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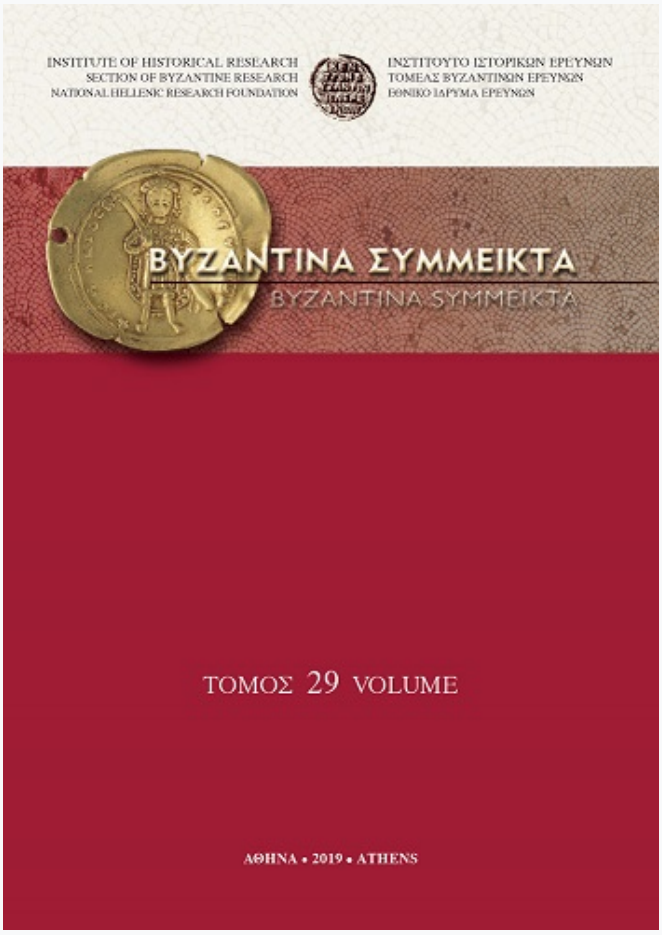
Byzantina Symmeikta

Vol 29 (2019)

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 29



Arab apostates in Byzantium: Evidence from Arabic sources

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doi: 10.12681/byzsym.18441

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To cite this article:

RAMADAN, A. M. (2019). Arab apostates in Byzantium: Evidence from Arabic sources. *Byzantina Symmeikta*, *29*, 273–314. https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.18441

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ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
ΤΟΜΕΑΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ

Τομος 29 Volume

Abdelaziz Ramaḍān

Arab Apostates in Byzantium: Evidence from Arabic Sources

ΑΘΗΝΑ • 2019 • ATHENS

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Arab Apostates in Byzantium: Evidence from Arabic Sources*

Islamic-Byzantine relations have attracted close attention of many scholars specialized in the history of the two worlds. Several studies have appeared on various political, diplomatic, and other cultural aspects of these relations. However, there are still some aspects that need to be further highlighted, including the status of the minorities of each side on the territory of the other.

In 1998, S. Reinert published an article dealing with the Muslim presence in Constantinople from the 9th century until the 15th century, which he opened by saying: "The subject I am treating here, namely, the Muslim populations in the Byzantine Empire, is a topic on which extremely little has been written. The bulk of our scholarship linking Byzantines with Muslims focuses on their interactions as military and religious antagonists, or their diplomatic and commercial exchanges. Nonetheless, at the margins of this corpus, one finds a smattering of discussion and fragments of evidence pertinent to our theme"[1]. In this study, Reinert has suggested that the evidence for such a topic consists of 'scattered snapshots' that relate to two main groups: captives and merchants[2].

* I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the anonymous reviewers, as well as to my good friend and colleague Dr. Hesham M. Hassan, for their useful comments and suggestions.

1. S. W. Reinert, The Muslim Presence in Constantinople, 9th-15th Centuries: Some Preliminary Observations, in: *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. H. Ahrweiler – A. E. Laiou, Washington, DC 1998, 125-150, esp.125.

2. Reinert, Muslim Presence, 126.

The titles of subsequent studies seem to harmonize with Reinert's approach, although they deal only with one group, the captives[3]. The content of these studies may challenge the assumption that these two groups are permanent and stable Muslim populations in Constantinople. It is logical that most of the merchants or captives did not settle permanently in Byzantium, but their stay was tied to a temporary circumstance and ended either by a commercial deal or redemption. Perhaps this was the basis upon which Gustave von Grunebaum relied in his hypothesis that Byzantium "did not tolerate a Muslim organization on its soil"[4]. On the other hand, these studies may pose another more important challenge with regard to the extent to which the 'scattered snapshots' available can be used to trace Muslim minorities that have permanently settled in Byzantium and achieved a degree of integration within its society.

A number of scholars have examined mechanisms of Byzantines' policy to integrate foreign elements. R. Lopez argued that a foreigner, whatever his origin, could become a real citizen if he has his home within the Empire, intermarry with citizens, and accept the Byzantine way of life[5]. D. Nicol

3. L. Simeonova, In Depths of Tenth-Century Byzantine Ceremonials: The Treatment of Arab Prisoners of War at Imperial Banquets, *BMGS* 22 (1998), 75-104; A. Kolia-Dermitzaki, Some Remarks on the Fate of Prisoners of War in Byzantium (9th-10th Centuries), in: *La Liberazione dei 'Captivi' tra Cristianità e Islam, Atti del Congresso Interdisciplinare di Studi Storici* (Roma, 16-19 Settembre 1998), Città del Vaticano 2000, 583-620; A.M.A. Ramaḍān, The Treatment of Arab Prisoners of War in Byzantium, 9th-10th Centuries, *Annales Islamologiques* 43 (2009), 155-194; S. Patoura, Arab and Byzantine Prisoners in the Reign of Leo VI the Wise: Images from Contemporary Byzantine Sources, *Graeco-Arabica* 11 (2011), 399-413; Eadem, Οι αιχμάλωτοι και η εξημέρωση του πολέμου: το παράδειγμα των βυζαντινο-αραβικών σχέσεων, in: A. Kralides – A. Gkoutzioukostas (eds.), *Βυζάντιο και Αραβικός κόσμος. Συνάντηση Πολιτισμών*, Thessaloniki 2013, 383-404; Eadem, Ο ρόλος των αιχμαλώτων στις αραβο-βυζαντινές σχέσεις (8ος-10ος αἰ.). Πόλεμος και διπλωματία, *Θέματα Αρχαιολογίας* 2/1 (2018), 48-63; S. Wierzbinski, Prospective Gain or Actual Cost? Arab Civilian and Military Captives in the Light of Byzantine Narrative Sources and Military Manuals from the 10th Century, *Studia Ceranea* 8 (2018), 253-283. See also S. Patoura, *Οἱ αἰχμάλωτοι ὡς παράγοντες ἐπικοινωνίας καὶ πληροφόρησης (4ος-10ος αἰ.)*, Athens 1994, 71-77.

4. G. E. Von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, Chicago 1964, 181.

5. R. Lopez, Foreigners in Byzantium, *Bulletin de l'institut historique belge de Rome* 44 (1974), 341-352, esp. 342-343. In a different context, A. Kaldellis (*Ethnography after Antiquity: Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature*, Philadelphia 2013, 126-127),

studied the case of the integration of some Latin elements during the 11th to 13th centuries and concluded that the full integration could have been achieved only with three conditions: conversion to Orthodoxy, adoption of Greek, and intermarriage with Byzantine families[6]. Y. Rotman has adopted the same approach when dealing with the absorption of Arab captives in Byzantium. As he points out, " ceux-ci ont la possibilité d'être affranchis s'ils sont prêts à se convertir, à épouser des femmes byzantines et à s'installer dans les territoires byzantins. Les trois actes, la conversion au christianisme, le mariage et la libération, transforment les captifs arabes en sujets byzantins"[7]. From his side, Ch. Brand also demonstrated the possibility of applying this model of integration to some Turkish elements during the 11th and 12th centuries. More importantly, he revealed the possibility of finding evidence related to other Muslim minorities, rather than captives and merchants, able to integrate into the social structure of Byzantium, having converted to Christianity and formed mixed families that had achieved tangible success in the service of the empire[8].

In general, these studies have shown a Byzantine policy to integrate Latins and Turks and benefit from them in conflict with enemies, at a time when Byzantium was looking for a safe place on the map of the new world of Turkish-Latin expansion since the late 11th century.

Given that Muslims had remained for about four centuries a powerful neighbor and opponent of the empire since the middle of the 7th century, it is more likely that Byzantines adopted a similar policy with different mechanisms that conformed to the nature of the Muslim context. As

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has analyzed the image of foreign Christian peoples in Byzantine sources. He played down the importance of Christianity in transforming the foreigner to being Byzantine on the basis that Byzantines "had an exclusive sense of identity predicated in their being Romans, not only Christians, and, while it was possible for foreigners to become Byzantines, this process required them to conform to national Roman standards that were beyond the acceptance of Christianity".

6. D. M. Nicol, Symbiosis and Integration: Some Greco-Latin Families in Byzantium in 11th to 13th Centuries, *BF* 7 (1979), 113-135, esp. 118-119.

7. Y. Rotman, Byzance face à l'Islam arabe, VIIe-Xe siècle. D'un droit territorial à l'identité par la foi, *Annales HSS, juillet-août* 4 (2005), 767-788, esp. 778. See also Ramaḍān, Treatment, 179f.

8. Ch. M. Brand, The Turkish Element in Byzantium, Eleventh-Twelfth Century, *DOP* 43 (1989), 1-25.

J. Hussey has pointed out, Byzantines could not have predicted the success of an explicit Christianization policy toward Muslims, as in other regions, and thus they sought to achieve individual and group conversions based on utilitarianism[9]. In the context of such an endeavor, it appears that captives and populations of borderlands and dissidents of the official Islamic authorities have provided a fertile environment for Christianization and assimilation.

The conversion from Islam to Christianity within Muslim territories and the punishments involved are one of the most common topics in modern studies[10]. Scholars rarely speak of the apostates who have moved to live in Byzantium, and if this happens, it usually comes casually and briefly in the context of their discussion of other topics, in particular when dealing with Byzantine-Arab cultural or diplomatic exchange[11], or with the phenomenon of Turks' apostasy and defection to Byzantium from the 12th century onwards[12]. In his survey of apostasy from Islam to other religions

9. J. M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, Oxford 1990, 114. Hussey also emphasizes that "In general, the failure of the Orthodox Church to make genuine conversions on any large scale among Muslims was a feature of Byzantine history (in contrast to its success with the South Slavs and Russia)". B. Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims*, Princeton 1984, 13, also points out that while the Byzantines were able to practice successful missionary activities among pre-Islamic Arabs, the rise of Islam made them reluctant to send such missionaries to the Muslims.

10. U. Simonsohn, Conversion, Apostasy, and Penance: The Shifting Identities of Muslim Converts in the Early Islamic Period, in: A. Papaconstantinou – N. Mclynn – D. L. Schwartz (eds.), *Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam and Beyond*, Farnham 2015, 197-217. On the Christian legend of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn's apostasy see M. N. Swanson, The Christian al- Ma'mūn Tradition, in: D. Thomas (ed.), *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq*, Leiden 2003, 63-92. On the legend of apostasy and martyrdom of the caliph's cousin, Pachomios, in the first half of the 8th century, see D. J. Sahas, What an infidel saw that a faithful did not: Gregory Dekapolites (d. 842) and Islam, *GOTR* 31 (1986), 47-67.

11. M. Canard, Les relations politiques et sociales entre Byzance et les Arabes, *DOP* 18 (1964), 35-56, esp.42-3; A. D. Beihammer, Muslim Rulers Visiting the Imperial City: Building Alliances and Personal Networks between Constantinople and the Eastern Borderlands (Fourth/Tenth-Fifth/Eleventh Century), *Al-Masaq* 24/2 (2012), 157-177, esp.161-162.

12. The phenomenon of the Turks' apostasy is a subject of many studies. A. D. Beihammer [Defection across the Border of Islam and Christianity: Apostasy and Cross-Cultural Interaction in Byzantine-Seljuk Relations, *Speculum* 86/3 (2011), 597-651], provides a survey of cases of Byzantine-Seljuk apostasy during 12th and 13th centuries.

during the Middle Ages, D. Cook recorded few cases of the apostates who moved to Byzantium, showing that "few studies have dealt with the far more complicated question of Muslims converting to other faiths"[13]. Cook appeared to explain this in light of the difficulty of the source material. According to his words "The material culled from the sources is very fragmentary and does not create a complete picture; neither does it lead to clear-cut conclusions"[14]. Ch. Sahner, in the context of his use of the *abundant* hagiographical sources to understand why Muslim undertook the surprising journey from 'mosque to church' in the early centuries after Islamic conquests, also refers to the supposed problem of the Arabic source material, saying that "Muslim historical texts contain scattered references to true apostasy, often in the context of warfare, captivity, and enslavement. Evidence of voluntary conversion, however, is hard to come by"[15].

The purpose of this article is to retrieve the available evidence, whatever vague, of the justifications that led some Arabs to conversion, the position of Byzantine authorities towards this, and the mechanisms adopted for their integration into society, the extent of integration achieved by these apostates, and finally the attitude of Byzantine society towards them. I seek as much as possible to avoid dealing with captives since, as a recent study of mine has shown in detail[16], they lacked free will; their conversion, and of course their stay in Byzantium, has often been linked to coercion and/or physical and moral pressures.

He suggests that "the history of Byzantine-Muslim contacts from the 7th century onwards provides a long list of prominent apostates". However, he refers only, in passing, to the two famous historical cases of Naṣr/Theophobus and Samonas. See also R. Shukurov, *The Byzantine Turks 1204-1461*, Leiden 2016, 179, 226-231; A. D. Beihammer, *Byzantium and the Emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia, ca.1040-1130*, London, New York, 2017, 170, 172, 313-315, 339; A. Jovanovic, Imagining the Communities of Others: The Case of the Seljuk Turks, *ByzSym* 28 (2018), 239-273, esp.268-269; Brand, Turkish Element, 12, 16, 17.

13. D. Cook, Apostasy from Islam: A Historical Perspective, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 31 (2006), 248- 288, esp. 248.

14. Cook (Apostasy, 251), relies on this explanation to justify the purpose of his study: "Consequently, this paper can only probe the subject and classify the few examples found".

15. Ch. C. Sahner, 'Swimming against the Current'. Muslim Conversion to Christianity in the Early Islamic Period, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 136/2 (2016), 265-284, esp. 265, 269-270.

16. Ramaḍān, Treatment, 166-171, 179-190.

Residents of borderlands:

In his introduction to *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis. Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, F. Curta shows that the shift in modern scholarship from the concept of 'frontier-as-barrier' towards that of 'frontier as a permeable zone', allows us to see interactions and exchanges rather than impermeable boundaries[17]. Curta's approach seems an appropriate embodiment of the trend adopted by recent studies dealing with Byzantine-Islamic borders. As these studies have shown, despite the military nature of the borderlands, its cities in times of peace served as a local market and trade centers. The long-term persistence of these borders has imposed a state of peaceful coexistence between their people on the economic and social levels and created, according to A. Papaconstantinou, a specific 'frontier culture'[18]. As J. Haldon and H. Kennedy have pointed out, these regions were very different from those behind, for, on their soil, distinct cultural and social and economic characteristics grew[19]. This made its inhabitants, as noted by C. Galatariotou, not interested in the hostile propaganda between the two sides on both official and religious levels[20]; undoubtedly, the special nature of the borderlands made them a fertile environment for Byzantine policy to convert and assimilate elements from their population. It seems that these areas served not only as a bridge of passage for ambassadors, traders, and

17. F. Curta (ed.), *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis. Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, Turnhout 2005, 1-9, esp. 2-4.

18. A. Papaconstantinou [Confrontation, Interaction, and the Formation of the Early Islamic Oikoumene, *REB* 63(2005), 167-181, esp. 171-172] criticizes the perception of M. Bonner (ed.), *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*, Aldershot 2005, xxvii, for the frontier district "as an ideologically charged place where people came, not to mix those different from themselves, but rather to fight them and to sake out more securely their own territory of self." She borrowed from E. K. Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran*, Berkeley 1999 on the frontier cult of St Sergius which promoted a specific form of interaction and cultural integration between Muslims and Christians.

19. J. F. Haldon – H. Kennedy, The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the 8th and 10th Centuries: Military Organisation and Society in the Borderlands, *ZRVI* 19 (1980), 79-116, esp. 105-106. See also Canard, Relations, 41-45.

20. C. Galatariotou, Structural Oppositions in the Grottaferrata Digenes Akrites, *BMGS* 11 (1987), 29-68, esp. 33.

captives, as K. Durak has shown, but also for the transfer of religiously converts from both sides[21].

Arab and Byzantine literature, especially epics, reflect a vibrant picture of the border society and its mixed families scattered across both sides' territories. The Byzantine epic of the 'twyborn' hero Digenis Akritis, relates the story of his father, the emir Mousour, and presents him as a religious oscillator who sacrificed his religion, country and people to marry a Byzantine general's daughter named Irene, who later gave birth to the epic hero, Basil[22]. It also includes other stories about the conversion of Panthia, Mousour's mother[23], and a girl called Aisha, who was seduced by a Byzantine man to escape with him to Byzantium[24]. The frequent stories of apostasy at the borderlands prompted N. Oikonomides to suggest that the epic in its entirety expresses the aspirations of these Arabs to get a

21. K. Durak, Traffic across the Cilician Frontier in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries: Movement of People between Byzantium and the Islamic Near East in the Early Middle Ages, in: Kralides – Gkoutzioukostas (eds.) [as in n.3], 141-154. In the latest study on the nature of Byzantine-Islamic border and its religious and tribal composition, A. A. Eger (*The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier: Interactions and Exchange among Muslim and Christian Communities*, London – New York 2015, 254, 291-292) has dealt with the conversion, notably to Islam, among the local border communities through an ethno-religious perspective and concluded that "The ethno-religious hypothesis shows processes of accommodation and adaptation among groups, although it does not take into account acculturation and assimilation processes (such as conversion), which would have occurred gradually over time. Nevertheless, all of these processes suggest that interaction on the frontier was not simply a matter of Muslim fighting against Christian in a holy war." Eger has recorded some cases of apostasy on both sides. Unfortunately, however, she did not address the religious characteristics of the borderlands that provided a fertile ground for apostasy.

22. *Digenes Akrites*, ed. & trans. J. Mavrogordato, Oxford 1956, 20-23; *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions*, ed. & trans. E. Jeffreys, Cambridge 1998, 36-40, 250-252. See also, T. M. Muhammad, The Conversion from Islam to Christianity as viewed by the Author of Digenes Akrites, *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* 7 (2010), 121-140. For other editions see, among others, E. Trapp, *Digenes Akrites: Synoptische Ausgabe der ältesten Versionen*, Vienna 1971; S. Alexiou, *Βασίλειος Διγενής Ακρίτης*, Athens 1990. Studies related to the epic are so abundant that it is difficult to enumerate, yet for an extensive bibliography see F. H. Moore, *Digenes Akrites: The Scholarly History and Literary Analysis of a Lost Byzantine Poem*, PhD Dissertation, Stanford University 2001.

23. *Digenes Akrites*, ed. Mavrogordato, 52-54; ed. Jeffreys, 59-65.

24. *Digenes Akrites*, ed. Mavrogordato, 156.

place in the new society, and to have a new identity within their alternative Christian homeland[25] .

On the Arab side, the vernacular prose epic of Princess Dhāt al-Himma[26], is filled with stories about persons resulting from such mixed marriages. It tells, for example, the story of Ẓālim's departure with his son al-Ḥārith, the husband of Dhāt al-Himma, across the border to the Byzantium, where they married Byzantine women and gave birth to mixed-blood children[27]. And the story of the *amīr* 'Abd al- Wahāb, the son of al-Ḥārith and Dhāt al-Himma, who captured a Byzantine girl and gave birth to a child, but Byzantines succeeded in saving and returning her with the child to Byzantium to be raised according to Christianity[28]. There is also the story of Maymūnah, the wife of the *amīr* 'Abd al-Wahāb, who fled to Byzantium and married the emperor Romanos (Armānūs) and converted her Arab servants to Christianity[29].

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25. N. Oikonomides, L' épopée de Digénis et le frontière orientale de Byzance aux Xe et XIe siècles, *TM* 7 (1979), 375-397, esp. 394.

26. *Dhāt al-Himma* is the most important and longest extant prose epic cycle in Arabic. It seems as a tribal epic that starts with a rivalry between the two Arab tribes, the Banū Kilāb and the Banū Sulaym, who were partly brought by the Umayyads from Arabia to settle in Syria and to lead the Islamic troops into Byzantine territory. As a frontier epic, its main focus revolves around Arab-Byzantine conflicts between the reigns of the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (65-86/685-705) and the Abbasid Caliph al-Wāthiq (227-232/842-847). It includes references dating back to the period of the Crusades. M. Canard [Dhūl Himma, *EI*[2] and Idem, Delhemma, épopée arabe de guerres arabo-Byzantines, *Byz* 10(1935), 283-300] suggests that it is formed of two different cycles of different periods and origin and that "it is impossible to give an exact date for the composition of the romance". For general information and secondary literature see: U. Steinbach, *Ḏāt al-Himma: Kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu einem arabischen Volksroman*, Wiesbaden 1972; C. Ott, *Metamorphosen des Epos: Sīrat al-Muǧāhidīn (Sīrat al-Amīra Ḏāt al-Himma) zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit*, Leiden 2003. English summary of the contents in M. C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic: Heroic and Oral Story-telling*, Cambridge 2005, 2: 151-211 and 3: 301-504.

27. *Sīrat al-Amīra Dhāt al-Himma*, Beirut 1981, I, 630-40. Later (*Dhāt al-Himma*, I, 689), the author tells that 'Abd al-Wahāb, the son of Dhāt al-Himma and al-Ḥārith, captured the Byzantine wives of his father and grandfather: *Each had given birth to a boy named in the name of Christianity. One was 'Abd al-Masīḥ* (slave of Christ), *and the other was 'Abd al-Sayyīd* (slave of the Lord).

28. *Dhāt al-Himma*, II, 98.

29. *Dhāt al-Himma*, V, 256.

Like *Digenis Akritis*, *Dhāt al-Himma* often shows that these mixed children are oscillators in their faith, such as Sayf al-Naṣrānīyah (the Sword of Christianity), the son of the *amīr* ʻAbd al-Wahāb, who was converted to Islam by his father and named Sayf al-Ḥanīfīyah (the Sword of Islam). Then he returned to the camp of the Byzantines and fought in their ranks against the Muslims[30]. Also, Baḥrūn, the son of al-Baṭṭāl from a Byzantine girl, who entered into a polemic dialogue with his father, and yet remained reluctant to enter Islam and eventually escaped from captivity with his mother to Byzantium[31].

While it is recognized that literature, especially epics, have their own language and standards which do not necessarily correspond to actual reality, they at least reflect the popular imagination of the border society and may have connotations consistent with historical reality. If *Digenis Akritis* and *Dhāt al-Himma* indicate that mixed marriages produced ethnically mixed and religiously volatile offspring, and that these marriages were sometimes performed in abnormal conditions and without the desire of Byzantine girls[32], Arabic evidence may have hinted at this in their account of the invasion of Ṭarsūs (354/965) by Nikephoros II Phocas (352-359/963-969),

30. *Dhāt al-Himma*, III, 187-8.

31. *Dhāt al-Himma*, V, 190, 214-15, 232-3.

32. *Dhāt al-Himma* shows many marriages between Muslims and Byzantine girls without the will of the latter. It also refers to frequent escape incidents of these girls with their children to Byzantium whenever they have the opportunity. The Byzantine woman, Maymūnah, the wife of Prince ʻAbd al-Wahāb, fled with her son to Byzantium to raise him according to Christianity. Other similar stories indicate that Byzantines imposed re-baptism on Byzantine women who had previously been baptized in Muslim lands. For example, when the Byzantine emperor offered Christianization to a Byzantine girl who had been a prisoner of the Muslims, she responded: *I was only a Christian and one of the people of baptism. I was in the service of one of the most ugliest men. A fat old man with a miserable condition*. The emperor rejoiced in her speech and made her a wife to his son, after he immersed her in the water of baptism and was cleansed by the priest. He said to her: *Now I have purified you from the religion of the people of al-Ḥanīfīyah* (Islam) [*Dhāt al-Himma*, IV, 595-596; V, 232-233]. While this story is consistent with the Byzantines' keenness to re-baptize their natives returning to Christianity, Greek sources refer to another ritual related to the Arab new converts to Christianity. A ritual that includes, in addition to baptism, the abjuration formula: *ἀναθεματίζω τὸν θεὸν τοῦ Μωάμεδ περὶ οὗ λέγει ὅτι αὐτός ἐστι θεὸς εἷς θεὸς ὁλόσφυρος, [ὃς] οὐκ ἐγέννησεν οὐδὲ ἐγεννήθη οὐδὲ ἐγένετο ὅμοιος αὐτῷ τις*: *PG* 140, 133-134. On this ritual, see E. Montet, Un rituel d'abjuration des musulmans dans l'église grecque, *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 53 (1906),145–163; D. J. Sahas, Ritual of Conversion from Islam to the Byzantine Church, *GOTR* 36 (1991), 57-69.

where the reaction of Byzantine women married to Muslims was described as follows: *When the mothers of the sons of the Muslims saw their people, they left their homes and said to their husbands: 'We are free now and we do not need to you'. Some of them left their children, while others took them to be brought up according to Christianity. The Muslim fathers came to the Rūm soldiers to bid farewell to their children with tears and cries. Then they left in the worst case, to the extent that the Rūm soldiers have been very sympathetic to them*[33].

The suffering of Muslim fathers from the loss of their children and Byzantine wives seems to have motivated many to join them when they were given the choice. When the *δομέστικος* John Kourkouas peacefully took over Melitene in 322/934, he erected two tents and placed the cross on one of them, giving its population the choice of leaving the city or converting to Christianity and retaining their properties and families. According to Arabic evidence, *the great part of Muslims went to the side of the tent overtopped with the cross to keep their families and moveable property*[34].

These two incidents seem to be consistent with an interesting Byzantine text that confirms these mixed marriages. In the letter to Leo, archbishop of Catania, Patriarch Photius emphasizes the need to re-baptize children resulting from such marriages[35]. N. Oikonomides interpreted this in the light of what he described as a familiar tradition adopted by Byzantine wives in the Islamic world to baptize their children, a tradition that existed until the twelfth century[36]. However, it seems difficult to accept Oikonomides'

33. At-Tanūkhī [327-384/939-994, *Nishwār al-Muḥaḍara wa Akhbār al-Mudhākarah*, ed. A. Shalji, Beirut 1972, IV, 52-53; Yāqūt-Al-Hamawī [574-626/1179-1229], *Mu 'jam al-Buldān*, ed. H. Habashi, Beirut 1986, IV, 29.

34. Ibn Al-Athīr [555-630/1160-1233], *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, ed. A. Al-Qadi, Beirut, 1995, VII, 106. H. M. Ḥassan [Ο εκχριστιανισμός των Αράβων και ο εξισλαμισμός των Βυζαντινών: η εικόνα του «άλλου» στις αραβοβυζαντινές πηγές του 7ου και 10ου αιώνα, in: A. Kralides – A. Gkoutzioukostas (eds., as in n.3), 167-194, esp.174], relying only on the Egyptian modern scholar al- 'Adawī's *ad-Dawla al-Islamiyyah wa Imbrāṭūriyat ar-Rūm*, attributes this incident to Stefanos, the son of co-emperor Romanos I Lekapenos.

35. *Photius Epistulae et Amphilochia*, edd. B. Laourdas – L. G. Westerink, v. III, Leipzig 1985, 162-166, esp. 165.

36. N. Oikonomides, The Turks in the Byzantine Rhetoric of the 12th Century, in: C. E. Farah, *Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire*, Northeast Missouri State University 1993, 149-155, esp. 151.

assumption that the baptism rites of these children have been carried out against will or under the silence of their fathers[37]. It is not easy for Muslims living under Islamic control to allow this, especially if it would expose them to harsh penalty by the law. It is likely that this baptism was carried out secretly and in a limited range within the borders[38]. Although Arabic evidence has documented some individual cases of mixed marriages[39], and has sometimes hinted at their potential religious influence on the resulting offspring, it did not provide one case of baptism of a child by his Byzantine mother in the territory under Islamic rule.

Undoubtedly, the overlap and interaction of the border society provided an ideal environment for Byzantine policy of Christianization and assimilation. This is reflected in the Byzantine attempt to convert large numbers of border inhabitants during the 10th century Byzantine military expansion. As S. Ivanov has pointed out, as a result of Empire's restoration of many territories that had been taken from it three centuries before, "the Islamicized population of these territories immediately became the subject of Christian preaching"[40]. If Judge 'Abd al-Jabbār (359-415/969-1025) has greatly exaggerated the estimate of the apostates' numbers by about 2,000,000, attributing their conversion to means of coercion or seduction[41], there are other evidence for the voluntary conversion of many border inhabitants.

In her dealing with the 10th century economic importance of the new territories regained by the Byzantines in the eastern borderlands, C. Holmes has shown that in some cases the price of the Muslim residence in these territories was conversion to Christianity[42]. However, as Arabic evidence

37. Oikonomides, Turks, 151.

38. In this context, there may be merit to Ḥassan's suggestion (Ο εκχριστιανισμός, 177) that «η διαδικασία του εκχριστιανισμού εκτός των συνόρων του Χαλιφάτου δεν ήταν η ίδια με εκείνη εντός των συνόρων. Οι Χριστιανοί, που ζούσαν στις αραβοκρατούμενες περιοχές, φοβούνταν μήπως η μεταστροφή ενός Μουσουλμάνου γίνει γνωστή στους υπόλοιπους Μουσουλμάνους Άραβες, οπότε σε αυτή την περίπτωση θα κινδύνευαν».

39. In the 9th and 10th centuries, Byzantine concubines were important members in the Abbasid harem, and gave birth to many caliphs: N. M El-Cheikh, *Women, Islam, and Abbasid Identity*, Cambridge, Mass.-London 2015.

40. S. A. Ivanov, *'Pearls before Swine': Missionary Work in Byzantium*, trans. D. Hoffman, Paris 2015, 125.

41. 'Abd Al-Jabbār, *Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubuwah*, ed. A. 'Uthmān, Beirut, 1966, I, 182-183.

42. C. Holmes, 'How the east was won' in the reign of Basil II, in: A. Eastmond (ed.),

points out, the approach adopted by John Kourkouas when he peacefully took Melitene in 324/935 was a typical policy during the 10th century. When Nikephoros Phocas peacefully conquered Tarsus in 354/965, the terms of reconciliation with its people included the free choice between leaving the city or living there with the payment of *al-jizya* tax or converting to Christianity. As Arabic evidence records, the later would have *the privilege and dignity and blessings of his grace*. Two banners were erected, one for those who favored Christianity and move to Byzantium and the other for those who wanted to leave. Accordingly, *Many Muslims, who chose Christianity or who had the ability to pay al-jizya, turned to the banner of the Rūm*[43].

The choice of Christianity as one of the basic terms of reconciliation may reflect the 10th century Byzantine superiority which was explicitly expressed in the truce of Ṣafar (359/970) between the Hamdanids and Byzantium. It guaranteed freedom and safety of the apostates from Islam[44]. The consent of the Muslims to such a term can be interpreted in the light of the necessities of the *status quo*. It can also be regarded as a vital item that the Byzantines sought to include as a new mechanism in their Christianization policy. On the one hand, it guarantees freedom and safety for those who have already apostatized, while at the same time provides motivation or perhaps a justification for those who wish to abandon Islam and move to Byzantium[45].

Eastern Approaches to Byzantium, *Papers from the Thirty-Third Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, Aldershot [u.a.] 2001, 41-56, esp. 44.

43. Ibn Miskawyh [320-421/932-1030], *Kitāb Tajārub al-Umam*, ed. H. F. Amedroz, Cairo 1915, II, 210-213; At-Tanūkhī, IV, 52; Yāqūt Al-Ḥamawī, IV, 28-29; Ibn Al-Athīr, VII, 287; Ibn Kathīr [700-774/1301-1373], *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, ed. A.M. Al-Bajāwī, Beirut 1992, XI, 255. Bar Hebraeus [1226-1286] *Chronographia,* Arab. trans. I. Armaleh, Beirut 1991, 64, appears more specific about the apostasy of the people of Tarsus. He says: *Many of its Arab people were baptized, and some remained as they were, but all their children were baptized*. See also C. E. Bosworth, The City of Tarsus and the Arab-Byzantine Frontiers in Early and Middle ʻAbbāsid Times, *Oriens* 33 (1992), 268-286, esp.278-279.

44. Ibn Al-ʻAdīm [588-660/1192-1262], *Zubdat al-Ḥalab min Tārīkh Ḥalab,* ed. S. Al-Dahan, Damascus 1951, I, 163-8. See also W. A. Farag, *The Truce of Safar*, Birmingham 1977; K. A. Takirtakoglou, Οι πόλεμοι μεταξύ του Νικηφόρου Φωκά και των Αράβων, *ByzSym* 25(2015), 57-114, esp.110-12.

45. Arabic sources record stories of people killed because of their conversion within the Islamic territories. A Christian spice dealer was killed and burned because he converted

By contrast, Arabic evidence indicates that evacuation of the population and displacement of large numbers of them to Byzantium, especially children and women, are components of a different approach adopted by the Byzantines in dealing with the border cities that were taken by force. It seems that Nikephoros Phocas was the most prominent in adopting such a policy. According to Arabic evidence, when he seized Mopsuestia in 354/965 after a siege, he transferred all its population, who were about 200.000, to Byzantium[46]. The historian Ibn Kathīr estimates numbers of the transferred people from Tripoli and Hems in 358/969 by about 100,000 boys and girls. He adds that *many of them converted to Christianity by the Rūm hands*'[47]. Similarly, the geographer Ibn Ḥawqal (d.367/977) mentions that when Nikephoros Phocas seized Ma 'arat al-Nu 'mān in the same year, he carried with him *35,000 women, boys, and adult men*[48]. Also, when he attacked Antioch in 358/969, *about 20,000 boys, young men and women were moved to territories of the Rūm*[49]. These figures may seem exaggerated, but Byzantine evidence itself confirms that these wars brought large numbers of captives to Byzantium[50].

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to Islam and then wanted to return to Christianity (Ibn Al-Athīr, VII, 81). Another Qurayshi Muslim, named Rwayiḥ, converted to Christianity and was killed after two years of unsuccessful attempts to persuade him to return to Islam (Bar Hebraeus, *Chronographia*, 40).

46. Ibn Al-Athīr, VII, 278; Ibn Miskawyh, II, 211. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronographia*, 64, mentions that Nikephoros *captured 200,000 men, women and boys and sent them to the land of the Rūm*, while the Christian historian Yaḥya Ibn Sa 'īd al-Anṭākī [d. 458/1066], *Annales*, ed. L. Cheikho, Beirut 1905, 123, mentioned that Nikephoros carried with him all the people of Mopsuestia.

47. Ibn Kathīr, XI, 268-9. He describes Nikephoros Phocas as: *one of the harshest people on the Muslims. He took many cities by force, such as Ṭarsūs and Aḍana and Mopsuestia and others. He killed and captured a countless number of Muslims that only God knows. All or most of them converted to Christianity*. Ibn al-'Adīm, I, 149, records that the number of Muslim prisoners reached 100 thousand before the capture of Antioch. For a detailed discussion of Nikephoros Phocas' eastern campaigns as presented by the Arabic sources, see Takirtakoglou, Οι πόλεμοι, 57-114.

48. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Surat al-Arḍ*, Cairo n.d., 164.

49. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronographia*, 66. Arabic sources also record that when Nikephoros Phocas attacked Aleppo in 351/962, he moved 10,000 young women and men to Byzantium (Ibn Al-Athīr, VII, 274; Ibn Miskawyh, II, 193; Ibn Al-'Adīm, I, 132,134; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronographia*, 62). He moved 1200 from Ma 'rat Maṣrīn to Byzantium (Yaḥya Al-Anṭākī, 131).

50. Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, *Libri I-IV*, ed. & trans. M. Featherstone–

In light of this, it can be said that Byzantine Christianization policy towards the Muslims, especially in the borderlands, reached a peak in the 10th century. The shift in the balance of power to the Byzantines' own advantage and their successive victories have made the Muslims incapable of dealing with such a policy. This is reflected in the semi-official recognition of the free apostasy, as described in the terms of peace settlements mentioned above, and also in the Arabic poem attributed to Nikephoros Phocas, in which he explicitly declares his intention to spread Christianity in Muslim lands[51], and in the poem written by the theologian al-Qaffāl as-Shāshī (291-365/904-976) to respond to him, in which he implicitly admits that there are many cases of apostasy among the Muslims[52].

J. S. Codoñer, Boston-Berlin 2015, 164 [hereafter: Theophanes Continuatus (Featherstone–Codoñer)], refers to about 25,000 prisoners from Theophilos' expedition at Charsianon in 216/831. Leo the Deacon [*Leonis Diaconi Caloënsis Historiae libri decem* ..., ed. C. B. Hase (CSHB), Bonn 1828, 23-24 = *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, trans. A-M. Talbot – D. F. Sullivan, Washington, D. C. 2005, 76] describes the victory of Leo Phokas over Sayf al-Dawla Ibn Ḥamadān (333-356/945-967) at Adrassos in November 329/960, and his arrival at Byzantium with myriads of captives: *ὁ δὲ κατειληφὼς τὸ Βυζάντιον, ἐπεὶ μετὰ πλείστης ὅτι λείας καὶ μυρίων δορυαλώτων Ἀγαρηνῶν εἰσήει* ... Skylitzes (*Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn, CFHB 5, Berlin, 1973, 250 [hereafter: Skylitzes), records that, after Leo Phokas' return, *τῶν δὲ ἁλόντων καὶ ἐν τῇ πόλει πεμφθέντων τοσοῦτον ἦν τὸ πλῆθος, ὡς πληρῶσαι δούλων καὶ τὰς ἀστικὰς οἰκίας καὶ τοὺς ἀγροὺς* [*the number of prisoners of war in this city was so great as to fill the urban households and the farms with slaves*, trans. J. Wortley, *A Synopsis of the Byzantine History 811-1057*, Cambridge 2010, 241].

51. This poem was sent to the Abbasid caliph al-Muṭīʿ (334-363/946-974). Ibn Kathīr points out that it was written by *one of his writers who had abandoned Islam and its people*. It includes: *I will open the land of God in east and west, and spread the religion of the Cross with my sword*¨: S. Al-Munjid, *Qaṣīdat Imbrāṭūr al-Rūm Niqfūr Fūqās fī Hijāʾ al-Islām wa al-Muslimīn wa Qaṣīdatā al-Imāmyn al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī wa Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī fī al-Rad ʿAlayhu*, Beirut 1982, 7, 22. See also: N. Hermes, The Byzantines in Medieval Arabic Poetry: Abu Firas' 'Al-Rumiyyat' and the Poetic Responses of al-Qaffal and Ibn Hazm to Nikephore Phocas' "Al-Qasida al-Arminiyya al-Malʿuna" (The Armenian Cursed One), *ByzSym* 19(2009), 35-61, esp. 53; G. Grünebaum, Eine poetische Polemik zwischen Byzanz und Bagdad in X. Jahrhundert, *Analecta Orientalia* 14(1937), 43-64; Ivanov, '*Pearls before Swine*', 125.

52. *If* some *Arabs lose their sight, or many of them, like cattle, deny their religion*, he said (Al-Munjid, *Qaṣīdat*, 31, 33).

Finally, It should also be noted that there are indications that Byzantine armies included Christian clergy for missionary purposes. Judge ʻAbd al-Jabbār refers to the presence of the Patriarch himself, in addition to monks, among the ranks of Byzantine armies, and to the Byzantines' claim that their success in converting large numbers from the Syrian borderlands (*al-thughūr al-Shāmīyah*) was a result of their miracles[53]. The same is confirmed by the Hagiographer of St. Nikon when referring to the saint's departure with the Byzantine armies to attack Crete in 350/961, and tells how he stayed among its inhabitants and was able to miraculously convert many Muslims[54]. *Dhāt al-Himma* is also filled with many references to the presence of clerks and monks among the Byzantine armies in the borderlands to carry out explicit Christianization activities[55].

Apostates for personal motives:

There is evidence that a number of Arab dignitaries moved to Byzantium for personal reasons, such as rebellion against the authority of the Caliphate, impunity, or revenge for personal dignity against insults or injustice by a leader or caliph. One of the Prophet companions, the prominent Umayyad Rabīʼa ibn Umayya, is said to have *fled to Damascus and then to the king of the Rūm and converted to Christianity*, because caliph ʻUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (13-23/634-644) decided to sign on him the penalty of drinking alcohol, or that he fled after committing adultery with a woman[56]. A Qurayshī noble, known as al-Wābiṣī, was said to be *disgruntled and fled to the Rūm lands,*

53. ʻAbd al-Jabbār I, 182-3, attacks Byzantines' claims that the success of their Christianization policy among the Arabs is due to the miracles of the patriarchs and saints: *You claimed that the nations did not respond to Christianity except with the signs and miracles that appeared by Paul, George, Mark, and others. You also claimed that the Patriarch came from the land of the Rūm, took down his army and raised their dead from the graves and that the Monk Michael came to the people of Mopsuestia, turned water running to oil, and all their sheep to horses, so they all went on their own and headed to the Rūm territories, as did the people of Samosata and Ḥiṣn Manṣūr.*

54. O. Lampsidis, *Ὁ ἐκ Πόντου ὅσιος Νίκων ὁ Μετανοεῖτε (Κείμενα-σχόλια)*, Athens 1982, 46- 50 (text) and 415-418 (comments). *The Life of St. Nikon*, ed. & trans. D. Sullivan, Massachusetts 1987, 83-87. See also Ivanov, *'Pearls before Swine'*, 125.

55. *Dhāt al-Himma*, I, 839, 895; II, 100, 521; III, 194, 699; IV, 489; V, 254.

56. Ibn Ḥajar Al- ʻAsqalānī (773-852/1372-1449), *Al-Iṣāba fī Tamyīz al-Saḥāba*, ed. A.M. Al-Bazāwī, Beirut 1992, II, 521. See also Cook, Apostasy, 261.

converted and died there as a Christian. One of the given reasons for his defection is the decision of caliph ʻUmar ibn ʻAbd al- ʻAzīz (99-101/717-720) to punish him for drinking alcohol[57].

Most importantly, Arabic evidence suggests that the status of the apostate and his leadership of a group or clan can lead to a mass conversion and transition to Byzantium[58]. The alleged personal insult or abuse of the royal status of the last Ghassanid king in Syria (632-638), al-Mundhir ibn al-Ḥārith[59], led him with 30,000 of his people to rebel against caliph ʻUmar ibn al- Khaṭṭāb, convert and flee to Byzantium[60]. The harsh defeat of Naṣr, a commander of the Khurramite rebellious religious sect of Babek, by caliph al-Muʻtaṣim (218-227/833-842) in late 833 drove him and 14,000 of his men to Byzantium and Christianity[61]. Change of political power

57. Abū Al-Faraj Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, ed. I. ʻAbbās *et al*., Beirut 2008, VI, 86. The historian Ibn ʻAsākir (d. 571/1175) *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. M. Al- ʻUmruwī, Cairo 1995, VIII, 387 does not mention the reason for the Caliph's decision to punish him, but he adds that al-Wābiṣī was then a governor of Medina. Al-Iṣfahānī (*Kitāb al-Aghānī*, VI, 86-87) and Ibn ʻAsākir VIII, 385 give another account stating that he was captured and tortured by Byzantines until entered into their religion.See also Cook, Apostasy, 260-1.

58. Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, 293, suggests that this happened mostly on the basis of tribal allegiance.

59. Arabic sources usually refer to him after the Islamic conquest as Jabala Ibn al-Ayham Ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ghassānī. He converted from Christianity to Islam after successive Islamic victories over Byzantines in Syria. On the biography of Jabala and his portrait in Arabic sources, see J. A. Bray, The Damnation of Ǧabala, A Ḫabar in Context, in: U. Vermeulen – J. M. F Van Reethi (eds.), *Law, Christianity and Modernism in Islamic* Society, Leuven 1998, 111-24; Idem, Christian king, Muslim apostate: depictions of Jabala Ibn al-Ayham in early Arabic sources, in: A. Papaconstantinou – M. Debié – H. Kennedy (eds.) *Writing «true stories»: Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East*, Turnhout 2010, 175-203. I. Shahîd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, v. 2, Part 2, Washington D.C. 2009 125-126 et passim.

60. One of these accounts indicates that he was angry with caliph ʻUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭab because he refused to punish a Damascene man for slapping him on the face because Jabala put his foot on his robe. Another story says that he smashed a nose of a man who inadvertently put foot on his robe while circling around the Kaʻba. The caliph then punished him by ordering the man to do the same thing with him: Ibn Kathīr, VIII, 64-5; Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, ed. R. M. Raḍwān, Beirut 1982, 142.

61. The historian Al-Ṭabarī [224-310/839-923], *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, ed. M. A. Ibrāhīm, Beirut 1986, V, 235, points to the escape of Naṣr with a large group of the

after the overthrow of caliph al-Muqtadir (295–320/908–932) led his close confidant, Bunnay ibn al-Nafīs, with many of his people to the same fate[62]. After 941, the harshness of the Hamdanids of Mosul and their arbitrariness in obtaining heavy taxes forced 10,000 knights of the clan Banū Ḥabīb, with their wives and slaves, to leave their areas near Nisibis for adjacent Byzantine regions, where they declared their submission to the emperor and conversion to Christianity[63]. In 235/849-50, the oppression of the Sicilian ruler Khalīl Ibn Isḥāq led to flight of many Muslims to Byzantium: most of

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Khurramites to Byzantium when talking about the participation of thousands of them in the attack of Theophilos on Sozopetra in 223/837. The historian Al-Mas'ūdī [283-346/957-896], *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar*, Cairo 1966, II, 276 adds that Theophilos was almost killed on the battlefield, but that *he was saved by a Christianized named Nuṣayr with a number of his followers*. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronographi*a, 31, 33-34 is more informative when referring to Nāsīr who, after his defeat by the caliphate army, was forced to resort to Byzantium *with many of his followers, all of them converted to Christianity*. He also points to the participation of Nāsīr and his men in the imperial wars against the caliphate until his death and many of his followers in one of these wars. Michael the Syrian [1126-1199], *Chronique*, trans. J. B. Chabot, Paris 1899-1910, III, 88 states that the followers of Babek along with the general Naṣr, after suffering a harsh defeat by the Abbasids, went to the Byzantine emperor and apostatized. Notably, Byzantine sources are ambiguous on their conversion to Christianity. See L. Brubaker – J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680-850: A History*, Cambridge 2001, 408 and n.160.

62. According to these sources, Ibn al-Nafīs *was one of the closest people to al-Muqtadir. He rode a horse and fled from Baghdad disguised. He entered Mosul and then Armenia and then moved to Constantinople where he apostatized* (Ibn Kathīr, XI, 160; Ibn Al-Athīr, VII, 53). At the end of the tenth century, the fall of the Hamdanid dynasty in Aleppo led its last emir Abū al-Hayjā' Ibn Sa'd ad-Dawla to resort to Byzantium. As Canard, Relations 42, suggests "Il y vécut sans doute à la cour de 1'empereur et entra dans l'armée byzantine, en se convertissant, car nous connaissons un sceau de lui avec une légende arabe sur une face et sur l'autre une effigie de Saint Théodore (Stratilate?)". On this seal see Kh. Edhem, *Catalogue des sceaux de plomb arabes et arabo-byzantins et turcs*, Constantinople 1904, 42, no. 31. It also seems that changing the course of battles has sometimes been a motive for apostasy. According to Matthew of Edessa (*The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, trans. A. E. Dostourian, New York, London 1993, 30), the imminent capture of Damascus by John Tzimisces in 975 prompted a certain Turk of Baghdad with 500 of his horsemen to apostatize and enter the Byzantine service.

63. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Ard*, 191-192.

them converted to Christianity[64].The mass apostasy was also a minor theme in *Dhāt al-Himma*, almost identical in content to historical evidence. As in the case of al-Mundhir ibn al-Ḥārith, two of the main characters in the epic, Ẓālim and his son al-Ḥārith, moved to Byzantium with 12,000 of their clan, the Banū Kilāb, as a result of being subjected to a humiliating punishment by the caliph[65].

Arabic evidence also presents the physical attractiveness, *fitna*, of Byzantine women as one of the personal reasons that can lead a Muslim to apostasy[66]. It provides stories of male Arab lovers who have been dominated by an irresistible desire for Byzantine girls to the point that they easily sacrificed everything, land, religion, and homeland, to win these girls. Usually conversion to Christianity and going to live in Byzantium were a recurring requirement of the girls to accept the association with them, to the extent that it can be said that it became a common pattern in all the stories of love relations between the two sides. The Arab side is always represented by the male, while it is very difficult to find one story of an Arab girl in love with a Byzantine man. Such stories, despite very rare, can only be found in the epics[67].

The love of Byzantine girls is one of the most frequent motivations of apostasy in *Dhāt al-Himma*, which has always focused on the beauty of these girls as a major reason that has incited many Arabs to apostatize. Among its characters is that of the fighter ʻArqūb al-Khayām, who loved the Byzantine princess Nūra, and whose *soul inclined to disbelief and made him abandon Islam*[68]. And that of the fighter Ṣabbāḥ ibn ʻAmir al-Kilābī, who was fond of a female slave of a Byzantine nobleman. A monk called Shūmudras promised him that he would persuade her master to give her

64. Ibn ʻIdhārī (d. *c.* 695/1295), *Al-Bayān al-Mughrab fī Akhbār al-Andalus wa al-Maghrib*, ed. E. Levi-Provençal, Cairo 1948, I, 215.

65. *Dhāt al-Himma*, I, 637.

66. On the Arab obsession with the beauty and attractiveness of Byzantine women see: N. M. El-Cheikh, Describing the Other to Get at the Self: Byzantine Women in Arabic Sources (8th-11th Centuries), *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40/2 (1997), 239-250, esp. 239-240.

67. In *Dhāt al-Himma*, and the story of Maymūnah, see above, p. 280, n. 29. In *Digenis Akritis*, and the case of the Arab girl Aisha, see above, p. 279.

68. *Dhāt al-Himma*, II, 278-9.

up to him if he apostatized, saying that: *I will crown you in the church, and the wedding will be at my expense, and after that both of you will become one spirit and body until one of you dies. This is Christianity*[69]. *Dhāt al-Himma* also relates the story of Abū Yukhluf al-Maghribī who accompanied al-Baṭṭāl to Constantinople, disguised as merchants, to liberate captives. The beauty of one *patrician*'s daughter seized him and eventually led him to baptism[70]. On the Byzantine side, *Digenis Akritis* also presents love as the only motive which incited one of its heroes, *amīr* Mousour, to apostasy[71].

Although love as a motive for apostasy appears as an epic treatment, we can find similar stories in Arabic sources. The *adab* writer Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (284-356/897-967) tells a story of a young Muslim ascetic, *zāhid*, who could not resist the temptation of a Christian slave girl from Amorium and immediately fell in love with her. He gave up his companions and continued to chase her despite severe beatings from her family. The girl finally required him to apostatize in order to marry her, but he refused. However, the man continued his attempt with the girl, which led to his beating severely by the neighbors. This time, the injuries led to his death[72].

Another most famous story is attributed to a very devout and faithful man who preserves the Qur'ān in his mind. When he was fighting in the borders, he saw a beautiful girl and fell in love with her, then apostatized to marry her. Many years later, some Muslims, in a prisoner exchange mission, met him in Constantinople and asked what he still remembered from the Qur'ān. He replied that he forgot all of it except the verse: *Those who disbelieve may wish if they were Muslims* [Qur'ān 15:2]. They offered him to return with them but he refused. This story was repeated frequently in Arabic sources in various details and attributed to many people, but it has the following common denominators: 1) All its heroes before apostasy

69. *Dhāt al-Himma*, II, 344-348.

70. *Dhāt al-Himma*, III, 232-234, 383-391. The epic also presents hatred as a motive that could lead to conversion and resort to Byzantium, such as the case of a girl who rejected her father's attempts to force her to marry her cousin. She threatened: *If you force me to do so, I will kill myself, or enter the land of the Rūm and be with them as they want. I will worship the religion of the cross. Dhāt al-Himma*, IV, 704.

71. See n. 22 above.

72. Abū Al-Faraj Al-Iṣfahānī, *Al-Dayārāt*, ed. J. Al- 'Aṭṭyeh, London 1991, 49-50.

were pious and faithful, memorizer of the Qur'ān, and *mujāhidūn* against Byzantium for a long time. 2) They easily abandoned Islam and homeland to win their female lovers. 3) They refused an offer to return to their homeland. 4) All of them forgot the Qur'ān except the same verse[73].

However, whether the story is related to one person in different forms and details, or to various people, it reflects the Arab view of one of the reasons why a Muslim may abandon his religion and prefer to live in Byzantium. It is interesting to note that these sources did not attribute the story to a person who is oscillator in belief[74]. Forgetting the Qur'an, with the exception of a certain verse, despite the obvious exaggeration, seems to reflect the Arab view of the grave consequences for those who seek to do so[75]. The refusal to return to Muslim lands, the preference for Christianity and Byzantium may also reflect the break from their former life. Al-Wābiṣī has rejected an offer made by 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz's envoy to Constantinople to take him to the Islamic lands. He said: *How can I return to Islam while I have a wife and two boys, and if I enter the city, they will mock me by saying: 'O Christian'*[76].

Assimilation of apostates:

Perhaps the most obvious link between Arabic epics and historical sources regarding the Byzantine policy to absorb the apostates is clear

73. Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, VI, 86-87; Ibn 'Asākir, VIII, 385-386; Ibn Kathīr, XI, 64; Ibn Al- Jawzī, *Al- Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam*, ed. M. A. 'Aṭā, Beirut 1992, V, 120. This story also found its way into the *ḥadīth* collection of Al-Bayhaqī (384-458/994-1066), *Shu 'ab al-Īmān*, ed. M. Zaghlūl, Beirut 2000, 54-5. For an English translation of this text, see Cook, Apostasy, 266-267.

74. In his literary book *Zhamm al-Hawā*, i.e. 'Hatred of Love', Ibn al-Jawzī (508-597/1116-1200) embodies the concept of Arab culture of love as one of the dangers that can threaten the true believer and led him to grave consequences such as adultery, murder and above all infidelity. In chapter 43, entitled 'for those who disbelieved because of romantic love', he tells a number of stories about male lovers, from Baghdad and other cities, who apostatized to win their Christian girls. These stories, however, do not relate to Byzantine girls and are not accompanied by migration to Byzantium: *Zhamm al-Hawā*, ed. Kh. al-'Alamī, Beirut 1998, 408-409 (stories 1017-1021) See also Cook, Apostasy, 266.

75. It is more likely that the citation of this Qur'anic verse was to present a warning message rather than, as Cook, Apostasy, 267, suggests, mere humorous touch.

76. Al-Isfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, VI, 86-87; Ibn 'Asākir, VIII, 386.

in their consensus on the success of this policy in attracting and linking some of them to Byzantium using means of seduction. Arabic evidence usually presents money, power and the female beauty, i. e. *fitna*, as basic temptations. However, some historical sources adopt the epic approach and record exaggerated and unrealistic offers of temptation, such as sharing of the emperor's throne or marrying his daughter[77]. Other accounts are more realistic and almost match what was recorded by Byzantine sources.

The common denominator of these accounts is the image of prosperity enjoyed by the apostates in Byzantium. A comparison is often made between the flourishing and comfortable new life in Byzantium and the harsh living conditions in the former homeland. As Skylitzes points out, when Samonas' father came to Constantinople in a diplomatic mission and saw the life his son enjoyed, *he would have preferred to stay with his son and forsake his home town, Melitene*[78]. Life difficulties are presented as a motive for the apostasy of the Banū Ḥabīb[79] and the Khurramite soldiers[80]. Perhaps Genesios meant to compare the previous harsh life of the Khurramites with their new reality in Byzantium when he referred to the Persians *who formerly dwelled in tents and wrapped themselves with leather*[81]. The

77. Arabic sources point out that emperor Herakleios tried to seduce the captive 'Abdullah Ibn Ḥudhāyfah al-Sahmī to conversion by offering to marry his daughter and share the throne (Ibn Ḥajar, IV, 58; Ibn Al- Jawzī, IV, 320; VIII, 329). Ibn al-Athīr IV, 102, refers to the escape of the Arab noble al-Jaḥāf from caliph 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwān (65-86/685-705) to Byzantium and his return again after he received a promise of safety. The reason of his return is that *the emperor honoured him and asked him to convert versus anything that he wishes. Al-Jaḥāf replied: I did not come to you hatred in Islam.* These exaggerated offers may reflect the Arab perception of how much Byzantines wanted to attract and baptize them, and what the apostates could achieve in Byzantium. Moreover, I think it was an advanced justification to explain the motives that incited many Arabs to favour Byzantium and Christianity.

78. *Ὁ δὲ τοῦ Σαμωνᾶ πατὴρ τὴν παρρησίαν, ἣν ὁ τούτου υἱὸς εἶχε πρὸς βασιλέα, καὶ τὴν τιμὴν θεασάμενος καὶ τὴν δόξαν, ᾑρετίσατο συνεῖναι τῷ υἱῷ, Μελιτηνὴν τὴν πατρίδα ἀπαρνησάμενος*: Skylitzes, 189 (trans. Wortley, 183-184).

79. Ibn Ḥawqal, 192. As Genesios [*Iosephi Genesii Regum Libri Quattuor*, ed. A. Lesmueller-Werner & I. Thurn (CFHB 14), Berlin, 1978 38-39 (hereafter: Genesius). Eng. Trans. Kaldellis, *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, Canberra 1998, 52] also points out, Theophobos' father left his homeland and entered Byzantium in great poverty.

80. Michael the Syrian, III, 88.

81. *ὅθεν καὶ τοῦ Περσικοῦ ἔθνους, πάλαι μὲν τὸν σκηνίτην βίον περιπεποιημένου*

contrast between the Arab *tenda* and the Byzantine *οἶκος*, as a symbol of the difference between the nomadism and urbanization, is also a recurring literary theme in *Dhāt al-Himma* and *Digenis Akritis*[82]. According to Ibn Ḥawqal, the Byzantine emperor honored the clan Banū Ḥabīb, supplied its members with cattle, allocated them the best land and amenities and left them free to choose villages and houses[83]. He adds that the prosperous life of the clan in Byzantium made them correspond with other Arabs, especially the relatives who left behind in al-Jazīra, encourage them to join them in Byzantium, describing the extent of care they enjoy. Thus, *Many of their relatives and others who did not belong to them joined them*[84].

Byzantine evidence, though confusing the Khurramites and Persians[85], provides important details of the extent to which Theophobus/Naṣr and

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καὶ δέρρεσι κατὰ περιστολὴν τὴν ἀπορίαν ἢ τὸ γενναῖον ἐπιδεικνυμένου: Genesius, 37 (trans. KALDELLIS, 50).

82. *Dhāt al-Himma*, I, 897-898 presents the volatile and opportunistic character of Abū al-Hazāhiz, describing him at first as "ignorant and nomadic" in behaviour, but after baptism and settling in a Byzantine home, he became more urbanized. *Digenis Akrites* often compares the noble and comfortable life of the Byzantine *οἶκος* with the harsh life of the Arab *tenda*. In his account about the apostasy of the *amīr* Mousour and his relatives, he illustrates Arabs as people use to live in transit, but when they turn to Christianity and move to Byzantium they become more "civilized": GALATARIOTOU, Structural Oppositions, 37-38.

83. Ibn Ḥawqal, 192.

84. Ibn Ḥawqal, 192 also states that *They sent to those who were left behind and to those who knew to lure them to what they reached and received. They told them how the king generously gave, supported and established them. This made the latter covet what they received.*

85. A. KALDELLIS, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium*, Cambridge Mass., London 2019, 127, 128, suggests that the Khurramites were mostly Iranians from Azerbaijan, and that the Byzantines (accurately) called them 'Persians'. However, some Arabic sources attribute the leader of the sect itself, Babek, to an Arab origin, and that his father, 'Abdullah, is an Arab from Iraq who immigrated to Azerbaijan and committed adultery with a woman who gave birth to Babek. Ibn Al-Nadīm (d. c. 995AD.), *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. A.F. Al-SAYYĪD, London 2009, 417; Ṭāhir Al-Muqadīsī (d. 966 AD.), *Al-Bad' wa al-Tārīkh*, Cairo n.d., VI, 114-15. Other sources mention that Babek is a son of Muṭṭahar b. Fāṭima, the daughter of Abū Muslim al-Khurasānī. Al-Dīnawīrī (828-896 AD.), *Kitāb al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, ed. V. GUIRGGAS, Leiden 1888, 397. According to the most comprehensive study (H. Q. Al- 'AZĪZ, *Al-Babekīyah: al-Intifaḍah ḍida al-Dawlah al-'Abbāsīyah* [Babekism: The Uprising against the Abbasid State], Damascus 2000, 172-81), the sect included followers of various races: Persians, Arabs, Kurds and Armenians.

his men received warm hospitality and imperial generosity. According to this evidence, after the defeat of Babek, perhaps in early 834[86], Theophobus came over to Byzantium and made submission for himself and his 14,000 men to the emperor. For this reason Theophilos gave him his own sister in marriage and raised him to the rank of a *πατρίκιος*[87], along with *the illustrious of both retinue and honors, of a luxurious life style most adequate to his attendance*[88]. As for his men, Theophilos *made it legal for any Persian to marry Romans and to be joined and united in wedlock, causing many of them to be distinguished by imperial dignities*[89]. He also gave them 'ranks and *στρατεῖαι*'[90], inscribed them in the lists of the army and established a so-called Persian regiment, and commanded that *they should be numbered*

86. For an extensive discussion of the date, see J. S. Codoñer, *The Emperor Theophilos and the East, 829-842: Court and Frontier in Byzantium during the Last Phase of Iconoclasm,* Rutledge 2014, 147.

87. Theophanes Continuatus (Featherstone–Codoñer), 162; Genesius, 38 (trans. Kaldellis, 52). Ps. – Symeon (in: Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*..., ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, Bonn, 1838, 625-626 [hereafter Theophanes Continuatus (Bonn)] = *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae, Chronicon*, ed. S. Wahlgren [CFHB 44/1], Berlin–New York 2006, 218 [hereafter: Symeon Magister (Wahlgren)]), points out that he married Empress Theodora's sister. Some scholars tend to adopt this on the grounds that the Byzantine sources did not mention any sisters of Theophilos. J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I. A. D. 802-867*, New York 1965, 253 n. 3; W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival A.D.780-842*, Stanford 1988, 282.

88. *ὡς ἐντεῦθεν παρὰ τῷ βασιλεῖ πλεῖστα στεργόμενος εὐμοιρῆσαι πατρικιότητα, δορυφορίας τε καὶ σεβασμιότητος περιδόξων, ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ τῆς κατὰ θεραπείαν πολυτελοῦς καὶ ἱκανωτάτης ...*: Genesius, 4 (trans. Kaldellis, 53).

89. *συναρμόζεσθαί τε ἕκαστον τῶν Περσῶν νομοθετεῖ τοῖς 'Ρωμαίοις καὶ κατ' ἐπιγαμίαν ἅπτεσθαί τε καὶ συνείρεσθαι, πολλοὺς τούτων τοῖς βασιλικοῖς ἐμπρέπειν ἀξιώμασι πεποιηκώς* [Theophanes Continuatus (Featherstone–Codoñer), 162]. According to al-Ṭabarī, V, 235, *the Byzantine emperor provided them generously, arranged for them to marry Byzantine women and enrolled them as soldiers on whom he depend in his most important tasks.*

90. Genesius, 38 (trans. Kaldellis, 52). A *στρατεία* was almost the Byzantine equivalent of a modem military 'commission'. It referred to the obligations imposed upon its holder and the financial arrangements made by the state to support him. See J. F. Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription in the Byzantine Army c.550-950: A Study on the Origins of the Stratiotika Ktemata*, Wien 1979, 36, 41ff.

amongst the Romans who went out to war against the Hagarenes[91]. As in the case of the Banū Ḥabīb, the imperial lavish privileges seem to have spurred other Khurramites to join the regiment, whose number has grown in a few years to as many as 30,000[92].

Theophilos's arrangement for his new soldiers to marry Byzantine women was certainly seen an essential step in their assimilation process. As A. Kaldellis points out, it is more likely that this arrangement was to "facilitate, or even coerced, marriages with newly converted but essentially still foreign men, who did not yet speak Greek or understand Roman custom, and whose Christianity would have been skin-deep"[93]. This arrangement seems to be associated with an imperial edict mentioned in the *Life of St. Athanasia of Aegina*, who lived in the first half of 9th century[94], which states that unmarried women and widows should be given in marriage to foreign men[95].

Arabic sources confirm the keenness of the Byzantine authorities to give the daughters of the Byzantine families as wives to the apostates. Judge 'Abd al-Jabbār quotes from an Arab apostate that: *the emperor gave me generously, and said to his entourage: 'Look for wealthy women as wives for those converts to improve their conditions*[96]. In one of the stories of *Dhāt al-Himma*, the emperor addressed his *πατρίκιοι*: *Know that these people*

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91. *ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ κώδιξι στρατιωτικοῖς αὐτοὺς ἀναγράφεται, καὶ τάγμα οὕτως καλούμενον Περσικὸν ἐγκατέστησε, καὶ τοῖς κατὰ πόλεμον ἐξιοῦσι 'Ρωμαίοις κατὰ τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν ἐναριθμεῖσθαι προσέταξε*: Theophanes Continuatus (Featherstone–Codoñer), 163.

92. Theophanes Continuatus (Featherstone–Codoñer), 180. Naṣr/Theophobos, had been appointed as *τουρμάρχης* of the *φοιδεράτοι* and commander of the Persian troops. On this and for the growing size of the Khurramite regiment in 838 see Codoñer, *Theophilos*, 151; C. Zuckerman, Emperor Theophilos and Theophobos in Three Tenth-Century Chronicles. Discovering the 'Common Source', *REB* 75 (2017), 101-150.

93. Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 129.

94. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, 283, suggests a connection between this decree and the imperial desire to encourage the absorption of the Khurramites.

95. Athanasia herself had to marry a foreign man, whom she eventually persuaded to join a monastery: L. Carras (ed.), The Life of St Athanasia of Aegina, in: *Maistor. Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, Canberra 1984, 199-224, esp. 212-213 (=*Life of St. Athanasia of Aegina*, trans. L. F. Sherry, in: *Holy Women of Byzantium. Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. A.-M. Talbot, Washington, D. C. 1996, 137-158, esp. 139,143 and n. 22).

96. 'Abd Al-Jabbar, I, 171.

wanted our religion, and I have given them money until they become patrikioi like you. I advise you to share them in your wealth and to give your daughters as wives to them so that you will have the pleasure of Christ[97]. Perhaps such accounts match with other Byzantine evidence that hint at a change in the conditions of Arab apostates when marrying rich Byzantine women. Genesios records a marriage between a poor Saracen apostate and a rich Byzantine woman. He was working at her tavern, and after a long time she fell in love with him and gave birth to a boy, Theophobos[98]. Among the cases considered by the 11th century court of Eustathios Romaios was a complaint by a Byzantine widow against her deceased husband, the *πατρίκιος* Nasar, who violated his former obligation to increase her dowry[99].

Other evidence suggests that such marriages did not confine to upper class, but extended to other classes in all over the Empire, in the capital, provinces and frontiers. As al-Iṣfahānī records, the envoy of the Caliph ʻUmar ibn ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz to the Byzantine court met an apostate, al-Wābiṣī, who had a wife and two sons in Constantinople[100]. Another apostate, according to Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, had a family in Constantinople when Maslama ibn ʻAbd al-Malik attacked it in 717[101]. Outside the capital, the *Life of St. Theodora of Thessalonike* (812-892) narrates a story of priests and laymen of Myriophytos, one of the villages subjected to Thessalonike, who tried to compel of Elias, who was of Arab extraction, to anathematize the iconoclast heresy, but he denied. Later, of course, realizing the remarkable miracles of St. Theodora, he anathematized *the religion handed down to him by his ancestors*[102]. This story, and of course the Christian name of Elias,

97. *Dhāt al-Himma*, IV, 282-3.

98. Genesius, 37 (trans. Kaldellis, 39).

99. J. Cheynet, L'apport arabe à l'aristocratie byzantine des Xe-XIe siècles, *BSl* 16/1 (1995), 137-146, esp. 145. Nasar's accession to the high title of *πατρίκιος* and his marriage to a Byzantine lady, perhaps from the aristocracy, seems to be in line with *Dhāt al-Himma*.

100. Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, V, 126.

101. Yāqūt Al-Ḥamawī, II, 44.

102. Σ. Α. Πασχαλιδης, *Ὁ βίος τῆς ὁσιομυροβλύτιδος Θεοδώρας τῆς ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ*, Thessaloniki 1991, 178 (*Life of St. Theodora of Thessalonike*, trans. A-M. Talbot, in: *Holy Women of Byzantium*, 159-237, esp. 212-213). On christianization of the Arabs after a spiritual experience or a saint's miracle see H. M. Hassan, Η εικόνα των Αράβων στη βυζαντινή γραμματεία του 7ου και 8ου αιώνα, Ph.D Dissertation, University of Athens 2012, 109-110.

suggests that he is a member of an Arab family that had been converted and intermarried to village families at least during the ninth century.

Practically, Byzantine authorities sought to provide privileges and facilities to encourage families to approve such marriages. A short text in the *De Ceremoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, entitled *Περὶ τῶν αἰχμαλώτων Σαρακηνῶν τῶν ἐπὶ θέματι βαπτιζομένων*, points to tax-free land for three years, money, grains, seeds and oxen given to the new apostate captive, as well as tax exemptions for the family, whether military or civil, which accept to take him as son-in-law[103]. The comparison of the privileges mentioned in this text with those related to the cases of the Khurramites and Banū Ḥabīb suggests that the Byzantines distinguished in their dealings with the apostates between the individual and mass apostasy, the class background from which the apostate came, and more importantly the usefulness of these apostates.

However, regardless the kind or size of the privileges offered to the apostate, it is most likely that the Byzantines were not to present any advantages without expecting a return. M. Canard has suggested that "les Arabes ont fourni à 1'empire de nouveaux serviteurs, fonctionnaires de palais, officiers, soldats". However, he found a difficulty to answer the question "Cela représentait-il un enrichissement pour Byzance?"[104]. In his dealing with the Arab elements in Byzantine aristocracy during 10th and 11th centuries, J. Cheynet suggested that many of these elements served on the eastern frontier, a region which, apart from major operations, "n'est pas

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103. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae. Libri Duo*, ed. J. J. Reīske, CSHB, Bonn 1829, I, 694-695 (trans. E. McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century*, Washington, D. C. 1995, 366-367). It is also likely that the division of the Khurramites by Theophilos, after his growing suspicion of their intentions, into small units and their distribution to the *θέματα* under the command of local *στρατηγοί*, led to move of many of their wives, probably from the capital and other regions. Genesius, 41 (trans. Kaldellis, 55). As the above-mentioned evidence of the capture of Melitene by John Kourkouas in 324/935 and of Ṭarsūs in 354/965 by Nikephoros Phocas suggests, some of these marriages occurred originally between Muslims and Byzantine women, possibly captives, in the border cities. The desire of husbands not to give up their wives and children led to their conversion and move to live with them in Byzantium. Although these wives are likely to have been captured from borderlands, there is a possibility, though weak, that some of them belong to other areas at the heart of the empire.

104. Canard, Relations, 43.

au centre des interest des chroniqueurs byzantins". He suggested that some of the names of the 11th and 12th centuries, such as Yaḥya of Antioch and Loulou, may refer to an Arab origin[105]. However, it may be difficult to assert that these names are of apostates, since the possibility exists that Yaḥya was an Arab Christian, or that Loulou (Lū'lū') was of a Turkish origin. According to A. Kazhdan and A. Epstein, the representation of both Turks and Arabs in the ranks of the Byzantine nobility during the 11th and 12th century makes it difficult to identify the origin of some families, whether Arab or Turkish[106]. For other reasons, it may be appropriate to deal with the general approach of Cheynet with some caution, and therefore, it may be safe to deal only with the cases that their Arab origin has been confirmed[107].

105. Cheynet, Apport, 138.

106. A. P. Kazhdan – A.W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1985, 180.

107. Cheynet also relied on the similarity of names of some people, whose Arab origin was confirmed by Byzantine sources, with others to suggest their Arab origin. This approach seems risky as evident in the case of Samonas. Cheynet assumes a connection between him and a tenth century judge in Thessaloniki of a same name. However, the fact that Samonas was an eunuch without potential offspring, and that he refused his father's request to remain in Constantinople, when the latter visited him, left Cheynet only a narrow space to propose that "plus vraisemblablement il s'agit d'un homonyme venu, lui aussi, du monde arabe". However, the Arabic derivation of the name 'Samonas' itself seems dubious. 'Samonas' is a name of an ancient Minoan colony, a thousand-year-old olive tree in Crete and the famous Greek traditional villas. Cheynet's approach also seems inappropriate for the case of Michael Bourtzes, a leading general of Nikephoros Phokas and Basil II. According to Cheynet, Apport, 139, the origin of his name is uncertain, however, as he suggests, "la meilleure hypothèse le fait venir de l'arabe *Bourdj* (provenant du grec πύργος): l' homme de la tour". The name can be proposed as deriving from the place name Bourtzo or Soterioupolis near Trebizond. P. Charanis (*The Armenian in the Byzantine Empire*, Lisbon 1963, 45) and N. Adontz (Les Tarronites en Arménie et a Byzance, in: Idem, *Etudes armeno-byzantines*, Lisbon 1965, 197-263, esp. 234) advocated an Armenian origin for Bourtzes and his clan. Cheynet, Apport, 139-140, also takes the Arabic word "amīr" and the Greek one "σαρακηνός" as a firm evidence on the Arab origin of both John Amiropoulos, the *πατρίκιος* and *στρατηγὸς* of Euxeinos Pontos under Basil II, and Leo Sarakinopoulos, who occupied different high positions in Bulgaria after 971. However, this approach cannot be confirmed from Byzantine sources. It is also difficult to assert the Arab origin of Abu l-Aswār/Apleaphares, the ruler of the city of Dvin from 1022 to 1049. Cheynet (Apport, 144) himself admits that "l'origine des Aplespharai est inconnue". In fact, there is no evidence to confirm whether Apleaphares is of Arab, Armenian, or Turkish descent. In another case, he is also forced not to rule out

Arabic and Byzantine evidence often emphasizes the role of these apostates in the Imperial service against Muslims, especially as mercenary fighters. A major motivation on the part of the Byzantines from encouraging the mass-apostasy, notably of a border tribe or clan, was to use them for this purpose[108]. Undoubtedly, the inclusion of 10,000 knights from the Banū Ḥabīb in the army was not random or without a goal. According to Ibn Ḥawqal, the clan raided Islamic lands habitually every year during the harvest. They mainly raided in the Diyār Muḍar, taking several of the frontier forts, such as Ḥiṣn Zīyād and Ḥiṣn Manṣūr[109]. The Khurramite regiment of 30,000 fighters participated in attacking al-Jazīra in 223/837[110]. In 315/927 the Abbasid summer raid (*al-ṣā'ifah*) that Thamāl led out from Ṭarsūs surprised a Kurdish chieftain named Ibn al-Ḍaḥāk who had taken service with the Byzantines after apostatizing from Islam[111]. Bunayy ibn al-Nafīs and his people joined a campaign led by the *δομέστικος* Malīḥ against Samosata and Melitene in 319/931[112]. Finally, Mu'nis al-Khādim, the most influential leader of the Abbasids, resorted to ibn al- Nafīs to convince the Byzantines to withdraw from Melitene[113].

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that some of those who bore the name Chasan/Ḥassan had an Armenian origin. Indeed, the risk of Cheynet's approach lies in, for example, the possibility of including the *βέστης* Pharasmanios Apokapes as person of a probable Arab origin if Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. E. Tsolakis, [CFHB 50], Athens 2011, 91 (trans. A. Kaldellis – D. Krallis, Cambridge, Mass., London 2012, 211) did not explicitly refer to his Armenian origin.

108. Eger, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontier*, 292, suggests that this was to gather manpower with a degree of control and semblance of loyalty on the frontier.

109. Ibn Ḥawqal, 192-193.

110. Genesius, 37 (trans. Kaldellis, 50); Al-Ṭabarī, V, 235; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronographia*, 33-34. Most likely, Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, 282 is right in his hypothesis: 'Naturally Theophilos was delighted at the prospect of this mass conversion of infidels and of increasing the Byzantine army by almost a sixth with loyal soldiers who hated Arabs'. Like the Khurramite regiment, Cedrenus, *Historiarum Compendium*, II, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, Bonn, 1839, 602, points out that Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) recruited a large number of foreign mercenaries, Franks, Varangians and Arabs. He enrolled them in their own *τάγματα*, each consisting of the same race and sent them to the northern and eastern borders. It can safely be suggested that the Arab *τάγματα* were sent to the eastern border.

111. Ibn Al-Athīr, VII, 63.

112. Ibn Kathīr, XI, 167; Ibn Al-Athīr, VII, 70.

113. 'Arīb Ibn Sa'īd Al-Qurṭubī (d. 369/980), *Ṣilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, ed. M. A. Ibrāhīm, Beirut, n.d., 320.

Also, it seems that the Byzantines benefited from the apostates in the acts of espionage and military intelligence[114]. Nikephoros Phocas explicitly refers to the Armenian incompetence in the *theme of Ἀρμενιάκοι* to carry out acts of guarding and espionage, and therefore he recommended to use Arab spies and rely on them to obtain information about the movements of Muslims[115]. 'Abd al-Jabbār also points out that the Byzantines were interested in employing Arab apostates as spies because their appearance and language enable them to *mix with Muslims without being suspicious, so they could convey their news to the Rūm, as well as reports about their soldiers, leaders, and princes*[116]. In practical terms, the Byzantines exploited the knowledge of the Banū Ḥabīb in Arabic, pathways of Islamic lands and Muslim fighting methods to inflict the greatest harm on them[117].

Byzantine evidence also provides numerous references to the apostates who held important military posts. Theophanes refers to Eumathios, an Arab highly skilled in engineering, who had accepted baptism and whom Nikephoros I (186-196/802-811) enrolled in imperial service and established at Adrianople[118]. Theophanes Continuatus points to Nasar, the *δρουγγάριος τοῦ πλωΐμου* under Basil I (867-886), who was sent against Aghlabids since 879 and achieved victories that were crucial to the restoration of Byzantine control over southern Italy[119]. Skylitzes mentions Constantine, the *κόμης*

114. On Byzantine-Arab espionage in general see G. Theotokis, *Byzantine Military Tactics in Syria and Mesopotamia in the 10th Century: A Comparative Study*, Edinburgh 2018, Ch. 6. On the Byzantine use of envoys and captives as spies see N. Koutrakou, Spies and Prisoners of War. Diplomacy and Espionage. Their Role in Byzantine Foreign Relations, 8th-10th Centuries, *Graeco-Arabica* 6 (1995), 125-144; Eadem, 'Spies of Towns': Some Remarks on Espionage in the Context of Arab-Byzantine Relations (VII-Xth Centuries), *Graeco-Arabica* 7-8 (2000), 243-66.

115. Nikephoros II, Skirmishing, in: *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, ed. trans. G. T. Dennis [CFHB 25], Washington, D.C. 1985, 144-239, esp.153.

116. 'Abd Al-Jabbar, II, 326, 335.

117. Ibn Ḥawqal, 192-193.

118. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. De Boor, Leipzig 1883, 485 (Trans. C. Mango & R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD.284-813*, Oxford 1997, 665).

119. Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia, Liber V: Vita Basilii Imperatoris*, ed. & trans. I. Ševčenko, [CFHB 42], Boston-Berlin 2011, 220 f. (For the details see V. Vlyssidou, in *Βυζαντινά Στρατεύματα στη Δύση (5ος-11ος αι.)*. Athens 2008, 313-316). Nasar's father Christopher held the supreme court position of μάγιστρος and he had a brother named

τῆς ἑταιρείας, who was *an eunuch of Saracen origin*, and who served Constantine IX Monomachos and *never wavered in his fidelity to him*[120].

Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus provides important reference to an Arab family that has achieved a successful career in military service on the eastern front, acquired leadership positions and, most importantly, received a distinction from emperor Alexander (912-913). One of this family is Chase the son of Ioube (Ayyūb)[121] who, although *remained a true Sarakēnos in thought and manners and religion*, was raised to be a *protospatharios* and had *great freedom of intercourse with the emperor*[122]. According to other chroniclers, he held a fiscal position in the theme of Ἑλλὰς thereafter[123]. His brother the *πρωτοσπαθάριος* Niketas, whose name implies his conversion, was appointed as military governor of the Kibyrrhaiotai. Constantine

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Barsanes. Under Michael III (842-867), Nasar was appointed *στρατηγὸς* of the Bucellarian Theme and participated in the Battle of Lalakaon in 863, where the Byzantines inflicted a crushing defeat on 'Umar al-Aqṭa', the emir of Melitene. See the comments of T. Lounghis in *Η Μικρά Ασία των Θεμάτων*, Athens 1998, 252-254.

120. *Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ τῆς μεγάλης ἑταιρείας ἄρχων, εὐνοῦχος ἄνθρωπος, ἐκ Σαρακηνῶν ἕλκων τὸ γένος καὶ τῷ βασιλεῖ ὑπηρετήσας πρὸ τῆς βασιλείας καὶ πίστιν τηρῶν ἐς αὐτόν*: Skylitzes, 438 (trans. Wortley, 412). Attaleiates, 27 (trans. Kaldellis – Krallis, 59), refers to the eunuch Konstantinos the *πραιπόσιτος* who led the Byzantines during the Pecheneg war (ca. 1047-1053). Most likely, Skylitzes and Attaleiates talk about the same person.

121. Chase's father name is recorded by other chroniclers. Theophanes Continuatus (Bonn) 388; *Symeon Magister* Wahlgren, 303-304; Georgius Monachus, in: Theophanes Continuatus (Bonn), 880; Leo Grammaticus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB, Bonn 1842, 294. Cheynet, Apport 139, holds a link between the name of Chase's father and Ioubas, whose name appears on a 9th century seal as *Ἰουβᾷ βασιλικῷ πρωτοσπαθαρίῳ καὶ ἐκ προσώπου τῶν Κιβυρραιωτῶν*: G. Zacos & J. Nesbitt, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, Berne 1984, II, 167; However, Constantine Porphyrogenitus' reference (see next note) to Chase as *ὁ τοῦ πατρικίου Δαμιανοῦ δοῦλος* is completely contrary to Cheynet's suggestion that he was the son of a *πρωτοσπαθάριος*. Furthermore, as A.-K. Wassiliou (Beamte der Kibyrraioten, in TIB 8/1, 410), suggests, the name of the holder probably is Loukas and not Ioubas.

122. *ὁ γὰρ Χασὲ ἐκεῖνος, ὁ ἐκ Σαρακηνῶν τῷ γένει ὁρμώμενος, Σαρακηνὸς δὲ τῷ ὄντι τῇ γνώμῃ καὶ τῷ τρόπῳ καὶ τῇ λατρείᾳ διατελῶν, ...ἐπεὶ πολλὴν παρρησίαν εἶχεν τῷ τότε καιρῷ ὁ πρωτοσπαθάριος οὗτος Χασὲ πρὸς τὸν κύριν Ἀλέξανδρον, τὸν βασιλέα...* Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. G. Moravcsīk, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins [CFHB 1], Washington, D. C. 1967, 243 [hereafter: DAI].

123. See n. 121.

Porphyrogenitus indicates his strong influence on emperor Alexander who accepted his request to make his son, the *σπαθαροκανδιδάτος* Aberkios, a captain-general of the Mardaïtes of Attaleia[124].

Other Byzantine evidence provides many instances of Arab apostates who were able to achieve success and influence in the Byzantine court and civil administration. Theophanes refers to the *πατρίκιος* Beser who was honoured by Leo III, and attributes to him a key role in the outbreak of the Iconoclasm[125]. Skylitzes also points to Ioannikios of Arab origin who warned Romanos II of the plot against him by Basil Peteinos[126].

Perhaps the most famous apostate figure who has attained a prominent position in the imperial service is the eunuch Samonas, the *πατρίκιος* and *παρακοιμώμενος* of Leo VI, who was presented by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in his *De Administrando Imperio* as a good adviser on economic affairs[127]. Byzantine sources provide ample information on his career in the imperial palace, and attribute to him a major role in its political scene[128]. He began as a servant in the house of Stylianos Zaoutzes,

124. *DAI*, 243.

125. Theophanes, ed. De Boor, 402 (trans. Mango & Scott, 555). Scholars differ about the historicity of Beser. G. Ostrogorsky, Les débuts de la querelle des images, in: *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, Paris 1930, I, 235, thinks that he is a fictional character fabricated by Theophanes. A. A. Vasīlīev, The Iconoclastic Edict of caliph Yazid II, A. D.721, *DOP* 9 (1956), 23-47, esp. 30, suggests that he is the same Jewish magician Tessarakontapechos whose name was linked with Iconoclasm in other Byzantine sources. S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Leo III. With Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources*, Louvain 1973, 59ff believes that he is a real person who is not only mentioned in Theophanes but also in an Arab historical source, still a manuscript preserved in Leiden, where he is presented as the son of a noble Byzantine family, captured by Arabs in his youth and converted to Islam and educated in the court of caliph ‘Abd al-Malik. He succeeded in escaping to Byzantium, returned to Christianity, and received a great honor and abundant property from the emperor.

126. Skylitzes 251, Cf. Cedrenus, II, §42.

127. *DAI*, 245.

128. For the biography of Samonas, see Σ. Kougeas, Κῶδιξ τοῦ πατρικίου Σαμωνᾶ, *BNJ* 5 (1926-7), 198-204; R. Janin, Un Arabe ministre à Byzance, Samonas (IXe-Xe siècle), *EO* 34 (1935), 307-18; Sh. Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886-912): Politics and People*, Leiden 1997, 208-210; L. Rydén, The Portrait of the Arab Samonas in Byzantine Literature, *Graeco-Arabica* 3 (1984), 101-108.

the father of Empress Zoe[129]. After he revealed the plans of the Zaoutzes family to remove the emperor, he was granted as reward one-third of the property of this family and raised to be a *κουβικουλάριος*. Samonas soon became the right-hand man of Leo VI. Later, he was granted the title of *πρωτοσπαθάριος*, and in 906 he became *πατρίκιος* and raised to be *παρακοιμώμενος*[130].

This splendid career led L. Rydén to conclude his article dedicated to Samonas by saying: 'To sum up: the Arabs were regarded as enemies, and their religion was repugnant to the Byzantines. But if an Arab became Christian and served the Christian empire loyally, there was no end to his possibilities. In theory, he could even become emperor'[131]. This hypothesis is based on a suggested relationship between Samonas and two 10th century Jewish and Byzantine apocalyptic texts indicating that at the end of time an Arab would be the Last Roman Emperor[132]. It should be noted, however, that the evidence has already claims that some apostates, through their influence in the empire, sought to take over the throne, or that some emperors actually of an Arab origins. Byzantine evidence points out the attempt of the Khurramite soldiers to proclaim their leader Theophobos as emperor after the defeat of Theophilus in Amorium in 223/838[133]. There was also a Byzantine tradition that ascribed an Arab, or 'Syrian', ancestry to Leo V[134]. On the other hand, Arabic evidence refers to Nikephoros I as the

129. *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. P. Karlin-Hayter, Brussels 1970, 49.

130. *Vita Euthymii*, 49; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *DAI*, 245; Skylitzes, 179 (trans. Wortley, 174, 180); Leo Grammaticus, 271, 279.

131. Rydén, Samonas, 108.

132. Rydén, Samonas, 107-108.

133. Genesius, 40 (trans. Kaldellis, 54); Skylitzes 74; Theophanes Continuatus (Bonn), 124; Georgius Monachus [as in n. 121], 803. For a detailed discussion of this rebellion, see J. Rosser, Theophilos' Khurramite Policy and its Finale: The Revolt of Theophobus' Persian Troops in 838, *Βυζαντινὰ* 6 (1974), 265-71. See also D. Letsios, Theophilos and his "Khurramite" Policy. Some reconsiderations, *Graeco-Arabica* 9-10 [= *Festschrift in Honour of V. Christides*] (2004) 249-271]. Genesius, 42 (trans. Kaldellis, 55, 56) repeatedly refers to Theophilos' suspicions that Theophobos and his men were ambitious to seize the imperial throne.

134. Genesius, 8 (trans. Kaldellis, 11). Ps.–Symeon [as in n. 87, 603]. See also D. Turner, The Origins and Accession of Leo V (813-820), *JÖB* 40 (1990), 171-203, esp. 172-3. According to other evidence, Emperor Leo III, originally called Conon, was himself of North

grandson of al-Mundhir ibn al-Ḥārith[135], and to Nikephoros Phocas as *one of the descendants of a Muslim named Ibn al-Faqās, who was one of the dignitaries of Tarsūs, but he apostatized*[136]. In *Dhāt al-Himma*, Baḥrūn, the son of al-Baṭṭāl from a Byzantine girl, became king of the *Rūm*[137]. Although this evidence is not based on a tangible historical reality, it at least reflects a common Arab-Byzantine vision that there were no limits to the power that the apostate or his descendants could achieve in Byzantium.

Although it is difficult to estimate the extent to which these apostates are integrated into Byzantium, it can be said that the Byzantine sources did not provide sufficient evidence that the Apostate family, with few exceptions, could extend for many generations. The family of al-Nu'mān/ Anemas, the son of the *amīr* of Crete who was captured in 350/961, may be one of these exception[138]. Anemas became a loyal subject and was appointed an imperial bodyguard and army commander, and subsequently appeared in the narratives fighting prominently against the Rūs[139]. His name appears again after more than a century with his grandsons Michael and Leo, who took part, with two other unnamed brothers, in a conspiracy against Alexios

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Syrian origin, born at Germaniceia (Mar'ash). See Hussey, *Orthodox Church*, 34; Gero, *Leo III*, 141-2.

135. Ibn Al-Athīr , V, 333; Al-Mas'ūdī, *Al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf*, Damascus 2000, 285; Al-Dhahabī (673-748/1274-1348), *Al-'Ibar fī Khabar man Ghabar*, ed. S. Al-Munjid, Kuwait 1948, 194; Al-DhahabĪ, *Syar A 'lām al-Nubalā'*, ed. Sh. Al-Arnā'ūṭ, Beirut 1993, IX, 293. It seems that this evidence prompted some scholars to argue that 'there are many indications that certain noble families in Byzantium were in fact descendants of Arabs. These very likely included the dynasty of the Isaurians, and possibly Nikephoros I." I. Shahîd, Ghassān post Ghassān, in: C. E. Bosworth (ed.) *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, Princeton 1989, 323-36. The quotation from Cook, Apostasy, 262.

136. Ibn Al-Athīr , VII, 320; Ibn Kathīr, XI, 268; Ibn Al-Jawzī, IV, 56.

137. *Dhāt al-Himma*, V, 187.

138. Anemas' father, 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Shu'ayb Ibn 'Umar al-Qurṭubī, was the last *amīr* of Crete, ruling from 949 to the Byzantine reconquest of the island in 961. He was called Kouroupas in the Byzantine Sources. See G. C. Miles, A Provisional Reconstruction of the Genealogy of the Arab Amirs of Crete, *Κρητικά Χρονικά* 15-16 (1963), 59-73. N. M. Παναγιωτακης, *Θεοδόσιος ὁ Διάκονος καὶ τὸ ποίημα αὐτοῦ "Ἅλωσις τῆς Κρήτης"* [Κρητικὴ Ἱστορικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη 2], Herakleion 1960, 73. PmbZ II, # 20009.

139. Leo the Deacon, CSHB 148-149 (translation Talbot 192); Skylitzes, 304, 308 (trans. Wortley, 289-290, 292).

I Komnenos in 1105[140]. Other names of the Anemas descendants appear in seals and documents until the late 12th century[141].

Byzantine evidence suggests that much of the history of the Arab apostates in Byzantium was no more than a history of individuals, not families. S. Patoura has convincingly shown that many Arab immigrants "ἐντάχθηκαν εὐκολότερα στὴ νέα κοινωνία καὶ προσαρμόσθηκαν σ' ἕνα *modus vivendi* μὲ ἄγνωστα σ' ἐκείνους ἤθη καὶ ἔθιμα. Ὡστόσο, ἡ ἔνταξη αὐτὴ δέν ἐπέφερε κατ' ἀνάγκη καὶ τὴν πλήρη ἀφομοίωσὴ τους ἀπὸ τὸ νέο περιβάλλον ἤ τὴν ἀπάρνηση τοῦ παρελθόντος τους"[142]. However, it seems that some of these apostates did not plan from the outset for a long-term establishment, or that the future of some apostate in Byzantium ended as a result of the authorities' fear of growing influence or a conspiracy to eliminate it. Byzantine sources record cases of desertion of apostates from the military service and their joining the camp of enemies. In his narrative about an Arab engineer, Theophanes suggests that failing to receive the proper financial appreciation from Nikephoros I was a reason for his defection to the hostile camp of the Bulgarians[143]. The betrayal and defection of many of the Khurramites to the Abbasid army before the battle of Amorium [144] may be one of the reasons that their leader, Theophobos, was accused of *lèse-majesté*, and later executed by Theophilos[145]. There is also the case of Samonas's attempt to escape from Byzantium to Syria[146]

140. Anna Komnena, *Alexias*, XII.6.2, ed. Reinsch – Kambylis [CFHB 40], Berlin–New York 2001, 373-374.

141. For the references to the Anemas family, see the webpage of Byzantine Nobility-Foundation for Medieval Genealogy, http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/BYZANTINE NOBILITY.htm.

142. Patoura, *Οἱ αἰχμάλωτοι*, 145.

143. Theophanes ed. De Boor, 498, attributes to him the most prominent role in the victory of the Bulgarians and their occupation of Mesembria in 812: *καὶ ἐδίδαξεν αὐτοὺς πᾶσαν μαγγανικὴν τέχνην* (*he taught them the whole art of making engines*, trans. Mango & Scott, 682). It is not clear whether he was the same as Eumathios mentioned earlier by Theophanes, see n. 118 above and Mango – Scott, 687 n. 8.

144. Theophanes Continuatus (Featherstone–Codoñer), 184-186; Genesius 45-46 (trans. Kaldellis, 58).

145. Genesius, 42 (trans. Kaldellis, 55-6).

146. Samonas tried to escape to Syria before 906, but was arrested near Halys River and was brought back to Byzantium. Skylitzes, 184 (trans. Wortley, 178); Theophanes Continuatus, Bonn edition, 369.

which, whatever itsreason, may suggest that he was not entirely happy to live in Byzantium[147]. According to Byzantine evidence, four years after this attempt, his father visited Constantinople in a diplomatic mission, and when he expressed his desire to convert and stay at Constantinople, Samonas *would not agree to this, demanding that he go back home, retain his own religion and wait for his return at the first opportunity*[148].

In fact, anti-Arab sentiment within Byzantium seems to have been a psychological barrier preventing the full integration of the apostates. Byzantine society may accept apostates to the extent that some could be raised to the highest status of Sainthood[149], but it certainly did not like the idea of the presence of elements occupying a position and influence in the imperial service. The insistence of Byzantine sources to emphasize the humble origin of some apostates suggests a certain discontent with the status and influence they have achieved[150]. This seems to have interacted with the Byzantine superiority complex, as opposed to the inferiority of the others in general[151], and produced hostile feelings for which the apostates

147. R. J. H. Jenkins, The Flight of Samonas, *Speculum* 23(1948), 217-235, esp. 218 thinks that it was not a flight at all but a mission in disguise to obtain intelligence of Arab military plans, and "there is no suggestion of motive to induce the *cubicularius* to desert". Rydén, Samonas, 103 approves this suggestion considering it an "ingenious theory". On the other hand, Tougher, *Leo VI*, 215 recommends that "Samonas simply wanted to return to his own people", and "There seems to be no reason to doubt that this was the real motive".

148. *Σαμωνᾶς δὲ οὐ συνεχώρει, παρῄνει δὲ μᾶλλον εἰς τὰ οἰκεῖα ὑπονοστῆσαι καὶ τῆς ἰδίας ἔχεσθαι πίστεως, προσμένειν δὲ καὶ αὐτόν, εἰ καιροῦ λάβοιτο. ἐκεῖσι γενέσθαι.* Skylitzes, 189 (trans. Wortley, 183-184). Sh. Tougher *Leo VI*, 215, suggests that the flight probably occurred in the same year of the Arab advance on Constantinople and the sack of Thessalonike in 904, and Samonas "might fear the anti-Arab sentiment within Byzantium".

149. On this see D. J. Sahas, Hagiological Texts as Historical Sources for Arab History and Byzantine-Muslim Relations: The Case of a Barbarian Saint, *ByzSt* n.s. 1-2 (1996-1997), 50-59; Idem, What an Infidel Saw [as in n. 10], esp. 50-62; I. Dick, La Passion de S. Antoine Ruwah néo-martyr de Damas (+25 déc. 799), *Le Muséon* 74 (1961), 109-113; A. A. Vasiliev, The Life of Theodore of Edessa, *Byz* 16 (1942/1943), 165-225, esp. 207ff; J. V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, New York 2002, 55-56; Ramaḍān, Treatment, 188 n. 176.

150. The negative portrait of Samonas and Chase for their inferior origin can be compared with the positive portrait of Theophobos presented by Genesius 38 (trans. Kaldellis, 52), who seems very sympathetic to him and was keen to emphasize his royal origin.

151. As Kaldellis, *Ethnography*, 138 noted, foreign peoples, even when being

had a considerable share. This, of course, partially contradicts with the view of some modern scholars that "Η βυζαντινὴ κοινωνία ἦταν κατ' ἀρχὴν ἀντιρατσιστικὴ καὶ ἀνοικτὴ πρὸς ὅλους."[152], and that "Από τη στιγμή που υποχωρούσε η θρησκευτική διαφορετικότητα, το άτομο μπορούσε να αφομοιωθεί στη βυζαντινή κοινωνία και να ικανοποιήσει τις φιλοδοξίες του· σε αυτό το πλαίσιο ούτε το χρώμα ούτε η γλώσσα στέκονταν εμπόδιο στην εξέλιξη ενός Άραβα στη Βυζαντινή Αυτοκρατορία"[153].

The privilege of Chasi family led Constantine Porphyrogenitus to criticize his uncle, Emperor Alexander, because *he superseded all who had been appointed to any commands by the emperor his brother, of blessed memory, being thereto persuaded by malicious and foolish men*[154]. Arethas, in his *Ἐπιτάφιος* for Patriarch Euthymios, points out that Alexander handed over the imperial matters to the *Barbaroi*. Karlin-Hayter regards this criticism as a kind of defense mechanism from aristocratic families against the policy of favouring Slavs and Arabs in the senior positions[155]. This mechanism appears to be more pronounced in the case of Samonas. Byzantine sources certainly intend to criticize Leo VI himself when they attribute all evil traits to his right-hand man, Samonas[156]. L. Rydén

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Christians, never ceased being barbarians in the eyes of the Byzantines, irreducible different and inferior. In his words, the Byzantines "considered Christian barbarians as little better than animals (at best tame rather than wild)".

152. Patoura, *Οἱ αἰχμάλωτοι*, 73.

153. Ḥassan, Ο εκχριστιανισμός, 178, and n.75, 76. Ḥassan did not provide evidence to support his hypothesis. He did not deal with cases of apostates who migrated and settled in Byzantium, but merely referred incidentally to the models of Samonas and Anemas. Long before Ḥassan and Patoura, Canard, Relations, 43 had also suggested that "L'intégration à la société byzantine qui ne connaissait pas de discriminations raciales se faisait sans trop de difficultés. La conversion, favorisée par des gratifications, l'octroi de titres et des mesures financières prises par le gouvernement, était le résultat final. Ces Arabes finissaient par devenir [Romain]".

154. *ὡς πάντας τοὺς ὑπὸ τοῦ μακαρίου βασιλέως καὶ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ* προβληθέντας *ἔν τισιν ἀρχαῖς διεδέξατο, χαιρεκάκοις καὶ κακοβούλοις ἀνδράσιν πεισθείς. DAI*, 243.

155. *Arethae Scripta Minora*, ed. L. G. Westerink, v. 1, Leipzig 1968, 82-93. P. Karlin-Hayter, The Emperor Alexander's Bad Name, *Speculum* 44 (1969), 585-596, esp. 591.

156. *Vita Euthymii* 91 describes him as a Satan in disguise (*σατανώνυμος*). Skylitzes, 185 (Trans. Wortley, 180) criticized him as *the emperor's most artful collaborator in all things wicked and illegal: πρὸς πᾶσαν παρανομίαν καὶ κακίαν συνεργὸς αὐτῷ καθεστὼς*

convincingly assumes that this attack was not directed against the person of Samonas, but it was an expression of resentment of the aristocratic class of Arab influence in the imperial court[157]. The author of the *Andreas Salos apocalypse*, which appears to have been composed before the 11th century[158]. did not only present the devil in form of an Arab merchant dressed in a black garment and walking freely in the streets of Constantinople around the area of the *Forum Bovis*[159], but also seemed expressing his displeasure when predicted that *ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ Ἰσμαηλίτης οὐχ εὑρεθήσεται*[160].

δεξιώτατος. Zonaras III 453 describes him as *ὁ μυσαρὸς Σαμωνᾶς*; See also Rydén, Samonas, 103.

157. Rydén, Samonas, 105. It is also possible that this negative image was partly influenced by general Byzantine views of Arabs during Middle Byzantine period, whose sources are filled with similar perceptions. See E. Jeffreys, The Image of the Arabs in Byzantine Literature, *The 17th International Congress of Byzantine Studies*. Washington 1986. Major Papers, New York 1986, 305-323; N. A. Koutrakou, The Image of the Arabs in Middle-Byzantine Politics: A Study in the Enemy Principle (8th-10th Centuries), *Graeco-Arabica* 5(1993), 213-24.

158. C. Mango, The Life of Saint Andrew the Fool Reconsidered, *RSBS II. Miscellanea A. Pertusi*, Bologna 1982, 297-313, esp. 299-308, believes that the apocalypse was produced sometime between the end of the 7th and the middle of the 8th century; J. Wortley, The Literature of Catastrophe, *Byzantine Studies/Études byzantines* 4 (1977), 1-17, esp. 4 dates it to the late 9th century. P. J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, ed. D. F. Abrahamse, Berkeley, CA 1985, 123 suggests the early 10th century. P. Magdalino, The Year 1000 in Byzantium, in Idem (ed.). *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, Leiden – Boston 2003, 256 endorses a mid-10th century date. L. Rydén [The Andreas Salos Apocalypse. Greek Text, translation, and Commentary, *DOP* 28 (1974), 197-261, esp. 199, 260; Idem, The Date of the 'Life of Andreas Salos', *DOP* 32 (1978), 127-155] and P. Guran, Historical Prophecies from Late Antique Apocalypticism to Secular Eschatology, *RÉSEE* LII, 1-4 (2014), 47-62, esp.55 date it to the second half of the 10th century. Finally, A. Kraft, The Last Roman Emperor *Topos* in the Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition, *Byz* 82 (2012), 213-57, esp.241-2 assumes a tentative date of the 9th-10th centuries.

159. A. Kraft, Constantinople in Byzantine Apocalyptic Thought, *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 18 (2012), 25-36, esp. 28, 29 and n.19. It seems that the reference to the freedom of movement of the Arab merchant/the devil in the same place of the predicted invasion indicates the desire of the author to show the presence of the Arabs in Constantinople as an occupation of it.

160. Vita S. Andreae Sali, *PG* 111, 856B. Trans. L. Rydén, *The Life of St Andrew the Fool*, Uppsala 1995, II: 72, 262; Idem, Andreas Salos Apocalypse. Greek Text, 251; See also Alexander, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 156 and n. 17; P. Cesaretti, The *Life of St Andrew the*

Anti-Arab sentiment within Byzantium sometimes exploded in the form of physical violence. Around 915, Chase's financial policies have brought him hatred of the local inhabitants. According to Byzantine evidence, angry Athenians rebelled against him and stoned him to death before the altar of a church[161]. In 1044, the angry inhabitants of Constantinople demonstrated in front of the Imperial Palace to protest the growing influence of foreigners in the city. Constantine IX Monomachos was forced to issue an order to foreigners who had lived in the city for thirty years to leave within three days or will be blinded. Thus, about 100,000 people were forced to leave, and no more than 12,000 people were allowed to stay because the Byzantines trusted them[162]. Most likely, the company of Ἀγαρηνοὶ from the imperial bodyguard, that participated in putting down the revolt of Leo Tornikios in 1047, was some of those reliable[163].

Conclusion

In the latest study on Byzantine politics to accommodate the various ethnic elements, A. Kaldellis has suggested that "Byzantium was capable of absorbing groups and individuals whose ancestry was partly or even wholly foreign and treating them as fully Roman"[164]. This judgment is of course based on the holistic approach of the various ethnic elements that inhabited Byzantium without distinction between one element and another, or between the official position and society. Kaldellis takes the Khurramites as a 'textbook case' to rule that the Byzantines "could absorb thousands of men from a group that was initially so different from the mainstream of its own culture, who initially shared no common traits, whether in ethnicity, language, or religion"[165]. Based on Genesios, he also goes far to assume that

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Fool by Lennart Rydén: *vingt ans après*, *Scandinavian Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 2 (2016), 31-51, esp. 42.

161. See n. 121.

162. According to Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 262, these foreigners were from Muslims, Christians, and others. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronographia*, 94, records that they were Armenians, Arabs, and Jews.

163. Attaleiates, 20-21 (trans. Kaldellis – Krallis, 43).

164. Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 72.

165. Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 128. This 'textbook case' can be used to prove the other side of the premise. At the grassroots level, the girl Athanasia of Aegina was reluctant to

these Khurranites "ceased to exist as Khurramites, or 'Persians'", and that "If the Persians' descendants retained any affective memory of their ancestors, they did not express it in ways that reached our sources"[166].

The reader of Genesios may come out with a completely different impression. His narrative draws two very distinct images, his 'hero' Theophobos, the pious and loyal[167], who rejected the rebellion of his followers against Theophilos to proclaim him an emperor, and his contingents whom led by the spirit of rebellion *hoping thus to revive the past customs of the Persians*[168]. This never reflects the assimilation or 'acculturation' proposed by Kaldelllis[169]. On the one hand, the affective memory of the ancestors' past does not reflect the Khurramites' predisposition for Romanization. On the other hand, Genesios himself does not leave any implicit impression that the Khurramites exhibited the requisite cultural traits of Romanization, but pointedly refers to them as only 'Persians' whose foolish acts aroused the Emperor's suspicions and gave some envious Byzantines the opportunity to get rid of Theophobos[170]. In fact, unlike Kaldellis' approach, the Khurramites can be used as a 'textbook case' to reach a different judgment on the criteria that formed the official positions of the Byzantines towards apostates and the extent to which they could accept the other as 'Roman'.

The pragmatic policy of the empire was undoubtedly aimed at converting and absorbing some Arabs to use against its most important neighboring enemy, the Muslims. However, the peculiarity of this enemy lies in the fact that they follow a monotheistic religion that makes any explicit missionary activity very difficult. It seems that the best solution to

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marry a foreigner and was forced to do so by an imperial decree. On the official level, the end of the Persian contingents and their leader in the imperial service does not refer to such assimilation.

166. Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 128.

167. Genesius, 43 (trans. Kaldellis, 57).

168. *ὡς ἐκ τούτου καὶ τὰ Περσῶν καινίζεσθαι ἔθιμα*, Genesius, 40 (trans. Kaldellis, 54).

169. Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 72 suggests that Byzantines treated foreigners as fully Roman "so long as they adopted and exhibited the requisite cultural traits, so long as they become Roman through acculturation".

170. Genesius, 40, 42 (Trans. Kaldellis, 54, 55-56). These suspicions drove Theophobos to take a select group of his followers and flee to the city of Amastris. Genesius, 43 (trans. Kaldellis, 56).

this dilemma was to resort to individual and group conversions on the basis of mutual utilitarianism. The Byzantines exploited the religious volatility of some Arabs, especially in the borderlands, along with their diverse needs: family reunification, freedom from oppression, the desire for a more just and desirable life, escape from punishment for breaking the law or violating a caliph's authority, or even for winning a mistress.

In order to benefit from these apostates, the empire had to first verify their allegiance, and of course this can only be achieved by integrating them into society. Marriage, after apostasy, was the most effective mechanism. Evidence suggests that these marriages took place in the capital, provinces and borderlands, and included various classes, even the aristocracy. The quality of the marriage is likely to depend on the status of the apostate and the amount of benefit he can perform. Theophobos, as leader of the Khurramites, married the imperial family, while his men were more likely to marry lower classes. Unfortunately, the sources do not provide sufficient evidence on the extent to which the Byzantine families accepted the idea of such marriages. However, the refusal of St. Aegina's to marry a foreigner, as well as the imperial privileges granted to the families in the *θέματα* to urge them to give their daughters as wives to apostates, may indicate that the idea was not palatable[171].

There is no doubt that the provision of a post for the apostate was another mechanism adopted by the Byzantines to secure his career within the society, which may help him to adapt, and ensure the empire to achieve its goals from him. However, the quality of this post also has been based on the status and usefulness of apostate. Evidence suggests that the empire has distinguished in the granting of the function and associated privileges between mass and individual apostasy. Privileges granted to the leader of the clan or group are unlikely to be comparable to those accorded to his followers. It is quite different for the individual apostasy. The eunuch Samonas and Chasi began their careers as servants in aristocratic houses, and Theophobos' father was working as a servant in a tavern for a rich woman. These cases in themselves hint at the assumption that other

171. Judge 'Abd Al-Jabbar, I, 171-2 also tells the story of an Arab apostate, recruited for the Byzantine army, whose Byzantine wife hated him to the extent that she used to make sexual intercourses with her male friends during his absence in campaigns.

apostates, who held high positions in the imperial administration and whose conditions before the apostasy are not recorded by the sources, benefited from the availability of social mobility within the empire.

Evidence suggests that the majority of apostates, especially newcomers, were employed against the Muslim enemies, as mercenaries, spies, or even as holders of high military posts in the eastern *θέματα*. While the *πρωτοσπαθάριος* Chase, for his skill in finance, had a fiscal position in *the theme* of Ἑλλάς, his family seemed more connected to the eastern frontier, in particular to the Kiberrhaiotai and Attalia. Both the Banū Ḥabīb, the Khurramites, Bunayy ibn al-Nafīs' people played an important role in espionage and campaigns on Islamic lands. Nasar, the *δρουγγάριος τοῦ πλωΐμου* in the reign of Basil II, led the war against Aghlabids since 879.

However, few of these apostates appeared in the imperial military service on other fronts, perhaps for certain skills or experiences. Eumathios, for his skills in engineering, was established at Adrianople against the Bulgars. Anemas seemed to be more useful in fighting against the Rus rather than Muslims. It seems that the most reliable apostates were relied upon to serve within the Imperial Palace. Samonas was the παρακοιμώμενος of Leo VI's court, and Constantine was the *κόμης τῆς ἑταιρείας* under Constantine Monomachos. The fact that these two were eunuchs suggests that they grew up in Byzantium, perhaps as servants of aristocratic families closely related to the Imperial Palace, as is certain in the case of Samonas, and gained the confidence and reputation to enter this palace. This may also apply to the case of Chase.

High positions and dignities acquired by apostates indicate that the path of social mobility was open to them. However, this too was a double-edged sword. The continuation of such privilege has been linked to the degree of imperial satisfaction with the performance of these apostates and their commitment to remain under control. The end of Theophobos and his men is a clear example. On the other hand, this privilege aroused the resentment of many Byzantines, especially among the aristocracy who, no matter how receptive they were to the other, expressed their anger in word and deed. In theory, the negative image of apostates drawn by some chroniclers and, in practice, the end of Theophopos and his men, and the attempt of Samonas to escape and reject his father's request to stay in Byzantium, physical violence against Chase, the Byzantine protest against the Arab presence in

1044, as well as the reference to the desire of some apostates not to continue in Byzantium[172], are all evidence that the matter of assimilation of the Arab apostates in Byzantium needs further discussion.

Αραβες Αποστατες στο Byzantio: Μαρτυριες απο Αραβικες Πηγες

Το άρθρο πραγματεύεται το θέμα της παρουσίας Μουσουλμάνων Αράβων «αποστατών» στο Βυζάντιο βάσει των ιστοριογραφικών αραβικών πηγών και σε σύγκριση με τις βυζαντινές πηγές. Εξετάζει εξονυχιστικά εάν υπήρχε δυνατότητα παρουσίας μίας μόνιμης αραβικής μειονότητας, η οποία θα είχε τις προϋποθέσεις για ένταξη στη βυζαντινή κοινωνία. Ως εκ τούτου, η εν λόγω δημοσίευση επιδιώκει να αντιμετωπίσει πολλά θέματα όπως: οι συνοριακές κοινότητες ως ένα πρόσφορο περιβάλλον για την αποστασία, τα προσωπικά κίνητρα της αποστασίας, μέχρι ποιό βαθμό οι Βυζαντινοί αποδέχθηκαν αυτούς τους αποστάτες, είτε σε επίσημο είτε σε καθημερινό επίπεδο σχέσεων. Τέλος, αναλύει πώς καθορίστηκε ο βαθμός αφομοίωσής τους στην βυζαντινή κοινωνία.

172. According to this evidence, some apostates did not wish to remain in Byzantium, but they rejected offers to return to Islamic lands for fear of ridicule because their wives and children became Christians. Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, V, 126; Yāqūt Al-Ḥamawī, II, 44.