornament are of little value. For a conspectus of views see R.W. HAMILTON, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, Jerusalem 1949, 70-4; H. STERN, Recherches sur la Mosquée al-Aqsa et ses mosaïques, *Ars Orientalis* 5(1963), 28-38; K.A.C. CRESWELL, *Early Muslim Architecture*, Oxford <sup>2</sup>1969, 1/1, 32-5 and 1/2, 373-80; B. FINSTER, Die Mosaiken der Umayyadenmoschee, *Kunst des Orients* 7(1970), 127-9; K.A.C. CRESWELL, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, revised and enlarged by J.W. ALLAN, Aldershot 1989, 8, 73-82; M. ROSEN-AYALON, *The Early Islamic Monuments of al-Haram al-Sharif*, Jerusalem 1989, 4-7; R.W. HAMILTON, Once Again the Aqsa, in J. RABY and J. JOHNS (eds), *Bayt al-Maqdis. 'Abd al-Malik's Jerusalem*, Part One [Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX/2], Oxford 1992, 141-4; A. ELAD, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship. Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage*, Leiden 1995, 37-42; R. HILLENBRAND, Jerusalem §II, 1 (iv) Aqsa Mosque, in J.S. TURNER (ed.), *A Dictionary of Art* 16, London 1996, 496-7; and Arabia, Greece and Byzantium: Cultural Contacts in Ancient and Medieval Times, ed. Abdulaziz Al-Helabi, Dimitrios Letsios, Moshalleh Al-Moraekhi, Abdullah Al-Abduljabbar, Riyadh 2012 / AH 1433, Part II, pp. 163-201.

But while Mu‘awiya had built a celebrated palace in Damascus,<sup>2</sup> ‘Abd al-Malik himself had not undertaken any significant building campaigns there, even though it was the Umayyad capital. So it was here in Damascus, not far from Jerusalem, that the opportunity presented itself for al-Walid to make his own considered statement as a patron of architecture. That said, there is no need to postulate a desire on al-Walid’s part to outshine what his father did; it is equally plausible that he should wish to continue in the same vein, and himself erect a splendid monument whose reach would be as much political as religious. ‘Abd al-Malik, moreover, had set the bar high in that he had devoted lavish resources to the Dome of the Rock,<sup>3</sup> so it is not surprising that in this respect too al-Walid should spare no expense when he came to build his imperial mosque in nearby Damascus.<sup>4</sup> And he did his best to give that mosque a setting worthy of it, located as it was in the centre of his capital on a site that had been hallowed by successive places of worship for the best part of two millennia,<sup>5</sup> even if no site quite as public and visible as that of the Dome of the Rock was available in Damascus.

The second connection between these buildings is the fact that they are, broadly speaking, contemporary with each other, and this of course made comparisons between them inevitable. Each of them was the principal architectural legacy of successive caliphs, and their completion dates are less than a generation apart. This closeness in time – and also, as it happens, in space – effectively reinforced the impact of both buildings on the people of Greater Syria and beyond in the Umayyad period. Together they presented the new religion of Islam through monuments of imposing scale and embellished with state-of-the-art decoration. Their public, proclamatory power could not be ignored. And each gained extra impact from the other.

R. GRAFMAN and M. ROSEN-AYALON, *The Two Great Syrian Umayyad Mosques: Jerusalem and Damascus*, *Muqarnas* 16(1999), especially 1-7.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account, see F.B. FLOOD, *The Great Mosque of Damascus. Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture*, Leiden 2001, 147-54; for its wider context, cf. too J.M. BLOOM, ‘The Qubbat al-Khadra’ and the Iconography of Height in Early Islamic Architecture’, *Ars Orientalis* 23(1993), 135.

<sup>3</sup> G. LE STRANGE, *Palestine Under the Moslems*, London 1890, 144-5, quotes from Jamal al-Din Ahmad’s *Muthir al-Ghiram*, written in 1351 and therefore a very late source, that ‘Abd al-Malik had devoted the revenue of Egypt for seven years to finance the building of the Dome of the Rock and the Aqsa Mosque. 100,000 dinars was left over at the end of the building campaign; this was used to gild the dome of the Qubbat al-Sakhra. The parallel with the seven years’ worth of revenue from Syria spent by al-Walid on the Great Mosque of Damascus is suspiciously pat.

<sup>4</sup> For a full discussion, see CRESWELL, *EMA*, 1/1, 151.

<sup>5</sup> The relief of a sphinx from a temple dedicated to the god Hadad has been found on the site of the Umayyad mosque (AMIR JA‘FAR ‘ABD AL-QADIR [=AMIR DJAFAR ABD EL-KADER], *Un orthostate du temple de Hadad à Damas*, *Syria* 26(1949), 191-5. I am grateful to Dr Kassem Touweir for the information that an even earlier sherd of the 2nd millennium B.C. has been found there.

The third connection is that, when seen together rather than singly, these two monuments showed that the Dome of the Rock was not a flash in the pan but that the Muslims were fully capable of wielding the symbolic language of Byzantine architecture and its ornament for their own purposes, and that they could build creatively on the early Christian and Byzantine traditions, and the still earlier Roman tradition, instead of merely copying them. Moreover, this process gathered momentum and confidence in the brief period that separated these two buildings. In that interim, Islamic coinage had definitively broken with attempts to mould the existing Byzantine and Sasanian numismatic traditions to Islamic purposes and instead had embarked on a wholly new course, as shown by ‘Abd al-Malik’s reform coinage with its exclusive emphasis on the written word.<sup>6</sup> This evidence from a medium other than architecture puts these two religious buildings into a wider context of bold innovation. So it should not be surprising that the Great Mosque of Damascus is much more radical in its treatment of the early Christian and Byzantine heritage than was the Dome of the Rock.<sup>7</sup> And indeed it reconfigures the components of the standard basilica, a type built by the hundred in the first seven centuries after the birth of Christ, in unprecedented ways. These include the west front transported to the centre of the north façade; two major entrances rather than one, and both of them divorced from the east-west axis of the covered sanctuary; the atrium attached to the north rather than the west façade; and a central domed and gabled transept bisecting the covered area of the sanctuary (figs.2-3). All the forms are thoroughly familiar in themselves, but from the viewpoint of local Christian architecture every single one of them is in the wrong place. Thus the Muslim architect, or whoever was responsible for the design of this mosque, showed an impressive capacity for lateral thinking in both senses of the term. He worked stubbornly and systematically against and across the grain of local tradition. This building, then, pushed the envelope; it dramatically extended the boundaries of long-familiar architectural forms, and did so with all the authority of the greatest empire in the contemporary world. The key factor seems to have been the bold decision to use the entire enclosure of the erstwhile classical temple; no other early mosque can be proved to have had the pronounced laterality of Damascus (fig.4). If

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<sup>6</sup> For the general background, see M.L. BATES, *History, Geography and Numismatics in the First Century of Islamic Coinage*, *Revue Suisse de Numismatique* 65(1986), 231-62; and for the 690s, W.L. TREADWELL, *Abd al-Malik’s coinage reforms: the role of the Damascus mint*, *Revue Numismatique* 165(2009), 357-82.

<sup>7</sup> This topic has not attracted as much attention as it deserves. See meanwhile CRESWELL, *EMA* 1/1, 117-8, FINSTER, *Mosaiken*, 121-6 and O. GRABAR, *La Grande Mosquée de Damas et les origines architecturales de la mosquée*, *Synthronon. Art et archéologie de la fin de l’Antiquité et du Moyen Age: recueil d’études par André Grabar et un groupe de ses disciples*, Paris 1968, 107-14. The latter study stresses the ceremonial and liturgical imperatives which influenced the design of this mosque, but these factors are not enough in themselves to explain its spatial inventiveness. For the links with the Aqsa Mosque, based however on a reconstruction which differs in significant ways from earlier reconstructions (e.g. that of CRESWELL, *EMA* 1/2, fig.446 [in red] opposite p. 379), see GRAFMAN and ROSEN-AYALON, *Umayyad Mosques*, especially 11-12.

a totally unencumbered site had been selected the result would probably have been a mosque far more in tune with those of Kufa,<sup>8</sup> Basra,<sup>9</sup> Medina<sup>10</sup> and so on, with a much shorter qibla wall.<sup>11</sup>

The fourth connection also has to do with Christianity, but this time as a faith rather than as an architectural tradition. Here the pace has quickened in the brief interval between the two monuments. The Dome of the Rock occupies a site rich in Abrahamic and especially Jewish tradition, but it is not a site as central to Christianity as others in Jerusalem. The surviving inscriptions within the building,<sup>12</sup> however, do mount a full-throttle attack on the key Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity, and in contradistinction they assert the uncompromisingly monotheistic core doctrines of Islam. They do so with a remarkable degree of overlap and indeed repetition, and at great length – the band stretches to some 240 metres.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the medium is at war with the message, for this inscription is located at about 9.5 metres above the current floor level,<sup>14</sup> and in dim lighting. Furthermore, it is in unpointed and unvocalised Kufic script. Thus it presents multiple obstacles to understanding. Moreover, the text is of course in Arabic, not in Greek, and – set as it is within a Muslim building – it is singularly unsuited to reach the vast majority of the Greek- or Aramaic-speaking Christians of the city. The most one could say of this text, of which so much has been made in modern scholarship,<sup>15</sup> is that it would have reached a small handful of keen-sighted, literate and patient Arabs. Its principal role is therefore symbolic in the sense that its mere presence stamped the building as Islamic and made it a kind of sacred book. But its effectiveness as an instrument of propaganda proclaiming the supremacy of Islam over the other Abrahamic religions was severely limited. Nevertheless, the intention to assert dominance over the doctrines of Christianity was unmistakable; and the coins of the 690s tell the same story.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>8</sup>. CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, 23-6 and fig.14.

<sup>9</sup>. Ibid., 23.

<sup>10</sup>. Ibid., 27, 40, 142-9 and fig.74; J. SAUVAGET, *La Mosquée Omeyyade de Médine: Étude sur les Origines Architecturales de la Mosquée et de la Basilique*, Paris 1947.

<sup>11</sup>. See the Umayyad mosques listed in notes 107-9 below.

<sup>12</sup>. It is not known whether there were originally any external inscriptions. The investigations of H.R. ALLEN, *The Original Appearance of the Dome of the Rock*, in J. JOHNS (ed.), *Bayt al-Maqdis. Part Two. Jerusalem and Early Islam* [Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX/2], Oxford 1999, 197-213 suggest that it is unlikely; see his model, *ibid.*, 202-3.

<sup>13</sup>. O. GRABAR, *The Dome of the Rock*, Cambridge, Mass. and London 2006, 90.

<sup>14</sup>. CRESWELL, EMA, 1/1, 68-70.

<sup>15</sup>. See especially O. GRABAR, *The Umayyad Dome of the Rock*, *Ars Orientalis* III(1959), 53-5; C. KESSLER, 'Abd al-Malik's Inscription in the Dome of the Rock: A Reconsideration, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1970), 2-14; N. RABBAT, *The Meaning of the Dome of the Rock*, *Muqarnas* 6(1989), 16; O. GRABAR and S. NUSSEIBIH, *The Dome of the Rock*, London 1996, 48-9, 78-81 and 106-9; GRABAR, *Dome of the Rock*, 90-3.

<sup>16</sup>. Notice in particular the field of the obverse of the dinar and the dirham of 'Abd al-Malik's reform coinage. This bears the legend: Allahu al-ahad. Allahu al-samad. Lam yalid wa lam yulad wa la sharik lahu ("God is One. God is the Eternal. He does not beget and He is not



Fig. 1 Jerusalem, Dome of the Rock, exterior



Fig. 2 Great Mosque of Damascus, aerial view

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begotten and He has no associate”). The presence of the same text on both the gold and the silver coinage ensured that this anti-Christian message in theory reached everyone in the middle and higher strata of society – i.e. those involved in more expensive transactions, in other words the social, economic and political élite.

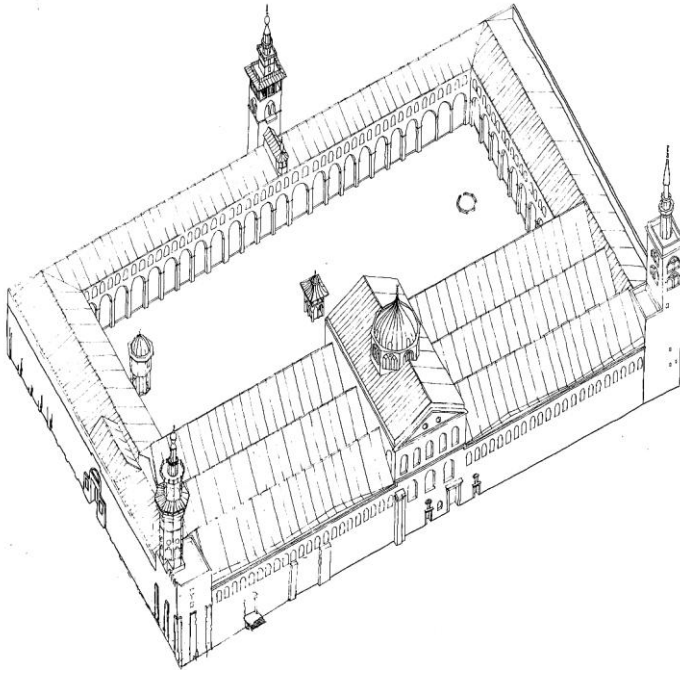


Fig. 3 Great Mosque of Damascus, three-dimensional sketch

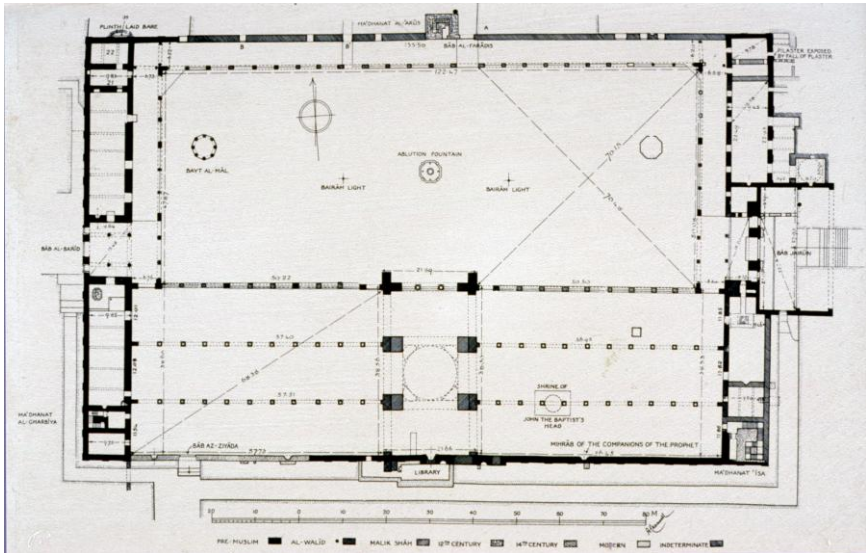


Fig. 4 Great Mosque of Damascus, plan (after Creswell)



Thus while the anti-Christian polemic of the Dome of the Rock is sufficiently clear in theory and in its intention, in practice it can only have had a very limited impact. The agenda at Damascus was similar; the difference was that its execution was a triumphant and permanent success. It is necessary at this point to recapitulate some well-known facts. As Creswell demonstrated with forensic rigour some eighty years ago,<sup>17</sup> the situation at the time of the Muslim take-over of Damascus in 636 was that the church of St John was the city's principal place of Christian worship. It had been built within the cleared precinct (temenos) of the Roman temple of Jupiter Damascenus, itself erected on the foundations of earlier temples (fig.5). For some seventy years Muslims and Christians used the temenos together, the Muslims worshipping in a makeshift mosque close to the Bab Jairun. In 705, however, al-Walid I demolished both the Christian church and the makeshift mosque. This left the space within the walls of the temenos entirely cleared, and it was here that al-Walid built his great mosque. The stark confessional implications of these actions could not have been plainer. A major Christian church in an overwhelmingly Christian city had been demolished by the Muslims, and a huge and visually stunning mosque had been erected on the same site. This action, seen by the Christians as illegal because it broke the terms of the treaty of capitulation,<sup>18</sup> had inescapably political as well as religious implications,<sup>19</sup> for Damascus was the capital of the vast Umayyad empire, with the prestige to match. The impact of the mosque was intensified by the sheer size and ambition of the new building, with its extensive and costly decoration in the medium par excellence of Christian churches, namely mosaic. Indeed, just as the Dome of the Rock exhibited a greater degree of external wall mosaic than any Christian church before it, so too did the Great Mosque of Damascus have a larger surface of wall mosaic in its interior than any earlier or indeed, as it proved, later Christian building.<sup>20</sup>

Before moving on from the immediate context of the Great Mosque of Damascus in Umayyad religious architecture, there is one last issue to be considered. This is the visual and aesthetic connection between the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus in their architectural and decorative vocabulary, and this leaps to the eye. It stands to reason that in two such splendid

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<sup>17</sup>. CRESWELL, EMA, 1/1, 187-96.

<sup>18</sup>. Ibn Jubayr, admittedly a late source (late 12th century), gives details of how al-Walid's offer to give the Christians another church in exchange was rejected, whereupon the Caliph began to demolish the church with his own hands; and how 'Umar II (reigned 99-101/717-20), receiving a petition for compensation from the Christians, was minded to turn over the Great Mosque to them, but in the end granted them a great sum in compensation, with which they were content (LE STRANGE, *Palestine*, 242).

<sup>19</sup>. Hence the remonstrances of the Byzantine emperor as recorded by the 9th-century scholar Ibn Qutayba (CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, 152 and MARGUÉRITE GAUTIER-VAN BERCEM in her contribution to CRESWELL, EMA I/1: *The Mosaics of the Great Mosque of the Umayyads in Damascus*, 231).

<sup>20</sup>. Perhaps the closest comparators are St Mark's in Venice, where most of the mosaics date from the 12th century onwards, and the cathedral of Monreale in Palermo, where the mosaics date from 1172 onwards.

public monuments so closely linked in time, space and patronage the later one would profit from the experience acquired in completing its predecessor. Quite apart from a shared classical heritage in stone masonry, columns, capitals, arches, mouldings and window grilles – an entire architectural vocabulary unselfconsciously acquired and unselfconsciously used – the decision to use non-figural glass wall mosaics on a huge scale in both structures brought them very close together. In this respect one could indeed regard the Dome of the Rock (fig.6) as a dry run for the Great Mosque of Damascus; it certainly gave the mosaic craftsmen working on the latter building a flying start. So they used much of the vocabulary of motifs employed to such good effect in the Dome of the Rock, with clear guidelines before them as to where such motifs worked best (fig.7) and what technical challenges this medium presented. But the much more extensive surfaces of the mosque made it imperative to widen the range of motifs dramatically, while all the time avoiding the depiction of living beings. This dramatic reduction in the range of options, accompanied by an equally dramatic, indeed unprecedented, expansion in the surface area to be covered, posed a daunting challenge. The rest of this paper will try to show how it was met.

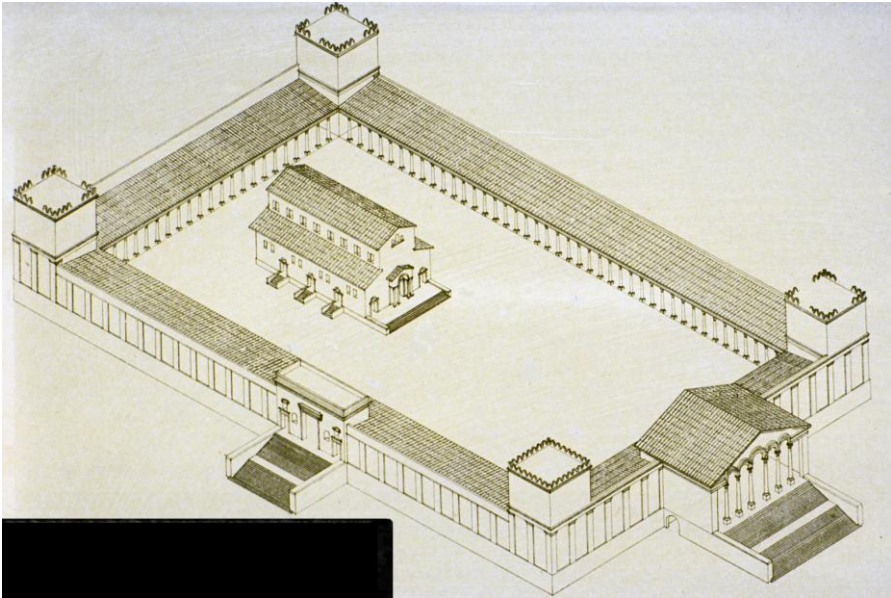


Fig. 5 Damascus, reconstructed state of the site of the future mosque, c.700  
(after Creswell)

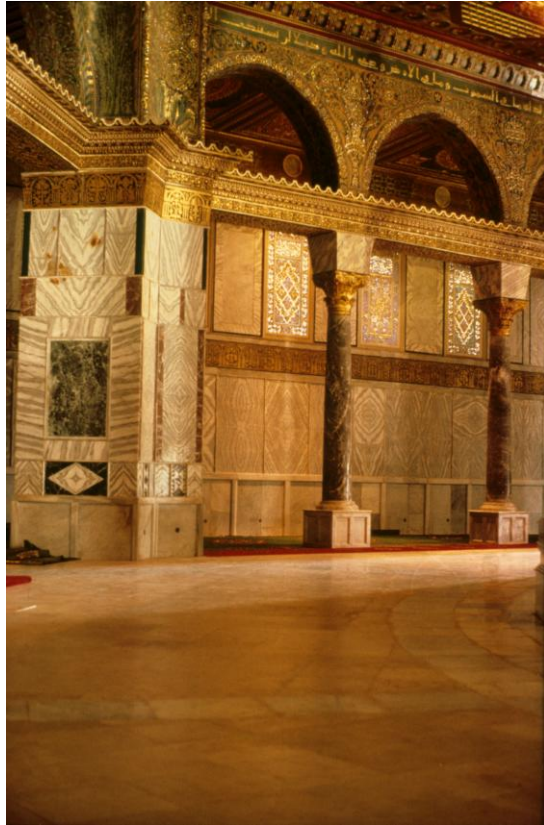


Fig. 6 Jerusalem, Dome of the Rock, interior



Fig. 7 Great Mosque of Damascus, courtyard, mosaic decoration on arch soffit

## Problems and pitfalls in the mosaic programme

It is standard practice to place the Damascus mosaics firmly within the cadre of Byzantine church decoration.<sup>21</sup> Supporters of this approach can point to the report by al-Tabari (admittedly written two centuries after the event) to the effect that al-Walid, when building the Medina mosque, asked the Byzantine emperor for mosaic cubes and craftsmen to set them, and that this request was granted. Later Islamic historians ensured that this story lost nothing in the telling, and – as Creswell gleefully demonstrated – disfigured the simplicity of the original account with gross distortions and exaggerations.<sup>22</sup> But the arguments about whether or not this account is true tend to downplay the salient and obvious fact that at the time of the Muslim conquest of Syria, and for many generations thereafter, Syria was thoroughly Christianised and that its art was firmly within the cultural orbit of Byzantium. There was, so to speak, no other show in town unless, indeed, it was that of the Roman empire itself. When the story is seen in that context, it is cut down to size. While al-Walid may indeed have made such a request – and several motives for this might be proposed – he had no need to beg the Byzantine emperor for help; Greater Syria itself had suitable craftsmen in plenty, as the unrivalled sequence of floor mosaics in 6th- to 7th-century local churches indicates.<sup>23</sup> The case of Jordan is particularly instructive, since some of the finest floor mosaics there were created in the Umayyad period.<sup>24</sup> The celebrated comment of al-Muqaddasi to the effect that the greatest Umayyad religious buildings were a deliberate response to the splendours of local Christian architecture points in the same direction.<sup>25</sup> And many of the craftsmen employed for the Dome of the Rock would still have been available a mere thirteen years later. So it is safe to assume that the assembling of technically skilled craftsmen for this vast project was not a serious problem.

The real difficulty – and it is one somewhat neglected in modern scholarship – lay in devising a suitable set of images for this enormous wall surface, most of it continuous and therefore well suited to continuously connected subject matter. And indeed a panoramic theme was the eventual choice. It was precisely in this matter of wall surface that Christian parallels were distinctly unhelpful. The iconography of Christian wall mosaics at this time was conditioned by the standard forms of church architecture. These favoured the basilica in its various forms (including the centralized multi-domed basilica) and the martyrium. Neither of these architectural forms provided a useful model for the mosaic programme at

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<sup>21</sup>. The connection is laid out in some detail by GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, *Mosaics*, 366-72.

<sup>22</sup>. CRESWELL, *EMA I/1*, 152.

<sup>23</sup>. C. DAUPHIN, *Mosaic Pavements as an Index of Prosperity and Fashion*, *Levant* 12(1980), 112-34.

<sup>24</sup>. M. PICCIRILLO, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, Amman 1993, 45-7. They include Madaba, Maʿin and al-Quwaysma (*ibid.*, pls. 22, 304 and 454 respectively), while the spectacular architectural subject matter of the mosaics in the church of St Stephen at Umm al-Rasas is dated to 756 (*ibid.*, pls.344-58).

<sup>25</sup>. LE STRANGE, *Palestine*, 117-8.

Damascus. In the standard Christian basilica it was the central nave that bore the iconographically crucial decoration, and this could have a processional emphasis which mirrored the liturgy itself.<sup>26</sup> The configuration of the Great Mosque of Damascus ensured that while the building did indeed have a central nave, this was short, as were the other naves along the mosque's north-south axis. It was the east-west axis which had long sequences of arcades (fig.8); but that axis was secondary, and liturgically insignificant. So the reshuffling of the components of the standard Christian church in the Damascus mosque meant that the standard Christian iconographic solutions for those components would simply not work, because the spaces were too different.

What were those spaces? The Great Mosque of Damascus comprises quite varied surfaces, though large, unbroken, oblong expanses, for instance along the qibla wall or on the back walls of three sides of the courtyard, are the dominant accent. The numerous arcades create spandrels and soffits aplenty, and there is also a sprinkling of curvilinear surfaces; but this is emphatically not a vaulted building. A few of the spaces, such as the front of the gable or the interior of the now long-vanished Umayyad dome, were located high up in the building. The treatment of the gable suggests that in such cases the major features of the mosaic programme were correspondingly enlarged to ensure easy legibility (figs.9-10). At the other end of the spectrum, the octagonal Bait al-Mal in the courtyard has its upper external faces covered with mosaics whose every detail can be taken in from ground level (figs.11-12).<sup>27</sup> But exceptions apart, the main impact of the mosaics would have depended on the programmes chosen to decorate two quite different kinds of surface: firstly, the largely unbroken back walls of the courtyard and the qibla, varying in length between some 40 and almost 170 metres, with a height of mosaic-covered surface (to judge by what survives) of c.8.35 metres,<sup>28</sup> so that the surface area of these mosaics alone would have exceeded 3,400 square metres; secondly, the side walls of the sanctuary and its inner northern face;<sup>29</sup> and thirdly, throughout the mosque, the superstructure of arcades carried on more than 110 columns or piers. And each of those arcades would have had both an inner and an outer face decorated with mosaics, which would have doubled the amount of mosaics required in these areas. Nor should one forget the soffits of these arcades, the bridges between the outer and inner faces, which also bore mosaic decoration (fig.7). These second and third categories, then, also added up to a formidable surface area,

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<sup>26</sup>. For examples in Rome (Sta Maria Maggiore) and Ravenna (Sant' Apollinare Nuovo), see J. LASSUS, *The Early Christian and Byzantine World*, London 1967, colour pls. 21 and 31-2.

<sup>27</sup>. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, *Mosaics*, 353-4, figs.417-18; G. DEGEORGE, *La Grande Mosquée des Omeyyades Damas*, Paris 2010, 129, 134, 136, 163, 186 and 209.

<sup>28</sup>. CRESWELL, *EMA I/1*, 174 gives the basis for this estimate, but does not follow up the implications.

<sup>29</sup>. For the latter, see a water-colour by R.P. SPIERS made before the fire of 1893 (FLOOD, *Damascus*, colour pl. II) and photographs and drawings made after that fire but while the remnants were still in fair condition (GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, *Mosaics*, 354-60 and figs. 419-26).

though one that would be much more difficult to calculate. And then the gable and the treasury must be taken into consideration too, though these are of minor importance in terms of sheer surface. The second and third categories of wall surface as defined above, constantly interrupted as they were by arcuated forms and thus of dramatically unequal surface area, would also have been much less suited to bear any continuous, connected iconographic programme. Rather would this arrangement favour a series of individual vignettes, and this is exactly what is visible today. Sometimes these vignettes comprise trees (fig.13, which may contain post-Umayyad elements), sometimes buildings, and sometimes floral or geometric ornament,<sup>30</sup> so they echo the main themes of the much longer panorama. Happily the surviving mosaics give examples of both types of programme - i.e. both the continuous and the disconnected variety - and thus permit a tentative reconstruction of the scheme as a whole.

In any case, whatever the nature of the surfaces to be covered, Christian iconography was of course fundamentally unsuitable from the theological point of view as a model for the decoration of the Damascus mosque. It seems that – as the experiments in Umayyad coinage had already shown – a distaste for figural imagery in a religious context had already established itself by this time, so the processions of holy people (saints, martyrs, apostles) and narratives of Old and New Testament scenes, let alone large-scale images of Christ and the Virgin Mary, were equally unsuitable as sources of inspiration for those charged with the design of the Damascus mosaics.

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<sup>30</sup>. Sometimes they echo the repertoire of the Dome of the Rock, for example in the use of cornucopiae depicted as narrow verticals.



Fig. 8 Great Mosque of Damascus, interior view of sanctuary along the east-west axis



Fig. 9 Great Mosque of Damascus, exterior gable





Fig. 10 Great Mosque of Damascus, exterior gable, detail



Fig. 12 Great Mosque of Damascus, Bait al-Mal, detail

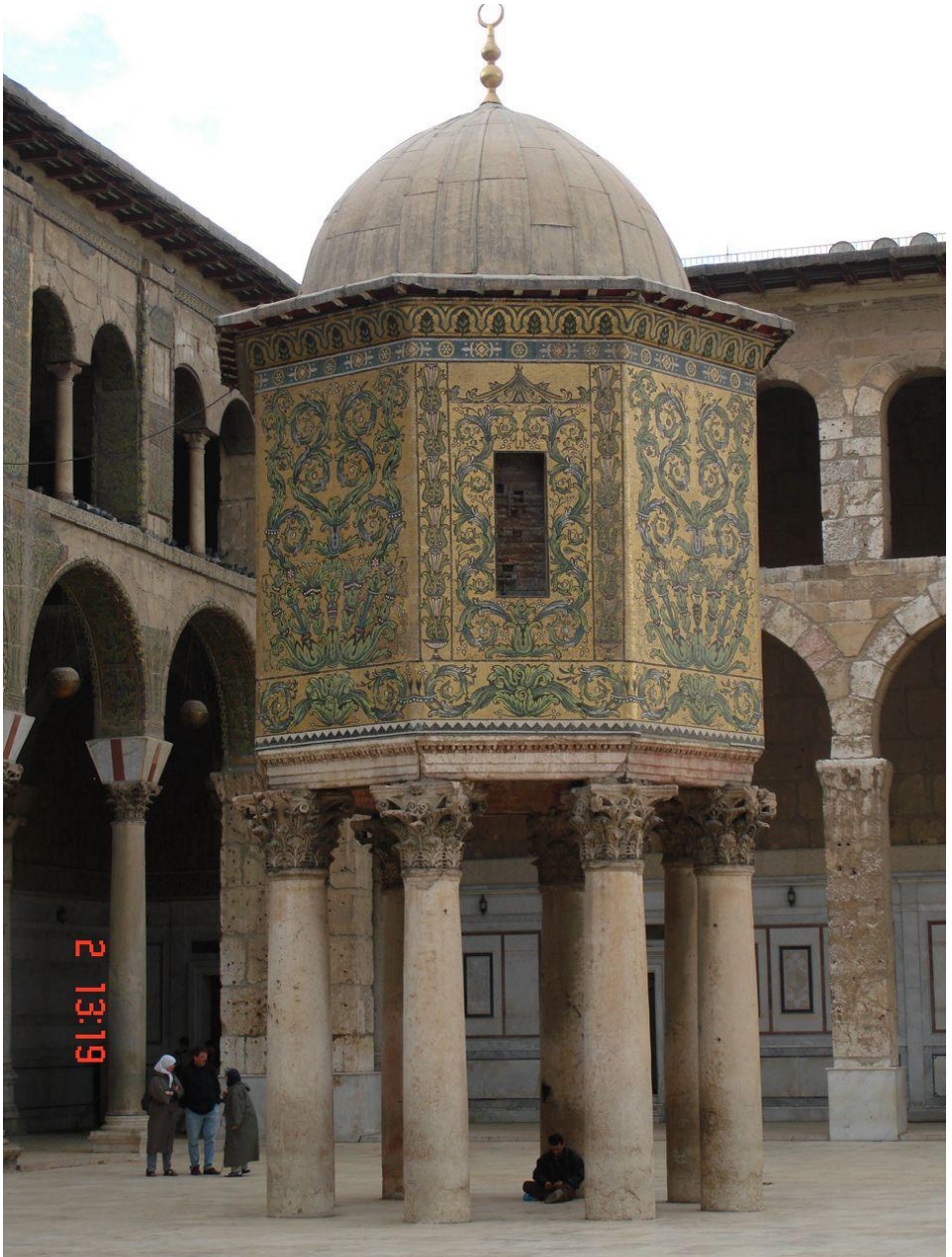


Fig. 11 Great Mosque of Damascus, Bait al-Mal

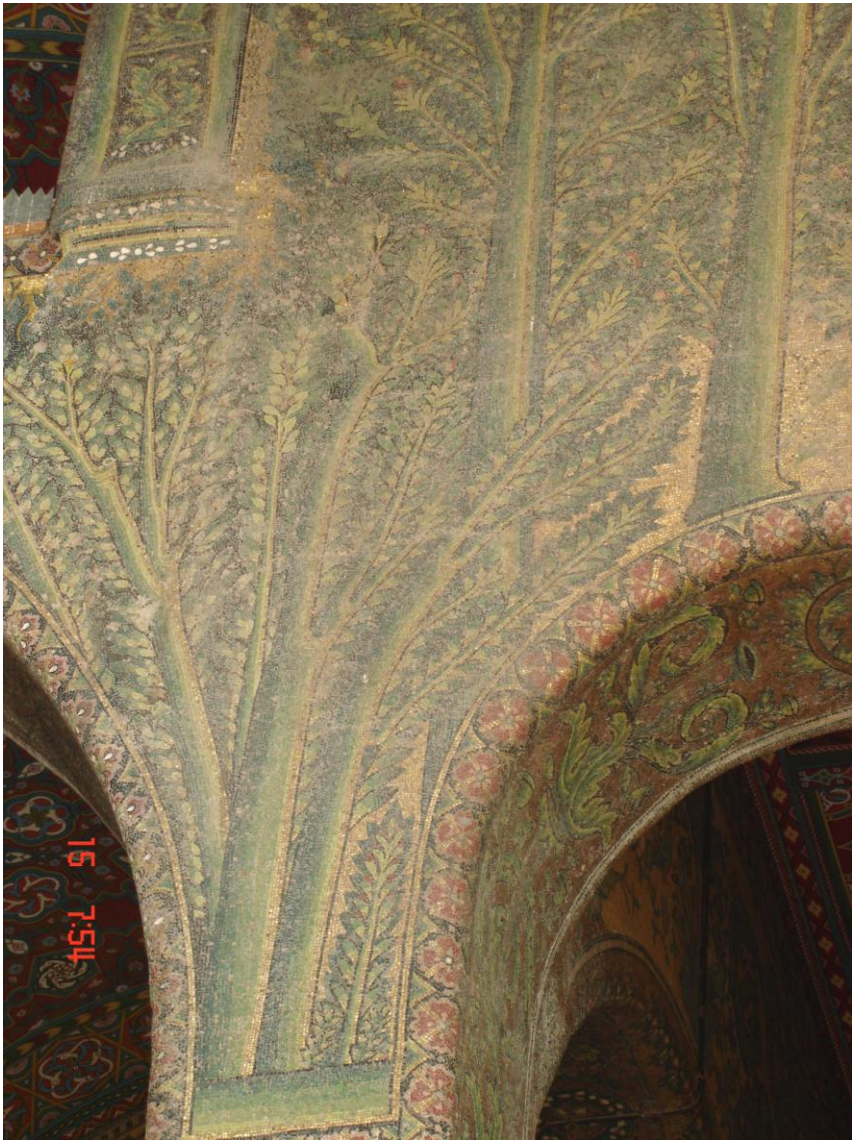


Fig. 13 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic vignette of trees on courtyard façade

Nor did local Christian floor mosaics offer significant inspiration, for here too figural themes were to be seen everywhere, notably in personifications and in the popular theme of the inhabited vine scroll, another legacy from the classical world.<sup>31</sup> The geometric themes so common in these floor mosaics seem not to have recommended themselves for use in wall mosaics, since they are largely absent from both the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the narrow border patterns in the mosaics, whether geometric or floral, are of a very simple kind and clearly serve as straightforward devices of demarcation. This may suggest that they were not regarded as meaningful, which of course implies that the themes that were used for larger surfaces were chosen precisely because they were not neutral but did carry some meaning.

The total absence of inscriptions in the Umayyad decoration that does survive at the Damascus mosque suggests that the decision to accord a major role to epigraphy, as was so often the case in later mosques and other public buildings, was still some way off. That said, as Finster has noted,<sup>33</sup> the area around the mihrab did indeed bear inscriptions.<sup>34</sup> They are described in the medieval sources as being predominantly Qur'anic rather than historical and were of pronounced apocalyptic intent. Since no other Umayyad inscriptions apart from the Qur'anic ones and the foundation inscriptions are recorded in the medieval sources describing the Damascus mosaics,<sup>35</sup> it seems legitimate to assume either that there were none or that they were not regarded as significant. It follows that, unlike the Dome of the Rock, this mosque did not rely on the written word to transmit doctrinal messages, and the likelihood is that these played a minor role. Nevertheless, their concentration around the mihrab, the cynosure of the entire mosque, in the immediate vicinity of an image of the Ka'ba<sup>36</sup> – the only named building in these mosaics mentioned by the Arabic sources – indicates that their intent was serious indeed.

The huge area to be covered with mosaics brought its own attendant problems. The danger of monotony was especially acute in the case of the long uninterrupted surfaces of the inner walls, since they had no architectural articulation

<sup>31</sup>. J.M.C. TOYNBEE and J.B. WARD-PERKINS, Peopled scrolls: a Hellenistic motif in imperial art, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 18(1950), 1-43; C. DAUPHIN, The Development of the "Inhabited Scroll" in Architectural Sculpture and Mosaic art from late Imperial Times to the Seventh Century A.D., *Levant* 19(1987), 183-212.

<sup>32</sup>. Though the window grilles of the Damascus mosque display extremely sophisticated geometric patterns (analysed by CRESWELL, *EMA* 1/1, 202-4, figs.118 and 127 and pl.59). So clearly geometry of this kind, though well within the compass of the craftsmen, was not regarded as suitable subject matter for large surfaces of mosaic work. The geometric character of the borders of the mosaics is kept quite simple.

<sup>33</sup>. FINSTER, *Mosaiken*, 119.

<sup>34</sup>. The Qur'anic inscriptions are helpfully given in full in an Appendix ("The Lost Inscriptions of the Umayyad Mosque") in FLOOD, *Damascus*, 247-51; the historical inscriptions are given on 252-4.

<sup>35</sup>. But see n.72 below.

<sup>36</sup>. GAUTIER-VAN BERCEM, *Mosaics*, 238-9.

to lend them variety. This problem simply did not arise in the case of the arcades. The solution of artificial division into separate panels was not adopted, so continuity as well as variety was at a premium. The methods by which this was achieved are an absorbing study in themselves, but cannot be pursued here. Ample and regular fenestration ensured good natural lighting for the longer stretches of wall, while within the body of the sanctuary itself long rows of hanging lamps, with their flickering flames, invested the mosaics with life, mystery and a dim splendour thanks to the uneven and shifting play of light. The aspect of such an interior is well captured in the Qur'anic frontispieces from San'a', one of which depicts a structure that has much in common with the Great Mosque of Damascus.<sup>37</sup>

### The originality of the mosaics

It is important to concede at the outset that the subject matter of the mosaics – landscape elements combined with buildings – is not original in itself, as Förtsch has demonstrated in compelling and nuanced detail.<sup>38</sup> But the interpretation of this theme is full of original touches. That is perhaps not surprising, given that it was essentially a Roman rather than a Byzantine theme, and thus not a major part of the living tradition of the visual arts that the Umayyads encountered in Syria. It would therefore have lent itself all the more readily to alterations and rethinking of various kinds. As is well known, architecture-scapes figured largely in Roman art of the 1st century A.D. and later, as the wall paintings of Rome, Pompeii, Boscoreale and Herculaneum show,<sup>39</sup> and landscapes were also popular. It is likely enough that this repertoire spread far beyond Italy and reached the Roman East. The Umayyads might very well have seen isolated aspects of this general theme in late antique floor mosaics, such as those of the Antioch area,<sup>40</sup> and perhaps examples of relevant wall decoration also survived in Syria into early Islamic times. Indeed, excavations at Ephesus have revealed plenty of such ornament. But why choose an outdated Roman model in the first place? The choice of Roman rather than Byzantine models could be explained by an awareness on the part of the Umayyads

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<sup>37</sup>. H.-C. GRAF VON BOTHMER, *Architekturbilder im Koran: Eine Prachthandschrift der Umayyadenzeit aus dem Yemen*, *Pantheon* 45(1987), 4-20 and colour pl.II.

<sup>38</sup>. R. FÖRTSCH, *Die Architekturdarstellungen der Umayyadenmoschee von Damaskus und die Rolle ihrer antiken Vorbilder*, *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 7(1993), 177-212. FÖRTSCH has once and for all systematically documented the Roman connection in truly impressive detail, with a keen awareness of the various strands discernible in these borrowings. He treats the Roman motifs recognisable in the Damascus mosaics one by one, which lends his analysis extra authority. Cf. too G. HELLENKEMPER SALIES, *Die Mosaiken der Grossen Moschee von Damaskus*, *Corso di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantina* XXXV(1988), 295-313.

<sup>39</sup>. FÖRTSCH, *Damaskus 182-5, 190-6, 203-7*; this discussion, conducted as it is in the context of the Damascus mosaics, is by far the most subtle, wide-ranging and authoritative treatment of their sources, particularly the Roman ones, published to date.

<sup>40</sup>. Cf. the discussion of how architecture is depicted in the mosaics of Antioch (D. LEVI, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, Princeton, London and the Hague 1947, I, 137-9, 142-4, 149-50, 157-9, 392-3, 606-8 and II, pls. XXII, XXV-XXVIIa, XXIXa, XXX, XXXV and XLIIb).

that it was Rome rather than Byzantium that had built a world empire, so that Rome was the more appropriate model to follow for the new aspiring world empire.<sup>41</sup> Too close a reliance on Byzantine precedent, on the other hand, would have politically undesirable implications. After all, the Byzantine empire remained not just the major political foe of the Umayyads, but also their most formidable rival in both cultural and religious terms. That made it imperative to avoid too obvious a reliance on Byzantine models. But in fairness one must add that while Roman models clearly provided the initial inspiration for the Damascus mosaics, the detailed realization of this theme on such a grand scale in this mosque goes far beyond any Roman example. The minds that could recompose the time-honoured basilical form into such unexpected configurations as we see in the Damascus mosque clearly did not balk at rethinking the stereotyped Roman iconographic formula of landscape-with-buildings in ways that craftsmen raised in that culture would never have dreamed.

So what exactly is new? There is space in this paper to develop only two topics at appropriate length: first, the huge size of the mosaic programme; and second, the many changes that were introduced into the familiar theme of a landscape with buildings.

The first topic, then, concerns the sheer scale on which the mosaic programme, and the panorama in particular (figs.14-15), is conceived. Its huge extent has symbolic dimensions irrespective of the content of the mosaics themselves. Even to imagine this amount of wall mosaic, let alone finance it, called not only for a capacity to think big but also for a bold originality of concept. The exuberant profusion of these mosaics, covering it seems most of the wall surfaces above a height of 6.65 metres from the ground, would have made of the mosque, in the area around the courtyard, within what one might term its cloisters, and finally in the musalla or sanctuary itself, a complete enclosed world of its own. Merely to be inside the mosque would in some sense transport those who viewed it into that world, for it was all around them on an engulfing scale. The choice of a distinctively Christian medium of decoration on this unprecedented scale drove home the unwelcome message of Muslim dominance. And its impressive scale and consequent prestige guaranteed that its lessons would not be lost on subsequent Muslim architects.<sup>42</sup> So a great deal follows from the colossal scale on which this formula of landscape with buildings is deployed. It is scale alone that propels it to a new importance, essentially promoting it from a mere background role, operating so to speak just as wallpaper, to the foreground, indeed to centre stage. That catapults it from a minor supporting role to the major decorative accent of the entire building. This had already been done at the Dome of the Rock, where the entire drum of the

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<sup>41</sup>. In much the same way it is Rome rather than Byzantium that does duty for the idea of "the West" in the decoration of Qasr al-Hair al-Gharbi, as shown for example in the frame of the gateway itself, the Palmyrene echoes of the sculpture of that gateway, the seated imperial figure from the first floor and, most striking of all, the floor fresco of Mother Earth.

<sup>42</sup>. G. MARÇAIS, La mosquée d'El-Walid à Damas et son influence sur l'architecture musulmane d'Occident, *Revue Africaine* 50(1906), 37-56.

interior is taken up by an apparently endless unfolding scroll in multiple tiers, which springs from a series of vases.<sup>43</sup> This theme (minus the vases) occurs in the mosaics of one of the minor vaults at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, where it fits perfectly well as a space-filler; the eye glides over it.<sup>44</sup> But swollen to immense size in the Dome of the Rock, it cannot be ignored and thereby acquires an extra freight of meaning. And if that result could be achieved with a theme as initially unpromising as vases and vegetal scrolls, how much more powerful was the message of the much bigger, much more visible and much more varied architectural panorama in the original state of the Damascus mosque!

And here it is appropriate to consider briefly in more general fashion the fortunes of the landscape-with-buildings motif in Byzantine monuments. For indeed this theme was not entirely lost after the decline and fall of Rome: it continued to play a useful part in providing background detail for the major figural programmes of Christian church decoration. This can be seen, as scholars have long recognized, in the apses of early churches in Rome, some of which also develop complex architecture-scapes,<sup>45</sup> and in several 4th-6th century monuments in Ravenna<sup>46</sup> and elsewhere,<sup>47</sup> and it would be strange if now lost Syrian churches had not furnished further examples. To that extent, some impact of early Christian and Byzantine elements may be recognisable in the Damascus mosaics.<sup>48</sup> But the key point here is

<sup>43</sup>. The effect of its apparently endless repetition is well captured in ROSEN-AYALON, *Early Islamic Monuments*, colour pls. I-XVI.

<sup>44</sup>. E. KITZINGER, *Byzantine Art in the Period between Justinian and Iconoclasm*, *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress*, Munich 1958, IV/1, 11, Abb.10 (= W.E. KLEINBAUER [ed.], *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West. Selected Studies by Ernst Kitzinger*, Bloomington and London 1976, 167 and 215).

<sup>45</sup>. An outstanding example is the apse of Sta. Pudenziana; see E. KITZINGER, *Byzantine Art in the Making. Main lines of stylistic development in Mediterranean Art 3rd-7th Century*, Cambridge, Mass. <sup>2</sup>1980, pl. 80. Representative images from other early Roman churches are conveniently assembled in W. OAKESHOTT, *The Mosaics of Rome from the third to the fourteenth centuries*, London 1967: Sta. Maria Maggiore (pls. 46-7, 49-51, 53, 55-6, 127-9 and colour pls. II, IV, IX-X and XIV), Sta. Costanza (pl. 41), Sta. Agnesi fuori le Mura (colour pl. XVI), and S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura (pl. 77).

<sup>46</sup>. For large colour plates, see E. RICCOMINI, *Ravenna*, Florence 1967: S. Vitale (pls. 5, 8 and 73); the Baptistery of the Orthodox (pls. 49-50) and Sant' Apollinare in Classe (pls. 64, 68 and 70) and A. BUSIGNANI, *I Mosaici Ravennati*, Florence 1964, pls. 26-7. For a range of stereotypical architectural motifs, well suited to the reductionist idiom of the Christological programme in the upper panels of the nave of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, see G. BOVINI, *Mosaici di S. Apollinare Nuovo di Ravenna. Il Ciclo Cristologico*, Florence 1958, pls. VV-VIII, XI, XVIII-XXI and XXIV-XXVI.

<sup>47</sup>. Such as the church of St George, Thessaloniki (KITZINGER, *Byzantine Art in the Making*, fig.99; for details, see A. GRABAR, *Byzantium from the death of Theodosius to the Rise of Islam*, tr. S. Gilbert and J. Emmons, London 1966, figs.82-3). Curiously enough, perhaps the closest Byzantine parallel for the Damascus mosaics is not from a church at all; it is a detail from the Great Palace floor mosaic in Constantinople, depicting buildings, trees and rushing water (*ibid.*, fig.105).

<sup>48</sup>. See too the conspectus of this topic provided by GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, *Mosaics*, 368-9.

that landscapes and buildings were, to say it once more, secondary. So for the Muslims to remove the heart of this Christian iconography – its sacred figures and narratives – and promoting what was left into new prominence did not merely change the balance between constituent parts (as had been done in the design of this mosque) but rather created something new and unprecedented. This new concept demands attention on its own terms and is not to be dismissed as a copy of something else, however accomplished that copy may be.

The second topic concerns the ways in which Umayyad craftsmen re-interpreted the somewhat stale theme of buildings in a landscape, or a landscape enlivened by buildings.<sup>49</sup> One may identify as new the consistently lateral thinking which, by looking at such a long-familiar theme with a fresh eye, makes possible its radical transformation. Here we come to the heart of the distinctive Umayyad achievement in these mosaics. This transformation, like so much else, is intimately linked with the grandiose scale of the mosaics, since that necessitated, as already noted above, a greater attention to detail and to variety than any earlier surviving versions of the theme attest – or indeed required. Monotony had to be avoided, but how did that work out in practice? Several motifs recur so consistently that they are clearly integral to the desired effect of this steadily unfolding panorama: trees, buildings, waves and, above and beyond all these, but encompassing them all, the gold background.

The surviving record of the Qur'anic inscriptions within the prayer hall indicates that while they did contain isolated references to the Garden and fertility,<sup>50</sup> their principal content was eschatological.<sup>51</sup> But the surviving mosaics evoke rather different Qur'anic passages, as has long been recognized,<sup>52</sup> and it is entirely possible that such passages were inscribed on the walls in the original Umayyad construction. But even if they were not, the content of these Qur'anic verses is vividly realized in these mosaics. It may be as well to record some of the passages that might be relevant; most of them have not been deployed in earlier discussions of the mosaic programme. Sura 2:25 reads “Those who believe and do good works...theirs are Gardens underneath which rivers flow”; 25:10 mentions “Gardens underneath which rivers flow; and (He) will assign thee mansions [qusur]”; 61:12 promises “He will forgive you your sins and bring you into gardens underneath which rivers flow, and pleasant dwellings [masakin] in the Gardens of Eden”, while 13:35 speaks of “The Garden which is promised unto those who keep their duty (to Allah): underneath it rivers flow; its food is everlasting, and its

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<sup>49</sup>. Useful insights on this theme are embedded in MARGUERITE GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM'S prodigiously long and detailed account of the Damascus mosaics (Mosaics, 324-72). But this account is seriously flawed because of the gross over-emphasis on description at the expense of analysis, and by the paucity of illustrations.

<sup>50</sup>. FLOOD, *Damascus*, 250 and 251 respectively.

<sup>51</sup>. *Ibid.*, 247-51.

<sup>52</sup>. E.g. by FINSTER, *Mosaiken*, 119-20 and, following her closely, K. BRISCH, *Observations on the Iconography of the Mosaics in the Great Mosque of Damascus*, in P.P. SOUCEK (ed.), *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, University Park, Pa. 1988, 16-17.



shade...” 25:75 introduces a new idea: “They will be awarded the high place” (al-ghurfa), which is frequently repeated, as in 29:58 – “Those who believe and do good works, them verily we shall house in lofty dwellings (ghurafa’) of the Garden underneath which rivers flow”. This is repeated in 34:37, which states “they will dwell secure in lofty halls” (al-ghurafat), and in 39:20 – “But those who keep their duty to their Lord, for them are lofty halls (ghuraf) with lofty halls (ghuraf) above them, built for them, beneath which rivers flow...” Still more Qur’anic verses with similar content have been cited in discussions of these mosaics, and for Muslims familiar with the Qur’anic text the cumulative impact of so many interlocking references to the same subject matter cannot be underestimated. Nor should the ample material on this theme in the hadith literature be forgotten.<sup>53</sup>

Three major themes stand out clearly in these and similar quotations: high buildings; gardens; and rivers which flow beneath them. It would be hard to find a better concise description of the mosaics of the Damascus mosque. In that sense they could be seen as illustrations of the Qur’anic text. In this context it should be especially remembered that while such subject matter is occasionally encountered in late antique or early medieval art as part of the setting for scenes of significant iconographic import,<sup>54</sup> it is unprecedented as the principal theme of a religious building. Its appearance therefore demands an explanation, and Byzantine prototypes are powerless to provide a convincing context. One is left, therefore, with a deliberately Islamic scheme of decoration whose veneer of Byzantine and, behind that, Roman style and subject matter<sup>55</sup> is only superficial and secondary to the intended meaning. The accuracy of the veneer is not in dispute, but that is not the issue. As so often in Umayyad art, the motifs are taken from classical, Early Christian or Byzantine art, but are then transformed by their context into something rather different. In this case, the novelty lies in the combination of deliberately unreal buildings and deliberately unreal trees. That combination removes these motifs from being mere echoes of idyllic classical landscapes and transports them to an altogether higher plane.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the repeated appearances of high buildings in

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<sup>53</sup>. For the tenor of these accounts, see IMAM ‘ABD AL-RAHIM IBN AHMAD AL-QADI, *Islamic Book of the Dead. A Collection of Hadiths on the Fire and the Garden*, Norwich and San Francisco 1977, 133-5.

<sup>54</sup>. See notes 45-8 above.

<sup>55</sup>. FÖRTSCH, thanks to the wealth of photographic documentation and, above all, to the many explanatory drawings of small details that he has assembled, decisively clarifies this point. Methodically subdividing the Barada panel into its constituent parts, and numbering them accordingly (“Architekturdarstellung”, Abb.1), he makes it possible for the very first time to appreciate in full the subtleties of layout in this celebrated panel by virtue of treating it as an entire entity instead of discussing its component parts seriatim. This process also reveals some of the varied devices employed to ensure the maximum degree of visual continuity.

<sup>56</sup>. FÖRTSCH argues convincingly (209-11) that certain Roman idyllic landscapes had undertones of the Elysian fields, the Golden Age and the locus amoenus, all with an other-worldly quality that made them suitable models for the craftsmen at Damascus. But even so, there can be little doubt that the Damascus mosaics represent a far more serious engagement

a garden setting defined by gigantic trees and bounded by a predella of running water could be an exact evocation of Sura 56:28-32: "Among thornless lote-trees and clustered plantains and spreading shade and water gushing". All four of these elements are repeatedly present and correct in the Damascus mosaics.

The Qur'an uses a series of words to describe the habitations of the blessed in paradise. By far the most frequently used is *ghurfa* (usually employed in the plural form *ghurafa'*), a word to which the adjective "lofty" is commonly applied. It is a word used in Arabic to this day to designate among other things high buildings comprising individual units piled one on top of another, as found in Tunisia for example.<sup>57</sup> The Yemen, too, that ultra-conservative guardian of the ancient Arabian architectural heritage, has maintained intact the tradition of high-rise housing. It was in the Yemen that, surely not by accident, Islamic tradition sited the mythical pre-Islamic palaces of Sadir, Ghumdan and Khawarnaq, the latter two vaunted for their 20-storey height, which made them a *topos* of architectural excellence for over a thousand years.<sup>58</sup> To interpret the buildings in the Damascus mosaics as half-baked renditions of classical prototypes is thus to miss a crucially Arab dimension in them. Yemen still has thousands of tower houses characterized by sheer faces of forbiddingly blank high walls, broken in their upper reaches by windows. That latter detail in the Damascus mosaics (fig.16) finds its modern counterpart in the formal reception room or *mafraj* located in the top storey of modern Yemeni houses, the ideal spot from which to enjoy a cool breeze, a good view and relaxing afternoon conversations with friends.

Yet this is not the whole story. Successive observers have noticed the constantly changing perspective used in these architecture-scapes. Scholars have contented themselves with noting the inconsistencies and accounting for them by an imperfect understanding of the relevant classical conventions. This approach will really not do, for the craftsmen's mastery of the technical aspects of mosaic work at Damascus is by general consent well-nigh absolute. It is hard to believe that masters in one aspect of their art were novices in another. Buildings that are formally similar, such as those clustered together in the hill villages, are subtly

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with a far more closely defined Paradise. And here again, the impact of their colossal scale makes itself felt.

<sup>57</sup>. As at Medenine not far from Gabès, where the so-called "beehive skyscrapers" are still locally referred to by that same term *ghurfa* (R. CARRINGTON, *East from Tunis. A Record of Travels on the Northern Coast of Africa*, London 1957, 103 and pl. opposite 95). The semantic field of the Arabic root *gh.r.f.*, quite aside from the meaning discussed above, embraces a number of symbolic links with the Damascus mosaics – a species of tree, an upper room or storey of a house, and the Seventh Heaven; cf. E.W. LANE, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (repr. Beirut 1980), I, 2249, who draws on the hadith collections as well as the commentaries of al-Baydawi and others.

<sup>58</sup>. N.N.N. KHOURY, *The Dome of the Rock, the Ka'ba, and Ghumdan: Arab Myths and Umayyad Monuments*, *Muqarnas* 10(1993), 60-2; N.A. FARIS, *The Antiquities of South Arabia*, Princeton 1938, especially 8-9, 13-19; G. ROTHSTEIN, *Die Dynastie der Lahmidin in al-Hira. Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, Berlin 1899, 15-16 and 144-5.

differentiated from each other in numerous ways, such as triangular patches of shadow executed in a darker shade of the same colour, or other variations in shade creating a dappled effect, or tesserae laid in diagonal or rippling rows, or in a grid pattern, or a monochrome tone enlivened by a random scatter of black cubes. All these devices help to suggest depth. And the ubiquitous rampant vegetation, by its location behind, in front or in the middle of buildings, also serves perspectival ends. Such technical virtuosity means that quite a different explanation for these inconsistencies is therefore required. The key issue is that these buildings are not intended to be realistic. The insistence on realism is part of the unconscious intellectual baggage of Western art history. Quibbles about perspective are beside the point. The whole aim is that this should be fantasy architecture, able for example to disregard the laws of gravity. Some of the visual references in early Christian and Byzantine mosaics to the bejewelled buildings of the New Jerusalem, or to buildings in a sphere beyond the earthly one – as in the Baptistery of the Orthodox at Ravenna, the church of St George at Salonica or Santa Pudenziana in Rome<sup>59</sup> – are fantastic in the same deliberate way. What might perhaps be called the anti-realism of the buildings depicted in the Damascus mosaics thus falls into place as a defining characteristic of their other-worldliness. Their multiple stories, often mutually unrelated, their split levels, their blithe disregard of architectural propriety and structural realities, their reduction of bearing members so that they look increasingly precarious and top-heavy from one storey to the next, so that multi-storey buildings rest preposterously on four columns (fig.17) – all these are pointers in the same direction.

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<sup>59</sup>. See notes 45-8 above.

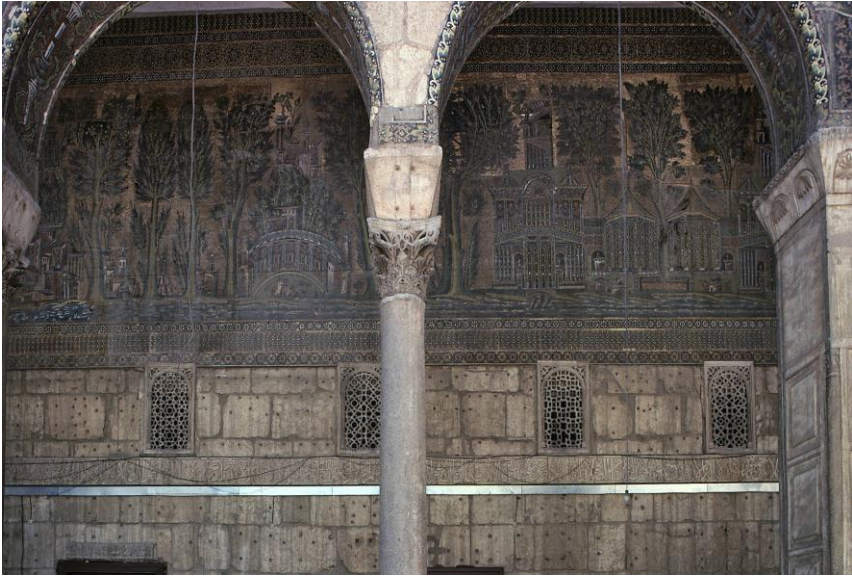


Fig. 14 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of panorama on the west back wall



Fig. 15 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of panorama on the west back wall, including modern restorations

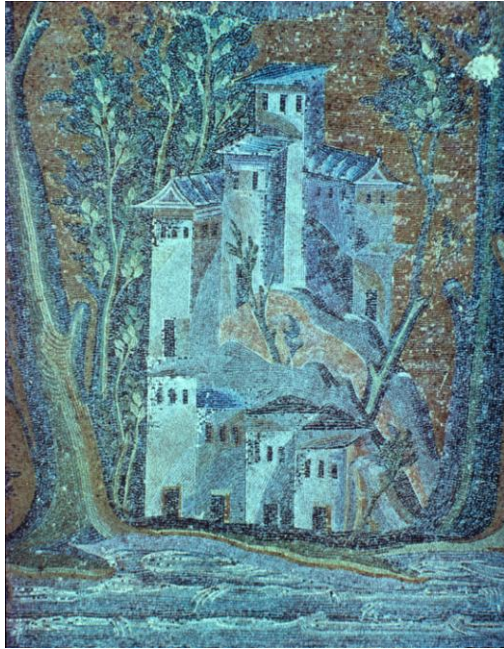


Fig. 16 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of clustered tower houses on the west back wall



Fig. 17 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of multi-storey building on the west back wall

But perhaps nothing stamps them as being so unmistakably non-terrestrial as the vegetation which burgeons from them in such rank profusion and at times threatens to engulf them. It invades these buildings and transforms them into something organic – from fleurons in their spandrels to columns whose surfaces are densely packed with leaves, branches and scrolls, with vines<sup>60</sup> twining themselves around the shafts. Such vegetal elements – not just leaves but miniature trees, bushes, shrubs, saplings, thickets – expand to fill empty spaces, and sprout incongruously from capitals, roofs, balconies and plinths, indeed it seems from almost every nook and cranny of many a building. Roof gardens proliferate and huge leaves drape roofs with a curvilinear flourish (fig.18).<sup>61</sup> All this is an imaginative but entirely legitimate inference to draw from the Qur'anic descriptions of paradise, which conjure up images of lofty buildings embowered in greenery.

Indeed, the Qur'an mentions several other types of structure besides the *ghurfa*, though their nature is somewhat enigmatic. They include dwellings (*masakin*) in the Gardens of Eden (Sura 61:12), pavilions (*khiyam*) in which the *houris* are closely guarded, the *raffaf*, variously translatable inter alia as a cushion or a building with apertures,<sup>62</sup> and mansions (*qusur*, plural of *qasr*, a word often meaning fort or castle but sometimes also employed of a princely residence). None of these words occurs frequently, and there is clearly some difficulty in deciding which of them could be applied to a second type of structure which recurs repeatedly in the Damascus mosaics. The palatial flavour of these other structures, however, makes the word *qasr* perhaps the most appropriate. Instead of the massive cubic blocks of the *ghurafa'* they sport balconies, verandahs, balustrades, porticoes, arcades, semi-domes, interior lighting and other refinements (fig.19). Their open-plan design suggests pavilions or kiosks. Their size varies dramatically. They too are overrun by vegetal growth, and for good measure festooned with jewels. Were it not for the implausibility of social distinctions among the elect one might be tempted to explain them as buildings intended for a different category of believers than those whom the *ghurafa'* would suit. Yet many of them, like the *ghurafa'*, perch at the water's edge. Perhaps, then, they simply assert the variety of the buildings of paradise. It has to be said, however, that by no means all of the buildings depicted in the Damascus mosaics can be fitted comfortably into a Qur'anic context. Some evoke the façades of classical temples or other public structures of the Graeco-Roman world (figs.20-21), thereby substantiating the comment made by al-Muqaddasi and subsequently repeated by other medieval

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<sup>60</sup>. Although in Islamic tradition vines are explicitly excluded from Paradise (A.J. WENSINCK, *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition alphabetically arranged*, Leiden, repr. 1971, 183).

<sup>61</sup>. CRESWELL, *EMA* 1/1, pl.53d. R. ETtinghausen, *Arab Painting*, Geneva 1962, 26 suggests that this is a misunderstanding of acroteria, but it may be a knowing and playfully witty re-interpretation of that feature.

<sup>62</sup>. This root, like *gh.r.f.*, has a wide semantic field, including “window”, “aperture for the admission of light”, “pillows”, “meadows” or “gardens” (of Paradise), and is related to *raff*, a kind of arched construction (LANE, *Lexicon*, 1116-17).

Arabic authors that “there is hardly a tree or a notable town which has not been pictured on these walls”,<sup>63</sup> while others<sup>64</sup> have a specific context that excludes any Qur’anic association. As for the oft-noted emptiness of this paradisaic landscape, the echoing absence of human beings, Brisch has explained this convincingly by the fact that paradise will be peopled only on the Last Day when, as the Qur’an says, “The Garden shall be brought forth for those who fear Allah”.<sup>65</sup>

Once it is recognised that, on the whole, the buildings can be associated with paradise, and thus on a scale and of a type which transfigures earthly prototypes, the way is open to see the trees in the same way. Their astonishing height has often been remarked, but has been discounted as the result of naïveté on the part of the artists – another example of the casual downgrading of the craftsmen at work here – or as stemming from the desire to devise some rhythmic equivalent for the regular placing of saintly figures in Byzantine mosaics. Yet it is a consistent feature of Islamic tradition to attribute immense height and size to the trees of paradise.<sup>66</sup> Whether the intention here is to depict specific trees, such as “the lote-tree of the utmost boundary” mentioned in Sura 53:14, must for the time being remain an open question. Many of them can justly be termed generic, though some scholars have claimed to recognize a variety of species.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, it is perhaps the treatment of trees that marks the most significant departure from the Roman, Early Christian and Byzantine traditions. These trees take many forms: huge, bare monumental trunks bursting into a leafy canopy at a great height; smaller trees with a more natural balance between trunk, branch and

<sup>63</sup>. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, *Mosaics*, 233. Not one of the medieval Arabic authors, incidentally, suggests a paradisaic interpretation for the Damascus mosaics, even though some of the craftsmen responsible for the mosaics saw them in that light (see note 76 below).

<sup>64</sup>. E.g. CRESWELL, *EMA*, 1/1, pl. 56b. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM interprets the central structure as a bridge and takes it as an indication that Damascus is the city being depicted here (*Mosaics*, 371-2). ETtinghausen, on the other hand (*Arab Painting*, 26), calls it a hippodrome, and that is much more plausible. He sees this building and an open-roofed gateway visible on the right of CRESWELL, *EMA*, 1/1, pl. 53d as examples of a third type of building, distinct from both houses and palaces. Presumably he had public buildings in mind. That said, even though only a fraction of the Umayyad mosaics remain, it is worth noting that not a single known building is to be found in the 500 square metres of mosaic that survive.

<sup>65</sup>. BRISCH, *Iconography*, 17.

<sup>66</sup>. A celebrated example, mentioned in several hadith collections (three accounts in Muslim; two in al-Bukhari), is the tree in Paradise which is so huge that a rider on a swift horse can travel in its shade for a century and would still not pass from under it. For further references to the trees of Paradise, see WENSINCK, *Concordance*, 183.

<sup>67</sup>. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, *Mosaics*, 336-7, mentions “almond or olive”, apple and pear; and later adds to these poplars, cypresses, walnut, fig, plum and apricot trees (*ibid.*, 339). The problem is that for the most part she does not identify their precise location in the mosaics, so one cannot check her interpretation tree by tree. Compare DEGEORGE, *Mosquée*, 158, a spandrel with four trees identified by DEGEORGE on the basis of their fruit as almond, apple, pear and fig trees respectively. Yet while their fruits are fully distinct, their trunks are uniformly generic: a curious combination.

leaf; shrubs; saplings; and bushes. Pride of place goes to the massive trunks, the exclamation marks of the entire panorama (figs.15-17 and 20-21). Suddenly they have become major players in the design. They are brutally pollarded; their many stumps show how the lower branches have been cut off in almost uniform fashion. Stripped down in this way, the leafless lower part of these trees is clearly demarcated from the upper part, which is a riot of vegetation. The result, visually speaking, is a succession of massive golden trunks which punctuate the foreground at fairly but not mechanically regular intervals. As noted above, they could be interpreted as the botanical equivalent of the files of saints processing towards the altar in many a Byzantine basilica. In both cases these upright accents create a slow, majestic rhythm which the eye follows almost involuntarily. In a church they mirror the movement of the congregation towards the altar in the mass. Here, in the mosque, they have no such liturgical function; but they do correlate in an unobtrusive way, like the flowing river beneath them, with the slow walk of the viewer round the courtyard.

But they do more than this. Boldly colourful modelling, applied in vertical strips in graduated tones with the brightest yellow-gold tones in the centre shading off into dark red, black, green, cream or blue tones at the sides,<sup>68</sup> alleviates the bareness of their lower parts. But it is precisely that bareness which allows the buildings scattered between them to be seen in full detail, with no danger of being engulfed by the leafy branches found higher up in such profusion. These trees, then, serve as articulating devices for the composition as a whole, lending the entire composition a stately rhythm; moreover, by virtue of sheer repetition they ensure continuity, effectively creating a sequence of adjoining panels. This is achieved not only by their form but also by the broad and distinctive technicolour striation of their trunks. The strong emphasis on trees goes far to explain the presence of many different types in the entire programme, though the long panorama features broadly similar trees which are, as already noted, of no easily recognizable species. But the soffits of the arcades create shapes that lend themselves to long narrow trees, or multiple clumps of trees with tall thin trunks and vertical branches, and foliage that clings closely to them,<sup>69</sup> while the spandrels – though occasionally they contain buildings<sup>70</sup> – favour stockier trees with spreading leafy foliage (fig.22).<sup>71</sup> It is noticeable that the trees in these confined spaces are much closer to nature than those in the large panorama, whose colouring is consistently surreal.

The artists went to great lengths to breathe life into the depiction of water, with cubes of powder blue, turquoise, sea green and dark blue. The fact that the river is flowing rather than still is admirably suggested by irregular white-capped

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<sup>68</sup>. The range and combination of colours varies from one tree to the next.

<sup>69</sup>. CRESWELL, EMA I/1, figs. 391-6 and pls. 50a,c,d and e, 51c and d, 52b, 58c,d and e and 60b,c and d; DEGEORGE, *Mosquée*, 162 and 183.

<sup>70</sup>. CRESWELL, EMA I/1, figs. 387, 389-90 and pls. 52d, 53b and d; DEGEORGE, *Mosquée*, 168-9, 178, 218-9.

<sup>71</sup>. CRESWELL, EMA I/1, figs. 397, 411-12 and pls. 48a, 51a and b, 52a and c, 53a and c; DEGEORGE, *Mosquée*, 15-17, 101, 158-9.



waves, by sudden breaks in the flow and by gradations of colour (fig.16). The cubes are laid in undulating, diagonal, stepped or horizontal courses to suggest the varied movement of the water, with eddies, swift currents, choppy waves, and broader billows. Sometimes waves collide to make bursts of spray. Or they are topped with spume. Or the blue tonality is interrupted by broad parallel white lines ending in little falls of water rendered as multiple commas. Sometimes the water falls in three separate parallel spurts or freshets. White is used for all of these effects. Everywhere water is in lapping, curling motion. This water is alive, a bringer of fertility; it is not merely a flat blue surface. The river banks are defined by a continuous double course of brown tesserae topped by a single or double course of white ones. These banks can have diagonal, ragged or jagged profiles. One underlying message here is movement, and that correlates well with the eye of the beholder slowly traversing the panorama, and still better with the viewer walking slowly along its length.

The aesthetic and symbolic potential of a continuous gold background had long been a distinctive marker of Byzantine mosaic decoration. Its capacity to suggest both sanctity and other-worldliness had already long been exploited in the decoration of churches, where holy figures were set against such backgrounds. These associations worked equally well in the Damascus mosaics. As an anonymous commentator on al-Muqaddasi's text writes, "Some parts are entirely encrusted with gold mosaic, so that the wall appears to be a blaze of gold".<sup>72</sup> That effect is not easily secured. Close examination of some of those areas where the original gold background has survived reveals that sometimes the cubes were matt, sometimes polished; sometimes smooth, sometimes rough; sometimes laid flat in their beds, but sometimes angled slightly in one or another direction so as to refract light at different angles; and that the cubes of gold leaf were sprinkled more or less liberally with cubes of other colours including black, silver, cream, and light or dark brown. The presence of any one of these individual subtleties may not be readily detected, but their cumulative impact cannot be mistaken (fig.16). It brings these gold backgrounds to life and prevents them from degenerating into a brassy, dead, flat sameness as in the modern restoration of the Bait al-Mal (fig.12).<sup>73</sup> Yet even the Umayyad work shows that yellow rather than gold cubes were frequently used in dimly lit areas, virtually out of sight, to save expense.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, *Mosaics*, 234.

<sup>73</sup>. DEGEORGE, *Mosquée*, 188.

<sup>74</sup>. *Ibid.*, 333.



Fig. 18 Great Mosque of Damascus, building overrun with vegetation, western arcade

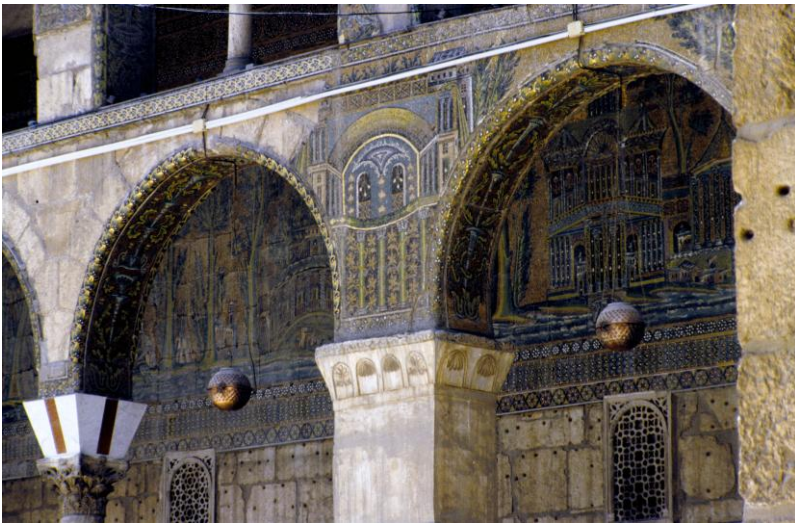


Fig. 19 Great Mosque of Damascus, courtyard façade with mosaic panorama in background



Fig. 20 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of loose interpretation of a classical building on the west back wall

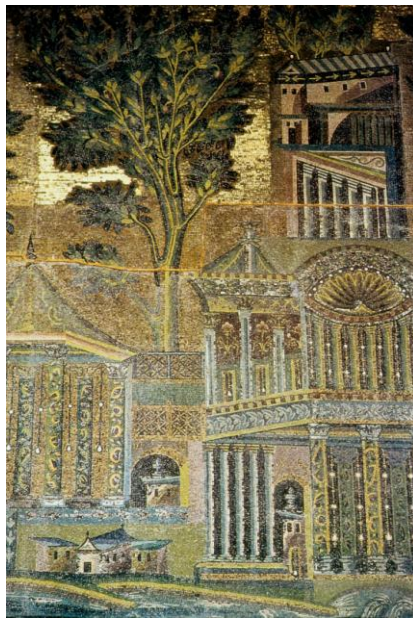


Fig. 21 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of public and palatial buildings on the west back wall



Fig. 22 Great Mosque of Damascus, mosaic of tree in spandrel of courtyard arcade

As to the messages that these mosaics transmitted, that contentious topic deserves a more extended treatment than this paper can give. A scholarly consensus has gradually consolidated around the notion that the theme of Paradise permeates these mosaics. But one should guard against the assumption that a single, exclusive interpretation was ever intended. The popularity of symbols, after all, has much to do with their ability to suggest multiple ideas simultaneously. Conclusive proof that Paradise was the intended theme would require inscriptions within or beside the panorama, or contemporary literary evidence, and neither is now to hand.<sup>75</sup> Several scholars have, however, noted the account quoted by Ibn al-Najjar, writing in 593/1196, and repeated by al-Samhudi (d. 911/1506), that “Some of the workers in mosaic said ‘We have made it [the Medina mosaic] according to what we know of the forms of the trees and mansions of Paradise’”.<sup>76</sup> Not enough has been made of this,<sup>77</sup> the sole medieval evidence of how some of the craftsmen themselves interpreted the images they were creating. At the very least, this one passage offers compelling evidence for the Paradise interpretation from within Islamic culture itself, since the reference to trees and mansions clearly connects the Medina mosaic programme with that of Damascus. And the fact that ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, of all people, gave thirty dirhams as a reward to the artist who was responsible for “the big tree” depicted in the Medina mosque<sup>78</sup> – clearly an important part of the mosaic programme – provides valuable supporting evidence for the doctrinal acceptability of the Medina mosaics even among the ultra-pious.

While there is indeed, as noted above, a literary record of now lost Qur'anic inscriptions with apocalyptic messages in the area of the mihrab in the Damascus mosque, those verses do not, as discussed above, fit well with the great landscape panorama that seems to have been the dominant visual accent of the mosque. So from the outset the mosaic work transmitted more than one message. That leaves the way open to suggest that, apart from the themes of Paradise and the Day of Judgment, the mosaics might also have had still other meanings, whether complementary or supplementary. Some scholars have suggested that they were perhaps intended as an attempt to outdo local Byzantine work,<sup>79</sup> or as a depiction of the ghuta of Damascus,<sup>80</sup> or as an evocation of the great Syrian city of Antioch,<sup>81</sup> famous for its nocturnal illuminations,<sup>82</sup> or indeed of Syria itself. And still bolder speculations have been or could be proposed: for instance, that the mosaic

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<sup>75</sup>. Al-Muqaddasi, however, twice mentions inscriptions in the context of the courtyard (GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, *Mosaics*, 233).

<sup>76</sup>. SAUVAGET, *La Mosquée Omeyyade de Médine*, 81.

<sup>77</sup>. BRISCH, *Iconography*, 18 is an honourable exception.

<sup>78</sup>. SAUVAGET, *Mosquée*, 81.

<sup>79</sup>. P. BROWN, *The World of Late Antiquity from Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad*, London 1971, 195.

<sup>80</sup>. E. DE LOREY, *The mosaics of the Mosque of the Omayyads at Damascus*, *Syria* XII(1931), 19.

<sup>81</sup>. *Ibid.*, 18-20.

<sup>82</sup>. IDEM, *L'Hellénisme et l'Orient dans les Mosaïques de la Mosquée des Omayyades*, *Ars Islamica* I/1(1934), 45.

programme could be understood as a vision of the known world, now at peace, with a strongly implied claim to dominion of that world,<sup>83</sup> or as a realization of the Bedouin ideal of a vast fertile oasis, as an echo of Arabian architectural traditions, as a celebration of the faith, even as an instrument for proselytizing.<sup>84</sup> No doubt still other ideas could be entertained. At all events, the many switches of emphasis, omissions, unexpected juxtapositions, repetitions, exaggerations, contrasts and continuities incorporated in these mosaics, and of course the huge scale of the panorama,<sup>85</sup> could well have been part of the aim of transmitting certain messages. That aim seems to follow logically from the decision to promote the landscape-with-buildings theme from a supporting role to the centre of attention.

In short, whatever interpretation one champions, to interpret so lavish a spread of costly mosaics as “mere” decoration simply will not do. The example of Christian churches, and – more to the point – of the Dome of the Rock argues against such a reductionist idea. So does the location of these mosaics in the great mosque of the capital city of the Umayyad empire. Here, if anywhere, was the place to make a statement, at once political and religious: to assert the power of the Umayyad state and to proclaim the triumph of the Islamic faith. If that Umayyad statement is not entirely free of ambiguity, if its details are not yet fully streamlined, that should occasion no surprise; the Umayyads were still finding their feet in the complex domain of religious and political iconography. Hence, perhaps, as in the Dome of the Rock, that statement was conveyed in multiple ways – through the choice of a hallowed site, through the building itself, through inscriptions and through the decorative scheme. There was of course nothing new in using the decoration of a religious building to say something important; the essential novelty was the idea of using this somewhat banal theme of a landscape with buildings as the instrument of such messages. And it is here that the scale of the entire enterprise comes into its own, for – to say it yet again – to a significant extent its meaning depends on its size. No longer are these landscapes and buildings mere background or filler ornament. Executed on this dwarfing scale, they create the sense of an entire self-contained world which, though similar to ours in many ways, has been transfigured into a higher reality. These are landscapes of the imagination. And as such they are susceptible to more than one interpretation.

Nor should one forget the karma so celebrated in medieval times as a particular tour de force of this mosque<sup>86</sup> – a golden carved vine scroll some 45 cm

<sup>83</sup>. ETTINGHAUSEN, *Arab Painting*, 28.

<sup>84</sup>. This may sound intrinsically implausible, but non-Muslims were received and even lodged in mosques, and while they had no intrinsic right to enter them, they were admitted there on sufferance: see the compendium of hadiths drawn from al-Bukhari’s *Sahih* (M.M. ALI, *A Manual of Hadith*, London <sup>3</sup>1978, 69).

<sup>85</sup>. Of which only some 500 square metres survives (GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, *Mosaics*, 326), which in all probability represents significantly less than 10% of the original total; it is important always to keep in mind the dwarfing impact of such a huge acreage of mosaic.

<sup>86</sup>. FLOOD, *Damascus*, 57-68 is the fullest account available; see too IDEM, *Umayyad Survivals and Mamluk Revivals: Qalawunid Architecture and the Great Mosque of*

wide set some 3 to 4 metres above the floor level and which ran along and around the qibla and adjoining walls, a kind of cordon sanitaire for the entire sanctuary, that most sacred part of the whole building.<sup>87</sup> Some clues as to how it might have looked in its original gem-incrusted state survive – for example, a rare photograph of the qibla wall taken before the fire of 1893;<sup>88</sup> the main theme of the inner drum mosaic of the Dome of the Rock; the circular roundels in the border between the base of the Barada panel and the window grilles (figs.15 and 18);<sup>89</sup> the massive, slowly unfolding vegetal scroll on the eastern wall of Bab Jairun;<sup>90</sup> the border below the panorama on the west wall of the Damascus mosque (fig.15); and the scrolling border of both buildings in the double architectural frontispiece of the luxury Qur'an from San'a'.<sup>91</sup> More generally, one might compare its role to that of the carved frieze of arches and fleurons around the inner perimeter wall of the Dome of the Rock,<sup>92</sup> with its striking colour scheme of gold and black.

It is time to conclude. The Damascus mosaics have been analysed in exhaustive detail by several scholars, from de Lorey<sup>93</sup> to Marguerite van Berchem<sup>94</sup> and Bonfioli,<sup>95</sup> from Finster,<sup>96</sup> King<sup>97</sup> and Brisch<sup>98</sup> to Förtisch,<sup>99</sup> Hellenkemper Salies,<sup>100</sup> Flood<sup>101</sup> and Degeorge<sup>102</sup> and a host of other studies in the past few

Damascus, *Muqarnas* 14(1997), 57-66, which outlines the impact of the karma on later Islamic architecture.

<sup>87</sup>. For the justification of these measurements and for the proposed extent of the karma, see FLOOD, Damascus, 59-61.

<sup>88</sup>. Best reproduced in CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, pl.62A, d. Cf. the enlarged digital version of a section of the karma illustrated in FLOOD, Survivals, 59, fig.3.

<sup>89</sup>. Detailed colour plate in DEGEORGE, Mosquée, 181; but the drawing by Farid Shafi'i reproduced in CRESWELL, EMA 1/1, 175, fig.92, depicts something entirely different – a continuous scroll which, while not identical to the karma, is much closer to it in spirit.

<sup>90</sup>. DEGEORGE, Mosquée, 140.

<sup>91</sup>. VON BOTHMER, Architekturbilder, colour pls.I and II and fig.7.

<sup>92</sup>. M. ROSEN-AYALON, Note on a particular technique of architectural decoration, *Israel Exploration Journal* 24/3-4(1974), 223-35; M. F. ABU KHALAF, The Carved and Gilded Marble Friezes of the Umayyad Period in the Dome of the Rock, in A. BAKHIT (ed.), *The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilad al-Sham During the Umayyad Period. Between 24-27 October. 1987*, Amman 1989, 462-83; IDEM, *Islamic Art through the Ages. Masterpieces of the Islamic Museum of al-Haram al-Sharif (al-Aqsa Mosque) Jerusalem*, Jerusalem 1998, 81-9.

<sup>93</sup>. See notes 80 and 82 above.

<sup>94</sup>. M. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, Mosaics.

<sup>95</sup>. M. BONFIOLI, Syriac-Palestinian Mosaics in Connection with the Decorations at the Mosques at Jerusalem and Damascus, *East and West* X(1959), 56-76.

<sup>96</sup>. FINSTER, Mosaiken.

<sup>97</sup>. G.R.D. KING, *The Origin and Sources of the Umayyad Mosaics in the Great Mosque of Damascus* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis) University of London 1976.

<sup>98</sup>. Brisch, Iconography.

<sup>99</sup>. FÖRTSCH, Architekturdarstellungen.

<sup>100</sup>. HELLENKEMPER SALIES, Mosaiken.

<sup>101</sup>. FLOOD, *Damascus*.

decades. The discussion has been further complicated by uncertainties about what is genuine Umayyad workmanship. The glaring, painful inconsistencies of colour values between two high-quality published versions of a couple of the most famous details of the Barada panel – the hemispherical “hippodrome” and the stacked volumes of a cluster of tower houses<sup>103</sup> - leave one with a sense of profound unease. Such violent tonal discords insistently pose the question “what did the original mosaics really look like?”<sup>104</sup>

But quite apart from this issue, too often the close scrutiny of detail and indeed meaning has trumped a full assessment of other aspects of this programme. These include the interplay of the mosaics with the architecture that they grace; their fitness for purpose; their innovative quality; and, perhaps above all, a full appreciation of the huge challenge posed by this project of wall decoration in terms of imagination, time, expense, materials, and labour, not to mention less easily quantifiable matters such as imagination, consistency and appropriateness. In short, these mosaics, given their seminal importance in the genesis of Islamic art, are still curiously under-published.

Were the Damascus mosque and its mosaic decoration bigger than they needed to be? Among many other factors governing that choice, one should not forget that the huge scale of both architecture and decoration was a statement of hope and belief in the future – a future when Muslims would be the overwhelming majority in Damascus and would need a mosque on this scale. In that sense this was a speculative building, an immense gamble – for at the time, Damascus was a largely Christian city. Hindsight has obscured this dimension of the project. But whatever the motive, whether short-term or long-term or both, the sheer grandeur of the whole concept – now sadly lost to view for the most part - compels admiration. Yet its colossal size fulfilled a key function of these mosaics, namely to outperform the achievement of the Christians of Syria in their splendid ecclesiastical buildings. Those were the buildings on the spot in Greater Syria and they were the ones to beat. That message was all the more powerful because the mosque occupied previously Christian sacred space. But that space was not the entire mosque; it was only the site of the destroyed Christian church in the middle of the courtyard. The Muslims were numerically a small minority but they nevertheless used a much bigger worship space than the Christians had found necessary. It is hard not to see political as well as religious motivations here.

The homage to the Roman past, and the keen desire to reconnect with that past, was underlined principally by the use of the entire walled classical precinct (the *temenos*) with its remaining classical structures such as corner towers and the

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<sup>102</sup>. DEGEORGE, *Mosquée*.

<sup>103</sup>. Compare ETTINGHAUSEN, *Arab Painting*, 24 and 25 with DEGEORGE, *Mosquée*, 148-9 and 224. It is possible to believe that one of the two versions accurately reflects the actual appearance of these mosaics – but not that both of them do so. And of course both versions might contain combinations of accurate and inaccurate renderings of the true colour values.

<sup>104</sup>. GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM’S text is peppered with dramatic complaints about the destruction of Umayyad work by incompetent modern restorations.



Bab Jairun complex (fig.2). So it was as important to the Muslims to outdo the Romans as to outdo the Byzantines. They did so in part by the use of colossal scale and in part by a deliberate and indeed exaggerated rejection of realism in many of the buildings and the trees, which evoke an otherworldly ambience. Had that not been the case, the Muslims could have constructed the mosque on the site of the Christian church alone. But al-Walid's ambition was bolder and more comprehensive than this. Finally, unlike the Dome of the Rock, which announced its presence and thus its message from afar to all and sundry – Muslim, Christian and Jew alike – the Great Mosque of Damascus kept its choicest splendours out of infidel gaze. One had to enter it to savour its full effect. It was therefore aimed principally at Muslims.<sup>105</sup> And in comparison with other contemporary mosques it was in a class all of its own.<sup>106</sup> Other mosques in the region, as the examples at 'Amman,<sup>107</sup> Palmyra<sup>108</sup> and Jarash<sup>109</sup> show, were much simpler in their basic design, and even the other major imperial foundations of al-Walid – the mosques at Medina, Mecca,<sup>110</sup> Sana'a,<sup>111</sup> and Jerusalem – were obviously not decorated on the scale adopted at Damascus. All these factors combined to make the Great Mosque of Damascus the principal religious and cultural icon of its time. Despite the loss of the vast majority of its Umayyad mosaics,<sup>112</sup> it has retained much of its unique lustre right into our own times.

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<sup>105</sup>. But see n. 84 above.

<sup>106</sup>. That said, one of its most enthusiastic admirers, al-Muqaddasi, writing in the late 10th century, so far forgets himself as to state not only that “the mosque [of Damascus] is the most beautiful thing that the Muslims possess today” and that al-Walid “made it one of the wonders of the world”, but also that “the Mosque of al-Aqsa was more beautiful than the Mosque of Damascus” (GAUTIER-VAN BERCHEM, *Mosaics*, 233-4). The contradiction is left unresolved.

<sup>107</sup>. A. NORTHEGE, The Umayyad Congregational Mosque, in A. NORTHEGE (with contributions by J. BOWSER, U. HÜBNER, H.I. MACADAM and J. WOOD), *Studies on Roman and Islamic 'Amman. The Excavations of Mrs C.-M. Bennett and other Investigations*, Oxford 1992, 63-9, figs. 20-7 and pls. 8-10a.

<sup>108</sup>. D. GENEQUAND, An Early Islamic Mosque at Palmyra, *Levant* 40(2008), 3-13.

<sup>109</sup>. A. WALMSLEY and K. DAMGAARD, The Umayyad congregational mosque of Jarash in Jordan and its relationship to early mosques, *Antiquity* 79(2005), 362-78.

<sup>110</sup>. The fullest discussion is by FINSTER, *Mosaiken*, 129-31.

<sup>111</sup>. CRESWELL, rev. ALLAN, *Short Account*, 83-8.

<sup>112</sup>. I am most grateful to my old friends David Gye, Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair for allowing me to use their photographs in this paper.



## **L'origine des informations byzantines au sujet de l'Arabie préislamique**

**PANAYOTIS YANNOPOULOS**

Avant d'entrer dans le vif du sujet, il faut définir les cadres de cette recherche. D'abord clarifier le cadre chronologique, car jusqu'à nos jours les historiens sont loin d'être d'accords sur la date du commencement de l'« ère byzantine ». Pour les uns elle commence avec le transfert de la capitale à Constantinople, pour les autres avec la prise du pouvoir par Justinien I et pour d'autres encore avec le règne d'Héraclius. Dans cette recherche nous laissons de côté le IV<sup>e</sup> s. qui est encore beaucoup plus « romain » ou « classique » que « byzantin » ou « médiéval ». Il faut ensuite clarifier le cadre géographique car les Byzantins sous le terme « Arabie » ne comprenaient pas les mêmes territoires qu'actuellement. Nous laissons toutefois la définition du cadre géographique à nos sources.

L'Arabie préislamique n'avait pas attiré l'intérêt byzantin en tant que territoire et de ce fait les références des auteurs byzantins sont occasionnelles. Certes, les textes hagiographiques parlent parfois de la région, mais leurs informations à cause de leur caractère engagé et anecdotique ne sont pas dignes de foi. Les historiens de l'Église, se limitent à des informations administratives sans s'intéresser à la réalité historique. Ils donnent parfois des informations plus intéressantes quand ils parlent des missions ayant pour objectif la christianisation des populations arabes. Les historiens, y compris les chroniqueurs, sauf exceptions heureuses, parlent de l'Arabie et des ses habitants surtout à l'occasion des conflits armés entre Byzance et l'empire perse, puisque des tribus arabes y étaient mêlées comme alliés de l'un ou de l'autre belligérant. Le dernier type des sources, les rapports des ambassadeurs, présente un intérêt particulier, mais malheureusement n'en restent que de fragments. Toutefois, signalons dès le départ que notre objectif n'est pas d'exposer les informations des sources byzantines au sujet de l'Arabie ou des Arabes ; une telle entreprise dépasse de loin les limites d'une intervention dans un colloque. Comme le titre de la communication l'indique, notre objectif est de déterminer l'origine des informations des sources byzantines au sujet de l'Arabie et des Arabes de la période préislamique, opération qui permettra une évaluation de ces informations. Ainsi, notre exposé des faits rapportés par nos sources se limitera au minimum nécessaire. L'analyse des données de nos sources permet de dire que les informations qu'elles fournissent tournent autour des deux axes principaux, à savoir celles qui concernent le pays et celles qui concernent les gens.

Pour le pays, les sources utilisent le terme d'origine étymologique grecque « Arabie » pour indiquer le territoire limité au nord par la Syrie, à l'ouest par le Jourdan et la Mer Rouge, à l'est par l'Euphrate et le golfe persique, et au sud par

l'océan indien.<sup>1</sup> Donc sur le plan géographique, l'Arabie au sens byzantin grosso modo ne diffère pas de la presqu'île arabe actuelle. Toutefois, il ne faut confondre cette Arabie, appelée aussi Grande Arabie,<sup>2</sup> avec la province byzantine du même nom, appelée aussi Petite Arabie ou Arabie Petraia.<sup>3</sup> La province en question, dont la capitale était Bostra, couvrait plus au moins le territoire de l'actuelle Jordanie. Les sources parlent en outre des certaines régions de la presqu'île arabique, à savoir de l'Arabie Fertile (l'*Arabia Felix* des textes latins),<sup>4</sup> l'actuelle Yémen et la partie sud-ouest de l'Arabie Saoudite, tandis que la *Chronique de Théophane* ainsi que Nicéphore le Patriarche font état de l'Arabie d'Aithrivou ou Ethrivou, difficile à localiser notamment à cause du caractère lapidaire de leurs informations.<sup>5</sup> Tenant compte du contexte et des localités que la *Chronique* en question situe dans cette région, il semble que les Byzantins appelaient ainsi le nord de l'Arabie Fertile.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. Concernant les limites de l'Arabie Théophylacte Simocatta, *Ἱστορία*, éd. CH. DE BOOR, Theophylacti Simocatae, *Historiae*, Leipzig, 1887, III 17, p. 146, IV 15, p. 182 et V 1, p. 188, note que l'Arabie s'étalait de Nisibe au fleuve Tigre. Jean Malalas, *Χρονογραφία*, éd. I. THURN, Ioannis Malalae, *Chronographia*, dans *CFHB* 35, Berlin et N. York, 2000, XII 27, 229-230 et XII 30, 231, présume les mêmes limites, mais Cosmas l'Indicopleustes, *Χριστιανική τοπογραφία*, dans *PG* vol. 88, col. 105C et col. 108C, appelle Arabie toute la terre ferme à l'est de la Mer Rouge. L'ouvrage géographique qui couvre mieux la région reste celui de A. KAMMERER, *La Mer Rouge, l'Abysinie et l'Arabie depuis l'antiquité. Essai d'histoire et de géographie historique*, Le Caire, 1929.

<sup>2</sup>. Théophane, *Χρονογραφία*, éd. CH. DE BOOR, Theophanis, *Chronographia*, vol. I, Leipzig, 1883, 365.

<sup>3</sup>. Cfr Théophane, 424 et 430. Cette province est souvent rapportée sous le nom d'Arabie, cfr Eusèbe de Césarée, *Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία*, éd. G. DINDORF, Eusebii Caesariensis, *Opera*, vol. IV, Leipzig, 1890, VI 37, 278 et VIII 12, 365 ; Théorodet de Cyr, *Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία*, reprise de l'éd. de L. PARMENTIER et G. C. HANSEN, Théodoret de Cyr, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, dans *Sources Chrétiennes*, 501, Paris, 2006, II 8 1, 350 et II 8 30, 364 ; Évagre le Pontique, *Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία*, éd. J. BIDEZ et L. PARMENTIER, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius*, Londres, 1898, II 18, 92 ; Zossime, *Ἱστορία Νέα*, éd. L. MENDELSSOHN, Zosimi comitis et exadvocati fisci, *Historia nova*, Leipzig, 1887, I 8, 8 ; Théodore le Lecteur, *Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία*, éd. G. H. HANSEN, *Theodoros Anagnostes, Kirchengeschichte (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, Neu Folge, 3)*, Berlin, 1995, 79 ; Jean Malalas, IX 16, 169, XII 27, 229-230 et XII 30, 231 ; *Vie de S. Savas*, éd. E. SCHWARTZ, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, Leipzig, 1939, 124 et 136.

<sup>4</sup>. Cosmas l'Indicopleustes, col. 169C ; Théophane, 416.

<sup>5</sup>. Nicéphore de Constantinople, *Ἱστορία σύντομος*, éd. CH. DE BOOR, Nicephori Archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani, *Opuscula Historica*, Leipzig, 1880, 21 ; Théophane, 333 et 365.

<sup>6</sup>. Nicéphore de Constantinople, 21, s'aligne à Procope en signalant qu'il s'agissait de la partie d'Arabie Fertile habitée par des Sarakènes. Théophane, 365, de son côté qualifie cette région Grande Arabie d'Ethrivou qu'il distingue de la Perse et de la Mésopotamie. Ces trois régions ont été conquises par Abd al Malik vers la fin du VIIe s. Donc Théophane aussi semble donner ce nom dans toute la partie occidentale de la presqu'île. En parlant de la généalogie de Mahomet, Théophane, 333-334, note en outre que les premiers adeptes de l'islam furent notamment les habitants de l'Arabie d'Ethrivou ; dans ce cas donc cette région

Procopé signale que cette région, dont il ne donne pas le nom, était habitée par de Sarakènes qui exploitaient la plantation des palmiers d'une large vallée qui allait du nord vers le sud.<sup>7</sup>

Procopé parle d'un autre territoire arabe qu'il appelle Madianitis ; il le situe au sud de la province byzantine d'Arabie<sup>8</sup> et plus précisément entre le territoire des Homérites (l'Arabie fertile des autres sources) et la grande vallée des palmiers ; sa partie côtière était soumise à l'autorité des Homérites, tandis que l'arrière pays était peu habité.<sup>9</sup> Il est donc possible de l'identifier avec le centre-ouest de la presqu'île.<sup>10</sup> Nonnosos, un diplomate byzantin envoyé par Justinien I dans la région, fait état de ce territoire, qu'il l'appelle Maadinitis, et signale en plus qu'au milieu du VI<sup>e</sup> s. il était gouverné par un certain Kaïssos.<sup>11</sup>

Théophane note que Théodore, patriarche d'Antioche à l'époque de Constantin V (741-775) était exilé dans une région arabe, appelée Moavitis, sans toutefois prendre la peine de la situer d'avantage.<sup>12</sup>

Finalement, Procopé semble considérer que l'île d'Iotavi, faisait partie de l'Arabie ; elle était occupée par quelques Juifs qui reconnaissaient, selon lui, l'autorité byzantine.<sup>13</sup> Selon Malchos, auteur du Ve s. dont nous ne conservons que quelques fragments, l'île, située à l'entrée du golf d'Akaba, constituait une escale obligatoire pour les bateaux afin qu'ils soient contrôlés par la douane byzantine.<sup>14</sup>

Le reste de l'Arabie, c'est-à-dire la partie orientale de la presqu'île, restait pour les Byzantins une *terra incognita* qu'ils l'appelaient 'territoire indien'.<sup>15</sup>

est indentifiable avec la partie nord de l'Arabie Fertile, comme le supposent Procopé et Nicéphore.

<sup>7</sup>. Procopé, *Ἐπερ τῶν πολέμων*, éd. J. HAURY, Procopii Caesariensis, *Opera omnia*, vol. I : *De bellis I-IV*, Leipzig, 1905, I 19, 101-102.

<sup>8</sup>. Procopé, II 1, 148-150.

<sup>9</sup>. Idem, 102 ; Théophane, 333.

<sup>10</sup>. Pour plus de détails, cf. I. SHAHID, *Byzantium in South Arabia*, dans *DOP*, 33 (1971), 23-94. Cf. en outre M. ΚΟΡΔΩΣΗΣ, *Ιστοριογεωγραφικά πρωτοβυζαντινών και εν γένει παλαιοχριστιανικών χρόνων (Βιβλιοθήκη Ιστορικών Μελετών, 264)*, Athènes, 1996, 92, pour qui la Madianitis, ou selon lui Maadinitis, renvoie à la région autour de l'actuelle Medina.

<sup>11</sup>. Les informations de Nonnosos au sujet de la région de Maadinitis et de Kaïssos, cf. *Photius. Bibliothèque*, éd. H. HENRY, vol. I, Paris, 1959, 4-7. Nonnosos y ajoute que déjà son grand père était envoyé comme ambassadeur de l'empereur Anastase I à Kaïssos, comme d'ailleurs son père Ambrachios par Justinien I. Le résumé de Photius ne permet pourtant pas de dire si dans les trois cas la personne nommée Kaïssos est la même ou non.

<sup>12</sup>. Théophane, 430. Il faut peut-être mettre en relation ce territoire avec son homonyme biblique qui se situait à l'est de la Mer Morte.

<sup>13</sup>. Procopé, I 19, 101.

<sup>14</sup>. Malchos, dans *PG* 113, col. 78, note que sous Léon I, un chef local Arabe, nommé Amokersos, a chassé de l'île les douaniers impériaux et encaissait pour son propre compte les droits de douane. À en croire Procopé (cf. note *supra*), l'autorité byzantine y était rétablie sous Justinien I. Cf. ΚΟΡΔΩΣΗΣ, 297.

<sup>15</sup>. Jean Malalas, XVIII 16, 363, sans toutefois préciser davantage l'étendu des ces 'régions indiennes'. Le même auteur (XVIII 34, 373) signale qu'il faut confondre ces régions avec les 'régions des sarakènes'.

Les sources n'utilisent pas un terme commun pour nommer tous les habitants de la région. Théodore Anagnostes et Évagre parlent des « Arabes » pour désigner les habitants de la Arabie byzantine.<sup>16</sup> Cosmas l'Indocopleustes semble faire appel à un terme générique en disant que les Homérites, les Kinaedokopites et les Sabéens, peuplades du sud-est arabe, étaient « Arabites »<sup>17</sup> ou Arabes.<sup>18</sup> Certaines sources indiquent les habitants de l'Arabie sous les noms des Agarènes<sup>19</sup> ou des Ismaélites,<sup>20</sup> termes qui font respectivement référence aux personnages bibliques d'Agar, concubine d'Abraham, ou de son fils Ismaël, considérés comme étant des ancêtres des Arabes. Ces deux termes étaient considérés par les auteurs byzantins comme péjoratifs étant donné qu'Agar était esclave d'Abraham et de ce fait son fils n'était qu'un bâtard.<sup>21</sup> La *Vie de S. Euthyme* est révélatrice à ce propos : son auteur parle des deux Arabes des milieux élevés, à savoir du chef de clan Aspevetos et de son fils Tervon convertis au christianisme ; baptisés par saint Euthyme, « ils n'étaient plus des Agarènes ou de Ismaélites, mais des Sarakènes », c'est-à-dire des descendants de Sarah, de l'épouse légitime d'Abraham.<sup>22</sup> Finalement c'est sous le vocal des Sarakènes que nos sources désignent habituellement les Arabes de la période préislamique.

Zossime et Évagre en parlant des peuplades arabes au long de la frontière byzantine, les appellent « Arabes Skénites » (= Arabes sous tentes) ; ils gagnaient leur vie en vendant leurs services comme gardes-frontières aux Byzantins.<sup>23</sup> En outre, Procope semble faire la différence entre ces Arabes nomades pro byzantins et les Sarakènes, qui vendaient leurs services aux Perses.<sup>24</sup> Or, Procope n'est pas conséquent à lui-même, car dans d'autres passages il parle des Sarakènes comme alliés des Byzantins,<sup>25</sup> tandis qu'il utilise le même vocal pour indiquer les Arabes en général.<sup>26</sup> D'ailleurs les autres écrivains byzantins n'ont pas suivi Procope. Par exemple, Évagre pour faire la distinction entre les Arabes skénites alliés des Byzantins et alliés des Perses, il appelle les seconds « barbares », peut-être dans le sens de non chrétiens.<sup>27</sup> Par contre Cyrille de

<sup>16</sup>. Théodore le Lecteur, 79 et 82 ; Évagre le Pontique, III 41, 141.

<sup>17</sup>. Cosmas l'Indicopleustes, col. 105B-C et col. 108C.

<sup>18</sup>. Idem, col. 169C.

<sup>19</sup>. *Vie de S. Euthyme*, éd. E. SCHWARTZ, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, Leipzig, 1939, 21.

<sup>20</sup>. Ibidem ; Sozomène, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία*, éd. J. BIDEZ, *Sozomenus, Kirchengeschichte (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, Neu Folge, 4)*, Berlin, 1995, VI 38, 299

<sup>21</sup>. Sozomène, VI 38, 299, fait une synthèse des historiens avant lui pour dire que 'les anciens' appelaient les peuplades arabes Ismaélites, puisqu'elles tiraient leur origine d'Ismaël, version que l'auteur conteste.

<sup>22</sup>. *Vie de St. Euthyme*, 21.

<sup>23</sup>. Cfr Zossime, I 8, 8 ; Évagre le Pontique, III 36, 135, ainsi que Théophane, 141, qui copie Évagre.

<sup>24</sup>. Procope, I 17, 82 et 90 ; II 27, 280.

<sup>25</sup>. Idem, I 19, 102 ; II 20, 239.

<sup>26</sup>. Idem, I 19, 101.

<sup>27</sup>. Évagre le Pontique, IV 12, 162 ; V 9, 205 et V 20, 216. L'auteur appelle aussi « barbares » les Arabes qui organisaient des incursions à l'intérieur de la frontière byzantine

Scythopolis préfère une solution beaucoup plus claire et beaucoup plus raisonnable : signale chaque fois si les Sarakènes dont il parle étaient des alliés des Byzantins ou des Perses.<sup>28</sup> L'appellation « skénites » ne doit donc pas être prise au sens d'une appartenance politique des Sarakènes, mais au sens réel des « habitants sous les tentes ».<sup>29</sup> En général, les sources appellent Sarakènes toutes les peuplades qui occupaient la partie septentrionale et occidentale de la presqu'île arabe sans faire d'autres distinctions.<sup>30</sup> L'origine étymologique est discutable ; il est possible que ce terme renvoie à Sarah, épouse d'Abraham,<sup>31</sup> mais il est aussi plausible de le rattacher au verbe arabe 'saraka' (= voler), puisque les sources présentent ces gens comme ayant pour seule occupation lucrative la guerre et les razzias.<sup>32</sup> À partir du VIIe s., la dénomination Sarakènes devient commune et elle est utilisée par certains auteurs byzantins pour indiquer les Arabes en général. Pour la période préislamique, Sarakènes sont appelés seulement les peuplades qui occupaient le nord-ouest de la région arabe, c'est-à-dire le Sinaï, le Jordanie et le bord oriental de

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dans le but de faire du butin, cfr III 2, 100; III 36, 135 et V 6, 202. Dans ce second sens utilise le terme Eusèbe, VI 42, 288.

<sup>28</sup>. *Vie de S. Euthyme*, 18, *Vie de S. Jean l'Hésychaste*, éd. E. SCHWARTZ, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, Leipzig, 1939, 211 : Arabes alliés des Perses. *Vie de S. Euthyme*, 19, 52-53 et 75 : Arabes alliés des Byzantins.

<sup>29</sup>. Cyrille de Scythopolis est très clair à ce propos : les Sarakènes vivant au long de la frontière byzantine et perse dressaient de tentes pour y habiter cfr *Vie de S. Euthyme*, 67. Théophane, 333, note aussi que les Madianites « habitaient sous les tentes » ; dans le même sens va un texte sinaïtique, F. NAU, *Le texte grec des récits du moine Anastase sur les saints pères du Sinaï*, dans *Oriens Christianus*, 2 (1902), 87-89.

<sup>30</sup>. À titre d'exemple, Théophylacte Simocatta, II 2, 72-73 et II 10, 89, chaque fois qu'il parle des Sarakènes alliés des Byzantins, il le note expressément. Le même auteur, VIII 1, 283, note que l'Arabie était habitée par plusieurs 'nations' (= peuplades) appelées toutes Sarakènes ; certains de ceux-ci étaient des alliés de l'empire. Ces derniers portent la responsabilité de la guerre entre Byzantins et Perses sous Maurice, car ils organisaient des razzias à l'intérieur de la Perse provoquant ainsi la colère du Grand Roi. Jean Malalas, appelle aussi Sarakènes les Arabes aussi bien dans le cas où ils étaient alliés des Perses (cfr X 34, 372 et XVIII 32, 372) que dans le cas où ils étaient alliés des Byzantins (cfr XVIII 35, 375). Il appelle aussi Sarakènes les mercenaires Arabes dans l'armée auxumite (cfr XVIII 56, 384-385). Des textes hagiographiques publiés par NAU, *Anastase*, 75, 81-82 et 87-89, appellent Sarakènes les habitants du Sinaï, mais aussi ceux de la presqu'île arabe.

<sup>31</sup>. Selon Sozomène, VI 38, 299, se sont les Arabes qu'ils ne voulaient pas être appelés Ismaélites, car cette appellation renvoyait à la mère d'Ismaël, esclave d'Abraham ; ils ont donc adopté le nom des Sarakènes, renvoyant à Sarah, l'épouse légitime d'Abraham. Il n'y a pas de doute que l'historiette sort directement de l'imagination des auteurs chrétiens.

<sup>32</sup>. Certes aucune source ne fait état de cette étymologie, mais plusieurs la supposent car elles ne ratent pas l'occasion pour signaler que la razzia était l'activité préférée des Sarakènes, cfr à titre d'exemple Eusèbe, VI 42, 288 ; Évagre le Pontique, III 2, 100, III 36, 135 et V 6, 202 ; *Vie de S. Euthyme*, 67 ; *Vie de S. Savas*, 97 et 98-99. Dans ce dernier passage, Cyrille de Scythopolis n'est pas tendre envers les Sarakènes : il les qualifie « barbares en ce qui concerne les habitudes et malfaiteurs en ce qui concerne le comportement » et ayant le vol comme seule occupation.

la Mer Rouge, jusqu'à Yémen. Il faut toutefois noter que les sources byzantines distinguent entre ceux qu'elles appellent Arabes ou Sarakènes et ceux qu'elles appellent Indiens ; ces derniers occupaient le « territoire indien » de la presqu'île arabe.<sup>33</sup> Puisque les Éthiopiens sont aussi appelés « Indiens », nous pensons que les sources byzantines appellent ainsi les habitants de l'Arabie du sud-est à peau plus foncée.<sup>34</sup>

Parmi les autres peuplades, les sources byzantines mentionnent les Homérites ou Hymérites ou Himiarites ou encore Imiarites. Il s'agit en réalité des Himyarites que les sources translittèrent par Homérites, sans doute sous l'influence d'Homer.<sup>35</sup> Nous utilisons toutefois dans la suite le terme « Homérites », puisque il est le plus commun dans nos sources et parce qu'il est adopté par les historiens modernes. Ils occupaient l'Arabie Fertile et ils étaient organisés en État.<sup>36</sup> Selon son biographe, S. Grigentios assura la fonction épiscopale à Tefran de 535 à 552 ; pour cette raison nous devons accepter que les Homérites étaient en partie christianisés. La rédaction de ce texte, initialement placée au VIIe s., date de la fin du IXe ou même du début du Xe s.<sup>37</sup> Cela ne met pas toutefois en doute l'historicité des faits qu'il rapporte, car selon l'opinion unanime, son rédacteur puise dans des sources syriaques et coptes du VIIe s. et donne une image fidèle de la société homérite préislamique.<sup>38</sup> Dans le même sens va d'ailleurs le *Martyre de S. Arethas et de ses*

<sup>33</sup>. Procope, I 19, 102.

<sup>34</sup>. Ainsi Jean Malalas, XVIII 56, 384-385, appelle 'Indiens' aussi bien les Homérites qui habitaient l'Arabie que les Auximites qui habitaient l'Afrique.

<sup>35</sup>. V. CHRISTIDES, *The Himyarite-Ethiopian War and the Ethiopian Occupation of South Arabia in the Acts of Gregentius (ca 530 AD)*, dans *Annales d'Éthiopie*, 9 (1972), 121.

<sup>36</sup>. Procope, I 19, 102-104. En outre, dans un pseudépigraphe, attribué à S. Grigentios et intitulé *Lois des Homérites*, la société homérite est présentée comme un exemple de bonne organisation ; cfr à ce propos l'étude en deux volumes de Evelyne PATLAGEAN, *Les Lois de St. Grigentios*, Paris, 1965. La véracité historique des informations de ce texte et surtout le dépistage de l'époque à laquelle il se réfère restent plus que problématiques.

<sup>37</sup>. Cfr A. BERGER, *Das Dossier des heiligen Grigentios, ein Werk der Makedonien Zeit*, dans *Βυζαντινά*, 22(2001), 64 ; IDEM, *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Thafar*, Berlin, 2006, 100-109 ; S. A. IVANOV, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond (Oxford Studies in Byzantium)*, trad. anglaise par S. FRANKLIN, Oxford et N. York, 2006, 148-149 ; V. CHRISTIDES, *The Himyarite-Ethiopian War*, 117 ; IMMACOLATA AULISA, *Giudei e Cristiani nell'agiografia dell'alto medioevo (Quaderni di « Vetera Christianorum », 32)*, Bari, 2009, 76. Le biographe de S. Grigentios fut, selon sa propre déclaration, évêque de Tefran ; il portait le nom de Jean ou de Palladios.

<sup>38</sup>. Cfr l'analyse très détaillée de CHRISTIDES, *The Himyarite-Ethiopian War*, 117 et 133-134. En réalité la biographie de S. Grigentios puise dans *Le livre des Himyarites* (en syriaque), éd. A. MOBERG, *The Book of the Himyarites : Fragments of a Hitherto Unknown Syriac Work*, Lund, 1924, dans la dite *Lettre de Siméon*, (en syriaque), traduction italienne par I. GUIDI, *La lettera di Simeono vescovo di Beth-Arsham sopra i martiri omeriti*, dans *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei. Memorie della classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, 7 (1881), 471-518, dans le *Martyre de S. Arethas et de ses compagnons* (en grec), éd. J. BOISSONADE, *Μαρτύριον τοῦ Ἀγ. Ἀρέθα*, dans *Anecdota Graeca*, 5, Paris, 1833, 1-62 et dans *Actes d'Azkir*



*compagnons*, indubitablement rédigé au VI<sup>e</sup> s. qui d'ailleurs sert de source au rédacteur de la *Vie de S. Grigéntios*.<sup>39</sup> Cela toutefois ne met pas en doute l'historicité des Homérites, mentionnés pratiquement par toutes les sources byzantines qui se réfèrent au sud-ouest arabe, christianisés à l'époque d'Anastase I.<sup>40</sup> Procope mentionne en outre au moins un port important du royaume des Homérites, le Voulikas,<sup>41</sup> tandis que Cosmas l'Indicopleustes fait état de Leuké Kômè, qui semble être le chef-lieu du royaume.<sup>42</sup> À cette liste des localités il faut encore ajouter Tefran et Negran, sièges épiscopaux de la région et l'énigmatique port de Gabbara, dont parle le *Martyre de S. Arethas*.<sup>43</sup>

Les Homérites mis à part, Procope parle des Maddinoi ; ils ne sont pas présentés comme une peuplade particulière mais comme étant des habitants de Madianitis, dont il a été question ; ils étaient soumis aux Homérites.<sup>44</sup> Nonnosos parle aussi des Madinoi sans toutefois dire s'ils étaient soumis aux Homérites ; ils reconnaissaient comme chef de clan un certain Kaïssos qu'il était aussi reconnu comme chef par les Hindenoï, un autre clan mentionné par Nonnosos.<sup>45</sup>

Théophane mentionne la tribu des Amanites, qui, selon lui, n'étaient pas des Madianites, mais des Homérites.<sup>46</sup>

Cosmas parle des deux autres peuplades, les Kinaedokopites et les Sabéens, qui à son temps ne se distinguaient plus des Homérites.<sup>47</sup> Il faut alors conclure qu'il s'agissait plutôt de tribus de la région yéménite.

À côté des indigènes, les sources font état de peuples envahisseurs qui ont occupé soit une partie, soit la totalité de l'Arabie pendant une certaine période. C'est le cas de Blémies, peuple soudanais qui a souvent organisé des incursions en Arabie, d'Auxumites, nation éthiopienne (que les sources byzantines appellent aussi Indiens) qui aux confins du Ve au VI<sup>e</sup> s. ont occupé l'Arabie Fertile, et de Perses qui à la fin du VI<sup>e</sup> s. ont soumis toute la presque île arabe.

Il est à noter que les sources byzantines ne parlent pas de la langue pratiquée par les habitants de l'Arabie. Seul un texte hagiographique, qui se réfère

(en copte), traduction italienne par C. ROSSINI, *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, sér. V, 19 (1910), 729-738 et 747-750.

<sup>39</sup>. *Martyre de S. Arethas et de ses compagnons*, 1-62.

<sup>40</sup>. L'information est donnée par Jean Diakrinomenos, éd. G. H. HANSEN, dans *Theodoros Anagnostes, Kirchengeschichte (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, Neu Folge, 3)*, Berlin, 1995, 157, dont l'information a une valeur particulière puisque Jean, selon sa propre déclaration (152), était le neveu de Silouanos, évêque des Homérites.

<sup>41</sup>. Procope, I 19, 103.

<sup>42</sup>. Cosmas l'Indicopleustes, col. 105B-C.

<sup>43</sup>. Selon le *Martyre de S. Arethas et de ses compagnons*, 49, les forces auxumites qui ont attaqué les Homérites ont débarqué à ce port.

<sup>44</sup>. Procope, I 19, 102.

<sup>45</sup>. *Photius. Bibliothèque*, 4-7. Il est toutefois impossible de dire si Nonnosos se réfère à des peuplades, à des tribus ou à des clans ou s'il indique simplement les habitants des agglomérations.

<sup>46</sup>. Théophane, 333.

<sup>47</sup>. Cosmas l'Indicopleustes, col. 105B-C, col. 108C et col. 169C.

même au milieu du VII<sup>e</sup> s., transmet le cas d'une femme sarakène qui s'adressa à son époux en 'langue arabe'.<sup>48</sup> Théophylacte Simocatta suppose aussi une langue arabe, car il parle des interprètes qui servaient d'intermédiaires entre les alliées Sarakènes et les officiers byzantins.<sup>49</sup>

Concernant les religions les sources parlent de chrétiens, de juifs et de païens.<sup>50</sup> Certains textes hagiographiques, provenant du Sinaï, signalent que les Arabes en général, mais surtout les Sarakènes, acceptaient difficilement le christianisme ou le judaïsme, et souvent de manière superficielle.<sup>51</sup> Or, d'autres sources hagiographiques notent que les Sarakènes alliées des Byzantins étaient christianisés ;<sup>52</sup> en général les sources mentionnent des Arabes chrétiens surtout au long de la frontière byzantine.<sup>53</sup> L'historiette de la reine Mavia (dont il est question un peu plus loin) pour la région frontalière, constitue une preuve irréfutable de la diffusion du christianisme parmi les Arabes.<sup>54</sup> Paganisme, judaïsme et christianisme coexistaient dans la région yéménite.<sup>55</sup> Procope, copié par Théophane, en parlant de la guerre entre Homérites et Auximites donne, entre autres, un caractère religieux à ce conflit en disant que le roi des Homérites était judaïsant mais ses sujets étaient païens ou chrétiens.<sup>56</sup> La même version est donnée par le *Martyre de S. Arethas et de ses compagnons*, un noble chrétien de Negran mis à mort ainsi que ses 340 serviteurs, le 24 octobre de 523. Ils étaient victimes de leurs convictions religieuses

<sup>48</sup>. Cfr NAU, *Anastase*, 87.

<sup>49</sup>. Théophylacte Simocatta, II 10, 89.

<sup>50</sup>. Il faut toutefois être très retissant quand les sources byzantines se réfèrent à la religion. Par ex. Procope, I 20, 107, en parlant de la guerre entre Homérites et Auximites, note que le roi des Homérites était de religion juive, tandis que ses sujets étaient en majorité païens. Or, le *Martyre de S. Arethas et de ses compagnons*, dont cfr *supra* note 39, dit qu'au moins les habitants de Negran étaient christianisés ; la biographie de S. Grigéntios note aussi que les Homérites étaient en grande partie christianisés, même si l'authenticité de ce texte est mise en doute, cfr à ce propos AULISA, 126-128.

<sup>51</sup>. Cfr NAU, *Anastase*, 75 : les Sarakènes du Sinaï étaient païens. En outre l'auteur anonyme d'un autre texte sinaïtique (cfr NAU, *Anastase*, 87-89), accuse les Sarakènes chrétiens du Sinaï d'avoir accepté facilement l'islam. Ses griefs semblent fondés ; comme le note Euty chius d'Alexandrie (*PG*, vol. 111, col. 1072 CD), sous Abd al Malik ibn Marwan (685-705), même les Arabes serviteurs du monastère avaient accepté l'islam. Toutefois les textes sinaïtiques ne disent pas que tous les Sarakènes du Sinaï étaient de non chrétiens ; un de ces textes (cfr NAU, *Anastase*, 87-89) parle même des martyrs chrétiens parmi les Sarakènes.

<sup>52</sup>. Cfr notamment les narrations de la *Vie de S. Euthyme*, 18-25, qui parle de toute une tribu, jadis alliée des Perses, qui a passé au camp byzantin et qui de ce fait est devenue chrétienne.

<sup>53</sup>. Ainsi, par exemple Procope, II 20, 239, se sent obligé de noter qu'un Sarakène nommé Ambros était chrétien.

<sup>54</sup>. Cfr *infra* note 67.

<sup>55</sup>. L'ouvrage de référence pour les religions de la région reste celui de G. RYCKMANS, *Les religions arabes préislamiques*, Louvain, <sup>2</sup>1951.

<sup>56</sup>. Procope, I 20, 107. Le texte de Théophane, 222-223, est corrompu à cet endroit de manière qu'il est difficile de dire si l'auteur a bien compris sa source. Toutefois, Jean Malalas, XVIII 56, 384-385, présente l'affaire du côté auxumite et donne une dimension beaucoup plus politique à cette guerre.

lors des persécutions des chrétiens lancées par le judaïsant roi des Homérites Dû Nuwâs ; 4.679 chrétiens avaient péri lors de ces persécutions déjà avant Arethas et ses compagnons.<sup>57</sup>

L'organisation sociale des Arabes préoccupe très peu les sources byzantines qui négligent d'en parler. Il semble qu'il y régnait un système tribal très hiérarchisé. Un chef suprême, que les Byzantins appellent βασιλεύς (= roi) ou φύλαρχος (= chef de la tribu ou chef du clan), s'imposait par peuple.<sup>58</sup> Nos sources mentionnent certains « rois » et certains « phylarches » Sarakènes à l'occasion des guerres entre Byzance et la Perse, tandis que d'autres « rois » sont mentionnés pour la région de l'Arabie Fertile. En général la terminologie des auteurs byzantins au sujet des dirigeants Arabes est très instable et incertaine, car elle ne cadrait pas avec celle de l'empire qu'ils connaissaient.

Certaines sources présentent les Sarakènes comme n'ayant pas d'autres occupations que la guerre et les incursions.<sup>59</sup> Certes ceux d'entre eux qui vivaient au long de la frontière byzantine ou perse gagnaient pratiquement leur vie en prêtant leurs services à l'un ou à l'autre de leurs puissants voisins. Pour les habitants des régions côtières de la Mer Rouge, Procope note qu'ils s'adonnaient aux activités maritimes, y compris le commerce.<sup>60</sup> Dans le même sens va la *Chronique de Théophane*, selon laquelle les Arabes étaient de bons commerçants.<sup>61</sup> Les sources hagiographiques sont parfois plus explicites : Cyrille de Scythopolis

<sup>57</sup>. Faits rapportés par le *Martyre de S. Arethas et de ses compagnons*, 4-21. En résumant le *Martyre de S. Arethas et de ses compagnons*, la *Vie de S. Grigéntios* et *Le livre des Himyarites*, le roi auxumite Negus débarqua en Arabie et battit le roi des Homérites Dû Nuwâs ; ce dernier se refusa sur les montagnes. Negus installa une garnison à Tefran, y construisit une église et quitta l'Arabie pour l'Afrique. Dû Nuwâs saisit l'occasion, reprit le contrôle de la région et se mit à persécuter les chrétiens. Ses atrocités provoquèrent la réaction d'El Esbaan, roi des Auxumites, qui débarqua avec son armée en Arabie yéménite et battit Dû Nuwâs.

<sup>58</sup>. Nos sources attribuent le titre de « basileus » à des chefs Arabes qui n'étaient que de chefs des tribus et parfois de chefs de clans. Cyrille de Scythopolis dans le *Vie de S. Jean, l'Hésychaste*, 211, est très clair : c'étaient les Perses qui ont attribué le titre de « roi » au chef des Sarakènes Al Mundhir (Ἀλαμούνδαρος pour les sources byzantines) afin de l'attirer dans leur camp. Procope, I 17, 90, confirme l'information en disant que lors de la guerre persobyzantine, les Sarakènes alliés de la Perse, avaient un roi ; les Skénites, alliés des Byzantins, reconnaissaient des chefs de clan ; Justinien I, pensant que ce système était plutôt nuisible pour les intérêts de l'empire, nomma Hârith (Ἀρέθας pour les sources byzantines) roi aux Arabes skénites, afin qu'ils puissent faire face à l'agressivité des leurs congénères pro perses. Certes nos sources font souvent des anachronismes et parlent des rois sarakènes déjà à l'époque de l'empire romain, cfr par exemple Jean Malalas, XII 26, 229, XII 27, 229-230 et XII 30, 231, qui toutefois lors de la guerre entre Byzantins et Perses fait distinction entre le chef de Sarakènes pro perses, qu'il appelle tantôt 'roi' tantôt 'roitelet' (XVIII 61, 390) et le chef des Sarakènes pro byzantins, qu'il appelle 'chef de tribu' (XVIII 35, 375 et XVIII 60, 387).

<sup>59</sup>. Cfr *supra* note 32.

<sup>60</sup>. Procope, I 19-20, 100-106.

<sup>61</sup>. Théophane, 333-334.

fait état des Arabes éleveurs des chameaux grâce auxquels ils prêtaient leurs services comme transporteurs<sup>62</sup> tandis que les textes sinaïtiques parlent des Sarakènes exerçant des activités pacifiques.<sup>63</sup> La *Vie de S. Grigéntios* ainsi que le *Martyre de S. Arethas* laissent supposer une société ordinaire et bien organisée dans le sud ouest de la presqu'île arabe ; toutes les occupations lucratives y étaient pratiquées.

Après ce long tour d'horizon de nos informations au sujet de l'Arabie préislamique et des ses habitants, passons à la question de l'origine de nos informations données par les auteurs byzantins. La question qui se pose est de savoir si ces informations sont fiables. L'origine de la documentation exploitée par ces auteurs peut être révélatrice de la méthode qu'ils ont suivie lors de la composition de leurs œuvres, permettant ainsi une appréciation de la valeur historique de leurs informations. Le croisement des données textuelles à notre disposition indique que nos sources peuvent être réparties en plusieurs groupes à savoir :

- i) le groupe de sources d'un intérêt limité,
- ii) les sources non originales,
- iii) les sources parallèles,
- iv) les sources en partie originales,
- v) les sources originales, et
- vi) les sources hagiographiques.

Dans le premier groupe sont classés certains historiens de l'Église, tels que Théodoret de Cyr, Eusèbe de Césarée et Théodore Anagnostès qui se limitent à des affirmations banales du type 'la nation arabe est perfide'<sup>64</sup> ou qui parlent de la province byzantine de l'Arabie en tant que métropole du patriarcat d'Antioche, en citant de temps en temps le nom d'un prélat chrétien. Ces auteurs ne contribuent aucunement à l'étude de l'Arabie préislamique. Leurs informations, si elles n'ont pas comme origine des rumeurs populaires, elles proviennent de sources administratives de l'Église auxquelles ces auteurs avaient accès.

Le deuxième sous groupe des sources, celui des auteurs non originaux, tels que Socrate de Constantinople, Jean Skylitzès, Jean Zonaras et bien d'autres, transmettent des informations copiées sur d'autres sources connues. Dans ce cas, il vaut mieux puiser directement dans les sources originales que de se fier aux copies parfois sommaires de ce groupe d'auteurs. Certes, l'historien doit se poser la question : pourquoi ces auteurs, en triant le matériel à leur disposition, sont

<sup>62</sup>. *Vie de S. Savas*, 186.

<sup>63</sup>. NAU, *Anastase*, 66 : un Sarakène chasseur ; 74-75 : un Sarakène éleveur des chèvres.

<sup>64</sup>. Cfr Théophylacte Simocatta, III 17, 146. Ce qualificatif n'est toutefois pas d'origine byzantine ; Zossime, I 18, 14, en parlant de l'empereur romain Philippe l'Arabe note qu'il descendait 'de la pire des nations', raison qui oblige à chercher une origine romaine à cette image négative du peuple arabe. Cette image négative n'était pas généralisée ; Sozomène, VI 38, 300, est plutôt favorable à égard des Arabes en disant qu'il s'agissait d'un peuple 'heureux'.

intéressés à l'Arabie préislamique, mais une telle problématique concerne la méthodologie historique et non pas l'histoire au sens stricte.

Parmi les sources parallèles, celle qui présente un intérêt c'est l'*Histoire ecclésiastique* d'Évagre. Cet auteur, d'origine syrienne, vivait à Constantinople depuis 588 où il a rédigé son traité en six livres ; ils couvrent la période entre 431 et 593. Donc au moment qu'Évagre écrivait, Procope avait déjà publié son *Histoire*. Or, Évagre ignore l'*Histoire* de Procope et quand il transmet une information transmise aussi par Procope, il ne puise pas dans ce dernier. Évagre donne des informations concernant l'Arabie préislamique pendant la guerre persobyzantine qui proviennent souvent de Jean Malalas. Toutefois certains détails ne se retrouvent que dans son *Histoire* ; ils ont comme origine ses propres souvenirs puisqu'il a vécu en Syrie, région pratiquement frontalière pendant cette guerre.

Jean Malalas, Théophylacte de Simocatta et Théophane le Confesseur forment le groupe des sources en partie originales. Ces auteurs transmettent des informations qui sont tantôt copiées sur des sources plus anciennes, tantôt originales. Pour ce qui est la partie copiée, nos remarques faites au sujet des sources non originales sont valables aussi dans ce cas ; les informations originales seront traitées dans l'alinéa consacré aux sources originales.

Parmi les auteurs qui ne copient pas d'autres sources connues il faut d'abord mentionner Tyrannius Rufinus, né à Concordia d'Aquillée vers 345 et mort en Sicile en 410.<sup>65</sup> C'est donc un auteur qui se situe aux confins des mondes romain et byzantin. En 403 Rufin a traduit en latin l'*Histoire ecclésiastique* d'Eusèbe de Césarée qui allait jusqu'à 324 en y ajoutant encore deux livres qui couvrent la période entre 324 et 395.<sup>66</sup> Dans son *Histoire Ecclésiastique* il parle de Sarakènes qui, sous la direction de leur reine Mavia, ont attaqué les provinces byzantines en 378 ; l'affaire a finalement bien tourné du moment que les autorités ecclésiastiques ont cédé à la demande des Sarakènes d'avoir comme évêque un certain Moïse.<sup>67</sup> Il est connu que Rufin, après avoir fait des études à Rome, est devenu un des adeptes des plus fervents d'Origène, raison pour laquelle il est entré en conflit doctrinal avec son ancien ami S. Jérôme. Pour connaître l'Orient, il voyagea en Egypte et ensuite en Palestine où il a vécu de 378 à 397. Il avait donc une connaissance personnelle des faits dont il parle. L'historiette de Mavia, étant située en 378, fait donc partie de sa propre rédaction et non pas de l'*Histoire* d'Eusèbe. Cette information a donc pour origine les connaissances personnelles de l'auteur.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>. Cfr B. ALTANER, *Précis de patrologie*, adapté par H. CHIRAT, Paris et Tournai, 1961, 550-552.

<sup>66</sup>. Idem, 338, 347 et 550-552.

<sup>67</sup>. Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, éd. E. SCHWARTZ et TH. MOMMSEN, dans Eusèbe de Césarée, *Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, 9)*, Berlin 1903-1909, II 6, 1010-1012.

<sup>68</sup>. L'historiette est copiée par Sozomène, VI 38, 297-298, et Socrates le Scholastique, *Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία*, éd. G. CH. HANSEN, Sokrates, *Kirchengeschichte (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, Neu Folge 1)*, Berlin, 1995), IV 36, 270-271.

Zocime, un historien qui a vécu au Ve s., rédigea une *Nouvelle Histoire* qui va jusqu'à 410. Étant païen, il brosse des portraits plutôt négatifs pour les empereurs chrétiens. Ses informations au sujet des Arabes durant la période protobyzantine sont insignifiantes et copiées sur Eunape ou Olympiodore. Pour la période romaine, il donne des informations sur la situation régnante au long de la frontière méridionale de l'empire ; il puise ses informations dans des sources actuellement perdues. Il s'agit d'un historien très sérieux, mais dont les informations sont sans intérêt pour l'histoire des peuplades arabes sans tenir compte qu'elles concernent le monde romain.

Procopé (490/507-c. 562) fit l'historien officiel de Justinien I ; il pouvait avoir accès aux archives de l'État et aux documents officiels. Dans son *Histoire* il donne plusieurs informations au sujet des Arabes Skénites et les Sarakènes, engagés dans la première guerre entre l'empire et la Perse comme alliés de l'un ou de l'autre de deux belligérants. Il est connu que Procopé, lors de cette première guerre persobyzantine (527-531), accompagnait le stratège Bellisaire en tant qu'observateur, un genre de rapporteur spécial.<sup>69</sup> Ces informations donc au sujet des Arabes et de leur implication dans la guerre proviennent de ses propres observations ou des ses contacts personnels avec des gens du pays. Or, Procopé insère dans son récit deux chapitres au sujet des habitants, Arabes et Éthiopiens, des deux rivages de la Mer Rouge, en y ajoutant certaines informations au sujet de la guerre entre Homérites et Éthiopiens, celée par la défaite des Homérites.<sup>70</sup> Ce qui frappe dans ce cas c'est la précision des informations de Procopé. Une telle précision ne peut avoir comme origine qu'un document officiel, sans doute le rapport d'un ambassadeur ou d'un chargé d'affaires envoyé par Constantinople afin d'inspecter la situation qui régnait en Mer Rouge vue l'offensive perse qui a poussé les armées du Grand Roi jusqu'au sud de la presqu'île arabe. Procopé avait accès à ce genre de documents notamment à cause de sa qualité d'historien officiel de la cour. Jean Malalas, qui parle aussi de la guerre entre Homérites et Éthiopiens n'oublie pas de dire que l'empereur Justinien I avait en réalité envoyé une ambassade auprès des Éthiopiens, afin de les convaincre de déclarer la guerre aux Homérites qui avaient basculé au camp perse. Malalas note que le chef de l'ambassade a fait rapport à l'empereur qui était enchanté de la réussite de ses envoyés.<sup>71</sup> Sans doute Procopé a pu consulter ce document et puise dans celui-ci ses informations. Il très probable que l'ambassadeur en question n'était autre que Nonnosos. Nonnosos a vécu sous Justinien I par qui il était envoyé comme ambassadeur en Arabie et en Éthiopie. À son retour il a fait rapport à l'empereur. Justinien, selon Jean Malalas, était tellement satisfait de travail de Nonnosos qu'il l'avait embrassé. Ensuite Nonnosos a rédigé un traité sur l'Arabie et l'Éthiopie, traité toutefois perdu. Photius a conservé dans sa

<sup>69</sup>. Procopé, I 1, 5.

<sup>70</sup>. Aux habitants de l'Arabie est consacré le chapitre 19 du livre I du *De bello persico* de Procopé, I 19, 100-106, tandis que le chapitre 20 du même livre (I 20, 106-107), est consacré aux habitants de l'autre rive de la Mer Rouge, ceux que Procopé appelle Éthiopiens.

<sup>71</sup>. Jean Malalas, XVIII 56, 384-385.

*Bibliothèque* un résumé.<sup>72</sup> Il sera inutile de noter que Nonnosos puise dans ses propres expériences.

Parmi les auteurs originaux il faut aussi citer Jean Diakrinomenos, originaire de Syrie, qui a vécu aux confins du Ve au VIe s. Il a rédigé une *Histoire ecclésiastique* qui commençait à 429 et qu'elle allait jusqu'à la fin du règne d'Anastase I. Son traité est perdu ; seuls quelques extraits sont parvenus jusqu'à nous.<sup>73</sup> Selon sa propre déclaration, Jean était le neveu de Silouanos, évêque des Homérites.<sup>74</sup> Il ne donne qu'une information concernant l'Arabie préislamique : la christianisation de l'Arabie fertile remonte aux temps de l'empereur Anastase I.<sup>75</sup> La relation de l'auteur avec l'évêque Silouanos, éventuellement le premier évêque des Homérites, donne un poids particulier à son information qu'il puise dans ses propres expériences.

Cosmas l'Indicopleustes, originaire d'Alexandrie, entrepris, vers 520, un voyage en Afrique orientale et peut-être en Arabie dans le but d'explorer les possibilités commerciales que ces régions présentaient. Finalement il est arrivé jusqu'aux rivages des Indes. À son retour il a gagné le monastère du Sinaï où il est devenu moine. En 547 il se mit à rédiger, dans une langue très simple, sa *Topographie chrétienne*, une cosmographie plutôt enfantine, mais très intéressante à cause de ses informations sur les peuples contactés par Cosmas lors de son périple. Cosmas mentionne la guerre entre les Auxumites, c'est-à-dire les Éthiopiens sous le règne d'El-Esbaan et les Homérites.<sup>76</sup> Mais son objectif n'était pas de parler de cette guerre, mais de son passage par Adoulide, ville située à une distance de deux milles de son port sur le rivage africain de la Mer Rouge. Il y a vu une stèle en marbre local, dont il fait une description détaillée, portant une inscription en grec relatant les victoires d'un roi Ptolémée qui a soumis les peuples africains jusqu'à la Somalie ; il a même organisé une expédition contre les Arabes de l'Arabie fertile et il les a soumis aussi. Le roi des Auxumites ayant décidé de partir en guerre contre les Homérites demanda à Asba, gouverneur d'Adoulide, de lui envoyer une copie du texte de l'inscription. Asba chargea Cosmas et un autre commerçant de l'Adoulide, nommé Ménas, de copier le texte, ce qu'ils ont fait en gardant toutefois un exemplaire pour eux-mêmes. Cosmas donne le texte dans sa *Topographie* ainsi que la description de la stèle.<sup>77</sup> Cosmas ne semble pas imaginer pourquoi El-Esbaan voulait disposer du contenu de cette stèle ; il dit seulement que cela faisait partie de ses préparatifs. Tenant compte que Procope et Jean Malalas parlent notamment de cette guerre, il est clair que El-Esbaan cherchait un prétexte

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<sup>72</sup> Cfr *supra*, note 11.

<sup>73</sup> Ces fragments, ainsi que le résumé conservé par Photius dans sa *Bibliothèque*, sont édités par G. H. Hansen, cfr *supra*, note 40.

<sup>74</sup> Jean Diakrinomenos, 152.

<sup>75</sup> Idem, 157.

<sup>76</sup> Cosmas l'Indicopleustes, col. 101C. Les monnaies de ce roi Auxumite sont publiées par W. F. PRIDEAUX, *The Coins of the Axumite Dynasty*, dans *The Numismatic Chronicle*, 4 (1884), 214 ; elles portent la légende ECBAHA.

<sup>77</sup> Cosmas l'Indicopleustes, col. 101A à col. 108C.

pour déclarer la guerre aux Homérites. Le fait que l'Arabie fertile était annexée par les Ptolémées, lui semblait une raison suffisante pour exiger la soumission des Homérites et, si ils refusaient, de leur déclarer la guerre. La sincérité de Cosmas est ici hors doute. Non seulement son récit complète celui de Procope et de Malalas, mais surtout la langue du texte de l'inscription diffère de celle de Cosmas : elle est beaucoup plus archaïsante et dans un style triomphal qui n'est pas celui de Cosmas. Le fait qu'il fait aussi appel au témoignage de son copain Ménas, qui au moment que Cosmas rédigeait sa Topographie était lui aussi moine dans le monastère de Raïtho,<sup>78</sup> plaide en faveur de la véracité de l'information.

Jean Malalas (491-578), un Syrien hellénisé d'Antioche, a travaillé à Constantinople où il a rédigé, dans une langue populaire, une *Chronique universelle* qui va jusqu'à 563, mais qui allait, semble-il, jusqu'à 573, car sa dernière partie est perdue. Malalas relate en bref les faits exposés par Procope au sujet de la participation des Sarrakènes au conflit perso-byzantin. En outre, il fait un exposé sur la guerre entre Auxumites et Homérites,<sup>79</sup> dont Cosmas l'Indicopleustes parle des préparatifs et Procope de son déroulement. Malalas ne copie à ce propos ni Cosmas ni Procope. Cosmas, comme il est déjà signalé, ne parle pas de cette guerre, tandis que Procope en parle en se plaçant du côté des Homérites. Jean Malalas ne dit pas clairement d'où il tient ses informations, dont l'historicité n'est pas mise en doute du fait d'être confirmées par Procope et Cosmas, mais à demi mots laisse croire qu'il a consulté le rapport d'un ambassadeur. Puisque l'ambassadeur, dont il est question, était Nonnosos, il semble impossible que Jean Malalas ait un accès direct à son rapport ; il a plutôt lu le traité de Nonnosos sur l'Arabie et l'Éthiopie. Pour les informations concernant les Sarrakènes, il est possible qu'il puise dans ses propres connaissances, puisque les faits qu'il expose sont passés à la frontière syrienne, donc dans la région où il avait longuement vécu.

Théophylacte Simocatta, originaire d'Égypte, assura sous Héraclius des fonctions publiques très importantes, dont celui de l'Éparque de la ville. Il écrivit, parmi d'autres traités, une *Histoire universelle* en huit livres qui couvre le règne de l'empereur Maurice (582-602), mais avec des références assez fréquentes aux périodes plus anciennes. Ses informations concernant l'Arabie préislamique sont toujours en relation avec les guerres entre Byzantins et Perses. Elles ont parfois pour origine Procope, mais habituellement Théophylacte ne copie pas une autre source ; il puise directement dans les documents officiels, même en langue persane, auxquels il avait accès vu son statut d'un très haut fonctionnaire de l'État.

Il reste le cas le plus compliqué, la *Chronique de Théophane*, dont la rédaction était entamée par Georges le Syncelle avant 810 et elle est parachevée par Théophane le Confesseur en 814. Donc la *Chronique de Théophane* est la source byzantine la plus éloignée de l'Arabie préislamique, puisqu'elle est rédigée au IX<sup>e</sup> s., mais aussi la source la plus riche en informations concernant les Arabes aussi bien avant qu'après l'islam. Pour cette raison, elle est parfois appelée 'Histoire des

<sup>78</sup>. Idem, col. 103A.

<sup>79</sup>. Jean Malalas, XVIII 15, 362-363.



Arabes'.<sup>80</sup> Les informations de cette *Chronique* au sujet des Arabes préislamiques ne sont pas originales. Elles sont copiées sur les écrits de Procope, d'Évagre, de Jean Malalas, de Théophylacte de Simocatta et peut être sur ceux de Jean d'Ephèse, de Jean d'Antioche et de Jean d'Épiphanie. Par contre l'origine de plusieurs informations de la *Chronique* au sujet des Arabes après le début du VIIe s. reste un mystère. Parmi celles-ci une généalogie du Prophète,<sup>81</sup> unique dans son genre, a fait couler beaucoup d'encre au sujet de sa valeur historique et de son origine.<sup>82</sup> L'hypothèse la plus vraisemblable est qu'à l'origine de ces informations se trouve une source syrienne, rédigée par un chrétien, traduite ensuite en grec.<sup>83</sup> Les opinions des historiens ne s'accordent pas sur la personne qui avait consulté cette source. Selon les uns Georges le Syncelle avait vécu un certain temps dans le monastère de Charitonos en Palestine ; il y consulta les sources locales qui donnaient des informations au sujet des Arabes.<sup>84</sup> Selon les autres, ce texte, traduit en grec, est arrivé à Constantinople où Théophane ou Georges le Syncelle avaient l'occasion de

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<sup>80</sup>. Cfr la note de Constantin Porphyrogénète, *De administrando imperio*, éd. G. MORAVCSIK, dans *CFHB*, Washington D. C., 1967, XXII, 98 ; la question est débattue par P. YANNOPOULOS, *Théophane abrégé au Xe siècle*, dans *Βυζαντινά*, 15 (1989), 308-310.

<sup>81</sup>. Théophane, 333-334.

<sup>82</sup>. L'étude la plus complète à ce propos reste celle de L. I. CONRAD, *Theophanes and Arabic Historical Tradition: Some Indications of Intercultural Transmission*, dans *BF*, 15 (1990), 1-44.

<sup>83</sup>. L'idée d'une source orientale des informations de Théophane est ancienne. E. W. BROOKS, *The Chronology of Theophanes 607-775*, dans *BZ*, 8 (1899), 82-97 ; IDEM, *The Sicilian Expedition of Constantine IV*, dans *BZ*, 17 (1908), 455-459 ; IDEM, *The Sources of Theophanes and the Syriac Chroniclers*, dans *BZ*, 15 (1906), 578-587 et P. PEETERS, *La légende de saint Jacques de Nisibe*, dans *AB*, 38 (1920), 288-373 ; IDEM, *L'intervention politique de Constance II dans la Grande Arménie en 338 (Bulletin de la classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et politiques de l'Académie Royale de Belgique, série V, n° 17,1)*, Bruxelles, 1931, 10-47, ont systématisé la recherche. Cfr en outre S. P. BROCK, *Syriac Sources of Seventh-Century History*, dans *BMGS*, 2 (1976), 17-36 ; R. HOYLAND, *Arabic, Syriac and Greek Historiography in the First Abbasid Century*, dans *Aram*, 5 (1991), 217-239 ; A. PALMER, S. BROCK et R. HOYLAND, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, Liverpool, 1993, 96-100 ; C. MANGO *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History. Text, Translation and Commentary*, dans *CFHB*, 6, Washington D.C., 1990, 15 ; C. MANGO et R. SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813*, Oxford, 1997, lxxxii-lxxxvii ; NINA FIGULEVSKAJA, *Theophanes' Chronographia and the Syrian Chronicles*, dans *JÖBG*, 16 (1967), 55-60.

<sup>84</sup>. R. MAISANO, *Il 'sistema' compositivo della Cronaca di Teofane*, dans *Syndesmos. Studi in onore di R. Anastasi*, vol. I, Catane, 1991, 279-282 ; C. MANGO, *Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes?*, dans *ZRVI*, 18 (1978), 9-17 ; MANGO et SCOTT, lxi-lxiii ; P. SPECK, *Das geteilte Dossier. Beobachtungen zu den Nachrichten über die Regierung des Kaisers Herakleios und die seiner Söhne bei Theophanes und Nikephoros (= ΠΟΙΚΙΑ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΑ)*, Bonn, 1988, 499-519.

le consulter.<sup>85</sup> Quelque soit l'hypothèse, tous les spécialistes sont d'accord pour dire que les Syriens sont à l'origine des informations de Théophane au sujet de la généalogie du Prophète.

Le dernier type de sources, à savoir les textes hagiographiques sont les plus difficiles à contrôler, car leurs auteurs ne s'intéressent pas aux faits historiques, mais ils visent exclusivement à mettre en vue les héros chrétiens ; il s'agit donc de sources tendancieuses. Dans ce but ils n'hésitent pas à déformer l'histoire afin qu'elle soit conforme à leur objectif, sans tenir compte de cas où ils puisent dans leur imagination pour inventer des faits inexistantes. Ils ne sont toutefois pas dépourvus d'intérêt, car ils décrivent les situations sociales pour cadrer leur récit. En outre, les sources hagiographiques ne font pas un groupe homogène, car à côté des biographies complètes, pour la période avant le VIIe s. il existe de collections des biographies ou encore de collections de biographies brèves mal datées. Concernant l'Arabie préislamique, il y a moyen d'y reconnaître deux sous groupes. Un premier est composé par les biographies de Cyrille de Scythopolis, qu'elles rapportent les faits placés dans le désert du Jourdan et les textes anonymes relatifs aux ermites et aux moines du Sinaï. Ces régions étaient habitées par les Sarakènes. Les hagiographes sont bien disposés à leur égard si ces Sarakènes étaient chrétiens, tandis qu'ils sont très virulents s'ils étaient païens. En outre, ils mettent beaucoup l'accent sur le respect que ces Sarakènes témoignaient pour leurs traditions et sur la ténacité de leurs liens familiaux. Puisque les rédacteurs de ces textes ont tous soit vécu, soit passé un temps considérable dans les régions dont ils parlent, leurs informations ont pour origine leur propre expérience et de ce fait peuvent être considérées comme fiables, mais elles ne peuvent pas être prises à la lettre, car elles sont, comme il est dit, tendancieuses.

Le second sous groupe de sources hagiographiques concerne en réalité deux textes : la *Vie de S. Grigéntios* et le *Martyre de S. Arethas et de ses compagnons* ; ils ont en commun de traiter des personnages ayant vécu dans la région yéménite. Comme nous avons noté le premier de ces textes pose des problèmes à cause de la date tardive de sa rédaction. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous n'avons fait que rarement appel à son témoignage. Certes, à l'heure actuelle la recherche a établi l'origine des informations de ce texte et a prouvé que son rédacteur est respectueux de ses sources. Pour cette raison les historiens lui font crédit. Mais, comme nous l'avons noté lors d'autres occasions, dans ce cas il vaut mieux recourir directement aux sources d'origine que de se fier à une réélaboration des données faite après plusieurs siècles. Par contre, le *Martyre de S. Arethas*, malgré son caractère anonyme, présente plusieurs gages de véracité historique. Il fait état des situations connues par d'autres sources, à savoir Procope et Jean Malalas, mais vues sous un autre angle : celui de l'hagiographe qui ne s'intéresse pas à l'histoire mais à la mise en valeur de son héros de la foi. En outre, des sources byzantines, à savoir *Le livre de Himyarites* et *La lettre de Siméon* confirment

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<sup>85</sup>. Cfr notamment I. S. ČIČUROV, *Feofan Ispovednik – publikator, redaktor, avtor ?*, dans *VV*, 42 (1981), 78-87, A. ΚΑΡΠΙΟΖΗΛΟΣ, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και χρονογράφοι*, vol. 2, Athènes, 2002, 146-147

l'historicité des faits rapportés par le *Martyre de S. Arethas*. La connaissance des lieux, des personnes, des habitudes et des situations qu'atteste le rédacteur de ce texte ne laissent pas des doutes qu'il avait soit une connaissance personnelle des faits dont il parle, soit une source perdue d'un témoin visuel des ces faits. C'est pourquoi nous jugeons ce texte digne de foi.

Pour conclure, les auteurs byzantins ne donnent pas beaucoup d'informations sur l'Arabie préislamique et ses habitants ; habituellement ils en parlent quand les faits historiques rapportés étaient en relation avec l'empire. Cette pauvreté est en partie compensée par la qualité de leurs informations. Dans la plupart de cas, ils puisent dans leurs propres expériences ou dans des sources fiables, telles que les documents officiels, les rapports des ambassadeurs, les inscriptions. Des doutes peuvent être émis seulement quand les auteurs byzantins puisent dans une source incontrôlable, comme c'est par ex. le cas de la *Chronique de Théophane* ou quand la mise en valeur d'un personnage saint poussent les hagiographes d'imaginer certains faits mineurs.



# Sayf al-Dawla, al-Mutanabbī and Byzantium: The Evidence of a Textile

CAROLE HILLENBRAND

## The Historical Context

By the third/tenth century the Sunni caliphate, which had once ruled a united empire stretching from Spain to Central Asia, had given way to smaller political entities. A good number of independent or semi-independent Sunni dynasties still acknowledged the religio-legal status of the caliphate at Baghdad. But further disunity and political fragmentation occurred with the emergence of small Shī'ite dynasties during what the Orientalist scholar MINORSKY famously called 'the Shī'ite century'. One such dynasty, the Ḥamdānids, descendants of the Banū Taghlib, ruled at that time in Northern Syria and the Jazīra. By contrast, in the same historical period, the Byzantine empire, under the control of the Macedonian dynasty (843-1025), enjoyed overall strong rule, and those who held the office of the *Domesticus*, the Byzantine military commander in charge of the eastern borders, launched many offensives against the Muslim world.<sup>1</sup>

The geographical location of the territories ruled by the most famous of the Ḥamdānids, Sayf al-Dawla (ruled 333/944-356/967), led him to conduct a large number of military raids into the lands of Rūm for a period of around thirty years.<sup>2</sup> His first victory against the Byzantine frontier commander, the *Domesticus*, came in 326/938, but his principal successes were achieved between 336/947 and 346/957. Thereafter he experienced devastating defeats at the hand of the *Domesticus* Bardas Phocas and then by his three sons, Nicephorus, Leo and Constantine.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these setbacks Sayf al-Dawla was admired and eulogised by medieval Arab writers, both chroniclers and poets.<sup>4</sup> His court at Aleppo attracted the best intellectuals of his time, including the philosopher al-Fārābī, the preacher

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<sup>1</sup> A. A. VASILIEV, *History of the Byzantine empire*, vol. 1, Madison and Milwaukee 1964; M. CANARD, *Histoire de la dynastie des Hamdanides de Jazīra et de Syrie*, vol. 1, Paris 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn al-'Adīm lists the campaigns conducted by Sayf al-Dawla into Rūm. He then writes: Battles took place between him (Sayf al-Dawla) and Rūm, most of them in his favour and some of them against him. Ibn al-'Adīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab fī tārikh Ḥalab*, vol.1, ed. S. ZAKKĀR, Damascus 1997, 119.

The geographer Ibn Shaddād mentions in some detail the raids which took place in the years 343-5/954-6 and 347/958; see 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, *Al-a'lāq al-khaṭīra fī dhikr umarā' al-Shām wa'l-Jazīra*, tr. A.-M. Eddé-Terrasse as *Description de la Syrie du Nord*, Damascus 1984, 196-99.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Shaddād, *Al-a'lāq*, tr. Eddé-Terrasse, 198.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn al-'Adīm, *Zubda*, vol.1, 144; Ibn al-Azraq al-Fāriqī, *Tārīkh Mayyāfāriqīn*, British Library MS Or. 5803, ff. 113b-117a.

Ibn Nubāta,<sup>5</sup> the poets al-Mutanabbī, al-Nāmī and Abū Firās (the cousin of Sayf al-Dawla) and many other luminaries. Sayf al-Dawla himself is said to have composed poetry.<sup>6</sup> Ibn Khallikān writes that Sayf al-Dawla held an assembly every night to which the men of learning came,<sup>7</sup> and he describes this *majlis* of Sayf al-Dawla as a *point of union for all persons distinguished by their acquirements in any of the sciences*.<sup>8</sup>

The same laudatory tone is adopted by al-Tha‘ālibī, who declares: *The sons of Ḥamdān were princes whose faces were formed for beauty; whose tongues, for eloquence; whose hands, for liberality; and whose minds, for pre-eminence; Sayf al-Dawla was renowned as their chief and the middle pearl of the necklace*.<sup>9</sup>

It is indeed noteworthy that Sayf al-Dawla is widely portrayed in the medieval Islamic historiographical tradition as a ruler who in the time-honoured Arab way cultivated both the ‘arts of peace’<sup>10</sup> and the ‘conduct of war’; he is shown to be a worthy protagonist to take on the might of the prestigious and venerable Byzantine empire. According to Ibn Shaddād, Sayf al-Dawla showed great magnanimity towards a distinguished prisoner of war, Constantine, son of the *Domesticus*, who remained for some time in captivity with him. Constantine wrote to his father to tell him of the generosity of Sayf al-Dawla towards him, saying that if his father had been taking care of him he would not have been as kind to him as Sayf al-Dawla had been.<sup>11</sup>

The fame of Sayf al-Dawla as a valiant warrior, the epitome of a *jihād* fighter, was widespread even in his own time, and contemporary poets, above all al-Mutanabbī, perpetuated for posterity the memory of his achievements in Rūm. Even after being afflicted by serious and crippling illness from 351/962 onwards,<sup>12</sup> Sayf al-Dawla entered the fray of battle, carried in a litter, and he continued to conduct

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Khallikān, *Kitāb wafayāt al-a’yān*, tr. Baron W. M. DE SLANE as *Kitāb wafayāt al-a’yān: Ibn Khallikan’s Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 2, Paris 1843, 10-11.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, tr. DE SLANE, vol. 2, 334-40; EI<sup>2</sup>, art. Sayf al-Dawla (T. BIANQUIS).

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, tr. DE SLANE, vol. 2, 205.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, tr. DE SLANE, vol. 3, 308.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, tr. DE SLANE, vol. 2, 334-5.

<sup>10</sup> The phrase is used by Nicholson; R. A. NICHOLSON, *A literary history of the Arabs*, Cambridge 1969, 270.

As al-Mutanabbī himself puts it:

*Him have I visited when sword in sheath was laid,  
And I have seen him when in blood swam every blade.*

*Him, both in peace and war the best of all mankind.*

See al-Mutanabbī, *Mutanabbi carmina cum commentario Wahidii*, ed. F. DIETERICI, Berlin 1856-61, 481-4; tr. NICHOLSON, *Literary history*, 306.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Shaddād, *Al-a’lāq*, tr. EDDÉ-TERRASSE, 195.

<sup>12</sup> He became afflicted with hemiplegia (*fālij*) and grave intestinal and urinary disorders; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fi’l-tārīkh*, ed. C. J. TORNBURG, Leiden and Uppsala 1851-76, vol. 8, 580.

affairs of state. He was buried in the manner of a *shahīd* in his family mausoleum in Mayyāfāriqīn;<sup>13</sup> a brick covered in the dust from one of his campaigns was put under his cheek.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Relationship between Sayf al-Dawla and al-Mutanabbī

The career of al-Mutanabbī is described in particular detail by the local historian of Aleppo, Ibn al-‘Adīm,<sup>15</sup> and it has often been discussed by modern scholars.<sup>16</sup> After the eventful years of his youth, al-Mutanabbī joined the entourage of Sayf al-Dawla in 337/948-9, remaining at his court until 346/957. According to Ibn Khallikān, al-Mutanabbī accompanied Sayf al-Dawla on his military expeditions into Byzantine territory.<sup>17</sup> Often a turbulent and controversial figure,<sup>18</sup> al-Mutanabbī composed odes of dazzling virtuosity. It was most fortunate for Sayf al-Dawla that the brief interlude of his military triumphs over the Byzantines coincided with the nine-year stay of al-Mutanabbī at his court. Indeed, because of the vast popularity of this poet’s panegyrics in his honour, Sayf al-Dawla has enjoyed an especially prestigious posthumous reputation. And it is generally agreed by Arabic literary scholars that the poems composed in honour of Sayf al-Dawla (the *Sayfīyyāt*), in which al-Mutanabbī deploys the full grandeur of his epic style, represent his finest poetic achievement.<sup>19</sup> In what follows, an extract from one of these celebrated poems will be analysed with a view to clarifying the context of such poems and the light which they shed on Ḥamdānid court life and on relations between that dynasty and Byzantium.

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<sup>13</sup>. Ibn al-Azraq, *Tārīkh*, f. 117a; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, 580.

<sup>14</sup>. C. HILLENBRAND, Jihad poetry in the age of the Crusades, in *Crusades. Medieval Worlds in Conflict*, eds. T. MADDEN, J. L. NAUS and V. RYAN, Farnham and Burlington, Vt., 2011, 11-12.

<sup>15</sup>. Ibn al-‘Adīm gives a very full set of narratives about him; cf. Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī tāriḫ Ḥalab*, ed. S. ZAKKĀR, vol. 2, Damascus 1988/1408, 639-86.

<sup>16</sup>. For example, R. Blachère, La vie et l’oeuvre d’Abū ṭ Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, in R. BLACHERE, *Analecta*, Damascus 1975, 401-30.

<sup>17</sup>. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, trans. DE SLANE, vol. 2, 104.

<sup>18</sup>. Arberry reminds the reader that al-Mutanabbī was criticised both for arrogance and for the quality of his poetry, during his lifetime and thereafter; cf. A.J. ARBERRY, *Poems of al-Mutanabbī*, Cambridge 1967, 3-4.

<sup>19</sup>. *El<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. al-Mutanabbī (R. Blachère); E. DERMENGHEM, *Les plus beaux textes arabes*, Paris 1951, 103.

A description of the tent of Sayf al-Dawla by al-Mutanabbī<sup>20</sup>

وَأَغْصَانُ دَوْحٍ لَمْ تُعَنَّ حَمَائِمُهُ	***	عَلَيْهَا رِيَاضٌ لَمْ تُحْكَمْهَا سَحَابَةٌ
مِنَ الدَّرِّ سِمَطٌ لَمْ يُقْبَهُ نَاطِمُهُ	***	وَفَوْقَ حَوَاشِي كُلِّ نُوبٍ مُوجِّهٌ
يَحَارِبُ ضِدَّ ضِدِّهِ وَيُسَالِمُهُ	***	تَرَى حَيَوَانَ البَرِّ مُصْطَلِحًا بِهَا
تُجُولُ مَذَاكِيهِ وَتَدَأَى ضَرَاعِمُهُ	***	إِذَا ضَرَبَتْهُ الرِّيحُ مَاجَ كَأَنَّهُ
لَا يُبْلَجُ لَا تِيْجَانَ إِلَّا عَمَائِمُهُ	***	وَفِي صُورَةِ الرُّومِيِّ ذِي التَّاجِ ذِلَّةٌ
وَيَكْبُرُ عَنْهَا كُفُّهُ وَبِرَاجِمُهُ	***	تُقْبَلُ أَفْوَاهُ المُلُوكِ بِسَاطِئِهِ
وَمَنْ بَيْنَ أَذْنَيْ كُلِّ قَرَمٍ مَوَاسِمُهُ	***	قِيَامًا لَمَنْ يَشْفِي مِنَ الدَّاءِ كَيْفُهُ
وَأَنْفُذَ مَمَّا فِي الجُفُونِ عَرَائِمُهُ	***	قَبَائِعُهَا تَحْتَ المَرَاقِقِ هَيْبَةُ

The following discussion, then, focuses on a short but very significant passage from one of the *Sayfiyyāt* of al-Mutanabbī. The *qaṣīda* itself was declaimed to Sayf al-Dawla on his return to Antioch after he had captured the previously impregnable fortress of Barzūya.<sup>21</sup> According to the notes provided by ‘Azzām in his edition of the *Dīwān*,<sup>22</sup> ‘this panegyric of the *amīr* Sayf al-Dawla dates from Jumādā II, 337’.<sup>23</sup>

The passage analysed here (lines 19 -26 of the ode) is preceded by 18 lines of poetry. The first five lines constitute the usual introduction (*nasīb*) depicting the conventional stance of the lover at the campsite abandoned by his beloved. A transition to the main panegyric section of the *qaṣīda* is effected in line 18 when the poet exclaims that better than all the water of youth is the moment when he watches the sparkling rain fall onto the tent (*fāza*) (of Sayf al-Dawla). The reference to rain is presumably an image of the ruler’s generosity from which al-Mutanabbī hopes to profit if the poem finds favour with his patron.

Line 18 mentions Sayf al-Dawla’s *fāza*, a word whose dictionary definition as a tent supported by two poles,<sup>24</sup> is susceptible of more than one interpretation. It

<sup>20</sup>. The version of the text given here is reproduced from the article by J. HOROVITZ, Die Beschreibung eines Gemäldes bei Mutanabbī, *Der Islam* I(1910), 385-8.

<sup>21</sup>. WELIN describes a silver *dirham*, the first Ḥamdānid coin minted at Antioch. It is dated 337/948-9 and was probably made to commemorate the visit of Sayf al-Dawla on his return to the city that year from Barzūya; see U. S. WINDER WELIN, Sayf al-dawlah’s reign in Syria and Diyarbekr in the light of the numismatic evidence, *Commentationes de nummis saecolorum IX-XI in Schweden gefundenen Münzen des 9. bis 11. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1, 1961, 61.

<sup>22</sup>. Al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, ed. A. ‘Azzām, Cairo 1363/1944, 242, note *alif*. Note *bā*’ mentions that Sayf al-Dawla was sitting in a tent of silk brocade (*dībāj*); ‘Azzām, 242.

<sup>23</sup>. This date corresponds to the Christian date of December 948.

<sup>24</sup>. A. DE BIBERSTEIN-KAZIMIRSKI, *Dictionnaire arabe-français*, Paris 1860, vol. 2, 646.



might mean a tent in the form of an inverted 'v', with the poles supporting the two central extremities of the cloth, the whole presumably anchored by guy-ropes and tent pegs. Or it could refer to a vertical hanging stretched between two poles. Or finally it could indicate an awning, supported by poles at two of its corners and probably pitched at a slant so that its designs could clearly be seen, and steadied by ropes at the other two corners. It is this last interpretation that is most plausible, for there are numerous later images of such awnings depicted in Islamic book painting, each with its prince seated in majesty below it.<sup>25</sup>

The above lines have been translated by European scholars of Islam, and especially of Islamic art, into English, French, Spanish and German. Some of these scholars have been eager to show from the evidence of this passage that the alleged prohibition on pictorial art in the Muslim world does not extend to secular contexts, such as the one demonstrated here – probably an awning spread over a ruler's head in his military camp.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the existence of the translations of this passage by ARNOLD, WORMHOUDT, HOROVITZ, WIET, and others, there is still more to say about these very interesting lines of al-Mutanabbī. Moreover, the existing translations read at times much more like flowery paraphrases than exact renderings of the text. An attempt at a literal prose translation of these lines now follows,<sup>27</sup> although it is, of course, impossible to render in English the full subtlety of the multivalent resonances of such a brilliant verbal poetic master as al-Mutanabbī.<sup>28</sup>

#### Translation of lines 19-26

19. *On it (the tent) are gardens which no rain cloud has caused to spring up,  
And branches of lofty trees whose doves have never cooed.*
20. *And above the edges of each double-sided tapestry  
Is a string of pearls whose stringer has not pierced them.*<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup>. For Timurid examples, see T.W. LENTZ and G.D. LOWRY, *Timur and the Princely Vision. Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, Los Angeles and Washington D.C. 1989, 258, 260 and 265; for Safavid examples, see S.C. WELCH, *Royal Persian Manuscripts*, London 1976, 62, 81, 110, 112, 120 and 122.

<sup>26</sup>. T. W. ARNOLD, *Painting in Islam. A study of the place of pictorial art in Muslim culture*, New York 1965, 20; G. WIET, *Soieries persanes*, Cairo 1947, 78; HOROVITZ, 'Die Beschreibung', 386-7; al-Mutanabbī, *Poems of the Diwan of Abu Tayyib Ahmad Ibn Husain al-Mutanabbi*, trans. with notes by A. WORMHOUDT, Oxford 1968, 1.

<sup>27</sup>. Each line of the English translation corresponds to half the line in Arabic.

<sup>28</sup>. It is a pity that, as far as I know at least, Arberry did not translate this passage, since he, above all others, was able to render the power of such Arabic poetry, even in English translation.

<sup>29</sup>. A translation of Horovitz's rather wordy German translation of this line reads: 'Above all the edges of each double-sided material (of the tent) is a string of pearls, which, however, did not need first to be pierced by him who put them onto the string'. See HOROVITZ, 'Beschreibung', 386.

21. *You see land animals peacefully together (there);  
One opponent fights its opponent and (then) makes peace with it.*
22. *Whenever the breeze makes it (the awning) billow, it sways as if  
Its full-bodied<sup>30</sup> horses are moving around and its lions are outwitting  
(their prey).*
23. *In the image of the Byzantine possessed of a crown there is submission  
Towards the proud one who has no crowns except his turbans.*
24. *The mouths of kings kiss his carpet  
For his sleeve and finger joints are too high for them (to reach).*
25. *Standing before him whose cauterisation<sup>31</sup> cures illness  
Between their ears each chieftain bears his branding marks.<sup>32</sup>*
26. *Their (sword) pommels are beneath their elbows out of awe  
And more penetrating than what is in the scabbards are his decisions.*

Commentary on the lines of the poem translated

In line 19 there is an impression of ethereality and immortality, with multiple layers of meaning. The gardens with lofty trees are imaginary, of course, as in the beautiful mosaics in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus; this may well be an evocation of the gardens of Paradise mentioned in the Qur'an.<sup>33</sup> The doves that inhabit these trees do not coo there, because this is an eternal sphere. One is reminded of the Arabic proverbial phrase used on a Mamlūk tinned bronze lunch-box to bring good fortune and long life to its owner:

*ṭawwala al-'umr mā nāḥat ḥamāma – may his<sup>34</sup> life last as long as a dove cooes<sup>35</sup>*

The use of the verb *ḥāka* is very skilful, considering its semantic range which, as well as its meaning 'to make plants spring up by watering them', can also be 'to weave'. Indeed, perhaps there is an intended word play here.

<sup>30</sup>. The noun *madhākī* signifies strong or hefty horses. Moreover, in a fashion typical of al-Mutanabbī, there could even be a pun lurking here, since one meaning of the root in the phrase *saḥāba mudhkiya* is that of a cloud which has repeatedly produced rain (see line 19, where the word *saḥāba* is indeed used); see E.W. LANE, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, Beirut 1980, I, 972. Lane cites *Tāj al-'arūs*.

<sup>31</sup>. Arnold's translation of this hemistich reads: 'Standing before him whose branding iron heals the fever of their pride'; ARNOLD, *Painting*, 20.

<sup>32</sup>. *mawāsīm* – marks imprinted on the skin of animals with an iron instrument heated in the fire; see BIBERSTEIN-KAZIMIRSKI, vol. 2, 1538.

<sup>33</sup>. See the evidence for this view accumulated by B. FINSTER, in *Die Mosaiken der Umayyadenmoschee von Damaskus*, *Kunst des Orients*, 7/2(1972), 117-21.

<sup>34</sup>. Literally 'the life'.

<sup>35</sup>. Cf. the inscription on a Mamlūk lunch-box in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford; cf. J.W. ALLAN, *Later Mamlūk metalwork – II. A series of lunch-boxes*, *Oriental Art*, XVII/2, Summer 1971, 1.

What seems to be depicted in line 20 is an awning which is a double-sided (*muwajjah*)<sup>36</sup> embroidered tapestry. Around its edges are white points or circles that look like a string of unboiled pearls. This custom of hemming material or a garment with pearls already had an ancient tradition behind it by this time.<sup>37</sup> This image too bears the hallmark of the purity of the heavenly realm.<sup>38</sup>

As in line 19, line 21 evokes an idyllic pastoral scene in Paradise. The imagery of animals living in peace together has venerable antecedents in the Old Testament Biblical tradition, as, for example:

*The wolf shall also dwell with the lamb,  
And the leopard shall lie down with the kid.*<sup>39</sup>

*The wolf and the lamb shall feed together.*

*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.*<sup>40</sup>

Such images of the peaceful co-existence of predators and prey were a staple of the floor mosaics of churches in the Near East from late antique to Islamic times, and they could be interpreted as carrying similar connotations of friendship among animals, and thus evoking the Biblical Eden.<sup>41</sup>

The mention of turbans and crowns in line 23 is reminiscent of the saying 'Turbans are the crowns of the Arabs'.<sup>42</sup> The reference to the ruler's carpet in line 24 again has an ancient pedigree. To approach the caliph and, above all, to sit on his carpet, was a signal honour. Indeed, for the ruler to grant increasing spatial nearness to his presence was a yardstick of his favour. Here, with the reference to monarchs kissing the carpet of Sayf al-Dawla,<sup>43</sup> which represents his autonomous symbolic space, the poet expresses the complete subjugation of one head of state by another.

Presumably, in line 25, the reference to cauterisation is to a branding iron used for marking the skin of animals or indeed human beings.<sup>44</sup> Symbolically, the illness of those who have been brought before the turbaned ruler is that of insubordinate pride. Not only is the emperor subjugated but other lesser chiefs too stand in respectful pose, as line 26 indicates.

## General reflections

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<sup>36</sup>. Nicholson refers to *al-madh al-muwajjah*, which he calls a 'two-sided panegyric'. It may, he says, 'be compared to a garment having two surfaces of different colours but of equal beauty'; cf. NICHOLSON, *Literary history*, 311.

<sup>37</sup>. M.W. MEISTER, 'The Pearl Roundel in Chinese Textile Design', *Ars Orientalis* 8(1970), 255-67.

<sup>38</sup>. M. CANARD, 'Quelques aspects de la vie sociale en Syrie et Jazīra au dixième siècle d'après les poètes de la cour Hamdanide', *Miscellanea orientalia*, London 1973, 172.

<sup>39</sup>. Isaiah 11:6.

<sup>40</sup>. Isaiah 65:25.

<sup>41</sup>. M. PICCIRILLO, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, Amman 1993, 119, 128 and 351.

<sup>42</sup>. BIBERSTIEN-KAZIMIRSKI, *Dictionnaire*, vol. 2, 1496.

<sup>43</sup>. AVINOAM SHALEM, 'Forbidden territory. Early Islamic audience hall carpets', *Hali*, 99, July 1998, 70, 74.

<sup>44</sup>. See, for some of the background to this practice, R. NOUR, 'Tamga ou Tag. Marque au fer chaud sur les chevaux à Sinope', *Journal Asiatique*, 1928, 1-4.

It would appear that the awning – it does not seem to be a tent - described here depicts a paradise-like setting of gardens with shady trees, birds and animals. Elsewhere on the awning a defeated Byzantine crowned figure is seen prostrate before a turbaned Arab ruler. Other grandees are also present, standing in respectful poses. The reference to the sword pommels of the attendant chieftains being beneath their elbows reflects with close accuracy a detail of Sasanian court ceremonial that is recorded in several rock reliefs. These show courtiers ranged beside the shah, their elbows jutting out and their hands resting in the pommels of their swords, which are held vertically between the knees.<sup>45</sup>

As already mentioned, art historians have used these lines to focus on the issue of figural representation in medieval Muslim art. In that connection ARNOLD says that it is uncertain whether the picture was painted on the canvas of the ‘tent’ or if it had been ‘woven into a curtain or worked in some form of embroidery’.<sup>46</sup> WELIN tentatively suggests that al-Mutanabbī is talking about woven tapestries<sup>47</sup> and she is probably right. Indeed, the allusion in lines 19 and 20 would seem to be to an awning woven on both sides with images.

Elsewhere amongst his odes al-Mutanabbī mentions amongst the gifts that Sayf al-Dawla had given him were silk brocade textiles on which Rūmī craftsmen had depicted their kings.<sup>48</sup> So it is conceivable that the imagery in the lines analysed here comes from the poet’s close scrutiny of one such textile. Possibly the textile in question had been made to order from a Byzantine original for a scene in which Sayf al-Dawla, not the Byzantine ruler, is receiving signs of obeisance from defeated rulers in his tent. Such a scene as this recalls the Psalter of Basil II, painted in the early eleventh century and depicting the victorious emperor standing armed and upright in full armour, while the defeated Bulgarians grovel at his feet.<sup>49</sup> But it also relates to a Sasanian tradition in which the kings of the earth pay homage to the enthroned shah, and more generally to the themes of the kings of the earth and the family of kings. The interpretations have been proposed respectively by HERZFELD<sup>50</sup> and GRABAR<sup>51</sup> for the wall painting of the Six Kings at Qusayr ‘Amra, an early eighth-century hunting lodge and bath in the Jordanian desert.

According to HOROVITZ, a chapter in *De Ceremoniis* of the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the contemporary of Sayf al-Dawla, describes a similar homage ceremony to the one depicted in this poem of al-Mutanabbī.

<sup>45</sup>. For examples see R. GHIRSHMAN, *Iran. Parthians and Sasanians*, tr. S. GILBERT and J. EMMONS, London 1962, 172 and 225.

<sup>46</sup>. ARNOLD, 21.

<sup>47</sup>. WELIN, Sayf al-dawlah’s reign, 62, n. 16.

<sup>48</sup>. Al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān*, ed. ‘Azzām, 362.

<sup>49</sup>. A. GRABAR, *L’empereur dans l’art byzantin*, Strasbourg 1936, pl.23/1

<sup>50</sup>. E. HERZFELD, Die Könige der Erde, *Der Islam* 21(1933), 233-6.

<sup>51</sup>. O. GRABAR, ‘The Painting of the Six Kings at Qusayr ‘Amrah’, *Ars Orientalis* 1(1954), 185-7.

HOROVITZ argues that the poet is describing a picture he has actually seen and that the painting was executed by a Byzantine artist.<sup>52</sup>

In creating a scene in which the Byzantine emperor is brought to heel by an Arab ruler – a theme already depicted in a different way in a celebrated fresco in the audience hall at the Umayyad baths of Qusayr ‘Amra – al-Mutanabbī is evoking deeply embedded historic memories as well as mythic hopes for the future. The memories are of centuries-old frustrated Arab ambitions to capture Byzantium and, in particular, its magnificent capital city Constantinople. Even in the Jāhiliyya period the Bedouin Arabs had heard of the Byzantine emperor, Qaysar, and the grandeur of his court. After the coming of Islam, in the days of the first Arab conquests, the taking of Constantinople had been a major objective for the early caliphs. However, by the second/ninth century, Muslim leaders had realised that they would have to wait for a long time for this long-cherished ambition to be fulfilled.

But this did not mean that the dream of conquering Byzantium disappeared. It must have lingered in the Muslim imagination as an event which God would allow to happen at its pre-ordained moment.<sup>53</sup> In the meantime, such a victory could inhabit the sphere of messianic myth, to be evoked in court poetry and popular legend.

Al-Mutanabbī deploys the full armoury of his poetic skills. The sheer scale of the exaggeration in this poem is extremely daring. The ruler of an ancient and venerable empire is humiliated in the poet’s creative imagination by an Arab princeling who governs a small border state centred on Aleppo and who has recently achieved a small military triumph. All the strategies of the panegyric ode are deployed to inflate this victory to the full. The rhetorical potential is enhanced by the grandeur of the enemy. This, we are led to believe, is no mere border skirmish between two equal protagonists. It does not serve the poet’s purpose in these lines to use the real historical opponent of Sayf al-Dawla, the *Domesticus*. It is necessary for al-Mutanabbī to declare that his turbaned Arab patron has defeated none other than the crown-bearing Byzantine emperor who lies in abject humiliation in front of him. The victory must be over the loftiest foe the poet can imagine – Qaysar himself.

It is worth wondering whether the Arab historians living two or three hundred years later, when writing about the real event of the defeat and capture of the Christian Byzantine emperor Romanus IV Diogenes by the Muslim Seljuq sultan Alp Arslan in Dhu’l-qa‘da 463/August 1071,<sup>54</sup> recalled these extraordinarily ambitious poetic lines by al-Mutanabbī describing a purely imaginary capture by Sayf al-Dawla of the Byzantine emperor. Certainly several medieval Muslim chroniclers who recorded this pivotal hinge of history extracted a full measure of triumphalist pride from it.

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<sup>52</sup>. HOROVITZ, 387.

<sup>53</sup>. Qur’ān 30: 3-5.

<sup>54</sup>. CAROLE HILLENBRAND, *Turkish myth and Muslim symbol. The battle of Manzikert*, Edinburgh, 2007.

There are a number of resonances shared by the poem of al-Mutanabbī and some of the accounts of the events that took place with Romanus IV Diogenes in Alp Arslan's tent after the battle of Manzikert. Both the poetic lines of al-Mutanabbī and the historical Manzikert narratives of the Muslim chroniclers speak of the forced obeisance of the Byzantine emperor to the Muslim sultan. Ibn al-Jawzī relates that the Seljuq sultan pushed the emperor's face onto the ground. Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī mentions that Romanus kissed the ground. Rashīd al-Dīn writes that the sultan fixed two rings in the emperor's ears. The Persian chronicler Mīrkhwānd goes further with his rhetorical statement that Romanus 'was forced to lay the face of humiliation into the dust of impotence and baseness'.<sup>55</sup> So there are strong resemblances between the imaginary incident evoked by al-Mutanabbī and a real event which took place only a century or so later.

However, it is important to remember the actual final outcome of the encounter between Romanus and Alp Arslan which is recorded in both Muslim and Byzantine sources – the honourable release of the ruler of an ancient empire by a Muslim sultan who shows mercy and magnanimity.

Although poetic sources should be used with caution by historians, there is certainly information to be gained from the *dīwān* of al-Mutanabbī about the social history of the third/tenth century in Northern Syria and in particular about Sayf al-Dawla and his relations with Byzantium in war and in peace.<sup>56</sup> For al-Mutanabbī, Sayf al-Dawla is the epitome of the noble Arab of 'unblemished descent', as well as a true champion of Islam.<sup>57</sup> As the poet declaims elsewhere in his *dīwān*:

*'Do not be amazed: there are many swords, but today there is one Sword of the Dynasty.*

*His noble nature unsheathes him in war, and the habit of benevolence and mercy sheathes him'.<sup>58</sup>*

Let that serve as an epitaph for a ruler who practiced with such distinction the arts of peace<sup>59</sup> and war alike.

<sup>55</sup>. HILLENBRAND, *Manzikert*, 41, 71,94,102. For the full accounts of the battle by these authors, cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, ed. F. KRENKOW, Hyderabad 1359, 260-5; Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān fī tārikh al-a'yān*, ed. A. SEVIM, Ankara 1968, 146-52; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, ed. A. ATES, Ankara 1960 31-9; Mīrkhwānd, *Rawḍat al-ṣafā' fī sīrat al-anbiyā' wa'l-mulūk wa'l-khulafā'*, no editor, Lucknow 1332, 68-83.

<sup>56</sup>. CANARD, *Histoire*, 32-3,

<sup>57</sup>. ARBERRY, *Poems*, 13.

<sup>58</sup>. A. HAMORI, *The composition of Mutanabbī's panegyrics to Sayf al-Dawla*, Leiden, 1992, 64.

<sup>59</sup>. His library in Aleppo was made *waqf* for the public good; see Y. Eché, *Les bibliothèques arabes publiques et semi-publiques en Mesopotamie, en Syrie et en Egypte au Moyen Âge*, Damascus 1967, 130-1.

# Les échos des conquêtes arabes dans les sources byzantines et l'évolution des relations vers la reconnaissance mutuelle (VIIe-Xe siècles)

M. TAHAR MANSOURI

## Introduction

Après l'islamisation de la presqu'île arabe, les Arabes fraîchement convertis à l'islam et se sentant mandatés par une force divine les poussant à propager l'islam. Or la seule possibilité qui s'offrait à cette époque est de le faire en direction de Byzance pour plusieurs considérations :

- Géographiques : La presqu'île arabe étant cernée par la mer de trois côtés (le sud l'est et l'ouest) et la seule voie de communication aisée à entreprendre était celle de la Syrie puis l'Egypte d'un côté et l'Irak qui s'ouvre sur les profondeurs de l'Asie de l'autre côté.
- Liens économiques : les relations commerciales entre la presqu'île et la Syrie et sa façade maritime ne se sont jamais rompues. Les caravanes partant du Sud de l'Arabie ou des villes occidentales de cet espace débouchaient obligatoirement sur la Syrie ou vers l'est en direction de la Mésopotamie.
- Historiques : la présence de tribus arabes sur les marges syriennes et irakiennes qui ont maintenu des liens avec les tribus arabes de la presqu'île arabe tout en étant intégrées dans le milieu byzantin en adoptant la chrétienté et en servant comme auxiliaires dans l'armée byzantine .
- Idéologiques : l'islam n'ayant pas à combattre les animistes mais plutôt des religions et des empires constitués car l'idéologie universaliste de l'islam n'est contre carrée que par une autre idéologie universaliste celle de la romanité chrétienne.

Si les raisons de cette orientation vers le Nord sont palpables, les causes sont multiples. Mais l'objectif de notre contribution est d'essayer de comprendre l'effet des conquêtes arabes sur les mentalités byzantines. Comment les Byzantins avaient perçu cette nouvelle religion mais son élan conquérant qui menaçait l'existence de l'empire byzantin gréco-chrétien héritier de Rome avec son ubiquité?<sup>1</sup> Quelle image les textes Byzantins avaient-ils brossée de l'islam et des conquêtes qui ont suivi sa proclamation et quelle évolution cette image a-t-elle connue durant l'espace temps allant du VIIe jusqu'au Xe siècle ?

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<sup>1</sup>. Tertullien ne disait-il pas «*Ubique populus, Ubique respublica Ubique Vita* », in: J-M. LASSERE, "Ubique Populus". *Peuplement et Mouvements de population dans l'Afrique romaine, de la chute de Carthage à la fin de la dynastie des Sévères*, éditions du CNRS, 1977, I .

Pour aborder un tel sujet nous avons utilisé les textes de certaines chroniques comme l'évêque Sébéos, Jean de Nikiou, la Chronique de Séert, des textes hagiographiques comme la passion des 42 martyrs ou la vie des Saintes telle que la vie de Sainte Theoktiste de Lesbos ou encore quelques documents officiels tel l'Oraison funèbre de Basile Ier prononcée par son fils Léon VI le sage ou les correspondances de Daphnopatés, secrétaire de Chancellerie sous le règne de Romain Lecapène, les textes traduits et regroupés par ALAIN DUCCELLIER dans son ouvrage *le miroir de l'Islam* et enfin la correspondance du patriarche Nicolas Mysticos au début du Xe siècle en s'appuyant aussi sur les textes arabes quand cela s'avère nécessaire pour éclairer ou compléter l'information.

## I. L'Islam

En tant que religion, les textes byzantins à la différence des textes arabes rendant l'écho favorable de la perception byzantine de l'Islam<sup>2</sup> nous présentent l'Islam comme une fausse prophétie.<sup>3</sup> Les croyances chrétiennes étant ancrées dans les esprits, ne pouvaient admettre qu'une nouvelle croyance ne vienne chasser sur le même terrain et viser les mêmes humanités. Mais une telle conviction n'a cessé de s'amenuiser pour céder la place à d'autres conceptions intra-chrétiennes. Mais pour brosser un tableau négatif de cette confession à la fois menaçante et émule, les textes byzantins et arméniens nous disent que l'Islam est un complot fomenté par les juifs.<sup>4</sup> Cette conception on la trouve chez l'évêque Sébéos qui rapporte une histoire relative à l'entrée du deuxième calife Omar à Jérusalem et le stratagème organisé et exécuté par les juifs selon l'évêque Sébéos, c'est d'égorger deux porcs à l'entrée du temple dans lequel Omar était en prière faisant accuser des chrétiens d'un tel acte hostile. Par la suite les juifs auraient proposé leur aide à Omar contre une administration commune de la ville de Jérusalem. Le texte nous dit que les Juifs se sont aussi proposés de guider les armées musulmanes et leur montrer le chemin vers les possessions byzantines.<sup>5</sup> Une autre chronique rédigée vers le milieu du IXe s. connue sous le titre de *la Chronique de Séert* nous relate un fait comparable de par sa teneur mais se situant au temps du premier calife Abou Bakr. La chronique nestorienne nous dit que le Kaab al-Ahbar aurait convaincu le premier calife de la nécessité de châtier les Byzantins qui étaient en connivence avec les Perses.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> M. Hamidullah, *al wathaiq alsiyasiya li al-'Ahd al-Nabawi wa al-Khilafa al-Rachida*, éd DAR AL NAFA'IS Beyrouth 1985, voir les lettres et les réponses qui leur ont été données par Héraclius et qui stipulent une adhésion du basileus à l'Islam, 111-115.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. DUCCELLIER, *Le Miroir de l'Islam. Musulmans et chrétiens d'Orient au moyen-âge (VIIe-XIes)*, Paris 1971; IDEM, *Chrétiens d'Orient et Islam au Moyen-âge (VII-XVe s)*, Paris 1996.

<sup>4</sup> A. DUCCELLIER, *Le miroir de l'Islam*, 31-36.

<sup>5</sup> L'évêque Sébéos, *Histoire d'Héraclius*, traduit de l'arménien par F. MACLER, Paris, 1904, 96-98 ; 102-103.

<sup>6</sup> MGR SHER, *La Chronique de Séert, Patrologie Orientale*, XIII, 619.



Cette explication émane de l'histoire chrétienne dans laquelle les Juifs seraient responsables de la crucifixion de Jésus. Et n'ayant pas réussi à étouffer la chrétienté à la naissance ils auraient tenté à plusieurs reprises de l'éradiquer en s'appuyant tour à tour sur les ennemis de Byzance, les Perses puis les Arabes. C'est une explication se référant au passé et voulant justifier les défaites du début du VIII<sup>e</sup> s. Aux yeux des auteurs de l'époque, l'armée byzantine ne se serait pas vaincue sans « le complot des juifs »<sup>7</sup>. Et d'un autre côté un tel jugement vise à identifier l'Islam aux yeux des sujets byzantins non pas comme une nouvelle religion, ce qui lui conférerait un caractère céleste divin et sacré mais comme une action humaine en plus de mauvais aloi. Ce qui ternirait cette nouvelle religion et réduirait l'élan de tous ceux qui seraient tenté de l'adopter ou de se soumettre à ses lois. A cette époque, l'empire byzantin qui est un empire multiethnique, multi confessionnel et multilinguistique, souffrait d'un déséquilibre interne opposant les différentes confessions et ethnies les unes aux autres. L'ethnie grecque étant la plus dominante ne serait-ce que par le pouvoir dont elle dispose sentait une sorte de complexe de supériorité par rapport aux autres ethnies. Les chrétiens qui pratiquaient la religion selon le rite de Constantinople étant les mieux situés dans les différents appareils de l'état. En plus le traitement réservé aux sujets des empereurs ne semblait pas équitable eu égard aux origines ethniques et à la confession; ce qui a créé une certaine tension ethnique au sein de l'armée. Théophane dans sa chronique nous dit qu'à l'occasion de la distribution des rétributions pour l'armée aurait traité les auxiliaires arabes de l'armée byzantine « de chiens, ce qui les a poussés à ouvrir les portes du désert à leurs contribués ».<sup>8</sup>

Bien plus l'empire byzantin dans ses provinces orientales était le domaine de populations hétérodoxes qui refusaient de se soumettre aux préceptes religieux émanant de Constantinople, ce qui les rendaient enclins à la scission plus qu'à l'union, une situation qui faciliterait leur soumission au nouvel état en tant que convertis à l'Islam ou en tant que protégés de l'Islam en tant que *dhimmis*.

Leur présenter l'Islam comme un complot juif permettrait deux choses :

D'un côté les ramener au bercail de l'église chrétienne et d'un autre leur rappeler l'accusation contre les juifs qui auraient contribué à crucifier le Christ et de ce fait les empêcher religieusement de fraterniser avec l'ennemi. Par ailleurs l'Islam ne reconnaît pas la crucifixion du Christ dans la mesure où la Sourate de Marie ('Meriem) nous dit qu'il n'a pas été crucifié mais c'est un sosie qui a été crucifié à sa place. Ne pas reconnaître la crucifixion de Jésus innocenterait derechef les Juifs d'une accusation qui leur pèse sur la tête comme une épée de Damoclès. C'est ce qui aurait permis aux hommes d'église à Byzance de faire cette association entre Islam et Judaïsme.

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<sup>7</sup> Expression du A. DUCÉLLIER, *Le Miroir*, op.cit., 31.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Theophanes, *The chronicle*, trad. HARRY TURTLEDOVE, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1982.

## L'Islam est inhérent au Christianisme

Deux éléments apparaissent dans certains textes comme celui de Jean Skylitzes (auteur du Xe-XIe) qui, parlant de la prise de l'île de Crète par des rebelles andalous fugitifs, voit dans l'action des Musulmans un châtement divin pour des chrétiens déviant.<sup>9</sup> Et une telle conception fait que le bon croyant ne pouvait s'opposer à la volonté divine ce qui a facilité la conquête arabe de la Syrie. Cependant cette notion de châtement n'était pas perçue par les byzantins de la même manière. Si pour les impériaux ce châtement vise les hétérodoxes vivant dans la région et soumis à la nouvelle autorité, pour les hétérodoxes qui ont négocié leur statut de *dhimmis* avec les Musulmans, l'armée byzantine a été vaincue par les Arabes tout simplement parce que ni l'Empereur ni le Patriarche ni ceux qui les soutiennent ne sont sur la bonne voie.<sup>10</sup>

Mais une fois la Syrie conquise, les échanges, souvent violents, entre byzantins et musulmans se sont intensifiés. La guerre mais aussi la découverte de l'Islam de l'intérieur de par les discussions entre chrétiens et musulmans et du fait de l'effort d'explication mené par les Musulmans dans le but de convaincre leurs adversaires de la justesse de leur religion et le y attirer, ont permis de déceler quelques ressemblances entre Chrétienté et Islam. L'Islam n'étant pas une négation des religions précédentes, car il n'a pas seulement intégré des éléments de la Chrétienté mais aussi du Judaïsme, il reconnaît les prophètes précédents dont Jésus, chose qui a semé le trouble dans les esprits chrétiens. Du fait de certaines ressemblances et de certains emprunts, l'Islam apparaît aux yeux des hommes de l'église comme une hérésie chrétienne. Le considérant ainsi, cela permettrait de le combattre en usant d'arguments religieux. Et cela a permis de développer les polémiques entre chrétiens et musulmans, déplaçant ou dédoublant la guerre matérielle par un débat intellectuel portant sur les caractéristiques des deux religions. Polémique qui ne s'est jamais arrêtée au moyen-âge et qui sert aujourd'hui à certains comme base de départ pour dénigrer la civilisation arabo-musulmane ou pour s'attaquer à l'occident chrétien. Faut il rappeler le discours du

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<sup>9</sup>. Skylitzes, *Empereurs de Constantinople*, éd. et traduction de B. FLUSIN et annotation de J.-C. CHEYNET Paris, 2003, 40. «Après que les deux continents, je veux parler de l'Asie et de l'Europe, qui formaient comme la tête et la queue d'un même corps, subissant la colère du Seigneur, même s'ils ne comprirent pas la leçon, eurent été corrigés par des massacres, des incendies, des tremblements de terre, des pillages, des combats civils, d'incroyables déplacements de villes, des prodiges venus du ciel, des prodiges venus de l'air, à la fin, ce fut sur les malheureuses îles, qui sont comme le milieu du corps, que s'abattirent d'horribles catastrophes, afin que les coups frappassent l'ensemble de ce corps. Cependant, ceux qui refusaient d'adorer la forme théandrique étaient incapables de se laisser corriger». Al-Kindi *Woullat Misr*, éd. H. NASSAR, Beyrouth, sans date, 183. Cf. V. CHRISTIDES, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs (ca.824)*, Athens 1984. L'auteur ne s'est pas référé au texte de Skylitzes, *Synopsis historiae*, 41, qui situe la prise de la Crète par les Andalous en 827 comme le stipulent les sources arabes et que les deux types de sources concordent pour donner le nombre de navires andalous attaquant l'île. Al Kindi, op. cit., 188-189.

<sup>10</sup>. A. DUCELLIER; *Le Miroir*, op.cit., 54.

pape Benoît XVI à Ratisbonne ou le livre de Sylvain Gugenheim pour voir combien les polémiques médiévales ; déplacées de leur contexte, servent toujours de base pour tenter de dresser monde oriental arabo musulman et monde occidental chrétien.<sup>11</sup> Qu'en est-il de la représentation des conquêtes qui ont suivi l'islamisation de la presqu'île arabique ?

## II. Les conquêtes

D'entrée, le texte de l'évêque Sébéos dans sa présentation de l'humanité, fait une comparaison entre les peuples les associant à une image animale pour mettre en exergue le mal que représentaient les conquêtes musulmanes en s'écriant « Mais qui peut raconter l'horreur de l'invasion des Ismaélites, qui embrassèrent la mer et la terre ? ». <sup>12</sup> Pour cela, les Grecs sont comparés à une « bête qui a une forme humaine », le royaume des sassanides est comparé à « un ours », <sup>13</sup> alors que le royaume de Gog et Magog est associé à « un léopard ». <sup>14</sup> Quant au « royaume d'Ismaël est associé à une bête artificielle que l'auteur décrit comme « terrible, étonnante ; ses dents en fer, ses serres en cuivre, elle mangeait et broyait et foulait au pied le reste ». <sup>15</sup> Une image standard que les textes byzantins et arméniens et plus tard chrétiens occidentaux appliquent à leurs ennemis. Et cette image va être reprise à chaque fois qu'il est question des envahisseurs qui menacent l'empire. Mais que donne une telle image dans l'imaginaire byzantin ?

D'abord cette bête artificielle est une création divine et du point de vue religieux on ne peut s'opposer à la volonté divine. Ce qui affaiblira la résistance byzantine et ouvrira aux arabes les voies les menant jusqu'à la chaîne du Taurus qui deviendra la zone des marches frontières et qui finira par devenir une frontière mutuellement reconnue. D'ailleurs les Arabes ne vont pas tenter de s'installer derrière cette ligne de démarcation. Les expéditions menées en hiver comme en été vont se contenter de razzier les zones proches des frontières et poussant parfois jusqu'aux porte de Constantinople sans vouloir ou sans pouvoir s'y installer

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<sup>11</sup>. SYLVAIN GOUGUENHEIM *Aristote au mont Saint Michel. Les racines grecques de l'Europe chrétienne*, Paris 2008. Voir notre avis sur cet ouvrage paru dans *Journal Réalités*, n° 1170 du 31/7 au 6 /8 / 2008, 20-22. «La contribution des Arabes à la renaissance européenne serait-elle «un autre point de détail de l'histoire»? Il semble que cet ouvrage, malgré les critiques qui lui ont été faites par des chercheurs et universitaires français dignes de leur savoir, a été vendu comme un *best seller*. Une question s'impose comment un tel ouvrage a-t-il pu outrepasser les critiques et les pétitions si l'état d'esprit des lecteurs n'était pas acquis à la cause qu'il défendait. Le produit ne se vend que lorsqu'il correspond en grande partie au goût de ses consommateurs et le discours ne perce que s'il caresse l'inconscient de l'auditoire !

<sup>12</sup>. L'évêque Sébéos, *Histoire d'Héraclius*, traduit de l'arménien par F. MACLER, Paris, 1904, 96-98; 104.

<sup>13</sup>. Ibidem, 104.

<sup>14</sup>. Ibidem, 105.

<sup>15</sup>. Ibidem, 105.

surtout après l'échec du siège de Maslama Ibn 'Abd al-Malik en 96h/717.<sup>16</sup> Alors que du côté byzantin va se développer le thème de la patrie chrétienne à défendre. Léon III l'Isaurien dira en plein conflit iconoclaste à ses adversaires comme à ses sympathisants : « L'empire chrétien est notre patrie, défendons le ».<sup>17</sup>

Les conquêtes arabes ont été toujours associées au pillage, au meurtre à la destruction et à l'effusion du sang. Cette image est devenue une récurrence qu'on rencontre dans les différents textes écrits par des byzantins ou inspirés par des auteurs byzantins, mais c'est aussi une image appliquée aux peuples dits barbares, et pour les Byzantins les Arabes sont un peuple parmi les peuples barbares.

Pour les Byzantins la présence des Arabes sur les frontières de l'Empire, en dépit du danger qu'ils représentent, seraient une nécessité. L'Empire puise dans cette image négative une des raisons de son histoire politique et culturelle. C'est à ces peuples barbares qu'il doit sa résistance son héroïsme et ses martyrs.<sup>18</sup>

C'est en évoquant le siège d'Amorium par les Arabes que l'auteur hagiographique de la passion des 42 martyres nous dit : «Vois combien il a manigancé (Ismaël) de mauvaises action contre les peuples bien nés, combien de malheurs il a fait tomber sur la Cité de Dieu et surtout avec quelle injustice il a traité les martyrs du christ».<sup>19</sup> Ces événements relatés par un texte de hagiographique cite les personnages byzantins qui permettraient de situer le texte du côté byzantin au temps de Théophile (829-842) et du côté arabo musulman au temps d'al-Mu'tasim (833-842) qualifié dans le texte par le terme d'amiramoumnès (amir al-Mu'minin).<sup>20</sup> Ces martyres ne pouvaient exister si ce n'est l'ennemi sarrasin qui les amis à mort. C'est d'ailleurs le même thème dans la vie de Sainte Théoctiste de Lesbos, capturée par des Musulmans originaires de Crète dans l'île de Lesbos puis réussit à échapper à ses geôliers pour finir sa vie dans l'île de Paros.<sup>21</sup>

Cette image des musulmans qui ne reculaient devant aucune sacralité byzantine serait une forme de stéréotype qui parfois s'estompe devant les hostilités christiano-chrétiennes. Dans une des lettres envoyées par romain Lecapène au Tzar des Bulgares Syméon l'image des arabes est de loin meilleure de que celle du Bulgare frère dans la religion, le texte rappelle au Tzar des bulgares que les Agarènes respectaient les traités à la différence du Tzar lui même chrétien.

Ainsi l'image des musulmans – comme toute image de l'autre – n'est jamais stable, elle change mais en même temps elle évolue vers un certain rapprochement ou une certaine reconnaissance de l'autre en fonction de l'évolution des relations entre les deux voisins.

<sup>16</sup>. M. TAHAR MANSOURI, La Mosquée de Constantinople à l'époque byzantine, in : *Byzantiaka* 11(1991) 117-127.

<sup>17</sup>. H. AHRWEILER, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin*, Paris, 1974.

<sup>18</sup>. A.-M. TALBOT, *Holy Women of Byzantium*, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington 1996, 101-116.

<sup>19</sup>. La passion des 42 martyres, éd. F. HALKIN, *Subsidia hagiographica* 71(1986), 153, 162.

<sup>20</sup>. La passion, 162-163.

<sup>21</sup>. Voir le récit de sa vie dans *Holy women of Byzantium*, 95-116: St Theoctiste of Lesbos, translated by ANGELA C. HERO.

### III. L'évolution des relations : Vers la reconnaissance à la fois politique et religieuse

Malgré l'état de guerre endémique qui caractérisait les relations entre Byzance et les Musulmans durant la période allant du VIIe au Xe s. les échanges ne se sont jamais estompés.

Le premier échange et dont les textes arabes parent le plus c'est l'échange de prisonniers car suite à chaque expédition arabe ou contre attaque byzantine, se constitue une sorte de comité qui négocie l'échange de prisonniers. Cet échange est souvent précédé par des échanges d'ambassadeurs ou d'émissaires pour faciliter l'échange et en fixer les termes, le lieu, la date et le nombre des échangeables parmi les prisonniers.

Au sommet de l'échange les militaires sont la préoccupation majeure des pouvoirs musulmans, ce qui explique le nombre important des prisonniers musulmans tant évoqué par les textes et dont certaines sources nous avancent les chiffres non pas pour montrer le nombre mais pour insister sur la volonté des pouvoirs musulmans de délivrer des musulmans sous le contrôle des chrétiens<sup>22</sup> et certains textes nous disent qu'on les fait « sortir de l'obscurité du pays des Rums vers la lumière des pays d'islam ». S'ensuit l'échange de prisonniers souvent négocié entre musulmans et byzantins et qui est souvent une occasion d'échange culturel et humain en marge d'un échange officiel celui des prisonniers.

Par ailleurs, le traitement réservé aux prisonniers des deux côtés n'est sans doute pas un traitement fixe. Il évolue en fonction du rapport de force et parfois en fonction de l'attitude des pouvoirs en place.

Par contre la rigueur de l'emprisonnement, la dureté du traitement dans les geôles byzantines ne laisse aucun doute sur la peine qu'encourent ces prisonniers. Hilal al-Sabi' nous laisse une description pathétique de cet état de fait en rapportant ce qu'un ambassadeur d'al-Muqtadir Bi-Allah aurait dit :

«Les prisonniers musulmans à Byzance avaient une situation acceptable jusqu'au moment où deux Empereurs prennent le pouvoir ensemble, que la situation devienne intenable. Les prisonniers sont brimés, affamés, dénués de tout ce qui peut les couvrir et subissaient la pression des deux Empereurs pour qu'ils se convertissent à la Chrétienté».<sup>23</sup> L'intervention des autorités de Bagdad en faisant pression sur le Catholicos des Arméniens de Jérusalem et le Patriarche d'Antioche et en dépêchant un ambassadeur auprès des deux Empereurs qui ne sont autres que

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. L. BEN FRAJ, *Mémoire de Certificat d'aptitude à la recherche sur l'échange de prisonniers entre Byzance et les Abbassides (jusqu'à la bataille de Manzikert en 1071)*, Faculté des Sciences Humaines et sociales (en arabe), Tunis 1992-1993.

<sup>23</sup> Abu'l Hasan Hilal al-Sabi', *al-Wuzara aw Tuhfat al-Umara' fi Tarikh al-Wuzara*, éd. A.A. AL-FARRAJ Beyrouth, 1958, 354. Nous pouvons noter au passage que certains musulmans choisissent parfois de se convertir pour échapper au sort réservé aux prisonniers, Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-mulouk*, IX, DAR AL-MAARIF, Le Caire 1975, 202.

Constantin VII Porphyrogénète, encore très jeune et son beau-père Romain Lecapène qui a la réalité du pouvoir, pour voir cette situation s'améliorer.

L'échange officiel qui suit les guerres ou qui les devance a été toujours maintenu entre les deux parties, envoyés et ambassadeurs se relaient entre Byzance et les différentes capitales de l'islam depuis l'Andalousie jusqu'à Bagdad passant par Kairouan, Mahdia, le Caire et Damas. Les textes arabes et byzantins en rendent l'écho.

Bien plus les relations commerciales, même si nous ne sommes pas bien informés sur cet aspect du moins durant la période qui nous intéresse sont attestés par le livre de l'éparque, rédigé par Léon VI le sage à l'intention du préfet de la ville où il est question de l'organisation du commerce des sarrasins à Constantinople ou encore le texte de Yahiya b. Saïd al-antaki qui évoque la forte communauté des Rums amalfitains vivant au Caire vers la fin du Xe siècle.

D'ailleurs c'est à cette période que l'on attribue la célèbre épopée de Basile Digénis Akrités. Le nom même du héros de cette épopée traduit cette nouvelle ambiance marquée par les brassages des populations de frontières dans la mesure où il appartient aux Musulmans par l'ascendant paternel et aux Byzantins par l'ascendant maternel. Il est l'homme de frontières aux deux appartenances.<sup>24</sup>

Cette mutation dans la mentalité byzantine augure du moins théoriquement d'une nouvelle ère dans les rapports entre Musulmans et Byzantins. Une mutation palpable des deux côtés des frontières. Dans cette période le monde musulman connaissait des mutations mentales qui peuvent être qualifiées de pacifistes exprimées dans la littérature par Abi Hayyan al-Tawhidi qui relativisait la culture en écrivant «*A toute nation ses vices et ses vertus, à chaque peuple ses compliments et ses défauts et à chaque communauté sa perfection et ses défaillances dans les faits et les gestes. Ce qui se traduit par l'inégalité des richesses, des vertus, des maux et des imperfections parmi les hommes*».<sup>25</sup> Ou encore Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'arri qui écrit «*Les religions nous ont séparés et elles ont semé les germes de la haine*».<sup>26</sup> Même si les deux auteurs cités sont considérés comme des cas exceptionnels dans l'histoire de la littérature arabe, ils ne pouvaient qu'exprimer un sentiment d'acceptation de l'autre, de la futilité des conflits entre humains et témoignent de ces changements dans les mentalités, sinon dans certaines mentalités. Par ailleurs, sur le plan social et militaire.<sup>27</sup> Pour Byzance un nouveau danger auquel les Byzantins n'étaient pas préparés se dessine sur les frontières orientales et représentés par les Turcs Seljukides ce qui était de nature rapprocher les ennemis d'hier vers un nouveau type de rapports, où la reconnaissance l'emportait sur le

<sup>24</sup>. A. RAMBAUD, Une Épopée du Xe siècle: Les exploits de Digénis Akrités, in: *Etudes sur l'Histoire byzantine*, Paris 1922, 65-108; A. FRANTZ, Digénis Akrités : A Byzantine epic and its illustrators, *Byzantion* 15(1940/1941), 87-91.

<sup>25</sup>. Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi, *al-Imta' wal mu'anasa*, 6e nuit, 113.

<sup>26</sup>. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muntazam*, VIII, 186

<sup>27</sup>. N. ELISSEEF, *L'Orient musulman au Moyen-âge*, Armand Colin, Paris 1977 ; MARC BERGE, *Les Arabes*, Paris 1978.

rejet et l'humanité des uns et des autres semblait prendre le dessus sur les différences culturelles et religieuses.

### Conclusion

La littérature byzantine jusqu'au Xe s n'a cessé de reproduire les premières images forgées pour exprimer un sentiment de peur pour galvaniser les populations à fin de résister aux attaques arabes répétées et dresser une barrière entre les habitants des provinces méridionales de l'empire et l'Islam.

Cette idéologie a-t-elle réussi dans ses objectifs ? On peut dire qu'elle a réussi surtout à brosser une image négative et l'ancrer dans l'imaginaire chrétien en général. Cette image est souvent reprise et mise en exergue dans les moments de tension et de crise. Une image construite dans un contexte particulier mais toujours d'actualité.

Elle n'a pas empêché le brassage de populations et le rapprochement entre les deux cultures et ceux qui en sont les adeptes.

Ce qui est l'expression d'un changement dans les mentalités des deux côtés, un changement qui va vers l'acceptation de l'autre, dans sa différence comme l'ont exprimé chacun à sa manière Saint Jean l'Eméropolite qui écrit «*appeler les Agarènes très pervers et haïssables, cela n'est pas bien car il est écrit : Aimez vos ennemis et traitez bien ceux qui vous haïssent*»,<sup>28</sup> quoique d'une manière officielle, Nicolas Mysticos dans une de ses lettres aux pouvoirs musulmans en écrivant : «*Du moment qu'il y a deux souverainetés, celle des Sarrasins et celle des Romains, qui dominant et inondent de leur lumière l'ensemble de la souveraineté terrestre, comme le font les deux grands liminaires dans le firmament, il faut pour cette seule raison vivre en communauté et en fraternité...* ».<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>. Vie de Saint Jean l'Eméropolite, in: A. DUCÉLLIER, *Le miroir*, 243-244.

<sup>29</sup>. Nicolas Mysticos, Patriarche de Constantinople, «Première lettre à l'émir de Crète», PG, vol. 111, col. 28 ; traduction anglaise in: Nicolas Mysticos, *Lettres*, éd. traduction de J.H. JENKINS et L.G. WESTERINK, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington 1973, 3 ; voir également le texte in DUCÉLLIER, *L'église byzantine entre pouvoir et esprit (313-204)*, Paris, 1990, 230. Pour mieux comprendre cette évolution, cf. M.T. MANSOURI, L'oeil du grand rival, la ville vue par les Musulmans, *Autrement* 40, Janvier 1996, 154-170.





# The Byzantine Court and the Arab Caliphate: Mutual Attempts at Rapprochement at the Peak of the Arab-Byzantine Struggle (9th-10th c.)

SOPHIA PATOURA

I shall begin this paper by focusing on two excerpts, one from an Arab and one from a byzantine source. According to Al-Nu'man's *Kitab al-majalis wa'l-musayarat* (= The Book of Sessions and Excursions), on being petitioned by the byzantine emperor Romanos II for a perpetual truce, the fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz replied thus through the byzantine ambassador: "Religion and Islamic law forbid the agreeing of a perpetual truce, for Allah sent his prophet Mohammed and established the institution of the Imams to call upon the world to espouse his Faith and to wage holy war on the infidel to achieve this". The caliph went on to further clarify and explain his stance: "Had the truce been a perpetual one, then the holy war (jihad) which is enjoined on Muslims would have been negated, the call for Islam would have ceased and the command of the Qur'an would have been contravened".<sup>1</sup>

On the byzantine side, Leo VI the Wise admits in the 18<sup>th</sup> constitution of his *Tactica* that he wrote the work in question in view of the Saracens (Arabs). In an effort to bolster his generals' morale, he also invoked religion as an ideology, declaring in turn what was essentially a Christian holy war to be waged upon the 'infidel' Arabs: "Accustom everyone, all together, who are engaged in the struggle for Christ our God [...] and for the entire Christian people [...]. For your labors [gain] the rewards stored up [for you] by God himself and by Our God-given Majesty".<sup>2</sup>

Both sources date from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, a century which, like its predecessor, was marked by vicious Arab-byzantine clashes. If one were to base one's assessment on these and numerous other similar accounts, on the many acts of war enacted in the Arab-byzantine borderlands and on the military campaigns mounted on both sides, one could easily describe relations between the two empires as thoroughly hostile. However, a host of accounts included in historical and

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<sup>1</sup>. A. A. VASILIEV, *Byzance et les Arabes: La Dynastie Macédonnienne (867-959)*, II-1, Bruxelles 1950, 420-423; M. CANARD, Les sources arabes de l'histoire byzantine aux confins des Xe et XIe siècles, *Mélanges R. Janin. REByz* 19 (1961), 287-289 [= Variorum Reprints, *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient*, London 1973, XVII]; A. TIBI, Byzantine-Fatimid relations in the reign of Al-Mu'izz li-Din (935-975 A. D.) as reflected in primary arabic sources, *Graeco-arabica* 4 (1991), appendix II, 102.

<sup>2</sup>. Leonis VI *Tactica*, ed. G. DENNIS, *The Tactika of Leo VI (Text, Translation, and Commentary)*, [CFHB 49], Washington, D.C. 2010, 444; cf. G. MICHAELIDES-NOUAROS, Ο δίκαιος πόλεμος κατά τα Τακτικά του Λέοντος του Σοφού, *Σύμμεικτα Σεφεριάδου*, Athens 1961, 411-434.

literary texts both Byzantine and Arab depict the other side of the coin: both sides' unceasing attempts at rapprochement, finding common ground and understanding the other using various means and through the mediation of numerous factors. Such efforts had also featured in previous centuries, but they had been both sporadic and uncoordinated and it was only in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries that they gained in impetus and high-level institutionalized diplomacy was incorporated into the two empires' foreign policies.

During this period, the ideological rhetoric of 'holy war' provided both leaderships with an important tool for keeping their war-weary and exhausted troops on the alert. At its political and intellectual apogee in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Byzantium, which had begun to take its hegemony over the *Oecumene* for granted, found itself facing an enemy that had evolved into a major power – the only one of its neighbours that had developed a bureaucracy, institutions, diplomacy, an organized standing army and the military technology required for besieging cities and launching sea-borne military missions. Under the banner of 'holy war', Islam was now calling Byzantine Universality into question and claiming world hegemony for itself. "Crete and the other countries of the world are ours, by the grace of God, who has appointed us lords over the world", caliph al-Mu'izz unambiguously declared in his letter to Romanos II, defending the Arab occupation of Crete on the occasion of the embassy of 957/8.<sup>3</sup>

Unsure how to respond to their era's unfamiliar balance of international power, the byzantine court had no choice but to treat its rival as an equal – in words, at least – and to formally recognize that portion of world hegemony that it claimed for itself. It was in this spirit of compromise and retreating from the positions it had hitherto held on the singularity of the byzantine empire and its primacy as a world power that the regent and future patriarch, Nikolaos I Mystikos, composed his celebrated letter to the caliph of Baghdad, al-Muqtadir, in which he wrote: "There are two lordships, that of the Saracens and that of the Romans, which stand above all lordship on earth, and shine like two mighty beacons in the firmament". He goes on to note that there were vast differences between the two societies due to their respective religions, but hastens to stress that these differences should not be allowed to prevent the two from enjoying a social and brotherly relationship, or to deprive the two peoples of communication.<sup>4</sup> A few years earlier, Leo VI had had no qualms about employing a contradictory discourse in his *Tactica*, which contain descriptions that belittle and slight the Arabs while simultaneously presenting them as a paradigm, exhorting the Byzantines to emulate their military organization, their selfless willingness to go to war *en masse* and the effectiveness with which they waged their *jihad*.<sup>5</sup> Formulae such as the

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<sup>3</sup>. CANARD, *Les sources arabes*, 287; TIBI, *Byzantine-Fatimid relations*, appendix III, 104.

<sup>4</sup>. J.H. JENKINS - L.G. WESTERINK, *Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople Letters* [CFHB 6], *Dumbarton Oaks* 1973, 2.

<sup>5</sup>. DENNIS, *Taktika of Leo VI*, 474 - 480; G. DAGRON, "Ceux d'en face". *Les peuples étrangers dans les traités militaires byzantins, Travaux et Memoires* 10 (1987), 223; J.F. HALDON, *Recruitment and Conscription in the Byzantine Army c. 550-950. A study on the origins of*

“magnificent, most noble and most prominent Primate of the Agarenes” undoubtedly reflect a change in the byzantine stance towards the Arabs which was now – on the surface, at least – rooted in the principles of equality and mutual respect.<sup>6</sup>

Byzantium was now being called upon to face an Enemy with a capital as N.-C. KOUTRAKOU most aptly notes in her paper on the subject.<sup>7</sup> It had to define a rival that would increasingly come to resemble it, a great political and religious power which was laying claim to a place in the international firmament and calling byzantine hegemony into question. For the Byzantines, the Arabs – especially after their conquest of Crete – became “their perpetual nemesis”, a constant threat to their very existence.

For their part, the Arabs were equally awestruck by the might of Byzantium, an empire which, quite apart from its glorious past, was during this period engaged in vigorously re-conquering its lost territories and re-establishing its lordship over the *Oecumene*. The dynastic rivalry and internal strife that beset the caliphate during the 10<sup>th</sup> century in particular would also focus Arab attention on tackling their great rival.

Thus, however harsh the rhetoric the Byzantines employed against the Arabs especially and chiefly in their religious texts, and however fanatical the entreaties for religious war may have been from Arab – chiefly ecclesiastical – circles, a rapprochement between the two sides was now inescapable. The ideologies and fixations nurtured by the ruling classes on both sides would now have to give way before cool logic and the harsh reality of constant war and its painful consequences. In other words, the byzantine court and Arab caliphate would have to ‘domesticate’ war, incorporating it into a system of normal social relations, rendering it predictable, restricting the time and space it took up and transforming it into a stimulus for – and element in – inter-communication.<sup>8</sup> At the leadership level, both sides had long since set diplomatic processes in motion which had, until the 9<sup>th</sup> century, chiefly related to issues of war and peace.<sup>9</sup> The new dynamic that would subsequently emerge in the evolving diplomatic contact would centre on the ransoming, exchange, legal protection and proper treatment of prisoners. The processes set in motion to resolve these issues led to new forms of diplomatic

*the Stratiotika Ktemata* [Öster. Akad. d. Wissenschaften Phil.-hist. Kl. Sitzungsber., 357 bd.], Vienna 1979, 48 ff.

<sup>6</sup>. J.J. REISKE, *Constantini Porphyrogeniti Imperatoris, De cerimoniis aulae byzantinae* [CSHB 2], Bonn 1829-1830, 686 (henceforth *De cerimoniis*); cf. NIKE-CATHERINE KOUTRAKOU, The image of the Arabs in Middle-Byzantine Politics. A study in the Enemy principle (8th-10th Centuries), *Graeco-arabica* 5 (1993), 213.

<sup>7</sup>. KOUTRAKOU, The Image of the Arabs, 215.

<sup>8</sup>. G. DAGRON, Apprivoiser la guerre. Byzantins et Arabes ennemis intimes, in: *To εμπόλεμο Βυζάντιο, 9ος-12ος αι. (Byzantium at war)*, ed. K. TSIKNAKIS, Athens 1997, 37.

<sup>9</sup>. H. KENNEDY, Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy, in: *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. J. SHEPARD - S. FRANKLIN, Variorum 1992, 137.

activity in both courts, and provided exceptional conditions for communicating on every level.<sup>10</sup>

The byzantine and Arab sources contain a large amount of relevant information that conveys an image of a diplomatic marathon which closer study reveals to have involved numerous protagonists including emperors and caliphs, senior officials from both courts (generals, patricians, emirs and viziers), patriarchs and high-ranking clerics, ambassadors, interpreters and – above all – high-ranking Arab and byzantine prisoners who willingly or unwillingly played their part in this communication, providing information and helping to effect a political and cultural rapprochement between the two empires.

The institution of official exchanges of groups of prisoners in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century undoubtedly marked a turning point in byzantine-Islamic relations.<sup>11</sup> In the contents of the new status, a number of new and highly significant procedures were added to those already in use. In addition to the despatching of ambassadors, letters and gifts, a given place could now be specified for the assembling of prisoners, hostages could be exchanged, and the rites of exchange would henceforth be observed by a host who thronged there from the nearest border regions. The implementation of these procedures provided an opportunity for communication on every level between the enemies, starting with the royal courts of Byzantium and Islam, and extending, via the military and political authorities in the border provinces, to the Christian and Muslim populace who were given this chance for – albeit only visual – contact.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most significant chapters in Arab-byzantine relations is recorded in the content of the official exchanges and ransoming of prisoners on the banks of the river Lamos near Tarsus, most of which has been recorded by Arab writers like al-Masudi, al-Maqrizi, al-Tabari and al-Baladhuri.<sup>13</sup> The content of the letter from the byzantine emperor Romanos I to the caliph of Baghdad al-Radi, in 938 exemplifies the considerable effort being invested in attempting to draw closer to the rival power in the context – and on the pretext – of prisoner exchanges. The

<sup>10</sup>. The contribution of byzantine prisoners, according to Arab sources, had been really important since the first centuries of Arab expansion, in organizing the caliphate and transferring of "Know-how" at all levels. Along with the christians communities of Syria and Egypt, the prisoners of war were used and exploited in transmitting the knowledge of sciences and classical philosophy, but mainly in developing the empire of Islam in sectors such as the administration, the diplomacy, the commerce, the arts, etc., see J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Views of Islam*, *DOP* 18 (1954), 113; MARIA CAMPAGNOLO-POTHITOU, *Les échanges des prisonniers entre Byzance et l'Islam aux IXe-Xe siècles*, *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 7(1995), 24; MILKA ANDONOVA-HRISTOVA, *Modèles historiques de coexistence pacifique entre musulmans et chrétiens orthodoxes pendant les périodes byzantine et post-byzantine*, *Byzantinoslavica* 61 (2003), 229-239.

<sup>11</sup>. R.A. KHOURI AL ODETALLAH, *Αραβες και Βυζαντινοί: το πρόβλημα των αιχμαλώτων πολέμου*, Thessaloniki 1983, 68-87. CAMPAGNOLO-POTHITOU, *Les échanges*, 29-30.

<sup>12</sup>. SOPHIA PATOURA, *Οι αιχμάλωτοι ως παράγοντες επικοινωνίας και πληροφόρησης (4ος-10ος αι.)*, Athens 1994, 137-138.

<sup>13</sup>. CAMPAGNOLO-POTHITOU, *Les échanges*, 7-8, 30.

byzantine leader expresses his hope and desire for the two sides to draw closer together after the exchange, and for their peoples to be reconciled.<sup>14</sup> Patriarch Nikolaos I expresses similar concerns in his letter to the caliph al-Muqtadir, in this case about Cypriot prisoners, before going on to express his hope and desire for rapprochement between the Arab and byzantine worlds.<sup>15</sup>

The Arab authorities often manifested a comparable interest in the fate of Muslim prisoners, a typical example being the intervention made with the Constantinopolitan authorities by the vizier Ali bn-Isa during the brief reign of Alexander (912-913).<sup>16</sup> The ambassadors played a crucial role at every stage in the exchange process, and both sides selected capable and flexible courtiers for the job who stood out for their intelligence, knowledge and cultivation.<sup>17</sup> The best-known byzantine ambassadors included Methodius,<sup>18</sup> Leo Choerosphactes<sup>19</sup> and John Kourkouas<sup>20</sup>; the caliphate's appointees included the experienced and successful diplomat Nasir (Nasr) bn al-Azhar.<sup>21</sup>

The conditions of the era and the court bureaucracy in both empires meant that foreign ambassadors usually had to spend a long time in the capital cities of their interlocutors, which provided them with the opportunity to communicate, and

<sup>14</sup>. VASILIEV, *Byzance et les Arabes* II-1, 425-430; KHOURI AL ODETALLAH, *Αραβες και Βυζαντινοί*, 69-70.

<sup>15</sup>. ZENKINS - WESTERINK, Nicholas I Patriarch, 2-16; cf. C.P. KYRRIS, The nature of Arab-byzantine relations in Cyprus from the middle of the 7th to the middle of the 10th century A. D., *Graeco-arabica* 3 (1984), 152-153.

<sup>16</sup>. During the caliphate of al- Muqtadir, the vizir of Ali bn- Isa sent a diplomatic mission to Constantinople, accompanied by the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch, with the task of looking into the living conditions and treatment of muslim prisoners by the Byzantines (M. CANARD, Extraits des sources arabes, in: A.A. VASILIEV, *Byzance et les Arabes* II/2, Bruxelles 1950, 286-291).

<sup>17</sup>. A. TOYNBEE, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his world*, London 1973, 390-393.

<sup>18</sup>. The slavonic Life of brother missionaries Cyril and Methodius gives us the information related to the embassy of Methodius in Baghdad in the year 851 (FR. DVORNIK, *Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance*, Prague 1969/2, 69 ff).

<sup>19</sup>. Leo Choerosphactes, in charge of the 908 embassy in Bagdad, delivered, according to the historian al- Tabari, a handwritten letter of the emperor Leo VI, in which he proposed to caliph an exchange of prisoners and asked him to send to the byzantine capital an Arab ambassador in order to gather the muslim prisoners. The caliph's response was immediate, mainly due to Choerosphactes' flexibility and negotiating skills, as the Arab historian marks. (VASILIEV, *Byzance et les Arabes* II/1, 132-139; G. KOLIAS, *Léon Choerosphactès, magister, proconsul et patrice*, Athens 1939).

<sup>20</sup>. VASILIEV, *Byzance et les Arabes* II/1, 316).

<sup>21</sup>. Al- Tabari, while describing the diplomatic mission of Nasir to Constantinople during the years 860-861, regarding to the negotiation of a prisoner exchange, mentions an incident that was caused in the byzantine court due to the Arab ambassador's refusal to follow the protocol, according to which everyone owed to change clothes in front of the emperor. This incident is an indication of Nasir's particular power and of his high post at the caliphate (see A.A. VASILIEV, *Byzance et les Arabes* t. I, La dynastie d'Amorium (820-867), Bruxelles 1935, 320).

become better acquainted, with the 'other side'.<sup>22</sup> The Arab and byzantine sources describe the ambassadors' reception in the two imperial capitals as magnificent and especially extravagant. Indeed, it was the hosts' intention to use every means at their disposal to impress their distinguished foreign guests with the opulence of their court and the power of their leader.<sup>23</sup>

The detailed description in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *De Cerimoniis* makes it clear that the Byzantines assigned considerable importance to the hosting of Arab ambassadors and the impressions they formed of the byzantine capital.<sup>24</sup> The work in question refers to "our friends the Saracens", their being met on the border, installed in luxurious accommodation (the *mitato* referred to by the Porphyrogenitus), their participation in official court and social events and their invitation to official symposia, where they were honoured over and above other foreign envoys.<sup>25</sup> All of this clearly points to the existence of a special protocol relating to the hosting of Arab ambassadors, who were often joined by high-ranking Arab prisoners who also participated in symposia, ceremonies and other court events.<sup>26</sup>

Byzantine ambassadors were received with the same magnificence in the Arab caliphate and to the same end: to present the image of a wealthy and civilized capital and of an all-powerful, undisputed leader. In the caliphate of Baghdad, for instance, the palace complex housing the caliph and his courtiers rivalled that of Constantinople in its architecture, artistry, opulence and luxury and must have excited the admiration and astonishment of all those, Muslim and Byzantine, who visited it.<sup>27</sup>

In his *History of Baghdad*, the Arab historian al-Khatib al-Bagdadi, describes the especially splendid reception afforded to byzantine ambassadors by the Arab court on the occasion of the tenth exchange of prisoners in 917. Amidst eye-witness accounts, he lists and describes every part of the palace included in the

<sup>22</sup>. PATOURA, *Οι αιχμάλωτοι ως παράγοντες*, 141.

<sup>23</sup>. *Ibidem*, 141-143.

<sup>24</sup>. REISKE, *De cerimoniis*, 570-592.

<sup>25</sup>. *Ibidem*, 399, 401, 570-592; cf. M. CANARD, Les relations politiques et sociales entre Byzance et les Arabes, *DOP* 18 (1964), 36-37 [= Variorum Reprints, *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient*, London 1973, XIX]; L. DOUGLAS - J. SHEPARD, A double life: placing the peri presbeon, *Byzantinoslavica* 52 (1991), 34-35.

<sup>26</sup>. It's worth mentioning the innovation introduced by Leo VI, with Philotheos' Kletorologion, according to which muslim prisoners were also invited to the official banquets in the byzantine capital, during the Christmas and Easter ceremonies, possibly to replace the missing ambassadors (N. OIKONOMIDES, *Les listes de Préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles (Introduction, Text, Traduction et Commentaire)*, Paris 1972; LILIANA SIMEONOVA, In the depths of tenth-century byzantine ceremonial: the treatment of Arab prisoners of war at imperial banquets, *BMGs* 22 (1998), 75-104.

<sup>27</sup>. M. CANARD, Bagdat au IVe siècle de l'Hegire (Xe siècle de l'ère chrétienne), *Arabica*, volume publié à l'occasion du mille deux centieme anniversaire de la fondation de Bagdat, Leiden 1962, 271-272 [= Variorum Reprints, *Miscellanea Orientalia*, London 1973, XV].

tour given to the byzantine ambassadors;<sup>28</sup> the Arab intellectual and prisoner of war, Harun ibn Yahya, would do the same for the byzantine imperial palace in his “A Description of Constantinople”, an account preserved by his contemporary and fellow Arab, the geographer Ibn Rosteh in his *Kitab al-a laq al nafisa* (= Livre des choses precieuses).<sup>29</sup>

The status enjoyed by Muslim ambassadors in the byzantine capital was largely based on the classical tradition of hospitality and the Christian concept of human rights. The status of byzantine envoys in the different Arab capitals was more complex and included various stages and levels specified in Islamic law. However, the common denominators in every phase in their welcome and stay in the caliphate were the protection and generous hospitality afforded to them, and their status as sacred personages – a status every civilized ‘nation’ afforded to guests during this era.<sup>30</sup> The letter sent by the emir of Egypt, Muhammad ibn Tugj al-Ihsid, to the emperor Romanos Lekapenos in the light of the byzantine embassy of 936-937, should be mentioned at this point as indicative of many such letters. It relates in detail the reception and hosting of the byzantine ambassadors in the emir’s palace, and reveals their role in effecting a rapprochement between Byzantium and the Arabs. The phrase with which the emir begins his letter to the emperor to a close is highly significant: “Because you have initiated friendly and courteous relationships with us, you make it worth our cultivating them and doing everything it is in our hands to do to satisfy your needs and your desires”.<sup>31</sup>

It should also be noted that some of the embassies exchanged by the Byzantines and Arabs during this period were cultural in nature. That Constantine Porphyrogenitus should have despatched copies of Orosios’ world history, *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII* (= Seven Books of History Against the Pagans) and Dioskorides’ botanical handbook *De Materia Medica* to the caliph of Cordoba; that caliph Al-Mamun of Baghdad should have asked the emperor Theophilos to send Leo the Mathematician to his court, a request mirrored in the emperor Nikephoros I’s request to caliph Harun ar Rashid to send the Arab poet Abu-I-‘Atahiya to the byzantine capital;<sup>32</sup> that artists and materials (tesserae,

<sup>28</sup>. CANARD, Bagdat au IVe siècle de l’Hegire, 271; CAMPAGNOLO-POTHITOU, Les échanges, 42.

<sup>29</sup>. A.A. VASILIEV, Harun ibn Yahya and his description of Constantinople, *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 5 (1932), 149-153; PATOURA, *Oi axhálaxtoi ox paráxonres*, 103-110.

<sup>30</sup>. C.E. BOSWORTH, Byzantium and the Arabs: war and peace between two world civilisations, *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 3-4 (1991-1992), 6 [= Variorum, *The Arabs, Byzantium and Iran; Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture*, London 1996, XIII]; CANARD, Les relations politiques, 37-38.

<sup>31</sup>. M. CANARD, Une lettre de Muhammad ibn Tugj al- Ihsid emir d’Egypte à l’empereur Romain Lécapène, *Annales de l’Institut d’Etudes Orientales de la Faculté des Lettres d’Alger* 2, (1936) [= Variorum Reprints, *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient*, London 1973, VII].

<sup>32</sup>. See M. CANARD, La prise d’Héraclée et les relations entre Harun ar-Rashid et l’empereur Nicéphore Ier, *Byzantion* 32 (1962), 366-371 [= Variorum Reprints, *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient*, London 1973, XVIII].

marble, onyx etc.) should have been transported from Byzantium to the caliphates for the construction and decoration of palaces and mosques are all indicative of mutual respect and esteem, and of an attempt to bring the two worlds closer together by means of culture, which transcended the narrow bounds of their formal diplomatic relationship.<sup>33</sup>

In the religious sphere, Byzantium and Islam shared a common worldview, a common theological vision of human history with similar ethical standards with regard to justice in this world and the next.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, despite extended periods of war and conflict, the prerequisites were in place for the two empires to at least collaborate in culture, science, art and other technical spheres.

Summing up, I should like to note that there are too many examples of peaceful Arab-byzantine relations to summarize in a single paper. However, the examples referred to here do allow certain general conclusions to be drawn.

As far as the issue of prisoners, a core reference point in this presentation, is concerned, it would seem that the institution of official exchanges and ransoming was put to tactical use by both sides as a means of maintaining equilibrium of sorts between the two powers. It also served as a means of lobbying for the necessity of constant dialogue, and established lines of communication between the two worlds on every political and social level.

Arab-byzantine diplomatic relations can thus be seen to have moved along two separate and distinct axes: that of a harsh institutionalized diplomacy in the context of which ambassadors, letters, gifts and, sometimes, prisoners were sent from one empire to the other with a view to the negotiating of peace treaties, truces and the exchange or ransoming of prisoners, but also that of a freer, more flexible diplomacy which, primarily conducted on the level of convention, included cultural actions and ingratulatory behaviour on both sides,<sup>35</sup> and even efforts to develop an intellectual and spiritual dialogue built upon the religious differences between the Christian and Islamic worlds.<sup>36</sup> As a consequence, war and its impact – which was equally grave and painful for both sides – plus mutual recognition of the size and might of the Other, were the constants in the light of which the byzantine court and the Arab caliphate constructed their peaceful and friendly – as well as their hostile – relations.

<sup>33</sup>. CANARD, *Les relations politiques et sociales*, 36; PATOURA, *Οι αιχμάλωτοι ως παράγοντες*, 78-81. Included in the cultural diplomacy surely were the precious gifts, which were exchanged through the ambassadors, but also the trade that official representatives, Byzantines and Arabs, freely practiced, during their stay in the two empires' capital cities.

<sup>34</sup>. BOSWORTH, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, 18.

<sup>35</sup>. See PATOURA, *Οι αιχμάλωτοι ως παράγοντες*, 22-26, 83-124, where the sources and the bibliography.

<sup>36</sup>. C. E. BOSWORTH, *The "protected peoples" (Christians and Jews) in medieval Egypt and Syria*, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 1979, 11-35 [= Variorum, *The Arabs, Byzantium and Iran, Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture*, London 1996, VII]; see also, J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine views of Islam*, *DOP* 18 (1964), 115-132; I. SHAHID, *Byzantium and the Islamic World*, in: *Byzantium: A World Civilization*, ed. ANGELIKI E. LAIOU - H. MAGUIRE, Washington D. C. 1992, 50-51.



# **A Preliminary Introduction to the Comparison of Maritime Traditions in the Red Sea, Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean from the 1st to the 15th Century AD**

**ALKIVIADIS GINALIS**

## **Introduction**

In contrast to the widely studied cultural, political and economic relationship between the Late Roman-Arab and Graeco-Arab world (including the Western Indian Ocean), studies concerning the vessels acting in these regions are not so forthcoming. In contrast to the very large and rich textual corpus and iconographic sources on nautical technology from China and the Mediterranean, the evidence for the Red Sea and Indian Ocean is very limited. Also in terms of archaeological finds, apart from the Mediterranean Sea, the evidence is still very sparse and hardly provides sufficient information to develop a comprehensive picture of shipbuilding traditions in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Therefore, although the understanding of seafaring for the communication and political, economic, social and cultural exchange between different civilizations, regions and spheres of influence in West- and South Asia is increasing due to recent works such as that of Hoogervorst,<sup>1</sup> many questions still remain to be answered. A comparative study of construction features and their development, alongside a consideration of political and economic aspects of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages can provide a starting point from which to piece the puzzle together. Furthermore, a combination of ethnographic and ethno-historical studies on recent maritime traditions and culture can provide a BETTER UNDERSTANDING of which types of ships had been used and how they had been built in different areas, as well as why technological changes appeared and where the ideas behind them came from.

In general, it is assumed that Byzantine and Arab ships especially in the Mediterranean Sea were similar in type, shape and building tradition.<sup>2</sup> There are numerous terms cited for common Arab-Byzantine ship-types, such as the Dromon (Δρόμων)/Drūmūn, Chelandion (Χελάνδιον)/Shalandī, Sachtoura (Σαχτούρα)/Shakhtūr, Karavos (Κάραβος)/Qārib, Tarida (Ταρίδα)/Tarrīda or Sandalon (Σάνδαλον)/Sandal.<sup>3</sup> But what about traditions in the Red Sea and the Indian

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<sup>1</sup>. T. HOOGERVORST, *Tracing the prehistoric emergence of long-distance maritime contacts in the Indian Ocean: Combining historical linguistic and archaeological approaches*. Oxford (unfinished PhD Dissertation; with thanks to the author T. Hoogervorst for sharing information)

<sup>2</sup>. V. CHRISTIDES – STELLA CHRISTIDOU – A. APOSTOLOPOULOS (ed.), *Treasures of Arab-Byzantine Navigation (7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> C.)*, Athen 2004.

<sup>3</sup>. V. CHRISTIDES, Ibn al-Manqālī (Mangli) and Leo VI.: New Evidence on Arabo-Byzantine Ship Construction and Naval Warfare, *BSI* 56 (1995) 83-96; V. CHRISTIDES, Military Intelligence in Arabo-Byzantine Naval Warfare, in: *Byzantium at War (9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c.)*, K. TSIKNAKES, 1997, Athens, 269-281; A. DAIN, *Naumachica. Partim adhuc inedita in unum*

Arabia, Greece and Byzantium: Cultural Contacts in Ancient and Medieval Times, ed. Abdulaziz Al-Helabi, Dimitrios Letsios, Moshalleh Al-Moraekhi, Abdullah Al-Abduljabbar, Riyadh 2012 / AH 1433, Part II, pp. 249-262.

Ocean? Did Arab or even indigenous ships there share similar features with those from the Mediterranean?

A comparison of rudder-, rigging- and hull characteristics between Mediterranean Arab-Byzantine ships<sup>4</sup> and the Feluccas or Dhows<sup>5</sup> of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean outline some common features and similarities but also some differences. This suggests that there was an intense and wide interaction of different naval technologies in specific zones. Even though little is known about indigenous ships, especially due to the scarcity of archaeological records,<sup>6</sup> already prior to Late Roman-Arab and Graeco-Arab interactions, indigenous and Southeast Asian maritime traditions diffused and spread between the Arabian peninsula and the Indian Ocean.<sup>7</sup> As such, Devendra correctly presents a very complex differentiation of the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia into several general technology zones.<sup>8</sup> Including the development of ship-construction in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, this literally creates a Gordian knot. Of course, the technological interaction in the various zones took place neither consistently nor over a short period of time. The main transition period for shipbuilding, particularly the transformation and adaptation of characteristic features and methods such as the construction of the hull, the rigging and the steering system, can be divided into three main chronological stages:<sup>9</sup>

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*nunc primum conguessit et indice auxit*, Paris 1943, 63-66; I. FADEL, To πλοίο Shalandi, in: *Byzantine and Arab Sailing Ships (7th – 13th cent.)*, eds. A. ANDRIOTIS – K. KARAPLI – CH. SPANOUDIS, Athens – Oinoussai 2001, 48-49; D. NAKHILI, *Al-Sufun al-Islāmiyah*, Alexandria 1979, 74ff.

<sup>4</sup>. For Byzantine shipbuilding technology see: A. GINALIS, *Materielle Zeugnisse der byzantinischen Seefahrt unter besonderer Beachtung der Unterwasserarchäologie*, Vienna 2008, 32-66 (unpublished Master Dissertation).

<sup>5</sup>. For the construction of Dhows see: D. A. AGIUS, *In the wake of the Dhow. The Arabian Gulf and Oman*. Reading 2002; YA'QUB YUSUF AL-HIJI, *The art of dhow-building in Kuwait*, Al-Mansuriyyah 2001.

<sup>6</sup>. The only pre-Islamic site is the dugout canoe at Kelangi Ganga, dated to around 380 AD. G. KAPITĀN, *Records of traditional watercraft from South and West Sri Lanka* (BAR Int. Series 1931), Oxford 2009, 168-169.

<sup>7</sup>. T. HOOGERVORST, *Indian Ocean*, Chapter 1.2: “Boat-building traditions in the Indian Ocean” (The dispersal of Southeast Asian maritime technology across the Indian Ocean); N. BOIVIN – R. BLENCH – D. FULLER, Archaeological, linguistic and historical sources on ancient seafaring: A multidisciplinary approach to the study of early maritime contact and exchange in the Arabian peninsula, in: *The Evolution of Human Populations in Arabia*, eds. M. PETRAGLIA – J. ROSE (Vertebrate Paleobiology and Paleoanthropology Series), New York 2009, 11-13;

<sup>8</sup>. S. DEVENDRA, Pre-Modern Sri Lankan Ships, in: *Ships and the development of maritime technology in the Indian Ocean*, eds. D. PARKIN – RUTH BARNES (Indian Ocean Series 2), London 2002, 143-147.

<sup>9</sup>. GINALIS, *Byzantinische Seefahrt*, 33.

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD  
 Between the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD  
 Between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD

Apart from commercial contacts between the Middle East, Africa, India and beyond in Antiquity,<sup>10</sup> the Mediterranean had always contact with the East, as far as India, China and Korea. Until the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC the contact was primarily through the overland route, well-known as the Silk route, or through the Persian Gulf to India.<sup>11</sup> But after the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, the Parthians (247 BC – 224 AD) interfered with the flourishing trade between the Mediterranean, India and China. As a result, Roman merchants were forced to seek an alternative route via the Red Sea in order to bypass the Parthians.<sup>12</sup> With the establishment of the Roman province of Egypt in 30 BC and the direct access to the Red Sea, Roman merchants started a complex economic exchange, not only within the Red Sea region itself (as in earlier centuries) but even with the East African coast, the Arab peninsula and the western coast of India. This long-distance maritime contact is confirmed by textual sources such as Pliny the Elder and the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (Περίπλους τῆς Ἐρυθρᾶς Θαλάσσης) from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.<sup>13</sup> The Romans with their long distance trade in the Indian Ocean (with its peak in the 1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) may not have initiated or “switched on” maritime activity in India and the Arab world, but certainly stimulated supra-regional trade and most of all the manufacture of deep-sea going vessels. It was long assumed, that technological interaction took place only one-way and that Arab and that indigenous sailors of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean owed their maritime skills to the Roman and Byzantine merchants. However, as HOOGERVORST shows in his Dissertation and as this paper aims to emphasise, Asian seafaring traditions played a significant role for the development and history of the Mediterranean seafaring as well.

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<sup>10</sup> K. A. NILAKANTA, Sastri, Southern India, Arabia and Africa. *New Indian Antiquary* 1/1(1938) 25ff.

<sup>11</sup> G. K. YOUNG, *Rome's Eastern Trade. International Commerce and Imperial Policy 31 BC - AD 305*, London 2001, 148ff., 190ff.

<sup>12</sup> Even though trade connections in the Red Sea were laid already before the Roman period and Ptolemaic kings established ports along the Red Sea coast such as Berenike and Myos Hormos, commerce with India and Arabia started and rapidly expanded during the reigns of Augustus and mainly under his successors: S. E. SIDEBOTHAM, *Roman economic policy in the Erythra Thalassa 30 B.C.-A.D. 217*, Leiden 1986, 4; YOUNG, *Rome's Eastern Trade*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> J. BOSTOCK – H. T. RILEY, *The natural history of Pliny*, III, London 1898, 138; T. HOOGERVORST, *Indian Ocean*, Chapter 1.2; G. W. B. HUNTINGFORD, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, London 1980, 158-159; W. H. SCHOFF, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea. Travel and trade in the Indian Ocean by a merchant of the first century*, New York – London – Bombay – Calcutta 1910, 46-47.

## The Hull

In the Roman Empire the commonly used construction method was the nailed hull-first technique, which had already been used for centuries in the Mediterranean Sea. In this method, planks were butted up against each other, edge to edge and built the ship's hull from the keel up. The planks were fastened with pins, which were in turn fixed vertically by means of mortise and tenon joints. Afterwards they were strengthened with the key ribs and framing timbers, using copper and later iron nails.<sup>14</sup>

Two hull fragments from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, uncovered in a reused context at Myos Hormos (Quseir al-Qadim), provide direct evidence for the introduction of the Mediterranean shipbuilding tradition into the Red Sea and its use for ships involved in Indian Ocean trade in Antiquity.<sup>15</sup> The Roman influence, however, should not be overestimated since regional seafaring, at least, existed in this area. But unfortunately, not a single ship has been excavated in the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean to provide direct evidence for shipbuilding characteristics of that period. Therefore, scholars have to rely almost entirely on iconography, travelogues and other written resources. Further, AGIUS and PULAK correctly argue, that the shipbuilding tradition of the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea may not have undergone radical changes until nowadays.<sup>16</sup> Thus traditional features in the construction of a modern Dhow show signs of continuity with the past.<sup>17</sup> According to chapter 15 and 36 of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, the ship construction method used in the Persian-Arab world and beyond at that time was the hull-first technique as well, but by using ships with (ραπτῶν) sewn planks.<sup>18</sup> In this method, the planks were bound together edge to edge and holes of about 1cm were drilled in the planks and finally sewn together with coir fibre, date-palm fibre or dried grass along the longitudinal seams. Other organic materials and substances for sewing

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<sup>14</sup>. For ancient ship-construction see: G. DE DONATO, *Mare Nostrum. The Roman Sea* (Encyclopedia of Underwater Archaeology 3), London 2003, 24-27; J. R. STEFFY, *Wooden Ship Building and the Interpretation of Shipwrecks*, London <sup>2</sup>1998, 37-72.

<sup>15</sup>. S. E. SIDEBOTHAM, *Berenike and the ancient maritime spice route* (The California world history library 18), London 2011.

<http://www.pcma.uw.edu.pl/index.php?id=555&L=0>;

<http://www.archbase.com/berenike/english1.html>.

<sup>16</sup>. D. A. AGIUS, *Seafaring in the Arabian Gulf and Oman. The People of the Dhow*, London 2005; C. PULAK, Paper at the *Tropis X* conference at Hydra in 2008; YA'QUB YUSUF AL-HIJJ, *Dhow-building*.

<sup>17</sup>. YA'QUB YUSUF AL-HIJJ, *Dhow-building*, 44-95.

<sup>18</sup>. HUNTINGFORD, *Periplus*, 158-159; HIMANSHU P. RAY, *The archaeology of seafaring in ancient South Asia*, Cambridge 2003, 59-60; E. H. SELAND, Shipwreck, Maroons and Monsters: The Hazards of the Ancient Red Sea Navigation, in: *Connected Hinterlands: Proceedings of Red Sea Project IV*, eds. Lucy BLUE – J. COOPER – R. THOMAS – J. WHITEWRIGHT (Society for Arabian Studies Monographs 8), (*BAR Int. Series* 2052), Oxford 2009, 183.

and caulking ships included sugar palm bark, lime or dammars.<sup>19</sup> Except for some areas (particularly on Southeast Asian islands), ships in the Arabian Sea and western Indian Ocean were constructed with continuous sewing in either a criss-cross or a cross-vertical pattern, called “lacing”.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, it can be assumed that the Red Sea served as a meeting point of the Roman-Mediterranean mortise and tenon and sewn tradition of the Indian Ocean, which coexisted and acted contemporaneously as far as the western Indian Ocean.

From Late Antiquity onwards and especially between the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, after centuries of a peaceful “Mare internum”, the Late Roman and Byzantine Empire were confronted with hostile fleets along the Mediterranean coasts again, which called for swift action at sea? The imperial fleet needed to be manoeuvrable and at the same time to outnumber, or at least to be equal in number to that of the enemy. Increased warship production demanded a reduction in building time and costs. The first signs of a transformation within ship-construction from the hull-first to a skeleton-first technique, where the main focus shifted from stability to a faster and lower-priced production process, became evident. This shift was caused by interplay of commercial, economic and political-geographical factors.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike the hull-first technique, the skeleton-first construction method places priority on the framework of the ship. Here the frame skeleton is erected first, and is subsequently covered with the planks of the hull. This transition in hull-construction style resulted in a decreasing usage of mortise and tenon joints, as the frame, rather than the joints of the hull, provided the ship’s strength. Archaeological evidence from shipwrecks, such as the Yassi Ada (A) wreck<sup>22</sup> or the wreck of Pantano Longarini,<sup>23</sup> both from the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, suggest the first indications of this changing method by virtue of their mixed construction technique. The lower part of the hull up to the waterline was constructed in the hull-first and the upper part already in the skeleton-first method.<sup>24</sup> The first fully documented wreck to be

<sup>19</sup>. KAPITĀN, *Sri Lanka, 175*; LOTIKA VARADARAJAN, Indian boat building traditions. The ethnological evidence, in: *Athens, Aden, Arikamedu. Essays on the interrelations between India, Arabia and the Eastern Mediterranean*, eds. MARIE-FRANCOISE BOUSSAC – J.-F. SALLES, New Delhi 1994, 169.

<sup>20</sup>. For detailed information about Asian methods of fastening planks see: T. HOOGERVORST, *Indian Ocean*, Chapter 1.4: “Methods of plank-fastening” (The dispersal of Southeast Asian maritime technology across the Indian Ocean).

<sup>21</sup>. GINALIS, *Byzantinische Seefahrt*, 32, 35ff.

<sup>22</sup>. G. F. BASS – F. H. VAN DOORNICK JR., *Yassi Ada. A Seventh-Century Byzantine Shipwreck, I*, Austin Texas 1982; A. J. PARKER, *Ancient Shipwrecks of the Mediterranean & the Roman Provinces* (BAR Int. Series 580), Oxford 1992, 454-455.

<sup>23</sup>. PARKER, *Ancient Shipwrecks*, 303; P. THROCKMORTON – G. KAPITĀN, An Ancient Shipwreck at Pantano Longarini, *Archaeology* 21/3 (1968) 182-187; P. and J. THROCKMORTON, The Roman wreck at Pantano Longarini, *IJNA* 2/2 (1973) 243-266.

<sup>24</sup>. As already mentioned, the transition took place neither consistently nor in a short period of time. The shift occurred generally more quickly at smaller ships. While 6<sup>th</sup> century Tantara A wreck with an approximate length of 12m x 4m is representative of small ships at

built entirely in the skeleton method and thereby lending evidence to a completed development is the well-known Serce Liman wreck of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>25</sup>

It is not a coincidence at all, that the period of naval developments in the Mediterranean Sea coincide exactly with the time of the Arab conquest of the eastern provinces (635 conquest of Damascus and 642 conquest of Alexandria) and their expansion around the Mediterranean Sea throughout the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>26</sup> The history and struggle of Byzantium with the Arabs up to the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century AD caused not only crucial political and economic changes but moreover initiated the need of technological development and transition in order to be able to cope with the new challenge.

In contrast, there had not been such a need in the Indian Ocean at that time. The Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea were controlled and dominated by Arab seafarers. Since no major naval fleet was needed, which would have required a sturdy and much heavier and stronger nailed ship-construction, sailors continued sewing their ships. For this cost-efficient and effective technique for merchant ships the use of the hull-first technique was mandatory. In all textual accounts of this period, the sewing method is mentioned as the only mode of constructing ships,<sup>27</sup> and one can even today still find this technique in southern Arabia, India and Sri Lanka. Dhow-builders in Oman still sew some parts of their

that time, the Tantura B from the 9<sup>th</sup> century must have been a relatively large ship (19-23m x 5m) in its day. Both represent an early stage of skeleton-first construction too, containing floor- and so-called half- framing timbers, which were subsequently covered by planks. The mixed construction method of the Marmara VI wreck of the 9<sup>th</sup> century as well as the Marmara I, III and Yeni Kapi I, II, IV, V wrecks, all of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, confirm that shipbuilding in the Byzantine Empire underwent a period of technological transition, at least until the tenth century: S. A. KINGSLEY, *Barbarian Seas. Late Rome to Islam* (Encyclopedia of Underwater Archaeology 4), London 2004, 99-101; S. A. KINGSLEY, *Shipwreck Archaeology of the Holy Land. Processes and Parameters*, London 2004, 47; PARKER, *Ancient Shipwrecks*, 26; ERSU PEKIN, *Gün ışığında, İstanbul'un 8000 yılı. Marmaray, Metro, Sultanahmet kazıları*, İstanbul 2007, 200-201, 208-215.

<sup>25</sup>. G. F. BASS – SHEILA D. MATTHEWS – J. R. STEFFY – F. H. VAN DOORNINCK JR., *Serce Limani: An Eleventh-Century Shipwreck. The Ship and Its Anchorage, Crew, and Passengers, I*, Austin, Texas 2004.

<sup>26</sup>. CHRISTIDES, *Arabo-Byzantine Naval Warfare*; V. CHRISTIDES, *The conquest of Crete by the Arabs (ca.824): a turning point in the struggle between Byzantium and Islam*, Athens 1984.

<sup>27</sup>. As early as by Procopius from the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Koranic verse “*The Moon*” from the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD or several other descriptions from geographers and travellers from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD such as Marco Polo, al-Ya’qubi, Al-Masudi, Abu Zayd Hasan, al-Jawhari or Ibn Sida: PROCOPIUS, *History of the Wars*, transl. and ed. H. B. DEWING, London 1954, I.19, 23-25; D. A. AGIUS, *Classic Ships of Islam. From Mesopotamia to the Indian Ocean*, Leiden 2008, 161-163; SELAND, *Monsters*, 183; SARAH ARENSON, *The Red Sea – a Bridge or a Barrier? The Case of Naval Warfare*, in: *Natural Resources and Cultural Connections of the Red Sea*, eds. JANET STARKEY – P. STARKEY – T. WILKINSON (Society for Arabian Studies Monographs 5), (BAR Int. Series 1661), Oxford 2007, 90-91; Marco Polo, *The travels of Marco Polo*, transl. R. LATHAM, London 1958, 66.

ships like the stem and sternpost to the ends of the planks.<sup>28</sup> Although drawings and other illustrations show sewn boats of the Indian Ocean up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD and later, it is generally assumed that the method of iron-fastening (as used in the Mediterranean) was introduced by the Europeans with the arrival of the Portuguese in the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>29</sup> However, the sewn method seems not to be superseded by iron-nailed fastening before modern times, since Vasco da Gama mentions exclusively sewn-planked ships for the 16<sup>th</sup> century AD and drawings by Thomas Bowrey from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and John Edye from 1834 show still zig-zag stitched ships.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, it is still under discussion when the first iron-nailed fastened ships appeared in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The earliest possible date for the introduction of fully nailed ships might be the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, traceable either to the Arab administrator *al-Haġġāġ bin Yūsuf*<sup>31</sup> or to the influence of Chinese Junks, which had used this technique for centuries and sailed in the Indian Ocean as far west as the Red Sea.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the earliest archaeological evidence known for the use of iron nails is the 2002 excavated shipwreck at Kadakkarappally in Southwest India from the 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>33</sup>

### Rigging

It is well known, that in Antiquity the Mediterranean used the square rigged sail where the sail is carried on a horizontal spar perpendicular to the ship's keel.<sup>34</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD rigging material uncovered at the excavations of Myos Hormos and Berenike, including wooden brail rings, rigging block sheaves, a dead-eye and cotton strips as well as even some few linen strips of

<sup>28</sup>. AGIUS, *Classic Ships*, 165.

<sup>29</sup>. E. KENTLEY, The sewn boats of India's East coast, in: Tradition & Archaeology. Early maritime contacts in the Indian Ocean: *Proceedings of the international seminar, Techno-archaeological perspectives of seafaring in the Indian Ocean, 4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC - 15<sup>th</sup> cent. AD*, eds. HIMANSHU P. RAY – J.-F. SALLES, New Delhi 1966, 255-257; T. HOOGERVORST, *Indian Ocean*, Chapter 1.4.

<sup>30</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>. Written sources from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD such as the work “*On the Nations of India and the Brahmins*”, describing the journey of an Egyptian *Scholasticus* from Thebes to India, or Procopius itself report the preference of wooden pegs or sewn ships due the existence of magnetic islands attracting all ships with iron nails: J. D. M. DERRET, The Theban Scholasticus and Malabar in c. 355-60, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 82/1 (1962) 21-31; PROCOPIUS, *History*, I.19, 23-25; T. HOOGERVORST, *Indian Ocean*, Chapter 1.4; SELAND, *Monsters*, 183.

<sup>32</sup>. P.-Y. MANGUIN, Late Medieval Asian shipbuilding in the Indian Ocean. A reappraisal, *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien, XVIe-XIXe s.* 2/2 (1985) 10-11.

<sup>33</sup>. R. K. PEDERSEN, The shipwreck in the Coconut Grove: The Kadakkarappally Boat. *INAQ* 31/2 (2004) 3-9; VICTORIA TOMALIN – V. SELVAKUMAR – M. V. NAIR – P. K. GOPI, The Thaikkal-Kadakkarappally Boat: An archaeological example of medieval shipbuilding in the western Indian Ocean, *IJNA* 33/2 (2004) 253-263.

<sup>34</sup>. L. CASSON, *Ships and Seafaring in ancient times*, London 1994, 39ff; L. CASSON, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World*, London 1995, 229ff.

sails.<sup>35</sup> Both sites show S- or anticlockwise and Z-spun textiles. At that time the Mediterranean followed mainly the tradition of S- or anticlockwise spun linen sails, whereas the Indian Ocean used Z-spun cotton sails. But around the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, cotton-growing is also attested for Egypt.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, we meet three traditions: a Mediterranean influence, an Indian influence and finally a local mixture of both traditions. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Red Sea region acted as a zone of interaction between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, combining the European S-spun technique with Asian cotton sails. Apart from the Red Sea hybrid form, the Z-spun materials indicate an either Indian or Arabian Gulf origin and confirm the suggestion that the ships of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean used the same sails at that time.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the rigging block sheaves, the dead-eye and the brail rings support a similar fashion of rigging system and interaction of material. Whereas the artefacts from Myos Hormos and Berenike follow Mediterranean characteristics, they were all made of wood species of either Indian or East African origin.<sup>38</sup>

Unfortunately, we do not know anything about the rigging system of indigenous ships in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean of that time, but it can be assumed that at least the big deep-sea going vessels used square sails. But this rigging was about to be superseded and replaced soon.

From Late Antiquity onwards, a new rigging system, the so-called triangular lateen sail seems to arise and slowly dominating the sea. Probably evolving from the square sail brailed in a triangular shape,<sup>39</sup> it could have set along the line of the keel (fore-and-aft) and improved the tacking against the wind.<sup>40</sup> For a long time the lateen sail has been attributed to the Arabs and the Indian Ocean,<sup>41</sup> who introduced it into the Mediterranean in the course of their expansion from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Andhra coins, which depict fore-and-aft rigged sails<sup>42</sup> and the image of a lateen sail relief on the tombstone of Alexander of

<sup>35</sup> . Myos Hormos: J. WHITEWRIGHT, Roman Rigging Material from the Red Sea Port of Myos Hormos. *IJNA* 36/2 (2007) 282-292; Berenike: FELICITY C. WILD – J. P. WILD, Sails from the Roman port at Berenike, Egypt. *IJNA* 30/2 (2001) 211-220.

<sup>36</sup> . J. P. WILD, Cotton in Roman Egypt: Some problems of origin, *Al-Rāfidān* 18(1997) 289-290.

<sup>37</sup> . WILD – WILD, *Berenike*, 212-213.

<sup>38</sup> . WHITEWRIGHT, *Myos Hormos*, 289-291.

<sup>39</sup> . L. CASSON, The Origin of the lateen. *The American Neptune* 31(1971) 49-51.

<sup>40</sup> . Which means sailing in a closer angle to the contrary wind in a zig-zag way.

<sup>41</sup> . R. L.B. BOWEN, Eastern sail affinities, *The American Neptune* 13/1(1953) 192; G. F. HOURANI, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, Princeton 1951 (1995), 103.

<sup>42</sup> . J. DELOCHE, Iconographic evidence on the development of boat and ship structures in India (2<sup>nd</sup> C. B.C. – 15<sup>th</sup> C. A.D.) A new approach, in: Tradition and Archaeology. Early maritime contacts in the Indian Ocean: *Proceedings of the international seminar, Techno-archaeological perspectives of seafaring in the Indian Ocean, 4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC - 15<sup>th</sup> cent. AD*, eds. HIMANSHU P. RAY – J.-F. SALLES, 1996, New Delhi, 201-202.



Miletus,<sup>43</sup> demonstrate the existence and use of the triangular sail not only in the Indian Ocean but also in the Mediterranean Sea from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD onwards.<sup>44</sup> So where does the lateen sail actually come from and when does this innovation arise? Well, to answer this question it is necessary to have a closer look at its physical properties and technical advantage. The lateen sail might be less efficient than the square sail, but it has the benefit of catching the wind on both sides of the sail, enabling the vessel to manoeuvre much closer to contrary wind.<sup>45</sup> The advantage was that sailors no longer depended on the wind blowing from a specific direction in order to make good speed. Concerning the question of the first adaption of the lateen sail for trading ships in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, the depictions from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD give us already a *terminus ante quem*. Taking into account that the direct long distance maritime connection between Europe and Southeast Asia through the Red Sea had been initiated by the incorporation of Egypt to the Roman Empire in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, forms a *terminus post quem*. Subsequently the 200 year time-span between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD could be a transition period for this technological interaction. But which geographical zone could introduce or spread that innovation in such a short time, both in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean?

The only region which could act as a zone for interaction, as well as strongly requires such an innovation itself, is the Red Sea. The navigation on the Red Sea was not only difficult due to its shallowness and coral reefs, but most of all due to its strong northern winds, especially the more north you sail.<sup>46</sup> Since the Red Sea has a Southeast-Northwest orientation, a much closer manoeuvre to the contrary wind was necessary to make transport and travel in the Red Sea more favourable for sailing towards the northern harbours of Berenike, Myos Hormos or later Clysma (Suez) and Aila (Aqaba). This is supported by the fact that the Red Sea region already acted as a zone of interaction between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean during Antiquity, exchanging rigging material and techniques. Nevertheless, this new rigging system spread and developed differently in the Mediterranean, Arabia and Southeast Asia.<sup>47</sup> Unlike the Mediterranean triangular

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<sup>43</sup>. CASSON, *Ships and Seamanship*, Fig. 181.

<sup>44</sup>. In fact, the earliest Byzantine depictions of a lateen sail date to the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century AD such as the Kelenderis ship mosaic and the Kellia ship graffito, whereas the earliest evidence in Islamic art occurs not earlier than on a 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century Egyptian lustre-ware dish: J. WHITEWRIGHT, The Mediterranean Lateen Sail in Late Antiquity. *IJNA* 38/1 (2009) 98ff; D. NICOLLE, Shipping In Islamic Art: Seventh Through Sixteenth Century AD, *The American Neptune* 49/3(1989) 170-171; Ill. 6.

<sup>45</sup>. Square rigged ships couldn't manoeuvre closer than 78,75 grade, whereas lateen sailed vessels managed to tackle as close as 56,25 grade.

<sup>46</sup>. J. WHITEWRIGHT, How Fast is Fast? Technology, Trade and Speed under Sail in the Roman Red Sea, in: *Natural Resources and Cultural Connections of the Red Sea*, eds. JANET STARKEY – P. STARKEY – T. WILKINSON (Society for Arabian Studies Monographs 5), (BAR Int. Series 1661), Oxford 2007, 77-87; Fig. 6:1-6:5.

<sup>47</sup>. HOOGERVORST, *Indian Ocean*, Chapter 1.5: "Indian Ocean Sails" (The dispersal of Southeast Asian maritime technology across the Indian Ocean).

type, the type used in the Arab world is technically quadrangular since its forepart does not end in a point and therefore also called “*Settee*”, “*Arab lateen*” or “*Quasi-lug lateen*” sail. In turn, the triangular lateen sail from Southeast Asia or so-called “*Oceanic spritsail*” and its hybrid forms from South India and Sri Lanka show similarities with the Mediterranean lateen sail, despite a different rigging system and that latter one has no lower yard.<sup>48</sup> Since the so-called Arab quadrangular lateen sail is interpreted as an intermediate stage of the development from the square to the triangular lateen sail, it is thus evident that this technique was probably invented in and spread from the Red Sea and similar environments such as the rivers Nile and Euphrates, both to the open seas in the west and the east.

### Steering

The third main feature under development is the steering system. Basically two main types of rudders can be seen being used for steering ships:

The classical quarter rudder

The medieval stern-mounted rudder

The question of the transition from the classical quarter rudder towards the central stern-mounted rudder and their origins has been the focus of discussions and research for a long time. On the one hand it was argued that the innovation of the stern rudder originates from North Europe and was introduced to the Mediterranean probably in the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD and to the Indian Ocean by the arrival of the Portuguese in the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD. On the other hand it had been assumed that the use of a stern rudder originates from Chinese junks who transmitted this technology through the Arabs to the Mediterranean Sea.

The use of a central stern steering system, both in Europe and Asia, can be traced back already as far as the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC.<sup>49</sup> But at that time ships used a single stern steering system, but did not yet use a rudder *per se*. Instead, they just converted an oar and mounted it on the stern. Consequently, the actual first evidence of a stern rudder originates from China and can be traced back as early as to a model from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.<sup>50</sup> Since Chinese junks did not have a sternpost, the rudder was suspended and held by a system of tackle and controlled by a tiller. Although this first main type of stern rudder was introduced to the Indian Ocean and beyond by the Chinese, it was probably distributed and is still used in a different way by the Arabs in the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> For example at Middle Kingdom tomb reliefs, depicting Egyptian river boats of the Nile: M. ATA, *Egypt from Past to Present. Through the Eyes of an Egyptian*, Cairo 2007, 68.

<sup>50</sup> J. NEEDHAM, *Science and civilization in China. Volume 4. Physics and physical technology. Part III. Civil engineering and nautics*, Cambridge 1980, 649-650; K. S. TOM, *Echoes from Old China: Life, Legends, and Lore of the Middle Kingdom*, Honolulu 1989, 103-104.

<sup>51</sup> This is reflected by linguistic data. For further information see: HOOGERVORST, *Indian Ocean*, Chapter 1.7: “Other nautical devices” (The dispersal of Southeast Asian maritime technology across the Indian Ocean), App. 16.

At the same time, the Romans as well as later the Byzantines and Arabs, both in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Persian and Arabian Gulf, continued using the classical tradition of the quarter rudder. Here, the helmsmen or “*ναύκληρος*” was using two oars, one each side of the ship lashed to the stern, in order to navigate the ship.<sup>52</sup> Arab textual sources as well as iconographic depictions up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD,<sup>53</sup> show the use of both rudder types together contemporaneously. This suggests a period of transition from the quarter rudder towards the stern rudder on Arab ships (probably in the Indian Ocean) from the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards and at least until the 12<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>54</sup>

In contrast, but based on the first main type of a stern-mounted rudder of Chinese junks, the Arab world developed a different kind (as mentioned above): here, the rudder was attached to the sternpost (by lashing the two parts together) in a permanent fashion and controlled by lines attached to a crosspiece mounted on the rudder’s head perpendicular to the plane of the blade. Therefore, the Arabs<sup>55</sup> were borrowing from the Chinese the idea of a single stern-mounted rudder, but innovating and developing an independent mechanism. But why did the people of the Mediterranean not adapt this technology at least for bigger merchant ships in its entirety at this time?

Since the Arabs fastened the rudder by lashing it to the sternpost, the lashings had to be maintained constantly. The Byzantines probably could not see any advantage compared to the quarter rudder for the Mediterranean and ignored this innovation until it was introduced in a different way from northern Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, using the so-called pintle-and-gudgeon system.<sup>56</sup> This system allowed not only a better rudder attachment, but also a better protection of the rudder and the helmsmen against damage and missiles during naval battles.<sup>57</sup> This forms another milestone in maritime history, since it influences or evolves synchronously together with a change of ship-construction again. In order to use the pintle-and-gudgeon stern rudder, the ship required a totally vertical sternpost and a transom on which the rudder could be fixed. As such, it develops with the transition of North European “cog-like vessels” into large seaworthy cogs,<sup>58</sup> which required a

<sup>52</sup>. CASSON, *Ships and Seamanship*, 224-228; Fig. 114.

<sup>53</sup>. Such as “The best Divisions for the Classifications of Regions – Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Marifat al-Aqalim” of al-Muqaddasi from 985 AD and the “Book of Fixed Stars - Suwar al Kawakib” of al-Sufi from 1130 AD: CHRISTIDES – CHRISTIDOU – APOSTOLOPOULOS, *Arab-Byzantine Navigation*, 159; L. V. MOTT, *The Development of the Rudder, A.D. 100-1600: A Technological Tale*, College Station 1991, 92ff. (published Master Thesis)

<sup>54</sup>. MOTT, *Rudder*, 93-94; Fig. 8.1.

<sup>55</sup>. As well as probably the North Europeans.

<sup>56</sup>. It is first depicted on church carvings at Winchester and Zedelghem, dating to around 1180 AD and first appeared with cogs in the Northern and Baltic Sea: H. BRINDLEY, *Medieval Rudders*, *Mariner’s Mirror* 13 (1927) 86; For more detailed information see: MOTT, *Rudder*, 82-91; 92ff; Fig. 7.2.

<sup>57</sup>. *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>58</sup>. For cogs see: J. R. STEFFY, *Wooden Ship Building and the Interpretation of Shipwrecks*, London <sup>2</sup>1998, 114ff.

more elaborate steering system. Finally, although Portuguese cogs introduced the new pintle-and-gudgeon stern rudder also to the Indian Ocean, Arab seafarers never adopted this system and today still construct traditional dhows with the lashing method. One reason, which is not to be overlooked, might be the question of availability of suitable construction materials.<sup>59</sup> Like the import of timber for the Red Sea and the Middle East mainly from India but also from the Mediterranean (Table 1 & 2), iron was not a native material in the region of the Indian Ocean and therefore had to be imported.

**Table 1**

Wood-types for the construction of Red Sea and Indian Ocean Dhows

<b>Framework</b>		<b>Planks</b>		<b>Keel</b>	
Benteak	HW*	Benteak	HW	Indian Laurel	HW
Teak	HW-MHW	Vaka	HW	Teak	HW-MHW
Poon	HW-MHW	Teak	HW-MHW	Jack Wood	MHW
Jack Wood	MHW	Jack Wood (rare)	WoodMHW		
Pali Wood	MHW	Pali Wood	MHW		
Meet Wood	MHW				
Salam	MHW				
Syrian Thorn (only Red Sea)	MHW				

**Other**

Teak (Decking)	HW-MHW		
Indian Laurel	HW		
Benteak (Rudder)	HW		
Poon (Mast)	HW-MHW		* HW – Hardwood
Vaka (Gunwale)	HW		MHW – Middle-Hardwood
Mango Wood	HW		SW – Softwood
Jack Wood (Mast-step)	MHW		
Egyptian Thorn (only Red Sea)	MHW		

<sup>59</sup>. HOOGERVORST, *Indian Ocean*, Chapter 1.8: “Concluding remarks” (The dispersal of Southeast Asian maritime technology across the Indian Ocean).

**Table 2**

Wood-types for the construction of Mediterranean ships

<b>Framework</b>	<b>Planks</b>			<b>Keel</b>	
Oak	HW	Stone Pine	MHW-SW	Oak	HW
Elm	HW	Plane	SW	Elm	HW
Cypress	HW	Spruce	SW		
Mulberry	HW	Pine	SW		
Stone Pine	MHW-SW	Poplar	SW		
Plane	SW				

### Conclusions

Not only the development of ship-construction itself, but also the steering and rigging system of ships, indicates a very complex and active interaction between the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean from Antiquity to the late medieval period. The progress and changes in shipbuilding in the different regions neither took place consistently nor in a short period of time.<sup>60</sup> The aim of this paper is to show, that the process of innovation and interaction was not linear and requires a deeper investigation of interconnection between wider geographical areas in order to understand features and characteristics of local traditions.

The Arab world, especially the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, played a significant role for the interaction and development of nautical innovations - either being actively involved, such as in the development and spread of technologies, or passively by initiating a time of change. The latter one can be seen mainly in the Mediterranean, especially in the Arab-Byzantine relationship and history. Not only the history of the Byzantine Empire but also the progress and development of Europe towards the Age of Discovery is associated and affected by its relationship with the East. Although the seafaring traditions in the Red Sea, Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean show many similar features and certainly share a common maritime history, the impact of nautical developments in these areas was different.

Connected to the nautical developments in the areas of the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, linking regions with their geographical and physical characteristics as well as their infrastructure such as harbours and routes etc. played a crucial role in the interaction of knowledge. While Egypt and the Nile had been the artery for communication and interaction between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean during the early centuries (with its linking harbours of

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<sup>60</sup>. This is shown by different adaption period of certain construction features on smaller and bigger ships their relationship in the course of time.

Berenike and Myos Hormos), this changes very much in Late Antiquity under Byzantine rule. From the 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards the Sinai Peninsula takes over the role as a linking area between East and West, connecting its two harbours of Clysma and Aila at its edges on the Red Sea with Dor and Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast.

Finally, the development of military inventions and naval tactics occurred in course of this interaction as well. But this will be another subject for a future paper.

# **Sailing in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean Imaginary Creatures in Some Byzantine and Arab Illuminations: The Unicorn (MONOCERŌS)**

**VASILIOS CHRISTIDES**

Sailing in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean inspired the 6<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine author Cosmas Indicopleustes to write a number of books of which only one, *The Christian Topography*, has survived.<sup>1</sup> It is mainly a cosmography inspired by religious dogmatism, but simultaneously part of it contains valuable original geographical information, collected first-hand or gathered by questioning other merchants. Actually, Cosmas is an example of the fact that Christianity alone cannot be blamed for the sterility of Byzantine Geography, for Christianity restricted itself to only cosmographical interpretations. Cosmas' main aim to stubbornly support the Bible's cosmological veracity left unaltered his description of foreign lands and people which later periods lack, especially his important information concerning the Ethiopians and Himyarite Arabs derived from first-hand eyewitness information.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, while many studies have been written about Cosmas' work, little effort has been made to examine and investigate his personal life and maritime activities, which are closely related to the Byzantine naval policy in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean at the time of Justinian's reign, as well as the linguistic peculiarities of his language.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. Cosmas' "Christian Topography" has been edited and translated in French with meticulous care by WANDA WOLSKA-CONUS, ed. and trans., *Cosmas Indicopleustes, Topographie chrétienne*, 3 vols., I (Paris 1968), II (Paris 1970), III (Paris 1973), hereafter *TC*. There are two translations in English: E. O. WINSTEDT, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes*, Cambridge 1909, and J. W. MCCRINDLE, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk*, London 1897. Recently a voluminous book appeared with an analytical text criticism and commentary, see HORST SCHNEIDER, *Kosmas Indikopleustes Christliche Topographie – Textkritische Analysen Übersetzung Kommentar*, Turnhout, Belgium 2010; it is mainly a theological approach.

<sup>2</sup>. Of outstanding value is Cosmas' concrete information concerning the time of the war between Ethiopians and Himyarite Arabs, which he placed at the reign of the emperor Justinian (518-527). The dismissal of Cosmas' historical validity and chronological accuracy – because of certain inconsistencies – cannot be accepted.

It is to be noted that Cosmas' mention of 'Ella 'Aṣbeha's plan of invasion is not reported with any praise for his Christian mission, but simply as another Ethiopian expedition for conquest in contrast to the spirit of the hagiographical work of the "Martyrdom of Arethas and his Companions". For this hagiographical work, see the edition by MARINA DETORAKI and translation by JOËLLE BEAUCAMP, *Le Martyre de Saint Aréthas et de ses Compagnons (BHG 166)*, and my review of it in *Antiquité Tardive*, 16 (2008).

<sup>3</sup>. Meager information about Cosmas Indicopleustes appears in M. ANASTOS' pioneering work, *The Alexandrian Origin of the Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 3 (1946), 73-80, and in the succinct note by L. CANSDALE, *Cosmas*

*Arabia, Greece and Byzantium: Cultural Contacts in Ancient and Medieval Times*, ed. Abdulaziz Al-Helabi, Dimitrios Letsios, Moshalleh Al-Moraekhi, Abdullah Al-Abduljabbar, Riyadh 2012 / AH 1433, Part II, pp. 263-276.

This was the time of the florescence of the Byzantine navigation originating in Alexandria where international sea trade, encouraged by the patriarchate of Alexandria, enjoyed freedom never to be repeated later. The Alexandrian merchants extended their trade activities on the one hand across the Mediterranean and on the other in the Red Sea and beyond.<sup>4</sup>

Concerning Cosmas' language, ROGER SCOTT correctly compares it with Malalas'. They both shared the same hostility for the classical language and culture,<sup>5</sup> although Cosmas' style is more complicated and it lacks the vivid simplicity of Malalas' language. Regarding his language and style in contrast to his contemporary historian Procopius who, enthralled by the past, imitated Thucydides rather awkwardly, Cosmas writes in an unsophisticated and often ungrammatical style, obviously for an audience of similar taste.<sup>6</sup>

Cosmas' cosmological theory and especially the numerous designs illustrating passages from the Bible have been thoroughly studied, initially by DOULA MOURIKI, following KURT WEITZMANN's first steps,<sup>7</sup> until the recent work by LESLIE BRUBAKER who, demonstrating the close connection between the religious iconography in certain of Cosmas' manuscripts and the religious iconoclastic movement, added a new dimension.<sup>8</sup> A thorough new study by HORST SCHNEIDER has completed the theological aspect of Cosmas' book.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to the intensive research on Cosmas' religious illustrations, little has been accomplished concerning Cosmas' miniatures of plants and animals of exotic countries, which are mainly reported in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of his book.

Indicopleustes, Merchant and Traveler, in *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie*, Bonn 22-28 September 1991, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum Ergänzungsbände* 20.1(1995), 609-616.

<sup>4</sup>. In my forthcoming work "Justinian's Maritime Policy in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean", *Graeco-Arabica* vol. 12, I undertake a detailed description of Justinian's naval policy in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

<sup>5</sup>. R. SCOTT, Malalas and his Contemporaries, in *Studies in John Malalas*, ed. ELIZABETH JEFFREYS, BRIAN CROKE and ROGER SCOTT, Sydney 1990, 79.

<sup>6</sup>. The 10<sup>th</sup> century Patriarch Photius contemptuously states that Cosmas' expression is miserable and that he ignores basic syntax. See R. HENRY, ed. and trans., *Photius, Bibliothèque*, I, Paris 1959, no. 36, 8-9, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup>. See DOULA MOURIKI-CHARALAMBOUS, *The Octateuch Miniatures of the Byzantine Manuscripts of Cosmas Indicopleustes* (unpublished dissertation), Princeton 1970. K. WEITZMANN's book, *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, ed. H. L. KESSLER, Chicago – London 1971, remains fundamental. Weitzmann's completed theory appears in another work to be mentioned later in this article. See also A. REVEL-NEHER, Some Remarks on the Iconographical Sources of the Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Kairos* 32/33(1990-1991), 78-97; W. WOLSKA-CONUS, La Topographie Chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustes: Hypothèses sur quelques Thèmes de son Illustration, *Revue des Études Byzantines* 48(1990), 155-191.

<sup>8</sup>. LESLIE BRUBAKER, *The Christian Topography* (Vat. gr. 699) Revisited: Image, Text and Conflict in Ninth-Century Byzantium, in *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization*, ed. ELIZABETH JEFFREYS, Cambridge 2006, 3-24.

<sup>9</sup>. See H. SCHNEIDER, op. cit., note 1 above.



Cosmas, in his descriptions of exotic countries and animals, had affirmed the probability of uniting the Christian spirit with the classical tradition in envisioning the religious audience of Alexandria. The audience must have been the Greek speaking Christian population of this city whether of Egyptian or Greek origin, since at that time most of the Egyptians beyond Alexandria were illiterate while in this city one could hardly distinguish between hellenized Egyptians and egyptianized Greeks. As MARIA LEONTSINI characteristically points out, “for the Byzantines the natural world was the product of the divine creation and simultaneously the area of human activities”.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that the religious monk Cosmas adds the descriptions of countries and animals to his theological contemplations. The drawings of the animals are mainly the products of his own observation while sailing in the Red Sea and plausibly in the Indian Ocean.

It should be noted that from the meager information provided in Cosmas’ work concerning the Greek speaking community of Alexandria and his personal life, we learn that there was a prosperous class of merchants in this city, i.e. Sopatrus and Mēnas (members of this class),<sup>11</sup> who were heavily involved in the lucrative trade with the countries of the Red Sea and beyond. Cosmas explicitly reports that he belonged to this class and traveled to those countries “for the sake of trade”. Obviously, he was not a member of the crew, “ναύτης” (sailor), but traveled as “ἐπιβάτης” (passenger) [engaged in trade].<sup>12</sup> No doubt as a long time traveler in the turbulent waters of the Red Sea and perhaps of the Indian Ocean, he must have experienced various adventures. But, in contrast to other travelers—merchants who enjoyed narrating their adventures, often embellishing them with imaginary stories, Cosmas is not interested in describing them. It is only in one passage that he provides an interesting adventure, which also reveals the limits of the Byzantine ships sailing in the Red Sea. He describes how on one of his trips sailing towards “interior India”, his ship was almost sunk succumbing to boisterous winds, stormy underwater currents and tumultuous waves while huge birds, probably albatrosses,

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<sup>10</sup>. See MARIA LEONTSINI, Οικόσιτα, ωδικά και εξωτικά πτηνά. Αισθητική πρόσληψη και χρηστικές όψεις (7<sup>ος</sup>- 12<sup>ος</sup> αι.), in *Animals and Environment in Byzantium (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> c.)*, ed. I. ANAGNOSTAKIS – T. KOLIAS – E. PAPADOPOULOU (Institute for Byzantine Research, International Symposiums 21), Athens 2011, 285-317; N. ΚΟΥΤΡΑΚΟΥ, Φύση και άνθρωπος στο Βυζάντιο. Αντιλήψεις και ιδεολογήματα, in *Άνθρωπος και Φύση, Διεπιστημονική εκδήλωση Ζαχάρω-Αρχαία Ολυμπία, 28-30 Σεπτεμβρίου 1989*, Διεθνές Κέντρο Φιλοσοφίας και Διεπιστημονικής Έρευνας, ed. L. K. BARTZELIOTIS, Athens 1992, 130-141; T. G. KOLIAS, Man and Animals in the Byzantine World, in *Animal Diversities, Medium Aevum Quotidianum Sonderband XVI*, ed. G. JARITZ – A. CHOYKE, Krems 2005, 165-166.

<sup>11</sup>. See for Mēnas, WOLSKA-CONUS, *T. C.*, II, §56, 9, p. 369; §57, 3, p. 369, and for Sopatrus, *T. C.*, XI, §17, 2ff, p. 349; for Sopatrus see the comprehensive article by CH. VERLINDEN, Cosmas Indicopleustēs, Sopater et le monde arabe, *Graeco-Arabica* 4(1991), 65-69.

<sup>12</sup>. Cosmas makes a distinction between the terms “ναύτης” (sailor) and “ἐπιβάτης” (passenger) [merchant]; see WOLKA-CONUS *TC*, II §30, 8, p. 335. In the Mediterranean Sea frequently “ναῦται” (sailors) could easily be “ἐπιβάται” (passengers) while this was rare in the ships sailing in the turbulent waters of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. For these terms see JULIE VELISSAROPOULOS, *Les nautilères grecs*, Geneva – Paris 1980, 74.

were flying over their vessel.<sup>13</sup> The place where this happened was vaguely described as close to Barbaria, at the mouth of the ocean.<sup>14</sup>

J. DESANGES correctly pointed out that this area where this accident took place must be traced to the end of the Arabian Gulf [Red Sea], near the African coast, at the mouth of the Indian Ocean.<sup>15</sup> He further remarks that the term “little India” mentioned by Cosmas was not India proper but the land of the Himyarites., marking the limits of Cosmas’ travels who had never visited Asiatic India in spite of his name, “Cosmas, the traveler of India”.<sup>16</sup> It is the present author’s belief that DESANGES’ view about Cosmas’ ship heading towards the land of the Himyarites and not towards India proper is plausible and that the land of the Himyarites marks the limits of the Byzantine navigation, since no Byzantine ships are reported in any source to have crossed the straits of Bāb al-Mandab. Of course, Cosmas may have traveled to India on a foreign ship.

While no Byzantine ships seemed to dare cross the Bāb al-Mandab straits and sail into the perilous Indian Ocean, the Byzantine merchants are reported to thrive on the lucrative trade of the exotic products of the Far East. Cosmas’ personal friend, Sopatrus, proudly demonstrates the shiny Byzantine gold coins gained through this trade.<sup>17</sup> The Byzantine merchants as well as missionary people, traveling in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, could easily embark ships which belonged to other countries. Thus, a certain Palladius (4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> c.) reports on a trip of a Byzantine to India from Ethiopia on an India bound Ethiopian ship.<sup>18</sup> St. Frumentius, who traveled to Ethiopia leaving from a Byzantine port on a Byzantine ship, returned home on an Ethiopian ship.<sup>19</sup> In the *Martyrdom of Arethas and his Companions*, it is reported that Persian merchant ships, the main trade rivals of the Byzantines, were anchored in the port of Adulis in Ethiopia.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup>. WOLSKA-CONUS, *TC*, II, §30, 1-17, p. 335.

<sup>14</sup>. For the various references to “Barbaria”, see WOLSKA-CONUS, *Index*, p. 425.

<sup>15</sup>. J. DESANGES, *Recherches sur l’activité des Méditerranéens aux confins de l’Afrique (VIe siècle avant J.-C. – IVe siècle après J.-C.)*, Paris – Rome 1978, 161-162.

<sup>16</sup>. DESANGES, *op. cit.*, note 65.

<sup>17</sup>. WOLSKA-CONUS, *TC*, XI, §19, 1-5, p. 351.

<sup>18</sup>. For the text of Palladius see J. DUNCAN and M. DERRET, *The History of Palladius on the Races of India and Brahman*, *Classica et Mediaevalia* 21(1960), text: 100-135; commentary: 64-99; new edition, W. BERGHOFF, *Palladius de gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus*, Meisenheim – Glan 1967. It is noteworthy that Palladius realistically describes the Red Sea and Indian Ocean ships constructed without nails, I,4: “ἔστι δὲ εἰδικῶς τὰ διαπερῶντα πλοῖα εἰς ἐκείνην τὴν μεγάλην νῆσον [Ταπροβάνην] ἄνευ σιδήρου ἐπιούροις ξυλίνους κατεσκευασμένα”. According to DESANGES, *op. cit.*, 363: “Puis nous voyons le *scholasticus* attendre longtemps en vain dans un port axoumite la possibilité de gagner Taprobane, et finalement s’embarquer sur un navire apparemment indien (c’est-à-dire probablement axoumite), et non pas romain ...».

<sup>19</sup>. For Frumentius see G. HAILE, *The Homily in Honour of St. Frumentius Bishop of Axum*, *Analecta Bollandiana* 97(1979), 316-17.

<sup>20</sup>. MARINA DETORAKI, *op. cit.*, p. 263, §29, 4.

During Justinian's time, while trade in the lucrative Red Sea and Indian Ocean route was encouraged, little effort was made to construct Byzantine ships capable of sailing beyond the Red Sea. Writing in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Procopius expressed astonishment for the method of constructing the Arab ships sailing in the Red Sea.<sup>21</sup> The most conspicuous characteristic of these vessels, known as *dhow*s or *bums*, was their construction by stitching without the use of any iron nails. The outside planks were mainly sewn with cord and there were no ribs or frame.<sup>22</sup> Procopius' astonishment manifests that, in contrast to the Arab ships of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, the Byzantine ships sailing in the Red Sea continued to be built according to the Mediterranean technology. We can assume that they had been constructed in the shipyards of Alexandria, then carried dismantled to the Red Sea and/or constructed in shipyards of the Red Sea with imported Malabar wood.<sup>23</sup> L. CASSON expressed the view that the Byzantine ships were better constructed than those of the Arabs because they were well built with their massively strong hull held together by thousands of close-set mortise and tendon joints instead of the feeble, flexible Arab type.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the Arab technique of sewn boats has been considered by many Arab authors as ideal for sailing in the treacherous waters of the Red Sea and traveling in the Indian Ocean under favorable winds.<sup>25</sup>

Whether the ship which Cosmas had embarked and suffered an almost shipwreck was Byzantine or Ethiopian is not indicated in his short description of this event. Perhaps it was a Byzantine ship whose limited itinerary, like most of the Byzantine ships, ended at the cross point where the Red Sea met the Indian Ocean. But Cosmas, like many other Byzantine merchants reported above, could have traveled beyond Bāb al-Mandeb on a foreign ship.

While Cosmas' voyage to Asiatic India cannot be easily ascertained, his description of Taprobane, now Sri Lanka, could have been written either by hearsay or based on his own eyewitness experience. A careful scrutiny of the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Cosmas' *Christian Topography* and the attached drawings of plants and animals, hitherto little studied, help us to understand the personal visits of Cosmas to Sri Lanka, most probably on a foreign ship.

An important question that is raised is whether the illuminations of Cosmas' text depicting plants and animals were the product of Cosmas' personal observations which he acquired on his numerous trips to the countries around the Red Sea and Sri Lanka. It is the personal view of the present author that Cosmas' crudely drawn sketches of animals and plants were his own product, as he himself

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<sup>21</sup>. Procopius, *Persian Wars*, I, 19, 23-25.

<sup>22</sup>. See CHRISTIDES, Some Remarks on the Mediterranean and Red Sea Ships in Ancient and Medieval Times: A Preliminary Report, *Tropis* 1(1985), 76.

<sup>23</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>. L. CASSON, Rome's Trade with the East; the Sea Voyage to Africa and India, in *Ancient Trade and Society*, Detroit 1984, 185.

<sup>25</sup>. V. CHRISTIDES, Naval History and Naval Technology in Medieval Times. The Need for Interdisciplinary Studies, *Byzantion* 58(1988), 312-313.

reports.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that these pictures, in spite of their primitive form, were undoubtedly realistic since Cosmas was writing for an Alexandrian audience, well familiar with wild animals. A zoo of various wild animals had existed in Alexandria already in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, established by Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BC).<sup>27</sup> Certain alterations may have been inserted in Cosmas' drawings through the long transmission of the manuscripts of his work, but the simplicity of his designs could not be heavily distorted.

Specially constructed ships for the transportation of elephants and other wild animals to the port of Alexandria were constructed about which little is known.<sup>28</sup> Most probably this zoo continued to exist in Alexandria during Byzantine times; the *Digesta* (6<sup>th</sup> c. AD) reports the transportation of wild animals in the Red Sea, most likely for a Byzantine zoo in Alexandria.<sup>29</sup>

The country of origin of Cosmas' illuminations of wild animals and plants can easily be identified. Thus, the drawing of Cosmas' elephant, depicted with small ears and concave back, undoubtedly betrays African origin, clearly distinctive from the Asiatic.<sup>30</sup> More important is Cosmas' depiction of a pepper plant over banana trees. Special attention to this plant was paid by ANNE MCCABE, who revealed that it was a precise depiction of a pepper vine planted in Asiatic India.<sup>31</sup> She correctly asserts that this picture in connection with Cosmas' realistic account of five pepper trade centers on the Malabar coast of India certainly indicates that Cosmas actually had visited Asiatic India.<sup>32</sup>

While almost all of Cosmas' illuminations are based on first-hand knowledge derived mainly but not exclusively from African countries, the depiction of an imaginary animal, the unicorn (Greek: monocerōs), is irrelevant to any real animal. Following his usual practice of mentioning whether he actually saw any of the animals he described, Cosmas straightforwardly states, "I did not see it" [the unicorn}, but "only four brazen figures of him set up in the four-towered palace of the king of Ethiopia".<sup>33</sup>

<sup>26</sup>. Cosmas could have used drawings of animals of the Hellenistic legacy which still continued in early Byzantine times, but such drawings were usually schematic; see ZOLTÁN KÁDAR, *Survivals of Greek Zoological Illuminations in Byzantine Manuscripts*, Budapest 1978.

<sup>27</sup>. For the zoo of Alexandria, see HARRY M. HUBBEL, Ptolemy's Zoo, *Classical Journal* 31(1935), 68-76.

<sup>28</sup>. CHRISTIDES, Transportation of Elephants in Hellenistic and Byzantine Egypt, in *Handelsgüter und Verkehrswege*, Akten des Internationalen Symposions Wien 19.-22. Oktober 2005, Vienna 2010, 71-77.

<sup>29</sup>. In the *Digesta*, XXXIX, 4, 16, there is a list of wild animals imported from Nubia: "leones...pantherae...".

<sup>30</sup>. WOLSKA-CONUS, *TC*, vol. III, appendix, fig. 9, p. 392.

<sup>31</sup>. ANNE MCCABE, Imported *materia medica*, 4<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Byzantine Pharmacology, in *Byzantine Trade, 4<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, The Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, Farnham, Surrey 2009, 282.

<sup>32</sup>. *Ibid.*, note 43.

<sup>33</sup>. WOLSKA-CONUS, *TC*, XI, §7, 1-4, p. 327.

A full account of the various aspects concerning the unicorn in ancient and medieval times, about which there is an immense literature, would be out of the scope of this article.<sup>34</sup> It is sufficient to concentrate mainly on the unicorn as it appears in Cosmas Indicopleustes' text and image. Cosmas' illumination depicts a mythical animal with the body of a horse which bears on the top of its head an upturned horn of extraordinary size, from which it gained its name (*monocerōs*). In contrast to the realistic representation of the rest of the depicted animals in Cosmas' illuminations, that of the unicorn is one of many images which was borrowed from the illustrated manuscripts of the Old Testament, the so-called *Septuagint*. As suggested by K. WEITZMANN, the archetype of a large number of biblical subjects created for the illustration of the *Septuagint* in early Christian times was transmitted into secondary Byzantine texts, such as patristic and hagiographical works.<sup>35</sup>

Searching in the rich illustration of the *Septuagint*, the chapter of "Genesis" in particular, one discerns a clear depiction of the unicorn in one of the manuscripts. It is the scene called "The naming of the terrestrial animals" (Fig. 1). Adam appears flanked by a group of domesticated and wild animals under the inscription "θηρῶν πετεινῶν κλιῆσις" (naming of domesticated land animals and birds). Among them distinctly appears the unicorn, whose name is explicitly reported in the corresponding biblical text of the manuscript.<sup>36</sup> Although the unicorn is squeezed among the rest of the animals, we can discern its horse-like feet and the conspicuous awkwardly protrusion of the single horn over his head. This type of an artificially protruding horn is the prototype imitated by Cosmas, by some early Byzantine painters and by some later Arab painters to be discussed further in this work.

In Cosmas' illumination of the unicorn (*monocerōs*) (*Codex Sin.*, fol. 202<sup>r</sup>), a scene of hunting is presented in which a hunter carrying a bow chases wild animals, one of which is the unicorn (Fig. 2).<sup>37</sup> Save the exaggerated length of its horn, Cosmas' unicorn has no signs of any extraordinary qualities as it appears in his relevant text. The attributes of Cosmas' literary *monocerōs*, based on concrete biblical references, do not exceed those described in *Septuagint*, i.e. immense physical strength based on its horn.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Cosmas, who enjoyed describing exotic but not mythical creatures in both his text and images, presents an earthy *monocerōs*, although by his time many stories circulated about a *monocerōs* with magic supernatural powers performing miracles. The Greek sources deal with the term *monocerōs* already from the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC. Ailianos (3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD), mixing zoology with

<sup>34</sup>. JACQUES LE GOFF, *Héros et Merveilles du Moyen Age*, Paris 2005.

<sup>35</sup>. See the comprehensive chapter in K. WEITZMANN, op. cit., "The Illustration of the *Septuagint*", 45-75.

<sup>36</sup>. The picture depicting the panoramic view of "the naming of the animals", in which the unicorn appears, is presented in K. WEITZMANN and MASSIMO BERNABÒ (with the collaboration of RITA TARASCONI), *The Byzantine Octateuchs*, vol. 2.2, Princeton 1999, fig. 80a; the relevant commentary is found in vol. 2.1 of *The Byzantine Octateuchs* (1999), p. 31.

<sup>37</sup>. WOLSKA-CONUS, *TC*, vol. III, appendix, p. 386; fig. 4, p. 387.

<sup>38</sup>. WOLSKA-CONUS, *TC*, XI, 7, p. 327.

mythology, describes the *monocerōs* as “one-horned Indian beast, size of a horse”. The horn of this monster is a protective item from poison.<sup>39</sup>

During Byzantine times, when zoology and mythology were mixed indiscriminately, *monocerōs* appears in a number of sources, on the one hand as a monster and on the other as securing immunity to poison. It is invincible and can be captured only by the charm of a virgin when she approaches it and by the sound of music. Typical examples appear in the popularized zoological text called *Physiologus*, written ca the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD and revised in the 11<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>40</sup> Gradually the mystical element of *monocerōs*, mixed with religious symbolism, prevails in Byzantine literature and art and becomes a popular topic in the medieval and later Western literature and art, a field far beyond the scope of the present work.<sup>41</sup>

Suffice it to concentrate in the present work on an illumination of the Moscow Chludov Psalter, dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, which is of particular importance because on the one hand it demonstrates the type of the unicorn as drawn and understood by Cosmas Indicopleustes, and on the other it incorporates folkloristic elements of the Hellenistic and Byzantine tradition.<sup>42</sup> It depicts the *monocerōs* having the common characteristics as they appear in Cosmas’ drawing, i.e. the body of a horse and one extraordinary horn protruded over its head. This imaginary animal stretches one of its feet towards a seated lady who extends her hands in a gesture of embracement (Fig. 3). This scene is the most popular of all the fabulous characteristics which are described in Ailianus’ work and the anonymous *Physiologus*, i.e. the scene of the capture of *monocerōs* by a virgin.<sup>43</sup> Gradually it became the trademark of a large number of illustrations in Western literary works, known as *bestiaria*.<sup>44</sup>

To sum up, in contrast to some Arabic sources where the narrations of sailing in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean are frequently dotted with descriptions of imaginary creatures, Cosmas’ *Topography* included just one, that of *monocerōs*. Cosmas’ drawing of *monocerōs* was inspired by the Bible solely based on an illustration of the *Septuagint*. In contrast, in certain Byzantine illuminations the image of *monocerōs*, which was enriched with the folkloristic Hellenistic tradition of this imaginary animal, caused the creation of a new type of creature, originally ferocious, later trapped and tamed by a virgin maid. A typical example of this

<sup>39</sup>. See ALWYN FABER SCHOLFIELD, ed. and trans., *Aelian. On the Characteristics of Animals*, I (1958), p. 201: “India produces horses with one horn...and from these horns they make drinking vessels and if anyone puts a deadly poison in them and a man drinks, the plot will do him no harm...”.

<sup>40</sup>. HANS-GEORG BECK, *Ιστορία της Βυζαντινής Δημόδοξης Λογοτεχνίας (Geschichte der Byzantinischen Volksliteratur*, Munich 1974), Greek trans. by NIKE EIDENEIER, Athens 1989, 74-76.

<sup>41</sup>. See JACQUES LE GOFF, note 34 above.

<sup>42</sup>. Illumination from the Moscow Chludov Psalter (9<sup>th</sup> c. AD), Moscow, Historical Museum, cod. 129, fol. 9<sup>3v</sup>; reprinted from J. EBERSOLT, *La Miniature byzantine*, Paris-Brussels 1926, pl. XIII, 2, p. 19.

<sup>43</sup>. See note 39 above.

<sup>44</sup>. G. BLANCIOTTO, *Bestiaire du Moyen Age*, Paris 1980.

innovated image of the *monocerōs* is the above described Byzantine illumination of the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 3), which was widely diffused in Western Europe.

It is of particular interest that the imaginary animal unicorn (*monocerōs*) does also appear in the Arabic sources. This is not surprising since in the Arabic sea narrations, myth and reality are interwoven and sea monsters, Cyclops and other imaginary creatures are abundant. Three important sources describe sailing in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, i.e. *The Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor*,<sup>45</sup> written at the turn of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, *The Book of the Marvels of India* by Buzurk bn. Shahriyār, written ca the 10<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>46</sup> and *The Travel of the Merchant Sulaymān to India and China*, written by Abū Zayd Ḥasan at about the same time.<sup>47</sup> In all the three above-mentioned Arabic sources, the exotic folkloristic elements prevail with numerous imaginary creatures, sea horses, monstrous vultures and hideous black beasts,<sup>48</sup> while simultaneously valuable information concerning navigation in the Red Sea is reported.<sup>49</sup>

Among the imaginary creatures described in two of the above sources, *The Travels of the Merchant Sulaymān to India and China* and *The Book of the Marvels of India*, the unicorn appears as a species of rhinoceros. In Sulaymān's narration, it is called *bushān* and has one horn on his nose. As in the Greek sources, the horn of the unicorn is possessed with magic power. In the inside of this horn there is the form of the image of a creature which resembles a human being. "The horn is pitch-black but the inside image is white".<sup>50</sup> This Indian animal, similar to the Greek unicorn, has immense physical power; it constantly fights with elephants and it is invincible.<sup>51</sup>

Sulaymān's description of the *bushān* as a species of rhinoceros, which is usually called *karkadān* in the Arabic sources, also appears almost identical in the famous Arab geographer Ibn Khurdādhbih (middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> c.).<sup>52</sup> More important is Ibn al-Wardī's information (middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> c.), based on the lost work of the

<sup>45</sup>. V. CHRISTIDES, *The Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor, the Arabian Odyssey of the Indian Ocean*, in *Sailing Ships of the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Gulf*. Volume II. *Navigation in the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean*, Athens 2000, 19.

<sup>46</sup>. See P. A. VAN DER LITH and L. M. DEVIC, ed. and French trans., *Buzurk bn. Shahriyār, Kitāb 'Ajāib al-Hind. Livre des merveilles del'Inde*, Leiden 1883-1886.

<sup>47</sup>. GABRIEL FERRAND, French trans., *Voyage du marchand arabe Sulaymān en Inde et en Chine*, Paris 1922.

<sup>48</sup>. For these folkloristic motives in comparison to the similar saga in Homer's *Odyssey*, see MIA I. GERHARDT, *Les voyages de Sindibad le Marin*, Utrecht 1957, 12 ff.

<sup>49</sup>. For the oral maritime law in the Indian Ocean at this period, see R. B. SERGEANT, *Maritime Customary Law off the Arabian Coasts*, in *Sociétés et Compagnies du Commerce en Orient et dans l'Océan Indien*, ed. J. TOUJOT, Paris 1966, 195-207. See also CHRISTIDES, *The Voyages of Sindbād the Sailor, the Arabian Odyssey of the Indian Ocean*, 23.

<sup>50</sup>. G. FERRAND, *Voyage du marchand arabe Sulaymān en Inde et en Chine*, 50.

<sup>51</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>. See Ibn Khurdādhbih's relevant passage in G. FERRAND, *Relations de voyages et textes géographiques arabes, persans et turks, relatifs à l'Extrême Orient du VIII<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris 1913, reprinted Frankfurt am Main 1986, 29.

10<sup>th</sup> century writer Djayhani, about the so-called rhinoceros- *bushān*: “This animal resembles the donkey, but it has on his head one curved horn which is very useful as antitoxic against poison”.<sup>53</sup> Thus Ibn al-Wardī’s description of the species of rhinoceros, called *bushān-karkadān*, obviously resembles that of the *monocerōs* as it appears in some Greek sources, especially in *Physiologus*.

The only Arabic text where there is a clear description in both text and image of the *monocerōs* is Qazwīnī’s (d. 1283) *Kitāb ‘Adjāyb al-Makhlūqāt* (Book of the Marvels of the Creatures).<sup>54</sup> Qazwīnī’s book includes excellent information about the knowledge of Arab cosmology, zoology, botany and other relevant fields mixed with passages of magic and mythology. In his illuminations, he draws real as well as imaginary creatures, as for example the creature called *insān bahriyun* (human creature of the sea), the bird *rukḥ* carrying people in the air, and among others, the *monocerōs*. Qazwīnī calls the *monocerōs* “*baqr al-waḥsh*” (wild ox) and describes it as an “animal tamed by music and dance” (Fig. 4).<sup>55</sup>

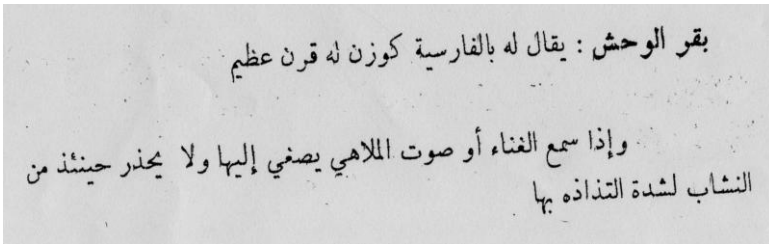
It is worth mentioning that there are some striking similarities between certain passages of the narration of the Byzantine *Physiologus* concerning *monocerōs* and the relevant passages in Qazwīnī’s book, *Kitāb ‘Adjāyb al-Makhlūqāt*. Both describe how this ferocious animal can be trapped by the sound of music.

Byzantine text:<sup>56</sup>

Τὶ δὲ ποιοῦσιν οἱ τοῦτο θηρεῦντες, λαμβάνοντες μεθ’ αὐτῶν τύμπανα, σάλπιγγας... ἀπάγουσι ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ἐνθα ἐνὶ τῷ ζῶον καὶ συνιστῶσι χορόν... βοῶντες μεγάλως ἐν τῷ χορῷ...

(What the hunters of the [monocerōs] do to [subdue it] is to take with them drums and trumpets, to go to the place where the animal exists and start dancing sounding noisily.)

Arabic text of Qazwīnī:<sup>57</sup>



<sup>53</sup>. See Ibn al-Wardī’s relevant passage in G. FERRAND *Relations de voyages et textes géographiques arabes, persans et turks, relatifs à l’Extrême Orient du VIII<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, vol. II, Paris 1914, 412.

<sup>54</sup>. Qazwīnī, *Kitāb ‘Adjāyb al-Makhlūqāt* (Book of the Marvels of the Creatures), ed. FAROUK SAAD, Beirut 1981.

<sup>55</sup>. *Ibid.*, text p. 407, illumination 15.

<sup>56</sup>. E. SBORDONE, *Physiologus*, Rome 1936, 313.

<sup>57</sup>. Qazwīnī, *op. cit.*, 407.



(The Wild Ox [= *monocerōs* – unicorn]

In Persian it is called *kuzan*. It has a big horn...whenever it hears singing or any sound of amusement, it pays great attention to it and, becoming exceedingly languid, it completely ignores the archer's [hunter's] arrows.)

In the Greek text of *Physiologus*, after *monocerōs* is lured by music and dance, it is captured by a woman, a point that is missing in the Arabic text, in which it is caught solely by music and dance. In both texts the horn has antitoxic qualities, protecting from poison.

The pictorial representation of the unicorn continues for centuries in Islamic art. Of course, the meaning of the traditional legend is lost and it acquires the visual conception of one of the various human-head quadrupeds (sphinxes) and/or birds (harpies).<sup>58</sup> Of the numerous pictorial representations of the unicorn in Islamic art it is worth mentioning two. One appears in a miniature of the lavishly illustrated manuscript called Ḥarīrī's *Maqamāt* kept in the National Library of Paris (MS Arab 5847), completed in the year 1237 AD (Fig. 5).<sup>59</sup> The painter Yaḥya al-Wasit depicts a ship of the Indian Ocean which had just escaped a violent storm. It carries a variety of plants and one harpy next to which a unicorn is depicted. Attached to the crowned head of the unicorn appears the typical characteristic of the unicorn, the highly projected horn. The second example is found in a much later illustrated Persian manuscript of *Shahnamah* (15<sup>th</sup> c.).<sup>60</sup> This scene reminds us of Cosmas Indicopleustes' illumination of a hunter chasing deer and a unicorn (Fig. 2). The unicorn's body is almost identical with the deer's, but the highly protruding horn betrays the revival of the unicorn (Fig. 6).

In conclusion, there is no doubt that certain elements of the Greek tradition of the *monocerōs* were transmitted to the Arab world, i.e. the anti-toxic nature of the horn of the *monocerōs* protecting from poison and the trapping of this ferocious animal by the charm of an enchanting musician. Most probably such motives were borrowed from the Greek work *Physiologus*, or perhaps both the above-mentioned Arabic sources and *Physiologus* derived their material from a previously written or oral unknown source rooted in the ancient Near East.

Finally, both the colorful depiction of the unicorn in Ḥarīrī's *Maqamāt* (13<sup>th</sup> c.) and that which appears in the Persian *Shahmanah* (15<sup>th</sup> c.) are a vague reminiscent of the ferocious biblical animal, serving only as a decorative element without any symbolism.

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<sup>58</sup>. For all the types of these imaginary creatures see EVA BAER, *Sphinxes and Harpies in Medieval and Islamic Art*, Jerusalem 1965.

<sup>59</sup>. Unfortunately, R. ETTINGHAUSEN's booklet *The Unicorn*. Freer Gallery of Art, Occasional Papers, Washington DC 1950, was not available to me, in which I suppose examples of the unicorn in Islamic art must have been presented.

<sup>60</sup>. M. M. ASHRAFI, *Persian-Tajik Poetry in XIV – XVII Centuries Miniatures*, ed. KAMAL S. AINI, Tajik 1974, 31.

## FIGURES



Fig. 1. *Monoceros* among other animals. Naming of the Animals and Creation of Eve. *Genesis*, 2:22. From KURT WEITZMANN, MASSIMO BERNABÒ and RITA TARASCONI, *The Byzantine Octateuchs*, vol. 2,2, Princeton 1999, pl. 80a (Vat. 747, fol. 42v).

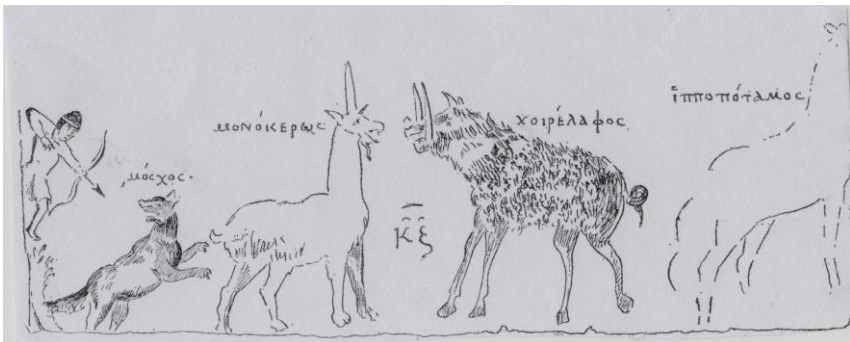


Fig. 2. Scene of hunting. *Monoceros* among other wild animals. Sin. fol. 202r. From WOLSKA-CONUS, *Topographie chrétienne*, vol. III, Paris 1973, appendix p. 387.



Fig. 3. Trapping of a unicorn. Illumination from the Moscow Chludov Psalter. 9<sup>th</sup> c. AD. Moscow, Historical Museum, Cod. 129, fol. 9<sup>3v</sup>. Reprinted from J. EBERSOLT, *La Miniature byzantine*, Paris – Brussels 1926, Pl. XIII, 2, p. 19.

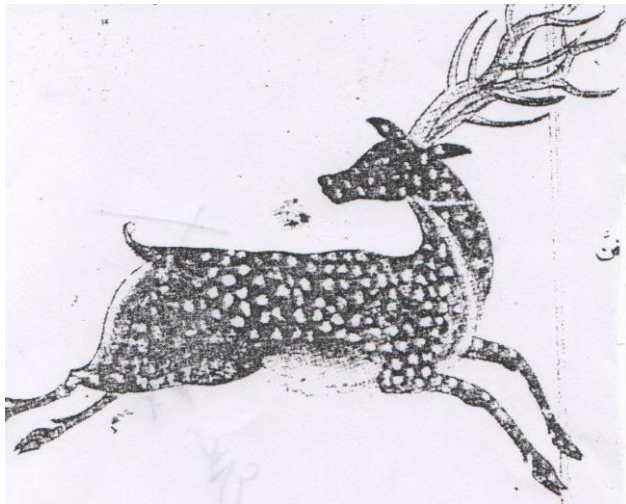


Fig. 4. *Monocerōs*, so-called “*baqr al-wahsh*” (wild ox). From Qazwīnī, *‘Adjāyb al-Makhlūqāt*, ed. FAROUK SAAD, Beirut 1981 (text on p. 407).



Fig. 5. Depiction of *monocerōs* on a ship. Ḥarīrī's *Maqamāt*, National Library of Paris (MS Arab 5847).



Fig. 6. Depiction of *monocerōs* in a Persian manuscript. Hunting scene in Firdawsi's *Shahnamah*. Illumination (15<sup>th</sup> c.). From M. M. ASHRAFI, *Persian-Tajik Poetry in XIV – XVII Centuries Miniatures*, Tajik 1974, p. 31.

## Clyisma in the Literary and Documentary Arab Sources

TAREK M. MUHAMMAD\*

The geographical location of Clyisma at the junction of roads that led from Egypt, Sinai, and Palestine served the needs of travelers and caravans for rest and security before continuing their journey through the desert. As a port at the head of a gulf that faced the Red Sea (Hieropoliticus Sinus = Gulf of Suez), coastal vessels sailed and traded between African and Arabian trading centers on the Red Sea;<sup>1</sup> venturesome seagoing merchant vessels could pursue trade with ports on the Indian Ocean.<sup>2</sup> The physical disadvantages of Clyisma's location, however, kept it from offering competition with such major ports of trade as Myos Hormos (Abū Sha'ar / Quseir al-Qadīm)<sup>3</sup> or Berenice,<sup>4</sup> before the sixth century A.D.<sup>5</sup>

For the early Arab period, there is a considerable number of references to Clyisma in Greek and Coptic official letters, which are issued by the Arab rulers of Egypt, as well as the literary sources and a substantial article on the site in the two editions of the Encyclopedia of Islam under its Arabic name, al-Kulzum.<sup>6</sup>

This paper examines the literary and documentary Arab references that speak about Clyisma and its importance, especially that many of the modern

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\* I'd like to thank Profs. H. Khalilieh, D. Letsios, and A. Elkhatib for their useful remarks.

<sup>1</sup>. See S. E. SIDEBOTHAM, Ports of the Red Sea and the Arabia-India trade, *MBAH* 2 (1986) 16-36.

<sup>2</sup>. MAYERSON, A Note on Iotabê and Several Other Islands in the Red Sea, *BASOR* 298 (1995), 34. In the Roman period, the Red Sea was a commercial intermediary between Rome, and Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia, Africa and India. See J. SCHWARTZ, L'empire romain, l'Égypte, et le commerce oriental, *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 15<sup>e</sup> Année 1 (1960) 19 ff.

<sup>3</sup>. About Myos Hormos see S. E. SIDEBOTHAM, Northern Red Sea Ports and their Networks in the Late Roman/Byzantine Period, in: *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th Centuries: The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange: Papers of the Thirty-Eighth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St. John's College, University of Oxford, March 2004*, ed. M. M. MANGO, Farnham, Burlington 2009, 341-343; A. BULOW-JACOBSEN, H. CUVIGNY, and J. L. FOURNET, The identification of Myos Hormos: New Papyrological Evidence, *BIFAO* 94 (1995) 27-42; W. MURRAY and E. H. WARMINGTON, Trogodytica: The Red Sea Littoral in Ptolemaic Times, *GeoJournal* 133/1 (1967) 32-33.

<sup>4</sup>. As for Berenice see W. Z. WENDRICH, R. S. TOMBER, S. E. SIDEBOTHAM, J. A. HARRELL, R. T. J. CAPPERS, and R. S. BAGNALL, Berenike Crossroads: the Integration of Information, *JESHO* 46/1 (2003) 46-87; F. C. WILD and J. P. WILD, Sails from the Roman port at Berenike, Egypt, *IJNA* 30/2 (2001) 211-220; S. E. SIDEBOTHAM, *Berenike and the Ancient Maritime Spice Route*, California 2011; IDEM, Late Roman Berenike, *JARCE* 39 (2002) 217-240; R. WELLSTED, Notice on the Ruins of Berenice, *JRGS* 6 (1836) 96-100; L. CASSON, New Light on Maritime Loans: P. Vindob G 40822, *ZPE* 84 (1990) 195-206; MURRAY and WARMINGTON, *Trogodytica*, 27-30.

<sup>5</sup>. MAYERSON, *The Port of Clyisma*, 120.

<sup>6</sup>. MAYERSON, *The Port of Clyisma*, 119.

historians who dealt with Clysma gave more attention to the literary and hagiographical sources of Graeco-Roman Clysma.<sup>7</sup>

While from the beginning of the eighth century A.D. the appearance of Clysma as an Islamic port is clear in the papyrological documents, its appearance is obvious in the literary sources of the ninth century A.D. onwards. On the other hand, while the geographical references about Clysma are almost similar, the historical accounts are various and valuable. From the eleventh century A.D., the sources refer to Clysma infrequently for many reasons, which will be discussed later. In the twelfth century, Clysma was in ruins under the Crusader existence in the Red Sea, especially at Aela,<sup>8</sup> which was an important station on the Egyptian route of the pilgrimage.

### Prologue: Clysma in Pre-Islamic Sources

Clysma, which was situated at the head of the Hieroopoliticus Sinus<sup>9</sup> and in proximity to the modern city of Suez was first brought to attention by the geographer Ptolemy (fl. 127-48 A.D.), who positions it according to the system that he devised and cited, as *Klyisma Phrouirion* or the fort of Clysma. Shortly thereafter, the name of Clysma surfaces in the work of the sophist Lucian of Samosata (ca. 125-180 A.D.). These are the two earliest literary references to a site called Clysma. Subsequent notices in the literature, with several exceptions, are equally brief, and even more so is MORITZ'S article in Pauly-Wissowa's *Realencyclopädie*. By way of contrast, however, the Greek papyri from Egypt are more explicit and informative. For example, a papyrus dated 179 A.D. speaks of two cavalry men about to leave for Clysma.<sup>10</sup>

Although Clysma had a unique location on the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea during the Graeco-Roman and Islamic periods, the Egyptian ports of the southern Egyptian coast of the Red Sea, Berenice, Leukos Limen (the modern Quseir),<sup>11</sup> and Myos Hormos,<sup>12</sup> where sailing conditions were more favorable than

<sup>7</sup>. For example see V. CHRISTIDES, Some Hagiographical Works (Greek, Latin, Arabic and Ethiopic) as a source for the Study of Navigation and Sea Trade in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean in pre-Islamic Times, *JSAI* 2 (1997) 62-76; A. S. ABU-JADAYL, Clysma- Qulzum: A Key Port on the Red Sea in the Route to India from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century, in: *Sailing Ships of the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabic Gulf*, ed. V. CHRISTIDES, II, Athens 2000, 34-41; PH. MAYERSON, Egeria and Peter the Deacon on the Site of Clysma (Suez), *JARCE* 33 (1996) 61-64; IDEM, The Port of Clysma (Suez) in Transition from Roman to Arab Rule, *JNES* 55/2 (Apr. 1996) 119-126; SIDEBOTHAM, *Northern Red Sea Ports*, 329-352.

<sup>8</sup>. About the importance of Aela see YOUSSEF GHAWANMA, *Aela wa-l-Baḥr al-Aḥmar wa-Ahmyatahu al-Tārīkhīyya wa-l-Estratejīyya*, Irbid 1984.

<sup>9</sup>. *Hieroopoliticus Sinus* is identified in the sources variably as "the fort of Clysma" as "Clysma" or as "the island of Clysma" (MAYERSON, *A Note on Iotabê*, 34) while Heroopolis was a large village on a branch of the Nile and within the borders of Egypt (*The Pilgrimage of Etheria*, ed. and Eng. trans. M. L. McCLURE, London 1912, XIX).

<sup>10</sup>. MAYERSON, *The Port of Clysma*, 119.

<sup>11</sup>. See SIDEBOTHAM, *Northern Red Sea Ports*, 344.

in the gulf of Suez, received foreign cargoes that were transshipped overland to the Nile and to Mediterranean outlets. A reference should also be made of the island of Iotabê (Theran) in the Red Sea that was a Roman-trading colony prior to 473 A.D. Cargoes from India reaching this island were taxed and transshipped to Roman ports.<sup>13</sup>

Sailing conditions and shoals were not the only difficulties that Clyisma faced in becoming a major shipping center in the fourth and fifth centuries; its geographical location was not a promising one. Situated on a sandy plain extremely arid, receiving barely an inch of rain during the year and lacking a perennial source of water, Clyisma's chief source of potable water – save when a "sweet water canal" connected the site with the Nile – was available at the oasis of 'Uyūn Mūsā in Sinai, several miles southeast of the site and a mile inland. By the fourth century, the canal of Trajan undoubtedly had silted up through disuse and a lack of maintenance, thereby cutting off the town's immediate supply of drinking water.<sup>14</sup>

In the third century A.D., according to *martyrium of St. Athanasius of Clyisma*, sailors and merchants frequented the port of Clyisma and it became a center of Christianity,<sup>15</sup> in which V. CHRISTIDES thinks that St. Athanasius of Clyisma played a role in the Christianization of Clyisma, Berenice, and Nubia.<sup>16</sup>

During the fourth century, according to Etheria(Egeria) , Clyisma remained a station on the road between Egypt and Palestine. Etheria reports that a number of Byzantine ships retained their control of the trade traffic of the Red Sea at this time.<sup>17</sup> She says:

<sup>12</sup>. These places seem to have been small communities which were not self-sufficient because they lacked plentiful fresh water. They acted as satellites to the main commercial centre for the Red Sea trade, which was Coptos, the modern Qift, on the Nile. Coptos was the centre from which the Red Sea trade was controlled by the Roman authorities. It is probable that the customs service was centered there. Annius Plocamus would almost certainly have been based there, both during his earlier existence as a merchant, and also later when he was the collector of taxes. Coptos was the point at which Indian goods entered the Roman Empire proper. See T. JUDD, *The Trade with India through the Eastern Desert of Egypt under the Roman Empire*, 11, on the website

[http://archaeology-easterndesert.com/assets/applets/LYSA\\_Judd.pdf](http://archaeology-easterndesert.com/assets/applets/LYSA_Judd.pdf)

<sup>13</sup>. See PH. MAYERSON, *The Island of Iotabê in the Byzantine Sources: A Reprise*, *BASOR* 287(Aug. 1992) 1-4; IDEM, *A Note on Iotabê*, 33-35; M. HAMSHARI, *Therān fī al-Qarn al-Sādīs al-Milādī*," *JMIH* 4 (2005) 225-251; M. M. MANGO, *Byzantine Trade: Local, Regional, Interregional and International*, in: *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th Centuries: The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange: Papers of the Thirty-Eighth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St. John's College, University of Oxford, March 2004*, ed. M. M. MANGO, Farnham, Burlington 2009, 12.

<sup>14</sup>. MAYERSON, *Egeria and Peter the Deacon*, 63-64. See also ABU-JADAYL, *Clyisma-Qulzum*, 35.

<sup>15</sup>. ABU-JADAYL, *Clyisma - Qulzum*, 35-36; CHRISTIDES, *Some Hagiographical Works*, 66.

<sup>16</sup>. V. CHRISTIDES, *New Light on Early Christianity in Nubia: the Martyrium of Saint Athanasius of Clyisma*, *ByzSym* 9 (1994) 173-183.

<sup>17</sup>. V. CHRISTIDES, *Some Remarks on the Mediterranean and Red Sea Ships in Ancient and Medieval Times: A Preliminary Report*, in: *1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Ships*

"...So we returned to Clyisma by the same route and the same stations by which we had come out, and when we had arrived at Clyisma we were obliged to stay there also for rest, because we had traveled hard along the sandy way of the desert...Now although I had been acquainted with the land of Goshen ever since I was in Egypt for the first time, yet [I visited it again] in order that I might see all the places which the children of Israel touched on their journey out from Rameses, until they reached the Red Sea at the place which is now called Clyisma from the fort which is there. I desired therefore that we should go from Clyisma to the land of Goshen, that is, to the city called Arabia, which city is in the land of Goshen. The whole territory is called after the city, the land of Arabia, the land of Goshen, although it is part of Egypt. It is much better land than all the rest of Egypt. From Clyisma that is from the Red Sea there are four desert stations, but though in the desert, yet there are military quarters at the stations with soldiers and officers who always escorted us from fort to fort."<sup>18</sup>

Peter the Deacon,<sup>19</sup> the author of a conflation of earlier travel accounts of biblical sites, adds to the traditional elements of the Israelite exodus this description of Clyisma as an ancient port of trade:

"Clyisma itself is on the shore, right by the sea. It has an enclosed harbor which makes the sea come right inside the fort, and it is the port for India, which is to say that it receives the ships from India, for ships from India can come to no other port but this in Roman territory. And ships there are numerous and great, since it is a port renowned for the Indian merchants who come to it. Also the official (agents in rebus) known as the logothete has his residence there, the one who goes on embassy each year to India by order of the Roman emperor, and his ships lie there. The children of Israel came to this place on their way out of Egypt when they were escaping from Pharaoh, and the fort was built later on, to be a defence and deterrent against Saracen raids"<sup>20</sup>

It has been customary to attribute elements of this text to the lost portion of Etheria's fourth-century memoir.<sup>21</sup> Despite some similarities, the Etheria's account

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*Construction in Antiquity Proceedings, Peraeus 30 August-1 September 1985*, ed. HARRY E. TZALAS, Athens 1989, 76.

<sup>18</sup>. *The Pilgrimage of Etheria*, 13-14.

<sup>19</sup>. He was a monk from Monte Cassino, who wrote a book in 1137 A.D. on the holy places, *liber de locis sanctis*. He quoted many details about the holy places from Etheria's fourth-century memoir and from Venerable Bede's *de locis sanctis* (c. 702-703). See MAYERSON, *Egeria and Peter the Deacon*, 61.

<sup>20</sup>. Peter the Deacon, *Liber de Locis Sanctis*, ed. R. WEBER [*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* CLXXV], 101.

<sup>21</sup>. On the site of Clyisma between the accounts of Etheria and Peter the Deacon see MAYERSON, *Egeria and Peter the Deacon*, 61-64.



rarely concerns itself with mundane affairs, particularly with a lengthy description of a port of call. However, it is true that certain travelers might have had been fed erroneous information about Clyisma's geographical settings; what is especially difficult to accept is the statement that "*ships from India can come to no other port but this in Roman territory.*" Navigational difficulties in the Gulf of Suez, as described above, kept Clyisma from becoming a major Roman port of trade.<sup>22</sup>

From the sixth century onwards and due to the attention, which Justin I (518-527 A.D.) and Justinian I (527-565 A.D.) drew to the Red Sea, Egypt, and Arabia,<sup>23</sup> Clyisma became a major port on the Red Sea<sup>24</sup> and the importance of Berenice and Myos Hormos was decreased.<sup>25</sup> The evidence is substantiated by the number of ships, which entered the Ethiopian harbor of Gabaza in the summer of 525 A.D, after the appeal of the king of Ethiopia to Justin I. These ships were twenty vessels from Clyisma, seven from Iotabê, fifteen from Aela,<sup>26</sup> two from Berenice, seven from the island of Farsan, and nine from India.<sup>27</sup> Then the ships, which came from India via the Red Sea, had unloaded their cargos at Clyisma,<sup>28</sup> while Berenice became less.<sup>29</sup> Despite the importance of Clyisma, it was a small city, according to the account of Piacenza's pilgrim who visited Clyisma ca. 570 A.D.<sup>30</sup> and who reports of a fortress in the port-city of Clyisma, too.<sup>31</sup>

Gregory of Tours (538/9-594 A.D.) speaks about the advantages of the location of Clyisma, its harbor, and the Indian goods there when he says:

"*...The river about which I have told you flows in from the east and makes its way round towards the western shore of the Red Sea. A lake or arm of water runs from the west away from the Red Sea and then flows eastwards, being about fifty miles long and eighteen*

<sup>22</sup>. MAYERSON, *The Port of Clyisma*, 124-125.

<sup>23</sup>. See A. VASILIEV, Justin I (518-527) and Abyssinia, *ByzZ* 33/1(1933) 67-77; E. R. HARDY, The Egyptian Policy of Justinian, *DOP* 22 (1968) 21-41.

<sup>24</sup>. PH. MAYERSON, *The Port of Clyisma*, 120 ff., details the historical references, which are related to the continuity of Clyisma during the Roman and Byzantine periods.

<sup>25</sup>. Procopius, *History of the Wars, I-II The Persian Wars*, Eng. trans. H. B. DEWING, London 1914, chaps. XIX-XX; G. WIET, *Histoire de la nation égyptienne*, IV, Paris 1937, 166; M. G. MORONY, Economic Boundaries? Late Antiquity and Early Islam, *JESHO* 47/2 (2004) 187.

<sup>26</sup>. In the sixth century, Aela was mentioned many times and described as an important port by Procopius. On the other hand, he said that Iotabê was inhabited by Jews that were subjected to the Byzantines. Procopius, *History of Wars, the Persian Wars*, I, chaps. XIX-XX.

<sup>27</sup>. *Martyrium Sancti Arethae*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. 24, 747; Y. M. KOBISHANOV, Aksum: Political System, Economics, and Culture, First to Fourth Century, in: *General History of Africa: Ancient Civilizations of Africa*, ed. G. MOKHTAR, Berkeley 1981, 390; HAMSHARI, *Therān fī al-Qarn al-Sādis*, 250; MORONY, *Economic Boundaries*, 187.

<sup>28</sup>. MAYERSON, *The Port of Clyisma*, 124; MANGO, *Byzantine Trade*, 13.

<sup>29</sup>. AL-SAYYED A. SĀLEM, *Al-Baḥr al-Aḥmar fī al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*, Alexandria 1993, 11.

<sup>30</sup>. MAYERSON, *Egeria and Peter the Deacon*, 64; MORONY, *Economic Boundaries*, 188.

<sup>31</sup>. *Synecdemus of Hierocles*, ed. E. HONIGMANN, Brussels 1939, 46; CHRISTIDES, *New Light on Early Christianity in Nubia*, 176.

*miles side. At the head of the water stands the city Clysmā, built there, not because of the fertility of the site, for nothing could be more sterile, but for its harbor. Ships which come from Indies tie quietly at anchor here because of the fine position of the harbor and the goods collected here are then distributed all over Egypt.*<sup>32</sup>

### **Clysmā as an Islamic Commercial Port**

As for the Islamic period, it is remarkable that Clysmā and Aela appear as centers of Red Sea shipping in the Islamic tradition.<sup>33</sup> The Islamic expansion in Yemen and Egypt in particular were followed by an important period of expansion of trade in the Red Sea area, in which the ships came from India and China to the Egyptian ports in the seventh century A.D.<sup>34</sup> From the Red Sea ports and Aden, merchants sailed to India and China exporting commodities, both of the African coast of the Red Sea and beyond by Arab merchants under private initiative. Some of these merchants followed a pre-Islamic tradition of trading in those ports. However, the vitally transit trade between East and West made possible an extensive development in the Red Sea ports.<sup>35</sup> Clysmā, as a Red Sea port, became, beside the silk route, a commercial intermediary between China, India, Africa, and Egypt, where the Red Sea seems altogether to have been much more traveled than the Silk Road itself.<sup>36</sup> It also played a prominent role in the trade of Europe, since the ancient times.<sup>37</sup> For example, Ibn Khurdādhbah (820-912 A.D./205-299 A.H.) mentioned that the Radhanite Jewish traders brought adult slaves, girls and boys, brocade, braver pelts, assorted furs, sables, and swords from Western Europe to the Egyptian ports of the Mediterranean.<sup>38</sup> Then they transported their merchandise by

<sup>32</sup>. Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, Eng. trans. L. THORPE, London 1974, I: 10, 75.

<sup>33</sup>. P. CRONE, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, New Jersey 2004, 25. See also L. KEPPIE, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*, Baltimore 1991, 68-69.

<sup>34</sup>. C. D. FORDE, *Ancient Mariners: the Story of Ships and Sea Routes*, New York 1928, 57.

<sup>35</sup>. G. M. EL-TAHER, The Gate to the Mediterranean: Ports and Trade of the Red Sea Coast in Early Islamic Time, in: *Sailing Ships of the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabic Gulf*, ed. V. CHRISTIDES, II, Athens 2000, 53.

<sup>36</sup>. R. GORDON and J. REYNOLDS, Roman Inscriptions 1995-2000, *JRS* 93 (2003) 279.

<sup>37</sup>. Egypt was the chief intermediary between the Mediterranean world and the distant spice and silk lands of India and China. See L. C. WEST, Phases of Commercial life in Roman Egypt, *JRS* 7 (1917) 45.

<sup>38</sup>. About the Jewish merchants and their trade between India, Aden, and Egypt see: S. D. GOITEIN, Portrait of a Medieval India Trader: Three Letters from the Cairo Geniza, *BSOAS* 50/3 (1987) 449-464; IDEM, From Aden to India: Specimens of the Correspondence of India Traders of the Twelfth Century, *JESHO* 23/1-2 (Apr., 1980) 43-66; IDEM, New Light on the Beginnings of the Kārim Merchants, *JESHO* 1/2 (Apr., 1958) 175-184; IDEM, From the Mediterranean to India: Documents on the Trade to India, South Arabia, and East Africa from the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, *Speculum* 29/2 (Apr., 1954) 181-197; M. GIL, The Rādhānite Merchants and the Land of Rādhān, *JESHO* 17/3 (Sep., 1974) 299-328

pack animals to Clyisma, which was twenty-five parasangs away. At Clyisma, they set sail for al-Jār<sup>39</sup> and Jedda, after which they proceeded to al-Sind, India, and China.<sup>40</sup> They exported from India species, such as pepper, ginger, *bahār*, and betel nuts, iron, and brass products.<sup>41</sup>

In the ninth century A. D, al-Ya‘qūbī describes Clyisma as follows:

*"Al-Qulzum is a great city on the sea. Its merchants are engaged in the preparation of the supplies to be sent from Egypt to al-Hijāz and Yemen. It has different races of people and its merchants are wealthy."*<sup>42</sup>

Before the time of Ibn Khurdāhbah these merchandises had been shipped aboard vessels, which sailed from al-Fustāt to Clyisma *via* the canal (*khalīj*) of Amīr al-Mu‘minīn,<sup>43</sup> besides the pack animals. Then the merchants continued their journey from Clyisma to al-Jār and then to Aden; and from Aden either to India and China or to Ethiopia and Zanzibar.<sup>44</sup>

In 855 A.D./241 A.H., the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil (b. 821 - d. 862 A.D./206-248 A.H.) ordered Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Qummī to fight the tribes of Beja, south of Egypt. He went to Clyisma and brought seven ships laden with flour, oil, dates, *al-swayq*, and barley. Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Qummī ordered some of his colleagues to lead these ships to the shore of Beja on the Red Sea until their subjection.<sup>45</sup> This incident apparently refers to the importance of Clyisma as a military arsenal at this time.

The troubles and the economic hardship at Makka in 865 A.D./251 A.H. refer to the continuity of the Egyptian food supplies to al-Hijāz by Clyisma. In this year, the ships, which were loaded with supplies, arrived from Clyisma to Jedda.<sup>46</sup>

Ibn Ḥawqal, who began his traveling in 943 A.D. and visited Egypt, describes Clyisma saying:

*"Clyisma is a city on the shore of the sea, which ends there ... It, has no planets, no trees, and no water. It brings its water from far wells...It is well constructed, in which the gathering point of Egypt and Syria, and from there the cargos of Egypt and Syria were carried*

<sup>39</sup>. Al-Jār was the port of Madīna on the Arabian coast of the Red Sea. It was smaller than Jedda and was full of merchandises and capitals. See Ibn Ḥawqal, *Sūrat al-Arḍ*, Beirut n.d., 39.

<sup>40</sup>. Ibn Khurdāhbah, *Al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*, ed. M. J. DE GOEJE, Leiden 1889, 153-154; N. S. STILLMAN, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book*, Philadelphia 1979, 163.

<sup>41</sup>. GOITEIN, *From Aden to India*, 46.

<sup>42</sup>. Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Buldān*, Beirut 1988, 90.

<sup>43</sup>. On the history of *khalīj* Amīr al-Mu‘minīn, see SAYYED S. NADAVI, Arab Navigation, *IslCult* 15/4 (1941) 535-448; 16/1(1942) 72-86, 182-198, 404-422.

<sup>44</sup>. Nāsir Khusraw, *Safar Namah*, trans. Y. AL-KHASHĀB, Beirut 1983, 86.

<sup>45</sup>. Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, ed. R. M. RADWĀN, Beirut 1403 A.H., 239-240; Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-Arḍ*, 57-59; Al-Tabarī, *Tārīkh al-'Umam wa-l-Mulūk*, V, Beirut n.d., 323; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, VI, Beirut n. d., 123.

<sup>46</sup>. Al-Tabarī, *Tārīkh al-'Umam wa-l-Mulūk*, V, 405.

to al-Hijāz, Yemen, and the shores of the (Red) Sea. The distance between it and Miṣr (al-Fuṣṭāṭ) is two stages. It ends (towards the south) with the shore of the sea where it has no village, no city except some settlements in which some people live on the fishing and some dates palms."<sup>47</sup>

Once again Ibn Ḥawqal refers to Clysmā as a center of the routes that began from Clysmā to Iraq, Arabia, and China.<sup>48</sup> The archeological evidence proves that Clysmā had contacts with the eastern Mediterranean, the Nile valley and Delta, and the other ports of the northern Red Sea, besides Arabia, Axum, and some points in the Indian Ocean.<sup>49</sup>

It seems that, during the Fatimid period, the economic status of Clysmā was changed. Therefore, al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (r. 996 - 1021 A.D./386-412 A.H.) exempted the inhabitants of Clysmā from paying taxes on their ships to encourage the merchants as well as pilgrims to embark and disembark there.<sup>50</sup> Al-Muqaddasī indicated that the tax there was a *dirham* for a cargo.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, he did not say if this cargo was that of a ship or of a camel, the latter being the more probable assumption. This economic status became more difficult during the time of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustaṣir bi-Allāh (r. 1036-1094 A.D./427-487 A.H.) because of *al-shidda al-mustaṣiriyya*, in which the Nile did not flood for seven years and Egypt fell in a famine. Clysmā was influenced by this status especially that it had no sources of sweet water and its place as a valuable port on the Red Sea became less. Then, the routs of trade and pilgrimage, which passed through Clysmā and Aela, became declined and threatened. These routes turned to the Egyptian southern ports of the Red Sea, from Qūṣ to Quṣeir, Qūṣ to ‘Aydḥāb, and Aswān to ‘Aydḥāb.<sup>52</sup>

Al-Jazayrī refers to discontinuance of the land routes of pilgrimage *via* Clysmā because of *al-shidda al-mustaṣiriyya* and to the appearance of ‘Aydḥāb as an intermediary of Indo-Arabian trade and pilgrims with Arabia for more than two centuries.<sup>53</sup> It is probable that the good relations between the Fatimid Egypt and Yemen during the time of al-Ṣulayḥiyya dynasty, the distinguished place of Aden, as a center of the Indian and African trade, and the short naval route from ‘Aydḥāb

<sup>47</sup>. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Sūrat al-Arḍ*, 53; Idem, *Al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*, Leiden 1873, 38-39.

<sup>48</sup>. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Sūrat al-Arḍ*, 20-21.

<sup>49</sup>. SIDEBOTHAM, *Northern Red Sea Ports*, 335.

<sup>50</sup>. Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā‘iz wa-l-I‘tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khitat wa-l-Athār*, ed. M. M. ZYĀDA, I, Cairo 1939, 375.

<sup>51</sup>. Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqaṣīm fī Ma‘rifat al-Aqālīm*, ed. M. J. DE GOEJE, Leiden 1906, 200.

<sup>52</sup>. Sālem, *Al-Baḥr al-Aḥmar*, 22-23; ALI I. AL-GHABBĀN, "Ṭarīq al-Ḥajj al-Miṣrī," in: *Ṭuruq al-Tijāra al-Qadīma*, eds. ALI I. AL-GHABBĀN, B. ANDRÉ-SALVINI, F. DEMANGE, and M. COTTY, Paris 2010, 461; GOITEIN, *Portrait of a Medieval India Trader*, 456.

<sup>53</sup>. Al-Jazayrī, *Al-Durar al-Frā‘id al-Munazzama fī Akhbār wa-Ṭarīq Makka al-Mu‘azzama*, ed. H. AL-JĀSER, I, Riyadh 1983, 401-402. Cf. GOITEIN, *Portrait of a Medieval India Trader*, 456 ff; IDEM, *From the Mediterranean to India*, 197.

to Jedda, and from 'Aydhāb to Aden led to the development of the Egyptian southern ports on the Red Sea more than Clyisma.

When al-Idrīsī (1099/1100-1164 A.D./493-559 A.H.) speaks about the city of Zāligh (maybe Zayla') on the Abyssinian shore of the Red Sea he indicates that the ships of Clyisma reach this city with different kinds of merchandises and the merchants purchase the slaves and silver there. He adds that the ships of Clyisma navigate in the harbor of al-Mandab, before Yemen, and in the Indian Ocean, too.<sup>54</sup> Al-Idrīsī's reference disagrees with the account of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1178-1225 A.D./574-622 A.H.) who said later that the value of Clyisma decreased greatly and that it was in ruins. He said also:

*"Al-Qulzum is an ancient city, dry and gloomy. It has no water, no pasture, no planets, no animals and no trees. The water is brought to it from Suez by the ships...The foods (of its inhabitants) come from Belbīs and their water from Suez. They eat the goat meat. The water of their bathrooms is salty water; the roads leading to it are too hard. But it has nice mosques and great houses. And its merchandises are useful. It is the treasure of Egypt, the station of Ḥijāz, and the relief of the pilgrims."*<sup>55</sup>

Al-Idrīsī again refers to the declined status of Clyisma and explains that this took place because of the raids of the Bedouins (*al-'A'rāb*) on it that beset the inhabitants of Clyisma and take their possessions. Then the routes of the trade to Clyisma became disconnected, the people feared going there, life became hard, and its people drank unpalatable water from the spring of Suez, which was in a sandy place.<sup>56</sup> It is probable that the source of the first account of al-Idrīsī is attributed to an earlier period than the twelfth century in which Clyisma was in ruins.

There is a considerable point in the history of Clyisma, which is that it is closely associated with the sweet water canal that bears the name of the Roman emperor "Trajan's Canal" or "Trajan's River".<sup>57</sup> Later, in the Islamic period, it is called "*khalīj Amīr al-Mu'minīn*," which was the canal that linked Clyisma to the Nile and made Clyisma an attractive port despite its northerly location.<sup>58</sup> This canal facilitated the shipping of the goods from Alexandria to Clyisma, avoiding the dangers and expenses that desert crossing presented when using the other Egyptian

<sup>54</sup>. Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī Ikhterāq al-Afāq*, I, Beirut n.d., 44, 49-50.

<sup>55</sup>. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, IV, Beirut n.d., 388; Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm*, 196; *EL*<sup>2</sup>, v. II, Leiden 1995, s.v. Al-Kulzum (E. HONIGMANN). During the Mamluk period the trade of Far East and India changed mainly from Clyisma to the ports of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea. See W. H. MORELAND, The Ships of the Arabian Sea about A.D. 1500, *JRAS* 2 (Apr., 1939) 173-192; J. L. MELOY, Imperial Strategy and Political Exigency: The Red Sea Spice Trade and the Mamluk Sultanate in the Fifteenth Century, *JAOS* 123/1 (Jan. - Mar. 2003) 1-19.

<sup>56</sup>. Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, I: 348.

<sup>57</sup>. MAYERSON, *A Note on Iotabē*, 34.

<sup>58</sup>. R. E. ZITTERKOPF and S. E. SIDEBOTHAM, Stations and Towers on the Quseir-Nile Road, *JEA* 75 (1989) 156.

Red Sea ports.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, we have to take into consideration that the distance between Alexandria, Babylon (or al-Fustāt), Clysma *via* the canal of *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (or Trajan) was very short in comparison to that of Alexandria, Babylon, Coptos, Berenice, and Leukos Limen (al- Quseir); or that of Alexandria, Babylon, Antinoe, Myeos Hormos (Abū Sha'ar), *via* Hadriana or Kainopolis, which means that the costs of shipping to Clysma would be less than the other Red Sea ports.<sup>60</sup>

Alexandria means the European merchandises while Clysma means that of India, China, and Africa. I think that the idea of Trajan of re-digging the canal, which connects the West with the East *via* a short canal, is similar to that of Ferdinand M. de Lesseps. But in the case of Trajan the canal was a sweet water canal to resolve the problem of sweet water supplying at Clysma.<sup>61</sup>

A fairly extensive body of early texts mentions a canal through Wādī Ṭumaylat.<sup>62</sup> The earliest of this material dates to the first era of Persian control over ancient Egypt, the latest to Islamic times. Some sources provide more details than others do. Unfortunately, the information contained in these texts is far from consistent, and the ancient records have sown almost as much confusion as they have shed light. The relevant major sources will be summarized below in chronological order.<sup>63</sup> Much has been published about this canal, but C. A.

<sup>59</sup>. S. E. SIDEBOTHAM, *Roman Economy Policy in the Erythra Thalassa: 30 B.C.-A.D. 217*, Leiden 1986, 57; ABU-JADAYI, *Clysma- Qulzum*, 35.

<sup>60</sup>. For the Egyptian routs in the Eastern Desert see G. W. MURRAY, The Roman Roads and Stations in the Eastern Desert of Egypt, *JEA* 11, 3/4 (1925) 138-150.

<sup>61</sup>. It is concluded from the words of John of Nikiu. See *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu*, Eng. trans. R. H. CHARLES, New Jersey 2007, 55-56.

<sup>62</sup>. There is a certain amount of papyrological evidence for this canal, and although most dates to the late third century A.D. and after, we can be fairly confident that it was re-excavated under Trajan, who seems generally to have made improvements to the irrigation systems of Egypt and changes to the system of administration. The purpose of the canal is not clear. Some scholars argued that it was important to the exploitation of stone from the Eastern Desert, justifying his position by noting the particular importance enjoyed by both Mons Claudianus and Mons Porphyrites during the reign of Trajan. They thus supposed that stone was transported to the Red Sea, shipped to Clysma and taken via Trajan's Canal to the Nile. There is no evidence for stone being transported to the Red Sea from the quarries. The other possibility is that it was built to facilitate trade with the Red Sea ports and India, but the difficulty of navigating up to Clysma on the Red Sea may have discouraged ships from traveling north of Myos Hormos. The final possibility is some connection with the Roman Red Sea fleet. Eutropius notes that ships were transferred from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea on this canal for Trajan's campaign against the Parthians. For more details see C. ADAMS, *Land Transport in Roman Egypt: A Study of Economics and Administration of a Roman Province*, Oxford 2007, 34-35; MAYERSON, *A Note on Iotabê*, 34; SIDEBOTHAM, *Erythra Thalassa*, 176. See also map no 1.

<sup>63</sup>. C. A. REDMOUNT, The Wadi Tumilat and the 'Canal of the Pharaohs', *JNES* 54/2 (Apr. 1995) 127.

REDMOUNT epitomizes the chronological history of this canal in specific points.<sup>64</sup> Some Arabic sources refer to this canal, too. As the reports are in fundamental agreement concerning the course of the canal and the dates of its reopening and

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<sup>64</sup>. REDMOUNT, *The Wadi Tumilat*, 127-130. See also J. P. COOPER, Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals: Chronology, Location, Seasonality and Function, in: *Connected Hinterlands: Proceedings of Red Sea Project IV, held at the University of Southampton, September 2008. Society for Arabian Studies Monographs 8*, eds. L. BLUE, J. P. COOPER, R. THOMAS, and J. WHITEWRIGHT, Oxford 2009, 195 ff.; F. G. MOORE, Three Canal Projects, Roman and Byzantine, *AJA* 54/2 (Apr.-Jun. 1950) 99-100. As for the canal of Trajan, REDMOUNT epitomizes its ancient history in nine points: (1): Four *stelae* were erected by Darius I (r. 521-486 B.C.) to commemorate the excavation of a canal to the Red Sea. These *stelae* were placed on high points in the terrain so that they could be seen by boats following the canal. (2): Herodotus, who visited Egypt in the mid-fifth century B.C., is the first classical author to mention explicitly the existence of a canal connecting the Nile River to the Red Sea. He records that Necho II (r. 610-595 B.C.) was the first to attempt the excavation of such a canal to the Red Sea, but that he abandoned the project after 120,000 Egyptians died and after an oracle informed him only foreigners would profit from his labors. The canal was subsequently completed by Darius. According to Herodotus, the ancient canal left the Pelusiac branch of the Nile a little above Bubastis and arrived at the Erythraean Sea<sup>64</sup> after passing near Patoumos. (3): Aristotle, writing in the mid-fourth century B.C., indicates that "Sesostris" was the first to begin a canal crossing the Isthmus to the Erythraean Sea. Sesostris, however, like Darius afterwards, discovered that the level of the land was lower than that of the sea, and neither ruler completed the passage in order to avoid corrupting the waters of the Nile with those of the Sea. (4): Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285 B.C.-246 B.C.) recorded the cutting of a canal through Wādī Ṭumaylat in the text of the so-called *Pithom Stela*. (5): Diodorus Siculus visited Egypt in 59 B.C. and tells of an artificial canal running from the Pelusiac branch of the Nile to the Arabian Gulf. He recounts that this waterway was begun by Necho and continued by Darius, who left it unfinished because he was told the Red Sea was at a higher level than Egypt and would flood the land. The canal was completed finally by Ptolemy II who provided it with a lock. (6): Strabo who traveled through Egypt in 25-24 B.C. records that Sesostris was the first king to begin the canal, followed by Necho who died before the canal was finished. Later Darius continued the waterway, but stopped when he was told that the Erythraean Sea was at a higher level than Egypt and would submerge the land. The canal was finally finished by the Ptolemies who also fitted it with a lock. According to Strabo, the canal was 100 cubits (46 meters) wide and of sufficient depth to float large ships. (7): Pliny the Elder, who wrote his *Natural History* in the first century A.D., implies that up to his time the canal was never completed. He records that Sesostris, and after him Darius, had contemplated cutting the canal, but work was only finally undertaken by Ptolemy II. After excavating a channel 100 feet wide and 40 feet deep for a distance of 37.5 Roman miles as far as the Bitter springs, Ptolemy stopped when he found the level of the Red Sea was three cubits higher than the land of Egypt. (8): The Alexandrian astronomer and geographer Claudius Ptolemaeus, or Ptolemy, wrote in the second century A.D. that the canal from the Nile to the Red Sea the "River of Trajan" and indicates that in his day it started from the main Nile stream above the city of Babylon. (9): Lucien, a public official in Egypt under the Antonines about 170 A.D., mentions a voyager who traveled by a canal from Alexandria to Clyisma. This is the last known reference to a functional canal through Wādī Ṭumaylat in the Roman period.

closing, only a summary of the sources is presented here. The gist of these accounts is that Trajan's canal had completely silted up by the mid-seventh century A.D.

Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (803-871 A.D./187-257 A.H.) points out clearly that the Orthodox Caliph 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, during the year of al-Ramāda,<sup>65</sup> ordered 'Amr Ibn al-Āṣ to dig the canal in 17 or 18 A.H. Then he did it within six months and before the end of the year the ships sailed in the canal. The ships arrived in al-Ḥijāz (Arabia) in the seventh month, loaded with food and grain supplies from Egypt to Makka and Madīna.<sup>66</sup> From this time on, Egypt became the main supplier of wheat, lentils, onions, vinegar, and textiles as well as tax payments to al-Ḥijāz.<sup>67</sup>

Once again Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam says that the Caliph wrote to 'Amr saying: "You know that before Islam, ships used to come to us carrying traders of the people of Egypt. When we conquered Egypt, that canal was cut, having been blocked off, and the traders had abandoned it."<sup>68</sup>

This passage suggests that the canal may still have been in use into the Byzantine period. Indeed, if a description of it in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. *Historia Francorum* of Gregory of Tours is based on contemporary information, then the canal's period of disuse before the Arab re-excavation of it in the mid-seventh century A.D. was no more than seven decades.<sup>69</sup>

Al-Ya'qūbī adds that the number of the ships was twenty and every ship was laden with more or less three thousand *artabai* of the wheat. The Caliph went with his companions to the port al-Jār to welcome the ships upon arrival.<sup>70</sup> Later, al-Muqaddasī counted no less than three thousand camel loads exported every week to al-Ḥijāz.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>65</sup>. In this year, 17/18 A.H., the life at Makka and Madīna was difficult because of a severe aridity and drought.

<sup>66</sup>. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-Akḥbārāha*, ed. M. AL-HUJAYRĪ, Beirut 1996, 285; Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Khitat*, I, 127; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, IV, Cairo n.d., 43-44; Al-Suyūfī, *Husn al-Muḥādara fī Akḥbār Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, Cairo n.d., 76 ff.; Yāqūt al-Hamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, II, 386; P. SIJPESTEIJN, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the beginning of the Muslim Rule*, in: *Egypt in the Byzantine World 300-700*, ed. R. S. BAGNALL. Cambridge 2007, 447-448; H. KHALILIEH, *Islamic Maritime Law and Practice during the Classical Period (200-900 A.H./815-1494 C.E.): A Study Based on Jurisprudential, Historical and Jeniza Sources*. Ph. D. Dissertation, Princeton University 1995, 5.

<sup>67</sup>. SIJPESTEIJN, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, 443; COOPER, *Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals*, 205.

<sup>68</sup>. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 286.

<sup>69</sup>. Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, I: 10, 75; COOPER, *Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals*, 198.

<sup>70</sup>. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 288; Al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*, II, Beirut n.d., 154; Abū Sālih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some Neighbouring Countries*, ed. and Eng. trans. B. T. EVETTS, Oxford 1895, 172-173; Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Dhikr man Ḥajja men al-Khulafā' wa-l-Mulūk*, ed. G. E. AL-SHAYYĀL, Cairo 2000, 44-45; FAHMY, *Muslim Sea-Power*, 76; G. HOURANI, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, New Jersey 1995, 60.

<sup>71</sup>. Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqaṣīm*, 195.



Sa'īd Ibn Baṭrīq (877-940 A.D./264-328 A.H.) confirms that the ships carried the grain and barely from al-Fuṣṭāṭ to Clyisma through the canal of *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*. Then the ships carried them through the Red Sea to Madīna.<sup>72</sup>

Ibn Zūlāq (918-997 A.D./306-387 A.H.) says that 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb asked 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ to send the foods and grain to Madīna. Then, he told him that he would send him an endless caravan of food supplies, not by the sea. Then the Caliph ordered him to send it by the sea. 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ sent to him some supplies by the sea and apologized to him that the sea was far from him. Then the Caliph asked 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ to tell him about the distance between al-Fuṣṭāṭ and the sea, which he mentioned to him. The latter told him that it is about two nights. Then 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ordered him to dig a canal even he had to spend all the income of Egypt. But 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ did not accept the idea of the Caliph. After pressure of the Caliph on 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ, he did it.<sup>73</sup>

The Arab writers mention that 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ wrote to the Caliph to make the prices of foods at Madīna as those of Egypt by digging a river and construction of vaults. When the Caliph ordered him to do it immediately, some Copts advised 'Amr not to do that because the income of Egypt (*al-kharāj*) will decrease. 'Amr wrote to the Caliph who re-ordered him to do it. Then 'Amr re-dug the canal of Trajan and the prices at Madīna became as those of Egypt.<sup>74</sup> This incident leads to a question: Did the Copts play a remarkable role in re-digging the canal of Trajan?

Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam and Ibn Zūlāq clearly refer to the communications of 'Amr with some Copts when one of them said to him, "If you exempted me and my family from the tribute (*al-jizyah*) I will tell you about a suitable place for the canal." Then he wrote to the Caliph about his request, and then the Caliph permitted him to do that. Therefore, this Copt told 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ about the location of the canal (of Trajan).<sup>75</sup> This information proves that the Copts, who were professional in naval affairs,<sup>76</sup> helped the Arabs to dig and open *khalīj Amīr al-Mu'minīn*.

Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam refers to the continuity of sending the food supplies from Egypt to Arabia by Clyisma after the time of the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (r. 717-720 A.D./98-102 A.H.). Later, the Arab governors of Egypt neglected this canal and then it sanded up and was disconnected from Clyisma. The canal ended with an extremity or tail called *dhayl* (*dhanab*) al-Timsāḥ nearby Ṭahā

<sup>72</sup> Sa'īd Ibn Baṭrīq, *Al-Ta'rīkh al-Majmou' 'ala al-Taḥqīq wa-l-Taṣdīq*, Beirut 1909, 27.

<sup>73</sup> Ibn Zūlāq, *Faḍā'il Miṣr wa-'Akhbārāha wa-Khawāṣṣaha*, ed. A. M. 'UMAR, Cairo 1999, 53-54.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 286; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntazim fī Akhbār al-Bashar*, IV, Beirut 1358 A.H., 252; Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*, I, Beirut 2003, 329.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 287; Ibn Zūlāq, *Faḍā'il Miṣr wa-'Akhbārāha*, 54.

<sup>76</sup> On the professionalism of the Copts in the naval affairs see TAREK M. MUHAMMAD, The Role of the Copts in the Islamic Navigation in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries: the Papyrological Evidence, *JCOptS* 10 (2008) 1-32.

al-Qulzum,<sup>77</sup> or Baṭḥā' al-Qulzum.<sup>78</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī (896-957 A.D./283-346 A.H.) places *tur'at dhanab al-Timsāḥ* one mile (*mīl*) from al-Qulzum.<sup>79</sup> Ibn Taghrī Birdī confirms it and says that at his time the people called this canal *khalīj al-Qāhira*.<sup>80</sup> Once its way to the sea was blocked, however, the terminus of the canal soon regressed to Wādī Ṭumaylat within which it still served an irrigational function.<sup>81</sup>

'Abd el-'Azīz Ibn Marwān, the Arab governor of Egypt, built a vault on *khalīj Amīr al-Mu'minīn* near al-Fuṣṭāṭ in 717-718 A.D./98 A.H. and wrote his name on it as a founder. In 930 A.D. Takīn, governor of Egypt increased the thickness of that vault. Ikhshides in 943 A.D. increased it and the Fatimid caliph al-'Azīz Billāh (955-996 A.D./344-386 A.H.) maintained it, too.<sup>82</sup>

It is noteworthy that as a result of re-digging *khalīj Amīr al-Mu'minīn* by 'Amr Ibn al-'Āṣ, Clysmā became a flourished station on the road between Egypt, Syria and Iraq, too. It is confirmed by the arrival of al-Ashtar al-Nikh'ī from Iraq to Clysmā in 658 A.D./38 A.H., as a new ruler of Egypt, where *mutawālī kharāj* of Egypt met him there.<sup>83</sup>

It should be taken into consideration that the canal was not navigable all over the year. Greek papyrus no 1346, dated 710 A.D./91 A.H., proves this issue. In his letter to Basilus, *pagarch* of Aphrodito, Qurra Ibn Sharīk said to him:

*"We have assessed on your administrative district various articles for the cleaning and fitting up of the ships at Clysmā, and also supplies for the sailors of the ships which are at the same Clysmā, and we sent you also the demand notes for these many days ago, and wrote you to send them off quickly before the waters of (the canal of) Trajan subside, and till this day you have not sent any of them at all worth mentioning. On receiving the present letter, therefore, immediately and at the very instant send whatever there is of them in your district, not delaying anything at all, nor yet requiring another letter from us about this if at least you have any understanding and are in your right mind. For you will know that (if) you delay anything whatsoever of the said articles and supplies and the waters subside, you will have to convey them speedily (by land) to the said Clysmā, paying for their*

<sup>77</sup>. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 220; COOPER, *Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals*, 198.

<sup>78</sup>. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, II, 286. See also map no 3.

<sup>79</sup>. Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'āden al-Jawhar*, ed. M. M. 'ABD AL-ḤAMĪD, I, Cairo 1973, 343, 345.

<sup>80</sup>. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, IV, 42.

<sup>81</sup>. COOPER, *Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals*, 198.

<sup>82</sup>. Ibn Duqmāq, *Description de l'Égypte*, Beirut n.d., 120.

<sup>83</sup>. Al-Tabarī, *Tārīkh al-'Umam wa-l-Mulūk*, III, 127; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, III, 226; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, I, 104; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*, VII, Beirut n.d., 313.

*carriage out of your own property. Written the 8<sup>th</sup> Tybi, 8<sup>th</sup> indiction.*"<sup>84</sup>

It is probable that this papyrus was written on the eighth day of the month of Tybi (i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup> January of the Julian calendar and 7<sup>th</sup> January of the Gregorian) and sent to Aphrodito in Upper Egypt, where it arrived on 13<sup>th</sup> February of the Gregorian calendar. It presumably was sent in the expectation, or at least hope, that the recipient would be able to respond with the goods before the waters did indeed subside.<sup>85</sup> This indication refers to the propriety of navigation in the canal of Amīr al-Mu'minīn only during the time of the Nile's flood.

Papyrus no 1346 clarifies that the transport by sea in early Islamic Egypt was included in the taxes levied on the community; the extra costs for transport over land had to be paid by the *pagarch*. The same is stated in relation to the canal of Alexandria.<sup>86</sup> In the Fatimid Egypt, transport costs for luxury goods amounted to an average 1-1½ percent of the total price of the goods. Bulky goods transport costs amounted to much more, between 20 % and 25 % of the value.<sup>87</sup>

The canal remained navigable and open until 767 A.D./150 A.H., when it was closed by order of the second Abbasid Caliph, Abū Ja'far al-Mansūr (r. 712-775 A.D./93-158 A.H.). The questionable point here is that: Why did the Abbasid Caliph close the canal that was useful to the Egyptian economy?

It seems that he planned to prevent the supplies from reaching Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdullāh al-Nafs al-Zakiyya who rebelled against him at Makka and Madīna.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, maybe the Abbasid Caliph closed the canal to activate the trade in the ports of the Persian Gulf, especially that he was going to construct the new capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, Baghdad, in 762 A.D./145 A.H. before the beginning of the revolt against him at Madīna. It means that the trade coming from India and China had to follow the short route to Baghdad through the Persian Gulf, not through the ports of the Red Sea.<sup>89</sup>

It is reasonable to believe that the geographical location of Makka and Madīna may have constituted a factor in the decline of Clysma, particularly when the canal of Amīr al-Mu'minīn was filled with silt, a matter which disrupted the local and international commercial activities from and to Clysma. The two cities are situated on the Western side of Arabia and their ports on the Red Sea were Jeddā

<sup>84</sup>. *Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, ed. H. I. Bell, IV, London 1910, no. 1346. (henceforth *P. Lond.*) = Eng. trans. by I. Bell, *Der Islam* 2 (1911) 277; P. M. Sijpesteijn, *Travel and Trade on the River*, in: *Papyrology and History of Islamic Egypt*, eds. P. M. Sijpesteijn and L. Sundelin, Leiden 2004, 114, n. 6. SIJPESTEIJN, *Travel and Trade on the River*, 126

<sup>85</sup>. COOPER, *Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals*, 204.

<sup>86</sup>. *P. Lond.*, 1353 = Eng. trans. by I. BELL, *Der Islam* 2 (1911) 280-281.

<sup>87</sup>. SIJPESTEIJN, *Travel and Trade on the River*, 126.

<sup>88</sup>. Ibn Duqmāq, *Description de l'Égypte*, 120; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, II, 386; C. W. HALLBERG, *The Suez Canal: Its History and Diplomatic Importance*, New York 1931, 32; A. J. BUTLER, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of the Roman Dominion*, Oxford 1902, 227.

<sup>89</sup>. Sālem, *Al-Bahr al-Aḥmar*, 14

(for Makka)<sup>90</sup> and al-Jār (for Madīna). Abū Ja‘far al-Manšūr, destroying the economy of these two cities to quell the rebellion there, had to disconnect the naval trade of the Arabian ports of the Red Sea with Clysmā, the port which directed the Egyptian and Western merchandises to Arabia. This purpose already took place when he closed the canal, which linked the Nile to Clysmā. In this case, it is expected that the goods will be carried from the Nile valley to Clysmā on the pack animals. We have to take into consideration that the shipment of a ship is larger than that of many camels, which saves the money of the merchants. Therefore, the costs of the trade there will be increased.

In the tenth century, according to the map of Egypt of Ibn Ḥawqal (10<sup>th</sup> century), *khalīj Amīr al-Mu‘minīn* (*khalīj* Serdous) was far from Clysmā.<sup>91</sup> This remark means that the navigation from Cairo to Clysmā was until the end of the canal, during the time of the Nile's flood, and then the merchants carried on their journey to Clysmā by land. This assumption is an accepted explanation for the contradiction between Ibn Ḥawqal and al-Maqrīzī, who said that the canal was navigable until his time.<sup>92</sup>

It is note worthy that COOPER thinks that, by the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the canal has its end at al-Sadīr in al-Sharqiyya (province), where there is a dyke. Al-Sadīr is unknown today, but Yāqūt visited it in the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D., describing it as a “*marsh and bush area in Egypt between al-‘Abbāsa and al-Khashabī into which pours the overflow of the Nile when it rises...It is the first place you come to in Egypt going from Syria to Miṣr (Cairo)*”. Al-‘Abbāsa still exists today, at the western entrance to Wādī Ṭumaylat. Yāqūt says that al-Khashabī, unknown today, was three days from al-Fuṣṭāṭ “*at the first part of al-Jifār province when coming from Egypt, and the last part when coming from Syria.*”<sup>93</sup>

### **Clysmā as a Port for Muslim Pilgrims**

The canal of Amīr al-Mu‘minīn played a remarkable role in the flourishing of Clysmā in the Islamic period, not only for that it facilitated the commercial relations between the East and West through Clysmā, but also because of its role in the Islamic pilgrimage. The Muslim pilgrims, who came from all over Egypt, were coming from the shore of Tennis to al-Fuṣṭāṭ, and then to Clysmā. They were riding the big ships (*al-sufun al-kibār*) from Clysmā to Madīna.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>. It was the port of Makka on the Red Sea. The different ships come to Jeddah loading of merchandises. It was one of the great ports. Khalil ed-Ḍahiry, *Zoubdat Kachf el-Mamālik*, ED. P. RAVASSE, Paris 1894, 14.

<sup>91</sup>. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Ard*, 128-129 map of Egypt; see also map no 3.

<sup>92</sup>. SIDEBOTHAM, *Erythra Thalassa*, 68.

<sup>93</sup>. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, II, 373; COOPER, *Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals*, 198.

<sup>94</sup>. Ibn Zūlāq, *Faḍā'il Miṣr wa-'Akhbārāha*, 54; Sālem, *Al-Baḥr al-Aḥmar*, 12-13.

The Arab geographers shed light on Clysma, as a pilgrims' station, when they described the road from Egypt to Madīna.<sup>95</sup> Since the time of 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān, the third Orthodox Caliph, Clysma had a bridge (*jisr*) on the gulf (of Suez) by which the pilgrims continued their journey by land to the holy places.<sup>96</sup> This bridge remained until the time of Saladin.<sup>97</sup>

There were two routs from Clysma to Makka, the first was by land,<sup>98</sup> and the second one was by the Red Sea. The length of the first route (Clysma-Sinai-Aela),<sup>99</sup> the route of the most caravans of Egypt to Makka, was 15 days through a desert of three hundred parasangs, while that of the second one was 20 days, from Clysma to al-Jār directly, port of Madīna from which the distance was three days.<sup>100</sup> It is noteworthy that when Ibn Rosteh (10<sup>th</sup> century) mentioned the land route from al-Fustāṭ to Madīna he did not mention Clysma as one of the stations of that route.<sup>101</sup> There is no exact evidence to say whether the land pilgrims followed another land route to the holy places around the end of the tenth century or that the Egyptian land route of pilgrimage by Clysma was stopped.

In the eleventh century, Nāṣir Khusraw (1004-1088 A.D./ 394-481 A.H.) indicates that the cover of the Ka'ba (*kiswa*) was sent to Makka by the messengers of Sultan of Egypt with whom he went (in 1048 A.D./440 A.H.) to Makka for the pilgrimage. When they arrived in Clysma, they rode a ship to al-Jār and from it they arrived to Madīna within four days.<sup>102</sup> It is remarkable that the distance from Cairo to Clysma, which was about 90 miles,<sup>103</sup> took from three<sup>104</sup> to eight days.<sup>105</sup> It means that this journey was by land, not by the canal of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, which

<sup>95</sup>. Al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Buldān*, 90; Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*, I, 328; Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, I, 345.

<sup>96</sup>. Al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Buldān*, 90; Al-Baṣrī, *Akhbār al-Madīna*, ed. A. M. DANDAL and Y. S. BAYĀN, II, Beirut 1996, 211; Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*, I, 329.

<sup>97</sup>. In 572 A.H., when Saladin came back from Syria to Egypt, his brother Al-'Ādil went to Clysma and crossed the bridge to receive him. See Shihāb ed-Dīn Ismā'īl Abū Shāma, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn fī Akhbār al-Dawlatayn al-Nūriyya wa-l-Ṣalāhiyya*, ed. IBRAHĪM AL-ZAYBAQ, II, Beirut 1997, 440.

<sup>98</sup>. This route begins from Jub 'Umayra, al-Bwaib, 'Agroud, Clysma, al-Ranaih, al-Kursī, al-Ḥafr, Manzil, Aela, Madyan. From Madyan the route divides into two branches, the first is coastal and the other is through the desert. See S. S. 'ABD AL-MĀLIK, *Darb al-Ḥajj al-Miṣrī*, in: *Proceeding of the conference Makka 'Aṣimat al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya*, III, Makka 2005, 28.

<sup>99</sup>. Al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Buldān*, 90, adds that Aela was a great city full of different races of the people and merchandises, in which the pilgrims of Syria, Egypt, and Morocco come together. See also Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Arḍ*, 46.

<sup>100</sup>. Nāṣir Khusraw, *Safar Namah*, 86.

<sup>101</sup>. Ibn Rosteh, *Kitāb al-A'lāq an-Nafīsa*, VII, ed. M. J. DE GOEJE, BGA, Leiden 1892, 183.

<sup>102</sup>. Nāṣir Khusraw, *Safar Namah*, 110. Nāṣir Khusraw went to Makka as a pilgrim two times in 1048 and in 1050 A.D. While the first one was *via* Clysma, the second one was *via* 'Aydhāb.

<sup>103</sup>. Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, I, 348.

<sup>104</sup>. Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, I, 109.

<sup>105</sup>. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Ar*, 143; Nāṣir Khusraw, *Safar Namah*, 110.

was obsolete completely. Then the total distance from Cairo to Makka, by the naval route -Clyisma to al-Jār- was about 29-40 days.

Cairo-Clyisma	3-8 days = 90 miles
Clyisma - al-Jār	15 -20 days
Al-Jār-Madīna	3-4 days
Madīna-Makka	8 days

According to al-Bakrī, the costs of the pilgrimage journey were two *dinars* via the Sea of Clyisma.<sup>106</sup> Clyisma did not continue all over the Islamic period as a pilgrims' center because Suez<sup>107</sup> and 'Aydhāb became main ports of the Egyptian and Moroccan pilgrims<sup>108</sup> and the trade with India and Aden, as well. The turning of the pilgrims to Suez and 'Aydhāb referred to the decadence of Clyisma for many reasons:

1. The canal of Amīr al-Mu'minīn became sanded up.
2. The economic crisis of Egypt *ca.* the mid-eleventh century A.D.
3. The hardship of the life there because of the lack of sweet water.
4. The repeated Bedouins' raids on it.
5. The Crusader existence in the Red Sea.<sup>109</sup>

### Shipyard in Clyisma

Al-Ya'qūbī mentions that Clyisma was a harbor of ships,<sup>110</sup> in which there was a dockyard of the ships since the Byzantine period.<sup>111</sup> Then, far from the literary sources, the Greek papyri of the Islamic period, which shed light on the situation of Clyisma in the Early Islamic period, especially the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., show that Clyisma was a shipyard, too. According to the documentary papyri there were two great arsenals in Egypt connected with the

<sup>106</sup>. Al-Bakrī, *Al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*, II: 71.

<sup>107</sup>. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, III: 286.

<sup>108</sup>. Ibn Jubair, *Rehlat Ibn Jubair*, Beirut 1979, 40-49; Al-Jazayrī, *Al-Durar al-Frā'id al-Munazzama*, I, 401-412. See also Sālem, *Al-Baḥr al-Aḥmar*, 39-225; D. PEACOCK AND A. PEACOCK, The Enigma of 'Aydhab: a Medieval Islamic Port on the Red Sea Coast, *IJNA* 37/1 (November 2007) 32-48; A. PAUL, Aidhab : A Medieval Red Sea port, *SNRec* 36 (1955) 64-70; G. W. MURRAY, Aidhab, *GeoJourn* 68/3 (September 1926) 235-240; J. COUYAT, Les routes d'Aidhab, *BIFAO* VIII (1911) 135-143.

<sup>109</sup>. About the Crusader raids on the Islamic ports of the Red Sea see, Abū Shāma, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn*, III, 133-135; Ibn Jubair, *Rehlat Ibn Jubair*, 57; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*, XII, 311; G. LA VIÈRE LEISER, The Crusader Raid in the Red Sea in 578/1182-83, *JARCE* 14 (1977) 87-100; GHAWANMA, *Aela wa-l-Baḥr al-Aḥmar wa-Ahmyatahu al-Tārīkhiyya*, 38-52.

<sup>110</sup>. Al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Buldān*, 90.

<sup>111</sup>. FAHMY, *Muslim Sea-Power*, 72.

Islamic naval expeditions (κοῦρσα), that of the island of Babylon, and that of Clyisma on the Red Sea.<sup>112</sup>

Al-Idrīsī confirms that Clyisma was a shipyard until his time and says that the technique of the construction of the ships there was unique. Concerning this, he says:<sup>113</sup>

*"The ships that navigate in the sea [of al-Qulzum] are constructed in al-Qulzum. Their construction is a unique thing, which is that the ship side (al-kalkal) is extended on the ground widely and the board is still combined in it by adhesive until being well-groomed, then the piecing with the fiber ropes and binders, and fixing the catching bridges between the two sides. When it becomes completed, it is caulked with the grease taken from the sea's animals and the powder of the frankincense. The bottoms of these ships are wide without deepening to carry so many things and not sinking into a large depth."*<sup>114</sup>

In this passage, al-Idrīsī presents technical details about the construction of the ships in Clyisma. They were bound or stitched together with fiber ropes and binders, i.e. there were no iron nails. Ibn Jubair refers to this way, too, and mentions that the ships (*al-gillāb*) of the Red Sea have no iron nails and are stitched with the fiber ropes of the coconut palm (*al-narjīl*). The ships were caulked with fat, the grease of the castor, or that of the shark, which is better for caulking. The workers enameled the ships with the grease or fat to make the ships avoid the coral reefs of the Red Sea.<sup>115</sup>

Al-Mas'ūdī clarifies that they used the fiber ropes instead of the iron nails because the water of the Red Sea melts the iron nails and then they become feeble.<sup>116</sup> This way of the construction of the ships of the Red Sea existed before the Islamic period, i.e. before the seventh century A.D.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, it is probable that the Arabs did not develop the way of the construction of the ships in the Red Sea

<sup>112</sup>. MUHAMMAD, *The Copts in the Islamic Navigation*, 29; H. I. BELL, *The Aphrodito Papyri*, *JHS* 28 (1908) 115.

<sup>113</sup>. Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, I, 348-349. On the construction of the ships of the Red Sea see *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, Eng. trans. W. H. SCHOFF, London 1912, chaps. 15-16, 36, 60; Procopius, *History of Wars, the Persian Wars*, I, chap. XIX; Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, I, 163; Ibn Jubair, *Rehlat Ibn Jubair*, 47; Al-Jazayrī, *Al-Durar al-Frā'id al-Munazzama*, I, 410-411. See also R. MOOKERJI, *Indian Shipping. A History of the Sea-borne Trade and Maritime Activity of the Indians from the Earliest Times*, London 1912; HOURANI, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean*, 87 ff.

<sup>114</sup>. "وبالقلزم تُنشأ السفن السائرة في هذا البحر، وإنشأوها شيء طريف، وذلك أن الكلكل يتنسط على الأرض عريضاً ثم لا يزال اللوح يتركب منه على ما لصق به حتى يتهندم، ثم يجوز بجبال اللبف والدسر، ويوصل بينهما بالجسور الماسكة. فإذا كمل ذلك بأسره جُلفظ بالشحم المتخذ من دواب البحر ودقاق اللبان، وقيعان مراكبه عراض دون تعميق في تركيبها لتحمل بذلك كثير الوسق ولا تدرس على كبير عمق."

<sup>115</sup>. Ibn Jubair, *Rehlat Ibn Jubair*, 47.

<sup>116</sup>. Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, I: 163.

<sup>117</sup>. Procopius, *History of Wars, the Persian Wars*, I, chap. XIX. Cf. CHRISTIDES, *Some Hagiographical Sources*, 67-68.

and that the Coptic workers who worked in the shipyard of Clysmā still used the traditional techniques of them.

The documentary papyri refer to Coptic carpenters, caulkers, and other skilled workers who were sent to work in the shipyards of Clysmā, Alexandria, Babylon, and others.<sup>118</sup> The life of St. Anastathius of Sinai (d. ca. 700) confirms that many Christian workers, i.e. Copts, lived and worked at Clysmā. St. Anastathius also spent some of his time there.<sup>119</sup>

In the Greek letter no 1388 there was a requisition for sailors and their *δαπάνη* to be sent to Clysmā.<sup>120</sup> The same meaning is repeated in another papyrus, dated the eighth century.<sup>121</sup>

The letter no 1433, dated 706-707 A.D./87-88 A.H., from Qurra Ibn Sharīk to Basilius, *pagarch* of Aphrodito, refers to registers of requisitions, money, sailors, and workmen for the *karaboi*<sup>122</sup> at Clysmā. In this letter many names of the Copts that were related to the requisitions of Qurra were mentioned.<sup>123</sup>

In 708-709 A.D./89-90 A.H., Qurra Ibn Sharīk sent his commands to Basilius, *pagarch* of Aphrodito, for the cost of articles intended for the refitting of the ships of Clysmā and provisions for the sailors. The money is to be given to Sa'īd who is probably the person mentioned at the end of papyrus no 1346.<sup>124</sup> In the letter no 1386 Qurra said to him:

*"Articles for the cleaning and fitting up the (ships) at Clysmā, and also for sailors...and others for the government service in the 7<sup>th</sup> indiction... nominal solidi, and having made out the demand notes for them we have sent them to you. Immediately on the receipt of the present letter, therefore, in accordance with the powers given by the demand notes collect the said money and send it by your man with instructions to pay it over to Sa'īd our servant. And see to it that you do not pay anything at all for freight except that of the (wheat?) of the*

<sup>118</sup>. See *P. Lond.*, no. 1336, 1358, 1393, 1410, 1414, 1433-1434, 1449, 1508-1509, 1512-1514; H. I. BELL, An Official Circular Letter of the Arab Period, *JEA* 31(1945) 76; M. A. FAHMY, *Muslim Naval organization in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Cairo 1980, 26-27.

<sup>119</sup>. R. G. HOYLAND, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, New Jersey 1997, 92, 100.

<sup>120</sup>. *P. Lond.*, 1388, l. 3-6

<sup>121</sup>. *CPR*, ed. by F. MORELLI. XXII, Wien 2001, 40.10.

<sup>122</sup>. *Karabos* and its diminutive *karabion* were postclassical words usually used with the sense of a ship's boat; although, in Greek papyri from the Muslim Egypt and in some Byzantine texts they appeared as a term for a warship. See J. PRYOR and E. JEFFREYS, *The Age of ΔΡΟΜΩΝ the Byzantine Navy ca 500-1204*, Leiden, Boston 2006, 270. The Arab *karaboi* of the seventh and eighth centuries were fitted with the *καστελλάτοι*, a light frame along the sides for carrying the shields of the rowers. See *P. Lond.*, 1337, 3; CH. MAKRYPOULIAS, Muslim Ship through Byzantine Eye, in: *Aspects of Arab Seafaring, an Attempt to Fill the Gaps of Maritime History*, ed. by Y. Y. AL-HIJJ and V. CHRISTIDES, Athens 2002, 180-181.

<sup>123</sup>. *P. Lond.*, 1433.

<sup>124</sup>. FAHMY, *Muslim Naval organization*, 25.



*embola which is paid to the granaries of Babylon; for I intend to make inquiries and find out the truth about this, and I find that you have paid anything at all for freight except for the said embola for the granaries I will requite you with a retribution which will threaten your life and estate.*"<sup>125</sup>

The bilingual papyrus no 1515, which is a Greek-Coptic declaration, refers to provisions demanded for Clysma, which is concluded from the following phrase: "...πλοίο<sup>126</sup> το<sup>127</sup> Κλ[ύ](σματος) ὑπὸ Μααμητ υἱο(ῦ) Ἀβι Ἀβιβα ἐπικε(μένου) μ(ηνῶν) η νο(μίσματα) δ ε γ' ιβ' κδ' ..."<sup>126</sup> The Coptic papyrus no 1507 refers also to some goods sent to Muḥammad Ibn Abī Ḥabība at Clysma.<sup>127</sup>

In 709 A.D./90 A.H., Qurra Ibn Sharīk sent an order to Basilios, *pagarch* of Aphrodito, for a carpenter to be sent to serve in person in the building of ships for transporting either workmen or goods to Clysma, possibly by way of *khalīj* Amīr al-Mu'minīn. It says:<sup>128</sup>

*"In the name of Allah. From Qurra Ibn Sharīk, the governor, to Basilios, pagarches of Aphrodito. We have apportioned to your district one Carpenter for four months for work at the Barges, which convey to Clysma in the present 8<sup>th</sup> indiction, having fixed his wages and supplies at 2-3 nomisma per month excluding..., to be paid from the treasury, and having made out the demand note for him we have sent it to you. Therefore, send him with his tools in accordance with the powers given by the demand note immediately, and hand him over to Muhammad Ibn Abī Ḥabība, who is in charge of the work."*

In the same year (709 A.D./ 90 A.H.), Qurra Ibn Sharīk sent an order to Basilios to deliver a carpenter whose task was the construction of some vessels for the conveyance of (workers or goods?) to Clysma<sup>129</sup>. About that time, Qurra also sent to Basilios to send to him carpenters and caulkers for the *karaboi* and *dromonaria*.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>125</sup> . P. Lond., 1386 = Eng. trans. by H. I. BELL, *Der Islam* 2 (1911) 380-381; FAHMY, *Muslim Naval organization*, 25-26; Jāsir Kh. Abū Ṣafīyya, *Bardiyyāt Qurra Ibn Sharīk al-'Absī, Edition and Study*, Riyadh 2004, 263-264 [English title: *The Papyri of Qurra Ibn Sharīk al-'Absī*].

<sup>126</sup> . P. Lond., 1515, l. 8-11.

<sup>127</sup> . P. Lond., 1507.

<sup>128</sup> . P. Lond., 1336 = Eng. trans. by H. I. BELL, *Der Islam* 2(1911), 271; Abū Ṣafīyya, *Bardiyyāt Qurra Ibn Sharīk*, 253; FAHMY, *Muslim Naval organization*, 24; M. A. CHEIRA, *La documentation papyrologique de l'époque arabe*, Alexandrie 1948, 33.

<sup>129</sup> . P. Lond., 1336, l. 3-11.

<sup>130</sup> . P. Lond., 1391, l. 4 ff. The earliest mention of this kind of ships is a fragment of a work of unknown Greco-Roman author, possibly the history of Eunapios of Sardis (345/6-post 414 C.E.). On the origin of this kind of ships and its development see PRYOR and JEFFREYS, *The Age of ΔΡΟΜΩΝ*, 123-128, 188 ff. In Egypt *dromonaria* were single-blanked ships, whose main task, apparently, was to patrol the mouth of the Nile. They could also serve with sea-going fleets. See MAKRYPOULIAS, *Muslim Ship*, 181-182.

A bilingual papyrus written in 710 A.D./91 A.H. with Greek and Arabic counterparts urges Basilius urgently to send equipment and supplies via the canal of Amīr al-Mu'minīn for the sailors of the ships at Clysma before the waters of the canal subside.<sup>131</sup>

While another requisitions is repeated in a letter dated 710 A.D./91 A.H. for Clysma,<sup>132</sup> the account register no 1449<sup>133</sup> refers to a certain Copt called Papwōnsh who was ordered to collect anchors for "arrears of requisition for Clysma."

Letter no 1387,<sup>134</sup> dated 709-714 A.D./90-95 A.H., from Qurra to Basilius is a requisition of money in payment of the freightage of certain articles intended for Clysma. In this letter Qurra said:

"...We have apportioned to your administrative district for the freight of the ships which conveyed the requisitions for the karaboi at Clysma and the r(aid?...solidi?) in the present...indiction, and having made out the demand notes for these to the people of the separate places we have sent them to you. On receiving the present letter, therefore, in accordance with the powers given by the demand notes dispatch the said money by your man with instructions to pay it over..."

In 714-716 A.D./95-97 A.H., Qurra wrote to the same Basilius to send two caulkers and one carpenter to Clysma for refitting and cleaning the ships which carry the grains from Touō to Clysma. They had to work at Clysma for four months under the commandment of Muḥammad Ibn Abī Ḥabība.<sup>135</sup> In the same year, Qurra ordered Basilius to send to Muḥammad Ibn Abī Ḥabība at Clysma ten acacia-trunks at the rate of  $5\frac{5}{6}$  *nomismata*, eight ropes of palm-fiber, which Egypt was famous for their industry,<sup>136</sup> at the rate of  $4\frac{2}{3}$  *nomismata*, and 50 τολάρια at the rate of 10 *nomismata*, the total being  $20\frac{1}{2}$  *nomismata*.<sup>137</sup>

The documentary papyri also shed light on an interesting point, the wages of the technicians that worked at the shipyard of Clysma. They were higher than those of the sailors were.<sup>138</sup> For instance, in 709 A.D./90 A.H., the carpenter who worked in the shipyard of Clysma received  $\frac{2}{3}$  *nomisma* per month. The wage was paid directly from the treasury of the government not from the διοίκησις to the

<sup>131</sup> P. Lond., 1346; FAHMY, *Muslim Naval organization*, 24-25.

<sup>132</sup> P. of British Museum no. Or. 6233, ed. and com. ABŪ ṢAFIYYA, *Bardiyyāt Qurra Ibn Sharīk*, 174.

<sup>133</sup> P. Lond., 1449 = Eng. trans. by H. I. BELL, *Der Islam* 17 (1928) 4-8.

<sup>134</sup> P. Lond., 1387 = Eng. trans. by H. I. BELL, *Der Islam* 2 (1911) 381; ABŪ ṢAFIYYA, *Bardiyyāt Qurra Ibn Sharīk*, 264-265; FAHMY, *Muslim Naval organization*, 25.

<sup>135</sup> P. Lond., 1434, l. 92-99 = Eng. trans. by H. I. Bell, *Der Islam* 4 (1913) 89.

<sup>136</sup> FAHMY, *Muslim Naval Organisation*, 84.

<sup>137</sup> P. Lond., 1434, l. 150-160; MUHAMMAD, *The Copts in the Islamic Navigation*, 27.

<sup>138</sup> MUHAMMAD, *The Copts in the Islamic Navigation*, 21.

carpenter.<sup>139</sup> In the same year there was a carpenter sent to the shipyard of Babylon who received  $1\frac{1}{3}$  *nomisma* as a monthly wage, to repair the ships there.<sup>140</sup>

In 714-716 A.D./95-97 A.H., the carpenter who worked in the shipyard of Clysmā received  $1\frac{1}{4}$  *nomisma* as a monthly wage, i.e. five *nomismata* for four months.<sup>141</sup> Thus, the wage of the carpenter of Clysmā was between  $\frac{2}{3}$  and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  *nomisma*, while his fellow of Babylon received  $1\frac{1}{3}$  *nomisma* as a monthly wage. In the same period, the caulker (καλαφάτης) who worked at the shipyard of Clysmā received  $1\frac{1}{4}$  *nomisma* as a monthly wage, i.e. five *nomismata* for four months there,<sup>142</sup> while the caulker, who worked in the shipyard of Babylon, received  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *nomisma* as a monthly wage.<sup>143</sup> In an early case, the caulker who was dispatched to the κοῦρσον of Egypt of 710 A.D. received eleven *nomismata* for seven months and  $\frac{1}{2}$  *nomisma* for his maintenance, too.<sup>144</sup> Therefore, his monthly wage was 1.57 *nomisma*, i.e. about 1.6 *nomisma* per month. This little highness of his wage was because of the acceleration of the κοῦρσον of Egypt of that year. However, the shipbuilder at the shipyard of Clysmā received two *nomismata* as a monthly wage.<sup>145</sup>

Thus, according to the documentary sources, which referred to the requisitions for building and fitting the ships, for wages and subsistence of the sailors at Clysmā, it is evident that it was an important shipyard during the Early Islamic period.

### Conclusion

Thus, it seems that Clysmā played an important role in the development of naval trade in the Red Sea during the early Islamic period. The Arabs benefited greatly in the early Islamic period from Clysmā as a mediatory between Egypt and Arabia.

Through the canal of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, which was re-dug by 'Amr Ibn al-Āṣ, the ships carried the Egyptian food and grain supplies from Clysmā to Arabia.

The geographical situation of Clysmā, at the junction of roads that led from Sinai, Egypt, and Palestine served the needs of travelers and caravans for rest and security before continuing their journey through the desert.

Clysmā was also a commercial mediatory between East and West where the ships from India and China disembarked their merchandises then completed their journey to Europe through Alexandria. However, Clysmā was a shipyard and a station of the pilgrims. The texts refer to this role, which may have continued until the tenth century. From the eleventh century onwards, the importance of Clysmā

<sup>139</sup> *P. Lond.*, 1336 = Eng. trans. by H. I. BELL, *Der Islam* 2 (1911) 271.

<sup>140</sup> *P. Lond.*, 1410.

<sup>141</sup> *P. Lond.*, 1434, l. 94-99.

<sup>142</sup> *P. Lond.*, 1434, l. 94-99.

<sup>143</sup> *P. Lond.*, 1410.

<sup>144</sup> *P. Lond.*, 1393; BELL, *Two Official Letters*, 279.

<sup>145</sup> *P. Lond.*, 1410.

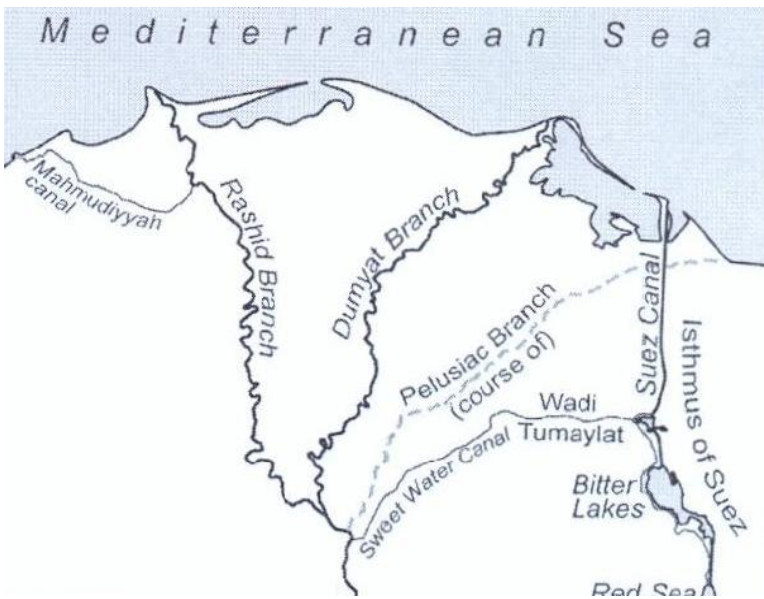
decreased gradually, especially during the Fatimid period, so that in the twelfth century it was in ruins and the ports of ‘Aydhāb and Suez became the major ports of Egypt on the Red Sea.

**Appendixes**

**Map 1**

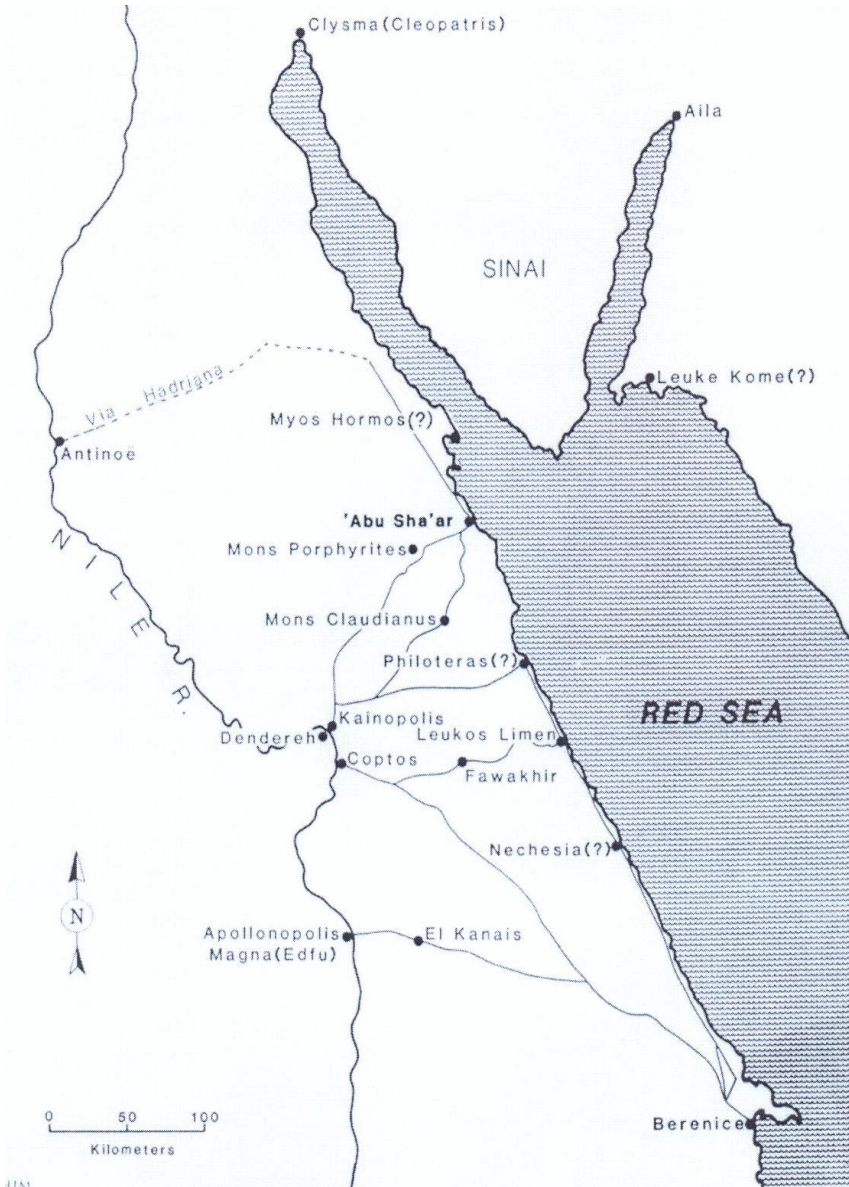
Canal of Trajan and Delta of Nile

J. COOPER, *Egypt's Nile-Red Sea Canals*, 195.

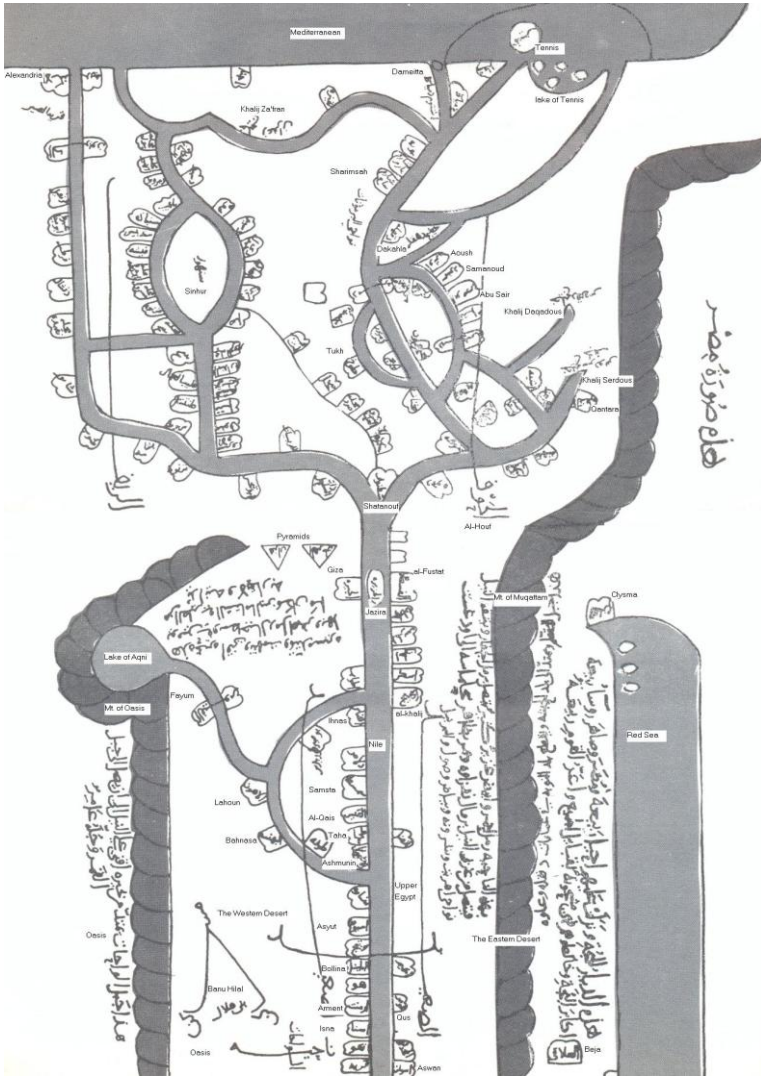


**Map 2**

Clyisma and the Roads of the Eastern Desert of Egypt (Byzantine Period)  
 S. E. SIDEBOTHAM and others, *Fieldwork on the Red Sea Coast, JARCE 26(1989),*  
 128.



**Map 3**  
Map of Egypt in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century  
Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ḥurat al-Ard*, 128-12



## Arab Advance along the Southern Part of the Silk Route, Gesar Phrom and Fu-lin (拂菻) of the Chinese Sources

STEPHANOS M. KORDOSES

The Arab penetration in Central Asia took place very early. In the year 651, the Arabs managed to conquer Herat and in 652 Merv followed. In the process they penetrated the region of Balkh by incursions, while, part of their raids was directed to the other side of the Oxus (Amu Darya) river, by attacking southern Samarkand. But a firm Arab advance towards Central Asia was not to be initiated prior to 705, when the governorship of Khorasan was assumed by general Qutaiba. By 709, Bukhara and lower or western Tocharistan were incorporated into the Arab territories. To the south of river Oxus, the king of Zabulistan and ruler of Hephthalites, Tarkhan Nizak, put up a brave resistance for more than ten years. But by 715, the whole of Tocharistan became a vassal to the Arabs state. Tocharistan revolted against Arab rule right after Qutaiba's death, with aid coming from the north, from the Turkic tribe of Turgesh. Yet, in 734 the Arabs managed to bring Balkh once more under their rule. Following this event, in 738, the Turgesh khagan was assassinated causing the downfall of Turgesh power.<sup>1</sup> Zabulistan and the nearby Kapisa now faced a danger, with no immediate help from the exterior. In the year 739, Kapisa, as other principalities of Central Asia, sent an embassy to the emperor of China. This is the year when the new ruler of Kapisa was enthroned, with the name or title *Fu-lin ki-so*<sup>2</sup> (*Fromo Kesaro*, i.e. Caesar of Rome), and from that point on he would present formidable resistance to Arab advance. Before taking a look at his deeds, one needs to examine the name *Fu-lin ki-so* born by that ruler, as it has a very interesting story, and it seems to be connected with that person's struggle against the Arabs.

This announcement is a derivative of a previous one made in Athens, focused on *Phrom Gesar* (or *Gesar Phrom*), in the Congress "Middle East and Far East in Byzantine literature and vice-versa".<sup>3</sup> In the announcement of Athens an

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<sup>1</sup>. E. CHAVANNES, *Documents sur les Tou – Kiue (Turcs) occidentaux, recueillis et commentés, suivis des notes additionnelles*, Paris 1900, 136, 144, 150, 203-205, 291-293; R. GROUSSET, *L'Empire des Steppes. Attila, Genghis-Khan, Tamerlan*, Paris 1970, 139, 165-167; R. FRYE, *The Golden Age of Persia. The Arabs in the East*, Weidenfeld – London 1993 74, 76,77, 87, 89; H. A. R. GIBB, *The Arab conquests in Central Asia*, London 1923, 16, 49-51, 56, 61, 65-66, 76; C. I. BECKWITH, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages*, Princeton University Press 1993, 38-39, 72-73, 75, 95, 96-97; R. M. GHIRSHMAN, *Les Chionites-Hephthalites*, Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Le Caire 1948, 24-26, 98-99.

<sup>2</sup>. CHAVANNES, *Documents*, 132, 161.

<sup>3</sup>. S. KORDOSES, The legend of 'Gesar Phrom' (Caesar of Rome) in Central Asia and Far East (forthcoming). The congress was organized by the Institute of Greco Oriental and African Studies, the Spanish embassy of Athens and the Museum of the city of Athens in 2008.

effort was made to track the relation between the title Caesar of Rome (or Byzantium), *Gesar Phrom* (Καίσαρος Ρώμης) of Central Asia and Caesar of Glin, which is a name that appears in the magnificent oral epic of Tibet and Mongolia.

The main actor in the epic of Tibet and Mongolia was the sovereign of Glin (an area situated in eastern Tibet or in Central Asia) who assumed the glorious name *καίσαρ* (Caesar) and conquered many countries becoming, in this way, a ruler of the world. In the literature it is attested that in Central Asia a Caesar of Rome (*Phrom Gesar*) existed, a title which is generally considered to be adopted from the title of the Byzantine emperor. *Phrom Gesar* is considered, quite often in the Tibetan literature, as a *Gru-gu* (or *Dru-gu*), i.e. a Turk.<sup>4</sup>

STEIN suggests that *Gesar*, king of the armies [*ou encore un athlète*], who is related to the countries of *Phrom/Khrom* (Rome) and to the *Dru-gu* (Turks), was believed to reside in the North, and was introduced in Tibet as a legendary name through the dissemination of the Buddhist tradition of the “four Sons of Heaven”. This tradition speaks of the four world rulers, amongst which the Caesar of Rome was also to be found and who resided in the West, where sometimes the land of the Turks was also situated.<sup>5</sup> Stein believes that the Turk *Phrom Gesar* derives from the “original” title “Caesar of Rome”, but there are scholars who suggest that one has to deal with two *Phroms* (Romes): One in Byzantium and the other in Central Asia.

*Phrom Gesar* is not only mentioned in the oral epics or legends of the Far East. There is reference of it in written sources, such as the Chinese sources. According to them, in 738, the King of *K'i-pin*/罽賓 (city of Kapisa), to the south of Hindokush, appealed to the Chinese emperor in order that the latter would recognize his legitimate son *Fu-lin Ki-p'o*/拂菻罽婆 as the successor to the throne of Kapisa.<sup>6</sup> H. HUMBACH and J. HARMATTA suggested that the name of the king's son, *Fu-lin Ki-p'o*, was a derivative of the title of the Roman Caesar (*Fu-lin ki-so*=*Phrom Gesar*). As the Chinese word *Fu-lin* derives from the word *Phrom* (Rome), this seems correct. Besides that, the previously mentioned scholars have spotted a number of coins bearing the “Fromo Gesaro”, inscription in the Bactrian script, which supports their suggestion.

The resistance put up by this ruler, *Fromo Gesaro*, against the advancing Arabs, was fierce and victorious. There are even coins issued by Arab governors on which their defeat by *Fromo Gesaro* and their obligation to render tribute to him are inscribed.<sup>7</sup> If one takes into consideration the fact that this ruler reigned from the

<sup>4</sup> M. HELFFER, *Les chants dans l'épopée tibétaine de Ge-sar d'après le Livre de la Course de Cheval: Version chantée de Blo-bzah bstan-'jin* [Centre de Recherches d'Histoire et de Philologie de la IVe Section de l'École pratique des Hautes Études. Hautes Études Orientales 9], Genève-Paris 1977, 449 ; R. A. STEIN, *Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet*, Paris, 1959, 241ff. P. PELLIOU, Le nom de Fou-lin, *Journal Asiatique* 3 (1914), 498-500.

<sup>5</sup> STEIN, *Recherches*, 244, 246.

<sup>6</sup> E. CHAVANNES, Notes additionnelles sur les Tou – Kiue (Turcs) occidentaux, *T'oung Pao* 4 (1904), 59.

<sup>7</sup> H. HUMBACH, *Phrom Gesar and the Bactrian Rome*, *Ethnologie und Geschichte, Festschrift für Karl Jettmar*, Wiesbaden 1983, 305.



time the Arabs resumed their operations in Central Asia in 738, after the withdrawal of Turgesh, his victories must have been very important and famous. As mentioned previously in the introduction of this paper, the Arabs were not able to penetrate Kapisa and Gandhara and generally the areas to their south-east, despite the efforts made by governor-general Qutaiba in the years 710-711 to subjugate the nearby Zabulistan.<sup>8</sup> These areas held their independence for several years despite the Arab raids. According to the Chinese sources the king of Kapisa kept sending delegations to the Chinese court up until 758-59,<sup>9</sup> another fact that demonstrates that *Fromo Gesaro* assumed the tradition of resistance against the Arabs in Central Asia with tremendously successful results.

Returning to the examination of the title of *Fromo Gesaro* (Caesar of Rome), J. HARMATTA suggested that the decision of the king of Kapisa to name his son as *Fou-lin Ki-p'o* (*Phrom Gesar/Fromo Kesaro*) was a result of the famous and glorious Byzantine victory of 718 against the Arabs.<sup>10</sup> HUMBACH does not find such a suggestion plausible and counter-suggests that the name was a "regnal name" and that "the practice of giving or adopting a name such as *Fromo Kesaro* can be traced at least to the Hephthalites who threatened the Sassanid empire from the east like the Byzantines did from the west. When the Hephthalites took possession of Bactria and Kabul, which contained manifest vestiges of Hellenistic civilization they felt there was reason enough to identify themselves with the Byzantines".<sup>11</sup>

Still, the above mentioned suggestions are not sufficient explanations for the name *Phrom Gesar* (Caesar of Rome), as shown recently in an announcement made in China.<sup>12</sup> In both cases of explanation the possibility that other rulers of Central Asia could also have had assumed the title can not be excluded. In other words, since many of the rulers of the principalities of Central Asia were putting up resistance against the Arabs and since vestiges of Hellenistic civilization were also to be found in other areas of Central Asia and north-western India why was it only the king of Kapisa bearing the title *Phrom Gesar*?

The author of the above mentioned announcement, suggests that this country was named *Fu-lin* ("Rome") not because of any relations it had with the Byzantine Emperor or the Hephthalites but because of the fact that it was inhabited by Greek speaking population (*Yona-Yonaka-Yavana*) who were moreover related to the inhabitants of the Eastern Roman Empire. His claim is based on the fact that in a Chinese inscription of 710 (named as *A-luo-han's/阿羅喊 inscription*), a certain country with the name *Fu-lin* is mentioned as the destination of a Chinese delegation a few decades earlier and, also, on the fact that in the Chinese sources

<sup>8</sup>. J. HARMATTA - B. A. LITVINSKY, Tokharistan and Gandhara under Western Türk Rule (650-750), *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. 3, UNESCO, Paris, 1996, 381.

<sup>9</sup>. CHAVANNES, *Documents*, 132.

<sup>10</sup>. HARMATTA - LITVINSKY, Tokharistan, 380.

<sup>11</sup>. HUMBACH, *Phrom*, 306.

<sup>12</sup>. M. KORDOSIS, *Fu-lin* (Phrom-Rome=Yavana-Greeks) of Central Asia (Southern Slopes of Hindokush), announcement in the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference of History of Middle Ages, Wu-han, China, 16-17 October 2010 (forthcoming).

the Roman Empire was called *Ta-ch'in*/大秦 or *Fu-lin* (Greeks and Romans respectively, demonstrating that for the Chinese the terms Greek and Roman were synonymous).<sup>13</sup> This author reference, having examined the areas of Central Asia bearing the name *Ta-ch'in* (Hindu: *Yona-Yonaka-Yavana*) or *Fu-lin* (*Fromo*), while having in mind the description of *Fu-lin*, given in *A-luo-han*'s inscription, suggests that this country can not be identified either with the *Ta-ch'in* of the *K'i-cha* kingdom, of the Afghan province of Djoudjan (modern north-western Afghanistan) or with the other *Ta-ch'in* of north-western India (*Sagala*, modern northern Pakistan). After having excluded those two *Ta-ch'in* of the Chinese sources, he identifies it with the wider region of Kapisa (suggesting that the kingdom of Kapisa matches the description of *Fu-lin* and its inhabitants, given by *A-luo-han*), an area to the southern slopes of Hindokush, the ruler of which was *Fromo Kesaro* and which, as he believes, was inhabited by Greek speaking population in the past or even at the time of his rule. He, therefore, concludes that the king could have easily assumed the title of Caesar of Rome (*Fromo Kesaro*), since Rome (i.e. *Yona-Yavana-Ta-ch'in*) was already the name (or one of the names) of his kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

This suggestion is, I think, further reinforced by some Buddhist traditions indicating that, initially, *Fromo Kesaro* was indeed a Greek (in terms of race) from the areas of Kapisa (Hindokush), references, which have not been given to adequate attention so far. This literature, of Buddhist origin, has widely spread across Tibet and it is believed that it is related to the Buddhist king *Asoka*. There are Chinese variations of this tradition of the 3<sup>rd</sup> or even of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. and its general motif is the following: "As Buddha predicted the decline of his teachings and theory he entrusted the divine law to the four great kings of Heaven. These had the obligation to protect it from the three evil kings who were, to the south the king of *Sakae*, to the north the king of *Yavana* (Greeks) and to the west the king of *Pahlava* (Parthians)"<sup>15</sup> (in another variation the evil kings are four, with the addition of the king of *Tushara/Tuchara* who are placed in the east). At the eastern areas of India laid the city Kausambi (in the interior of India, on Yamuna, an affluent of Gages), where the king *Mahendrasena* or *Mahasena* (Great Army) resided. *Mahendrasena*'s son, who was born as "sanguinary", "in an iron armour" (at the same time with 500 *sthavita*), resembling the sun and therefore "hard to look at",

<sup>13</sup>. S. KORDOSES, The legend of 'Gesar Phrom' (forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup>. M. KORDOSIS, *Fu-lin* (forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup>. STEIN, *Recherches*, 263: « Prévoyant le déclin de sa doctrine, le Bouddha confie la Loi aux quatre rois du Ciel (Est : Dhrtarāstra, Sud : Virūdhaka, Ouest : Virūpākṣa, Nord : Vaiśravaṇa, variant : Kuvera; PRZYLUŚKI J., *Le Bouddhisme*, Paris, 1932, p. 313, n. 4). Ils doivent protéger la Loi contre trois rois méchants qui viendront du même pays que Kuvera (ibid., 312-313) et auront chacun cent mille parents. Ils ne seront ni Chinois, ni Indiens (Buston). Ce seront, au Sud le Śaka (Bu-ston : Çikuna ; Scythes), au Nord les Yavana (Bu-ston : *idem*; Grecs), et à l'Ouest les Pahlava (Bu-ston : Ba-la-bā ; Parthes). Bu-ston ajoute qu'ils dévasteront le Nord et l'Ouest par leurs guerres. Le *Tsa A-han-king* donne quatre rois, en ajoutant celui des Tusāra~Tukhāra localisés à l'Est. Si ce seul orient manque dans la version de trois rois, c'est que l'Est est réservé au roi qui s'opposera aux autres ».

defeated the three evil kings, becoming in this way the savior of Buddhism and King of the World (*jambudvīpa*).

One has to note that according to this tradition the Yavana (Greeks) came from the north. But the northern areas were also the residence of another Caesar, as attested in the following tradition: In the Tibetan Epic *bKa'-than* reference is made to a *Gesar* of the north, with the characteristic "chosen King by divinity" (« roi élu »), who subjugates all his enemies to the four corners of his frontiers.<sup>16</sup> This is another tradition, apart from the epic of *Gesar of Glin* (Caesar of Glin), which relates *Gesar Phrom* with the northern areas.

Another Tibetan tradition concerns a maiden (with the name *mjes-ldan*), who is engaged to be married to a king and who is also the object of desire of two more kings, one of whom is *Gesar*. Finally the maiden manages to avoid all three kings and defeats them through her witchcraft. STEIN compares these three aspirants with the three evil kings of the previously mentioned Buddhist legend of *Asoka* and correctly notices that *Gesar* corresponds to *Yavana* (Greeks). He also notices that in the great Indian epic *Māhabharata*, *Kṛṣṇa* hit and killed *Yavana Kaserumant*.<sup>17</sup> Thus, *Kaser* (Caesar) is clearly described in this tradition as a Greek.

Having all the above in mind one may deduce the following:

1. The three kings who represent the *Yavana* (Greeks) to the north, the *Sakae* to the south, the *Pahlava* (Parthians) to the West (and in one case the *Tusara* or *Tuchara* to the east) are indeed these hostile nations named by the Indians as *mlecchas* (barbarians), invading India, mainly from the northwest from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.<sup>18</sup> The *Sakae* are placed to the south for, although they also arrived in the Indian sub-continent from the north, they marched to the south and managed to establish a state, *Sacastan*, with *Minagara* as its capital, placed close to the position of *Patala* or more to the East. The fact that the *Yavana* (Greeks) are placed to the north is of great interest as they indeed raided India from that direction, invading from the *Paropamisades* and *Gandhara*, where they had settled. From these northern areas came the raids of *Gesar*.

2. *Gesar* is, directly or indirectly, described as a *Yavana* or *Yona* (Greek) and arrives with his army from the north (as regards the position of India), i.e. from the areas of *Hindokush*, *Paropamisades*, *Gandhara* or the nearby areas,<sup>19</sup> which were, later, under the reign of *Fromo Kesaro* as *Kapisa's* domains. This is an important and valuable detail, not attested in any of the other sources.

It should be noted that that the king *Mahendrasena*, whose son, according to the tradition, defeated the three evil kings saving thus Buddhism, should not be identified with King *Asoka*, the great protector of Buddhism. The whole Buddhist tradition resembles that of the Buddhist holy book *Milindapanha*, which revolves

<sup>16</sup>. STEIN, *Recherches*, 264.

<sup>17</sup>. STEIN, *Recherches*, 265.

<sup>18</sup>. A. PARASHER, *Mlecchas in Early India. A Study in Attitudes towards Outsiders up to A.D. 600*, Delhi 1991, 188-191, 211-12, 223-24, 232, 235, 240-242, 249-250, 252, 259-261.

<sup>19</sup>. W.W. TARN, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. F. Holt, Chicago, 1984, 129ff. A. K. NARAIN, *The Indo-Greeks*, Oxford 1957, 47ff.

around Menander (reigned in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.), the Greek king of India. Menander had in his entourage 500 *Yavana*, some of whom were his ministers. This is reminiscent of the 500 athletes (*sthavita*) who became ministers of *Mahandrasena*'s son, according to that Buddhist tradition.<sup>20</sup>

In *Milindapanha*, Menander is the indisputable master of India with his capital at *Sagala* of Punjab.<sup>21</sup> But in the Buddhist tradition of *Mahandrasena*, the King (Menander) lived in Kausambi, a city which was indeed within Menander's kingdom, only much more to the east. This transfer of the center of the kingdom of *Asoka* at the heart of India was necessary in the legend in order to display the fact that Menander was active even in central India, given that *Sagala* was situated to the north-western India and was the place of origin of the *mlechchas Yavana* (barbarous Greeks). At this point Menander is represented completely as an Indian and as opposing all *mlecchas* (barbarians) including even Greeks. His capacity as the protector of Buddhism overshadowed his "barbarous" Greek origin.

We conclude that the *Gesar Phrom* of Kapisa, as *Gesar of the armies of the north* of the Tibetan epic, derives from *Fromo* (Rome) of Hindokush, i.e. from the *Yona* or *Yavana* (Greeks) living in the area to the south of Hindokush, where large numbers of Greeks, indeed, used to live and from where they raided India. This is a transfer of the western name "Rome" to the east, a transfer which took place very early, during the first centuries of the Christian era. The sources treat the terms Greek and Roman as identical (the Chinese sources verify the fact that *Yona* or *Yavana* [*Ta-ch'in*, i.e. Greeks] is homonymous to *Phrom* [*Fu-lin*, i.e. Romans]).<sup>22</sup> Consequently the title of Caesar could have been easily transferred to the East. From the Rome of the West to the Rome of the Hellenistic world of the East, which at that time, as has lately been noticed, was contained in its last stronghold, the area to the south of Hindokush. It is from that area that in the earlier times the *Yavana*, having established a powerful state, raided India. This also explains why in the Tibetan epic *Gesar* is placed to the north.<sup>23</sup> As the Buddhist tradition was created in India, the Tibetans kept the same orientation, but this time

<sup>20</sup>. In *Mahandrasena*'s tradition « le roi universel qui dompte les autres est un guerrier fort et s'appelle Grand Armée ou Grand Puissante-Armée (cf. *Gesar*, roi des armées). Il brille d'un tel éclat de majesté qu'on ne peut le supporter. Il est difficile de ne pas songer à l'auréole de gloire (le *hvarna*) qui, après avoir été caractéristique des rois universels de l'Iran, a passé sur les épaules de Vaisravana (voir plus loin, note 17). Mahāsena naît revêtu de fer et devient du fer dans la bataille. Dans l'épopée, *Gesar* et son double, le demi-frère, sont aussi de fer. Dans la version de *Vaidura dkar-po* qui double celle du bKa'-than, *Gesar*, roi des armées, est encore revêtu de fer et c'est là, nous le verrons à l'instant, caractéristique d'un roi du *jambudvīpa*. Enfin le cheval qui sait parler et naît en même temps que le roi du monde est un thème caractéristique de l'épopée de *Gesar* et du roi de Śambhala (au Nord!) qui a été identifié avec *Gesar* (voir chap. ix, p. 525). Il l'est aussi de la légende d'Alexandre qui nous fournira encore d'autres rapprochements ».

<sup>21</sup>. *The Questions of King Milinda*, ed. R. DAVIDS, 2-3.

<sup>22</sup>. M. KORDOSIS, *Fu-lin* (forthcoming).

<sup>23</sup>. STEIN, *Recherches*, 256ff. 273ff.

*Gesar* was related to people living to the north of River Oxus (Turks, Hor, et.c.), namely to the north of Tibet.

Hence, the king of Kapisa assumed the title *Gesar* of *Fu-lin* (*Fu-lin Ki-so*), i.e. Kesar of Yavana (=Greeks), because his territory coincided with that of the *Yavana*, around Hindokush and **because the title of *Gesar* existed there long before the time of the King *Fu-lin Ki-so***, probably from the first centuries of the Christian era, when the *Yavana* of the Mediterranean Sea were renamed as Romans (*Phrom-Fromo*), after having fallen under the rule of the Caesar of Rome. Now, one can also understand why in the epic of Tibet *Gesar* was a Turk. *Gesar Phrom* is a Turk since the Turks had assumed power over Kapisa and the surrounding areas stretching as far as Hindus River and, thus, they naturally adopted both names (Caesar and Rome). Later on the tribal name “Turk” became indicative not only of the ruling elite of Kapisa but of all tribes recognized today as Turkic or “Turks”.

All the facts mentioned above support the suggestion that there were two Romes in the Asian sources, one in the West and the other in the East, in Central Asia. The title Caesar of Rome, due to its reputation, was able to root in the East, too, as it was adopted by its inhabitants, who in the early period of imperial Rome were actually of the same ethnic stock with the populations living in eastern part of the actual Roman Empire (namely Greeks). **Consequently, *Drugu Gesar* (the Turk Caesar) originates in Caesar of Rome, but indirectly, through the *Kesaro* of the *Fromo/Yavana/Yona* (=Greeks) of Central Asia.**

As it was mentioned in the beginning, the title *Fromo Gesaro* ascribed to the king of Kapisa at this period is directly related to the anti-Arab league, part of which was the fighting “Rome of Asia”, under its ruler *Fromo Gesaro*. As highlighted in reference, the ruler of Kapisa assumed the title *Fromo Kesaro* at a time when Byzantium was at the peak of its war with the Arabs (which led to the victory of Acroinos). It was during this period, or a little later, that the Chinese changed the name of the Nestorian Church of China from Persian to Roman, a parallel fact of no less significance.<sup>24</sup>

As regards the title of Caesar of Rome in Asia, it seems that the role of the King of Kapisa accelerated the spread of his fame. His position and that of his kingdom (Kapisa) were made even more important by the fact that the country and its adjacent areas were a key for the control of the routes leading to India. Kapisa was traversed by the route which led from Bactria (and generally from the West) to India, which had to remain open and out of the reach of the Arabs. To its eastern edges, the kingdom of Kapisa was traversed by the routes leading from China to India, through Giglit (Balur). This route was raided on a constant basis by Tibetans and, from the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, by Arabs, too, as the latter had managed to penetrate Sind of India,<sup>25</sup> making raids to Kashmir easier from thereon (and leading to the latter’s desperate dispatches of diplomatic embassies to China, asking for help). It was essential for the Chinese to keep this route open for them in order

<sup>24</sup>. M. S. KORDOSIS, *T’ang China, the Chinese Nestorian Church and “Heretical” Byzantium (AD 618-845)*, Ioannina 2008, 267ff.

<sup>25</sup>. A. K. MAJUMDAR, *Concise History of Ancient India*, N. Delhi 1977, 266-67, 301ff.

to maintain contact with India and with Udiana, Kapisa and Zabulistan. The most sensitive part of the road, passing from today's Gilgit (Little Balur) had to be protected by the ruler of Kapisa, since his territory extended to that area. Suffice to say that in 732 envoys from both the Arabs and the Turgesh arrived at the Tibetan court. According to BECKWITH, they "had come via the Pamirs, through Wakan and Balur (Gilgit). Thus, Tibet must have had neutralized Chinese influence in the region, which made the Chinese very uneasy".<sup>26</sup> After Su-lu's death the Chinese army invaded Tibet, but this did not prevent a Tibetan attack on Gilgit. In 746 the Chinese defeated the Tibetans, but until then many principalities nearby the route towards India had become Tibetan vassals.

Consequently, the Chinese cooperation with Kapisa was more than necessary, as the latter played a key role in the control over the southern silk route, protecting it not only from the Arabs but also from the Tibetans. Its ruler was also willing to check the Arab advance in the area, something he had up to that time succeeded in, following the example of his counterpart, Caesar of Rome, in the West.

To recapitulate, in this announcement it is suggested that not only a *Fromo* (Rome) existed as a name of Kapisa in Central Asia (modern Afghanistan) in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. but also that the "*Fromo Kesaro*" title had long existed before the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It is related to the Greeks who resided to the north of India, i.e. around the areas of Kapisa-Gandhara, from which they raided India. Considering that, according to the Buddhist tradition, the protector of Buddhism and of India was also a Greek (Menander), one may conclude that in the early Christian era, memories of the Greeks were still very vivid, rendering the usage of the title easier. Later on (7<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards), when the Turks became the lords of Central Asia, the Turk ruler of Kapisa had but to reinstitute a title that was born by previous rulers of his country, from earlier times. This title was very useful in his struggle against the Arabs, and had already acquired a glorious dimension from the anti-Arab struggle of the real Rome of the West, Byzantium. He assumed it when necessary, namely when the Arabs started advancing again against his dominion and other principalities of Central Asia.

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<sup>26</sup>. BECKWITH, *The Tibetan Empire*, 111.

# The Arab Empire in Chinese Sources from the 8th Century to the 10th Century

LIN YING –YU YUSEN

## I. Introduction

The rise of the Arab Empire was discovered early by the Chinese people; the earliest envoy from the New World Power arrived China in 651 CE, and by the end of Tang Dynasty (618-907), over thirty Arab delegations visited China bringing with them an array of information about the country. However, reports from these envoys are not the only source regarding Chinese familiarity with Arabs; Persians, Central Asians and Chinese travelers also brought news, though colored by their own cultural understanding and judgments.<sup>1</sup>

The primary source regarding Arabs, or Dashi<sup>2</sup>, written during the Tang Dynasty, was the work of Du Huan and Hui Chao; who in their travelling notes included a chapter about the Dashi in Tongdian. Furthermore, there is information on the Dashi in two separate compilations of Tang Dynasty History which may be considered to be summary knowledge of the Arabs; Tang-shu (the old Tang history) and Xin Tangshu (the new Tang history). The former having been compiled and composed in 945 CE, based on government archives, while the latter was put together in the eleventh century written by historians.

It is interesting to note that the image of Arabs varies substantially between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In a report from the seventh century, Arabs were detailed as brave barbarian soldiers, living simple and rustic lives. One hundred years later, the grand cities and rich products of the new Empire made a deep and lasting impression on Chinese travellers. This paper contains translated accounts from four sources; Hui Chao's Wang wu Tianzhuguo xingji, a chapter from Tongdian, Du Huan's Jingxing ji and a chapter from Jiu Tangshu. When read in sequence, the change in views towards Arabs becomes quite apparent.

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<sup>1</sup>. Many Chinese sources on Arabs are collected in ZHANG XINLANG, *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian* (Collection of historical sources on Sino-West relations), Beijing 1979; FUAT SEZGIN et al., *Chinese sources on Islamic Countries*, Frankfurt am Main 1996.

<sup>2</sup>. *Dashi* (大食、大石) or *Duoshi* (多氏) in Chinese sources from 7<sup>th</sup> century to 15<sup>th</sup> century referred to Arabs. The transliteration of Arab, i.e. Alabi (阿剌毕、阿剌璧) made first appearance in *Yingya shenglan* written by Ma Huan, who was a Chinese Muslim and translator in the flotilla of Zheng He from 1413 to 1431. *Dashi* is possibly Tazi, the name that Persian people used for Arabs. See RAPHEAL ISRAELI, *Islam in China, Religion, Ethnicity, Culture, and Politics*, Lanham 2002.

Arabia, Greece and Byzantium: Cultural Contacts in Ancient and Medieval Times, ed. Abdulaziz Al-Helabi, Dimitrios Letsios, Moshalleh Al-Moraekhi, Abdullah Al-Abduljabbar, Riyadh 2012 / AH 1433, Part II, pp. 311-320.

## II. Record of Dashi in Wang wu Tianzhuguo zhuan<sup>3</sup>

This record claims that if one travels westward for a month from Tohuoluo guo,<sup>4</sup> they will arrive in Bosi (Persia). The King of Persia previously ruled the Dashi, who had previously been slaves tending to the King's camels. After the betray and murder of the King, the Dashi took the throne and ruled Persia

Further, travelling northward from Persia for ten days, will bring one to the mountains in Arab lands; however, the ruling King of the Dashi did not live on his own land; he had gradually moved to small Fulin<sup>5</sup> (Byzantine) in order to conquer the whole country. The Dashi were spread out, and some lived on islands with mountains, which were distant and difficult to travel to; and so they moved to small Fulin. The land of the Dashi was abundant with camels, donkeys, sheep, horses, cotton textiles, carpets, and not to mention, treasure. Their clothing had composed of garments made of fine cotton fabric, where a piece of cloth is placed on the garment as an upper part. It is interesting to note that the King did not do clothing different from "ordinary people". Women of society made and wore wide garments and cared for their hair, while men cut their hair and preserve their beards. While dining, regardless of class, everyone takes food from the same big bowl, using their hands and possibly chopsticks and spoons; the writers felt that this dining manner

<sup>3</sup>. The *Wang wu Tianzhuguo zhuan* (Notes of the road to Five India Regions) was written by Hui Chao, a Korean Buddhist monk around 726 or 727 CE. The current translation is made after ZHANG YI, *Wang wu Tianzhuguo zhuan jianshi* (Notes of the road to Five India Regions: a textual commentary), Beijing 2000. Other translations in western languages are: WALTER FUCHS, Huei-chao's Pilgerreise durch Nord-West Indien und Zentralasien um 726, *Sitzungsberichten der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 30 (1938), 426-429; YUN-HUA JAN, HAN-SUNG YANG, SH. LIDA and L.W. PRESTON, *The Hye Ch'o Diary: Memoir of the Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India*, Berkeley 1984. The book of Hui Chao takes the general format of traditional travel note in China, i.e. *xingji*, note of road. The writings are organized according to the route passed by the traveler. Each country or region along the route is introduced after a brief description of the road. The introduction of each country also follows a regular frame, including political situation, customs like hair style, clothing, products, and language. The author usually added some personal comments at the end of each chapter. Like other Buddhist monks travelling along the Silk Road in the same time, religion and the customs very different from Buddhist doctrines are paid special attention by Hui Chao.

<sup>4</sup>. Tohuoluo guo or Tuhuoluo state refers to Tokharistan, i.e. the general area of Bactria, including the areas of Surkhandarya, Southern Tajikistan and Northern Afghanistan.

<sup>5</sup>. *Fulin* refers to Byzantine Empire in Chinese sources since the 6<sup>th</sup> century, which originated from *Rum* and accepted by Chinese through the introduction of Persians, Turks and other Central Asians. See, P. PELLIOU, Fou-lin, *Journal Asiatique* 1914, 497-500. F. HIRTH, *China and the Roman Orient*, Shanghai 1885; D.D. LESLIE and K.H.J. GARDINER, *The Roman Empire in Chinese Sources*, Roma 1996; E.G. PULLEYBLANK, The Roman Empire as known to Han China, *JAOS* 119.1 (1999), 71-79. LIN YING, *Tangdai Fulin congshuo* (The contact between Byzantium and China during the Tang period), Beijing 2006. The small *Fulin* in Hui Chao's text refers to Syria



looks very ugly. The citizens of this area view that the meat directly taken from their killing stands for countless blessings from heaven, which they do regularly. They didn't believe in Buddhism, and their etiquette didn't include ceremonies of kneeling down and calling upon.

Furthermore, the area of the small Fulin is on the seashore, and to the northwest is the big Fulin.<sup>6</sup> The King there had an army of many soldiers and horses, and was not subjected to other states. The Dashi has launched attacks against the Fulin several times, but was not able to conquer it; the Turks also made attempts to invade Fulin, which were also futile. The land of Fulin has been rich with treasures, as well as an abundance of useful animals, cotton textiles, etc. In this area, the clothing seems to be similar to that of the Dashi and Persia; however, there is a difference in language.

Also, east of the area, lay the Hu states (An state, Cao state, Shi state, Shiluo state, Mi state and Kang state<sup>7</sup>) who have their own King, but are still subject to the Dashi. These territories may be small, and may not have many soldiers, but were still able to protect themselves. As in the other territories, though, these peoples wear similar cotton garments, with tousers and fur coats, but also speak a different language.

### III. Chapter of Dashi in *Tongdian*<sup>8</sup>

Dashi, in the west of Persia, during the mid Yongwei period (650-655 CE), sent their envoys. It is said that in the beginning there was a Persian barbarian in that area who was blessed by god with a sword that could kill anyone. This man

<sup>6</sup>. Big Fulin in this text refers to the Byzantine Empire.

<sup>7</sup>. The Hu states in this text refer to the states of Sogdians. The Sogdian states or Sogdiana lay north of Bactria, east of Khwarezm, between the Oxus (Amu Darya) and the Jaxartes (Syr Darya). Sogdian territory corresponds to the modern provinces of Samarkand and Bokhara in modern Uzbekistan as well as the Sughd province of modern Tajikistan. See ETIENNE DE LA VAISSIÈRE, *Sogdian Traders. A History*, Leiden 2005.

<sup>8</sup>. Du You (735-812 CE), once took the office of *Zaixiang*, i.e. prime minister during the reigns of Emperor Shunzong (805 CE) and Emperor Xianzong (806 -820 CE). He spent thirty years to complete *Tongdian*, an encyclopedia about administrative and political institutions, which was the first book on administrative system in Chinese historiography. The *Tongdian* includes nine big categories: economy, selection of officials, official titles, etiquette and rituals, music, military, law, *zhou* (administration of province), *jun* (administration of county), border regions. Each category is divided into several parts with separate titles. The chapter of Dashi is taken from the part of western people in the category of border regions that consists of a prelude and introduction of sixty states in the so-called *xiyu* (western region), that is, nowadays Xinjiang, Central Asia and West Asia. Noticeably, the chapter of Dashi in *Tongdian* is the earliest record of Arab Empire in the official histories in China. See C.B. WAKEMAN, *His Jung (the Western Barbarians): An Annotated Translation of the Five Chapters of the "T'ung Tien"(Tongdian) on the Peoples and Countries of Pre-Islamic Central Asia* (UMI, 1990); YU TAISHAN and LI JINXIU, *Tongdian xiyu wenxian yaozhu* (Notes on the chapter of western regions in *Tongdian*), Beijing 2009.

began to call the other barbarians together. Eleven men were the first to arrive; they were converted, knighted and appointed as Kings by the Persian. More and more people followed; they eventually amassed an army that toppled Persia itself, and conquered the cities of Fulin (Byzantium) and Poluomen (India). All enemies were no match for them; they had over 420,000 soldiers. 34 years later, the first King died and passed the throne to the first barbarian that was knighted by his hand. By the time the third King of this state had been crowned, the surname of these Kings had also become Dashi.

The men in the area at the time had long, large noses; they were thin, dark-skinned, and wore full beards. They looked Poluomen (Indian). The women were pretty. They also had a form of writing, though it was different from that of Persia. The land had many different animals, including camels, horses, donkey, mules, and antelope. The rocks and sand did not prove effective for agriculture; because of this, their diet consisted mostly of camel, horse and other meats. After conquering Persia and Fulin, the Dashi began to trade for rice and wheat flour. It is also said the King would often send trade ships into the sea with clothing and food; the ships sailed east for eight years yet never reached the western coast. However, legend states one expedition saw a square, stone island in the sea. Upon exploring the island, the sailors found there were trees on the island which had red branches and green leaves. Small children grew from the trees, with their heads connected to the branches. The children silently smiled and waived at the sailors, but became suddenly dry and black immediately after they were picked off the tree. The sailors, in light of this, took only one branch back, which was placed in the palace of Dashi King.

#### IV. Du Huan's *Jingxing ji*<sup>9</sup>

When King Mumen<sup>10</sup> took the throne, the city Yajuluo<sup>11</sup> was taken as the capital and Dashi were renamed after the name of the new capital. The men and women there were grandiose; tall, cleanly dressed and beautiful in manner. The women would cover their faces when they went outside at this point. All the peoples, either noble or humble, would pray five times a day. During the month of fasting, they were permitted to eat meat; the slaughter of cloven animals had religious merit. At this point in time the people began to wear silver belt buckles and to carry silver knives.

Music and drinking began to be prohibited at this point, and the people began to resolve conflicts in a more civilized manner. A ceremony hall was built, able to host over ten thousand people. Every seven days, the King would appear and lead a daily communal prayer. He would ascend to the high seat and would explain the intricacies of religion before the gathered people of the city. He would speak of things such as: “life is hard; the rule of heaven is unchangeable. Relations with unrelated women, robbery and stealing, rude and ugly behaviour, lying, cowardice in the face of danger, taking advantage of the poor man and bullying the humbler; these things are sins. If one commits Jihad in the name of their country, that person shall go to heaven”.

All the people in the country converted to his teachings. Their laws became more tolerant, and their funerals are simple. In the country and in these cities, trade and commerce boomed. People from all four points of the compass travelled to Yajuluo for commerce, as the products there were both high-quality and low-priced. The markets and shops were full of beautiful textiles, pearls, and shells. Glassware

<sup>9</sup>. Du Huan was a relative of Du You, the author of *Tongdian*. Du Huan joined the war of Talas in 751 CE where the Tang army led by General Gao Xianzhi was defeated by Arabs. Du Huan was captured by the Arab soldiers and traveled widely in the Arab Empire. He came back China around 762 CE and wrote *Jingxing ji* to record the geography and customs in the regions along his journey. Du You had a brief mention about him in *Tongdian* (volume 191, category of bianfang, i.e. border regions). It says, “Du Huan, a member in my family once followed Gao Xianzhi, military commander of western region, to join the war in the west. In the tenth year of Tianbao period (751 CE) he arrived the West Sea. In the beginning of Baoying period (762 CE) he took the merchant’s ship to return Guangzhou port. He wrote *Jingxing ji*. “The *Jingxing ji* was already extant in the tenth century and only some chapters were preserved in the *Tongdian*. The record of Dashi in the *Jingxing ji* was attached after the official account of Dashi in the *Tongdian*. See ZHANG YICHUN, *Du Huan Jingxing ji jiaozheng* (Du Huan’s *Jingxing ji*: text and annotations), Beijing 2000.

<sup>10</sup>. Mumen refers to āmir al-Mu’minīn, see BAI SHOUYI, *Xin Tangshu Dashi zhuan zhu* (Notes on the chapter of Dashi in *Xin Tangshu*), in BAI SHOUYI, *Minzhu zongjiao lunji*, Shijiazhuang 2001, 528.

<sup>11</sup>. Yajuluo refers to Akula, i.e. al-Kūfa, the first capital of Abbasid Dynasty, see F. HIRTH and W.W. ROCKHILL, *HAU-JU-KUA: His work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the twelfth and thirteenth Centuries, entitled Chu-fan-chi*, St Petersburg 1911, 110.

and metal vases and jugs became common. Camels, horses, donkeys and mules became common forms of transportation.

During festivities, large sugar crystals would commonly be carved into horses – similar to the carriages carved from precious stones found in China – which were then presented to royalty.

The rice and wheat flour in this country were no different from that found in China contemporarily. They had fruits such as *biantao* (flat peach, almond), and *qiannian zao* (palm date). Their turnips, specifically were grown big and round, and tasted delicious. They also had begun to grow the vegetables found in the more western countries.

The city became much more prosperous over time. The most expensive perfumes at the time became *Jesaiman* (jasmine) and *mozashi*, while the most expensive spices became *chasaibeng* and *qiluji*.

*Bian Shu* and *Liu Ci*, from the capital area in China, were craftsmen dealing with gold and silver pieces, as well as paintings and architectural designs, while *Le Huan* and *Lu Li* from the Hedong area provided the seaving services for silk and brocade.

Legend states their horses were the offspring of a dragon in the West Sea and a normal horse. The structure of both horses and camels lent themselves to their use drawing carriages (especially since they could run around a thousand miles a day); camels were strong, but with small figures and a hump for storing water, while horses have small stomach capacities. Ostriches, birds over four *chi*<sup>12</sup> in height, were also in the city. Their feet look like that of camels. People would ride on the bird's neck, which is capable of running with a rider for five or six *li*.<sup>13</sup> The egg of an ostrich is as big as three *sheng*.<sup>14</sup>

There also grew olive trees in the area. The fruit looks like a date in the summer, and was often made into oil and used to prevent disease. The climate there is warm, and it would rarely snow. People were often in danger of epidemic diseases, in which half of those afflicted patients will die in a year. At that point the armies had conquered forty to fifty countries. These countries are subjects of *Dashi*, and *Dashi* soldiers are sent to occupy these states. The territory of *Dashi* extended to the West Sea.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup>. One *chi* is around 33 cm.

<sup>13</sup>. One *li* is 500 meters.

<sup>14</sup>. The *sheng* is a measuring unit in ancient China. One big *sheng* in Tang period is around 600 milliliters, while one small *sheng* equals to 200 milliliters.

<sup>15</sup>. The West Sea in Chinese sources has several connotations in different texts. In *Du Huan's* text it more likely refers to Mediterranean Sea.

## V. Chapter of Dashi in the *Jiu Tangshu*<sup>16</sup>

Having previously lived in the western portion of Persian Empire, during the Daye period (605-618 CE), the Dashi relayed a tale of a Persian who had taken his camels to the pastures in the Jufen modina mountains.<sup>17</sup> It is told that unexpectedly a lion began conversing like a man, saying “to the west of the mountain there are three caverns hiding numerous weapons; take them. There is also a black stone with white words on it, read them, and you will be a King.” The Persian followed the instructions, and indeed found the weapons and a stone upon which the inscription abetted him to revolt. He then assembled desperadoes, crossed the Hengge Water,<sup>18</sup> and plundered caravan merchants, all the while increasing his following. He occupied the western part of Persia as a separate region, and claimed himself King; Persia and Fulin (Byzantium) revolted and launched punitive expeditions against him, but were both defeated.

Later, during the second year of Yonghui (651 CE), the Dashi began to send envoys to pay tributes. The King, Mimo Muni.<sup>19</sup> Dashi had ordered these envoys out, after the establishment of the Kingdom by roughly thirty four years (during which time the crown had been passed down to three Kings). The people of the land religiously worshipped the God of heaven, but the men were dark-skinned and bushy-bearded, with big, long noses lending them the appearance of Poluomen (Indians) while the women were fair. The Dashi had their own scripts. The land held an abundance of camels and horses, bigger than those of other countries; their weapons were sharp, their warriors brave. The composition of the earth, primarily sand and stone, did not lend itself to farming, and so the primary dietary components of these peoples were meats (like camel and horse meat).

The King began moving the black stone out of the Jufen modina Mountains located in the northwest and into his country. He had also sent an emissary, carrying clothes and food, on a trip on the sea that lasted at least eight

<sup>16</sup>. The chapter of Dashi in *Jiu Tangshu* is a most comprehensive account of Chinese-Arab relations during the Tang Dynasty. The *Jiu Tangshu* was compiled right after the collapse of Tang (941-945). The archives of Tang period were thus made a full use in this book. As other standard history, i.e. history sponsored and officially approved by the current dynasty, the record of foreign country has a quite regular format in writing. Each chapter contains the geographical location of the state, history and political system, custom, products, and above all, the contact with China. The event of visit and tribute, diplomatic affairs and wars are carefully recorded with clear dates. We can find all these characters in chapter of Dashi of *Jiu Tangshu*. This account indeed shows the close contacts and interactions between the two countries from the rise of Arab Empire to the tenth century.

<sup>17</sup>. Jufen refers to al-Kūfā, while Modina is Medina. See ZHANG XINGLANG, *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian* (Collection of historical sources on the Sino-West contact), Beijing 1979, vol. 3, 126.

<sup>18</sup>. The Hengge Water possibly a wrong script of Dahe Water, which refers to Tigris River in medieval Chinese sources. See ZHANG XINGLANG, op. cit., 127.

<sup>19</sup>. See note 10.

years, but had proved futile. The emissary had not reached the west coast, and instead on his trip had found a square stone, on which, it is claimed, grew a tree with red trunk and green leaves. The tree always bore little kids (six to seven cuns = 1/3 decimeter, in length) that laughed when they saw people, and waved their hands and feet. Their heads were connected to the branches, but when the branch was snapped off the child died immediately. Ultimately the stone and tree found a new home in the King's palace.<sup>20</sup>

Northwest of Dashi, at a distance of three months walk, is the Women Kingdom.<sup>21</sup>

During the beginning of the Longshuo period (661-664 AD), the Dashi had defeated Persia, then Fulin (Byzantium), cultivating the land to grow rice and wheat. Later, with an army of 400,000 soldiers, they expanded their conquest southward into Poluomen (India), conquering all the Hu countries (Central Asia).

During the consequent Changan period (701-705 CE), they sent envoys to make homage of horses, which was repeated once again in the second year of Jingyun (711 CE), and in beginning of Kaiyuan period (713-741AD) (where the tribute consisted of not only horses, but also belts with inlaid gold and precious stones). Faced with a threat of arrest during an audience, those sent out on envoys were peaceful, but would not prostrate themselves; Zhang Yue, head of the state secretariat, made a point to mention to the Emperor that the "Dashi have customs different than those in China. They come to China with admiration of our virtue, and we can not punish them." It was then that the Emperor granted the dashi what was considered a privilege; they were not required to prostrate, as they said they would only do so before their God. However, as they were repeatedly censured, they requested that they have the right to prostrate according to Chinese custom.

It was at this time that the Dashi Empire was extensively spread out from the East to west; this even encompassed Kang (Samarkand) and Shi (Kesh), and bordered Tuqishi (Türgiſh) in the east.

In another account of their history, during the mid Kaihuang period (581-600 CE) of Sui dynasty, the Gulie<sup>22</sup> clan had held the position of chief for

<sup>20</sup>. The kid growing out of tree is a well-known story in China from the Arab Empire during the Tang period. The same story is also collected in Du You's *Tongdian* (written around 807 CE), Duan Chengshi's *Youyang zazu* (before 863 CE), Duan Gonglu's *Bei Hulu* (around 869 CE).

<sup>21</sup>. The Women Kingdom is another famous legend about the west regions in Tang's Chinese geographical imagination. The story was first recorded in Xu Zhang's *Datang xiyu ji* (written in 646 CE). In volume 11 of *Datang xiyu ji*, the Women Kingdom was reported as some islands to the southwest of the Byzantine Empire. It is noteworthy that the Arab Empire replaced Romans as the neighboring country of this legendary Women Kingdom, indicating the new geographical idea of Chinese towards the west regions after the rise of Arabs. See LIN YING, From Geographical Knowledge to the Imaginative Space : Change of Byzantine Image in the Tang and Song Paintings, in *Cultural Relations between Byzantium and the Arabs*, eds. Y.Y. AL-HILJI and V. CHRISTIDES, Athens 2007.

<sup>22</sup>. Gulie refers to Kuraysh. See BAI SHOUYI, op. cit., 535.

generations in Dashi tribes. In the clan, there were two branches; one was Penni xishen, the other was Penni mohuan.<sup>23</sup> One of Xishen's descendants was Mo-hemo (Muhammad); brave and intelligent, he was elected to be the King by the tribes. He carried out military expeditions towards east and west, and conquered a vast area of around three thousand miles including Xiala (Hella, also known as Shan city).<sup>24</sup> The fourteenth generation decendent of Muhammad was Mo-huan<sup>25</sup>, who had murdered his brother Yiji<sup>26</sup> to claim the throne. A cruel and merciless leader, hated by his subjects faced a month-long revolt started by Bingbo Xilin<sup>27</sup> (from Mulu in Huluoshan region; Merv, Khorasan), headed the revolt. Donned in black, tens of thousands of followers had assembled and marched together, capturing Mo-huan (Marwan II) alive and killing him. Their next course of action was to find Apu luoba,<sup>28</sup> the descendant of Xishen branch (Hashim), so that he may ascend to the throne. It is interesting to note that in the time prior to Mohuan's rule the country had been referred to as "White-Robed Dashi," but then the name was changed to "Black-robed Dashi."

After the death of Apu Luoba (Abul al-'Abbass), his younger brother Apu Gongfu<sup>29</sup> ascended to the throne.

At the beginning of Zhide era (756-758 CE), the envoy from Dashi was appointed as commander by Emperor Daizong (762-779 CE). The soldiers of Dashi joined the wars to settle down the revolts against the two capitals.<sup>30</sup>

During the Baoying (762-763 CE) and Dali eras (766-779 CE), Dashi sent envoys frequently; the line of succession to the throne was as follows: Gongfu (Al-Mansur) followed by his son Mi-di (Al-Mahdi) who was then followed by Mu-xi (al-Hadi) succeeded, and later younger brother Ke-lun (Harun al-Rashid) succeeded.

Throughout this time, (the Zhenyuan era; 785-805 CE), Dashi and Tibetans were enemies; Tibetans were forced to defend their western borders from the Dashi,

<sup>23</sup>. The Penni is Chinese transliteration of Banu, i.e. clan. Xishen and mohuan both refer to the two important branches of Kuraysh clan, Hashim and Merwan.

<sup>24</sup>. It is very likely the earliest appearance of the name of Hella in Chinese sources. Xiala is Hella, while Shan city refers to city of Alexandria. According to Bai Shouyi, Xiala refers to Hira, the important culture center of Persia in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. However, we are not sure if the conquest of Hira deserves a special claim by the Arab envoys before Chinese officials. Xiala has another name, Shan city, which gave us more reason to believe Xiala as Hella.

<sup>25</sup>. Mohuan refers to Marwan al-Himaar (744-750 CE).

<sup>26</sup>. Yiji refers to Yagid III (744 CE).

<sup>27</sup>. Bingbo xilin refers to Abu Muslim. See BAI SHOUYI, *op. cit.*, 536.

<sup>28</sup>. Apu luoba refers to Abu al-'Abbas.

<sup>29</sup>. Apu gongfu refers to Abu al-'Jafar.

<sup>30</sup>. From 755 CE to 765 CE, the Tang dynasty was involved into the revolting war led by An Lushan and Shi Siming, two military commanders from Central Asia. In order to defeat the revolting army, the Tang Emperors Suzong (756-761 CE) and Daizong (762-779 CE) mainly depended on Uyghurs (Huihu) and soldiers from Central Asia. Noticeably, this record shows that the Arabs also joined the war to attack the revolting army in Changan and Luoyang, the two capitals of Tang.

which found it to be too much of a hassle on the Tang frontier with waning military forces.<sup>31</sup>

It wasn't until fourteenth year of Zhenyuan era (798 CE), though, that the Emperor granted the envoys of Dashi, Hancha, Yanji, and Shabei with the title of Zhonglang General, and sent them back to their homelands.

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<sup>31</sup>. For the military and political relations of Tibet, Tang China and Arabs during the late 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, see WANG XIAOPU, *Tang Tubo Dashi zhengzhi guanxi shi* ( The political relations of Tang, Tibet and Dashi), Beijing 1992. CHANG JEH-MING, *Les Musulmans sous la Chine des Tang*, Taibei 1980.



# The Eastern Luxury Nexus in Middle-Byzantine Literature: A Reality Check

NIKE KOUTRAKOU

Michael Psellos, Byzantine philosopher, scholar and statesman whose career spanned most of the 11th century,<sup>1</sup> used the words “an homage in perfumes and all that comes to our country out of India and Egypt” while describing, in his “Chronographia”, the last years of empress Zoë in the mid-11th century. He underlined in this way Zoë’s devotion to God and her offerings to Him through spices/perfumes, fragrances, frankincense as well as other costly products imported to Constantinople from India and Egypt.<sup>2</sup> It was a rhetorical antithesis with the purpose of pointing out that prayer is the real perfume preferred by God. However, the description also stressed the empress’s taste for luxury Eastern products under the guise of religious offerings. Already in a previous chapter Psellos had presented the two last Byzantine empresses<sup>3</sup> of the Macedonian dynasty, the sisters Zoë and Theodora, as having each her own collector’s “hobby”: Theodora used to collect gold pieces, arranged in especially made bronze coffer, while Zoë preferred to give gold away as a present and to collect the “most Indian of the Indian spices” and

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<sup>1</sup>. On Psellos’s life, career, works in general and historical writings as the *Chronographia* in particular, see H. HUNGER, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vols I-II, Munich, 1978, = *Βυζαντινή Λογοτεχνία, Η λόγια κοσμική γραμματεία των Βυζαντινών*, Greek translation with more recent bibliography by T. KOLIAS, K. SYNELLI, G. MAKRIS and I. VASSIS, vols I-III, Athens 1992, II, 187-201 and passim. J. N. LJUBARSKIJ, *Michail Psell. Ličnost’ i tvorčestvo*, Moscow 1978 = *Η προσωπικότητα και το έργο του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού*, (*The personality and works of Michael Psellos*), Greek translation by A. TZELESI, Athens 2004<sup>2</sup>, with corrections, supplements and recent bibliography, esp. 41-63. A. KARPOZIOS, *Byzantine Historians and Chronographers, vol. III, 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> cent.*, (in Greek) Athens 2009, 59-185. J. C. RIEDINGER, *Quatre étapes de la vie de Michel Psellos*, *Revue des Études Byzantines* 68 (2010), 5-60. E. PIETSCH, *Die Chronographia des Michael Psellos: Kaisergeschichte, Autobiographie und Apologie*, Wiesbaden 2005, with discussion of recent bibliography.

<sup>2</sup>. Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. E. RENAULD, *Michel Psellos, Chronographie* [Belles Lettres] vols. I-II, Paris, 1926-28, reimpr. 1967, vol. II, 49 : ...*θυσίαν προσάγειν Θεῷ, οὗ φημι δὴ τοσοῦτον τὴν δι’ αἰδέσεως λογικῆς τε προσαγωγῆς καὶ ἐξομολογήσεως, ἀλλὰ τὴν δι’ ἀρωμάτων καὶ ὅσα τῆς Ἰνδοῦν καὶ Αἰγυπτίων γῆς εἰς τὰ ἡμέτερα φοιτᾷ ὄρια.*

<sup>3</sup>. F. LAURITZEN, *A Courtier in the Women’s Quarters: The Rise and fall of Psellos*, *Byz 77* (2007), 251-266, esp. 252-254. M. JEFFREYS, *Psellos and “his emperors”: fact, fiction and genre*, in R. MACRIDES ed., *History as Literature in Byzantium. Papers from the fortieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, (University of Birmingham, April 2007), Ashgate, Farnham [Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies Publications 15], 2010, 73-91, esp. 74 and 77.

“naturally perfumed oils which did not lose their fragrance”,<sup>4</sup> in particular dwarf olive trees and white laurels. Her interest in those products was such that she herself, helped by her maids, experimented with extracts and oils of exotic plants and other woods and blossoms, trying to produce new fragrances. Psellos even remarked, rather ironically,<sup>5</sup> that her experiments were taken to such an extent that her separate bedroom apartments in the Palace looked like – and probably also smelled like – an apothecary’s workshop set up in the market.<sup>6</sup> Inadvertently, Psellos by mentioning the empress’s “Indian spices” just before comparing her bedroom to a spice shop also hints that the ingredients found in a Constantinopolitan apothecary’s shop used to come from India. What is of interest for us in Psellos’s descriptions is this image of India and Egypt as sources of fragrances, spices and other luxuries which linked those lands and the trade roads (both land and sea) connecting them, in a kind of “extended East concept” in Byzantine eyes.

I. Such mentions of India in conjunction with Egypt and/or Arabia in Byzantine texts as the “Chronographia”, were not exact references to the actual country of Egypt nor the Indian sub continent. This connection between India and Egypt both being parts of an “Eastern” – Asian and East African – nexus, was a constant one, without however, a clear picture as to where exactly this “India” was on the map in relation to Egypt, East Africa, more specifically Ethiopia, or the Arabs. For instance, the Chronicle of Malalas (in the framework of the Persian-

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<sup>4</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia*, vol. I, 147: ‘Ἐπει δὲ τῶν δυοῖν ἀδελφῶν, ἡ μὲν χρυσοῦ πολλοῦ ἤτητο, οὐχ ἵνα ἔχοι ἢ θησαυρίζοι, ἀλλ’ ἵνα εἰς ἄλλους μετοχεοῖ τὸ ρέυμα, καὶ τούτων δὴ τῶν ἰνδικωτάτων ἀρωμάτων τῶν τε ἄλλων καὶ μάλιστα τῶν ἐτι τὴν φυσικὴν λιβάδα μὴ ἀπολιπόντων ζύλων, ἐλαῶν τε τινων σμικροτάτων καὶ δαφνειῶν καρπῶν λευκοτάτων, ἡ δ’ ἑτέρα καὶ νεωτέρα δαρεικῶν ὀσημέραι μυρίων ὧν δὴ καὶ θήκας χαλκὰς ἐπεποίητο. On Zoë’s personal pursuits as indicative of the interest for luxury and the relevant growth of economic and trade activities in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century in the framework of mentality changes in the Byzantine society see M. GEROLYMATOY, Εμπόριο, κοινωνία καὶ αἰσθήσεις (= Trade, society and the senses) in: CHR. ANGELIDI ed., *Byzantium matures: choices, sensitivities, and modes of expression (eleventh to fifteenth centuries)* (in Greek) [Institute for Byzantine Research, International Symposia 13] Athens 2004, 257-268, esp. 259.

<sup>5</sup> J. LJUBARSKIJ, The Byzantine Irony. The case of Michael Psellos, in: A. AVRAMEA, A. LAIOU, E. CHRYSOS eds., *Byzantium, State and Society. In Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*, Athens 2003, 349-360.

<sup>6</sup> Psellos, *Chronographia* vol. I, 148: *περὶ τοῦτο δὲ μόνον ἐπόνει καὶ τὴν πᾶσαν πραγματεῖαν συνέτεινεν, τὰς τῶν ἀρωμάτων φύσεις μεταβάλλειν, καὶ μυρεψεῖν, τὰ δὲ πλάττειν τε καὶ τυποῦν, τὰ δ’ ἄλλως ἐργάζεσθαι, καὶ ὁ ἀποτετιμημένος αὐτῇ οἶκος εἰς εὐνήν οὐδὲν τι σεμνότερος ἦν τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς ἀγορᾶς ἐργαστηρίων.* The Book of the Eparch specifically defines the area in which the perfumers held their activities in 10<sup>th</sup> century Constantinople: J. KODER, ed., *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen, Einführung, Edition, Übersetzung und Indices* [CFHB 33] Vienna 1991, 10.1.

Byzantine rivalry in the region during the first Christian centuries)<sup>7</sup> gives the name “Indians” to the inhabitants of the kingdom of Axum, today’s Ethiopia, “Amerite Indians”<sup>8</sup> to the Himyar tribe of today’s Yemen and “Saracen Indians”,<sup>9</sup> to those living in the Arabian Peninsula. It is not for this paper to study Byzantine politics in the region of the Arabian peninsula and the Red Sea during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>10</sup> nor to analyse the Empire’s involvement in the conflict that arose in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century between the Axumites under king Ella Asbaha (the *Ἐλεσβάας* of Malalas<sup>11</sup>) and the Himyarites/“Amerite Indians” for the control of the trade roads<sup>12</sup> in the region. What is of interest for our purposes is that the Byzantines, viewed the “Indians” be they Saracen, Himyarite or Africans as essential for the empire’s trade, as well as to its strategy and war against the rival empire of Sassanian Persia.<sup>13</sup> The story of this involvement underscores a well established Byzantine perception of

7. J. HOWARD JOHNSTON, *The two Great powers in Late Antiquity, a comparison*, in: AV. CAMERON ed., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. States, Resources and Armies*, [Papers of the third Workshop on Late Antiquity III], Princeton 1995, 156-226; G. GREATREX- S. N. C. LIEU, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars, AD 363-630*, London 2002. P. SCHNEIDER, *L’Ethiopie et l’Inde: interference et confusions aux extrémités du monde antique (VIIIe siècle avant J.C.-VIIe siècle après J.C.)*, [Publications de l’Ecole Française de Rome] Rome, 2004, passim. SOPHIA PATOURA-SPANOU, *Christianity and Globality in Early Byzantium. From Theory to Practice* (in Greek) Athens 2008, esp. 165ff, 285-321, with recent bibliography.

8. Ioannis Malalae, *Chronographia*, ed. L. DINDORF, [CSHB], Bonn 1831, 456,24 - 457,5. According to the chronicler, the Axumite king declared war on the Himyar kingdom at the instigation of the Byzantine emperor: *Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων... ποιήσας θείας κελεύσεις κατέπεμψε πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Αἰθιοπιῶν. Ὅστις βασιλεὺς Ἰνδῶν (= Ethiopians) συμβολὴν ποιήσας μετὰ τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Ἀμεριτῶν Ἰνδῶν, (=Himyarites) κατὰ κράτος νικήσας παρέλαβε τὰ βασίλεια αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν χώραν αὐτοῦ πᾶσαν*

9. Malalas, 458, 18-19.

10. D. LETSIOS, *Byzantium and the Red Sea. Relations with Nubia, Ethiopia and South Arabia until the Arab conquest*, (in Greek), Athens 1988, passim. On trade relations in particular see St. E. SIDEBOTHAM, *Northern Red Sea ports and their networks in the late Roman/Byzantine period*, in: M. MUNDELL MANGO ed., *Byzantine Trade, 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The Archaeology of local, Regional and International Exchange. Papers of the Thirty-eighth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, (St John’s College, University of Oxford, March 2004), Ashgate, Farnham [Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies Publications 14], 2009, 329-352.

11. Malalas, 458, 17.

12. Malalas, 458, 14-16 explicitly states the essential role of the sea route through the Himyarite waters and then the Nile towards Alexandria in Egypt for the Byzantine trade, a fact which prompted the instigation of the war between the Axumite allies of Byzantium and Himyar: *ἀλλὰ δι’ ἧς ὑπέταξε χώρας τῶν Ἀμεριτῶν Ἰνδῶν διὰ τοῦ Νεῖλου ἐπὶ τὴν Αἴγυπτον ἐν Ἀλεξάνδρεια τὴν πραγματείαν ποιῆσθαι*. See V. CHRISTIDES, *The Himyarite –Ethiopian War and the Ethiopian Occupation of South Arabia in the Acts of Gregentius, (ca 530AD)*, *Annales d’Ethiopie* 9 (1972), 115ff. PATOURA-SPANOU, op. cit., 289ff. Also recently, D. W. PHILLIPSON, *Aksum, the entrepot and highland Ethiopia, 3<sup>rd</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries*, in: M. MUNDELL MANGO ed., *Byzantine Trade, 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (op.cit., n. 10), 353-368.

13. Malalas, 458, 17-20: *ἐκίνησε πόλεμον κατὰ Περσῶν, προπέμψας καὶ τοὺς ὑπ’ αὐτὸν Ἰνδοὺς Σαρακηνοὺς, ἐπῆλθε τῇ Περσικῇ χώρᾳ ὑπὲρ Ῥωμαίων*

India along with the Arabs-Saracens and the Axumite-Africans as regional powers worth cultivating by the Empire for their trading value as well as for their strategic importance.

This relationship, promoted through embassies,<sup>14</sup> specialized envoys, missionaries and traders helped perpetuate in Byzantium a concept already present in the ancient Greek Geographers: that of a luxurious, powerful East, land of all kinds of riches. By the middle Byzantine centuries, this image was firmly established in Byzantine mentality. Thus, Photios, the 9<sup>th</sup> century patriarch and scholar of encyclopaedic knowledge to whom we owe the survival of many ancient texts collected in his “Bibliotheca”, explicitly mentions that he had read the “History” written by Nonnosos, a 6<sup>th</sup> century diplomat and historian, which contained a chapter on Nonnosos’s embassy to “the Ethiopians, the Amerites (=Himyarites/Yemenites) and the Saracens, <who were> the most powerful of the then nations, as well as <on his embassy> to other Eastern nations”.<sup>15</sup> The Amerites of the text were the people of the Southern Arabian Peninsula, living in the so-called “Felix Arabia”<sup>16</sup> during the first Christian centuries as stated *expressis verbis* by Kosmas Indicopleustes, the 6<sup>th</sup> century merchant who described the Red Sea and the surrounding regions in his “Christian Topography”.<sup>17</sup> The above cited comment on the most powerful nations of the Arabian Peninsula τὰ ισχυρότερα τῶν τότε ἔθνῶν probably illustrates patriarch Photios’s own perception of the Arab power in the ninth century AD. However, even if the patriarch was projecting to the

<sup>14</sup>. See, for instance, the role of luxury presents in foreign relations: A. MUTHESIUS, Silken Diplomacy, in: J. SHEPARD – S. FRANKLIN eds., *Byzantine Diplomacy: Papers from the 24<sup>th</sup> Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (Cambridge, March 1990), Aldershot 1992, 235-248.

<sup>15</sup>. Photios, *Bibliotheca*, ed. R. HENRY, *Photius, Bibliothèque*, [Belles Lettres], Paris 1959ff, (codex 3), t. I, 4, 20-23: *Ἀνεγνώσθη Nonνόσου ἱστορία ἐν ἣ διαλαμβάνεται πρεσβεία αὐτοῦ πρὸς τε Αἰθίοπας καὶ Ἀμερίτας καὶ Σαρακηνοῦς, τὰ ισχυρότερα τῶν τότε ἔθνῶν, ἐτι δε καὶ πρὸς ἄλλα ἀνατολικά ἔθνη.*

<sup>16</sup>. On the concept of *Felix Arabia* and its survival throughout Byzantine history see E. KOUNTOURA, *Arabia, Egypt and Syria in Byzantine hagiographical Works during the Late Byzantine and Ayyubid Period*, in this Volume.

<sup>17</sup>. Kosmas Indicopleustes *Christian Topography* III, 66, 2-3, ed. WANDA WOLSKA-CONUS, *Cosmas Indicopleustes, Topographie Chretienne*, I-III, Paris 1968-1973, [Sources Chrétiennes 141, 159, 197] t. I, 505: *Ἀραβίας τε τοὺς Εὐδαίμονας τοὺς νῦν καλουμένους Ὀμηρίτας, πᾶσαν Ἀραβίαν καὶ Παλαιστίνην.* H. SCHNEIDER, *Kosmas Indikopleustes, Christliche Topographie: Textkritische Analyse, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, Brepols Turhout 2011, was not available to me. It is worth noting anyway that the “India”, to which refers the surname of Kosmas, alludes to the regions around the Red Sea. Ancient Greek Geographers usually referred to people with more dark skin as “Indians” and so the word could mean all people in a region extended from India towards eastern Africa including the Arabian Peninsula: N. PIGULEWSKAJA, *Byzanz auf den Wegen nach Indien*, [BBA36], Berlin-Amsterdam 1969, 197 ff. LETSIOS, *Byzantium and the Red Sea*, 60-67, 159-161. IDEM, *Diabolus in figura Aethiopsis tetri*. Ethiopians as demons in hagiographic sources: Literary stereotypes versus social reality and historic events in: J. P. MONFERRER-SALA, V. CHRISTIDES, TH. PAPADOPOULOS eds., *East and West. Essays on Byzantine and Arab Worlds in the Middle Ages*, Piscataway, N.J., 2009, 185-200.

past the image of the Arab power of his time, his comment perpetuated a concept of affluent regional political powers. The same applies to the relevant image as attested in other middle-Byzantine sources concerning the region, such as the “Laws of the Homerites” that proclaim the Himyarite kingdom “most illustrious” τὸ τῶν Ὀμηριτῶν περιφανέστατον κράτος<sup>18</sup> or in hagiographical texts that deal with the pre-Islamic Arabs as the “Martyrion of Arethas”,<sup>19</sup> or the “Life of Saint Gregentios”.<sup>20</sup> Such sources used material from the past centuries, especially the 6<sup>th</sup> century, although in their present form they appear to be a product of middle-Byzantine Constantinople, dated as late as the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> Hence, on one hand they bear testimony as to the interest that Eastern regions continued to enjoy among Byzantines and on the other hand they preserved and diffused during the middle Byzantine centuries, the image of a powerful East.

This image of a rich Eastern nexus is that of an exotic conglomerate extending from India to Africa. It included Tabropane,<sup>22</sup> contemporary Sri Lanka, the Arabian Peninsula and the lands on both sides of the Red Sea. This perception was further reinforced by the Byzantines’ study of ancient Greek authors.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>. A. PAPATHANASIOU, *The “Laws of the Homerites”. Missionary approach and legal-historical contribution*, (in Greek) Athens –Komotini 1994, 581<sup>A</sup> 412. CH. PAPASTATHIS, Silk trade and the Byzantine Penetration in the State Organization of South Arabia (c.533) in: *Cultural and Commercial exchanges between the Orient and the Greek World*, (Athens 25-28.10.1990), *Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue, Seminar Papers UNESCO*, Athens 1991, 111-121, esp. 113.

<sup>19</sup>. For the text’s edition see M. DETORAKI, *Le martyre grec de Saint Arethas et de ses compagnons* (BHG 166), *édition critique, étude et annotation*, traduction de JOELLE BEAUCAMP [Centre de recherche d’histoire et de civilisation de Byzance, Monographies 27] Paris 2007. I. SHAHID, *The martyrs of Najran, New Documents*, [Subsidia Hagiographica 49], Brussels 1971; V. CHRISTIDES, *The Martyrdom of Arethas and the Aftermath: History vs. Hagiography*, *Graeco-arabica* 7-8, (2000) 59ff.

<sup>20</sup>. A. BERGER, *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: introduction, critical edition and translation* with a contribution by Gianfranco Fiaccadori, [Millennium Studies in the Culture and History of the First Millennium 7], Berlin-New York 2006.

<sup>21</sup>. Discussion of the complete “dossier” of the saint patron of Arabia, the “Laws of the Homerites”, a compendium of law texts of pre Islamic Southern Arabia and the “Life” and the “Dialexis” of saint Gregentios in BERGER, *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios*, esp. 86-90.

<sup>22</sup>. A. ABEYDEERA, *Évocation des connaissances sur Sri Lanka dans l’ Antiquité* in : *Cultural and Commercial exchanges between the Orient and the Greek World*, (Athens 25-28.10.1990), *Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue, Seminar Papers UNESCO*, Athens 1991, 149-171, esp. 157-166. D. P. M. WEERAKKODY, *Taprobanē: ancient Sri Lanka as known to Greeks and Romans*, Turnhout 1997.

<sup>23</sup>. On the Byzantine geographical perceptions inherited from the ancient Greek geographers, both contrasting and adapting to the Biblical image of the World creation and their ideological constructs, see, J. KODER, *Sopravvivenza e trasfromazione delle concezioni geografiche antiche in età bizantina* in: F. PRONTERA ed., *Geografia storica della Grecia antica. Tradizioni e Problemi* [Biblioteca di Cultura Moderna, 1011], Bari 1991, 46-66. Also, J. KODER, *Η γεωγραφική διάσταση της Βυζαντινής Οικουμένης*, (= The geographical

Patriarch Photios with his acknowledged interest both in collections of “curiosa”, of wonders, and in real geographical treatises relating the riches of the East, further strengthened this perception of an Eastern luxury nexus, by summarizing and promoting among his literary circles the relevant ancient sources. His “Bibliotheca” confirms the role of ancient descriptions to the survival of this image of East: for example, Photios mentioned in a short notice that he had read books by ancient geographers, such as Protagoras’s “Universal Geography”. He explained that the Geography’s first five books described Asia, Libya (i.e. Africa) and Europe, while the sixth was a collection of “curiosa”, that is of strange stories out of strange lands that Protagoras had either read about in older works, or had seen himself.<sup>24</sup> Photios compared the last book of this work to another *relatio curiosum* coupled to a botanical compendium, by the 1<sup>st</sup> century author Alexander of Myndos.<sup>25</sup>

Also, in another instance Photios preserved extensive summaries of the works by a 2nd century BC writer, Agatharhidas of Knidos, who composed, among other works, a “History of Asia” in 10 books, a “History of Europe” in 49 books, and a 5-books work “On the Red Sea”.<sup>26</sup> The Photian excerpts of this last work “On the Red Sea”<sup>27</sup> include a geographical description of several small islands off the Arabian coast.<sup>28</sup> In other excerpts, such as that of the already mentioned “History” by Nonossos, there are references to the island of Farsan, probably Farasan in the Gulf, and to its inhabitants whose subsistence consisted almost exclusively of fish and sea food.<sup>29</sup> The patriarch’s interest in things Eastern and Eastern sea routes is further substantiated by his readings on the subject. He pointed out, for instance, that he had read the “Indica”, a text preserved under the name of Arrian.<sup>30</sup> It was, in all probability, a 1<sup>st</sup> century AD text (its dating ranges from 30 to 250AD) dealing with the sea routes and trade in what was called the *Ἐρυθρὰ* Sea at the time, that is the sea extending from the Red Sea and today’s Africa’s Golden Horn to the southern Indian Ocean. This text contains information on luxury products, (silver, precious and semi-precious stones especially topazes, agate and carnelian, silk and

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Dimension of the Byzantine Oecumene) in: E. CHRYSOS ed., *Byzantium as Oecumene*, (in Greek) [Institute for Byzantine Research, International Symposia 16] Athens 2005, 25-45, esp. 32-38.

<sup>24</sup> Photios, *Bibliotheca*, (codex 188), t. III, 48-49.

<sup>25</sup> Photios, *Bibliotheca*, t. III, 48.

<sup>26</sup> Photios, *Bibliotheca*, (codex 213), t. III, 123.

<sup>27</sup> Photios, *Bibliotheca*, (codex 250), t. VII, 134ff.

<sup>28</sup> Photios, *Bibliotheca*, t. VII, 162-163: “Ὅτι τῶν στενῶν ἐπέκεινα, φησί, τῶν συγκλειόντων τὴν τε Ἀραβίαν καὶ τὴν ἀπέναντι χώραν, νῆσοι κείνται σποράδες, ταπειναὶ πᾶσαι, μικραὶ τῶ μεγέθει, τὸ πλῆθος ἀμύθητοι, ... τετραμέναι δὲ πρὸς τὸ δοκοῦν πέλαγος παρεκτείνειν τὴν Ἰνδικὴν καὶ Γεδρωσίαν.

<sup>29</sup> Photios, *Bibliotheca*, (codex 3), t. I, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Photios, *Bibliotheca*, t. II, 18, while referring to codex 91, Arrian’s *History of Alexander*. See P. CHANTRAINE ed., *Arrien, De l’Inde*, Paris 1927, 5-11.

mellow cloth, yarn, long pepper, cinnamon<sup>31</sup> etc), traded in Indian ports.<sup>32</sup> Such information on the products and the people of the region (including debts and loans from more ancient texts such as Ctesias's 4<sup>th</sup> century BC "Account on India")<sup>33</sup> was repeated by subsequent writers, who also appear in Photios's compilation. Among them was the so-called Kosmas Indicopleustes, the 6<sup>th</sup> century merchant writer of the "Christian Topography".<sup>34</sup>

Photios himself was in fact extremely critical of narrations contained in books such as the "Book of the Christian" as was the title he gave to the "Christian Topography". He considered its author a storyteller rather than an eyewitness of what he described.<sup>35</sup> The surviving 10 books of the "Christian Topography", (Photios speaks of 12 books<sup>36</sup> which means that he had a text either different or differently arranged than the one we have) present a pronounced theological character along with some geographical or anthropological information. Despite this character and the difficulties in calculating distances in the geographical points (as for instance Tabropane and Tzinista, the "land of silk") mentioned in the text,<sup>37</sup> Kosmas makes references to fragrant frankincense and other such products of the region which obviously contributed to the preservation of the Eastern luxury image.

Several other books by ancient authors, dealing with Eastern subjects and sumrising information on the Eastern trade luxury products have a prominent place in the Photian compilation. For instance, the writings of Philostratos, a 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD author, are of special interest where the "Eastern nexus" (extending from India to Eastern Africa and Egypt) concept and its image as luxury provider is concerned. Photios, had read the "Life of Apollonios of Tyana" by Philostratos and summarizes Apollonios's purported travels to the East, that is both to India, where

<sup>31</sup>. J. INNES MILLER: *The Spice trade of the Roman Empire, 29BC-AD641*, Oxford University Press 1969.

<sup>32</sup>. L. CASSON, *The Periplus Maris Erythrei*, Princetont University Press, 1989, chap. 48-49: ...τὰ πρὸς ἐμπορίαν τὴν ἡμετέραν, ὄνυχίνη λιθία καὶ μωρρίνη καὶ σινδόνας ἰνδικαί....Προχωρεῖ δε εἰς τὸ ἐμπόριον οἶνος... ἰταλικὸς ...ἀραβικὸς καὶ χαλκὸς καὶ κασσίτερος καὶ μόλυβος, κοράλλιον καὶ χρυσόλιθον, ἱματισμὸς ἀπλοῦς καὶ νόθος παντοῖος ... στύραξ, μελίλωτον, ὕελος ἀργῆ, σανδαράκη, στίμι, δηνάριον χρυσοῦν καὶ ἀργυροῦν ἔχον ἀλλαγὴν καὶ ἐπικέρδειάν τινα. πρὸς τὸ ἐντόπιον νόμισμα(...). Φέρεται δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν τόπων, νάρδος, κόστος, βδέλλα, ἐλέφας, ὄνυχίνη λυθία καὶ σμύρνα καὶ λύκιον καὶ ὀθόνιον παντοῖον καὶ σηρικὸν καὶ μολόχινον καὶ νῆμα καὶ πέπερι μακρὸν καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐμπορίων φερόμενα. IDEM, *Egypt, Africa, Arabia and India: Patterns of Seaborn trade in the First Century AD*, *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 21 (1984), 39-47.

<sup>33</sup>. Photios, *Bibliotheca*, (codex 72), t. I, 133ff.

<sup>34</sup>. Photios, *Bibliotheca*, (codex 36), t. I, 21-22.

<sup>35</sup>. Photios, *Bibliotheca*, t. I, 21: ἀλλὰ καὶ τινα κατὰ τὴν ἱστορίαν ἀπίθανα συντίθησι. Διὸ καὶ μυθικώτερον μᾶλλον ἢ ἀληθέστερον ἠγεῖσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον δίκαιον.

<sup>36</sup>. Photios, *Bibliotheca*, t. I, 22.

<sup>37</sup>. ZHANG XU SHAN, The name of China and its geography in Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Byz* 74 (2004), 452-462, esp. 457, 461-462; M. KORDOSIS, The limits of the known land (Ecumene) in the East (China) according to Cosmas Indicopleustes. Tzinista and the Ocean, *Byz* 69 (1999), 99-106.

he apprenticed himself to the Brahmans, and to Ethiopia. Photios also inserts critical comments by Philostratos, according to whom the sages and scholars of India were much better and more ancient than those of Ethiopia. Philostratos asserted that the Indian sages had a more acute intelligence and lived to more advanced age, because they lived more to the East and took advantage of the rising sun.<sup>38</sup> Geographically Philostatos placed India east of the Caucasus and the region of Medes (Persia). At the same time he thought of Caucasus as a mountain chain which stretched south up to the Red Sea<sup>39</sup>. This indicated the existence of a geographically speaking “extended East” concept which comprised the Eastern regions from the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea. Other information such as the use of camels in courses all around the region,<sup>40</sup> or how the Indians made up their hair in a way similar to the one of the ancient Spartans,<sup>41</sup> that is tying them with a simple white band, might reflect actual (from previous centuries) sightings. Philostratos also repeats rather fantastic details such as encounters with extremely tall people who lived on the eastern side of the river Indus,<sup>42</sup> the hunting of mountain serpents,<sup>43</sup> or the use of huge rainwater tanks, allegedly devised by Apollonios, for the irrigation of the fields of India in periods of extreme heat.<sup>44</sup> Such details from ancient texts added to the exotic image of the rich Eastern lands and perpetuated it in the imagination of Byzantine scholars.

Further examples from the “Bibliotheca” compilation focus on such an image and often underline the luxury trade goods imported from the East. For instance, in his summary of a ten- volume “History” of the Persian-Byzantine Wars by Theophanes of Byzantium, Photios focuses on the well-known story about the smuggling of the silk worms in the walking sticks of Christian monks and the subsequently introduction of silk industry in Byzantium.<sup>45</sup> This image was reinforced by an exotic “look”, based on the books of the ancient geographers, themselves owing much to the already mentioned 4<sup>th</sup> century BC author, Ctesias of Knidos who worked as a medical doctor at the court of the Great king of Persia for a time and, consequently, was regarded in the ancient world as an authority on things Eastern. Photios added to this trend by quoting extensively from Ctesias’s

<sup>38</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 44), t. I, 28: *Πολλῶ δέ φησι τοὺς Ἰνδῶν τῶν ἐν τῇ Αἰθιοπία σοφῶν προέχειν, ὅτι τέ φησι πρὸς ἀκτῖνα οἰκοῦντες ἡλίου μᾶλλον εἰσι τὴν διάνοιαν ὄξεις καὶ καθαροί, καὶ ὅτι καὶ χρόνῳ προήκοντες.*

<sup>39</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 241), t. V, 172: *Ὁ δὲ Καύκασος ὀρίζει μὲν τὴν Ἰνδικὴν καὶ τὴν Μηδικὴν, καθήκει δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν ἐρυθρὰν θάλασσαν ἑτέρῳ ἀγκῶνι.*

<sup>40</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 241), t. V, 173.

<sup>41</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, t. V, 178.

<sup>42</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, t. V, 172.

<sup>43</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, t. V, 177-78.

<sup>44</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 44), t. I, 29: *πίθους γὰρ αὐτοῖς πλήρεις ὄμβρων καὶ ἀνέμων δὸς ἕιν τὴν χώραν ἀνομβρίας ἐπεχούσης*

<sup>45</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 64), t. I, 76ff. A. MUTHESIUS, Essential processes, Looms and technical Aspects of the Production of Silk Textiles in: A. LAIOU ET AL, *The Economic History of Byzantium. From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, [Dumbarton Oaks Studies 39], Washington 2002, vol. I, 147-168.



books “Persica”, (on Persia) and “Indica”, (on India). He cited detailed accounts about the river Indus<sup>46</sup> and the beasts that lived in the region. Thus, he depicted not only elephants and mythical beasts, but also he referred to the story of the so-called big “Indian dogs” and the men of that region, the *κυναμολγοί*<sup>47</sup>. This story from Ctesias’s books found its way in multiple texts of ancient geographers, such as Strabo’s “Geographica”, the historical works of Diodorus,<sup>48</sup> the “De natura animalium” by Claudius Aelianus<sup>49</sup> and from there in the medieval bestiaries.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore Ctesias described luxury goods such as gemstones,<sup>51</sup> the weather conditions in the region etc. In fact, to judge by the “Bibliotheca”’s excerpt, Ctesias’s description of “India” seems like an adventure story – full of strange sites and prodigious people, of lands where one encountered strange big plants and beasts.<sup>52</sup> There was even a description of an aromatic tree that produced a kind of “rose-myrrh” perfume, (one of the instances when we really learn what these fragrances smelled like) which was by right the sole property of the king of India. Ctesias stated that he had had a sniff of that perfume only because it was sent as a gift to the king of Persia whom he served.<sup>53</sup> Obviously with descriptions like the above concerning the sweet perfume worthy only of a king, it is no wonder that the perception of such luxury Eastern products was perpetuated through the centuries.

Several other ancient authors, whose History or Geography was excerpted in the “Bibliotheca”, added some reference or other to this image of Eastern nexus – extending from India through Arabia and East Africa to Egypt – as luxury provenance. For instance, Olumpiodoros, a 5<sup>th</sup> century AD historian,<sup>54</sup> narrates maritime travels, apparently along the Red Sea coasts, and the dangers and marvels encountered on the way. He also mentions specific sites, local animals, - especially parrots, which are also likely to have come from Ctesias’s book<sup>55</sup> - and the Egyptian emerald mines,<sup>56</sup> as examples of what could be seen along that Eastern nexus.

<sup>46</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 72), t. I, 134.

<sup>47</sup>. K. KARTTUNEN, Κυνοκέφαλοι and κυναμολγοί in Classical Ethnography, *Arctos: Acta philologica Fennica*, 18, (1984), 31-36.

<sup>48</sup>. Strabo, Geographica IV, 771; Diodorus Siculus III, 31, Leipzig 1829, 312.

<sup>49</sup>. Claudius Aelianus, *De natura animalium* F. MASPERO ed., *Claudio Eliano, La natura degli animali*, Milan 1998, XVI, 31. French translation and notes by A. ZUCKER, *Élien, La personnalité des animaux*, vols I-II, Paris 2001-2002.

<sup>50</sup>. J. VOISENET, *Bêtes et Hommes dans le monde médiéval. Le Bestiaire des clercs du Ve au XIIIe siècle*. Brepols, Turnhout 2000, 124.

<sup>51</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 72), t. I, 138.

<sup>52</sup>. K. KARTTUNEN, The country of fabulous beasts and naked philosophers: India in classical and medieval literature, *Arctos, Acta philologica Fennica* 21 (1987), 44-52.

<sup>53</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 72), t. I, 145. On the traditional association of power with special products, especially perfumes, see G. BOWERSOCK, Perfumes and Power, in: A. AVANZINI ed., *Profumi d'Arabia, Atti del Convegno*, [Saggi di Storia Antica 11] Rome 1997, 543-556.

<sup>54</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 80), t. I, 166ff.

<sup>55</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 72), t. I, 134.

<sup>56</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 80), t. I, 182.

This pattern holds true for all references to lands and roads forming an Eastern luxury nexus in the “Bibliotheca”. They appear in the most unlikely references, out of context and in several innocuous guises: first as geographical hints. For example, Photios notes that in the “Narrations of Conon, a 1<sup>st</sup> century AD writer, the story of Andromeda differs from the usual one in Greek Mythology and that her father’s kingdom extended towards the South from Phoenicia till the land of the Arabs who lived on the coast of the Red Sea.<sup>57</sup> Second, as mentioned before, the East appears as an exotic travel destination and source of exotic animals, costly jewels and luxury products. Finally, the lands of the East appear to be places of knowledge and ancient wisdom that had inspired the Greeks. This last feature is quite common in the case of Egypt, often mentioned as source of geometry and mathematical knowledge partly due to measuring the overflow of the Nile, as in the orations of the sophist Himerius, cited by Photios<sup>58</sup>. The same applies to India and its Brahmans according to the summary of the “Life of Isidoros”, by Damaskios as reworked by Photios.<sup>59</sup> Obviously, the interest of Photios in the “curiosa” ensured that, sometimes, the descriptions of the East he chose to excerpt from ancient authors were quite fantastic. However, even in the more far-fetched descriptions there were details on distance, on travel and on trade that were quite true. Agatharhidas’s work “On the Red Sea” for instance,<sup>60</sup> described people who lived on the trees or who subsisted by hunting elephants,<sup>61</sup> but also had quite correct information on the climate in the Ethiopian high plateaus<sup>62</sup> and on the trade ports established by Alexander the Great in the islands of the Gulf region.<sup>63</sup>

The same pattern of references to the East can be traced in one way or another throughout the Byzantine literature. There was even an allegorical use of the Eastern nexus concept in the story of the “worm of India”: it was a parable using the image of that sweetly tasting “worm of India” described by Claudius Aelianus in the “de Natura animalium”,<sup>64</sup> for the resurrection of Christ.<sup>65</sup> Also, “incenses and spices out of India” became a *topos* used by the Church fathers in order to criticize exceedingly luxurious living. Thus, when Asterios bishop of Amaseia, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, spoke in his sermon “on the rich man and poor man Lazarus”, of such luxury products, it was to castigate the preference of his contemporaries for luxurious living. Asterios underlined, quite ironically, that

<sup>57</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 186), t. III, 29-30.

<sup>58</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 243), t. VI, 109.

<sup>59</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 242), t. VI, 22. P. ATHANASIADOU, *Damaskios, The Philosophical History, Text with Translation and Notes*, Athens 1999, 335-341.

<sup>60</sup>. See above ns 26-27.

<sup>61</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 250), t.VII, 165-166.

<sup>62</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 250), t.VII, 168,35.

<sup>63</sup>. Photios, Bibliotheca, (codex 250), t.VII, 186. See K. KARTTUNEN, Early Roman Trade with South India, *Arctos, Acta philologica Fennica* 29 (1994), 81-91.

<sup>64</sup>. Claudius Aelianus, *De natura animalium*, XIV, 13: ὁ τῶν Ἰνδῶν βασιλεὺς ἐπιδόρπια σκεῖται ταυτὰ οἷα δήπου Ἕλληνες ἐντραγεῖν αἰτοῦσι. Φοινίκων <δὲ> τῶν χαμαιζήλων ἐκεῖνος σκόληκά τινα ἐν τῷ φυτῷ τικτόμενον σταθευτὸν ἐπιδειπνεῖ ἥδιστον ὡς Ἰνδῶν λέγουσι λόγοι

<sup>65</sup>. PH. KOUKOULES, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμὸς*, Athens 1948ff, t. A1, 131.

“fragrances from India” sold by spice dealers were used much more by chefs preparing rich banquets than by doctors for their medicines,<sup>66</sup> as they should be.

II. However, this knowledge of things Eastern perpetuated from studying ancient Greek sources was not limited to a small circle of scholars with access to the books in the “Bibliotheca” compilation. Thanks to anthologies and dictionaries, it was more widely known. For example the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Soudidas, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, often quoting or paraphrasing previous sources as the “Ethnika”, the Book of the Nations, by Stephen of Byzantium, (always useful despite eventual mistakes or corrupted entries<sup>67</sup>), stated that the Libyans or “Afroi”, that is the Africans, inhabited the West, while the Ethiopians were in the East, the so called “Tharseis” in the land of “India”, that is the “Indike”, out of which “gold came to king Solomon” and the Arabs were in the Middle of the Land.<sup>68</sup> The Dictionary’s geographic information might be vague and simplistic. Nevertheless, it is indicative of this Eastern nexus linking Arabia and the East to Eastern Africa. Even its source, the 6<sup>th</sup> century writer Stephen of Byzantium, in the relative caption defined two lands under the name “Arabia”<sup>69</sup>: the perfume/spice bearer which lies between the Persian and the Arabian Sea and the more Western one, which borders Egypt on the East and Syria on the North. The same text in the next caption indicated that the “Arab” river was in the land of “Indike”.<sup>70</sup> Also, as far as luxury goods are concerned, it is worth reminding that the same Dictionary of Soudidas, in the caption concerning silk, used the word “serikè”, that is “Chinese” silk, and recalled the story of the silk trade from China through India and Ethiopia to Alexandria during

<sup>66</sup>. Asterios of Amaseia, *Homilia de divite et Lazaro*, PG 40, 169B-C: *Αὔξουσα γὰρ καθ’ ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὸ περιεργότερον ἢ τρυφή, ἤδη καὶ τῶν ἐξ Ἰνδικῆς ἀρωμάτων παρεγγέει τοῖς ὄμοις. Καὶ μᾶλλον τῶν ἱατρῶν οἱ μυροπόλαι τοῖς μαγείροις ὑπηρετοῦσιν*” Similarly, several Church Fathers, castigated the excessive use of oils, fragrances and perfumes as cosmetics by the ladies of the time, as for example St. Athanasios (dubia), PG 28, 257C: *καὶ μύροις, καὶ θυμιάμασι, καὶ εὐωδίασι, καὶ ἐν ἱματίοις πολυτελέσιν, καὶ χρυσῷ καλλωπίζουσαι τὰ σώματα* or PG 28, 264D: *οὐκ ἐπιχρίση τὸ σῶμα σου μύρω πολυτελεῖ, οὐδὲ ἐπιβαλεῖς ἐπὶ τὰ ἱμάτια σου ἀρώματα πολύτιμα*. On such products see A. MCCABE, *Imported Materia medica*, 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries and Byzantine pharmacology in: M. MUNDELL MANGO ed., *Byzantine Trade, 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, (op.cit., n. 10), 273-292.

<sup>67</sup>. J. DESANGES, *l’Afrique dans les Ethnika de Stéphane de Byzance* in: J. P. MONFERRER-SALA, V. CHRISTIDES, TH. PAPADOPOULOS eds., *East and West. Essays on Byzantine and Arab Worlds in the Middle Ages*, Piscataway, N.J., 2009, 3-15.

<sup>68</sup>. *Souidae Lexicon*, ed. ADA ADLER, Leipzig 1928-1935 s.v. Θαρσεῖς. I. SHAHID, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. II/2, Washington 2009, 10-32. G. H. HECK, *Precious Metals of Western Arabia and their Role in Forging the Economic Dynamic of the Early Islamic State*, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, Riyadh 2003.

<sup>69</sup>. MARGARETHE BILLERBECK ET AL. ed., *Stephani Byzantii, Ethnika*, [CFHB 43/1], Berlin - New York 2006, I, 232 s. v. Ἀραβία: *ἡ χώρα. ... Δύο δ’ εἰσί, ἡ μὲν ἀρωματοφόρος μεταξὺ Περσικῆς καὶ Ἀραβικῆς θαλάσσης, ἡ δὲ μᾶλλον δυτικῆ συνάπτουσα πρὸς μὲν τὴν δύσιν Αἰγύπτω πρὸς ἄρκτον δὲ Συρία, περὶ ἧς ὁ περιηγητῆς Διονύσιος φησι «τῆς δ’ ἂν ἴδοις προτέρω νοτιώτερον...Ἀραβίον κόλπον μάχατον ῥόον...»*

<sup>70</sup>. *Ibidem*, 232 sv. Ἀραβίς: *ποταμὸς Ἰνδικῆς ἐν αὐτονόμῳ χώρᾳ περὶ ὃν οἰκοῦσιν Ἀραβῖται*

the 6<sup>th</sup> century;<sup>71</sup> similarly, in the caption concerning the Chinese, the Dictionary mentioned that silk goods originated in China,<sup>72</sup> and linked them to the silk trade roads.

Even more interesting for the survival of ideas concerning India, Arabia and Eastern Africa as an Eastern luxury nexus were texts in the middle Byzantine centuries which touched a much broader public. A pertinent example is the story of Barlaam and Ioasaph, a romance describing the conversion to Christianity of the Indian prince Ioasaph by the saintly hermit Barlaam and which reflects a Byzantine rendering of the story of Buddha circulating under the title “a story beneficial to the soul”. The popularity and wide dissemination of this legend in the Byzantine world, under the guise of hagiography, is attested by the number of surviving manuscripts (over 140), of its attribution to St. John of Damascus and especially of its wide use in other middle-Byzantine works of hagiographical character.<sup>73</sup> The edifying character and often symbolic linguistic charge used in such texts<sup>74</sup> and in hagiographical literature in general, favored their circulation. They were after all a widespread literary product that (depending on the author’s primary, edifying or even secondary, political or other purpose as well as on his style, narrative structure, textual debts and loans), could influence Byzantine perceptions<sup>75</sup> to a significant degree. In the story of Barlaam and Ioasaph, significantly, the title itself places events in the “land which is inner to that of the Ethiopians called land of the Indians”,<sup>76</sup> which, further on, is described as situated with reference to Egypt and the sea.<sup>77</sup> The story was allegedly related by “pious men from the inner land of the Ethiopians, commonly called Indians”<sup>78</sup> and prince Ioasaph’s father is presented as

<sup>71</sup>. *Suidae lexicon* s.v. σῆρικῆ

<sup>72</sup>. *Suidae lexicon* s.v. Σῆρες

<sup>73</sup>. *Historia animae utilis de Barlaam et Ioasaph. Text und zehn Appendices*, R. VOLK, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damascus*, (spuria) VI/2, (BHG 224 et 224A/CPG 8120), Berlin- New York 2006, VIII-IX. A. KAZHDAN, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650-850)* (in collaboration with L. F. SHERRY and CHR. ANGELIDI), Athens, [Institute for Byzantine Research, Research Series 2] 1999, 95-105.

<sup>74</sup>. H. –A. THEOLOGITIS, Histoire et littérature dans l’Hagiographie byzantine : le cas de Saint Nikôn dit le « Metaneoite » in : P. ODORICO and P. AGAPITOS eds., *Les Vies des Saints à Byzance: genre littéraire ou biographie historique? (Actes du IIe colloque international philologique, Paris 6-8 juin 2002)*, Paris 2004, 201-231, esp. 206, with recent bibliography.

<sup>75</sup>. L. RYDÉN, New forms of hagiography: heroes and saints, in: *The 17th International Byzantine Congress, Major Papers*, Washington, D.C., 1986, 537-554. J. LJUBARSKIJ, *Quellenforschung and/or Literary Criticism: narrative structures in Byzantine historical writings, Symbolae Osloenses* 73 (1998), 48-52.

<sup>76</sup>. *Historia de Barlaam et Ioasaph*, title, 1-2, 5: Ἰστορία ψυχωφελῆς ἐκ τῆς ἐνδοτέρας τῶν Αἰθιοπίων χώρας τῆς Ἰνδῶν λεγομένης

<sup>77</sup>. *Historia de Barlaam et Ioasaph*, I, 1-3, 8 : Ἡ Ἰνδῶν λεγομένη χώρα πόρρω μὲν διάκειται τῆς Αἰγύπτου, μεγάλη οὖσα καὶ πολυάνθρωπος, περικλύζεται δὲ θαλάσσαις καὶ ναυσιπόροις πελάγεσι τῶ κατ’Αἴγυπτον μέρει

<sup>78</sup>. *Historia de Barlaam et Ioasaph*, prologue, 28-29, 7: ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς τῆς ἐνδοτέρας τῶν Αἰθιοπίων χώρας, οὕστινας Ἰνδοὺς οἶδεν ὁ λόγος καλεῖν

being a ruler of India.<sup>79</sup> More to the point, Barlaam, the prince's mentor, is presented as having gone to the court in the guise of a merchant<sup>80</sup> dealing in precious stones. His story of a stone so precious that it could perform miracles and could only be offered to the prince,<sup>81</sup> is an allegory of Barlaam's presentation of the message of Christ. Nevertheless it served as an indication of the kind of trade goods that prevailed in trading with the countries of this Eastern nexus and thus helped perpetuate their "image" as luxury providers in Byzantine mentality.

III. The real question, however, is: was the image of the Eastern luxury nexus supported by actual trade in luxury trade goods of Eastern origin to Byzantium? By the time of Psellos in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, were they more of a literary reminiscence, a rhetorical *topos* than a reality?

It should be noted that by the 10<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, for the Byzantines, Eastern luxury products were sufficiently specific to mark a city as major trade post or warehouse station. It is what happened to the city of Artze, at a crossroads of Eastern Asia Minor, according to historian Michael Attaleiates, a contemporary of Psellos. The historian, while describing the (unfortunate) Byzantine campaigns against the Seljuk Turks in the years 1069/70, mentions the rebuilding of Theodosiupolis, a previously abandoned town in the region. The town developed, taking over the role of head provincial market in the region after the destruction of the nearby town of Artze in 1049 AD by the same Turks. The interesting point here is that the historian also states, in a kind of nostalgic reminiscence, the reasons of Artze's extraordinary wealth in previous times: it was due to its being a well-sized population centre and especially a big central market "for every product that came out of Persia, India and the rest of Asia".<sup>82</sup> The text does not specify these products, but the glowing terms used by the historian to describe the town's well-developed and affluent regional economy leave no doubt as to the role of Eastern products and trade in its prosperity. The strategic importance of Artze for the Byzantine Empire both as a fortified town and as an economic centre finds its confirmation in a most

<sup>79</sup>. *Historia de Barlaam et Ioasaph*, title according to ms. Z (Scorial. T III 6) 5: *λόγος και μερική διήγησις περι τοῦ βίου τοῦ ὀσίου Βαρλαάμ και Ἰωάσαφ τοῦ υἱοῦ Ἀβενήρ βασιλέως Ἰνδῶν*.

<sup>80</sup>. *Historia de Barlaam et Ioasaph* VI, 5-9, 48: *Βαρλαάμ...ἐξελθὼν τῆς ἐρήμου...ἰμάτια τε κοσμικὰ ἀμφιεσμένοις και νηὸς ἐπιβὰς ἀφίκετο εἰς τὰ τῶν Ἰνδῶν βασιλεια. Και ἐμποροῦ ὑποδὸς προσωπεῖον*

<sup>81</sup>. *Historia de Barlaam et Ioasaph*, VI 15-16, 49: *ὅτι ἔμπορος ἐγὼ. Ἐκ μακρᾶς ἐλήλυθα χώρας και ὑπάρχει μοι λίθος τίμιος ᾧ παρόμοιος πόποτ' οὐχ εὐρέθη..*

<sup>82</sup>. Attaleiates, *Historia*, I. BEKKER ed., *Michaelis Attalioiae, Historia*, [CSHB] Bonn 1853, 148, 4-11: *Θεοδοσίον πόλιν ... ἀοίκητον γενομένην διὰ τὸ ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ τοῦ Ἄρζη πλησίον οὐση και ἐν καλῷ τῆς θέσεως ὀρωμένη μεταθέσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τὴν οἴκησιν, και μεγάλην ἐγκαταστήσαι χωρόπολιν, και παντοίων ὀνίων, ὄσα Περσική τε και Ἰνδική και ἡ λοιπὴ Ἀσία φέρει, πλήθος οὐκ εὐαρίθμητον φέρουσαν, πρὸ ὀλίγων δὲ χρόνων ἀνοικοδομηθεῖσαν και κατοχυρωθεῖσαν, τὴν Θεοδοσίον πόλιν λέγω. SP. VRYONIS JR., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1979, 86-88.*

trustworthy source, the 10<sup>th</sup> century encyclopaedic and geopolitical manual compiled by emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus(945-959) for the exclusive use of his heir Romanus II, and known under the conventional title *De Administrando Imperio*.<sup>83</sup> In this work Artze is mentioned twice in the same chapter, along with two other towns in the region, as being governed by semi-independent Moslem leaders (the names are given in their Greek rendering as Apolosphueta/Abu al Aswad and Ahamet/Ahmad), who administered them under tribute to the emperor. In fact, Constantine Porphyrogenitus took care to be quite precise on one point: that Artze and its nearby Armenian towns of Chliat and Altzike, “have never been under the dominion of Persia or of the Commander of the faithful”.<sup>84</sup> However, the fact that the rulers were of Moslem faith as well as the proximity to Arab lands made Artze an ideal point for goods, especially luxury Asian ones to enter the Byzantine Empire, brought in both by local and by foreign merchants who resided there, possibly Syrian or Armenian as mentioned by another 11<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine historian, John Scylitzes.<sup>85</sup>

The 10<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenitus who, certainly, had direct access to Eastern luxury items also gave a direct testimony about them. Writing to a friend of his, Theodore the metropolitan bishop of Cyzicos, the emperor spoke in glorious terms of the excellent workmanship of an “Arab cup” that Theodore had sent him as a gift.<sup>86</sup> His description of the cup’s finely finished surface might allude to a metallic surface, e.g. silver or to the, then rare, glass vessels<sup>87</sup> or even to glazed ceramics, either imported from Arab lands or of Byzantine manufacture imitating an Arab style, as was often also the case with

<sup>83</sup>. *De Administrando Imperio*, GY. MORAVCSIK - R.J.H. JENKINS eds., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio*, [Dumbarton Oaks Texts 1] Washington 1967<sup>2</sup>. Commentary by F. DVORNIK, R.J.H. JENKINS, B. LEWIS, GY. MORAVCSIK, D. OBOLENSKY, S. RUNCIMAN, London 1962, 167-168.

<sup>84</sup>. *De Administrando Imperio* 44, 98-109.

<sup>85</sup>. Scylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum* I. THURN, ed., *I. Scylitzae, Synopsis Historiarum* [CFHB 5], Berlin - New York 1973, 451/29-30 : ὡκοῦν γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ ἰθαγενεῖς τε ἔμποροι καὶ Σύρων καὶ Ἀρμενίων καὶ ἄλλων ἔθνῶν πλῆθος οὐκ ὀλίγη. On the importance of Byzantine provincial markets and Artze in particular for international trade see M. GEROLYMATOU, *Markets, Merchants and Trade in Byzantium (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> c.)* (in Greek), Athens 2008, 117-137, esp. 120-121. EADEM, Παρατηρήσεις για το μικρασιατικό εμπόριο τον 11ο αιώνα, (= Remarks on the trade in Asia Minor during the 11<sup>th</sup> century) in: B. BLYSIDOU ed., *The Empire in crisis(?). Byzantium in the Eleventh Century (1025-1081)*, (in Greek), [Institute for Byzantine Research, International Symposia 11], Athens 2003, 191-200 esp. 198ff.

<sup>86</sup>. J. DARROUZÈS ed., *Epistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle*, Paris 1960, (letter 12, 5-6 in the correspondence between Theodore and the emperor) 329: τῆς δὲ ἀραβικῆς κύλικος ἑθαύμασα μὲν τὸ ποικίλον, τὸ λεῖον, τὴν λεπτοργάναν ..καὶ ἐσθίων καὶ κοιταζόμενος καὶ οἰνοχοεῖν

<sup>87</sup>. M. MUNDELL MANGO, Tracking Byzantine silver and copper metalware, 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, in M. MUNDELL MANGO ed., *Byzantine Trade, 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (op. cit.), 221-236, esp. 235-236. H. SARANTI, Τα βυζαντινά επιτραπέζια σκεύη, (= Byzantine table utensils) in: TH. KORRES, P. KATSONI, I. LEONTIADES, A. GKOUTZIOUKOSTAS eds., *Philotimia. Studies in Honour of Alkmene Stavridou-Zafraka* (in Greek), Thessalonica 2011, 525-541, esp. 531-532.

silk products<sup>88</sup>. It might also hint to a decorative use of Arabic letters, a kind of pseudo-Arabic inscription.<sup>89</sup> It is interesting, however that a luxury product easily recognized and codified by the “brand name” “Arab”, was acknowledged as a gift worthy of an emperor. Unfortunately, neither the emperor nor his correspondent mentioned how such a product could be obtained in a Byzantine town and sent by the bishop as a gift to the emperor.<sup>90</sup> The whole event, however, indicates the possibility of acquiring a particularly fine example of Arab manufacture in the Byzantine Empire and that notwithstanding the Arab-Byzantine conflicts of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Also a Byzantine imitation would point to the existence of an Arab original that Byzantines were familiar with.

Eastern luxury products, such as spices, gems, precious metals, silks or exotic animals, never stopped coming into the Empire, even though their quantities diminished. On the contrary, by the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century their Eastern provenance and designs was quite established and probably had even become fashionable. Emperor Theophilos (829-841) in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, had, on the return of his envoy John the Grammarian from Baghdad, a palace built according to Arab design – the Bryas Palace in Constantinople- which differed from similar Arab ones only by the fact that it also contained a Christian church and chapels, as per Byzantine religion, habits and esthetic sensitivities.<sup>91</sup> At the same time Constantinopolitan workshops continued to produce luxury items out of ivory, such as reliquaries, triptychs, portable icons or jewel boxes continuing the Alexandrian tradition of late antiquity.<sup>92</sup> This also meant that a constant supply of ivory kept coming into the Byzantine capital.

<sup>88</sup>. D. JACOBY, Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction. Byzantium, the Muslim World and the Christian West, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004), 197-240, esp. 220-222. J. HENDERSON, Tradition and experiment in first millennium AD glass production: the emergence of early Islamic glass technology in late antiquity, *Accounts of Chemical Research* 35.8 (2002), 594-202.

<sup>89</sup>. We can see such cups in Byzantine frescoes in Asia Minor, in particular on the representation of the Last Supper at the church of Karanlik Kilisse of Göreme, in Cappadocia: see for instance M. RESTLE, *Die byzantinische Wandmalerei in Kleinasien* III, Recklinghausen 1967, fig. 235.

<sup>90</sup>. On the empire's trade see A. LAIOU, Exchange and Trade, Seventh –Twelfth Centuries in: A. LAIOU ET AL, *The Economic History of Byzantium. From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, [Dumbarton Oaks Studies 39], Washington 2002, vol. II, 697-770.

<sup>91</sup>. *Theophanes Continuatus*, I. BEKKER ed., *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius monachus*, [CSHB], Bonn 1838, 98-99: ὁς καὶ πρὸς τὸν Θεόφιλον ἄρτι ἐξεληλυθὼς, καὶ τὰ τῆς Συρίας πρὸς αὐτὸν διεξερχόμενος, ἐπεισε τὰ τοῦ Βρυῖα ἀνάκτορα πρὸς τὴν τῶν Σαρακηνῶν κατασκευασθῆναι ὁμοίωσιν, ἐν τε σήμασι καὶ ποικιλίᾳ μηδὲν ἐκείνων τὸ σύνολον παραλλάττοντα...

<sup>92</sup>. A. CHRISTOPHILOPOULOU, *Byzantine History* B2 (867-1081), (in Greek), Thessalonica 1997<sup>2</sup>, 455. A particularly fine example of these ivories is the chiseled ivory jewel box with profane representations of mimes and games, currently in display at the Bargello Museum in Florence. On the ivories of Alexandria see E. RODZIEWICZ, Ivory, bone, glass and other production at Alexandria, 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries, in: M. MUNDELL MANGO ed., *Byzantine Trade, 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (op. cit., n. 10) 83-95.

More to the point there are mentions of Byzantine envoys who during Constantine Porphyrogenitus's reign, went on a mission in Moslem lands, visited the tomb of Thomas the Apostle in Edessa (Urfa) and presented it with candles on behalf of the emperor. This kind of cultural and religious tourism, gave them the opportunity to trade in gems and pearls<sup>93</sup> for which Arab markets were famous.

Thus India and Egypt constituted an integral part of the "luxurious and exotic East" image in Byzantine mentality. The citation concerning empress Zoë mentioned in the beginning of the paper, is not a unique occurrence. The eleventh century AD had seen a strengthening of relations between the Byzantine Empire and the Arab Moslem world, especially Fatimid Egypt. Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) maintained a frequent correspondence with the Fatimid Caliph Al Mustansir, with which Psellos himself was entrusted.<sup>94</sup>

Psellos, in one of his Letters to Patriarch Keroularius, made reference to Egypt in conjunction with the "fragrance/spice bearer", ἡ ἀρωματοφόρος without naming the land of Arabia which was the "spice bearer".<sup>95</sup> However this name was a traditional one for "Felix Arabia".<sup>96</sup> In fact, Arabia was, by the time of Psellos, so well known as spice producer and trader that the adjective without the name of the land was sufficient to identify it. However, by the middle Byzantine times, (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries) the Byzantines did not trade directly with Felix Arabia, the Southern part of the Arabian Peninsula. By the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Al Fustat south of Cairo, was already a populous city that functioned as the commercial centre for Eastern products,<sup>97</sup> among them perfumes, spices, drugs and jewels to reach the empire and especially the Byzantine capital. This letter of Michael Psellos, referring to Egypt in conjunction with the land/spice bearer, was most probably written in 1059 AD.<sup>98</sup> It was a time when Psellos as a statesman was numbered among patriarch Keroularius's adversaries and used a *hyperbole* in order to underline that his work concerning the patriarch would be known everywhere East and West. In order to do

<sup>93</sup>. *Theophanes Continuatus*, 455, 23: ἐμπορευσόμενοι λίθων τιμίων και μαργαριτῶν

<sup>94</sup>. Psellos, *Chronographia*, t. II, 64. N. KOUTRAKOU, The Arabs through Byzantine eyes (11th-12th centuries) A change in perception, in: J. P. MONFERRER-SALA, V. CHRISTIDES, TH. PAPADOPOULOS, *East and West. Essays on Byzantine and Arab Worlds in the Middle Ages*, eds, Piscataway, N.J., 2009, 27-54, esp. 37. On the 11<sup>th</sup> –century intensification of trade between Byzantium and Fatimid Egypt and the opportunities it offered to Italian merchants see D. JACOBY, Venetian commercial expansion in eastern Mediterranean, 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, in: M M. MUNDELL MANGO ed., *Byzantine Trade, 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (op. cit., n. 10) 371-391 and esp. 386ff.

<sup>95</sup>. Psellos, *Letter to Kerularius*, U. CRISCUOLO, ed., *Michele Psello, Epistola a Michele Cerulario*, Naples 1973, 31: εἶσται μὲν καὶ ἡ Αἴγυπτος, γινώσεται δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀρωματοφόρος

<sup>96</sup>. E. KOUNTOURA, Arabia, Egypt and Syria in Byzantine hagiographical Works during the Late Byzantine and Ayyubid Period, in this Volume.

<sup>97</sup>. *The Cambridge Medieval History*, 2008, III, 68-69.

<sup>98</sup>. Psellos, *Letter to Kerularius*, 14-15. On Psellos's ambivalent portrayal of Keroularius see J. LJUBARSKIJ, "How a Byzantine text should be read" in: E. JEFFREYS ed., *Rhetoric in Byzantium. Papers from the thirty fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, (Exeter College, Oxford 2001), Aldershot 2003, 117-125, esp. 121.



so, Psellos used a rhetorical antithesis juxtaposing “Egypt and the fragrance/spice bearer” with the “Western Ocean”.<sup>99</sup> It was a well known medieval literary imagery but at the same time it was an image that linked Egypt and the spice bearer (land) by way of antithesis to the Western Ocean, to a –non mentioned *expressis verbis* - Eastern Ocean and the Oceanic trade routes towards the Mediterranean. Hence Psellos offers us an indirect confirmation of the luxury trade routes being in Arab hands.

Psellos and several other middle Byzantine writers often used the image of India and Egypt metaphorically for the power and opulence of the East. For instance, in one of his oratory works, a “Laudatory Speech” to emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, Psellos used rhetorical exaggeration to present the Egyptian, Ethiopian, Indian, and other kingdoms as giving precedence to the Empire under the reign of that Byzantine emperor.<sup>100</sup> As proof of that fact he explicitly referred to exotic animals out of those lands, sent as gifts to the Constantine IX. The text of the Psellos is quite remarkable in that it lists luxury products that were customary exchanged as diplomatic gifts<sup>101</sup> between Byzantine and Moslem courts. It mentions silk threads and golden tunics as well as brilliant gems, gifts of the past that had been surpassed by gifts in live exotic beasts sent to his emperor. His description of elephants with their own drivers, especially on how an elephant could use his trunk as a hand, or of giraffes<sup>102</sup> as “composite” animals reflects personal experience. It recalls the exotic animals that were sent to and paraded through Constantinople in

<sup>99</sup>. Psellos, *Letter to Kerularius*, 31: εἴσεται μὲν καὶ ἡ Αἴγυπτος, γινώσεται δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀρωματοφόρος καὶ ὁ πρὸς ἐσπέραν ὠκεανός, ἐφ’ ἃ δὴ μέρη τὸ ἐμὸν μεταβήσεται σύγγραμμα.

<sup>100</sup>. G. DENNIS ed., *Michaelis Pselli, Orationes Panegyricae* Stuttgart –Leipzig 1994, Oratio 1, 257-266, 13: κἄν γὰρ τὴν Αἰγυπτίον εἶπη τις, κἄν τὴν Αἰθιοπίαν, κἄν τὴν Ἰνδῶν, κἄν Σκύθας, κἄν Σαυρομάτας, κἄν Ὑπερβορέους αὐτούς, οἷς κατὰ κορυφὴν ὁ τῆς σφαιρας πόλος ἐφέστηκε, μέρος εἰσὶ τῆς ὑπὸ σοῦ ἰθυνομένης ἀρχῆς. Ὅθεν ἄλλος ἄλλοθεν ἦκει δωροφορῶν, οὐχ ὡς πάλαι τὰ ἐκ Σηρῶν νήματα, οὐδὲ τὸν τυραννηθέντα εἰς ἐσθῆτα χρυσόν, οὐδὲ τὰς χλοαζούσας τῶν λίθων καὶ ἠρινὴν ἀποστιλβούσας χροιάν, ἀλλὰ ζῶων φύσεις οἷς ἐκεῖνοι τὸ πλεον εἶχον ἡμῶν, καὶ οὐδὲ τῶν ἰχνῶν παραχωρεῖν τοῖς πρὸ σοῦ βασιλεῦσιν ἠνέσχοντο. On the use of rhetorical devices by Psellos see J. LJUBARSKIJ, *The personality and works of Michael Psellos* (op. cit., n. 1), 227-253.

<sup>101</sup>. A. CUTLER, *Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab and related Economies*, *DOP* 55 (2001), 247-278; N. KOUTRAKOU, *Highlights in Arab-Byzantine Cultural Relations (IXth-XIth Centuries). An Approach through Diplomacy in:* Y. YOUSEF AL-HIJJI and V. CHRISTIDES eds., *Cultural Relations between Byzantium and the Arabs*, Athens 2007, 85-102.

<sup>102</sup>. *Michaelis Pselli, Orationes Panegyricae*, Oratio 1, 267-289, 13-14. Καὶ νῦν ὅταν θεάσσομαι τὸν ἐλέφαντα τὸν μετὰ τῶν μύθων μοι πάλαι ἀπιστούμενον διὰ μέσου θεάτρον ὑφ’ ἠγιόχου ἀγόμενον, σιδηροῦν καὶ ἄτρωτον τὴν δοράν, τὸ μέγεθος ὑψηλόν, τὸ εἶδος ἀλλόκοτον, ... ὅσα χειρὶ τῆ ρινὶ χρώμενον ... ὑποκλῶντα ταύτην καὶ κάπτοντα, ἐνθυμοῦμαι τοῦ Ἰνδοῦ τὴν ἐπὶ τούτῳ ὀφρῶν, ... δηλὸς δὲ εἰμι τῆ θέα ἐνθυοσιῶν καὶ τῆ πατριδὶ συγκαίρων ὅτι τοῖς τοιοῦτοις τετίμηται. Ὅταν δὲ τὴν ἐν τῇ παρδάλει θεάσσομαι κάμηλον ἢ τὴν ἐν τῇ καμήλῳ ἔλαφον, τὸ ἀπλοῦν ζῶον καὶ σύνθετον, ὑψηλὰ βιβῶσαν, ὥσπερ ἀπὸ μηχανῆς τὸν τράχηλον ὑποῦσαν καὶ αὐθις σπαστέλουσαν ... ἐκπλήττομαι ὅπως οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι καὶ Αἰθίοπες ... εἰς τὴν Ῥωμαίων βαδίζον ἰδεῖν ὑπέμειναν γῆν.

1054 as a gift from the Fatimid Caliph of Egypt in order to thank the emperor for the grain sent by Byzantium as a kind of emergency assistance to help avert a famine during a drought year in Egypt.

It must be pointed out however, that this kind of scene, with the parade of exotic animals when such gifts were received from foreign leaders, or as spoils of war, was something of a tradition for medieval Byzantium. The inhabitants of Constantinople were avid spectacle-lovers and they constituted an appreciative audience for exotic parades and took pride in them, a fact well known to the emperor who presented his subjects with spectacles featuring elephants and giraffes sent to him.<sup>103</sup> In another instance, in a “Speech on the miracles of Archangel Michael”, Psellos compared several famous landmarks of natural or manmade beauty which were the pride of the respective countries. Among them he cited elephants as beasts of wonder that were the pride of the land of Indians, in the same way that the city of Ekbatana was the pride of ancient Persia and the river Nile the pride of Egypt.<sup>104</sup> It was again a rhetorical exaggeration. Nevertheless it confirmed the perception of such Eastern animals as of something exotic and extraordinary that should be viewed with a sentiment of pride and from afar.

In the above cited case of the “Laudatory Speech” by Psellos, the reference to the actual event is, due to the nature of the text, full of artifices of rhetoric. Despite that, the link for the Byzantine eye, of the exotic animals to Egypt and “India” in a kind of eastern luxury nexus is quite apparent. Obviously, the outlandish aspect of these animals and their drivers in oriental costume and headdresses, were not lost on the population of Constantinople and their perception of “Exotic East”, was thus reinforced by actual events.

IV. Furthermore, the tradition of Eastern luxury products from India to Egypt through the trade roads which is reflected in middle Byzantine literature gave rise to verbal expressions that became part and parcel of the Greek language. Eastern luxury goods occur frequently in Rhetoric. Metaphors and comparisons styling the saintly life of a pious person as a “house of spices, conveying a health giving fragrance” or a life of virtuous deeds as a “robe not one spun of silken thread but one woven from strands of divine approval”<sup>105</sup> were frequent and allude to a culture in which these kind of products were much appreciated. Accordingly, the writer of the above lines, Ignatios the Deacon in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, employed them in a kind of elaborate metaphor that nevertheless was based on reality. In one of his letters addressed to a monk named Athanasios, he referred to a “robe of silken

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<sup>103</sup>. Attaleiates, *Historia*, [CSHB] 48, 12 - 50, 11.

<sup>104</sup>. E. FISHER, *Michaelis Pselli, Orationes Hagiographicae*, Stuttgart – Leipzig 1994, 5 (in Archangelum Michaellem), 625: *Διὰ ταῦτα οὐκ ἄλλαι μὲν τῶν πόλεων ἑτέροις κοσμοῦνται κάλλεσι τε καὶ θαύμασι, καὶ ἡ μὲν τῶν Ἰνδῶν δείκνυσι τὸν ἐλέφαντα, ἡ δὲ Περσῶν τὰ Ἐκβάτανα, καὶ τὸν Νεῖλον ἢ Αἴγυπτος*

<sup>105</sup>. C. MANGO ed. (in collaboration with St. EFTHYMIADIS), *The Correspondence of Ignatios the Deacon*, [CFHB 39], Washington 1997, letter 31, 88-89.

thread ...” “embroidered with variegated ornaments of virtuous behaviour”, and in fact alluded to a silken garment with floral decorations.

Psellos’s perception of such products although solidly anchored in reality, was also mixed with references and preconceived ideas about them, which confused contemporary reality in his writings. His letters and oratory works are full of metaphorical usages of such expressions. He often mentioned almost in the same breath India / East and Ethiopia as metaphors for a king’s wealthy rewards.<sup>106</sup> In several of his minor oratory works he praised their products such as exotic extracts used in medicine<sup>107</sup> and mentioned exotic beasts, usually elephants<sup>108</sup> as metaphors, in order to stress a point.

This constant verbal use of expressions linking India and Egypt with eastern luxury products accentuated the traditional common perception of East as origin of luxury, power and wealth. Thus, Psellos’s use of the rhetorical *hyperbole* when referring to Egyptians, Ethiopians, Indians and other nations bearing luxury goods as gifts in order to magnify the reign of the current Byzantine emperor (Constantine IX) had a literary tradition to draw upon that was easily recognized.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, in the previous century, the chronicle of *Theophanes Continuatus* cited Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Assyrians, Armenians, and others, as those who, as did the neighboring Arabs, supported the usurpation of Thomas the Slavonian in the early ninth century. The reference might have been something more than a literary exaggeration. The chronicle mentioned “those inhabiting the interior regions of Egypt, India...etc”,<sup>110</sup> but it gave no exact geographical position. In fact it intended to discredit Thomas by pointing out that he was a traitor of the empire and that his rebellion was supported by enemies and foreigners. The perception, however, remained that Thomas enjoyed considerable support from the East outside the frontiers, and therefore he lost because he was a renegade and a traitor. The chronicler made thus use of a literary commonplace along with the relevant perception of the East for his own contemporary political purposes, and in turn he reinforced that perception. In the same way, when Psellos made reference to Eastern luxury products, spices, fragrances and exotic beasts in his works, he had both literary tradition and 11<sup>th</sup> century realities to draw upon. In fact, till the 11<sup>th</sup>

<sup>106</sup>. A. LITTLEWOOD ed., *Michaelis Pselli, Oratoria Minora*, Teubner, Leipzig, 1985, Oratio 11, 75. On the use of metaphors by Psellos see E. MCCARTNEY, *The Use of Metaphor in Psellos’ Chronographia*, in: J. BURKE ed., *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott*, Melbourne 2006, 84-91.

<sup>107</sup>. *Michaelis Pselli, Oratoria Minora*, Oratio 29, 10 οὕτω γάρ τοι καὶ πόλιον καὶ τὸ ἐξ Ἰνδίας φάρμακον, ἢ τὰλλα τῶν χυμῶν τε καὶ τῶν δακρῶν ἃ δι᾽ ἐξάντη πέφυκε τοῖς νοσήμασι

<sup>108</sup>. *Michaelis Pselli, Oratoria Minora*, Oratio 25, 153: τοὺς δ’ ἐλέφαντας οἱ Αἰθίοπες οὐκ ἀχθοφοροῦσι πρὸ τῶν ἀγόνων

<sup>109</sup>. *Michaelis Pselli, Orationes Panegyricae*, Oratio 1, 257-263.

<sup>110</sup>. *Theophanes Continuatus*, [CSHB] 55, 4-7: οὐ γὰρ Αἰθιοπῶν μόνον τούτων διὰ τῶν ἡμῶν γειτονοῦντων καὶ ὁμορῶντων ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν ἐνδότερον οἰκούντων, Αἰγυπτίων Ἰνδῶν Περσῶν Ἀσσυρίων Ἀρμενίων Χάλδων Ἰβήρων Ζηχῶν Καβείρων καὶ πάντων τῶν διὰ Μάνεντος συστοιχοῦντων δόγμασι καὶ θεσπίσμασι

century reality might have made such products rarer than in antiquity<sup>111</sup> when the perception originated.<sup>112</sup> But, even rare sightings of exotic animals or use of cosmetic fragrances and costly spices out of Egypt, Arabia and India in middle Byzantine times reinforced what was known about them from previous centuries. At the same time this ancient image served well for propaganda purposes, as in the example of the gifts from al Mustansir to Constantine IX, and in its turn reinforced links of friendship.

In conclusion, the perception of an Oceanic route for luxury products out of India towards Byzantium, especially through southern Arabia and the upper Nile and Egypt, had given rise to a wider concept of an Eastern luxury nexus which continued to exist during the Middle Byzantine centuries. It remained alive through literary texts such as chronicles, romances, hagiographical works, and especially dictionaries and anthologies going back to the source of this kind of knowledge, i.e. the ancient Greek geographers whose works were known and studied by Byzantines scholars and used in teaching. This perception was perpetuated by past names and references used while alluding to contemporary events (thus elaborating a quasi identification of ancient names and peoples with contemporary Byzantine realities as in the case of the chronicler referring to Thomas the Slavonian's Arab and other followers by mentioning ancient empires as cited above) as well as by oriental products and exotic animals that found their way into the Empire, even if in lesser quantities than during the Late Antiquity. This perception matched reality again in the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century through the growth of trade between the Byzantine Empire and Moslem Lands, especially Fatimid Egypt. The literary reminiscences found a new validation as Eastern luxury products reached once more the Byzantine capital by the ancient spice road towards Al Fustat. This served as a reconfirmation (in another trade reality, the centre of which had by then moved more to the East),<sup>113</sup> of the linkage between India, spice bearer Arabia and Egypt in a kind of Eastern luxury nexus in the Byzantine mentality.

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<sup>111</sup>. A. LAIOU, Exchange and Trade, Seventh –Twelfth Centuries in: A. LAIOU ET AL, The Economic History of Byzantium. From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century, [Dumbarton Oaks Studies 39], Washington 2002, vol. II, 697-770, esp. 723.

<sup>112</sup>. P. FAURE, *Parfums et Aromates de l' Antiquité*, Paris, 1987, Greek transl. by G. SPANOS, *Μύρα και αρώματα της Αρχαιότητας*, Athens 2004, 332ff.

<sup>113</sup>. S. GORDON, *When Asia was the world*, Italian translation by L. Giaccone, *Quando l'Asia era il mondo, Storie di mercanti, studiosi, monaci e guerrieri, tra il 500 e il 1500*, Torino 2009, 27ff. TH. S. NOOMAN, The Impact of Islamic Trade upon Urbanization in the Rus' Lands: The tenth and early eleventh Centuries, in : M. KAZANSKI, A. NERCESSIAN and C. ZUCKERMAN, *Les centres proto-urbains russes entre Scandinavie, Byzance et Orient* [Réalités Byzantines 7], Paris 2000, 395-408.

# Arabia, Egypt and Syria in Byzantine Hagiographical Works during the Late Byzantine and Ayyūbid Period

ELEONORA KOUNTOURA GALAKI

My paper focuses on the Late Byzantine period, but a large amount of evidence used stems from earlier period, since Late Byzantine writers often combined the perceptions of the past with contemporary situations.

Let us begin our analysis with Nikephoros Gregoras (1290-1359), a polymath and astronomer of the 14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>1</sup> who among other works wrote a rhetorical speech, a hagiographical text, in honour of the first wife of the much earlier byzantine emperor Leo VI, the empress Theophano. She lived around 886-912<sup>2</sup> and shortly after she was canonized. Nikephoros Gregoras praises her valuable virtues, concentrating on her simple and prudent way of living. He declares that the empress had no particular interest in precious stones, perfumes or luxury clothes that normally fit an empress. Whether these words of Gregoras represent the truth, that is, whether the empress Theophano, who herself originated from the high aristocracy of Constantinople,<sup>3</sup> actually lived on modest means, which seems to me rather unlikely,<sup>4</sup> is outside the scope of our paper. What is relevant and of particular interest is that the high style writer uses the expression “Felix Arabia” in order to specify all the elements of luxurious living, namely perfumes, by saying verbatim: “her dresses and her curled hair did not emit the odour of entire Felix Arabia”.<sup>5</sup> Thus, he uses the term “Felix Arabia”, in order to define the distinctive, we may

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<sup>1</sup>. J. L. VAN DIETEN, *Nikephoros Gregoras. Rhomäische Geschichte* [Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur 4], Bd. I., Stuttgart 1973, 49-52. C. N. CONSTANTINIDES, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries (1294-ca. 1310)*, Nicosia 1982, 72-78. S. MERGIALI, *L'enseignement et les lettrés pendant l'époque des Paleologues (1261-1453)*, Thessaloniki 1996, 73-83. P. MAGDALINO, *L'Orthodoxie des astrologues: la science entre le dogme et la divination à Byzance (VIIe-XIVe siècle)* [Réalités byzantines 12], Paris 2006, 154.

<sup>2</sup>. On the long story concerning the Tetragamy of Leo VI, see *ODB*, vol. 3, s.v. Tetragamy of Leo VI, (A. KAZHDAN). For the empress Theophano, see F. WINKELMANN – R.-J. LILIE, et. al., *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit. Erste Abteilung (641-867)*, 4. Bd., Platon (# 6266) - Theophylaktos (# 8345), Berlin - New York 2001, # 8165.

<sup>3</sup>. She came from the aristocratic lineage of the Martinakios family: Skylitzes (ed. J. THURN, *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum* [CFHB 5], Berlin 1973), 172.92. See B. FLUSIN – J.-CL. CHEYNET, *Empereurs de Constantinople. Jean Skylitzès; texte traduit et annoté* [Réalités byzantines 8], Paris 2003, 66 n. 75.

<sup>4</sup>. Some sources highlight this way of life as a counterpart of her husband's unfaithfulness: *Life of Euthymius* (BHG 651, ed. P. KARLIN-HAYTER, *Vita Euthymii patriarchae Constantinopolitani* [Bibliothèque de Byzantion 3], Bruxelles 1970), 21, 166-168.

<sup>5</sup>. Gregoras, *Life of Theophano* (BHG 1795, ed. E. KURTZ, *Zwei griechische Texte über die Hl. Theophano, die Gemahlin Kaisers Leo VI*, *Zapiski Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk* 3.2, 1898, 25-45), here 41: *τουτωνι των μεόντων ολοσχερως αντεχεσθαι ... και μύροις χρίεσθαι και ὄλην Αραβίαν εὐδαίμονα τῶν ἱματίων και τῶν βοστρήχων αὐτῶν ἀποπνέειν*.

guess pleasant, scent that Theophano's dresses and hair emitted. This aforementioned colorful antonomasia certainly reflects a legendary image for Felix Arabia, which is also to be found somewhat earlier, in the rhetorical description of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, written by Nicolaos Messarites at some time between 1198 and 1203.<sup>6</sup> The latter writer, a pioneer in introducing new aesthetic principles in the 12<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>7</sup> vividly portrays the surroundings of the Church and uses the expression Felix Arabia in order to faithfully and successfully convey the idyllic atmosphere of the garden by stating that "it is more lovely than the garden of Laertis, - a citation from the *Odyssey* (XXIV, 336 ff)-, than the much-praised Felix Arabia". Felix Arabia for the Byzantines of this era seems to represent the conception of what is perfect for the senses, what evokes pleasure and finally what is synonymous with pleasing the senses. This favorable aspect of Felix Arabia is quite similar to the Byzantine view of earlier times, therefore we will follow the references to Felix Arabia as a "main thread" running throughout this study on the use of the names of the Arab lands by the Byzantine hagiographers of the later period.

By "Felix Arabia" the writer of the *Martyrion of Saint Arethas* in the 6<sup>th</sup> century as well as the compiler of the *Life of Saint Gregentios* define the area of Omiriton, which is identified with the ancient South Arabian state, the region of nowadays Yemen.<sup>8</sup> Felix Arabia was a wealthy<sup>9</sup> region and a famous commercial centre for silk and other luxury goods,<sup>10</sup> known since antiquity, as it appears for instance in the tragedy "Bacchae" of Euripides.<sup>11</sup> Much later Strabo, the most

<sup>6</sup> G. DOWNEY, Nikolaos Mesarites: Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* N.S. 47 (1957): 897-918; *καὶ σύμπαν ἡδύσομον ... ὑπὲρ τὴν θρυλλουμένην Ἀραβίαν εὐδαίμονα*. See A. LITTLEWOOD, Gardens of the Palaces, in: *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. MAGUIRE, Washington 1997, 13-37.

<sup>7</sup> A. KAZHDAN – S. FRANKLIN, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Cambridge U. P. 1984, 190-191, 236-242. See also MAGDALINO, *Astrologues*, 144-146.

<sup>8</sup> *Martyrion of Arethas* (ed. M. DETORAKI, *Le martyre de Saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons (BHG 166), édition critique, étude et annotation*; traduction par J. BEAUCAMP [Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, Monographies 27] Paris 2007), 185. See D. G. LETSIOS, *Βυζάντιο και Ερυθρά θάλασσα: σχέσεις με τη Νοβία, Αιθιοπία και Νότια Αραβία ως την Αραβική κατάκτηση*, Athens 1988, 64. A. BERGER, *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: introduction, critical edition and translation*; with a contribution by Gianfranco Fiaccadori [Millenium Studies 7], Berlin - New York 2006, 48, 812 note 5.

<sup>9</sup> A. WALMSLEY, Byzantine Palestine and Arabia: Urban Prosperity in Late Antiquity, in: *Towns in Transition Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds N. CHRISTIE – S. T. LOSEBY, Suffolk 1998, 126-158.

<sup>10</sup> I. SHAHID, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. II, part 2: *Economic, Social, and Cultural History*, Washington 2009, 10-32.

<sup>11</sup> The content of the passage refers to the ancient Greek god Bacchus' choice to leave his native country, i. e. the rich lands of Asia, and to establish his own ritual at Thebes in Greece. Euripides, *Bacchae* (ed. G. MURRAY, *Euripidis Fabulae, Bacchae*, vol. III, Oxford 1909,

famous geographer of the late antiquity, speaks about the fertility of the area<sup>12</sup> and its close connection with perfumes.<sup>13</sup> These particular elements are also encountered in the works of Diodorus Siceliota<sup>14</sup> and Claudius Ptolemaios.<sup>15</sup> In the Early Byzantine period Felix Arabia is mentioned by a number of writers, such as Philostorgios,<sup>16</sup> Stephanos Byzantios<sup>17</sup> and the Father of the Orthodox Church John Chrysostomos.<sup>18</sup> The latter writer define it under the expression “perfume-bearing Arabia” (*ἀρωματοφόρος Ἀραβία*).

The importance of this area during antiquity was not only due to the luxurious material prosperity, but also due to the subterranean wealth of Arabia in gold and silver, as it is presented in a recent publication<sup>19</sup>.

It is evident that the references to Felix Arabia, clearly with a positive approach are quite frequently found in sources from antiquity and the Early Byzantine period. However, a point that deserves particular emphasis is that Felix Arabia is only sporadically and briefly touched upon by the Middle Byzantine sources. For instance, in the chronicle of Theophanes, a 9<sup>th</sup> century historical source, the basic one for the events of the 8<sup>th</sup> and early 9<sup>th</sup> century, the term Felix

repr. 1969), ll. 13-23: λιπὼν δὲ Λυδῶν τοὺς πολυχρῆσους γύαας/Φρυγῶν τε, Περσῶν ἡλιοβλήτους πλάκας/ Βάκτρια τε τείχη τήν τε δύσχιμον χθόνα/ Μήδων ἐπελθὼν Ἀραβίαν τ' εὐδαίμονα/ Ἀσίαν τε πᾶσαν, ἢ παρ' ἄλμυρὰν ἄλα/ κείται μγάσιν Ἑλλησι βαρβάρους θ' ὁμοῦ/ ... /ἐς τήνδε πρῶτον ἦλθον Ἑλλήνων πόλιν./... Θήβας.

<sup>12</sup>. Strabo (ed. G. AUJAC – FR. LASSERRE, *Strabon Géographie* [Les Belles Lettres], Paris 1969): I, 2, 32: Ἀραβία ... ἢ μὲν εὐδαίμων κέκληται μόνη τῶν ἀπασῶν, τήν δέ, εἰ καὶ μὴ ὀνομαστὶ καλοῦσιν οὕτως, ὑπολαμβάνουσι γε καὶ ἱστοροῦσιν ὡς εὐδαιμονεστάτην.

<sup>13</sup>. Strabo, I, 2, 32: ὀλίγη δ' ἢ ἀρωματοφόρος, δι' ἣν καὶ τοῦτο τοῦνομα εὔρετο ἡ χώρα διὰ τὸ καὶ τὸν φόρτον εἶναι τὸν τοιοῦτον ἐν τοῖς παρ' ἡμῖν σπάνιον καὶ τίμιον. νυνὶ μὲν οὖν εὐποροῦσι καὶ πλουτοῦσι διὰ τὸ καὶ τὴν ἐμπορίαν εἶναι πυκνὴν καὶ δαμιλῆ. Cf. V. CHRISTIDES, *The Image of Pre-Islamic Arabs in the Byzantine Sources*, Princeton 1970, 155-174.

<sup>14</sup>. Diodorus (ed. C. H. OLDATHER, *Diodorus of Sicily*, London-Cambridge, Mass. 1967), vol. II, 49.1-3: διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ φουμένων καρπῶν τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν εὐδαίμονα Ἀραβίαν προσαγορευθῆναι. ... καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ὕλην τὴν ἀρωματίζουσαν πολλὴν φέρει καὶ καθόλου παντοδαπὰς φύλλων εὐωδίας, καὶ τῶν ἀποσταζόντων δακρῶν ὁσμαῖς ποικίλαις διείληπται.

<sup>15</sup>. Claudius Ptolemaios (ed. A. STÜCKELBERGER – G. GRASSHOFF et al., *Klaudios Ptolemaios Handbuch der Geographie: griechisch-deutsch*, Bd. 1.-2., Basel 2006), I, 17.6.

<sup>16</sup>. Philostorgios (ed. J. BIDEZ, *Philostorgius Kirchengeschichte: mit dem Leben des Lucian von Antiochien und den Fragmenten eines arianischen Historiographen*, bearbeitete Auflage von F. WINKELMANN, Berlin 1981), 32.13. Cf. C. MORRISON – J.-P. SODINI, *The Sixth Century Economy*, in: *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth century*, ed. A. E. LAIOU et al., vol. I, Washington, D.C. 2002, 210-211.

<sup>17</sup>. Stephanos Byzantios (ed. M. BILLERBECK – J. F. GAERTNER – B. WYSS – C. ZUBLER, *Stephani Byzantii Ethnica*, vol. I: A-Γ [CFHB 43/1], Berlin 2006), 367, p. 232.

<sup>18</sup>. Joannes Chrysostomos, *Epistulam ad Timotheum*, PG 62, 596.38: Ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀρωματοφόρῳ Ἀραβία καὶ Ἰνδία, ἐνθα εἰσὶν οἱ λίθοι, πολλὰ τοιαῦτα ἔστιν εὐρεῖν.

<sup>19</sup>. G. W. HECK, *The Precious Meals of Western Arabia and their Role in Forging the Economic Dynamic of the Early Islamic State*, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, Riyadh 2003. SHAHID, *Byzantium and the Arabs*, vol. II/2, 47ff.

Arabia occurs only once and not in relation with the Arabs.<sup>20</sup> At a later time Constantine Porphyrogenitos (913-959) in the chapter 25 of his well-known *De administrando Imperio*, a work on contemporary nations, declares that Felix Arabia belonged to the realm of the Abbasids.<sup>21</sup> Correspondingly, Ioannes Skylitzes, an 11<sup>th</sup> century byzantine historian, says that the nations settled in the so-called Felix practice the same faith as the Saracens.<sup>22</sup> The same historian mentions once more Felix Arabia when he narrates in a rather imaginary way sultan Kultumus's flight there during the Arab civil war of 1053.<sup>23</sup> Thus, we may say that the writers of the Middle Byzantine period in absolute contrast to the sources of earlier times offer rather poor and scanty information about Felix Arabia.

As one would expect, these quite scattered mentions coincide with the period of the rise of Islam and it may well be connected with the unfavourable perception of the Arabs in the Byzantine sources, especially in the hagiographical texts. The hagiographers of that time portray the Arabs with the most disrespectful characteristics, thus depicting the intensive military conflicts in which Arabs and Byzantines were involved since the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. It is sufficient to give some representative examples to show that the hagiographers describe the Arabs with the most violent phrases, such as the "most tricky persons"<sup>24</sup> "godless"<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup>. Theophanes (ed. C. DE BOOR, *Theophanis Chronographia*, vol. I, Leipzig 1883, repr. New York 1980), 416: "Oualid ordered that Peter, the most holy metropolitan of Damascus should have his tongue cut off ... and exiled him to Arabia Felix", translation by C. MANGO- R. SCOTT, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813*, Oxford 1997, 577. See. BERGER, *Life of Saint Gregentios*, 812 n. 5.

<sup>21</sup>. *Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio* (ed. GY. MORAVCSIK – R. J. H. JENKINS [CFHB 1], Washington 1967 §25.63-66, 82-83. See F. DVORNIK – R. J. H. JENKINS – B. LEWIS – GY. MORAVCSIK – D. OBOLENSKY – S. RUNCIMAN, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus De Administrando Imperio*, vol. II, *Commentary*, London 1962, 81-82. The previous work *Lexicon of Suda* (ed. A. ADLER, *Suidae Lexicon*, Leipzig 1928-1935, I/3, 432.3) contains a reference to Felix Arabia when mentioning the race of Navataioi: *Ναβάτος φασιν Ἀ<ραβίας εὐδαίμ>ονος γενόμενος. ἐκ τοιοῦτου τινος Ναβαταῖοι ἔθνος τῆς εὐδαίμονος Ἀ<ραβίας> χώρα Ναβατηνῆ*. This passage is included only in a 13<sup>th</sup> century manuscript *Marcianus 448*. Cf. CHRISTIDES, *The Image*, 173.

<sup>22</sup>. Skylitzes, 287.72-75: *οἱ ἀπανταχοῦ γῆς ὄντες Σαρακηνοὶ καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἔθνη τὰ τὴν ὁμοίαν αὐτοῖς σέβοντα θρησκείαν, Αἰγύπτιοι, Πέρσαι, Ἀραβεῖς, Ἐλαμίται, καὶ οἱ τὴν Εὐδαίμονα λεγομένην οἰκοῦντες*. Cf. V. CHRISTIDES, *The Names "Arabes" etc and their False Byzantine Etymologies*, *BZ* 65 (1972), 329-333.

<sup>23</sup>. W. FELIX, *Byzanz und die islamische Welt im früheren 11. Jahrhundert: Geschichte der politischen Beziehungen von 1001 bis 1055* [Byzantina Vindobonensia 14], Wien 1981, 173.

<sup>24</sup>. *Life of Ioannicios* (BHG 936, AASS, Novembris II, Bruxelles 1894, 384-435), 426B: *πονηρότατοι Ἀγαρηνοί*. See J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Views of Islam*, *DOP* 18 (1964), 115-131, here 130.

<sup>25</sup>. *Life of Michael the Synkellos* (BHG 1296, ed. M. B. CUNNINGHAM, *The Life of Michael the Synkellos. Text, Translation and Commentary* [Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 1], Belfast 1991), 56.29-30: *μεγίστην ζημίαν γενέσθαι παρὰ τῶν ἀθέων Ἀγαρηνῶν*.



people, in representing in that way the image of the enemy.<sup>26</sup> Therefore a reference to Felix Arabia with a clear favourable meaning, as it is found in earlier times, is out of question during this period.

Along with the hostile language used to describe the Arabs, we may observe that a similar mentality prevails in the description of the lands that have passed under their jurisdiction. It is true that the hagiographers of the Middle Byzantine period hardly show any interest in offering clear information and geographic description of the territories in which the Arabs lived. A very representative example of how hagiographers of the period perceived and depicted in their writings the lands from which the Arabs came is to be found in the *Life of the 42 Martyrs of Amorion*. The writer of this work, the monk Evodius, when describing the great expansion of the Arabs, vaguely touches upon their origin by saying merely that they came from a desert, without naming it. Then he says that the Arabs occupied Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Africa.<sup>27</sup> Even John of Damascus (675-749), who resided there under the Umayyads, appears through his writings not to have knowing much about Arab lands, since he was living “in a Christian ghetto which preserved the Byzantine political and historical outlook”, as JOHN MEYENDORFF has observed<sup>28</sup>. In the same train of thought the writer of the *Life of St. Theodore of Edessa* conveys a rather political perception, by saying that “Palestine and Phoenice were delivered into the hands of lawless people”, meaning that the conquerors were outlaws and that they consequently did not have the right to occupy those lands.<sup>29</sup> Through this sketchy but meaningful reference to Arab lands we may say that these texts reflect the standard Byzantine view that the Byzantine state was superior to all other states,<sup>30</sup> or that they echo the universal

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<sup>26</sup>. N. KOUTRAKOU, The Image of the Arabs in Middle Byzantine Politics. A Study in the Enemy Principle (8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Centuries), *Graeco-Arabica* 5 (1993), 213-224. See also P. A. YANNOPOULOS, Byzantins et arabes dans l'espace grec aux IXe et Xe siècle selon les sources hagiographiques locales et contemporaines, in: *East and West. Essays of Byzantine and Arab Worlds in the Middle Ages*, ed. J. P. MONFERRER-SALA – V. CHRISTIDES – T. PAPAPOPOULLOS, Piscataway 2009, 91-105.

<sup>27</sup>. *Life of 42 Martyrs of Amorion* (BHG 1214, ed. V. VASIL'EVSKIJ – P. NIKITIN, Skazanija 42 amorijskich mucenikach i cerkovnaja sluzba, Zapiski Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk 7.2, 1905, 61-78), 63: τῶν Ἰσραηλιτῶν ἔσω που ἔθνος ταῖς ἐρημίαις ἀπωκισμένον, ... ληίζεται πρῶτα μὲν τὰ ὑπὲρ τὴν Μεσοποταμίαν, εἶτα Παλαιστίνην Αἴγυπτόν τε καὶ Ἀφρικὴν, καὶ τὰ Ρωμαίων στρατόπεδα φροδᾷ τε καὶ ἀνάστατα καὶ μαχαίρας βαρβαρικῆς παρανάλωμα.

<sup>28</sup>. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Views*, 117.

<sup>29</sup>. *Life of Theodore of Edessa* (BHG 1744, ed. I. POMJALOVSKIJ, *Žitija izhe vo sv. otca nashego Feodora archiepiskopa Edesskogo*, St. Petersburg 1892), 16: ἐγκατέλιπεν ἡμᾶς ὁ κύριος καὶ παρεδόθη ἡ Φοινίκη καὶ Παλαιστίνη εἰς χεῖρας ἀνόμων.

<sup>30</sup>. H. AHRWEILER, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin*, Paris 1975, 51. R. MILES, *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, London - New York 1999, 4. A. KALDELLIS, *Hellenism in Byzantium: the transformations of Greek identity and the reception of the classical tradition*, Cambridge UP 2007, 294-295.

ideology that dominates Byzantine policy towards the areas that had passed to the jurisdiction of the Arabs.<sup>31</sup>

This imprecise and rather hostile image of the Arab land encountered in the Middle Byzantine texts is completely different, when we move towards the late Byzantine period. The writers of that time present some extensive information about these lands. Thus, their perception appears different from the Middle Byzantine period<sup>32</sup> and the writers return to sources of earlier times in order to define cities and regions that had not belong to the Byzantine Empire for centuries.

Let us examine some typical instances from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, by taking as an example the references to Felix Arabia, with which we started our paper and which we have mostly used in our discussion so far. Eustathios, the well known metropolitan of Thessaloniki (1115-1169), commentating on the geographer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Dionysios Periegetes describes the region of Arabia and speaks also about the “very wealthy races” (=πολύλοβα φύλα) that resided there.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the scholar and astronomer Nikephoros Blemmydes (1197-1269?) examines the region of Felix Arabia with a considerable degree of detail.<sup>34</sup> His statements may be due to the nature of his main interests in astronomy<sup>35</sup> and his experience in studying not only the ancient Greek philosophers but also Islamic astronomy, which during the 11<sup>th</sup> century was quite familiar to Byzantine scholars.<sup>36</sup>

The scholars of the Palaiologan period follow similar lines. We have already seen how Nikephoros Gregoras, who was also deeply involved in astronomy, gives the legendary picture of Felix Arabia,<sup>37</sup> an area which however he describes in his *History* more literally, with specific geographical details, drawing

<sup>31</sup>. SP. VRYONIS, Byzantine Attitudes towards Islam during the Late Middle Ages, *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies* 12 (1971), 263-286, here 264-266.

<sup>32</sup>. N. KOUTRAKOU, The Arabs through Byzantine eyes (11th-12th centuries): A change in perception, in: *East and West* ..., 27-55.

<sup>33</sup>. Eustathios, *Commentarium in Dionysii periegetae orbis descriptionem* (ed. K. MÜLLER, *Geographi Graeci Minores*, vol. II, Paris 1861, repr. Hildesheim 1965), 933: Ὅτι πολὺ καταχέει τῆς εὐδαίμονος Ἀραβίας ἐγκώμιον, ἐνδιατρίβων αὐτῇ, καὶ τοὺς τε Ἀραβας ἀβροβίους καλεῖ, ὡς καὶ πρὸ ὀλίγου ὀλβίστους, καὶ αὐτὴν μεγίστην λέγει, καὶ ἀγλαὰ φησι καὶ πολύλοβα φύλα νέμεσθαι αὐτήν. See also, *ibidem*, 927.

<sup>34</sup>. Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Conspectus geographiae* (ed. K. MÜLLER, *Geographi Graeci Minores*, vol. II, Paris 1861, repr. Hildesheim 1965), 466.

<sup>35</sup>. J. A. MUNITZ, *Nicephori Blemmydae Autobiographia sive Curriculum Vitae necnon Epistula Universalior* [Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca 13], Turnhout 1984, 8.1-18, p. 6-7. See CONSTANTINIDES, *Higher Education*, 20. MAGDALINO, *Astrologues*, 135-137, 144-146.

<sup>36</sup>. A. JONES, *An Eleventh-century Manual of Arabo-Byzantine Astronomy* [Corpus des astronomes byzantins 3], Amsterdam 1987, 14-19. A. TIHON, Tables islamiques à Byzance, *Byz* 60 (1990), 401-425, especially, 400-405.

<sup>37</sup>. See note 5. In his *History* he speaks about his fervent devotion to astronomy: Gregoras (*Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia* [CSHB], vol. I-II, cura L. SCHOPENI, Bonn 1829, vol. III, E. BEKKER, Bonn 1855), I/2, 322.3-5. On his involvement in astronomy, see also J. MOGENET – A. TIHON – R. ROYER – A. BERG, *Nicéphore Grégoras. Calcul de l'éclipse de soleil du 16 juillet 1330* [Corpus des astronomes byzantins 1], Amsterdam 1983.

information on sites and local life from the ancient geographers Diodorus Siceliotae and Ptolemaios.<sup>38</sup>

Another contemporary scholar, Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, the student of the polymath and astronomer Theodore Metochites,<sup>39</sup> offers an extensive description of Arabia in his voluminous work on Ecclesiastical History. He quotes also the exact source from which he extracted the information, that is, the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century ecclesiastical historian Philostorgios.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the detailed references to Felix Arabia in the works of Late Byzantine scholars have their origins in earlier writers. On the other hand these references to Felix Arabia may reflect the constant interest on behalf of the Byzantines in luxury goods from the East, as Christian and Muslim rulers and their entourages<sup>41</sup> shared and greatly appreciated the culture of luxurious objects, along with the rich population of Constantinople, including native and foreign inhabitants. Nevertheless it is interesting to observe that the aforementioned learned scholars from the Late Byzantine era were engaged scientifically in astronomy. We may therefore attribute this favourable perception of Arabia to their acquaintance with Islamic astronomy.<sup>42</sup> Such references are to be found not only in descriptions concerning Felix Arabia exclusively, but also dealing with other regions under Muslim rule, i.e. Syria, Palestine and Egypt.

Whenever the writers of the period mention Egypt and specifically Alexandria, they make comments either by referring to the ancient glorious past of the city or by insisting on a special characteristic element of Egypt or Alexandria. Maximos Planoudes (1255?-1305?) was an eminent scholar of the 13th century with great interest in geography,<sup>43</sup> arithmetic and astronomy.<sup>44</sup> In his hagiographical text in honour of St Diomedes he compares the magnificence of Tarsos, a city of

<sup>38</sup>. Gregoras, I/1, 107.3-6. Cf. H. HUNGER, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. I, München 1978, 512-513.

<sup>39</sup>. On the relationship of Metochites and Xanthopoulos: M. CUNNINGHAM – J. FEATHERSTONE – J. GEORGIOPOULOU, Theodore Metochites' Poem to Nikephorus Kallistos Xanthopoulos, in: *Okeanos: Essays presented to Ihor Sevcenko on his Sixtieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students = Harvard Ukrainian Studies 7* (1983), 100-116, especially 109, ll.264-268, where he refers to the astronomy. On Metochites' zeal in astronomy, see R. BYDEN, *Theodore Metochites' Stoicheioseis Astronomike and the Study of Natural Philosophy and Mathematics in Early Palaiologan Byzantium* [Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia 66], Göteborg 2003, 35-36, 277-282 and passim.

<sup>40</sup>. *Nicephori Callisti Xanthopuli, Ecclesiasticae historiae*, PG 146, 297B: *Περὶ Φιλοστοργίου, καὶ τῶν ἱστορηθέντων αὐτῷ περὶ τῆς εὐδαίμονος Ἀραβίας*.

<sup>41</sup>. J. DAY, The Levant trade in the Middle Ages, in: *The Economic History of Byzantium ...*, vol. II, 808. D. JACOBY, Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West, *DOP* 58 (2004), 221, 225, 231-238.

<sup>42</sup>. D. PINGREE, Gregory Chioniades and Palaeologan Astronomy, *DOP* 18 (1964), 135-160, especially 140-141. TIHON, Tables islamiques, 416-417. BYDEN, *Stoicheioseis Astronomike*, 241-250, 255-259. MAGDALINO, *Astrologues*, 138 ff.

<sup>43</sup>. CONSTANTINIDES, *Higher Education*, 76-77.

<sup>44</sup>. He touched astronomy through arithmetic; see CONSTANTINIDES, *Higher Education*, 72 ff., 80. MAGDALINO, *Astrologues*, 147-148, 149. A. KONSTANTAKOPOULOU, *Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλονίκη: χόρος και ιδεολογία*, Ioannina 1996, 131, 135, 208-209.

Cilicia with great significance for the region's defence – on behalf of Byzantium it functioned as a shield against Arab invasions – with other important and historical cities. With some exaggeration he says that Tarsos was to Cilicia the equivalent of important cities, such as Rome for Italy, Constantinople for Thrace, Alexandria for Egypt, Antioch for Syria and Jerusalem for Palestine.<sup>45</sup> In order to attach extra credence to the glorification of the city, he recalls that Alexander the Great passed through Tarsos and he met his death here after bathing alongside the river Cydnus<sup>46</sup>. There are numerous such paradigms where the hagiographers refer to the ancient past of Arabia, Egypt, Syria and Palestine by using sources of earlier times. The patriarch of Constantinople and high style writer Joseph Kalothetos<sup>47</sup> remembers the pyramids of Egypt together with the Colossus of Rhodes and the Gardens of Babylon in order to point out the prestige of Mount Athos. Subsequently, Theoktistos Stoudites, the author of one version of the *Life* of the patriarch Athanasios, recalls the status of Egypt as a wheat producing area with the intention to show metaphorically the great contribution of the patriarch Athanasios to the Orthodox Church.<sup>48</sup> Under the similar notion Constantine Acropolites, a scholar who lived in Constantinople at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in his speech on St Athanasios of Adrammytion points to the parallel wheat production between Thrace and Egypt by stressing the fertility of both areas.<sup>49</sup> With a high rhetorical style

<sup>45</sup>. Planoudes, *Life of Diomedes* (BHG 552, ed. L. G. WESTERINK, *Trois textes inédits sur saint Diomède de Nicée*, AB, 84, 1966, 180-227), 182: *ἡ προκαθεζομένη τῆς τῶν Κιλικίων περιούνημος πόλις Ταρσός, Ταρσός, ἡ καλλίστη καὶ εὐδαιμονεστάτη τῶν πόλεων, ἡ ταύτης ἔτυχεν ἐν Κιλικίᾳ πάση τῆς προεδρίας, ἧς Ῥώμη μὲν ἡ πρεσβυτέρα ἐν Ἰταλίᾳ, ἐν Θράκῃ δ' ἡ νεωτέρα, Ἀλεξάνδρεια δ' ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ, ἐν Συρίᾳ δὲ Ἀντιόχεια, καὶ Ἰεροσόλυμα ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ, καὶ ἐν θέμασιν ἄλλοις ἄλλαι τῶν πόλεων Ταρσός, ἧς τὰ μὲν τεῖχη τριπλῶ τῶ περιβόλῳ πρὸς ὕψος ἀξιόλογον ἐγειρόμενα μηδὲν εἶναι πρὸς κάλλος ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀσφάλειαν τὰ τῶν ἄλλων πόλεων ἀποφαίνει.* The mention regarding the triple defensive wall is remarkable and shows that the writer might know this area: F. HILD – H. HELLENKEMPER, *Kilikien und Isaurien* [TIB 5], Teil I, Wien 1990, 436-437.

<sup>46</sup>. Planoudes, *Life of Diomedes*, 183.

<sup>47</sup>. Kalothetos, *Life of Athanasios* (BHG 194c, ed. D. G. TSAMES, *Ἰωσήφ Καλοθέτου Συγγραμματα* [Θεσσαλονικεῖς Βυζαντινοὶ Συγγραφεῖς 1], Thessalonica 1980, 453-502), 461: *Μόνος γὰρ οὗτος ὁ χῶρος τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς θεαμάτων τὰ δευτερεῖα οὐκ ἀποφέρεται. Παρέλθοις ἂν καὶ Ῥόδου κολοσσὸν καὶ Αἰγύπτου πυραμίδας καὶ τεῖχη Βαβυλώνεια καὶ ἄλλ' ὅσα τῶν θεαμάτων τῷ χρόνῳ πάντα καταλυθέντα πρὸς τοῦτον εὐθὺς ἀπιδῶν.*

<sup>48</sup>. Theoktistos, *Life of Athanasios* (BHG 194, ed. A. PAPAPOPOULOS-KERAMEUS, *Žitija dvuh vselenskih patriarchov XIV v., svv. Athanasija I i Isidora I*, *Zapiski Istoriko-filologičeskago Fakulteta Imperatorskago S.Peterburgskago Universiteta*, 76, 1905, 1-51) 49: *γεννήματα ταύτης ἐπήλθουν ἐγένετο σιτοδότης Αἰγύπτου.*

<sup>49</sup>. Acropolites, *Life of Athanasios of Adrammytion* (BHG 192; ed. A. PAPAPOPOULOS-KERAMEUS, *Varia Graeca sacra: sbornik grečeskich neizdannyh bogoslovskich tekstov IV-XV vekov*, *Zapiski Istoriko-filologičeskago Fakulteta Imperatorskago S. Peterburgskago Universiteta* 95, S. Petersburg 1909, repr. Leipzig 1975, 141-147), 141: *Θράκην τὴν μετ' Αἴγυπτον εὐγεῶν καὶ μετ' ἐκείνην εὐθὺς ταττομένην καὶ τὰ πρωτεῖα καθ' ἀπασῶν εἰς εὐφορίας λόγον μετ' αὐτῆς φέρουσαν· παρήσω γὰρ ὡς ἐν εὐκράτῳ μὲν αὕτη καὶ φλογμοῦ βίαν ἐκφρευούσα καὶ ἡδύτερον τῶν πεπονηκότι ἐνορᾶν ἀδρυνομένῳ παρεχομένη τῷ στάχτι ...*

however he presents Egypt at a second level, in an effort to extol Athanasios' city of origin, Derkos, an otherwise insignificant town of Thrace. Of course there is no element in common, neither about the climate nor about the environment of the two regions, but the author expands a quite common topos of the texts<sup>50</sup> through which he accomplishes a more rhetorical approach in his text. The same motif is also used by Macarios Macres, a scholar of 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century, when describing the qualities of the biblical leader Jacob<sup>51</sup>. Nikephoros Gregoras reminds us of the Egyptians priesthood's habits shrouded in secrecy,<sup>52</sup> a motif, which he repeats in another speech,<sup>53</sup> thus illustrating his wide erudition. The same writer draws attention to an interesting evidence concerning the parrots from Libya and Egypt that lived in the palace of Constantinople, by reproducing earlier sources.<sup>54</sup> Egypt, Syria and Palestine are viewed by the hagiographers either as the cradle of religious sentiment,<sup>55</sup> or as a centre of flourishing of monasticism during the early Byzantine period,<sup>56</sup> thus constituting a commonplace found in hagiographical texts as regards the description of these lands.

<sup>50</sup>. Cf. N. -C. ΚΟΥΤΡΑΚΟΥ, The image of Egypt in the Byzantine thought-world: reminiscence and reality (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries), *Graeco-Arabica* 9-10 (2004), 211-233.

<sup>51</sup>. *Life of Macarios* (BHG 1001, ed. AST. ARGYRIΟΥ, *Macaire Makrès et la polémique contre l'Islam. Édition princeps de l'éloge de Macaire Makrès et de ses deux oeuvres anti-islamiques précédée d'une étude critique* [Studi e testi 34] Città del Vaticano 1986), 228: Ἀρχων τοίνυν τῆς χώρας μετ' οὐ πολὺ καὶ σιτοδότης τῶν Αἰγυπτίων καθίσταται διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ ἀρετὴν καὶ βασιλεὺς Φαραῶ ἀναδείκνυται

<sup>52</sup>. Gregoras, *Life of John of Pontoherakleia* (BHG 2188: V. LAURENT, La vie de Jean Métropolitite d'Héraclée du Pont, *Archéion Πόντου*, 6, 1935, 29-63), 60: ὅρα δέ μοι καθ' ὁμοιότητα καὶ τοὺς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἱερογραμματέας δημοσιεῖν οὐ σφοδρὰ ἐθέλοντας τὰ σφίσι λεγόμενα δόγματα. Cf. Metochites, *Life of Michael the Younger*, 672A.

<sup>53</sup>. Gregoras, *Life of Theophano*, 35: Τὸ γὰρ γένος Αἰγύπτιος ὧν καὶ μάγοις ἐκεῖ που χρησάμενος διδασκάλους, νεκρομαντεῖαν τε καὶ ψυχοπομπίαν ἐκείθεν ἐμεμαθήκει.

<sup>54</sup>. Gregoras, *Life of Theophano*, 39: Ἔτυχον γὰρ τηρικᾶτα παρὰ τὰς βασιλείους ἀλλὰς ἐν οἰκίσκοις ἀφράκτοις συγκεκλεισμένοι τισὶν ἔνιοι τῶν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου καὶ Λιβύης ὀρνίθων, ὅποσοι ῥαδίως πρὸς τὴν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φωνῆς ἐξικνοῦνται μίμησιν. Theophanes Cont. (ed. I. BEKKER, *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus* [Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae], Bonn 1838), 350.21-351.10; Skylitzes, 169.24-39. See M. LEONTSINI, Οἰκόσιτα, ὠδικὰ καὶ ἐξωτικά πτηνὰ. Αἰσθητικὴ Πρόσληψη καὶ Χρηστικὴ Ὀψεις (7ος-11ος α.), in: *Animals and Environment in Byzantium (7th-12th c.)*, eds. I. ANAGNOSTAKIS – T. KOLIAS – E. ΠΑΠΑΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ [NHRF/IBR, International symposium 21], Athens 2011, 285-317.

<sup>55</sup>. Acropolites, *Encomium S. Leontii* (BHG 987, AASS, Iunii, III, Bruxelles 1701, 562-568), 563: Αἰγυπτῶς τε καὶ Συρία σὺν Φοινίκη ἐκ προγόνων τὸ ῥαδίως θεοποιεῖν κληρωσάμενοι, οὐχ ὅπως περὶ τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ χωλαίνοντες ἔτυχον, ἀλλ' (ὃ φασιν) ὄλω ποδὶ πρὸς τοὺς ψευδωνύμους ἀπέκλιναν, ὡς καὶ τῶν βοσκημάτων συχνοῖς τὸ τίμιον ἐπιφημίζειν τοῦ Θεοῦ ὄνομα. Metochites, *Life of Michael the Younger* (BHG 2273, AASS, Novembris IV, Bruxelles 1925, 670-678), 672 A.

<sup>56</sup>. Philotheos, *Life of Savas* (BHG 1606, ed. D. G. TSAMES, *Φιλοθέου τοῦ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου ἀγιολογικὰ ἔργα* [Θεσσαλονικεῖς Ἅγιοι Θεσσαλονικεῖς Βυζαντινοὶ Συγγραφεῖς 4], Thessaloniki 1985, 161-325), 230. Cf. A. ΠΑΠΑΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ, *Le*

As we have seen so far the hagiographers of the Late Byzantine period, when referring to Arab lands borrow specific features from earlier times and describe the cities and the areas within Arab territory through the eyes of much earlier authors. Thus, the writers referring to those areas, which had not belonged to the Byzantine Empire for centuries try to connect them with their ancient tradition, by overlooking in various ways, perhaps by ignorance or for other reasons their contemporary political status.

However, they do not also fail to say a word about their current reality, by citing some instances of everyday life in the Arab lands. The examples are scanty but very indicative. An actual imaging of Alexandria in the 13<sup>th</sup> century is to be found in the *Life of Michael the Younger* written by Theodore Metochites. As this scholar was also a statesman,<sup>57</sup> he describes with extensive knowledge of the political status not only the harmonious relationship between the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282) and the Egyptian Sultan Qalâ'ûn,<sup>58</sup> but also offers a quite vivid description of contemporary Alexandria. Thus, Theodore Metochites conveys the image of the cosmopolitan city (*διὰ τὸ τῆς πόλεως Ἀλεξανδρείας, ... αἰεὶ πολυπληθὲς ἀνθρώπων*) with the number of merchants from different nations gathered there, giving precedence to the Italians, the masters of the contemporary trade, mentioning also at a third place the Arab merchants.<sup>59</sup>

Attaleia was another city that merits the attention of a writer of the period. Gregory of Cyprus, the Patriarch of Constantinople (1283-1289), who previously had been monk at the Galesion monastery, when composing the *Life of Lazaros of Galesion* (966/7-1053) inserts a colorful description of the coastal city of Attaleia. He presents it as a flourishing trading center, underlining that there were a lot of Arab merchants (*Σαρακηνοῖς, οἱ πολλοὶ περὶ τὴν Ἀττάλειαν τὸ τηνικάδε ἔτυχον ὄντες, ἐμπορίας χάριν κατάραντες*), some of them were involved in the slave-trade

*culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides: l'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes* [CNRS], Paris 2001, 232.

<sup>57</sup>. I. ŠEVČENKO, Theodore Metochites, the Chora and the Intellectual Trends of His Time, in: *The Kariye djami*, vol. 4: *Studies in the Art of the Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background*, ed. P. A. UNDERWOOD, New Jersey-London 1975, 17-91, here 26-29.

<sup>58</sup>. Metochites, *Life of Michael the Younger*, 672F-673B. See M. CANARD, Un traité entre Byzance et l'Égypte au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et les relations diplomatiques de Michel Paléologue avec les sultans mamlûks Baibars et Qalâ'ûn, in: *Mélanges Gaudefroy-Demombynes*, Le Caire 1937, 197-224 (=IDEM, *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient* [Variorum Reprints], London 1973, No IV).

<sup>59</sup>. Metochites, *Life of Michael the Younger*, 676E: *καὶ δι' ἐμπορίαν παρατυχόντων τῇ πόλει, Ἴταλοι καὶ τούτων γε πλήρης διὰ τὰς ἐμπορίας ἢ πόλις αἰεὶ, Ὡς ὡσαύτως ἐθάδες ἐκείνη, Ἄραβες, Σύροι, αὐτόθεν τε καὶ ἄλλοθεν ἐπίδημοι*. See D. JACOBY, Byzantine Traders in Mamluk Egypt, in: *Byzantium State and Society In Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*, ed. A. AVRAMEA – A. LAIOU – E. CHRYSOS, Athens 2003, 249-267. Especially the history of Venice is interwoven with that of Alexandria since the early ninth century onwards: G. CURATOLA, Venetian merchants and travelers in Alexandria, in: *Alexandria, Real and Imagined*, ed. A. HIRST – M. SILK, Aldershot 2004, 187-198.

activity.<sup>60</sup> As the relative passage on Attaleia is not included in the earlier version of the *Life of St Lazaros*, Gregory of Cyprus, who himself lived around the area for some years, rather provides the current image for Attaleia, that is of the late 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Joseph Kalothetos, an eminent writer of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (†1355) in his hagiographical text in honour of Andreas the Cretan (a saint of the 8<sup>th</sup> century) refers to the native city of his hero. He describes Damascus as a place which is full of goods, as well as having the ability “to rear its children”, “famous for horses”, “head of a place for strangers”. The writer in order to praise the city combines elements from the Bible and from his contemporary reality, as Damascus was then an eminent commercial centre with an abundance of goods. Probably for that reason he refers to features that mainly pertain to a place where there are strangers: “famed for horses”, “place which receives strangers”, “hospitable” (*εὐπιπος... ξενοδόχος... φιλόξενος*).<sup>61</sup>

The hagiographers of the late Byzantine period include some references to people, mostly to monks, who did pilgrimage to Holy Lands,<sup>62</sup> but they seldom give special details regarding itineraries, such as a description of the physical environment, or a presentation of the people that lived there. For example the *Life of St Meletios*, a rhetorical work attributed to Macarios Chrysokephalos (1300-1382), simply mentions that Meletios visited Palestine, without offering any further information.<sup>63</sup> Another text, which is preserved anonymously, narrating the course

<sup>60</sup> Gregory of Cyprus, *Life of Lazaros Galesiotes* (BHG 2273, AASS, Novembris III, 1910, 588-606), 590. See also Metochites, *Life of Michael the Younger*, 672B-C. See M. GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές, έμποροι και εμπόριο στο Βυζάντιο (9ος-12ος αι.)* [NHRF/IBR, Monographs 9], Athens 2008, 124.

<sup>61</sup> Kalothetos, *Life of Andreas of Jerusalem* (BHG 114c, ed. TSAMES, *Ιωσήφ Καλοθέτου ...*, 435-451), 437: *ή περιφανής τών πόλεων Δαμασκός, ήτις δι' έτους παντός περιβρέται παντοίοις αγαθοίς ... Καί γάρ ει κουροτρόφον έπαινεί τις, κουροτρόφος έστιν· ει εὐπιπον, εὐπιπος· ει ξενοδόχον και φιλόξενον, ξενοδόχος και φιλόξενός έστιν.*

<sup>62</sup> Cf. A. KÜLZER, *Peregrinatio graeca in Terram Sanctam: Studien zu Pilgerfuhrern und Reisebeschreibungen über Syrien, Palaestina und den Sinai aus byzantinischer und metabyzantinischer Zeit* [Studien und Texte zur Byzantinistik 2], Frankfurt am Main 1994, 86.

<sup>63</sup> *Life of Meletios* (BHG 1246a, S. LAURIOTIS, Βίος και πολιτεία και μερική θαυμάτων διήγησις του όσιου πατρός ήμών Μελετίου του Όμολογητου, *Gregory Palamas* 5, 1921, 582-584, 609-624), 611: *Έπει δέ και κατά την Παλαιστίνην έγένετο, και τούς ιερούς άπαντας προσέκνησε τόπους, δειν έγνω και τοίς κατά την έρημον άσκουμένοις θείοις συγγενέσθαι πατράσιν, και τύπους έκ τούτων άσκήσεως και του κατ' έντολήν βίου λαβείν. Γίνεται τοιγαρόν έν τῷ Σιναίῳ, και κατά τούς θηρευτικούς τῶν κυνῶν άνιχνεύει τās όρείους διατριβάς· έρευνᾷ τὰ σπήλαια, τὰ μοναστήρια τε περίεσι, και του ποθομένου τυγχάνει.* The same motif is encountered in the following texts: Theoktistos, *Life of Athanasios*, 7. *Life of Gregorios Sinaita* (BHG 722, ed. I. POMIALOVSKIJ, *Žitie iže vo svjatyh otca našego Grigorija Sinaita po rukopisi Moskovskoj Sinodal noj biblioteki*, *Zapiski Istoriko-filologičeskago Fakulteta Imperatorskago S. Peterburskago Universiteta* 35, Sankt Petersburg 1894, 1-46), 15. Kabasilas, *Speech on St Andrew the Younger* (BHG 115, A. PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS,

of four Italian ships to Palestine does not speak about the Arab lands, but offers information concerning their travel and their stopping at Patmos,<sup>64</sup> an island that appears as a transit center. Gregory of Cyprus in his *Life of St Lazaros* offers some remarkable details related to the route of Lazaros in the Holy Land: he stresses the difficulties that Lazaros had faced throughout the itinerary to Jerusalem which he reached on foot.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps the 13<sup>th</sup> century writer echoes also the situation of his own time.

Philotheos Kokkinos, the patriarch of Constantinople (1353-1376) recounts at length the pilgrimage of his spiritual father, Savas, to the Holy Land and recites the stations along the naval route he followed, departing from Athos: Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios, Ephesos. Savas stopped there for a while, probably during the period 1307-1308, as he wished to venerate the famous Church of St John of Ephesos. There he only found the ruins of the entire city and of the magnificent ancient Church (τὰ λείψανα μόνα τῆς παλαιᾶς κατιδὼν εὐδαιμονίας, ὅσα τε περὶ τὸν ἱερὸν ἐκεῖνον νεὼν φημι τοῦ ἡγαπημένου καὶ ὅσα κατὰ τὴν πόλιν ἔνδον<sup>66</sup>), since the city of Ephesos had been devastated by the Turkish leader Sasa Bey (24 October 1304).<sup>67</sup> After that Savas sailed to Patmos and thence arrived in Cyprus where he stayed for quite a long time. He then took up the road that leads to Damascus and to Antioch on foot. Philotheos Kokkinos says very little about Savas' very long journey that lasted about twenty years (1307-1328). For example, he mentions the indigenous Christian monastic population which resided around the Jordan river and Palestine, saying that they were speaking the Arabic language and they were embracing the true faith: οἱ τε περὶ τὸν Ἰορδάνην ἀσκούμενοι μοναχοὶ καὶ Παλαιστίνη πᾶσα καὶ τῆς τῶν Σύρων γλώττης, ὅσοι δηλαδὴ τὰ Χριστιανῶν ἀκριβῶς ἦσαν πρεσβεύοντες, alluding rather to those who follow the orthodox and not the Latin dogma.<sup>68</sup> From the same perspective of religion Philotheos Kokkinos defines an indigenous woman, who according to the writer's remark was a woman "of our dogma and

Συλλογὴ Παλαιστινῆς καὶ Συριακῆς Ἀγιολογίας, Sankt Petersburg 1907, repr. Thessaloniki 2001, 173-185), 177, 180.

<sup>64</sup>. *Miracles of Christodoulos* (BHG 306, ed. C. BOINIS, Ὁσίου καὶ θεοφόρου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Χριστοδούλου τοῦ θαυματουργοῦ τοῦ καὶ κτήτορος τῆς ἐν τῇ νήσῳ Πάτμῳ περιουμένου βασιλικῆς καὶ αὐτοκρατορικῆς μονῆς τοῦ ἁγίου ἀποστόλου καὶ εὐαγγελιστοῦ Ἰωάννου τοῦ Θεολόγου ἐν ἧ καὶ τὸ τίμιον αὐτοῦ τεθησαύρισται λείψανον, Athens 1884, 209-225), 212.

<sup>65</sup>. Gregory of Cyprus, *Life of Lazaros Galesiotes*, 592E.

<sup>66</sup>. Philotheos, *Life of Savas*, 189. See CL. FOSS, *Ephesus after Antiquity. A Late antique, Byzantine, and Turkish City*, Cambridge U. P. 1979, 145.

<sup>67</sup>. See A. KÜLZER, Ephesos in byzantinischer Zeit: ein historischer Überblick, in: *Byzanz - das Römerreich im Mittelalter*, Teil 2/2: *Schauplätze*, ed. F. DAIM - J. DRAUSCHKE, Mainz 2010, 535.

<sup>68</sup>. Philotheos, *Life of Savas*, 230. See M. H. CONGOURDEAU, La terre sainte au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle: la vie de Sabas de Vatopedi par Philothée Kokkinos, in: *Pèlerinage et lieux saints dans l'Antiquité et le Moyen âge. Mélanges offerts à Pierre Maraval*, ed. B. CASEAU - J.-CL. CHEYNET - V. DÉROCHE [Centre de recherché d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, Monographies 23], Paris 2006, 129.



religion” (*Γυνή δέ τις τῶν τῆς ἡμετέρας δόξης τε καὶ θρησκείας*)<sup>69</sup> and who had offered to Savas accommodation in order for him to rest from his long march.

The same writer points out the help that his hero had received from an Ismaelite, that is, someone of Muslim faith according to Byzantine mentality. For Philotheos Kokkinos the Ismaelite’s religion together with his habits were the criteria of defining his identity.<sup>70</sup> The same writer then adds some comments on the label “barbaros”, the special feature which the Byzantines, following an ancient Greek tradition, used to characterize foreigners.<sup>71</sup> He emphasizes that “although he was barbaros in relation to his race, he was not exactly barbaros, because he was reasonable and he had good opinions”.<sup>72</sup> This view, to designate someone through his opinions, something which fits very well to our modern society, is astonishing when encountered in scholars of the 14th century who should rather be considered as humanist thinkers.<sup>73</sup>

During the twilight of the middle ages and the rise of a new era we may see Byzantine scholars focusing on human worthiness, as they were influenced by their deep involvement with the ancient Greek *paideia*. Times had changed. Perhaps inspired by their acquaintance with the Arab scientists of astronomy, the hagiographers of the Late Byzantine period when referring to Arab lands, usually define them favorably according to their own ancient culture or through comparisons with the ancient Greek civilization. Consequently the Arabs, the enemies, as they are characterised by the sources of 9th and 10th centuries, are viewed very differently in the Late Byzantine period. Philotheos Kokkinos in the aforementioned passage echoes exactly this different perception.

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<sup>69</sup>. Philotheos, *Life of St. Savas*, 258.

<sup>70</sup>. ELEONORA KOUNTOURA GALAKI–NIKE KOUTRAKOU, Locals vs “foreigners”: Criteria for the formation of local identities in Late Byzantium. An approach to Modern *Graecitas* through Late Byzantine writers, in: *Identities in the Greek world (from 1204 to the present day)*, ed. K. A. Dimadis, vol. 5, Athens 2011, 107-125: [http://www.eens.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Identities-in-the-Greek-world-Granada-2010-Congress-Vol\\_5-2011-isbn\\_978-960-99699-7-0.pdf](http://www.eens.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Identities-in-the-Greek-world-Granada-2010-Congress-Vol_5-2011-isbn_978-960-99699-7-0.pdf)

<sup>71</sup>. Cf. H. AHRWEILER, Byzantine Concepts of the Foreigner: the Case of the Nomads, in: *Studies of the internal diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. H. AHRWEILER – A. E. LAIOU, 51. KALDELLIS, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 25, 268.

<sup>72</sup>. Philotheos, *Life of St. Savas*, 219. For a traditional view relating to the meaning of “barbaros”, see Kabasilas, *Encomion on St Andrew the Younger* (ed. A. PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS, *Συλλογή Παλαιστίνης καὶ Συριακῆς Αἰολογίας*, 1, Petrograd 1907, repr. Thessaloniki 2001, 173-185), 180.

<sup>73</sup>. H. HUNGER, Theodore Metochites als Vorläufer des Humanismus in Byzanz, *BZ* 45 (1952), 4-19. M. BAZZANI, Theodore Metochites, A Byzantine Humanist, *Byzantion* 76 (2006), 32-52.



## Byzantine References to the Flora and Fauna of the Arabian Peninsula and the Classical Greek Tradition (4th -12th c. AD)

MARIA LEONTSINI

Information on the geography and people of the Arabian Peninsula found in Byzantine literary texts was based on ancient knowledge deriving from both Classical and Hellenistic Times. Works of ancient writers referring to the East, such as Herodotus (5th c. BC), Aristotle (4th BC), Pseudo-Scylax (4th or 3rd c. BC), and Agatharchides of Cnidus (2nd c. BC), along with similar texts of a later date,<sup>1</sup> were quite systematically used by Byzantine scholars and these texts supplied them with material related to Arabic history and culture. The demand and study of such literature became more intense, whenever interest in Arabian populations increased during wars and conflicts or during peaceful exchanges such as diplomatic missions or commercial transactions. It must be noted that contacts with the Arabian Peninsula and other eastern regions beyond the limits of the Byzantine Empire were also developed by many countries of the West. The broader relationship between the Mediterranean region and the East has been studied extensively through modern archaeological and historical research confirming the economic importance of handling luxury goods, such as myrrh and frankincense.<sup>2</sup> In the *Etymologies*

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<sup>1</sup>. See for example the catalogue of writers used by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennitos (913-959) in his zoological compendium: *Supplementum Aristotelicum, Excerptorum Constantini de Natura Animalium Epitomae Subjucundis Aeliani, Aristophanis aliorumque de historia animalium excerpta*, ed. SP. P. LAMBROS, v. 1.1, Berlin 1885, xv-xvii. On ancient knowledge about the environmental data of the Arabian Peninsula see J. HENNINGER, *Arabica varia. Aufsätze zur Kulturgeschichte Arabiens und seiner Randgebiete. Contributions à l'Histoire culturelle de l'Arabie et de ses Régions limitrophes* [Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Band 90], Freiburg – Schweiz – Göttingen 1989, 172-177; R. G. HOYLAND, *Arabia and the Arabs. From the Bronze Age to Coming of Islam*, New York: Routledge 2001 (reed. 2003), 70-73, 103-107; J. RETSÖ, *The Arabs in Antiquity: their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads*, London – N. York 2003, 240-281, 514-525.

<sup>2</sup>. H. MAGOULIAS, *The Lives of Saints as sources of Data for the History of Commerce in the Byzantine Empire in the VIth and VIIth cent.*, *Κληρονομία* 3 (1971) 303-308; M. MCCORMICK, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300-900*, Cambridge University Press 2001, 716-719; D. JACOBY, *Venetian Commercial Expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean, 8th-11th centuries*, in: *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th Centuries, The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange*, ed. M. MUNDELL MANGO (Papers of the Thirty-eight Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St. John's College, University of Oxford, March 2004), Farnham 2009, 371-391, esp. 317. On the origins of this trade see J. RETSÖ, *The Arab Connection. Political Implications of Frankincense in Early Greece*, in: *Profumi di Arabia*, Atti del convegno a cura di A. AVANZINI, Roma 1997, 473-480; FR. DEMANGE, *The Frankincense Caravans*, in: *Roads of Arabia. Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, Catalogue of the exhibition, Musée du Louvre, Paris 14 July-27 September 2010, ed. A. I. AL-GHABBAN – B. ANDRÉ-SALVINI – FR. DEMANGE – C. JUVIN – M. GOTTY, Paris 2010, 132-135.

Arabia, Greece and Byzantium: Cultural Contacts in Ancient and Medieval Times, ed. Abdulaziz Al-Helabi, Dimitrios Letsios, Moshalleh Al-Moraekhi, Abdullah Al-Abduljabbar, Riyadh 2012 / AH 1433, Part II, pp. 355-379.

(XIV.iii, 15) of Isidore, bishop of Seville (ca. 560-636), compiled between ca. 615 and the early 630s in the form of an encyclopaedia, it is noted that *the word Arabia means holy because the region produces incense and perfumes; hence the Greeks called it eudaimon, our Latin speakers beatus*.<sup>3</sup> The adaptation of such views concerning the geography and history of the East, since the founding of the Byzantine Empire in the 4th c., was based on ancient pre-existing knowledge and even played a decisive role in the way the Byzantines perceived the world, shaped their relationships with the Arabs and became acquainted with their culture.<sup>4</sup>

Rapprochement with the East and the attempt to change the balance of influences in favour of Byzantium in the Arabian Peninsula were planned already in the 4th century with the mission of Theophilus the Indian to the Homerites by the emperor Constantios (337-361),<sup>5</sup> who tried to control the peninsula and especially the Red Sea. His effort was repeated later by Anastasios I (491-518), Justin I (518-527) and Justinian I (527-565), with a series of missions that led to political and military reactions in the region.<sup>6</sup> The same policy, adapted to the conditions of the

<sup>3</sup>. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, edited and translated by ST. A. BARNEY – W. J. LEWIS – J. A. BEACH – OL. BERGHOF, with the coll. of M. HALL, Cambridge 2006, 286; on other related entries see *ibid.*, XVII.viii, 1-6. For the variety of relevant interpretations see V. CHRISTIDES, The names Ἀραβες, Σαρακηνοί etc. and their false Byzantine etymologies, *BZ* 65 (1972) 329-333; see also MCCORMICK, *Origins of the European Economy*, 725.

<sup>4</sup>. P. LEMERLE, *Le premier humanisme byzantin. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au Xe siècle*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France 1971, 23-29; C. E. BOSWORTH, Byzantium and the Arabs: War and Peace between Two World Civilizations, *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 3-4 (1991-1992) 1-23 (= IDEM, *The Arabs, Byzantium, and Iran, Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture*, Aldershot, Variorum Reprints 1996 XIII); N.-M. EL CHEIKH, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* [Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs 36], Cambridge MA – London 2004, 103-105. On such contacts see A. KALDELLIS, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* [Greek Culture in the Roman World], Cambridge – N. York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 3-5, 34. The ancient sources on the geography of the Arabian Peninsula had been studied extensively by: H. KHADRAH, al-<sup>c</sup>arab fī al-maṣādir al-younāniyyah wa ar-roumāniyyah (900 BC- 100BC), *Annales of Faculty of Arts of University of Cairo* 50, 2 (1990), 25-88 and specifically 28-35. For the notification of the reference I thank my colleague Dr. H. M. Hassan.

<sup>5</sup>. D. G. LETSIOS, *Βυζάντιο και Ερυθρά θάλασσα: σχέσεις με τη Νουβία, Αιθιοπία και Νότια Αραβία ως την Αραβική κατάκτηση* [Ιστορικές Μονογραφίες 5], Athens 1988, 176-183; On the origins and the geography of the mission of Theophilus see G. FIACCADORI, *Teofilo Indiano* [Bibliotheca di «Felix Ravenna» 7], Ravenna 1992, 5-7; cf. M. S. KORDOSIS, Ἡ «ἄλλη Ἰνδική» καὶ ἡ νῆσος «Διβούς» τοῦ Φιλοστόργιου, *Ιστορικογεωγραφικά* 2 (1988) 169-178.

<sup>6</sup>. A detailed analysis is offered by LETSIOS, *Βυζάντιο και Ερυθρά θάλασσα*, 187-188. See also Z. RUBIN, Byzantium and Southern Arabia – The Policy of Anastasius, in: *The Eastern Frontiers of the Roman Empire* ed. D. H. FRENCH – C. S. LIGHTFOOT, *Proceedings of a Colloquium held at Ankara in September 1989*, BAR, International Series, 553.ii (1989) 383-420; M. S. KORDOSIS, *Τὸ Βυζάντιο καὶ ὁ δρόμος πρὸς τὴν Ανατολή. Πρωτοβυζαντινὴ περίοδος (324-610 μ.Χ.)* [Βιβλιοθήκη Ἱστορικῶν Μελετῶν 280], Athens 2002, 138-140. S. PATOURA-SPANOU, *Christianity and Globality in Early Byzantium. From Theory to Practice* (in Greek)

late sixth century, was continued by the emperors Tiberios (578-582) and Maurice (582-602), who tried to renew the old Roman tradition based on alliances with the Arab tribes and to respond to the competition of the Kingdom of Persia for the benefit of Byzantium.<sup>7</sup> All these undertakings, which aimed primarily at restoring the political power and economic control in the East, were consistent with the need of Byzantium to define its position in the world, a pursuit stated many times in Byzantine texts. As the geopolitical importance of the East increased after the rise of the Arabs, the Byzantines continued to be interested in various related topics, such as the way of life of the Arabs, the characteristics of their natural environment and the means of survival, development and expansion.

Apart from the ancient tradition that provided the background for the introduction to the history and geography of the Arab world, the Byzantines availed themselves of information resulting from their own actual knowledge and from historical experience. Ancient traditions and symbols concerning the world beyond the eastern Byzantine borders were definitely seen through the contemporary historical context, when commercial exchange, warfare or intensive diplomatic transactions and cultural contacts created new realities of mutual recognition between Arabs and Byzantium.<sup>8</sup> The combination of religious thought and secular knowledge was a parallel phenomenon in Christianity and Islam.<sup>9</sup> In addition to ancient traditional learning and to constant enhancement of experiences by the increasing transactions with the East, the view of the world and the perception of its natural surroundings were deeply influenced by Christian cosmological commentaries. The lush of the region and the exceptional production of spices were also familiar to the Byzantines from the Old Testament (e.g. Isaiah 60:6 Kings 10:2;

[National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Byzantine Research Monographs 10], Athens 2008, 285-289, 312-321; CH. J. ROBIN, Antiquity, in: *Roads of Arabia*, 81-99.

<sup>7</sup>. For the political impact that influenced the institutions through these contacts see E. K. CHRYSOS, The title Βασίλευς in Early Byzantine International Relations, *DOP* 32 (1978) 31-75. Circumstances changed with the advent of the Arabs: P. GOUBERT, Le Probleme ghassanide a la veille de l'Islam, *Actes du VIe Congrès International d'Études Byzantines*, Paris 1950, 103-118; W. E. KAEGI, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic conquests*, Cambridge 1992 (repr. 2000), 53-55.

<sup>8</sup>. V. CHRISTIDES, Byzantium and the Arabs: Some Thoughts on the Spirit of Reconciliation and Cooperation, *Acts of the Symposium on Byzantium and its Neighbours. Byzanz und seine Nachbarn* (Munich 1993), *Südoeuropa-Jahrbuch* 26 (1996) 131-142; IDEM, Periplus of the Arab-Byzantine Cultural Relations, in: *Cultural Relations between Byzantium and the Arabs*, ed. Y. Y. AL-HIJJI – V. CHRISTIDES, Athens 2007, 29-54; N. C. KOUTRAKOU, Highlights in Arab-Byzantine Cultural Relations (IXth–XIth Centuries AD): An Approach through Diplomacy, in: *Cultural Relations between Byzantium and the Arabs*, 85-102, and on the trade see M. MUNDELL MANGO, Byzantine Maritime trade with the East (4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries), *Aram* 8 (1996) 139-163 and M. GEROLYMATOU, *Αγορές, έμποροι και εμπόριο στο Βυζάντιο (9ος-12ος αι.)* [National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Byzantine Research Monographs 10], Athens 2008, 117-121.

<sup>9</sup>. E. CHRYSOS, *Από τη Μυριόβιβλο του Φωτίου στο Κιτάπ αλ-Φίχριστ του αλ-Ναδίμ. Θρησκευτική Ορθοδοξία και θύραθεν παιδεία στο Βυζάντιο και το Ισλάμ, Graeco-Arabica* 5 (1993) 359-367.

10:10; Ezekiel 27:22, Jeremiah 6:20). Descriptions of the geographic space and patterns of environmental data, found in ancient texts, were harmonized with Christian religion and generated new ideas concerning the perception of the World.<sup>10</sup> The influence of this background became obvious in Byzantine scholarly works, both religious and secular. It became regular for Byzantine authors to insert ancient scientific evidence on the world and its natural origins in explanatory commentaries and religious literature.

This approach is clearly represented in the descriptions of the ecclesiastical historian Philostorgios (368-ca. 439), who, when narrating the diplomatic mission of Theophilos the Indian, refers to Eudaimon Arabia (Arabia Felix) and thereafter introduces detailed accounts of the countries visited by the emperor's ambassador. Philostorgios apropos of the earthly Paradise affirmed that the biggest animals were to be found in the eastern and southern regions of the Earth in spite of the heat that prevailed there. His historical narration conveys clearly and comprehensively every related data on the flora and fauna of these lands, including updated instructions from his own time. In Philostorgios' text the Arabian Peninsula was a remote area that was usually associated with the Far East, India and Africa. Confusions often arose concerning the geographical definition of these areas within the world of the East;<sup>11</sup> this misunderstanding sometimes led to misconceptions regarding their inhabitants or the existence of animals and plants.<sup>12</sup> The old misunderstandings and mistakes were sometimes repeated and occasionally new ones emerged, as in the case of Ioannis Tzetzes (12th c.), who, when quoting information on the Arabian Peninsula, names among ancient writers, Herodotus and Diodorus, and adds a note from the work *Persica* of Ctesias (5th-4th c. BC), which, however, was actually about the Indian subcontinent.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>. *ODB*, v. 1, 703 s.v. Environment (A. Kazhdan); for a brief but very informative overview on the beliefs towards animals and nature see Z. KÁDÁR, *Survivals of Greek Zoological Illuminations in Byzantine Manuscripts*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1978, 23-26; K. MACVEY, Zoology, in: *Late Antiquity: a Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. BOWERSOCK – P. BROWN – O. GRABAR, Cambridge MA – London 1999, 753-754; M. LEONTSINI, Οικόσιτα, ωδικά και εξωτικά πτηνά. Αισθητική πρόσληψη και χρηστικές όψεις (7ος-12ος αι.), in: *Animals and Environment in Byzantium (7th-12th c.)*, ed. I. ANAGNOSTAKIS – T. KOLIAS – E. PAPADOPOULOU [Institute for Byzantine Research, International Symposiums 21], Athens 2011, 285-288 for similar citations.

<sup>11</sup>. PH. MAYERSON, The Saracens and the Limes, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 262 (May 1986) 35-47.

<sup>12</sup>. KORDOSIS, Ἡ «ἄλλη Ἰνδική» καὶ ἡ νῆσος «Διβοῦς», 175, 176, n. 6; P. MAYERSON, A Confusion of Indias: Asian India and African India in the Byzantine Sources, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113 (1993) 169-174.

<sup>13</sup>. Ioannes Tzetzes, *Historiarum Variarum Chiliades*, ed. TH. KIESSLING, Hildesheim 1963, VII,144, 739; VIII,252, 985-992; see the relevant observations and the very useful literary commentary, in: A. G. NICHOLS, *The Complete Fragments of Ctesias of Cnidus: Translation and Commentary with an Introduction*, dissertation presented in the University of Florida 2008, 43-46, 230. See also K. KARTTUNEN, Ctesias in Transmission and Tradition, *Topoi* 7 (1997) 635-645, esp. 637.

Nevertheless a great number of these references to plants and animals in Byzantine texts served to perpetuate the ancient idealized image of abundance in the land of Eudaimon Arabia (Arabia Felix).<sup>14</sup> As Philostorgios reached the end of the relevant chapter, he stated that *in a word, the whole region of the Homerites, even up to the Red Sea itself, brings forth its produce twice every year, and for this reason it is called Arabia Felix*.<sup>15</sup> The recording of Philostorgios by the intellectual patriarch Photios (858-867 and 877-886) in his opus magnum, the *Bibliotheca*, did not save but criticism for his religious divergence, calling his work *supposedly Ecclesiastical History*;<sup>16</sup> Photios omitted almost everything related to the geography and the natural environment of the East in his synopsis of the text of Philostorgios; this particularity was rather an exception, because *Bibliotheca* preserved significant ancient texts with invaluable information on the Arabian Peninsula, a fact that fitted in the broader occupation of the Byzantine scholars with the Roman literary past.<sup>17</sup> Hence, this knowledge that had its roots in ancient Greek writers, reflected furthermore some actual relationships between the two worlds,<sup>18</sup> which had become stronger during the Roman times; since then most of the previous experience was renewed and updated within the framework of relations between Arabs and Byzantines.<sup>19</sup>

### Arabia Felix: a place of wealth and prosperity, real and imaginary

The Byzantines, apart from fertile Arabia, also knew Arabia Petraea and Arabia Deserta. Arabia Petraea was mentioned by Claudius Ptolemaeus (2nd c. AD) as the administrative area that included the town of Petra, while the latter was identical with the desert of Arabia, already referred to by Strabo<sup>20</sup>, and also well

<sup>14</sup>. Philostorgios, *Kirchengeschichte. Mit dem Leben des Lucian von Antiochien und den Fragmenten eines arianischen Historiographen*, ed. J. BIDEZ. Auflage, bearb. von F. WINKELMANN [Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte], Berlin 1981, III, 11, 39-42.

<sup>15</sup>. Philostorgios, *Kirchengeschichte*, III, 11, 42.

<sup>16</sup>. Philostorgios (cod. 40), *Photius, Bibliothèque, tome I (Codices 246-256)*, ed. R. HENRY, Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1959, 23. BR. CROKE, Tradition and originality in Photius' historical reading, in: *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in honour of Roger Scott*, ed. J. BURKE – U. BETKA – P. BUCKLEY – K. HAY – R. SCOTT – A. STEPHENSON [Byzantina Australiensia 16], Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies 2006, 65-66.

<sup>17</sup>. A. MARKOPOULOS, Roman Antiquarianism: Aspects of the Roman Past in the Middle Byzantine Period (9th–11th centuries), *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, ed. E. JEFFREYS – F. K. HAARER, Burlington: Ashgate 2006, v. 1, 283-285.

<sup>18</sup>. On these ancient contacts see J.-F. BRETON, Arabie méridionale et Orient hellénisé, in: *L'Arabie et ses mers bordières*, ed. J.-F. SALLES [Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient 16], Lyon 1988, 191-199.

<sup>19</sup>. D. A. ZAKYTHINOS, Byzance et les Arabes dans leurs rapports intellectuels, *L'Hellénisme Contemporain*, Athènes 1947, 42-54.

<sup>20</sup>. Claudii Ptolemaei, *Geographia*, ed. K. MÜLLER, Paris: Didot, 1883, v. I, pars. II, 6, 7, 3, 4; cf. PH. HITTI, *The History of Arabs from the Earliest Times to the Present*, London – N. York

known from hagiography since saints and hermits who came from there sought for monastic life in near by areas.<sup>21</sup> However, the secular tradition represented by historiography, literature and geographical works in Byzantium, in most cases, describes Arabia as a rich and fortunate place. These images of Arabia and Arabs in the Byzantine writers,<sup>22</sup> even those found in hagiography, must have derived from these classical stereotypes. References to rare or exotic plants and animals in Byzantine texts served to perpetuate the ancient standardized view of abundance in the land of Eudaimon Arabia (Arabia Felix) and sometimes gave the impression that the entire peninsula was a place of marvel. The starting point for this image of Arabia was the *History* of Herodotus, who presented the country as the last of the inhabited lands towards the south parts of the Earth, and inserted before the description of Arabia, details on the flora and fauna of the Indian peninsula. Endemic animals and plants of Arabia appear in this text as *mirabilia* (*θωμασιότερον*, iii,111; *θωμασιότερον*, iii,112). The description of a series of aromatic plants and animal species basically associated the harvest of these plants with the particularities of the surrounding fauna. Such animals were the small winged snakes, as well as some other winged creatures, such as bats and great birds, as well as goats, the latter offering the gum-match from its beard called *ledanon*. The final part of Herodotus' narration is devoted to sheep,<sup>23</sup> which later became the main characteristic of Arabic nomadic life although this animal was connected to

1961, 44-45. The meaning of the term changed however, as shown in Malchus marking the Rocky Arabia, further East see I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D.C. 1989, 68-69; H.I. MACADAM, Strabo, Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy of Alexandria: Three Views of Ancient Arabia and its Peoples, in : *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel*, Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 24-27 Juin 1987 [Travaux du Centre de Recherche sur le Proche-Orient et la Grèce Antiques 10], ed. T. FAHD, Leiden 1989, 289-318.

<sup>21</sup>. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*, 289-306; J. BEAUCAMP – CH. ROBIN, Le christianisme dans la péninsule Arabique d'après l'épigraphie et l'archéologie, *TM* 8 (1981), Hommage à M. Paul Lemerle, 45-61; the interest in the monastic life attracted residents from Arabia, see for example J. PATRICH, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism. A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism. Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D.C. 1995, 280-281; M. S. KORDOSIS, *Ιστοριογεωγραφικά πρωτοβυζαντινών και εν γένει παλαιохριστιανικών χρόνων* [Βιβλιοθήκη Ιστορικών Μελετών 264], Athens 1996, 41, 157, 188, 316.

<sup>22</sup>. CHRISTIDES, The names Ἄραβες, Σαρακηνοί etc., 329-333.

<sup>23</sup>. Herodotus with an English translation by A. D. GODLEY, in four vols. [The Loeb classical library], v. 2, Books III-IV, London – Cambridge MA 1971, III,107-113; cf. *The Geography of Strabo*, with an English translation by H. L. JONES in eight vols. [The Loeb classical library], London – Cambridge MA 1966, v. 7, XVI.4,19; Aelian, *On the characteristics of Animals*, translated by A. F. SCHOLFIELD [The Loeb Classical Library], v. 2, Books VI-IX, Cambridge MA – London 1959, VII.27. On sheep and other mammals see A. S. GILBERT, The Native Fauna of the Ancient Near East, in: *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East*, ed. B. J. COLLINS [Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section 1. The Near and Middle East 64], Leiden 2002, 13-28.



India and Ethiopia in later tradition.<sup>24</sup> Camels, which were reported frequently for their participation in war and transportations, were more systematically presented in Aristotle's work *On Animals*. In fact, he remarked that the camels in the southern parts of the peninsula belonged to a distinct kind, different than other camels.<sup>25</sup>

It becomes evident though that the greatest part of Herodotus' text is taken up by the flavours and spices, which were the prime symbol of wealth and luxury in the Ancient and later on, the Byzantine world.<sup>26</sup> The winged serpents are later found in Aelian (ca. 175-ca. 235), when he speaks of the Egyptian black ibis, which prevented these snakes from crossing the Red Sea.<sup>27</sup> Accounts of Arabia, especially those included in the summarized text of Agatharchides, have come down to us through the *Bibliotheca* of Photios, which referred to the Sabaei, as a people dominated by eudaimonia, i.e. prosperity.<sup>28</sup> Agatharchides initially described the sea between Africa and the peninsula and then presented its fish as beasts. In addition in another paragraph – preserved only in the *Bibliotheca* of Photios – he refers to Phoinikon, a locality since then consistently linked to the broader region found in the western part of the Arabian Peninsula. The next place name is *Nessa*, a marshy land with ducks, which was near those regions known for the abundance of perfumes and incense, transported from there in large quantities.<sup>29</sup> The wealth of the Sabeans, with the large flocks, aromatic plants and forests of palms and other trees, which were inhabited by snakes, as testified by Herodotus as

<sup>24</sup>. P. SCHNEIDER, *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde. Interférences et confusions aux extrémités du Monde Antique (VIIIe siècle avant J.-C. – VIe siècle après J.-C.)*, Rome: École Française de Rome 2004, 174-175, with a citation from Pliny (8,212) for the absence of porc in Arabia.

<sup>25</sup>. Aristotle, *Historia Animalium* ed. A. L. PECK [The Loeb Classical Library], v. 1. Books I-III, London – Cambridge MA 1965, II,1; III,20; idem, v. 2, Books IV-VI, London – Cambridge MA 1970, V,14; see also HITTITTI, *The History of Arabs*, 46-48; RETSÖ, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, 256; *Lexicon des Mittelalters*, v. 5, s.v. Kamel (CH. HÜNEMÖRDER).

<sup>26</sup>. Herodotus, III,113: airs wondrous sweet blow from that land; see I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century, Volume II, Part 2: Economic, Social, and Cultural History*, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C. 2009, 51.

<sup>27</sup>. Aelian, Books I-V, Cambridge MA – London 1958, v. 1, II,38.

<sup>28</sup>. Agatharchide (cod. 250), Photius, *Bibliothèque*, tome VII (Codices 246-256), ed. R. HENRY, Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1977, 183. For the dating of the text and the mission see A. MARKOPOULOS, Νέα στοιχεία για την χρονολόγηση της «Βιβλιοθήκης» τοῦ Φωτίου, *Σύμμεικτα* 7 (1987) 165-181, esp. 170-171 and on the embassy to the Arabs as imitation of earlier glorious embassies of known personalities such as John the Grammarian and Leo the Philosopher see V. VLYSSIDOU, Σχετικά με την πρεσβεία τῦ Φωτίου "Ἐπ' Ἀσσυρίους", *Δίπτυχα* 5 (1991) 270-279. See also A. KAZHDAN, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850-1000)*, ed. CHR. ANGELIDI [The National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Byzantine Research, Research Series 4] Athens 2006, 10-12. On the use and the evaluation of classical texts *ibid.*, 18-20.

<sup>29</sup>. Agatharchide (cod. 250), 180, n. 3; J. DESANGES, Du bon usage d'Agatharchide ou de la nécessité de la Quellenforschung, *Geographica Historica*, ed. P. ARNAUD – P. COUNILLON, Bordeaux – Nice 1998, 69-82; on the production of incense and myrrh in Arabia see SCHNEIDER, *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde*, 195-198.

well, far surpassed any other peoples' wealth.<sup>30</sup> Similar information was repeated by Strabo (63/64 BC-ca. AD 24), who in turn, transmitted considerable knowledge on the Arabian Peninsula and its riches to later writers. However he was the first author to mention the tent-dwelling Arabs (Arabian Scenitae), thus alluding to a characteristic of the populations of the peninsula, would later function as a basic pattern of their life in many writers of Roman and Byzantine times. His introductory remarks are followed by an extensive and detailed description, borrowed from Artemidorus, containing various data on the fauna and flora of certain areas of the peninsula. Some regions of Arabia towards the South, and opposite Ethiopia were, according to Strabo, excessively rich, producing honey<sup>31</sup> and – besides horses, mules and hogs – were known for the numerous herds of animals, as well as birds of every kind, except geese and chickens. Then, Strabo adds information on the production and distribution sites of frankincense and myrrh, which were carried to the Nabateans by the Minaeans and the Gerrhaeans. Important is the reference on the region of Poseidium and the grove of palm trees (Phoinikon), famous for their fertility, and the island of Phocae, named after the endemic seals. The part describing the Nabataean country with its abundance of cattle and the wooded plain adequately supplied with water – also with cattle of all kinds – covers a significant portion of the text. Strabo additionally asserted that animals, like mules, wild camels, harts, and hinds, lions, leopards, and wolves could also frequently be found.<sup>32</sup>

*Phoinikon kome*, the palm grove, an area of Arabia with palm trees was identical in all probability to that mentioned by Prokopios (I. 19), the 6th c. historian. According to Prokopios, the Saracens held the coast beyond the limits of Palestine and lived in a forest of palm trees. The forest of palms was widespread throughout the country, where nothing else besides palms would grow. This palm grove was donated to Justinian I by the king Avoucharavos<sup>33</sup>, who also proved, in the words of Prokopios a capable warrior. Prokopios in this section of the narrative seemed sceptical of the value of this offer to Justinian. It was indeed stated that the area beyond this place was totally dry and had nothing to offer to Byzantium.<sup>34</sup> Prokopios was probably unaware of the strategic position of the Phoinikon or

<sup>30</sup>. Agatharchide (cod. 250), 180, n. 3. 183-187.

<sup>31</sup>. On the "honey" of Arabia see, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, XX.ii, 36, 397: *Formerly honey was from dew and was found in the leaves of reeds... in India and Arabia honey is still found attached on branches*; SCHNEIDER, *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde*, 208.

<sup>32</sup>. *The Geography of Strabo*, v. 7, XVI.3,1; XVI.4,2; XVI. 4,4; XVI. 4,18-22.

<sup>33</sup>. I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century, Volume I, Part 1: Political and Military History*, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D.C. 1995, 38-39, 84, 107, 125-130; KORDOSIS, *Ιστοριογεωγραφικά*, 92-93.

<sup>34</sup>. Procopii Caesariensis, *Opera omnia*, I-II, *De Bellis*, libri I-VIII, ed. J. HAURY – G. WIRTH, Leipzig 1962, v. I, 1,19,8-14, 101,24-102,17; cf. *De aedificiis*, ed. G. WIRTH, Leipzig 1964, v. IV, 5,8,2, 168,7-11; cf. I. SHAHĪD, Ghassānid and Umayyad structures: a case of Byzance après Byzance, in: *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam VII-VIIIe siècle* (Actes du colloque international, Lyon, Paris 11-15 Septembre 1990), ed. P. CANIVET – J.-P. REY-COQUAIS, Damascus 1992, 300.

rather wanted to undermine the policy of alliance, which was replacing a clear and open Byzantine domination in the peninsula with military action; or perhaps he wanted to demonstrate his reservations concerning the control of that the area by the Byzantines. Although this locality (Phoinikon kome) was already a point of reference of the Arabian Peninsula in Claudius Ptolemaeus, Agatharchides and Strabo, Prokopios' allusion does not seem to be an antiquarian citation; he rather gives the impression that he described Phoinikon kome in order to criticize Justinian's negotiations with the Ghassanids.

Arabia was projected in many ways as a land of perfumes in the narrative of Herodotus, in the extract from Agatharchides included in the *Bibliotheca* of Photios and in Strabo's text. Byzantine saints' lives confirm the same reality through information related to financial transactions or contemporary everyday life. The trade of perfumes along the coast of Arabia was mentioned in the *Martyrion* of Saint Arethas (6th c.), where it is also added that the country of the Homerites lies to the south of the site, which was under the control of the Romans and was called Phoinikon,<sup>35</sup> a hint on the transactions of this place rather unknown to Prokopios. Fragrance from Arabia among other oriental countries was also mentioned in the *Life* of Saint Symeon the Stylite the Younger, although the saint, coming from a family dealing with the trade of perfumes in Antioch, rejected the use of such offerings when the donors were not pure.<sup>36</sup> The provision of essences in the market of Constantinople as well as of other perfumes was subjected to very strict rules and was controlled from a certain guild, which was under the supervision of the eparch of the capital city, a very high official of the Byzantine administration affiliated with the emperor; this fact suggests that the consumption of these goods was an important issue for the Byzantine central authorities and for those who profited from these valuable products.<sup>37</sup> It must be underlined that perfumes were severely criticized by Church fathers as a sophisticated care for the body. However, myrrh was used widely as a cosmetic by women, despite the fact that this was

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<sup>35</sup>. *Le martyre de Saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons (BHG 166)*, édition critique, étude et annotation M. DETORAKI; traduction par J. BEAUCAMP; appendice sur les versions orientales par A. BINGGELI [Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance Monographies 27], Paris 2007, 2, 17-187, and 186 n. 21. Arabia as an intermediate area of the perfume trade in ancient sources is presented by SCHNEIDER, *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde*, 246-247. On the political conditions prevailing in the area see V. CHRISTIDES, The Himyarite-Ethiopian war and the Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia in the acts of Gregentius (ca. 530 A.D.), *Annales d'Éthiopie* 9 (1972) 115-146.

<sup>36</sup>. P. VAN DEN VEN, *La Vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le jeune (521-592)* [Subsidia Hagiographica 32], Bruxelles 1962, tome I, 222, 192-193; for the influence of the saint among the local nomadic populations see V. CHRISTIDES, Arabs as barbaroi before the Rise of Islam, *Balkan Studies* 10 (1969) 320.

<sup>37</sup>. *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen*, Einführung, Edition, Übersetzung und Indices von J. KODER [CFHB 32], Wien 1991, 10, 1-6, 110-112. See also the recent and extensive commentary by T. G. KOLIAS – M. CHRONE, *Τὸ Ἐπαρχικὸν Βιβλίον Λέοντος ΣΤ' τοῦ Σοφοῦ, Εἰσαγωγή, ἀπόδοσις κειμένου στὴ νέα Ἑλληνικὴ, σχολιασμός*, Athens 2010, 164-179.

constantly condemned, as evident by the relevant recurring admonitions.<sup>38</sup> These prohibitions were also addressed to soldiers and even to the clergy.<sup>39</sup> In the official manual of Byzantine imperial etiquette, known as *De cerimoniis* (10th c.), it is stated that after a meal the guests washed their hands with flavoured creams and perfumes.<sup>40</sup> Another imperial manual contained instructions on the perfumes and herbs, which must be included in the imperial luggage during military expeditions.<sup>41</sup> Gifts dispatched with embassies, accompanying money donations, included expensive perfumes such as the thirty sacks of incense (thylakia of thymiama) and the five hundred measures of fragrant oil (aleipta), which Constantine VII entrusted to the protospatharios Epiphanius during an expedition in 935 to Longobardia.<sup>42</sup> Myrrh and incense were moreover important elements in cult practices and the Byzantines believed that they should mainly be offered during religious ceremonies.<sup>43</sup> Both of them were used as medicinal plants in agricultural activities too. In the *Life* of Theophanes the Confessor it is mentioned, for example, that people tried to remove the locusts from the Saint's coffin with

<sup>38</sup> S. Iohannis Chrysostomi, Homilia, PG 62, II,3 col. 513; cf. PH. KOUKOULES, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός*, Athens 1951, v. 4, 346-347 and 349 and IDEM, *ibid.*, v. 5, 44. For a general account of the provenance of the perfumes see also, IDEM, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός*, Athens 1952, v. 2/1, 205; cf. B. CASEAU, Incense and Fragrances from House to Church, in: *Material Culture and Well-Being in Byzantium (400-1453)*, ed. M. GRÜNBAERT – E. KISLINGER – A. MUTHESIUS – D. STATHAKOPOULOS [Verlages der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften], Vienne 2007, 75-92.

<sup>39</sup> K. RHALLES – M. POTLES, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, Athens 1852, v. 2, 622-623 (canon 16); KOUKOULES, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός*, v. 4, 347-348.

<sup>40</sup> Constantini Porphyrogeniti, *De cerimoniis aulae byzantinae*, ed. I. I. REISKE [CSHB], Bonn 1829, v. 1, II.15, 592,14-17; KOUKOULES, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός*, v. 5, 185, 347, 349. See also S. W. REINERT, The Muslim Presence in Constantinople, 9th-15th Centuries: Some Preliminary observations, in: *Studies on the Internal Diaspora*, ed. H. AHRWEILER – A. LAIOU, Washington D.C. 1998, 125-150, esp. 130-133.

<sup>41</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Three treatises on imperial military expeditions*, ed. J. F. HALDON [CFHB 28], Vienna 1990, C,209, 106,209; 108,219-222; see also M. F. HENDY, *Studies in the Byzantine monetary economy, c. 300-1450*, N. York: Cambridge University Press 1985, 307; on this information and many others for the use of pharmaceutical materials and cosmetics see A. MCCABE, Imported *materia medica*, 4th-12th centuries, and Byzantine pharmacology, in: *Byzantine trade, 4th-12th centuries: the archaeology of local, regional and international exchange* ed. M. MUNDELL MANGO (Papers of the thirty-eighth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St John's College, University of Oxford, March 2004) [Publications of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies 14], Farnham – Burlington 2009, 288.

<sup>42</sup> Constantini Porphyrogeniti, *De cerimoniis*, II,44, 661,14-15; HENDY, *Studies*, 268; on the mission see T. C. LOUNGHIS, *Les ambassades byzantines en Occident depuis la fondation des états barbares jusqu'aux Croisades (407-1096)*, Athens 1980, 200-210, 321 with relevant bibliography.

<sup>43</sup> P. N. ANDROUDIS, Το εμπόριο των αρωμάτων και των αρωματικών φυτών στο Βυζάντιο, in: *Φαρμακευτικά και αρωματικά φυτά. Παραδοσιακές χρήσεις τους και δυνατότητες αξιοποίησής τους*, Ζ' τριήμερο Εργασίας, Κύπρος, Παραλίμνι 21-25 Μαρτίου 1997, Πολιτιστικό Τεχνολογικό Ίδρυμα ETBA, Athens 2001, 138-152.

myrrh,<sup>44</sup> implying that purification was obtained through the intervention of the holy relic, but also, in all probability, thanks to the therapeutic properties of the fragrance. The use of incense and myrrh for cleaning beehives, along with aromatic herbs were also referred to by saint Ioannis Chrysostomos and the *Geoponica* (10th c.),<sup>45</sup> a work on agricultural topics compiled in the 10th century from earlier treatises, whereas their scent was also used for trapping wild pigeons.<sup>46</sup>

It seems that the memory of the name Felix Arabia must have survived due to the continuous study of texts of the classical period, which was intensified during the Middle Byzantine era. Felix Arabia is mentioned in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* (10th c.), commemorating the feast day of Saint Gregentios, who was sent as bishop to southern Arabia when the area was under Aksumite control, and the memory of the eunuch of the queen Kandake.<sup>47</sup> As already indicated, Felix Arabia, was a term formerly known for the region and was occasionally still mentioned in Byzantine sources after the rise of Islam, even within the context of contemporary events and circumstances, in the texts of the Middle Byzantine period such as the *Short History* of Nikephoros, the *Chronography* of Theophanes (9th c.), *De Administando Imperio* and *De cerimoniis* (10th c.) and Ioannes Skylitzes' *Synopsis* (11th c.).<sup>48</sup> Eudaimon Arabia, the Blessed Arabia, is also used as a reference point for the region, that surrounded the territory the Saracens come from, in the *Tactica* of Leo VI (886-912), a 10th century treatise on warfare. According to the author, the Saracens were Arabs by race and earlier lived near the entrance to Blessed Arabia.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup>. K. KRUMBACHER, *Eine neue Vita des Theophanes Confessor*, Sitzb. d. Bayr. Ak. 1897, 398; cf. PH. KOUKOULES, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμὸς*, Athens 1952, v. 5, 273.

<sup>45</sup>. S. Iohannis Chrysostomi, *Homilia XV*, PG 62, col. 105; *Geoponica sive Cassiani Bassi scholastici de re rustica eclogae* ed. H. BECK, Stuttgart: Teubner 1994, XV,2,20, 440; KOUKOULES, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμὸς*, Athens 1952, v. 5, 301. See also A. A. CARRARA, *Geoponica and Nabatean Agriculture: A New Approach into their Sources and Authorship*, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 16 (2006) 103-132.

<sup>46</sup>. KOUKOULES, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμὸς*, v. 5, 405.

<sup>47</sup>. *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi, Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, ed. H. DELEHAYE, Bruxelles 1902, 329, 11 and 788,7.

<sup>48</sup>. Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short History*, Text, Translation and Commentary by C. MANGO [CFHB 13], Washington D.C. 1990, 18, 64,22-66,2; Theophanis, *Chronographia*, ed. C. DE BOOR, Leipzig: Teubner 1883-1885 (N. York 1980), v. I, 416,21; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administando Imperio*, ed. G. MORAVCIK [CFHB 1], Washington 1967, 25,65-66,82, 106,108; Constantini Porphyrogeniti, *De cerimoniis*, II.15, 586,16 (Saracen friends) and 691,24 (the sovereign of Arabia Felix) and Ioannis Scylitzae, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. I. THURN [CFHB 5], Berlin – N. York 1973, 474,97-98; see also, *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar*, Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation by A. BERGER. With a contribution of G. FIACCADORI [Millennium Studies 7], Berlin – N. York: de Gruyter 2006, 812, n. 5.

<sup>49</sup>. *The Taktika of Leo VI*, Text, Translation, and Commentary by G. DENNIS [CFHB 49], Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D.C. 2010, 18,104, 474-475, n.24.

This knowledge grew again with the renewal of the scholastic approach in the study of ancient texts. Michael Psellos (11th c.) mentioned ointments and perfumes in the letter addressed to the Patriarch of Antioch, in order to praise the correspondent's intellectual authority, by stating that it was equal to the quantities of those fragrances of Arabia Felix.<sup>50</sup> Fragrant plants of Arabia were also reported by Byzantine scholars, such as the metropolitan of Thessalonica, Eustathios, and Ioannis Tzetzes, both active in intellectual circles of the 12th century. The commentary composed by Eustathius, on the work entitled *Orbis Descriptio*,<sup>51</sup> a geographical treatise of Dionysius Periegetes (1st c.), a contemporary of Strabo, includes a series of annotations concerning the bliss and wealth of Arabia, while associating the scent of myrrh, the incense as well as *cassia*, *cinnamon* and *ledanon*, to miraculous stories of ancient Greek mythology,<sup>52</sup> apparently because this was appropriate for the antiquarian explorations of the era. The reference by Ioannis Tzetzes to the scent of a garden, compared with perfumes of Arabia belongs to the same literary atmosphere.<sup>53</sup> Gardens, identified with Arabia because of their smell, are mentioned in rhetorical texts, such as the works describing the courtyards of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople by Nikolaos Mesarites (1163/4-ca.1214) and the church of Saint Anna.<sup>54</sup> This image of the East as a region with wonderful flora and fauna, filled with aromas, was based on the belief in the location of Paradise in remote eastern territories. Philostorgios' descriptions of these regions had their origins in similar beliefs.<sup>55</sup> Some Byzantine theologians and scholars concluded that Paradise bordered the earth in these areas. Multiple examples exist: an extract in the *Chronicle* of Georgios Monachos (9th c.), tried to combine knowledge deriving from ancient cosmographers with Christian beliefs to support the view that Paradise lied to the East of the Universe and was full of fruits with sweet smells, while the

<sup>50</sup>. Michaelis Pselli, *Scripta minora*, 2. *Epistulae*, ed. L. KURTZ – F. DREXL, Milan 1941, n. 88, 116-117.

<sup>51</sup>. Eustathii, *Commentarii, Geographi Graeci Minores*, ed. K. MÜLLER, Paris 1861 (Hildesheim: G. Olms 1965), v. 2, 161-164.

<sup>52</sup>. Eustathii *Commentarii, Geographi Graeci Minores*, 381-384. On relevant citations in ancient texts see G. W. VAN BEEK, Frankincense and Myrrh in Ancient South Arabia, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 78 (1958) 141-152; SCHNEIDER, *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde*, 461.

<sup>53</sup>. Ioannes Tzetzes, *Epistulae*, ed. P. A. M. LEONE, Leipzig 1972, n. 51, 53,7.

<sup>54</sup>. Nicolaus Mesarites, *Descriptio ecclesiae SS. Apostolorum*, 3, 5,2; see G. DOWNEY, Nikolaos Mesarites: Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* N.S. 47 (1957) 897-918; J. WOLSCHKE-BULMAHN, The Study of Byzantine Gardens: Some Questions and Observations from a Byzantine Historian, in: *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. A. LITTLEWOOD – H. MAGUIRE – J. WOLSCHKE-BULMAHN, Washington 2002, 11; see also M.-L. DOLEZAL – M. MAVROUDI, Theodore Hyrtakenos' Description of the Garden of St. Anna and the Ekphrasis of Gardens, in: *Byzantine Garden Culture*, 147 and n. 22.

<sup>55</sup>. Philostorgius, *Kirchengeschichte*, III,11, 42; see also A. SCAFI, *Mapping Paradise. A History of Heaven in Earth*, *The British Library*, London 2006, 32-42.

breeze of the winds transferred this aroma to plants of the earth and to palm trees.<sup>56</sup> As this original but idealistic picture, inherited by ancient literary and biblical tradition was firmly founded, some more realistic features dictated by new historical realities gave the lead on different factors which were equally important for the knowledge of the Byzantines on the Arabian Peninsula

### **Arabia Petraea and Deserta, Scenites and Saracens: old names in new context**

The nomadic life of the Arabs, known already from Herodotus, was also described by Pseudo-Scylax in his work *Periplus*. In this early text the Arabs were presented as a community of horse-riding herders with pastures of all kinds of animals (sheep, goats and camels) who lived in the lands around Syria.<sup>57</sup> Regions with herds and camels were furthermore mentioned in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, a Greek text written by an anonymous navigator (1st c.). In this guide to navigating and trading between the Mediterranean and India, which lists all seaports with the goods traded at each one, among them some luxurious items, there is a hint about the offering of horses and pack mules to the chief officer of the area of Musa. Arabia Felix was one of the seaports mentioned in the *Periplus*, where it is also pointed out that although the name had its origins in earlier days, vessels sailed only this far in the past<sup>58</sup>. This remark would indeed refer to the ancient belief that Arabia was the country that extended to the borders of the world, a fact that continued to be acknowledged by Philostorgios much later<sup>59</sup> and constantly used throughout the Middle Ages to attribute Paradise to these areas. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* reveals thus the essence of the economic geography at the time and highlights the two basic sources of the region's wealth: trade and animal husbandry. This outlook did not cover the entire peninsula. According to Strabo, Saracens were living in a country producing a few palms, the acanthus, and tamarisk and used to raise camels.<sup>60</sup> In the Byzantine universal chronicle composed by Georgios Synkellos (d. after 810) there is an excerpt from Berossus (early 3rd century BC), describing the Kingdom of Babylon, according to which the lands reaching as far as

<sup>56</sup>. Georgius Monachus, *Chronicon*, ed. C. DE BOOR – P. WIRTH, Stuttgart 1904 (reed. 1978), v. 1, 259,1-9.

<sup>57</sup>. Pseudo-Scylax *Geographi Graeci Minores*, Paris 1855 (Hildesheim: G. Olms 1965), v. 1, (105), 79.

<sup>58</sup>. *The Periplus Maris Erythraei*, text with Introduction, Translation and Commentary by L. CASSON, Princeton 1989, 20, 62-63, 26, 64-65; J. ROUGÉ, La Navigation en Mer Érythrée dans l'Antiquité, in : *L'Arabie et ses mers bordières*, ed. J.-F. SALLES [Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient 16], Lyon 1988, 59-74. For an account of the disposal of animal and plant products in the ports mentioned in this text see ED. FRÉZOULS, Quelques enseignements du Périples de la Mer Érythrée, *Ktema* 9 (1984) 320-323.

<sup>59</sup>. Philostorgios, *Kirchengeschichte*, III,4, 32.

<sup>60</sup>. *The Geography of Strabo*, with an English translation by H. L. JONES in eight vols. [The Loeb classical library], London – Cambridge MA 1969, v. 1, I.2, 32; v. 7, XVI. 4,2; XVI. 4, 27,

Arabia were barren and deprived of water;<sup>61</sup> this digression shows that the Byzantines were aware of the diversity of the terrain in the peninsula, when they wished to give accurate geographical and historical data.

Descriptions from literary texts, usually associated with the areas called Petraia and Deserta Arabia, are confirmed today by the archaeological research of settlement structures and by the identification of the distribution of places suitable for grazing animals or cultivation lands.<sup>62</sup> While the epithet Felix, relating to Arabia, constantly referred to the prosperity of the peninsula in Strabo and other contemporary historians like Diodore Siculus,<sup>63</sup> the reference to the tent-dwelling Arabs (Arabian Scenitae) established a key feature for the inhabitants in its central and northern regions. Saracens were identified with the people that later were called tent-dwelling by Ammianus Marcellinus (4th c.), who attributed to them a life based on hunting and stock breeding, but lacking settlements or agriculture of any kind.<sup>64</sup> This statement was not true, since many agricultural products were included in the daily diet of Arabs.<sup>65</sup> Closer to reality was the knowledge on the country of the Saracens. According to the anonymous treatise compiled in the middle of the 4th century, known as *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, Saracens inhabited the

<sup>61</sup>. Georgius Syncellus, *Ecloga Chronographica*, ed. A. A. MOSSHAMMER, Leipzig: Teubner 1984, 28,31-32.

<sup>62</sup>. G. R. D. KING, Settlement in Western and Central Arabia and the Gulf in the Sixth-Eight Centuries A.D., in: *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, II Land Use and Settlement Patterns*, ed. G. R. D. KING – A. CAMERON (Papers of the Second Workshop on Late Antiquity and Islam), Princeton – N. Jersey: The Darwin Press INC. 1994, 181-212.

<sup>63</sup>. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, with an English Translation by C. H. OLDFATHER [The Loeb classical library], v. 2, Book II (continued) 35-IV,58, London – Cambridge MA 1967, II,54,1-2: *the area inside the country holds a multitude of Arab nomads living in tents and feed large herds of animals, which graze on countless plains. Between this land and Eudaimon Arabia there is desert without water.* For the important position of the animals in the *Bibliotheca* of Diodorus see M. CASEVITZ, *Histoire mythique, histoire vrai: remarques sur les animaux chez Diodore de Sicile (principalement dans les cinq premiers livres de la Bibliothèqu historique)*, *Ktéma* 27 (2002), Hommage à E. Levy, 87-94.

<sup>64</sup>. Ammianus Marcellinus, with an English translation by J. C. ROLFE [The Loeb classical library], v. 2, London – Cambridge MA 1972, XXII,15,1; XXIII, 6.13. Marcellinus equates the Scenitae Arabs with the Saracens and attributes to them a savage and nomadic way of life, supported by hunting and by their flocks but lacking settlements or agriculture of any kind (XIV,4,1-7); I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century*, *Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection*, Washington D.C. 1984, 82-86. The same judgement was adapted by Leo VI see *The Taktika of Leo VI*, 18,130, 486-487; see E. JEFFREYS, *The Image of the Arabs in Byzantine Literature*, in: *The 17th International Byzantine Congress, Major Papers*, *Dumbarton Oaks – Georgetown University*, Washington D.C. August 3-8, 1986, New Rochelle – N. York 1986, 306-307. For the traditional distinction between farmers and livestock breeders see M. LEONTSINI, Ποιμένες και ποίμνια: αντιλήψεις σχετικά με την κτηνοτροφία και τα προϊόντα της στο Βυζάντιο (5ος-10ος αι.), *10th Scientific Meeting on The History of Greek Milk and its Products* [The Cultural Foundation of the Piraeus Bank Group and the Foundation Aristeidis Daskalopoulos], Athens 2008, 169-191.

<sup>65</sup>. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century, Volume II, Part 2*, 127-130.



regions near Bostra (province of Arabia), and benefited from the commercial traffic of this city.<sup>66</sup> In the same way, Saracens were mentioned in an approximately contemporary text entitled *Itinerary from Eden to the land of the Romans* referring to Little India, which has been considered to be Arabia<sup>67</sup>—or, at least, a section of the peninsula— and lived near Ailat, surrounding the port from which one could sail to the Red Sea.<sup>68</sup> In the *Onomasticon*, a text composed by the church historian and bishop of Caesarea, Eusebius (4th c.), attempting to locate biblical places, Saracens were people living in Madiam, in the desert of Arabia,<sup>69</sup> an area where Arabian tribes originated from, that would later be repeatedly referred to by the Byzantine writers.

The references to Saracens were multiplied since then. As Byzantine influence and interests in the Arabian Peninsula were challenged for a long time by the Sasanians<sup>70</sup> the central government of Constantinople and the local aristocracy continued to focus on the region either with peaceful policies or military actions; this ambivalent reality is evidenced in the frequency of the term Saracens in the sources of the 5th and 6th centuries. It seems however, that references to Saracens and tent-dwelling Arabs usually signified the non-Christians, who undermined Byzantine policies with alliances against them or with open claims to territorial control and tax revenues.<sup>71</sup> This perspective was formulated already by Saint Jerome (ca. 347-420), who also considered Arabs as Ishmaelites, and identified them with Saracens, the pagan tent-dwelling raiders of the lands on the eastern fringes of the Roman Empire.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup>. *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, Introduction, texte critique, traduction, notes et commentaire, par J. ROUGÉ, Sources Chrétiennes 124, Paris: Éditions du Cerf 1966, 20, 154 and 38, 177

<sup>67</sup>. MAYERSON, A Confusion of Indias, 170-171

<sup>68</sup>. *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, App. II, 352,34, 37.

<sup>69</sup>. E. KLOSTERMANN, *Eusebius Werke*, Band 3.1: *Das Onomastikon* [Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 11.1] Leipzig: Hinrichs 1904, 118,22 and 124,10. On the term Maddenoi found in Ioannis Malalas and other texts, in the broadest sense of the pagan see I. SHAHÍD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century, Volume I, Part 1*, 129.

<sup>70</sup>. G. GREATREX, *Rome and Persia at War, 502-532* [ARCA, Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 37], Leeds: Cairns 1998, 225-240. On pre-islamic Arabs mentioned in the Narrations of St. Nilus see V. CHRISTIDES, Once Again the «Narrations» of Nilus Sinaiticus, *Byzantion* 43 (1973) 45-46 and CH. MESSIS, La mémoire du «Je» souffrant: construire et écrire la mémoire personnelle dans les récits de captivité, in: *L'écriture de. Mémoire. La littérature de l'historiographie, Actes du IIIe colloque international philologique «EPMHNEIA»*, Nicosie, 6-8 mai 2004. eds. P. ODORICO – P. A. AGAPITOS – M. HINTERBERGER [Dossiers byzantins 6], Paris 2006, 115-120.

<sup>71</sup>. LETSIOS, *Βυζάντιο και Ερυθρά θάλασσα*, 90-91.

<sup>72</sup>. Saint Jérôme, *Lettres*, Texte établi et traduit par J. LABOURT, vol. I, Paris 1949, n. 7, p. 2; cf. D. GRAF, Rome and the Saracens: Reassessing the Nomadic Menace, in: *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel*, 349-351 (= IDEM, *Rome and the Arabian Frontier: from the Nabataeans to the Saracens*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1997, X).

Pressures on behalf of the tent-dwelling Arabs or Saracens were, according to the sources, becoming more intense already in the 5th century. Historians of the Early Byzantine era, some of whose work survives in fragmentary form, presented Saracens mainly as skilled warriors, occasionally allies of the empire's armies, such as the cavalry units, which supported Constantinople, during the attacks of the Scythians mentioned by the pagan writer and historian, Eunapios (345-414).<sup>73</sup> They were also known as raiders in the eastern Byzantine borders.<sup>74</sup> According to Byzantine sources the recruitment of Saracens strengthened the military capability of the tribe leader Amorkesos, who then proclaimed an official recognition of his authority, as an ally of the Byzantines, and occupied the island Iotabe in the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba,<sup>75</sup> an important point for navigation and taxation in the Red Sea.<sup>76</sup> As demonstrated by this episode, one link in the chain of alliances with the Ghassanids,<sup>77</sup> cultural discrimination, which included religious cult, did not comprise christianized Arabs, only pagan Saracens.<sup>78</sup> Images of the tribes of Arabia in the two major historical works of 6th century, those of Ioannes Malalas and Prokopios are also vivid; both of them highlighted the nomadic nature of these tribes life. Prokopios, amidst the narratives on Justinian's I diplomacy towards the Ghassanids and on the military characteristics of the Saracen allies of Byzantium, speaks about the controversy of tribal pasture lands (II.1.1).<sup>79</sup> It should be noted that Ioannis Malalas referred to Saracens mostly as barbarians in his accounts on relative events from the Roman past, while in a characteristic passage he gave a detailed description about dromedaries camels and various other animals, obtained

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<sup>73</sup>. Eunapius, fr. 42, deriving from Zosimus, see *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire, Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, Text translation and Historical Notes R. C. BLOCKLEY [ARCA, Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 10], Liverpool 1983, vol. 2, 65. For the event in other sources see G. DAGRON, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, Paris 1974, 110.

<sup>74</sup>. Priscus, fr .10; fr .26; see *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, 242-243 and 322-323.

<sup>75</sup>. Malchus, fr. 10; see *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, 405-407. For Amorkesos see J. R. MARTINDALE, *PLRE II: A.D. 395-527*, Cambridge 1980, 73; LETSIOS, *Βυζάντιο και Ερυθρά θάλασσα*, 227-231; IDEM, The Case of Amorkesos and the Question of the Roman Foederati in Arabia in the Vth Century, in: *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel*, 521-538.

<sup>76</sup>. LETSIOS, *Βυζάντιο και Ερυθρά θάλασσα*, 66, 229.

<sup>77</sup>. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century, Volume I, Part 1*, 129, 155, 159.

<sup>78</sup>. V. CHRISTIDES, Arabs as barbaroi before the Rise of Islam, *Balkan Studies* 10 (1969), 319-320; I. SHAHĪD, *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs*, Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984, 1-16, 33-41; JEFFREYS, The Image of the Arabs, 306.

<sup>79</sup>. JEFFREYS, The Image of the Arabs, 308, with the references to the sources; H. AHRWEILER, Byzantine Concepts of the Foreigner: The Case of the Nomads, in: *Studies on the Internal Diaspora*, ed. H. AHRWEILER – A. LAIOU, Washington 1998, 13.

as loot from the seizure of the tents of Alamoundaros,<sup>80</sup> precisely stressing the wealth of this Arab leader.

The historians of the 6th century provide some more details about life in the Arabian Peninsula when describing relations between Byzantium and the Arabs. Later, during the spiritual revival of the Middle Byzantine period, scholars were exploring information of a more intellectual character. In Photios' *Bibliotheca*, apart from the copy of the Erythraean Sea of Agatharchides mentioned already, there is an extract from the History composed by the Byzantine ambassador Nonnosos, reporting the mission to the Red Sea area, during the reign of Justinian I.<sup>81</sup> This text included sporadic references, at least those selected by Photios, to the traditions and customs of the people of Arabia.<sup>82</sup> Nonnosos made some observations on the habits of the tribes of Arabia; a similar comment was also made by the historian Sozomenos (ca. 400-ca. 450)<sup>83</sup>. His digression on local rituals and festivities, which imposed peace between animals and humans, reflected the balanced relationships between people and the natural environment in the South of the Arabian Peninsula and was rather considered so unusual that it was marked in the extract of Photios as an exceptional and admirable attitude on behalf of the inhabitants of Phoinikon kome. Perhaps, the highly protectionist attitudes towards animals found in the text of legal nature, conventionally entitled: *Legislation of saint Gregentios as by procurement of the most pious King Abramios*, known also as the Laws of the Homerites, were related to the contribution and the breeding of animals in everyday life and to their survival in these areas; it indicated presumably that such ancient customs were linked with this reality. According to these rules, punishment was provided for overburdening and beating animals.<sup>84</sup> The origin and

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<sup>80</sup>. Ioannis Malalae, *Chronographia*, ed. I. THURN [CFHB 35], Berlin – N. York: W. de Gruyter 2000, 169, 94; 177,35; 229,82; 231,61; 364,33-34.

<sup>81</sup>. Nonnosos (cod. 3), Photius, *Bibliothèque*, tome I (Codices 1-84), ed. R. HENRY, Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1950, 5-6. See LETSIOS, *Βυζάντιο και Ερυθρά Θάλασσα*, 252-253, 261; CH. ROBIN, Le royaume hujride, dit «royaume de Kinda», entre Himyar et Byzance, *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 140 (1996) 665-714; JEFFREYS, *The Image of the Arabs*, 309.

<sup>82</sup>. JEFFREYS, *The Image of the Arabs*, 309-310. For an assessment of these rituals see G. W. BOWERSOCK, Hellenism and Islam, in: *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, ed. E. R. HOFFMAN, Malden – Oxford – Carlton – Victoria: Blackwell Publishing Ltd 2007, 87.

<sup>83</sup>. Sozomenus, *Kirchengeschichte*, Hrsg. im Auftrage der Kommission für Spätantike Religionsgeschichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin von J. BIDEZ, Eingeleitet, zum Druck besorgt und mit Registern versehen von G. C. HANSEN, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1960, VI,38, 297,12-300,9; see KORDOSIS, *Το Βυζάντιο και ο δρόμος προς την Ανατολή*, 106; I. SHAHĪD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington D.C. 1984, 274-278; JEFFREYS, *The Image of the Arabs*, 310-311.

<sup>84</sup>. *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios*, 426,207-212; 428,251-257. The dating of the Grigentios' dossier and especially the Laws in the 8th c., possibly in relation with the Patriarchate of Alexandria is suggested by CH. MESSIS, La famille et ses enjeux dans l'organisation de la cité idéale chrétienne: le cas des lois des « Homérites », in: *Réseaux*

chronology of this legislative text, at least of its final version, are placed in 10th century Constantinople, but apart from its relation to Najrân, a region of Arabia where livestock was a vital element for survival, the legal provisions with similar content in earlier Byzantine legal tradition may offer a rational explanation for the presence of these regulations.<sup>85</sup> This relation between the peninsula's inhabitants and nomadic life was a more concrete and stable element found among writers of Byzantium, compared to its earlier profile as a region notable for abundance and wealth derived from the rare species of aromatic plants. This aspect of nomadic life may explain the hesitation expressed by Prokopios concerning the evaluation of the importance of the region of Phoinikon. The statements of Prokopios could be regarded as a comment against the policies of Justinian I in the region, rather than an argument on the natural beauty and its richness, as was evident in similar citations of ancient writers and contemporary sources of the sixth century, Nonnosos, the *Martyrion* of Saint Arethas, speaking of the Arabian Peninsula.

The approach of the Arabs by Menander, another historian of the 6th century, responded to the standards imposed by their nomadic life. He presented Arabs as living freely and not as subjects under any authority. At the same time, he also adopted the traditional view of Arabs as barbarians.<sup>86</sup> His contemporary ecclesiastical historian, Evagrius, mostly referring to the Ghassanids, described Arabs as Scenitic barbarians and preferred to highlight the elements of nomadic life and raiding of the tent-dwelling (Scenitae), and even to state that they could not be defeated because of the speed of their horses,<sup>87</sup> echoing the opinion expressed

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*familiaux à la fin de l'Antiquité et au Moyen Age*. In Memoriam A. Laiou – E. Patlagean (12-13 novembre 2010), forthcoming. I thank the author for the permission to study his manuscript. See also above n. 34 and 35.

<sup>85</sup>. *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios*, 84-86, 90-91; see the approach to address similar issues from Byzantine Law in: A. N. ΠΑΡΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΥ, *Οι «Νόμοι των Ομηριτών»*. *Ιεραποστολική προσέγγιση και Ιστορική – Νομική Συμβολή* [Forschungen zur Byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte - Athener Reihe 7], Athens – Komotini 1994, 271-273 with bibliography relevant to the use of horses by the Arabs. On legal prohibitions concerning animals in the Byzantine legislation see also SP. N. ΤΡΟΙΑΝΟΣ, *Τὰ ζῶα στὸ βυζαντινὸ δίκαιο, κοσμικὸ καὶ κανονικὸ*, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος* 75 (2004) 77-90. For the origins of legal rules from the biblical tradition and the position of animals in various legal systems already in antiquity see K. ΠΙΤΣΑΚΗΣ, *Τὸ ζῶο οἰονεὶ ὑποκείμενο Δικαίου. Μιὰ περιήγηση στὴ νομικὴ ἱστορία*, in: *Ἡ προστασία των ζῶων και το δίκαιο*, ed. I. K. ΚΑΡΑΚΟΣΤΑΣ – Α. ΒΡΕΔΕΜΑΣ, Athens: Sakkoulas 2005, 29-56.

<sup>86</sup>. *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, Introductory Essay, Text, Translation and Historiographical Notes R. C. BLOCKLEY [ARCA, Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 17], Liverpool 1985, 29-30; fr.6.1, 72-73; fr.9.1, 98-99, 100-101; fr.9.3, 110-111.

<sup>87</sup>. Evagrius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. J. BIDEZ – L. PARMENTIER, London 1898 (Amsterdam 1964), III,2, 100; III,36, 135; V,6, 201-202; V,20, 216; VI,2, 223; VI,22, 238. See P. GOUBERT, *Le problème Ghassanide à la veille de l'Islam*, *Actes du VI Congrès International d'Études byzantines*, Paris 1950, vol. I, 106.

earlier by Zosimos (ca. 490s-ca. 510s) on their skilled horsemanship.<sup>88</sup> Famous for its horses was the city of Najrân referred to in the Ethiopian-Homeritic war.<sup>89</sup> Horses were vital to the war, both of the Arabs and the Byzantines.<sup>90</sup> The belief that Arabs were people who made contact with the Byzantines through war, just as they had earlier done with the Romans,<sup>91</sup> becomes obvious in the work *De mensibus* of Ioannes Lydos (490-565), an official at Justinian's court. Lydos, in his presentation of the month of July, recorded an episode from Julius Caesar's life, related to a prescription for epilepsy given to the Roman emperor by Areta, the ruler of the Arabian Scenitae, based on an ointment created by vulture's entrails (liver and heart) and blood mixed with honey or water.<sup>92</sup> The use of medicinal substances coming from the East, some of them connected to a wide range of herbal products growing in the Arabian Peninsula, is an issue traditionally found in Byzantine books of pharmacology.<sup>93</sup> We could perhaps say that the search for elixirs from the East was an antique challenge, which increased greatly during the Byzantine era. Arabian Scenitae was a tribe closely linked to Romans in the text of Ioannes Lydos

<sup>88</sup>. Zosimi comitis et exadvocati fisci, *Historia nova*, ed. L. MENDELSSOHN, Leipzig 1877 (Hildesheim 1963), IV.22, 177; cf. JEFFREYS, *The Image of the Arabs*, 309.

<sup>89</sup>. *Le martyre de Saint Arethas et de ses compagnons*, 34,8; I. SHAHID, *The Martyrs of Najrân: New Documents* [Subsidia hagiographica 49], Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes 1971, 223; see also IDEM, *Byzantium in South Arabia*, *DOP* 33 (1979) 40 [= IDEM, *Byzantium and the Semitic Orient before the Rise of Islam*, London Variorum Reprints 1988, IX]; PAPATHANASIOU, *Oi «Nóμοι των Ομηριτών»*, 271-273; S. al-Marih, Najrân, in: *Roads of Arabia*, 365-369 (photos: *ibid.*, p. 367).

<sup>90</sup>. T. G. KOLIAS, *Ἡ πολεμικὴ τεχνολογία τῶν Βυζαντινῶν, Δωδώνη. Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρίδα τοῦ Τμήματος Ἱστορίας καὶ Αρχαιολογίας τῆς Φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἰωαννίνων* 18 (1989) 17-41; SHAHID, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century, Volume II, Part 2*, 230-234.

<sup>91</sup>. GRAF, *Rome and the Saracens*, 351-356. A basic study for understanding the various aspects of the evolution of the phenomenon is that of A. G. GROUCHEVOY, *Trois niveaux de phylarques. Étude terminologique sur les relations de Rome et de Byzance avec les Arabes avant l'Islam*, *Syria* 72 (1995) 105-131.

<sup>92</sup>. Ioannis Lydi, *Liber de Mensibus*, ed. R. WVENSCH, Stuttgart: Teubner 1967, IV,104, 143; M. MAAS, *John Lydos and the Roman Past: Antiquarianism and Politics in the Age of Justinian*, London: Routledge 1992, 53-58.

<sup>93</sup>. B. CASEAU, *Les usages médicaux de l'encens et des parfums. Un aspect de la médecine populaire antique et de sa christianisation*, in: *Air, miasmes et contagion. Les épidémies dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Âge*, ed. S. BAZIN-TACCHELLA – D. QUERUEL – É. SAMAMA [Hommes et Textes en Champagne], Langres 2001, 75-85; MCCABE, *Imported materia medica*, 275-278, 280, 282, 286, 291; A. TOUWAIDE, *Fluid Picture-Making across Borders, Genes, Media. Botanical Illustration from Byzantium to Baghdad, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries*, in: *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, and Convergence*, ed. J. ANDERSON (Proceedings of the 32th International Congress in the History of Art, Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art, CIHA), The University of Melbourne, 13-18 January 2008, Carlton (Australia) 2009, 159-163; IDEM, *The Legacy of Classical Antiquity in Byzantium and the West*, in: *Health and Healing from the Medieval Garden*, ed. P. DENDLE – A. A. TOUWAIDE (Proceedings of the 15 Annual Medieval Studies Conference at The Pennsylvania State University), Woodbridge 2008, 15-28.

and thus were offering their wise knowledge to their allies. The Roman roots of the contacts with the Saracens and the general image of the latter as nomads were displayed in the relevant passages in the historical work of Theophylaktos Simokattes (7th c.), who presented Saracens as allies of the Byzantines, and hastens to declare that the name had a Latin origin, and then to call them nomadic barbarians, repeating the cliché on nomadic life established since antiquity.<sup>94</sup> Similar is the picture that emerges from the references to Arabian Scenitae in later historical works, especially after the appearance of the Arabs at the eastern borders of the Empire. In the account of the year 630 in Theophanes' Chronography, presenting the movements of the Arabic tribes from the Midianite desert, Arabs apart from the Homerites, were mentioned as dwelling there, as keeping cattle themselves and as living in tents. According to the same text, some of them traded on their camels,<sup>95</sup> a typical animal of Arabic life, familiar to the Byzantines from trade and transportation of goods, but also from the battles with the Arabs, during which camels had always played a key role.<sup>96</sup> Almost the same story is repeated in the imperial treatise, known as *De Administrando Imperio*, compiled by a staff supervised by Constantine VII and addressed to his son Romanos, which also speaks about the traditional Arab genealogy of the 'Ishmaelite' tribes<sup>97</sup>, and repeats that the Fatemites, who lived in the district to the north of Mecca were also brave men and warriors and carefully trained for wars and battles, riding camels instead of horses.<sup>98</sup> The opportunity of disposal of horses is evident in the treaties concluded between Byzantium and Arabs in the year 676/7 and was renewed in 683/4. According to what we know from the later tradition, the first time between the agreed conditions was the delivery of fifty thoroughbred horses while the second of three hundred sixty five.<sup>99</sup> Still a thoroughbred horse was offered by Abimelech as a

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<sup>94</sup>. Theophylacti Simocattae *Historiae*, ed. C. DE BOOR - P. WIRTH, Stuttgart: Teubner 1972, II.2,5, 72,23-73,2; III.17.7, 146,12-14.

<sup>95</sup>. Theophanis, *Chronographia*, 333,18-19,22, 451,18; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 21,70, 88-89. See L. I. CONRAD, Theophanes and the Arabic historical tradition: some indications of intercultural transmission, *BF* 15 (1990) 1-44 (10-11): in *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*, ed. M. BONNER, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, USA Series [The Formation of the Classical Islamic World 8], Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum 2005, n. 12, 327-328.

<sup>96</sup>. *Le martyre de Saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons*, 34,11 273; M. DECKER, *Tilling the Hateful Earth. Agricultural Production and Trade in the Late Antique East* [Oxford Studies in Byzantium], Oxford 2009, 251-252, 255-257.

<sup>97</sup>. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 14,13, 76-77; see also v. II, *Commentary*, ed. R. J. H. JENKINS, London: University of London, The Athlone Press 1962, 70. B. KOUTABA-DELIVORIA, *Ο γεωγραφικός κόσμος του Κωνσταντίνου του Πορφυρογεννήτου. Α' Τὰ «Γεωγραφικά». Γενικά στοιχεία φυσικής γεωγραφίας, βιογεωγραφίας και ἀνθρωπογεωγραφίας* (Περιοδικό «Παρουσία»-Παράρτημα 22), Athens 1993, 16.

<sup>98</sup>. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 15,4,8,10-1, 78; see also v. II, 72. This district in chapter 21,70, 88 is called *Arabia Tracheia*.

<sup>99</sup>. Theophanis, *Chronographia*, 355, 25; 361,13.

present to seal the peace of 688 with Justinian II,<sup>100</sup> a fact that shows that the raising of such important animals, suitable for the Byzantine emperor, was also an emblem of strength of the Arab leader.

If however, the horse was for the Arabs an animal connected with the highest class and with diplomatic exchanges, the camel was since antiquity a trademark of the East,<sup>101</sup> as shown by its depictions: the floor mosaic in the Great Palace of Constantinople, the mosaic from the Aventine of Rome, now in the Vatican Museum, the Canon Table of the Tetraevangelon (manuscript Par. Gr. 64) from the middle of 11th century, and the illustrated copy of the *Cynegetica*, as well as some other known instances of Byzantine manuscripts.<sup>102</sup> Animal illustrations became common features of decoration in Byzantine art objects and manuscripts after the development of relations with the East and the Arab world.<sup>103</sup> Byzantines became more familiar with camels during the conflicts with the Arabs, but they were always known for their contribution in the Eastern trade since Antiquity.<sup>104</sup> According to military manuals, Byzantine generals and their soldiers had to be prepared when camels graze and must be very careful, because the sight of the camel frightened and confused horses not used to them, preventing them from advancing.<sup>105</sup> Another advice came from the constitution 18 in the aforementioned *Tactica* of Leo VI, dedicated to the *practices of various People and of the Romans in their Battle formations*. Instructions drew attention to the fact that Arabs used camels instead of wagons and pack animals to carry their baggage and repeated that the horses could not proceed because of the confusion caused by the camels and

<sup>100</sup>. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 22,12 94; *ibid.*, v. II, 79. KOUTABA-DELIVORIA, *Ο γεωγραφικός κόσμος του Κωνσταντίνου του Πορφυρογεννήτου*, 198; N. DROCOURT, Les animaux comme cadeaux d'ambassade entre Byzance et ses voisins (VIIe-XIIIe siècle), in: *Byzance et ses peripheries*, ed. B. DOUMERC – CHR. PICARD (= Hommage à A. Ducellier), Toulouse 2004, 74-80.

<sup>101</sup>. A. CUTLER, Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Diplomacy, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38 (2008) 79-101. RETSÖ, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, 256; camels existed though in other regions than the East, such as the one whose skeleton was found in the coast of Thermaikos in the Kassandra peninsula (Megali Kypsa, Halkidiki), see I. A. PAPAGGELOS, Η κτηνοτροφία στη Χαλκιδική κατά τους Μέσους Χρόνους, in: *Animals and Environment in Byzantium (7th-12th c.)*, 467-468, pl. 9.

<sup>102</sup>. I. SPATHARAKIS, *The Illustrations of the Cynegetica in Venice. Codex Marcianus Graecus Z 139* [Bibliotheca Nazionale Marciana Venezia], Leiden 2004, 155-157, 158-159, 196, 211, 223, 230 (fig. 113).

<sup>103</sup>. KÁDÁR, *Survivals of Greek Zoological Illuminations*, 124.

<sup>104</sup>. C. CUSSET, Ya-t-il une curiosité animalière dans le *Périples de la Mer Érythrée?*, *Topoi* 7 (1997) 647-660, esp. 649.

<sup>105</sup>. *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, Text, Translation, and Notes by G. T. DENNIS [CFHB 25], Washington D.C. 1985, 10,178,114, 118, 120, 123. This advice is noted already in Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. GODLEY, in four vols. [The Loeb classical library], v. 1. Books I-II, London – Cambridge MA 1966, I,80: *the camels opposite the horsemen for this reason, because the horse has a fear of the camel and cannot endure either to see his form or to scent his smell*.

even that the hordes of camels and pack animals were often placed in the middle of a multitude of soldiers and a thick array of pennants above them to give the appearance of a large crowd of soldiers.<sup>106</sup> Since the camel played an important role in the war between the Byzantines and Arabs as well as in the transport of goods, it is natural to find relevant references in the *Geoponica*, which in chapter 15 of its 18th book containing information on cattle breeding, incorporates a recipe followed in Arabia for the cure of mange suffered by camels: *Yet in Arabia they are satisfied with the application of the cedria as in the cases of camels and elephants.*<sup>107</sup> This instruction of the *Geoponica*, which preserves antiquarian information, recalls the habit of importing instructions based in oriental traditions into Mediterranean scientific culture.

Multiple, at least in a series of Byzantine texts, are the references to Arabian horses.<sup>108</sup> But as these animals were not mentioned systematically by the ancient writers as part of the fauna of the Arabian Peninsula, their appearance in Byzantine texts was not related to these origins, although the Byzantine admiration for the Arab horse was shaped by the historical contacts with the Arab world. Their most interesting allusions nevertheless, come from the poetry of the Late Byzantine era. The admiration for these horses is found for example in Theodorus Prodromus' *Carmina* and the romance of Rhodanthe and Dosicles or in the rhetorical works of Michael Choniates, although Byzantine horses like those of Digenis Akrites remained always the ideal model for horses skilled for war.<sup>109</sup> Whereas the horse remained the real animal hero of the Middle Ages, references to the Arabian wolf, which obtained a metaphorical significance in the religious controversies, especially after the 8th century, were also frequent.<sup>110</sup> The portrayal, however, of Saracens as

<sup>106</sup>. *The Taktika of Leo VI*, 18,106-107, 476-477; 18,134, 488-489; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, 15,1011,78-79; T. G. KOLIAS, *The Taktika of Leo VI the Wise and the Arabs*, *Graeco-Arabica* 3 (1984) 133-134. Arabs in general made extensive use of horses and camels, especially in their early conquests and horses were brought to the battlefield without their riders who were mounted on camels D. R. HILL, *The Role of the Camel and the Horse in the Early Arab Conquests*, in *War, technology and society in the Middle East*, ed. V. J. PARRY – M.E. YAPP, London – N. York, 1975, 32-43; see also V. CHRISTIDES, *Byzantine Libya and the March of the Arabs Towards the West of North Africa* [BAR, International reports 851], Oxford 2000, 60.

<sup>107</sup>. *Geoponica*, XVIII, 15,5, 494. See also above n. 45.

<sup>108</sup>. J. RYCKMANS, *The Pre-Islamic South Arabian Bronze Horse in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection* (with technical remarks by I. VANDEVIVERE), *DOP* 29 (1975) 289.

<sup>109</sup>. Nicetae Choniatae *Historia*, ed. I. A. VAN DIETEN [CFHB 11/1-2], Berlin – N. York: de Gruyter 1975, 35,44; M. MARCOVICH, *Theodori Prodromi de Rhodanthe et Dosiclis amoribus libri ix.*, Stuttgart: Teubner 1992, IV,290; E. ELIZBARASHVILI, *The Formation of a Hero in Digenes Akrites*, *GRBS* 50 (2010) 445, 451.

<sup>110</sup>. As wolves were also characterized the impious emperors, see N.-C. KOUTRAKOU, *La propaganda imperial byzantine. Persuasion et reaction (viie-xe siècles)*, Bibliothèque "Sophie N. Saripolou", Athens 1994, 437; IDEM, «Animal Farm» in Byzantium? The Terminology of Animal Imagery in middle-Byzantine Politics and the Eight «Deadly Sins», in: *Animals and Environment in Byzantium (7th-12th c.)*, 319-377.



wolves of Arabia found in Byzantine texts must be a contrast with the Christian symbol of the sheep, but was probably derived from the Old and New Testaments (Habakkuk 1: 8 or Jeremiah 5:6) and was incorporated into the Christian theology of war.<sup>111</sup> More general but of the same origin is the reproach that Michael Psellos addressed to a correspondent who was likened to a wild Arab dog.<sup>112</sup>

Apart from aesthetic images in poetry or theological metaphors, Byzantine writers continuously drew knowledge from ancient writers on zoology. The intellectual trend became more pronounced during the Middle Byzantine era and culminated after the 11th century. In the compilation based on such ancient texts made by Constantine VII there are reports on flocks, horses and camels but also on the hyenas, living in the Arabian Peninsula and marine sea turtles along its coast.<sup>113</sup> The systematic classification of these species was subdivided in relation to the place of their origin and was drafted with reports from ancient authors. The method of the presentation of animals shows, however, that the interest in areas like the Arabian Peninsula remained alive and was continuously updated. A similar view of information is mentioned by a text, contemporary with Constantine's VII *de Natura Animalium*, known as the Lexicon of the *Suda* (10th c.), which refers to a snake that apart from Libya existed in Arabia, in the entry *Dipsas* (Διψάς), usually connected to India; this exceptional citation perhaps reflects the author's commitment to the tradition of ancient writers like Aristotle and Aelian, mentioning the serpents and lizards of Arabia.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup>. ΠΑΡΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΥ, *Οι «Νόμοι των Ομηριτών»*, 260 n. 118; see also D. V. GONIS, A Commentary on the Encomium to Our Holy Father Euthymius, Patriarch of Tirnovo, *Cyrrillomethodianum* 8-9 (1984-1985) 221-222. It should be noted that biblical references meant the wolf of darkness (Erebus) and not the Arab wolves. The misconception and the passing of this designation for the Arabs was adopted by Church Fathers such as Maximus the Confessor, see C. BOUDIGNON, Maxime le Confesseur était-il constantinopolitain?, in: *Philomathestatos. Studies in Greek and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. B. JANSSENS – B. ROOSEN – P. VAN DEUN [Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 137], Leuven – Paris – Dudley MA 2004, 11-43. See also the remarks made by K. ELLIGER, Das Ende der 'Abendwölfe' Zeph 3,3, Hab 1,8., in: *Festschrift, Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag*, eds. W. BAUMGARTNER – O. EISSFELDT – K. ELLIGER – L. ROST, Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1950, 158-175 referred by ST. GERO, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the reign of Constantine V with particular attention to oriental sources* [CSCO 346, Subs. 52], Louvain 1977, 27 and n. 11. I thank I. Anagnostakis for the kindness to draw my attention on all these misleading interpretations and also for suggesting to me the above references. Cf. D. HOJOON RYOU, *Zephaniah's Oracles against the Nations: A Synchronic and Diachronic Study of Zephaniah 2:1-3:8* [Biblical Interpretation Series 13], Leiden – N. York – Cologne: Brill 1996, 55.

<sup>112</sup>. Michaelis Pselli, *Scripta minora*, 2. *Epistulae*, n. 195, 221.

<sup>113</sup>. *Supplementum Aristotelicum, Excerptorum Constantini de Natura Animalium*, 46,45-46; 446-475,121-123; 597,147-148; 530,133 (as above n. 1).

<sup>114</sup>. *Suidae Lexicon*, ed. A. ADLER, Stuttgart: Teubner 1928-38 (reimpr. 1967-71), v. 1, Δ1306, 122. Aristotle, *Historia Animalium*, ed. D. M. BALME – A. GOTTHELF [The Loeb Classical Library], v. 3, Books VII-X, VII(VIII),28, 606b5; Aelian, *ibid.*, v. 1, Books I-V, Cambridge MA – London 1958, III, 108; SCHNEIDER, *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde*, 167-169.

Byzantine writers, along with the reproduction of information on animal species from ancient literary texts, were always fond of incorporating fictional narratives on imaginary animals to all kinds of written literature. Mythological and other fabulous narrations were likewise inserted in all types of literary texts, historical writings and geographical treatises. Like all medieval men, the Byzantines had a keen interest in exotic animals, both real and imaginary. For instance Agatharchides, who mentioned the ants of Arabia as lions, was followed by Strabo although they were usually related to India too; Arabian ants were favourite topics for medieval *mirabilia*.<sup>115</sup> Even more unrealistic is the story of fragrance produced by the mythical bird Phoenix, although it was attributed to Arabia only by Herodotus.<sup>116</sup> This bird was capable of regeneration and became a symbol of Resurrection while a variety of texts associate its characteristics with the ideal spirituality or magic. Early Christian scholars and theologians, through the extraordinary example of Phoenix tried to give a deeper meaning to this bird's qualities, promising to instruct people on the real means of salvation.

All these commentaries and surveys which multiplied the use of the old knowledge and transferred it to patterns of expression familiar to Byzantine society, occasionally aimed to serve practical needs and sometimes to bring spiritual delight and felicity similar to that of the land of Felix Arabia. We should not forget that this intention was reinforced by the vigorous transactions, the open communications, and the official contacts between Byzantium and the Arab world,<sup>117</sup> which promoted the relations between the two worlds on the intellectual level as well.<sup>118</sup> While after the 7th century the theological differentiation was decisive for the way the Byzantines saw the Arabs, the abundance of information relative to their origins and culture, maintained in ancient literature, was rediscovered and sometimes enhanced by biblical references, in order to fulfill intellectual exchange and cultural

<sup>115</sup>. SCHNEIDER, *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde*, 183. Aelian (v. 2. Books VI-XI, Cambridge MA – London 1959, X,13) devotes a paragraph on *the variety and colour and shape in the fauna of Arabia... not only in the case of powerful and noble, but even of the more insignificant animals*.

<sup>116</sup>. Herodotus, II,73; Michael Glycas, *Annales*, ed. M. BEKKER [CSHB], Bonn 1836, 88,19; S. EUSTRATIADIS, *Μιχαήλ τοῦ Γλυκᾶ. Εἰς τὰς ἀπορίας τῆς Θείας Γραφῆς*, Athens: P.D. Sakellarios 1906, VIII, 109,22; cf. SCHNEIDER, *L'Éthiopie et l'Inde*, 193, 197, 247.

<sup>117</sup>. N. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, Paris 1972, 169,20; 177,30; 327, n.237; cf. M. TAHAR MANSOURI, Byzantium and the Arabs from the VIIth to XIth Century, *Mediterranean World* 20 (2010) 57-67.

<sup>118</sup>. KOUKOULES, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός*, Athens 1955, vol. 6, 116. E. R. HOFFMAN, Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century, in: *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, ed. IDEM, Malden – Oxford – Carlton – Victoria: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2007, 317-349. S. D. GOITEIN, From the Mediterranean to India: Documents on the Trade to India, South Arabia, and East Africa from the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, *Speculum* 29 (1954) 181-197; H. ANTONIADIS-BIBICOU, *Recherches sur les douanes à Byzance. L'“Octava”, le “Kommerkion” et les commerciales* [Cahiers des Annales 20], Paris 1963, 71, 86, 195.

intercourse. As though if conditions changed, Byzantine scholars, being always fascinated by ancient learning, returned to the authors of classical antiquity in order to better understand the homelands of the Arabs and the natural environment of these areas. Although only a limited number of this information, was presented here in relation to historical and literary contexts, it becomes obvious that Byzantine literature offered through spiritual pursuits or economic, political and military needs, a variety of images of the Arabian Peninsula both typical, or sophisticated and exceptional, based mainly on nomadic life, trade and everyday practices that developed between the Arab and Byzantine cultures.

An imaginary world indissolubly bound up to ancient knowledge that reached the Byzantines through classical education and biblical tradition, was combined with data from a geographical and geopolitical realities as imposed by the prevailing historical conditions. Raw materials arriving in Byzantium, primarily as luxury goods, reinforced the quest for paradise in the Oriental side of the Oikoumene (Universe, inhabited world). The Arab world and its cradle in the Arabian Peninsula, as part of this tradition, was for the Byzantines an ideal space in which the fauna and flora acquired sometimes mythical dimensions. The trend was not halted after the contact with Islam that gave new meaning to religious otherness and influenced the redefinition of the Byzantine identity towards the East as another lifestyle with different hierarchies and tastes from which they could still draw knowledge on worldly activities, technical and spiritual matters. War and trade means have always, from this perspective, given rise to reinvent older known information, hereinafter identified taking into account the needs of the Islamic world. Accepting this new situation, the Byzantines renewed their relations with the East and never stopped to consider it as an indispensable source of knowledge.



## Greek Horse Medicine in Arabic

ANNE MCCABE

Horses were a passion shared by the Byzantines and the Arabs. Not only were they essential for the army, for travel, and for communication by messenger or by post, but horses were also used for sports and games such as racing, hunting, and polo.<sup>1</sup> In addition to being useful for both serious business and play, horses were status symbols. Fine horses and luxurious bejewelled saddles and bridles were sent as gifts sent between emperors and caliphs in the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries, as we know from the *Book of Gifts and Rarities*.<sup>2</sup> And skill in horsemanship was much admired in both cultures. In the *History of Skylitzes*, we read that the Byzantine emperor Theophilus, hearing that a recently captured Arab prisoner of war was an excellent horseman, asked the man to demonstrate his prowess before the crowds in the Hippodrome of Constantinople.<sup>3</sup>

It is not surprising therefore that the science of horse care and horse medicine was highly developed both in Byzantium and in the Arab world. We know the Greek texts on horse medicine through the great Byzantine encyclopedia known as the *Hippiatrica*, a compilation of the seven most important authors on the subject from Late Antiquity.<sup>4</sup> The *Hippiatrica* was copied and used throughout the Byzantine period and all over the Mediterranean world. A splendid copy of the compilation, covered in gold decoration, with beautiful calligraphy, was made in the mid-10th century for the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. The texts were also copied in more modest manuscripts for practical use, and some were translated into medieval Latin and Italian.<sup>5</sup> One of the Greek sources of the *Hippiatrica*, the horse-care manual of Theonnestus, was translated into Arabic, and had a certain amount of influence on the development of veterinary medicine in the Arab world. Indeed, the Arabic word for horse-doctor, *baytar*, is derived from the Greek word for horse-doctor, *hippiatros*.<sup>6</sup> And the *Fihrist* of the bookseller Ibn al-Nadim mentions books on horse care and horse medicine attributed to Greek authors that were available in 10th century Baghdad.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D. ALEXANDER (ed.), *Furusiiyya I*, Riyadh 1996; A. MCCABE, Polo in Byzantium: Sport or Spectacle? in M. MULLETT (ed.), *Performing Byzantium*, Proceedings of the 39th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Belfast 2005 (Ashgate, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> GHADA AL-HIJAWI AL-QADDUMI (trans.), *Kitab al-Hedaya wa al-Tuhaf*, Cambridge MA, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> J. THURN (ed.), *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum*, Berlin-New York 1973, 68-69.

<sup>4</sup> E. ODER and K. HOPPE (eds.), *Corpus hippiatricorum graecorum*, Leipzig 1924-7 (repr. Stuttgart 1971); A. MCCABE, *A Byzantine Encyclopaedia of Horse Medicine*, Oxford 2007.

<sup>5</sup> See MCCABE, *A Byzantine Encyclopaedia of Horse Medicine*, 18-48, with illustrations.

<sup>6</sup> M. PLESSNER, *Baytar*, in *The encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. I, Leiden 21960, 1149; M. ULLMAN, *Die Medizin in Islam*, Leiden and Cologne 1970, 217-18.

<sup>7</sup> B. DODGE (tr.), *The Fihrist of Al-Nadim*, New York 1970, 738-9.

I'd like first to focus on Theomnestus and the Arabic translation of his work. Theomnestus lived in the 4th century AD and appears to have had a solid medical education as well as practical experience with horses. He was a friend of the emperor Licinius, and travelled with the emperor and his entourage on the way to Licinius's wedding, in February of AD 313. They set off from Carnuntum, the Roman army camp on the Danube, to Milan, where the wedding was to be held. As the imperial retinue was crossing the Alps there was a heavy snowstorm; Theomnestus describes the scene in chilling detail.<sup>8</sup> The soldiers began to freeze to death on their horses, and they simply remained on their horses, all stiff. The sign that the men were dead was that their lips were drawn back and their teeth were showing. And when the horse happened to still be alive, it would just follow along, bearing the soldier's corpse, the corpse still clutching its weapon and the reins. If the horse died it would freeze stiff and remain standing in place. This happened to many men and horses and mules. Then one of Theomnestos' own horses began to freeze. This upset him very much, for, as he says 'Nothing is better than a fine swift horse. The horse was Gaulish, eight years old, and unbeatable in galloping after stags. I really wanted to save that horse.'<sup>9</sup> So when they stopped at a town for the night, he borrowed a stable, built a fire around the horse, fed it bread dipped in spiced wine, and massaged it with an oil made from henna and other medicinal plants. And the horse recovered.

The Arabic translation of Theomnestus, entitled simply *Book of horse-medicine*, *Kitab al-baytara*,<sup>10</sup> is preserved in two manuscripts: one in Istanbul, in the Köprülü Library, MS no. 959, dated AH 674 (AD 1276),<sup>11</sup> and the other at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, MS arabicus 2810, dated AH 750 (AD 1349)<sup>12</sup>. It has recently been edited and translated into German by SUZANNE SAKER.<sup>13</sup>

The Arabic text is important for three reasons. First, it is a specimen of early translation from Greek into Arabic. In both manuscripts, the translation is attributed in a colophon to Hunayn ibn Ishaq, who lived in the 9th century, and was perhaps the most illustrious of the translators of Greek into Arabic. Hunayn was a Nestorian Christian from Hira in southern Iraq. His translations of Plato, Aristotle, Galen, and Hippocrates, made from Greek into Arabic often via Syriac, helped

<sup>8</sup>. *Corpus hippiatricorum graecorum* I, 183-5.

<sup>9</sup>. *Corpus hippiatricorum graecorum* I, 184.

<sup>10</sup>. MCCABE, *A Byzantine Encyclopaedia of Horse Medicine*, 182-4; GUDMUND BJÖRCK, *Griechische Pferdeheilkunde im arabischer Überlieferung*, *Le monde oriental* 30(1936), 1-12; R. HOYLAND, *Theomnestus of Nicopolis, Hunayn ibn Ishaq, and the beginnings of Islamic veterinary science*, in R. HOYLAND and P. F. KENNEDY (eds.), *Islamic Reflections, Arabic Musings: Studies in Honor of Professor Alan Jones*, Oxford 2004, 150-69.

<sup>11</sup>. R. SESEN, C. IZGI, C. AKPINAR, *Fihris makhtutat Maktabat Kuprili*, I, Istanbul 1986, 488.

<sup>12</sup>. W. M. DE SLANE, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque nationale*, Paris 1833, 506.

<sup>13</sup>. *Die Pferdeheilkunde des Theomnest von Nikopolis: Ein Handbuch für den praktischen Tierarzt im arabischen Sprachraum des Frühmittelalters*, Wiesbaden 2008, with commentary and an Arabic-Greek glossary of medical terms.

create the foundations for medieval Arabic philosophy and medicine.<sup>14</sup> Is this attribution genuine? A book of horse medicine, *kitab al-baytara*, is included in the catalogue of Greek texts translated by Hunayn given in Ibn abi Usaybia's 13th century history of medicine, *Uyun al-anba fi tabaqat al-atibba*;<sup>15</sup> some scholars have identified it with the translation of Theomnestus.<sup>16</sup> The language and style of the text are not incompatible with what we know of Hunayn's translations.<sup>17</sup> Comparison of passages that are preserved in both Greek and Arabic, for example the description of the journey over the Alps, shows that the translation was made with accuracy, and attention not only to the content but also to the style of the original.<sup>18</sup> Hunayn was known for not simply translating word-by-word, but for translating the sense of the original text, creating translations that were more elegant and easier to understand. Whether or not the translation was made by Hunayn himself, it is an interesting example of early translation of Greek into Arabic.

Second, the translation had a certain amount of influence on the development of medieval Arabic veterinary literature. It was used by Muhammad ibn Yaquub ibn Ghalib ibn Ali al Khuttali, known as Ibn Akhi Hizam, who composed an important work on horse medicine in the 9th century for the caliph al-Mutawakkil.<sup>19</sup> Ibn Akhi Hizam's work thus furnishes a *terminus ante quem* for the translation of Theomnestus. Ibn Akhi Hizam's book in turn was a source for the book on agriculture of Ibn al-Awwam, compiled in 12th century Seville, as well as for the work on horsemanship and veterinary medicine written by Ibn al Mundhir for the Mamluk sultan Ibn Qalaun in the 14th century. Additional parallels with Theomnestus are to be found in the 13th century *Kitab al-Baitara* of Tag ad-Din.<sup>20</sup> So we can see the influence of the translation from Baghdad to al-Andalus.

Thirdly, the Arabic translation is precious because the Greek text does not survive in its original form. Excerpts from Theomnestus' book appear scattered throughout the *Hippiatrica*, interspersed with excerpts from six other texts on horse

<sup>14</sup>. G. GABRIELI, Hunain ibn Ishaq, *Isis* 6(1924), 282-92.

<sup>15</sup>. A. MÜLLER (ed.), Königsberg 1882-4, I, 200; probably the source for the mention by the 16th c. bibliographer Ahmed b. Mustafa Taşköprüzade, *Miftah al-saada wa misbah al-siyada fi mawduat al-ulum*, K. K. BEKRI and A. ABU AL-NUR (eds.), Cairo 1968, I, 330.

<sup>16</sup>. GABRIELI, Hunain ibn Ishaq, 287; M. MEYERHOF, Les versions syriaques des écrits galéniques, *Byzantion* 3(1926), 44.

<sup>17</sup>. As Dr. F. Zimmerman has kindly confirmed, in a letter of 19 Aug. 1998.

<sup>18</sup>. SAKER, 48.1-42.

<sup>19</sup>. M. HEIDE (ed.), *Das Buch der Hippiatrie: Kitab al-Baytara* von Muhammad ibn Yaquub ibn ahi Hizam al-Huttali, Wiesbaden 2008; V. WEIDENHÖFER, Ninth Century AD Arabian Horse Medicine: The *Kitab al-Furusiya wa-l-baytara* of Muhammad ibn Yaquub ibn Akhi Hizam al Huttali, in M.-T. CAM (ed.), *La médecine vétérinaire antique, sources écrites, archéologiques, iconographiques: Actes du Colloque international de Brest, Université de la Bretagne occidentale, 9-11 Sept. 2004*, Presses universitaires de Rennes 2007, 159-66.

<sup>20</sup>. See SAKER, 11-14; BJÖRCK, Griechische Pferdeheilkunde im arabischer Überlieferung; J.-J. CLÉMENT-MULLET (trans.), *Ibn al-Awwam, Le Livre de l'agriculture: Kitab al-Filaha*, revised by M. EL FAIZ, Arles 2000.

care and medicine. A few cross-references preserved in the Greek excerpts give clues about the order in which they originally appeared, and these clues are corroborated by the structure of the translation. 72 chapters are preserved in the Greek compilation, but the Arabic text contains 94. The Arabic text contains details that are not preserved in Greek, for example, the name of Theomnestus' home town, Nikopolis. It also contains the name of the person to whom Theomnestus dedicated his treatise, transcribed enigmatically as Kndws in Arabic.<sup>21</sup> Theomnestus used several sources in compiling his treatise, and he quotes them carefully by name: Apsyrtus, Agathotychus, Nephon, Cassius; these names are preserved in the Arabic text as well. It seems probable that the translation was made from a more or less complete copy of Theomnestus' original treatise, rather than from the fragments in the Byzantine encyclopaedia. The precision with which the Arabic translation appears to have been made renders it valuable for the evidence it provides about the contents and organization of the original Greek text.

The introduction of the treatise is only preserved in Arabic. In it, Theomnestus addresses his friend, and discusses the sources used for the treatise, both the work of earlier authors and his own practical experience. Following the introduction is a chapter on how to choose a horse. This section is preserved in Greek in only one manuscript. The Greek text implies that this chapter preceded the medical material in the treatise, which the Arabic text confirms.

"Before we examine the diseases of horses and their treatment, we shall first say a few things about what a horse that is worth looking after ought to be like. It should be strong and handsome. A horse's strength lies in its feet and its beauty lies in its head. It is from these parts primarily that strength and beauty are discernible. We shall choose a strong horse both from the place in which it is born, and also from its gait".<sup>22</sup>

The body of the text consists of descriptions of diseases and treatments for their cure. At the end of the treatise are recipes for drugs.

Theomnestus' book was not translated as an isolated incident, but formed part of a wider effort to translate Greek texts on science, medicine, and philosophy into Arabic<sup>23</sup> that Prof. ABDULHAMID SABRA has called the 'appropriation and naturalization' of Greek science into medieval Islamic culture.<sup>24</sup> But medicine and the drug trade had long been a point of contact between Arabia and the Greek world.<sup>25</sup> The *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, composed in the first century AD by a

<sup>21</sup>. See SAKER, 1.1, and commentary, 153-5, where 'Akindynos' is suggested as an alternative to HOYLAND's 'Quintus' or 'Ignatius'. One might even guess 'Licinius'.

<sup>22</sup>. *Corpus hippiatricorum graecorum* II, 231-4; SAKER, 1.14-2.39.

<sup>23</sup>. See e.g. D. GUTAS, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)*, London 1998; M. ULLMANN, *Die Medizin im Islam*, 257-94.

<sup>24</sup>. A. I. SABRA, The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement, *History of Science* 25(1987), 223-43.

<sup>25</sup>. See A. MCCABE, Imported *Materia Medica*, 4th-12th centuries, and Byzantine Pharmacology, in M. M. MANGO (ed.), *Byzantine Trade, Fourth to Twelfth Centuries*,



Greek-speaking merchant from Egypt, describes trading entrepôts in South Arabia from which goods were sent to the Mediterranean.<sup>26</sup> Among the most important items of trade was frankincense, native to the southern Arabian peninsula, and used both as a perfume and in medicine.<sup>27</sup> Incense was carried to the Mediterranean overland on the 'incense route' that passed by Madain Saleh and also by ship through the Red Sea.<sup>28</sup> A maximum price for top quality frankincense was fixed under the emperor Diocletian.<sup>29</sup> The frankincense tree, its origin in 'incense-bearing Arabia', and the uses of its aromatic resin are described in the medical manual of Dioscorides, composed in the first century AD, and used as the standard work on pharmacology throughout the Byzantine period. Dioscorides says that tricky merchants cheat their customers by mixing precious frankincense with plain gum or pine-resin.<sup>30</sup> An incense tree with its harvested resin in a basket is depicted in an illustrated 10th century manuscript of Dioscorides.<sup>31</sup> A lump of incense imprinted with the marks of the basket it was stored in was excavated at Qana (known in the Greek texts as Kane) in modern Yemen, one of the principal spice ports.<sup>32</sup> Incense bins were excavated at the port of at Khor Rori (identified with the port known as Moscha to the Byzantines) in modern Oman.<sup>33</sup> The trade in frankincense was so well-developed that the resin was a commodity, listed among substances that a horse-doctor always ought to have on hand in the veterinary manual compiled in the 5th century AD by Palladius.<sup>34</sup> Incense is prescribed in numerous instances by Theonnestus, for example mixed with sweet-smelling white wine and honey and administered through the horse's nostrils for a respiratory ailment.<sup>35</sup>

Trade in medicinal substances, which in Late Antiquity had been regulated by the Byzantine authorities, came under control of the Arab rulers after the conquests of the seventh century. The Red Sea ports of Aila (modern Aqaba) and

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*Proceedings of the 38<sup>th</sup> Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Oxford 2004*, Ashgate 2009, 273-92.

<sup>26</sup>. H. FRISK, *Le périple de la Mer erythrée*, Göteborg 1927.

<sup>27</sup>. D. PEACOCK and D. WILLIAMS (eds.), *Food for the Gods: New Light on the Ancient Incense Trade*, Oxford 2007. On the pharmacological properties of the resin see S. MARSHALL, Frankincense: festive pharmacognosy, *The Pharmaceutical Journal* 271(2003), 862-4.

<sup>28</sup>. G. K. YOUNG, *Rome's Eastern Trade: International Commerce and Imperial Policy, 31 BC-AD 305*, London-New York 2001, 34-36 and 90-135.

<sup>29</sup>. M. GIACCHERO (ed.), *Edictum Diocletiani I*, Genoa 1974, 36,56.

<sup>30</sup>. M. WELLMANN (ed.), *Pedanii Dioscuridis Anazarbaei De materia medica*, Berlin 1907-14, I.68.

<sup>31</sup>. New York, Morgan Library M652, fo. 230v.

<sup>32</sup>. A. V. SEDOV, New archaeological and epigraphical material from Qana (South Arabia), *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 3(1992), 116-18.

<sup>33</sup>. D. MORANDI BONACOSSO, Excavations at Khor Rori: the 1997 and 1998 campaign, in A. AVANZINI (ed.) *Khor Rori Report 1 (= Arabia Antica I)*, 34-8 and 48-50.

<sup>34</sup>. R. H. RODGERS (ed.), *De veterinaria medicina*, Leipzig 1975, 2.2-3.3, pp. 244-6.

<sup>35</sup>. SAKER 26.5; see also the Arabic-Greek glossary, s.v. *kundur*.

Clysmā (modern Suez), continued to be used.<sup>36</sup> An 8th century glass bottle found at Fustat, the medieval city of Cairo, bears a stamped 'quality control' inscription stating that the contents are a measure of white cumin, and naming as responsible officials the governor of Egypt and the prefect of police at Fustat.<sup>37</sup>

A medieval Arab horse doctor could have obtained more information about the medical plants and substances called for in the translation of Theophrastus by consulting an Arabic translation of Dioscorides. In cod. Par. gr. 2179, a copy of the Greek text of Dioscorides made in 8th century Syria or Palestine, the plant names have been translated into Arabic in the margins of the text. The entire Greek text was translated into Arabic in the 9th century, according to Ibn abi Usaybia, by Stephen, son of Basil, in Baghdad, at the time of the caliph al-Mutawakkil.<sup>38</sup> But influence went both ways. Arab merchants extended the trade routes as far as Indonesia and introduced new plants and medicinal substances to the Mediterranean world. Dioscorides was translated for the second time when a copy was sent as a gift from the Byzantine emperor to the court of the caliph at Cordoba.<sup>39</sup> One of the translators, Ibn Juljul, compiled a treatise entitled 'On substances which Dioscorides did not mention in his text'. Among these are spinach, bananas, ambergis, and musk.<sup>40</sup>

The taste for these substances was transmitted to Byzantium too. A recipe for horses in the beautiful manuscript of the *Hippiatrica* produced for the 10th century Byzantine court is made up of many expensive spices, starting with ambergis, musk, and aloeswood (aoud).<sup>41</sup> These were the three ingredients of a perfume called al-ghaliya, 'the expensive one', which appears many times among gifts given and received by 9th and 10th century caliphs in the *Book of Gifts and Rarities*.<sup>42</sup> We know from the 10th century Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies* that a perfume called galaion, probably the same as al-ghaliya, was offered to visiting Arab ambassadors in the palace of the Byzantine emperors at Constantinople.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>36</sup>. D. WHITCOMB, The Misr of Ayla: settlement at al-Aqaba in the early Islamic period, in G. R. D. KING and A. CAMERON (eds.), *The Byzantine and Islamic Near East*, vol. II: Land use and settlement patterns, Princeton 1994, 155-70; P. MAYERSON, The port of Clysmā (Suez) in transition from Roman to Arab rule, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 55(1996), 119-26.

<sup>37</sup>. G. C. MILES, Early Arabic glass weights and stamps: a supplement, *Numismatic Notes and Monographs* 120(1951), no. 23; IDEM, Cumin and vinegar for hiccups, *Archaeology* 4.1(1951), 23-4.

<sup>38</sup>. MÜLLER (ed.), vol. 2, 47-8; H. JAHIER and A. NOUREDDINE (trans.), *Sources d'informations sur les classes des médecins, XIIIe chapitre. Médecins de l'Occident musulman*, Algiers 1958, 36-40.

<sup>39</sup>. JAHIER and NOUREDDINE, *Sources d'informations*, 36.

<sup>40</sup>. A. DIETRICH, *Die Ergänzung Ibn Gulgul's zur Materia Medica des Dioskurides (Abhandlungen der Akad. der Wiss. in Göttingen, Philol.-Hist. Kl., 202)*, Göttingen 1993.

<sup>41</sup>. Berlin, Phillipps 1538, fo. 393v.

<sup>42</sup>. *Book of Gifts and Rarities* (as in n. 1 above), par. 22, 111, 118, 126, 302. The composition of the perfume is detailed in AL-QALQASHANDI, *Subh al-asha fi kitabat al-insha*, Cairo 1913, vol. 1, 430 and vol. 2, 118-19.

<sup>43</sup>. J. J. REISKE (ed.), *De Cerimoniis aulae byzantinae*, Bonn 1829, 583.

Fashions spread easily, of course. But I hope the example of the *Hippiatrica* has shown that horses, horse-medicine, and *materia medica* were important components of the common courtly and scientific culture that linked Byzantium and the Arab world.



# Piri Reis's Greek and Arabic Influences in his Chart and Map Creations for the Ottoman Empire

GEORGE TSOUTSOS – CHRISTOS TEAZIS

Among the Ottoman pirates Piri Reis constitutes a special case because he was at the same time a geographer and a navigator guide.<sup>1</sup> In the present work we will not proceed with a technical analysis of Piri Reis' cartographic work, since that would require specialist knowledge. We are rather going to carefully examine the social and cultural conditions through which his personality was molded and in which his various abilities were displayed. In this way we will try to discern as much as possible the Greek and Arabic influences in his nautical activities and in his cartographic work.

The environment that Piri Reis was raised in, the city of Kallipolis (Gelibolu) indisputably constitutes the first important stopover in his life and a source of great stimuli and influences. Kallipolis already had a shipyard since the Byzantine era and up to the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was one of the biggest and most productive shipyards of the Ottoman state.<sup>2</sup>

As for the date of birth and death of Piri Reis, these are considered to be the years 1465 and 1554 respectively in the Encyclopedia of Islam.<sup>3</sup> In the earlier publication of the Encyclopedia of Islam BABINGER writes, among others, about his Greek origin. However, uncertainty remains as to his origin because of the lack of further records for his uncle, Kemal Reis, who brought him up; Piri Reis was the offspring of Kemal' sister.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary we know with every certainty about the large number of the Greek sailors and technicians who were occupied with the construction and repair of ships in Kallipolis' shipyards.<sup>5</sup>

The expansion of the sea borders of the Ottoman Empire created the need of the formation of a powerful fleet so as to ensure the unhindered passage of the merchant marine, the protection of the inhabitants and the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>6</sup> For these reasons Beyazid (Yıldırım) Sultan gave orders to Saruca Paşa to build a shipyard in the city. This shipyard was the first big shipyard of the Ottoman Empire. Initially sixty ships were constructed.<sup>7</sup> Ottomans relied on

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<sup>1</sup>. KRANTONELLI AL., *Ιστορία της πειρατείας στους πρώτους χρόνους της τουρκοκρατίας 1390-1538*, Athens 1985, 134.

<sup>2</sup>. BEKAROĞLU – EXADAKTYLOU ΑΙΚ., *Οθωμανικά ναυπηγεία στον παραδοσιακό ελληνικό χώρο*, Athens 1994, 73.

<sup>3</sup>. LEVY R., Piri Reis, *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 9, 561.

<sup>4</sup>. KRANTONELLİ, op. cit, 132-133 and G. KORDATOS, *Μεγάλη Ιστορία της Ελλάδας: Νεώτερη ΑΙ 1453- 1821*, vol. 16, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 20<sup>th</sup> Aionas, Athens, 76.

<sup>5</sup>. H. İNALÇIK, Gelibolu, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. II, Leydev –Paris 1965, 1007.

<sup>6</sup>. A. AFETİNAN, *Piri reis'in hayatı ve eserleri*, Ankara 1974, 5.

<sup>7</sup>. *Piri Reis' in yaşamı, yapıtları ve bahriyesinden seçmeler* v.7, Ed. BÜLENT AKSARAY, C. ÜLKEKUL, AYSE HANDE CAN, İstanbul 2007, 4.

Greeks concerning the knowhow.<sup>8</sup> In order to acquire naval power the Ottoman state turned to pirates such as Barbaros Hayrettin, Turgut Reis, Kurdoğlu Muslihiddin, Kemal Reis, Hizir Reis, Burak Reis and others.<sup>9</sup> Pirates such as Barbaros Hayrettin caused horror and terror to the inhabitants of the Aegean.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the image of pirates was expanded in content among the Ottoman populations and in different Ottoman poetic texts it was associated with the image of the experienced mariner while Deruni likens pirates to Noa.<sup>11</sup>

In a similar environment Piri Reis reached manhood. This environment comprises his first “instinctive” contact with the aquatic element. As Ibn Kemal characteristically reports: “the children who grew up in Gelibolu, grew up in the water as crocodiles do. Their cradles are the ships. They sleep in the evening and rise in the morning with the noise of ships”.<sup>12</sup>

The development of the Ottoman fleet and the development of cartography follow a parallel course. It is characteristic that cartography developed in the Ottoman Empire in particular after 1354 when Kallipolis fell in the hands of the Ottomans and coincides chronologically with the construction of the fleet.

From the geographic work of Piri Reis, three works have been preserved which are dated from 1481 to 1528. The first work is the “World Atlas” (1513) from which there is preserved an offprint where the south and west coastlines of the American continent are mapped. His second work (1521), whose writing lasted 45 years, is a geographic book which explains the economic and social sides of Mediterranean. His third work (1528) is a local map which depicts the distance from Constantinople till the central and south coast of the American Continent.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning the “World Atlas”, Piri Reis himself writes: “This is a unique map such as no one has ever produced, and I am its author. I have used 20 maps as well as *mappaemundi*. The latter derive from the prototype that goes back to the time of Alexander the Great and covers the entire inhabited world – the Arabs call such maps *ja’fariyyah*. I have used eight such *ja’fariyyahs*. Then I have I have used an Arab map of India, as well as maps made by four Portuguese who applied mathematical methods to represent India and China. Finally I have also used a map drawn by Columbus in the West. I have brought all these sources to one scale, and this map is the result. In other words, just as the sailors of the Mediterranean have reliable and well-tested charts at their disposal, so too this map of the Seven Seas is

<sup>8</sup>. ÜLKEKUL, CEV. *XVI Denizci bir Bilimadamı Yaşamı ve Yapıtlarıyla Piri Reis*, vol. 1, Ed. Ankara Deniz İkmal Grup Komunalığı, İstanbul 2007, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>. AFETINAN, op. cit, 5.

<sup>10</sup>. SFYROERAS VAS, *Ta ελληνικά πληρώματα του τουρκικού στόλου*, Athens 1968, 24.

<sup>11</sup>. TUNCAY TUNCEL, *Osmanlı Şiirinde Gemicilik Terimleri*, Non published postgraduate study, İstanbul Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı, İstanbul 2008, 64.

<sup>12</sup>. AFETINAN, op. cit, 9.

<sup>13</sup>. R.LEVY, op. cit, 563-565.

reliable and worthy of recognition”.<sup>14</sup> In this text Piri Reis himself refers to the classical Arabic cartography and possibly to maps of Claudius Ptolemaeus, the famous Greek astronomer, mathematician and geographer of Alexandria.<sup>15</sup>

Many researchers think that Piri Reis did not take elements directly from the so-called “map of Alexander the Great” but rather from the map of the Venetian Bartolommeo dalli Sonetti that was published in 1482. B. SLOT points out that there is no way to investigate the accuracy of the reference of Piri Reis to the “map of Alexander the Great”. He also points out that even if there are many similarities between the books of Piri Reis and Bartolommeo, there also are differences. For example he says that Piri Reis covers more locations than Bartolommeo does, while there are different clues even for common locations. According to SLOT, “the most conspicuous difference between the Ottoman and the Italian is the cultural background.” Bartolommeo is a Renaissance man “... well-versed in the ancient Greek mythology”. On the other hand, “typical for the mixed Islamic-Christian legends found among the Turks of that time, is what Piri tells about the relics of Saint John on the island of Patmos. According to him the relics were carried to the Balat quarter of Istanbul but every time the Saint mysteriously returned home”.

The use of jargon is indicative for the investigation of the Greek and Arabic linguistic influences in the cartographic work of Piri Reis in combination with his maritime grounding. According to SLOT: “there was much similarity in the technical knowledge of the Ottoman sailors and the Western sailors, they stood on the same level, they even could communicate in what was called *Lingua Franca*, a kind of Mediterranean sailors’ Esperanto ...”.<sup>16</sup> Referring to the charting of the maps we must indicate that the term *cartography*, as it is used in the English language, comes from the Greek language and it is a derivative from the term *χάρτης* (map).<sup>17</sup> In the Ottoman language of administration, literature, and science, the term *cartography* comes from words of Arabic origin: *levh*, *kharita*, *resm*.<sup>18</sup> Given that the majority of the terms of the Ottoman language are of Arabic and Persian origin, we can presume that Piri Reis, even though he didn’t speak the Arabic language, used the necessary Arabic terms for navigation and cartography. Only with such knowledge could he proceed with drawing maps and recording locations, among other things. For example, the title of Piri Reis’ book, *Bahriye*, is Arabic and means “that it has to do with the sea”. It comes from the Arabic word

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<sup>14</sup>. SVAT SOUCEK, Piri Reis and the Persian Gulf, in: *Uluşlararası Piri Reis sempozyumu tebliğler kitabı 27-29 September 2004*, İstanbul Deniz Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı Seyir Hidrografi ve Oşinografi Dairesi Başkanlığı, İstanbul 2004, 4-31.

<sup>15</sup>. Ptolemy, *The Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*, ed. Book Club Associates, London, 682.

<sup>16</sup>. B. J. SLOT, Piri Reis’s Kitab-ı Bahriye, in: *Hadeeth ad- Dar, Dar al -Athar al-Islamiyyah* vol.25, Kuwait 2008, 28-29.

<sup>17</sup>. D. N. STAVROPOULOS, *Oxford Greek-English Learner’s Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Hong- Kong <sup>10</sup>1998, 967.

<sup>18</sup>. MEHMET KANAR, *Osmanlı Türkçesi Sözlüğü*, İstanbul 2003, 794, 1226.

*bahr* which means “sea”. In the Ottoman language the term means the Ottoman navy.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, because of the fact that many terms of the nautical jargon were of Greek origin, Piri Reis must have been familiar with the Greek language irrespectively of being of Greek origin or not. For example we can mention here the Ottoman terms *fener* which comes from the Greek term *φανός* and the term *irgalya* which comes from the Greek *εργαλεία* (tools).<sup>20</sup> At all events most researchers such as AHMET TURKER, AFETINAN and İBRAHİM HAKKI KONYALI claim that Piri Reis spoke Arabic and Greek and at least one more language of Latin origin, like Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese.<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that in the nautical jargon of the West the term *χάρτης* (map) is mainly of Greek etymological origin, such as *carte*, *Landkarte*, *harta*, *Karta*, etc.<sup>22</sup>

Among the Arabic influences in the cartographic work of Piri Reis we should also include the religious factor. Islamic law determined the actions of the Muslim pirates in the personal as well as in the public level, especially the rules of *Gaza* and *Cihat* ( *jihad*). Any violation of these rules entails severe sanctions.<sup>23</sup>

Questions are raised as to the Arabic influence generally on Ottoman knowhow concerning navigation. For example many types of Ottoman ships have Arabic names such as *maune*, *mavuna*, or *mavna*.<sup>24</sup> CASTELLO supports the idea that “with the appearance of the Ottoman Empire on the East side of the Mediterranean, a great part of the geographical and nautical tradition of the Arabs passed to the Turks, among whom there were excellent sailors and navigators”.

In concluding, we should stress and differentiate between the Ottoman pirates and the scientific grounding of Piri Reis. A grounding which Piri Reis developed consciously or unconsciously is rooted in the ancient Greek perception according to which experience leads to science. As Aristotle characteristically states: “Ἐπιστήμη και τέχνη δια της εμπειρίας τοις ανθρώποις” (“science and art is gained by humanity through experience”). In this way Piri Reis, was brought up in a marine environment, was taught a lot by his uncle Kemal Reis, and finally used the experience he acquired by his preoccupation with the sea in order to indulge in the science of cartography”.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup>. FERİT DEVELLİOĞLU, *Osmanlıca – Türkçe Ansiklopedisi LUGAT*, Ankara <sup>14</sup>1997, 65.

<sup>20</sup>. *Proias*, Σύγχρονον Ορθογραφικών Ερμηνευτικών Λεξικών της ελληνικής γλώσσης, 2<sup>nd</sup> vol., 1033 and 3<sup>rd</sup> vol., 2520.

<sup>21</sup>. AHMET TURKER, Piri Reis, in: *Hayatı, Uluslararası Piri Reis sempozyumu tebliğler kitabı*, 27-29 September 2004, İstanbul Deniz Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı Seyir, Hidrografi ve Oşinografi Dairesi Başkanlığı, İstanbul 2004, 1-11 and AFETINAN, op.cit, 17 and İBRAHİM HAKKI KONYALI, *XVI Denizci Bir Bilimadamı Yaşamı ve Yapıtlarıyla Piri Reis*, 202.

<sup>22</sup>. İDRİS BOSTAN, *Osmanlılar ve Deniz*, Deniz Politikaları, Teşkilat Gemiler, İstanbul, 12.

<sup>23</sup>. FERİT DEVELLİOĞLU, op.cit., 587.

<sup>24</sup>. CASTELLO FR., Arab Cartography, in: *Aspects of Arab Seafaring*, ed. YACOUB YOUSEF AL-HIJJI, VAS. CHRISTIDES, Athens 2002, 82.

<sup>25</sup>. PAPAŞTAMATIOU ST.- HATIRAS AP., *Αποφθέγματα σοφίας*, Athens 1979, 278.



## **Summaries**



## **Cambyses II's Treaty with the Arab King in 525 BC**

**EL-SAYED GAD**

In his history of the Wars between the Greeks and Persians, the Greek Historian Herodotus refers to the Persian expedition in Egypt, led by Cambyses II in 525 B.C. As he indicates in his description of the events leading to the expedition, Cambyses had to conclude a treaty with the Arabian king who was then ruling Southern Palestine and Northern Sinai. Accordingly, the Persians received a safe conduct from the Arabian King, securing his help to cross the desert. Since, Herodotus stresses, it would not have been possible for the Persians to invade Egypt without the Arab's assistance, they had been granted a special position in the Persian Empire.

This paper studies Herodotus' reference to the treaty, concentrating on his terminology and confirming its formal nature. It also discusses the historical context of the treaty and the special treatment granted to the Arabs during the reign of Cambyses and Darius, as a consequence. Herodotus' view that the Arabs were not subject to the Persians is supported and discussed in light of historical arguments referred to these events. The paper finally concludes with a reference to the region controlled by the Arabs of the treaty, their political system and their identity.

## **Aspects of Arab Political and Social Life during the Fifth Century BC Described by Herodotus**

**RAHMH AWAD AL-SINANY**

Historians agree that the oldest Greek written sources highlighting important aspects of the history of the Arabs are included in Herodotus writings, the earliest Greek historian whose work has been preserved. His Histories are introduced as an account of personal enquiry and a record of important human achievements transmitted to the future generations. In his "Survey", in the accounts regarding the Arabs Herodotus had shed light not only on their countries and lifestyles, but also on their political influence in the history of the Near East during the fifth century B.C. Herodotus' remarks drew attention on the Arab political entities and their significance and impact in the events of the time. On the other hand, he described aspects of Arab social life, traditions and respective customs with a great deal of fascination. Due to the fact that the aspects Herodotus illustrated were unique to the Arabic culture, he ensured to provide elaborate descriptions in his writing.

On the political side Herodotus' information confirms the existence of Arab rulers who had political power and sovereignty. They could set up powerful armies, trained and equipped with various weapons. Herodotus witnesses the power of the Arabs, the difficulty of control in their areas and the subjection to their rule

of the major powers in the time, such as Egypt and Persia. Such instances forced the Persians to enter into treaties of alliance and cooperation with the Arabs in the Persian wars with Egypt and Greece.

### **Greek at al-Masudi's Writings**

**ABDULAZIZ S. AL-HELABI**

Al-Masudi (Abu al-Hasan, Ali b. al-Husain 896-957), as historian, was concerned with world history and that of ancient civilizations. He benefited greatly from his extensive travels, where he met and debated with men from different religions and cultures. The history of the Greeks formed an important part of his world history, as it is reflected by the admiration and high appreciation in his writings of Greek scientific and philosophic achievements. Al-Masudi apologized that his information in that matter is scant in his two existent books (Muruj and al-Tanbeeh) as he had abridged the detailed information in his two lengthy books Akhbar al-Zaman and al-Kitab al-Awsat, which no longer exist.

Al-Masudi dealt with the subject in two respects, the first: the history of the Greeks and Romans in his book "Muruj al-Dhahab" (the Meadows of Gold). He did not differentiate clearly between the two histories, and the Greek history particularly lacked in accuracy; he did not reveal the sources of his information. He gave detailed information about Alexander's conquests in Asia and India in particular. The information on this topic needs critical examination, and it is not clear whether he reflects information from writings of those who accompanied Alexander or from Indian sources.

The second respect deals with scientific matters such as the landscape and topography, astronomy, the four seasons, winds, seas, etc ... Al-Masudi mentions the conflicting views of Greek and Muslim scholars. Al-Masudi also deals with the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt rather briefly giving the historical sequence of the kings, but mentioning only the dynasty of Queen Cleopatra VII.

### **Human Sacrifice between Arabian Peninsula and the Greek Mythology**

**HUSSEIN ELSHEIKH**

The first allusion to an attempt of human sacrifice on the Arabian Peninsula may very well be that of Prophet Abraham to sacrifice his son obeying to god's will. In this story, the sacrifice was not completed due to the miraculous replacement of Abraham's son Ismael by an animal sacrifice. Abraham's attempted sacrifice is suggested be dated in the period between the twentieth and nineteenth century B.C. Throughout time, the event became an established part of the Arabian heritage, but about the tenth century B.C. the Jewish people included this narrative

to their old testament. Abraham's son was named Isaac and the story was established as a part of Hebrew heritage.

After 13 centuries this sacrifice appeared in what was called "the Cyprian poem" written by a poet from Cyprus nearly about 7th to 6th century B.C., with some changes in the details, where the person to be sacrificed (Ismael) changed to "Iphegenia" the daughter of "Agamemnon" one of the Greek leaders in their campaign on the city of "Troy".

Though the story of Iphegenia's sacrifice was known to Aeschylus the Greek dramatist in his play "Agamemnon", and Sophocles in his play "Electre", still Euripides' play "Iphegenia in Aulis" was to be the only drama that adopted the whole story with all its details. The assumption has been introduced that Euripides had adopted the story of the Cyprian poem, which was also, coincidentally, very similar to the original event on the Arabian Peninsula.

Taking into consideration time differentiation it is clear that the author of the Cyprian poem was completely influenced by the story of Ismael's sacrifice (or Isaac according to the beliefs of the Jews and Christians). Now question discussed is: how and when did it happen? In other words: How and when the story of sacrifice was transported from the Arabian Peninsula to Cyprus and then to Greece? It is the question that this paper attempts to give an answer.

## **The Impact of Greek Art School on Yemen**

**HUSSEIN A. AL-AIDAROUS**

Influence from Greeks and Romans to Southern Arabia Peninsula began at an early time. At the same time, the relations of Yemeni merchants with the northern Arabian Peninsula continued and became stronger. Monuments and inscriptions have indicated to the depth of these relations and its continuity, and perhaps the most notable model is the tomb of the Maenian merchant on the Island of Delos.

Undoubtedly these relations included many aspects of life and influenced the Art, despite of its ancient roots in the southern Arabian Peninsula, and its own style with crystallized features. The Roman-Greek School in Yemen has apparently created a niche in particular among the high level strata of the society, as it possessed of more sophisticated elements and used expensive materials, such as bronze. Finds have revealed fantastic models been coproduced by Yemeni artists such as the statue (Dhamar Ali) and his son (Tharan Yahnam) from Al-Nakhla Al-Hamra, an area near Sana.

It would seem that the productions of this art school, despite that it did not represent the art of the large segments of Yemeni society, was not limited or restricted to a particular region, and various models in various parts of Yemen have excavated. The effect of this school was evident and was used to produce art effects made of other materials such as alabaster, stone, and more. A variety of new

artistic elements was emerged with some characteristics of Hellenistic art, which distinguish this art school in Yemen.

## **The Greek Influences on Arabian Numismatics**

**ALI HASSAN ABD-ALLAH**

The Arabian Peninsula had the privilege of a suitable geographic location among ancient states, where caravan roads were established for the exchange of goods. This location gave it a good chance to communicate with Mediterranean people, such as Greeks, Egyptians and Romans. As a result of this contact, in Eastern Arabia, the Arabs used Greek coins which circulated in Arab kingdoms of East Arabia Peninsula. Later, the Arabs developed their own mints and minted coins in their kingdoms at the beginning of the 4th century B.C.

Coins minted in Eastern Arabian kingdoms were influenced by Greek coinage, particularly, Alexander the Great and his successors. This paper will study and analysis the Greek influences on coinage of Eastern Arabia Kingdoms during that period and will show and present specimens of these coins, providing comparisons to specimens of Greek coins.

## **Classical Perspectives of the Arabian Trade**

**ABDULLAH A. AL-ABDULAJABBAR**

Arabian trade has acquired an important role in the history of the ancient Near East since the third millennium BC. It attracted and led successive states and empires to seek control over the Arabian trade and transit trade of the Peninsula. This study attempts to evaluate Classical perspective of the Arabian trade from the fifth century BC until the first century AD. This period represents an important stage in the history of the Arabian Peninsula and its trade.

The paper focuses on analyzing the writings of classical authors on Arabian trade and the writers' role in providing us with information on the Arabian trade and economic conditions of the region through their writings on population, political forces, goods, volume of trade and tax collection. It will also discuss the volume of the trade and it is impact on the economy of the Arabian Peninsula and the neighbouring regions, especially the Roman economy. It discusses the credibility of their information and assessment of the Arabian trading by comparing this information with the archaeological finds from Arabia and neighbouring regions.

## **Gold and Silver in Southern Arabia in the Light of Classical Sources**

**REDA ABDEL GAWAD RASLAN**

This paper deals mainly with gold and silver in southern Arabia in the light of classical sources, such as Diodorus Siculus, Agatharchides, Strabo, and the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea.

We don't have information about metals from Greek and Roman writers from the age of Homer to the Hellenistic age. Most of them refer especially to frankincense, myrrh, cassia, cinnamon and gum mastic; for example Herodotus who referred that Arabia was the only country which produced various incenses and grow trees bearing frankincense were guarded by winged serpents or snakes. The main place of gold and silver were Socotra, Saba etc.

We don't know much about the labours of gold in southern Arabia that Agatharchides depicted in Ptolemaic Egypt. According to Strabo and Diodorus silver had more value than gold in Arabia.

There are many inscriptions and archaeological finds in southern Arabia that indicate that metals were very important in the daily life of the region.

The paper will discuss some aspects of precious metal

The fame of southern Arabia with gold and silver before the age of Alexander the Great

The main places of gold and silver in southern Arabia or other parts in the peninsula

The usage of gold and silver in daily life of southern Arabia

How southern Arabian obtained gold and silver from Romans and east of Africa

## **Palm Tree in Pre-Islamic and Classical Sources**

**FATHIA HUSSAIN OKAB**

The palm tree has instigated the admiration and imagination of the Arabs since ancient times. Due to its great importance and benefit, the palm tree has been highly respected and considered holy and sacred. The Arabs had different means to show this respect and sacredness, thus, it was called "the tree of life", it was considered a symbol of good, blessings and richness, and more importantly it was a symbol of deities. It is worth noting that the agricultural land was named after it, so we can come across phrases such as "the palms of a certain individual", i.e. the farmland of this individual.

The Arabs decorated the temples with drawings and inscriptions of the palm tree. The interest in the palm tree was crystal clear in its recurrent presence in classic, historical and archaeological Arab sources. This research traces the scientific material related to the palm tree in Arabia in the light of inscriptions and what researchers mentioned in their findings based on archaeological excavations and others.

The research has been divided into three main sections. The first deals with a historical view of the palm tree and its proliferation, terms referring to the palm tree and its different names in ancient Semitic and Egyptian civilizations and its economic and religious importance. The second discusses the palm tree in written historical sources, such as inscriptions, classic writings and pre-Islam poetry. The third section deals with the palm tree in archeological sources such as the Gulf area seals, coins and rock and wall carvings.

## **The "Dwellers of the Wood" and the Red Sea Trade**

**ABDUL RAHMAN T. AL-ANSARY**

Having inherited the rule of Egypt after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C, Ptolemy I perceived a threat to the Ptolemaic Dynasty in the Nabataean control of the northeastern part of the Red Sea. His successor, Ptolemy II fortified Heroopolis on the Gulf of Suez and launched organized campaigns to discover the ports of the Red Sea. With those measures, the Ptolemaic Dynasty became a great power that Ptolemy III was able to conquer Syria and reach the Euphrates, and the Ptolemaic control of the Red Sea increased.

However, the dawn of the second century B.C witnessed the beginning of the weakness and eventual collapse of this dynasty, and the rise of the influence of the Romans in Egypt paved the way for its colonization. When the Romans finally conquered Egypt, their military campaign (25-24 B.C), commanded by Aelius Gallus, arrived at Port Leuce Come, reached Marsiaba (Ma'rib), and returned without achieving its objectives.

This paper addresses the Roman ports and the role they played in trade along the Red Sea during the Greco-Roman period and what relation these ports bore to the "Dwellers of the Wood" mentioned in the holy Qur'an in verses such as: (The Rockey Trakt, 78) "And the Dwellers of the Wood were also wrong-doers"; (The Poets, 176) "The Dwellers of the Wood rejected the apostles"; and (Qāf, 14) "The Dwellers of the Wood, and the People of Tubba; each one (of them) rejected the apostles, and My warning was duly fulfilled (in them) ".

The "Dwellers of the Wood" seems to be a designation related to one of those ports the Romans operat-ed; the holy Qur'an in various verses points to scales, weight, and measurements, and warns: "Give just/ Measure and weight, nor withhold/ From the people the things/ That are their due" (A'rāf, 85). Such indications imply that those people practiced trade. The question then arises: what is the closest port at which they traded and to which their name was related?



## **The Eastern Routes of Egypt and their Commercial Role among the Ports of the Red Sea in the Roman Period**

**ABDUL MUTI MUHAMMAD SIMSIM**

It is admitted that trade routes play an important role in internal and external trade of any country. The silk route, which connected East and West, played the same role in ancient and medieval times. From China to India, Persia, Arabia, and Egypt, the silk route was the most important route during that period. Most of the Eastern trade, which came from the Far East, reached Europe across the Red Sea ports especially the Egyptian ones, such as Myos Hormos, Berenike, Clysma, and others. On the other hand, there were Arabian ports on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, such as Aela, Leuke Kome, Adulis, but they did not have the same importance with that of the Egyptian shore of the Red Sea during the Roman period.

Though Romans had settlements in the north and south Arabia, they paid more attention to Egypt. Therefore, they constructed many routes from the Nile to its ports of the Red Sea and provided them with military forts, stations, water, food, etc. These arrangements made commerce across Egypt to Europe more flourishing than before. The security, water and food supplies on the Eastern Egyptian routes to the Red Sea were the main factor in flourishing of the eastern trade in the Red Sea.

There are many disputed points: How did the Eastern Egyptian routes play a remarkable role in the trade of the Red Sea during the Roman period? Why the Arabian ports of the Red Sea did not play the same role with that of the Egyptian ports of the Red Sea? Thereupon, this paper will focus on the answer of these questions through literary sources, papyri, archaeological reports and other sources.

## **Nikanor Archive and the Trade of the Red Sea Ports**

**NOHA A. SALEM**

Nikanor archive is one of the most important of the Greek archives in Egypt. It consists of about 88 Ostraca which deal with the commercial activities of Nikanor's family members in the Eastern desert of Egypt, extending over a period of nearly 70 years (6 BC- 62 AD). Nikanor and his family were camel-owners and drivers engaged in the transport of various commodities between Koptos, on the Nile valley, and the Red Sea ports, Myos Hormos and Berenice, the two important ports of the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea in the Roman period.

All the Ostraca were found at Koptos, suggesting that this was the operational base of the firm, where Nikanor received payments. Nikanor and his

family members seem to have supplied merchants stationed in the Red Sea ports and some soldiers with subsistence goods over a period of approximately seventy years.

This paper will shed light on the internal and external trade of the Red Sea ports of that period on the basis of the information derived from this interesting archive.

### **The Emperor Philip the Arab in the Roman Sources: A Critical View**

**MOHAMED EL-SAYED ABDEL-GHANI**

The Roman emperor "Philippus Arabicus" (Philip the Arab) (244 - 249 A.D.) started his career from Aleppo in Syria which was, at the time, a Roman province. His father was one of the Arab chieftains (Sheikhs) of that area. It is noteworthy that the Arab presence extended far beyond the north of the Arabian Peninsula to north Syria - in addition to other places to the south, east, and west - long before Philip's time. Philip joined the Roman army and was promoted successfully to the ranks of its highest command. He became the Praetorian Prefect under the Emperor Gordian III (who was a young lad and ruled between 238 and 244 when he was killed after he had been defeated by the Persians and seriously wounded in the battle of Ctesiphon). Philip replaced him on the Roman Imperial throne at the beginning of 244.

During his reign (244-249) Philip witnessed in 247 the huge celebrations of the millennium anniversary of founding the city of Rome (which had been traditionally founded in 753 B.C.). It is true that other oriental emperors and empresses reached the Roman throne before Philip (the Severian Dynasty 193-235 A.D.), but it was a bitter shock to some contemporary and later Roman historians and authors that an emperor of Arab origin celebrated the millennium of Rome. They could not conceal their feelings in their writings about Philip and his reign. They were intentionally biased and racist against him. They tried to defame him in their narratives about his origins, his conspiracy and usurpation of the throne (according to their reports). They blemished all his acts and decisions all through his short reign.

This research is an attempt to reach the historical truth about Philip and his reign in an objective way.

### **Rome's Attempts to Dominate the Arabian Gulf Region**

**HEND MOHAMMAD AL-TURKY**

The Arabian Gulf region has been of major economic and political importance since the first millennium BC. It maintained this importance for long

periods of time, and it was the focus of attention and attraction of foreign ambitions, from the plan of Alexander the great, after taking control over India and his desire to occupy the world's major seas (among which was the Arabian Gulf), to the ambitions of the Seleucid and Sassanid states to control the Gulf which would include routes, as well as commercial ports and centers on the coasts of the Gulf.

After their arrival, the Romans controlled the eastern countries to impose their power over Syria in 64 B.C and then Egypt in 30 B.C; a conflict started between them and the Parthians to control the trade of the East. They Romans tried to extend their influence in the Arabian Gulf region and there were many attempts to realize this desire to set up a Roman fleet in the Gulf region.

The paper will focus on such attempts and their goals.

## **Byzantium and the Arabian Gulf Region**

**HAMAD M. BIN SERAY**

Sassanians dealt with the Arabian Gulf as a Persian lake close to them, and as a field for their military movements and economic activities. Despite this policy, the Gulf region had its own relations with the outside world. The Gulf area also was involved in the Sassanid-Byzantine military conflict. This was evident in the involvement of the Byzantine campaigns in Persia and Mesopotamia and the overall rivalry between the two powers. One of the features of this competition is the attempt by the Byzantines to penetrate the Arab territory in the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf region and to benefit from the Arab capabilities in their struggle against the Persians. The Ethiopian movements can also be seen within the framework of the Byzantine military policy in the Arabian Peninsula. It also explains the Sassanian extension to Yemen.

In the context of the economic communication between the Byzantine world and the Gulf region, the great desire of the Byzantines to get access to Indian and Asian commodities and products has a central place, since these products were highly appreciated by the Byzantine society. The triangular Byzantine-Abyssinian-Persian relations were also an indirect factor for the Byzantines' communication with the Gulf region. Consequently the Ethiopian campaign against Makkah can be seen within the Byzantine plan to contest the Persian influence in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. This study also aims to concentrate on the archaeological findings and remains which were brought from the Mediterranean world to the Arabian Gulf Region.

## **Tanukhs in Syria and Their Relationship with the Roman Empire Between the Third and Seventh Centuries**

**KHALED ABD EL- BADEA RADWAN MAHMOUD**

The word "Thanouhite" was coined by Greek historians, naming the tribe of "Tanukh" which was a coalition of several Arab tribes. This coalition settled in northern Syria in the third century AD, and entered into direct relations with the Roman Empire which continued until the Islamic conquest of the Levant. Arab historians trace the origins of the "Tanukh" tribes to the Arab immigrations which occurred in unspecified circumstances from the territory of "Tehama" and resulted to their settlement in the north-eastern section of the Arabian Peninsula, before they went later to Syria. There, they kept, for a short time, their bedouin customs; they had had herds of camels and sheep, and pastured around the city of Aleppo.

There is no doubt that the relations between the "Tanukhids" and the Roman Empire formed an important chapter in the history of the empire in general and in the history of the Near East in particular. It might be argued that the effects of these relations reflected on the life of the nomads and their history in this region. The nomads Tanukhids gave military support to the Romans in their wars against the Arab State of Palmyra in Syria, and assisted them in their wars with the Persians. The Romans then secured the assistance of these Arab, getting with them in alliance until the fifth century AD.

It is clear from this study that the Tanukhids were influenced by their relationship with the Romans, and they were converted to Christianity. Their leader took the title of a king. These relations also left their impact on the Arabic script, as testified in an inscription, dated to the fourth century AD and attributed to the first of the Arab Tanukhid kings "Imru'al-Qays". Moreover, the Tanukhids benefited from their alliance with the Romans. This alliance had allowed them to supervise the trade routes of Upper Syria, and to have access to a section of its markets.

## **The Conflict between the Byzantine Empire and the Persians on the South Silk Road during the Reign of Justinian I (527 – 565)**

**MOHAMED NASR ABDELRAHMAN**

This research will study the conflict between the Byzantine Empire and the Persians on the parts of the Silk Road passing through the southern Arabian Peninsula during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I. The Byzantine-Persian conflict regarding the silk route gained its importance from Byzantium's urgent need for silk, which was imported in huge quantities used in the social and political life. As the Persian merchants controlled the main road of silk from China, across Central Asia to the Byzantine Empire, so the Byzantines sought for control of the other way in the south through the Arabian Peninsula, and encouraged the Ethiopian Axumite Kingdom of Yemen to take action in this

direction. Therefore, Justinian opened channels of communication with this kingdom, because he believed that the sovereignty of his allies to the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula would ensure its sea route and could break the Persian monopoly over the Chinese silk trade. He attempted to achieve rapprochement between the Ethiopian forces in Yemen and the Arab tribes in Najd, such as Maddeni tribe in order to beat the Persian monopoly of silk.

Of course, the Byzantines' intensive diplomatic efforts with the Kingdom of Axum and the elders of the Arab tribes in the peninsula were part of their global foreign policy. The main objective was always to secure the south-western borders against the Persians. The Silk Road through Central Asia together with the trade routes through southern Arab should be secured for free trade in order to assure for the Byzantine society the supply with important commodities, at first place silk.

This study tries to shed light on the features of this conflict over the control of the Arabian Peninsula as important for the silk trade. On the one hand it searches the relationship of Justinian with the elders of the Arab tribes, and his attempts to break the monopoly of the Persians to the silk trade and on the other hand the Persian reactions to these movements.

## **<sup>c</sup>Amer bin Hind's Embassy to the Emperor Justin II**

**NORA A. AL-NAIM**

The reign of Justin II has opened a new period in the history of the sixth century, in particular, his foreign policy and attitude towards the Arabs either they were the Ghassanids or the Lakhmids.

This period was reflected in four secular historians of the 6th century: Procopius, Agathias, Menander, and Theophylact. Menander was the only historian for this period, who makes reference to the Lakhmids. His remarks are in the context of Byzantine-Persian diplomacy.

The references to the Lakhmids in his book revolve largely around the subsidies which according to Menander had been, and should continue to be paid by Justinian. The negotiations went through two phases, the first was conducted in Ctesiphon between Chosroes and the Byzantine envoy John son of Domentziolos (in Greek), who was sent by Justin II in July 567 A.D, to the Persian court to announce the Emperor's accession to the throne, and there Chosroes broached the topic of the Byzantine subsidies to the Lakhmids.

The second phase unfolded in Constantinople between Justin II and Mebod who headed the Persian em-bassy with him also an embassy of forty members of the Lakhmids to discuss the question of the subsidies. Menander, before reporting the discussions in these two meetings, gives background information on the subsidies and reflects the Byzantine point of view, that of Justin II, who decided to stop the payment of subsidies.

## **The Circulation of Byzantine Dinar (Heraclius) in Arabia at Early Islam and its Influence in Abdul-Malik's Reforms**

**ATEF MANSOUR RAMADAN**

The Arabian peninsula occupied an important place among the old world countries, which was suitable for world trade to pass through its roads at that time to many countries like, Greece, Rome and Byzantium.

The Arabs used coins approximately from the beginning of 5th century B.C., and dealt with Greek coins from the beginning of 4th century B.C.

Before Islam the Arab used Byzantines dinars, which were described by the Arab historian as "Romeyah" or "Hercliya", and they also used Sassanian dirham. Both Byzantine dinars and Sassanian dirhams were considered as the international currency which was accepted for world trade as that time. Prophet Mohammed not only accepted and dealt with both of them but also accepted zakat by them.

In this paper I will discuss Byzantine dinars from the time of Heraclius and their relationship with Arabic coins and the monetary reform of Abdul-Malik. Abdul-Malik adopted Byzantine dinar struck by Heraclius in the last years of his reign.

The questions that need to be answered: why Abdul-Malik imitated this dinar in particular? What were the political, theological or economic reasons behind his decision? Did the conflict between Abdul-Malik and Emperor Justin II play a role for this choice?

## Conclusions

This conference has been notable for the unusually varied range of subject and interests that it has presented to us. Some themes in particular stand out. They include the perennial importance of trade, both between the Byzantine world and Arabia Felix and trade further afield; and the related topics of seafaring, navigation and cartography. Then there is material culture as represented by art, architecture, numismatics and archaeology extending not only across Arabia but also within the Byzantine world; here epigraphy, that indispensable – if laconic – basis for the raw data of history, in other words dates and names, is of outstanding importance. We have also looked at travelers of all kinds – diplomats, merchants, scholars – who examine the countries of “the Other” and examine their religions, their courts and their institutions. We have studied the writing of history within both the classical and the medieval worlds, and this has highlighted the multiple links between the Greek and Arab worlds, from their shared love of horses to the presence of Christians in the Yemen and Muslims in Constantinople. We have seen how the Chinese reacted to both of these civilizations and we have learned much about how officially financed translation schools broke down the barriers between different cultures and fostered the transfer of scientific knowledge and literary texts right across the medieval world.

The papers that have been delivered in Riyadh have been characterized by a meticulous attention to written sources in languages as diverse as Arabic, Greek, Nabataean, Aramaic, Latin, Amharic and the South Arabian group. The sources discussed have been appropriately varied: papyri, graffiti, numismatics and epigraphy as well as manuscripts. They highlight the need for linguistic expertise of the highest order. And here the contribution of Saudi scholars to Arabian history has proved absolutely crucial. The same level of attention has been demonstrated in the examination of archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic and art-historical evidence.

Many of the papers have of course been devoted to defining more closely the multiple links between the Greek and Arab worlds in early medieval times. We have discussed the exchange of embassies, but also more informal contacts; the conduct of trade by land and sea; the role of coins as a medium of exchange but also as instruments for the expression of royal power and even religious messages; the joint interest among Greeks and Arabs alike in exploration and in the navigational techniques that it demanded; the perennial interest in acquiring exotica and luxury items such as perfumes, incense, costly textiles and precious objects; and finally, as already noted, the grand translation projects that reached across political and religious divides to make knowledge more widely available.

Not only is this conference important academically, underpinned as it is by new and original research in many directions. It is also very significant on quite another level for the clear message that it sends out to the world at large, where there is still so much cultural and religious illiteracy. There is still so much ignorance about the ways in which the classical and Byzantine worlds interacted with the Arab lands and of how, in the formative period of Islamic culture from the

7th to the 10th centuries, the cosmopolitan Muslim world inherited and passed on the intellectual traditions of the Greeks, inherited their knowledge and built on it, expanding it in new directions. This intellectual vibrancy can be seen in all sorts of fields, such as astronomy, physics, mathematics, medicine, art and architecture, botany and other areas of knowledge.

A conference like this allows us to forge links that are not usually possible between scholars who are working alone. Unscheduled conversations which take place between papers in lunch and coffee breaks are as important as the papers themselves. And the value of a conference such as this is greatly enhanced by the participation of an audience that is engaged, and that is both learned and critical – this forces us to look at our material with new eyes.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to be part of this conference. We all look forward to the publication of the proceedings as the permanent memorial of what we did here in Riyadh. So thank you, and thank you again, to all the people who have made this conference work – the people behind the scenes as well as the people in front of them. And a special word of praise not only to the indispensable sponsors, but also to the joint organizers of the enterprise, Professors ‘Abdallah ‘Abd al-Jabbar, HE Dimitrios Letsios and Vassilis Christides.

Carole Hillenbrand  
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