

ثالثا: البحوث غير العربية

Non Arabic Articles

The Role of Super Natural Powers in Arab-Byzantine Warfare as Reflected by Popular Imagination

Abdelaziz M. Ramadan
Ain Shams University – Egypt

To modern mentality, supernatural powers and their intervention in matters of daily life seem as a sort of superstition, but for the ancient and medieval peoples, they were frequently considered the only available interpretation of what was occurring around them, and always the last resort at the time of danger or need. It is very difficult, as Peter Burke has pointed out, to find a distinction between 'natural' and 'supernatural', 'rational' and 'irrational' in the Middle Ages.¹

Among medieval peoples, Byzantines and Arabs can present the very clear examples of believing in the 'supernatural'. According to Cyril Mango, the 'average Byzantine' inhabited a world dominated by superstition, in a society whose culture appears deficient to a modern observer, and "to the Byzantine man, as indeed to all men of the middle ages, the supernatural existed in a very real and familiar sense."² In his book *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria*, Josef Meri presents the medieval Muslim mind in a very similar way. He also demonstrates common features of believing in the 'holy' and his supernaturalism among Jews, Christians and Muslims of Medieval Syria, interpreting this by saying:

•An early version of this paper was presented at the 3rd International Conference "The World of Islam: History, Society and Culture", Moscow, 22-24 October 2014. Here, I'd like to express my thanks to the staff of Erasmus Mundus and Prof. J. N. Panagiotidis who gave me the opportunity to begin this paper during a six months' post-doctor scholarship at the institute of Greek and Latin Philology, Freie Universität Berlin. My thanks should be extended to Prof. Ishāq 'Ibīd, Professor of Medieval History, and Prof. Mustafā Riyād, Professor of English at Ain Shams University, and Dr. Mahmūd 'Azāz at University of Arizona, for revising the English text.

¹ Burke, P., *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge, 1987), p.218. ["Our modern distinctions (between rational and irrational, natural and supernatural, religious and superstitious), were in the process of formation during the period; to apply them to the years before 1650, in particular, is to invite misunderstanding."].

² Mango, C., *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (London, 1980), p.151.

"Encountering manifestations of the holy in the pre-modern context occurred within the framework of religion which admitted the 'supernatural'".³

In the few last decades scholars have paid attention to the supernatural powers and their impact on the Byzantine religious and social thought. Most of the studies dealing with military role of these powers have been mainly concerned with the Theotokos as protectress of Constantinople against enemies' attacks, the tradition that was established during the Avar siege of Constantinople in 626 and continued through later centuries.⁴ Other studies have treated the tradition of warrior saints and provided references to stories of their miraculous intervention in Byzantine warfare.⁵ On the side of medieval Arab world, there is a rarity of such studies.

Arabs and Byzantines as rivals having relations and military encounters which extended for centuries, may need an approach that brings together both sides' popular belief in the 'supernatural' in a comparative or an analogical sense. Therefore, the goals of the recent study are not to analyze the origins of the 'supernatural' in Christianity and Islam or to concern itself with the historicity of Greek and Arabic sources' narratives and stories, but to understand the importance and impact of such popular beliefs in the Byzantine-Arab relations, particularly in their military confrontations, and how each saw the other's supernatural powers and his beliefs. Also, the paper tries to shed light on both sides' common popular belief in supernaturalism of the same divine

³Meri, J., *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford, 2002), p.22.

⁴Baynes, N., "The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople," *Analecta Bollandiana* 67(1949), pp.165-77; Speck, P., "Classicism in the Eighth Century? The Homily of Patriarch Germanos on the Deliverance of Constantinople", in: *Understanding Byzantium: Studies in Byzantine Historical Sources*, ed. S. Takács (Ashgate, 2003), pp.123-142; Idem, "The Virgin's Help for Constantinople", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 27(2003), pp.266-271; Pentcheva, B.V., "The Supernatural Protector of Constantinople: the Virgin and her Icons in the Tradition of the Avar Siege", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 26(2002), pp.2-41, esp. 17-20; Idem, *Icons and Powers: the Mother of God in Byzantium* (the Pennsylvania State University, 2006), pp.47-50.

⁵Walter, Ch., *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot, 2003); Grotowski, P., *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints. Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography 843-1261*, trans. R. Brzezinski (London. Boston, 2010); Badamo, H., *Image and Community: Representations of Military Saints in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2011.

powers. Here I will follow the method of Al-Amin Abouseada's study,⁶ rather than list all the stories and legends of miraculous divine intervention or the narratives of believing in supernatural powers on both sides, I will study them categorically as a phenomenon within their historical context.

***Al-Awliyā'* and the Saints:**

It may be better to begin with the saints. Despite the fact that they seem in a lower position if compared with the celestial powers, yet they were most pervasive in the popular imagination of all aspects of medieval life. To Byzantines and Arabs, "holy men and miracles were an essential part of life".⁷ Both sides recognized the saint (*walī*) as a mediator, holy person, miracle worker, healer, and a warrior for the faith.⁸ Meri, in his comprehensive study, has clearly showed the importance of *awliyā'*'s role and impact on the religious and social life of the medieval Muslim societies, albeit he did not give much detail on their imagined military role. The only example that he has presented on such role is the miraculous intervention of the Muslim ascetic Ibn Abī al-Numayr (d.425/1033) to secure Aleppo from a Byzantine siege. As Ibn al-'Adīm (d. 660/1261) tells that, when the Domestikos Bardas⁹ reached the gate of Aleppo in 373/983, he experienced a vision of the Messiah, who commanded him to lift his siege for the sake of Ibn Abī al-Numayr.¹⁰ A similar story is attributed to the siege of 421/1030, this time the people of Aleppo begged Ibn Abī al-Numayr's intercession to save

⁶Abouseada, A., "Supernatural Powers in Christian-Muslim Warfare: Crusades and Beyond", *Annales islamologiques* 43(2009), pp.107-125.

⁷Meri, *cult of saints*, p.10.

⁸The Egyptian Hanafi theologian Abu Ja'far al-Ṭahāwī (d. 321/933) regarded the miracles and stories of saints as genuine: "We believe in what we know of *karāmāt* (miracles and charismata), the marvels of the *awliyā'* and in genuine stories about them from trustworthy sources". Al-Ṭahāwī, Uṣūl al-'Aqīda al-Islāmīya Allatī Qarrarahā al-Imām Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. Salāma al-Azdī al- Ṭahāwī, ed. 'A. al-'Izzī (Beirut, 1987), p.198. Also, the later theologian Ibn Taymīya (d. 728/1328) reflected the importance of believing in saints and their supernatural powers among Muslims: "Among the fundamentals of the people of the *Sunna* is the belief in the miracles of the saints (*karāmāt al-awliyā'*) and the supernatural acts which God fulfills through them". Ibn Taymīya, *al-'Aqīda al-Wāsiṭīya*, ed. J. Sourdel-Thomine (Paris, 1986), p.25. [The English translation is of Meri, *cult of saints*, p.10].

⁹Bardas Phokas, the *domestikos* of the *scholai* in the reign of Basil II.

¹⁰Ibn al-'Adīm, *Zubdat al-Ḥalab min Tārīḥ Ḥalab*, ed. S. Zakkār (Damascus, 1997), 1: 161.

them from Emperor Romanus III Argyros (1028-34). As a result the latter experienced a vision of unidentified divine power that warned him from the destruction and the defeat which would befall his army if he tried to capture a city where this *walī* was living.¹¹ After the Byzantine withdrawal from Aleppo, Ibn Abī al-Numayr became a protector and an intercessor for its people. As Ibn al-'Adīm records, the lights were seen descending upon the spot where he prayed, and it became an important pilgrimage place.¹²

The imagined appearance of the Messiah to a Byzantine person in a vision, as Ibn al-'Adīm's first story demonstrates, was not exception in the Arabic sources. The epic of the princess Ḍāt al-Himma presents cases of Byzantine wise men, generals, monks and princesses who were believed to be experienced visions of the Messiah, sometimes in association with the Prophet Muḥammad, to demonstrate Islam as the true religion and invite them to adopt it.¹³ The rationale behind the appearance of the Messiah in these stories may be the concern to utilize another supernatural power that the Byzantines believe in, and therefore has an ability to influence them. This may also imply a common popular belief in the other side's supernatural powers, or at least a similar popular imagination.¹⁴

The last suggestion may be supported by other Arabic legendary narratives that aim to imply, from the Arab point of view, a Byzantine popular belief in the supernatural abilities of Muslim *awliyā'*. One of these legends, that is recorded in several Arabic sources, relates the

¹¹Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-talab fī Tārīḥ Halab*, ed. S. Zakkār (Beirut, 1988), 1: 461-462.

¹²Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat*, 1: 461-462.

¹³*Sīrat al-Amīra Ḍāt al-Himma* (Beirut, 1981), 3: 503, 521, 752; 4: 147.

¹⁴As Josef Meri has pointed out: "The veneration of the prophet Yaḥyā b. Zakarīā (St. John the Baptist) among Muslims was a syncretic cult partly influenced by the Byzantine Christian cult of St. John the Baptist". Muslims used to visit his head's shrine in Damascus seeking blessings. Meri, *Cult of Saints*, pp.200-201. Also, other scholars have demonstrated that al-Khiḍr, a venerated figure in the Qur'ān, was sometimes associated with St. George or St. Sergios, and venerated by both Muslims and Eastern Christians. On Al-Ḥiḍr's association with St. George, see: Ayoub, M., "Cult and Culture: Common Saints and Shrines in Middle Eastern Popular Piety", in: *Religion and Culture in Medieval Islam*, ed. R.G. Hovannisian & G. Sabagh (Cambridge, 1999), pp.102-115; Badamo, *Image and Community*, p.209 [according to Badamo's words: "Long before the Crusaders arrived, Arabs had absorbed St. George into Islam as al-Khiḍr"]. On his association with St. Sergios, see: Fowden, E. K., *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley, 1999), pp.179, 190.

famous story of Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, one of the Prophet Muḥammad's Companions, who died during the expedition of Yazīd against Constantinople in 49/669 and was buried in front of the land walls of the city. According to the Arab tradition, the horsemen road over it to obscure the site, yet it was discovered later and became an object of veneration and pious visits by the Byzantines, who built around it a white shrine, put on it a lamp and used to pray there for rain in times of drought.¹⁵ This legend most likely left its impact on another late one, this time its hero was the Arab conqueror of Sicily Asad b. el-Furāt (d. 213/828). Here also the Byzantine population of the island used to venerate his tomb and pray there for rain.¹⁶

Another Legend, recorded by the *sufi* writer Ibn Hūzān al-Quṣayrī (d.465/1073), also tries to draw a scene of a positive Byzantine response to the supernaturalism of Muslim *awliyā'*, a response that comes this time from monks. It relates a tale of an Arab lad who was taken captive by the Byzantines. His poor mother entreated a Muslim *walī*, called Taqī ad-Dīn b. Meḥ lid, for his intercession to liberate him. The *walī* bowed his head and murmured some words. At the same moment, while the captive lad was coming back to his jail after a harsh workday in the governmental desert stone pits, his iron chains were miraculously opened and became difficult to be closed again despite frequent attempts of the guards and a smith. Finally, the help of some monks was required, and when these monks realized that there is a divine power supporting the captive, they

¹⁵ This story is firstly mentioned by Ibn Saʿīd (d.230/845) [*Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, ed. A.M.'Omar (Cairo, 2001), 3: 450], then repeated by the later historians: Al-Ṭabarī (d.310/922), *al-Muntaḥab min Ta'rīḥ al-Ṣaḥāba wal Tabi'in*, in: *Al-Ṭabarī, Ta'rīḥ al-rusul wa l-mulūk*, ed. M. A. Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1962), 11: 515; *al-Muṭṭahhar al-Maqdisī* (d.322/933), *Kitāb al-bad' wa al-tārīḥ*, ed. Clement Huart (Paris, 1899), 5:117; Ibn al-Jawzī (d.597/1199), *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīḥ al-Mulūk wa al-Umam*, ed. M. 'Aṭā (Beirut, 1992), 5: 250; Ibn Aybak ad-Dwādārī (d.764/1362), *Kanz ad-Durar wa Gāmi' al-Ġurar* (= *Die Chronik des Ibn ad-dwādārī*), IV: *al-Durah al-Samya fī Aḥbār al-Dawlah al-'Umwyāyah*, ed. G. Graf & E. Glassen (Beirut, 1994), p.53;; Ibn al-Īmād (d.1089/1678), *Shaḍarāt al-Ḍahab fī Aḥbār man Ḍahab*, ed. M. & A. al-Arnī'ūṭ (Damascus, 1986), 1: 246-247. See also, El Cheikh, N.M., *Byzantium viewed by the Arabs* (London, 2004), pp.62-63. On the later history of the tomb see, Ozaslan, N., "From the shrine of Cosmidion to the shrine of Eyup Ensari", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 40/4(1999), pp.379-399; Al-Maṣrī, M.M., *Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī 'nd al-'Arab wa al-Turk* (Beirut, 1999), p.70 ff.

¹⁶Ibn Aybak, *Kanz ad-Durar*, VI: *al-Durah al-Muḍyah fī Aḥbār al-Dawlah al-Faḥmiyyah*, ed. Ṣ. Al-Munjid (Cairo, 1961), p.30.

led him safely to the Muslim territories after feeding and supplying him.¹⁷

Also, there is an Arabic story, recorded by the *sufi* writer Ibn Abī al-Dunīya (d.281/894), may reflect, like the stories of Messiah's visions, the other side of the picture. This time its hero is a Byzantine Patrikios (*Paṭ rīq*), who was captured, bound in Iron chains and put in prison during the reign of the Umayyad caliph Sulaymān b. 'Abd el-Malik (96-9/715-17). As the story tells, the captive miraculously disappeared from his jail, and when the Caliph ordered summoning the responsible guard for an interrogation, the later clarified that one morning when he was checking the Patrikios's imprisonment, he found it empty except from the iron chains. He also informed the Caliph about the Patrikios's incessant supplication and prayers to an invisible divine power.¹⁸ The story neither identifies the power which released the Patrikios nor explains the means by which this happened, but it strikingly has characters of many Byzantine hagiographical stories in which miraculous liberation of captives, particularly from Muslim prisons, became a familiar task for the Byzantine saints. In her study on some miracle accounts of early Arab period, Arietta Papaconstantinou has treated war captives as one of two themes that dominated the earliest miracles,¹⁹ but the only example of a saint's miraculous intervention to release a captive that she presents is a story of a young cleric of St. George's shrine in Paphlagonia, who was taken prisoners by Muslims. He prayed daily to be released and one day St. George came by on horseback and took him back to the shrine.²⁰

¹⁷Ibn Huzān al-Quṣayrī, *al-Risālā al-Quṣayrīyā fī 'Elm al-Taṣāwūf*, ed. M.M. Zurīq (Beirut, 2001), pp. 270-271.

¹⁸ Ibn Abī al-Dunīya, *Kitāb Muḡabī al-Da'wa*, ed. Z. Ḥimdān (Beirut, 1993), p.77; Idem, *Kitāb al-Faraḡ Ba'd al-Šidda*, ed. M. 'Aṭā (Beirut, 1993), p.44.

¹⁹Papaconstantinou, A., "Saints and Saracens: On some miracle accounts of the early Arab period", in: *Byzantine Religious Culture. Studies in honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed. D. Sullivan, E. Fisher and S. Papaioannou (Leiden, Boston, 2012), pp.323-338.

²⁰Papaconstantinou, 'Saints and Saracens', p.327. *Collections grecques de miracle. Sainte Thècle, saints Côme et Damien, saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), saint George*, ed. A.-J. Festugière (Paris, 1971), pp.276-278; *Miracula sancti Georgii*, ed. J. B. Aufhauser (Leipzig, 1913), pp. 13-18].Worth to be mentioned that Papaconstantinou has referred to saints' miraculous intervention for releasing war captive as a task that developed later. According to her: "with time, saving and bringing back captives became an important task of saints, and many miracle narratives contain stories of such lucky prisoners of war". Ibid, p. 327.

Many miracle accounts of such sort are recorded in the Greek hagiography of ninth and early tenth century. The *Life* of St. Ioannikios (in the first half of ninth century) relates a story of an aristocratic man living in a village called Elos,²¹ who was captured by the Arabs and was led away to Syria bound in Iron chains and put in prison. Some of his relatives went to the saint and fell at his feet begging him to liberate their kinsman. On the very night, the saint appeared to the captive and miraculously opened the prison's gates transporting him safely away from all the sentry posts and watchtowers.²² In the *Miracles* of St. Nicholas, we read also the story of Peter the Scholarius (in the second half of ninth century), who was originally a soldier captured by the Arabs in Syria and imprisoned at Samara, a misfortune which he regarded as a direct result of his neglect to fulfill a vow to become a monk. He entreated St. Nicholas for help promising that if he obtained his liberty he would go to Rome to take monastic vows. After some difficulty, to overcome which the further intercession of St. Simeon was necessary, the help of the Saints proved effectual, and Peter obtained his liberty. In accordance with his vow he went to Rome and was ordained monk by the Pope.²³

In addition to these miracle accounts, there are two similar stories that may belong to the period from Arab conquest of Crete in 828 to the Byzantine reconquest of it in 961. One of them is included in the *Miracles* of St. George and relates a story of a lad who was taken captive

²¹Its location is unknown, but most probably it was near or within the Mt. Olympos region in Bithynia or the wilderness areas of Lydia, in where the saint lived and moved.

²²*Life of St. Ioannikios*, trans. D.F. Sullivan, in: *Byzantine Defenders of Images. Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. A-M. Talbot (Washington. D.C., 1998), pp.328-330. According to the miracle, since the clear day was dawning, the captive resorted to a thicket, and after a while Saracen shepherds happened to be passing through the same thicket. Their dogs noticed the footprints of the captive, who then trembled in fear. The saint suddenly appeared to him and drove the dogs away. A late Arab story, recorded by the twelfth century historian Usāma b. Munqid̄, has a striking parallel to this story. According to it, a Muslim captive was claimed to have seen the Prophet in a dream. Waking up in the morning, he found his chain broken and fled walking between his guards. Like the miracle of St. Ioannikios, his flight escaped the notice of his guard, and as in the miracle, he resorted to a cave and his footprint were noticed, but this time God sent heavy snow that totally covered his traces. Usāma ibn Munqid̄, *Kitāb al-I'tbār [=Ousāma ibn Mounkidh: Un emir syrien au premier siècle des croisades 1095-1188]*, ed. H. Derenbourg (Paris, 1886), p.70].

²³Anrich, G., *Hagios Nikolaos*, I (Leipzig, 1913), pp.174-181. This story was assumed by the author of the *Life* of Peter of Athos. D. Papachryssanthou, "La vie ancienne de saint Pierre l' Athonite", *Analecta Boliandiana* 92(1974), 48-50.

and became a servant of the emir of Crete after a Cretan Arabs' raid on Mitylene, on the island of Lesbos and in which there was a famous church of St. George. The lad's mother entreated the saint to liberate him and finally the saint came to her aid. According to the hagiographer, on St. George's day, and when the lad was just about to fill a cup of wine for his master, a supernatural power took him with the cup from the hall of the emir's palace and brought him to his home across the sea.²⁴ This story presents a striking parallel to the second one, which is included in the Miracles of St. Nicholas. This time the hero is the peasant's son Basil who lived in the vicinity of Myra and was taken captive by the Cretan Arabs. Like the lad, Basil served the emir of Crete, and like the lad's mother, Basil's parents prayed to St. Nicholas to liberate him. Finally, as in St. George's miracle, Basil was released on the day of St. Nicholas and by a supernatural power that moved him holding a cup into which he was pouring wine.²⁵ Alexander Kazhdan is the first scholar that has noted the evident parallel of both stories, and as he has suggested:

*"There is no evidence whatever of a direct borrowing. The path of development of the legend was, probably, the story of miraculous liberation originated in oral form, spread over the whole Aegean basin, and was ascribed in Myra to St. Nicholas and on Lesbos to St. George."*²⁶

The hypothesis that these two miraculous stories began and spread in an oral form, and then were transferred to a written one can be extended to cover many other stories and various geographical regions.²⁷ As we have already seen, most stories of the saints' miraculous liberation, including the Arabic stories of the sufi writers Ibn Abī al-

²⁴Aufhauser, *Miracula Sancti Georgii*, pp.101-103.

²⁵Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos*, I, pp. 189-195, 273-275.

²⁶Kazhdan, A., "Hagiographical notes (5-8)", *Byzantion* 54(1984), pp.176-192, esp. 182 (repr. Idem, *Authors and Texts in Byzantium, Variorum*, 1993, no. IV.)

²⁷This miracle of St. George passed the oral and written form to be a painted icon during the Crusades. There is a 13th. Century image, in the church of Mar Tadros at Bahdeidat (in Lebanon), presents the saint riding over a body of water and holding a small figure behind his back, a child who holds a glass in his right hand and a jug in his left. Cormack, R., & Mihalarias, S., "A Crusader Painting of St. George: *"manieragrec"* or *"lingua franca"*," *Burlington Magazine* 126 (1984), pp.132-139. As Badamo points out, this iconography was widespread in both Syria and Lebanon. See his *Image and Community*, p.128, and figure 4: p.297. For comprehensive discussions of this miracle and its later transmission from Greek to other languages and cultures, including Coptic and Arabic, see Grotowski, P., "The Legend of St. George Saving a Youth from Captivity and its Depiction in Art," *Series Byzantina*1 (2003), pp. 27-77; Badamo, *Image and Community*, pp.154-157.

Dunīya and al-Qušayrī,²⁸ begin with the captive or his family's begging and prayers, and end with the divine intervention and the captive's disappearance from his jail or place of service. The changes always are in the way by which this intervention occurs.²⁹ Also, as we can note, all previous Greek miracle accounts belong to ninth and first half of tenth centuries, the period of Arab victories and raids on the Byzantine territories, particularly on the Aegean coasts and islands by the Cretan Arabs. The numbers that were taken captives and the terrors that befell these regions' populations might be effective factors in frequent attributing such miraculous task to saints.

The second imagined task, which is frequently mentioned in miracle accounts of this period, is these saints' miraculous intervention as local patrons to defend and protect cities, towns or villages, and their populations, from the Arabs' raids and attacks. The *Life* of St. Andreas records an Arab raid (c.720) on a Cretan fort called Drimeôs. According to it, the Arabs arrived in numerous ships and besieged the castle, where the saint and a part of his folk had taken refuge. The attackers fought hard and used their siege engines, but failed to capture it after suffering many losses in their attempts. The credit for their defeat was naturally attributed to the prayers of the saint.³⁰ Also, the Miracles of St. Theodore Tiron include some tales on his defensive role against an Arab attack on

²⁸We can also note an analogy between these miracle stories and an Arabic story, recorded by al-Wāqidī (d.207/822), in which the Prophet Muḥammad himself is claimed to be appeared one night to some desperate Muslim captives in a dream, released them from the iron chains and disappeared. Waking up, they found their Byzantine guards asleep, took their arms and killed them. Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, ed. T.A. Sa'd (Alexandria, n.d.), 2: p.12. Such stories, and analogy, continued to have an impact on the later popular imagination as the aforementioned story of Usāma b. Munqid̄ may demonstrate. (See note 22).

²⁹One of the few exceptions can be read in the *Life* of St. Peter of Argos. According to it, an Arab vessel once carried away a young Christian girl destined as a present to the Cretan Amir. The inhabitants appealed to St. Peter for help. Granting their request, he prayed; and shortly after the vessel was captured by a Greek galley and the young captive liberated. Here, the role of St. Peter is only the intercession, and he did not directly intervene to liberate the girl. Vasiliev, A., "The *Life* of St. Peter of Argos and its Historical Significance", *Traditio* 5(1947), pp.163-191, esp.175-176.

³⁰*Vita Andreae Cretensis* (by Niketas), ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ανάλεκτα Τεροσολυμικῆς Σταχυολογίας* V(Petersburg, 1888), pp.169-179, esp.177; Auzéry, M-F., "La carrier d' André de Crète", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 88/1(1995), pp.1-12, esp.3 n.23.

his burial city of Euchaita in 753/754.³¹ In one of these miracles, and just before the Arabs approached the city, a respectable lady envisioned the saint on horseback and in full armour actively defending the city, but angels ordered him to leave the way open to the invaders: "*Leave them the way open for it is not against God's wish that they fight this land*". He obeyed the order but prayed that God should not abandon the people of whom he was the protector. Therefore, although the city was destroyed, its inhabitants were saved.³²

Believing in the saints as cities and towns' supernatural patrons³³ was not only a matter of hagiographical treatment; we can meet such role in some historical accounts from the early tenth century. Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (945-59), in his *De Administrando Imperio*, relates a miracle that thought to have taken place during the siege of Patras by the

³¹This date is suggested by Constantin Zuckerman, "The Reign of Constantine V in the Miracles of St. Theodore the Recruit (BHG 1764)", *Revue des études byzantines* 46 (1988), pp. 191-210.

³² The translation of Zuckerman, "Reign of Constantine V", pp. 196-197. See also, Walter, *Warrior Saints*, pp. 47-48. Walter interprets Angles' order to the saint by saying: "It seems, however, that the celestial powers were not always favorably disposed towards the inhabitants of Euchaita". Walter, Ch., "Theodore, archetype of the warrior saint", *Revue des études byzantines* 57 (1999), pp. 163-210, esp.168. While Zuckerman ["Reign of Constantine V", p.193] explains it within context of the divine punishment for Constantine V's Iconoclast policy. Worth to be mentioned that the saint appeared in another miracle as a soldier on horseback and rescued a child who had been sold as a slave to the Arabs. Walter, *Warrior Saints*, p. 48; Idem, "Theodore", p. 168.

³³In some instances, the protective task of the saints extended to defend their icons, shrines and sanctuaries. In a miracle of St. Theodore Tiron, the Arabs failed to destroy his sanctuary, because their leader had fallen to the ground inside it, rolling about and biting his tongue. Walter, *Warrior Saints*, p. 48; Idem, "Theodore", p.168. Also, according to Theophanes, after an Arab naval raid on Rhodes in 807, the Arab leader, Ḥumayyīd b. Ma'yūf the governor of the Syrian coast in the reign of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, crossed Myra on his return journey and attempted to break the tomb of St. Nicholas. But miraculously, he smashed instead another near one. Thereupon "a great disturbance of sea waves, thunder, and lightning fell upon the fleet so that several ships were broken up and the impious Chomeid (Ḥumayyīd) himself acknowledged the saint's power and unexpectedly escaped the danger". Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD.284-813*, trans. C. Mango & R. Scott (Oxford, 1997), p.663. In a miracle of St. George, a Saracen soldier attacked an icon of him and died when the icon turned his weapon back on him. In another one, a group of Saracens entered a church while on a hunting expedition and one of them shot an arrow at an icon of St. George during the liturgy. The icon turned the arrow back on the attacker, which struck the hand of the Saracen and inspired him to convert to Christianity. Festugière, *Collections grecques*, pp. 275-276, 308-310.

combined forces of Slavs and African Saracens.³⁴ According to it, the besieged defenders of the town sent out a messenger to the military governor of the province, with a request to come to the town's aid or to give consent for its surrender. They instructed and gave a signal to their messenger that in the case of the governor coming, he should in his way back dip the standard, but if not, to hold the standard erect. While the messenger was returning with news that there is no military aid, his horse slipped and the rider fell off and dipped the standard (thanks to the intervention of God and the town's patron, the apostle Andrew). The defenders, believing that the governor was coming undoubtedly, opened the gates and sallied out against the enemies. The apostle Andrew then revealed to their eyes mounted upon a horse and forced the attackers to flee:

*"The Barbarians saw and were amazed and confound at the violent assault upon them of the invincible and unconquerable warrior... the victorious first-called apostle Andrew."*³⁵

Popular Byzantine belief in the supernatural powers of local patron saints is well illustrated by John Kaminiates during the Arab attack on Thessaloniki in 904, which was an appropriate opportunity to commemorate Saint Demetrios's frequent miraculous intervention in the city's fate.³⁶ According to him, all the city's populations hurried to the saint's shrine setting up a chorus of lamentation, and in motivated words called upon the martyr to be their protector against the attackers:³⁷

³⁴There is a debate on the date of this event, but it probably occurred in the early tenth century. For the discussion see the commentary in Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *De Administrando Imperio*, vol. II: Commentary, ed. R. J. H. Jenkins, (London, 1962), pp.183-184.

³⁵Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. GY. Moravcsik, trans. R.J.H. Jenkins, I (Washington, D.C., 1967), p. 229.

³⁶Memory of the saint's miraculous intervention in the city's fate was still alive in middle Byzantine society, as it is evident from a remark by John Kaminiates concerning the miraculous intervention of the patron saint on behalf of his city in its struggles against the invasions of the Avars and the Slavs. Kaminiates, *The Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. & trans. D. Frendo & A. Fotiou, Byzantina Australiensia 12 (Perth, 2000), p.17. See also: Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1838), pp.516-517; A. Grabar, "Quelques reliquaires de Saint Demetrios et le martyrium du Saint a Salonique", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950), pp. 3-28 (= *L'art de la fin de l'antiquite et du moyen age*, Paris 1968, 1, pp. 446-63).

³⁷Kaminiates, *Capture of Thessaloniki*, p.39.

"Listen to our petition, stand up with bold intercession on behalf of us your servants and rescue us from impending disaster, lest the children of the maidservant Hagar boast against us and say, 'Where is their protector?' For you see, most gracious one, that we do not put our trust in spears and shields, but have entrusted everything to your powerful intercession, pinning our hopes on engaging once again your provident concern."³⁸

Miracles of local patron saints, which sometimes illustrated them on horseback and in full armour, might be an appropriate environment for the developed pattern of warrior saints, which is usually thought to appear in the context of the Byzantine reconquest of northern Syria during the reigns of the military emperors Nikephoros II Phokas (963-69) and John Tzimiskes (969-76). The new military and religious spirit that dominated this period might put its impress on saints' military role in the Byzantine-Arab warfare.³⁹ As we have already seen, the miraculous intervention to liberate captives and defend cities against the Arab raids were the dominative saints' imagined tasks during the period in which the Byzantines took most of time the position of defense, but when they turned to the offense, these tasks naturally developed to be at battlefields and outside the Byzantine territories, whether as warriors involving in the fight or as a cult inciting the soldiers to fight.⁴⁰ According to a later account by Nikephoros Gregoras, the most popular warriors Sts. George, Demetrios and Theodore Stratelates, with the archangel Michael, were said to have supported the troops of Nikephoros Phokas besieging Arab-

³⁸Kaminiates, *Capture of Thessaloniki*, p.41.

³⁹According to Walter [*Warrior Saints*, p.292] it is precisely the reign of Tzimiskes that saw the apogee of the cult of the military saints in connection with the introduction of religious practices into army life. While Grotowski [*Arms and Armour*, pp. 70-73] has dealt with the appearance of the tradition within the context of what he called 'the proto-crusade movement' which was very clear in the reigns of Nikephoros Phokas and John Tzimiskes. On the other hand, Badamo has discussed the issue in the context of cross-cultural influences within the Christian-Muslim frontiers and suggested earlier eastern Christian roots for the tradition [*Image and Community*, pp. 36, 291].

⁴⁰ This hypothesis may be appropriate while dealing with the Byzantine-Arab warfare, but there are other examples on these warrior saints' fighting in defensive battles during the same period, mainly against the Rus. On these examples see, Sinclair, K. J., *War writing in middle Byzantine historiography. Sources, influences and trends*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2012, pp. 68-73. But even in these cases, one may suggest that the defensive role of the saints passed the pattern of local patrons to be imperial patrons who defend a whole beleaguered empire.

held Chandax on Crete in 961.⁴¹ A very similar scene could be seen in the Grottaferrata version of the epic *Digenis Akrites*. According to it, Sts. George, Demetrios, Theodore of Tiron and Theodore Stratelates were supporting Digenis Akrites in the fight against the Arabs immediately after Christ, the Virgin and the archangels.⁴²

However, the last imagined task of saints' intervention in the Byzantine-Arab warfare is related to Emperors or Generals' desire for obtaining the holy blessing and advice before the battle, and above all an *ex eventu* prediction that secures victory after it. Reading of the Greek sources, whether hagiography or chronicles, gives the impression that this tradition was influential and continuous through the whole period of the Byzantine-Arab military encounters. The most well known example of this tradition is connected with Petronas's expedition that defeated the forces of 'Umar, Emir of Melitine, at Porson in 863. It seems that the importance of this battle led to its association with many different predictions of holy men.⁴³ According to the hagiographer of St. George of Lesbos, the saint received Petronas twenty years earlier than the expedition and prophesied his victory over the Arabs.⁴⁴ Also, it is said that St. Antony the Younger predicted the victory to Petronas when the imperial order to campaign was issued.⁴⁵ The chronicle of Theophanes Continuatus includes in its account of the expedition the prediction of John, a monk at Mount Latros, that the Byzantines would win the battle.⁴⁶

⁴¹Schlumberger, G., *Un empereur byzantine au dixième siècle, Nicéphore Phocas* (Paris, 1923), p.74; Walter, *Warrior Saints*, p.133.

⁴²*Digenis Akrites* (Grottaferrata version), ed. & trans. J. Mavrogordato (Oxford, 1963), p. 205.

⁴³ This battle was a major victory for Byzantium in its attempts to retake the offensive against the Arabs and establish in eastern border.

⁴⁴*Life of Sts. David, Symeon and George of Lesbos*, trans. D. Abrahamse and D. Domingo-Forasté, in: *Byzantine Defenders of Images. Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. A-M. Talbot, Washington. D.C., 1998, pp.143-242, esp. 229-230.

⁴⁵ According to the *Life*, the saint had become a spiritual father to Petronas after curing him from a demonic possession. F. Halkin, "Saint Antoine le Jeune et Pétronas le vainqueur des Arabes en 863.", *Analecta Boliandiana* 62 (1944), pp. 215-217

⁴⁶Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, pp. 180-181. A similar account is recorded by Skylitzes who adds that "Petronas came to the capital after achieving such a remarkable victory. He brought along the monk who had foretold the victory, singing the praises of his virtue. He praised and magnified him before the Emperor". Skylitzes, *A Synopsis History of Byzantine History, 811-1057A.D.*, trans. J. Wortley (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 100-101.

About a century later, Constantine VII is said to have written to St. Paul the Younger asking him for his advice before embarking on the expedition of 949 against the Cretan Arabs. The saint replied trying to dissuade the Emperor from an undertaking that was not, as he said, "*In God's mind*". The latter, having already spent large sums of money in preparation for this expedition, chose to carry on with his plans, a choice he bitterly regretted later as the expedition failed.⁴⁷ He also predicted the refusal of the Hamdanid emir Sayf al-Dawlā to accept a truce and an exchange of captives offered by the emperor.⁴⁸

On the Arab side, we have two narratives. The first implies Arabs' well-awareness of such predictions' influence on the Byzantine decision of war. As al-Ḍahabī (d.748/1250) records, after a long Arab siege of Constantinople in the reign of the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar b. Abd el-'Azīz (99-101/717-20), Emperor Leo III (717-41) decided to attack the strained and weary Arab soldiers outside the city walls, but he totally abandoned his plan after encountering in his way a Byzantine ascetic who predicted his defeat.⁴⁹ The other narrative strikingly refers to an Arab positive response to the Byzantine holy men's predictions. According to al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī (d. 463/1070), on the eve of the expedition of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim (218-27/833-42) against Amorion in 223/838, two of his soldiers visited a Byzantine monk in his cell asking him foretelling the expedition's outcome, he replied that "*the king's soldiers, who will conquer Amorion, are unfathered sons*". *When this prediction reached the caliph, he approved it and said: "I am this king, as most of my soldiers are sons of Turkish and barbarian women"*.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ "Vita S. Pauli Junioris in monteLatro", ed. H. Delehayé, *Analecta Bollandiana* 11(1892), pp.19-74, 136-181, esp.73-74; Tsougarakis, D., *Byzantine Crete from the 5th Century to the Venetian Conquest* (Athens, 1988), p.25.

⁴⁸"Vita S. Pauli Junioris", p.72. On the ground that the saint is reported as an occasional consultant on matters of foreign relations, Koutrakou thinks that this prophecy might be based on solid knowledge of facts gathered through unofficial contacts. Koutrakou, N., "Diplomacy and Espionage: their role in Byzantine Foreign Relations, 8th-10th Centuries", *Graeco-Arabica* 6 (1995), p.130.

⁴⁹ Al-Ḍahabī, *Tārīḥ al-Islām wa Wafīyat al-Mašahīr wal-'Alām*, ed. O.A. Tadmurī (Beirut, 1988-2000), 8: 508-509. According to al-Wāqidī, on the eve of Yarmūk battle in 13/634, some Arab soldiers encountered Byzantine monks in their way to Emperor Heraclius' son, Constantine, to bless him and pray for victory. Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 233.

⁵⁰Al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baġdādī, *Tārīḥ Baġdād*, ed. B. A. Ma'rūf (Beirut, 2001), 4: 550. Also, Ibn al-'Umrānī (d. 580/1184) records a similar account, but this time Caliph al-Mu'taṣim himself is presented as the person who met the monk. Ibn al-'Umrānī, *Tārīḥ al-Ḥulfa'*,

In addition to this narrative, there is another well-documented Byzantine account that reflects a similar Byzantine response to the other's ability to predict and prophesy. This time the other is not an Arab holy man but a woman who, as John Skylitzes describes, was "*captured among the Hagarenes in one of the foregoing wars, and was talented for this kind of foretelling*".⁵¹ Emperor Theophilos (829-42), who was then seeking most diligently to know about those who would rule after him, consulted this woman, and she successfully fulfilled his desire.⁵² According to Genesios, the fame of the woman was propagated by rumor, and all were extolling her powers and asking about the future. All her prophecies became true, and the Emperor became fully confident in her powers.⁵³

Angels and Demons:

Despite that the popular beliefs, particularly for the Byzantines, ascribed to the human element, i.e. the holy men, a dominative supernatural role in the scene of the Byzantine-Arab warfare, there are other invisible celestial powers that sometimes were involved by popular imagination in such role. Angels in particular were frequently utilized by the Arab popular imagination in the context of Byzantine-Arab battles.⁵⁴

ed.Q. al-Sāmra'ī (Cairo, 1999), p.106. Al-Aṣḫānī (d.362/971), in his book on Monasteries, gives many references to Abbasid caliphs, Leaders and ordinary persons' visits to monasteries. One of these narratives records a visit of an Arab, called Abū Bakr al-Anbārī, to the monastery of al-Anwār (the lights) in a village near Amorion. He received a great hospitality from its monks, whose faithful and continuous prayers incited his admiration. Al-Aṣḫānī, *Al-Diyārāt*, ed. J. al-'Aṭyeh (London, 1991), pp.48-52. See also, Kilpatrick, H., "Monasteries through Muslim Eye: The Diyārāt Books", in: *Christian at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq*, ed. D. Thomas (Brill, 2003), pp.19-37. Consulting monks for advice by the Arabs is also attested by another Greek narrative. According to John Skylitzes, the Arab conquerors of Crete established their camp at Chandax relying on a monk's advice. Skylitzes, *Synopsis History*, p. 46.

⁵¹Skylitzes, *Synopsis History*, p.73. Genesios refers to her as a Hagarene captive woman who "was occasionally seized by a prophetic Pythian spirit". Genesios, *On the Reigns of the Emperors*, trans. A. Kaldellis (Canberra, 1998), p. 64.

⁵²Genesios, *On the Reigns*, p. 64; Skylitzes, *Synopsis History*, p. 73.

⁵³Genesios, *On the Reigns*, pp. 64-65. Genesios in these pages attributes to this woman many prophecies concerning noble persons' futures. The reader of these prophecies, which all were believed to become true, may imagine Genesios as if speaking about a holy woman. But since she was Muslim, Genesios could not openly say this but contented himself with the idea of the prophetic spirit's possession.

⁵⁴Al-Wāqidī claims that the Byzantines themselves were well-aware of Angels' interventions to support the Arab armies during their conquest of Palestine, *Futūḥ al-*

According to Ibn Abī al-Dunīya, when some Muslims were besieging a Byzantine fort, they saw an angel in guise of the Prophet. They entreated his intercession to conquer it, and he did.⁵⁵ Also, al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822) records that the Muslim leader Abū ʿUbayīda, on the eve of Yarmūk battle in 13/634, had been foretold the victory by a vision in which he saw white lightened fighters on horsebacks and in full armour. When he related this vision to his soldiers, one of them announced that he likewise had dreamed of white brides with green wings and claws like those of eagles fighting with them.⁵⁶

Appearance of Angels in unhuman form to support the Arabs against the Byzantines is repeated again in the epic of *Ḍāt al-Himma*. According to it, in a battle between the two sides during the reign of Caliph al-Wāṭiq, the Byzantine victory seemed imminent, but suddenly dust was raised, dimmed the visibility and through it fighters similar to monkeys and wolves appeared. They sallied out against the Byzantines and annihilated them. Finally, the caliph ascribed this victory "*whether to archangels or to the faithful demons*".⁵⁷ Such appearance may bear a Christian impact, since representing angels as birds, eagles and animals, like ox, lion and horse, was known in Byzantine art and literature.⁵⁸

While these Arabic narratives may remind us of the scene of warrior saints defending and supporting the Byzantine soldiers in

Ṣām, 2: 23, 28, Also, according to the Arab tradition, there are many veiled fighters who suddenly appeared in battles against the Byzantines and often succeeded in turning the situation from defeat to victory. Their supernatural courage and fighting made the Arabs believe that they are angels sent by God to support them. Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Ṣām*, 1: 12, 164. One of these heroes, according to al-Masʿūdī (d.346-957), is thought to be al-Khiḍr or an angel sent by God when he suddenly broke through al-Qādisiyā battle and bravely fought against the Persians. Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūğ al-Ḍahab wa Maʿādin al-Ġawhar*, ed. Q. Wahb (Damascus, 1989), 2:161.

⁵⁵Ibn Abī al-Dunīya, *Kitāb al-Awliyāʾ*, ed. A. Muḥammad & E.B. Zağlūl (Beirut, 1993), p.35; Idem, *Kitāb Muğabī al-Daʿwa*, p.62. Some Muslims, according to Ibn al-ʿĪmād, believed that ʿOmar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb was speaking by an angel's tongue. Ibn al-ʿĪmād comments on this belief by saying: "It is proved that God's saints, (*al-awliyāʾ*), have visions, miracles and marvels. Undoubtedly, ʿOmar is the best of them in this nation (*al-'Umā*)". Ibn al-ʿĪmād, *Shaḍarāt al-Ḍahab*, 1: p.179.

⁵⁶Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Ṣām*, 1: 258.

⁵⁷*Sīrat al-Amīra Ḍāt al-Himma*, 7: 994-995.

⁵⁸Peers, G., *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley, 2001), pp.28 n.25, 47 n.59, 91, 117.

battlefields, there is another story that may also bear a similarity to the Byzantine saints' imagined miraculous intervention to liberate captives. It is the story of Abī Salīm who was believed to be the first Muslim settled in the city of Ṭarsūs. According to Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1199), he is one of three brave Arab soldiers who were famous in fight against the Byzantines. He was captured by the Byzantines who, after failure to tempt him from Islam by means of torture, offered him a beautiful Christian woman because, as they believed, 'Arabs have strong desire for women'.⁵⁹ Abū Salīm restrained himself and succeeded in converting the woman to Islam and escaping (most probably by a miraculous means). While on horseback in their way to *Dār al-Islām* (the Muslim territories) they heard a voice of horses' hoofs and believed that the Byzantines were following them. After praying to God for salvation, they discerned that God dispatched to them witnesses from among his angels to certify their marriage.⁶⁰ This story is repeated again in the Arabic popular tales *Alf layla walayla* (the Arabian Nights) without any difference.⁶¹ This parallel may lead again to the hypothesis that there is only one story, began and spread in an oral form, and then was transferred to a written one, whether in a chronicle or within an epic.

However, these stories seem to reflect an analogy between the imagined supernatural roles of angels and those which were ascribed to the saints in the Greek hagiography and chronicles. This analogy, if it does not necessarily imply an influence, may lead to the hypothesis of a similar popular imagination. Vice versa, while saints' imagined supernatural role dominated the scene of these wars in the Greek sources, angels, it seems, rarely appeared in this scene. There are no stories or miracles, as far as I know, imply a direct angelic intervention in

⁵⁹On torture and the beauty of Byzantine women as familiar means that used by the Byzantines to attract the Arab captives toward Christianity, see: Ramadan, A.M., "The Treatment of Arab prisoners of wars in Byzantium, 9th-10th Centuries", *Annales Islamologiques* 43(2009), pp.155-194, esp. 166-171, 182-185. On the Arabs' view of Byzantine women's beauty and attraction (*fitna*), see: El-Cheikh-Saliba, N. M., "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), pp.239-250, esp.239-240.

⁶⁰Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 8: 329-330.

⁶¹Perhaps the only difference between both stories is that while Ibn al-Jawzī relates his story when treating the events of 170/786; the Arabian Nights dates it to the reign of 'Omar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb and the siege of Damascus in 15/636. See, Matar, N., "Christians in The Arabian Nights", in: *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: between East and West*, ed. S. Makdisi and F. Nussbaum (Oxford, 2008), pp.131-152, esp.149.

Byzantine-Arab warfare, but a mere accidental appearance in the context of rhetoric military speeches and hymns. An appearance which is usually associated with Christ, the Virgin and saints. Such association is clearly manifested in a military oration of Constantine VII, which was written in connection with his military encounter with Sayf al-Dawla the Hamdanid emir of Aleppo, when he implores God to dispatch an angel to protect the army along its route.⁶²

But this supposal cannot be applied to the archangels, particularly the archangel Michael who is usually presented as a "military archangel".⁶³ He sometimes appears fighting against the Arabs, also in the association with the Virgin and/or the combined warrior saints, as the aforementioned narratives of Nikephoros Gregoras and the epic *Digenis Akrites* demonstrate.⁶⁴ The fame of archangel Michael as a warrior might

⁶²"He Himself will send His angel and He will guide your journey, and may He help to surround you with hosts of angels and to keep you safe from harm at the hands of the enemy...Our Majesty to be joyful and to rejoice in your achievements, and to be embellished by your heroic deeds through the intercession of the immaculate Mother of God, His mother, and all the incorporeal angelic powers, and the saints who have served Him from eternity and been martyred for His sake". Trans. E. McGeer, "Two Military Orations of Constantine VII", in: **Byzantine authors: literary activities and preoccupations. Texts and translations dedicated to the memory of Nicolas Oikonomides**, ed. J. Nesbitt (Leiden, 2003), pp.111-138, esp.134. On the eve of war against the Rus in 971, John Tzimiskes likewise went to the church of Hagia Sophia and prayed that 'he be granted an angel to go before the army and make straight the road". Leo the Deacon, *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, trans. A-M. Talbot & D. F. Sullivan (Washington, D.C., 2005), p.175; McGeer, "Two Military Orations", p.134 n.109. This association is also attested in a military hymn, or a service called *akolouthia*, dated to the mid-tenth century and mainly directed against the Arabs. It contains these lines: "Life-giving son of God, by the prayers of your mother, and by the divine supplications of the angels and gloriously triumphant martyrs, gladden your faithful emperors, shatter the throngs of barbarians, and to the army that worships you, show mercy." (Pertusi, A., (ed.) "Una acolouthia militare inedita del X secolo," *Aevum* 22 (1948). Eng. trans. Stephenson, P., "Military documents of the mid-tenth century", http://www.paulstephenson.info/trans/military_texts.html

⁶³I'm borrowing this term from Walter, *Warrior Saints*, p. 91. On the images of the archangel Michael in military equipment see, Parani, M.G., *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography 11th-15th Centuries* (Leiden 2003), pp.154-155; Grotowski, *Arms and Armour*, pp.152. Archangel Michael, as Glenn Peers has shown, is the most popular of the "personalized" angels in Byzantium. His miracles produce him as a watcher and protector, particularly of individuals and sacred places. Peers, *Subtle Bodies*, p. 6 ff.

⁶⁴This association is also manifested in art. Two panels in the Museo San Marco, Venice, show the Archangel Michael in the centre in military costume. Around the border are placed figures of saints, most of them military. Walter, *Warrior Saints*,

incite Basil I (867-86), after his failed campaign against Tephrike in 871, to visit the church of archangels and begging them "in obvious distress and grief" not to let him die before destroying this city.⁶⁵

For the second invisible power, the demons, references to their imagined supernatural role in Byzantine-Arab warfare are very rare in both sides' sources. But we have two significant narratives implying that while demons were usually considered in both popular cultures as an evil power, this did not prevent each side from utilizing them in his favor against the other, but in this case, as the aforementioned story of the epic *Ḍāt al-Himma* demonstrated, these demons were turned to be "faithful". This sort of good demons may also be found in Genesios's account about the Arab siege of Syracuse in 877. According to it, Emperor Basil I sent Adrianos with a large fleet to free it. While he was being confined in a port called Hierax, on the southeastern coast of the Peloponnese, a citizen carried to him from some local demons the bad news that Syracuse had already fallen. Adrianos was still skeptical of this story till deserters from the Island confirmed it.⁶⁶

Sacred objects:

Undoubtedly, crosses, copies of the Qur'ān, icons, relics and other sacred objects are expected to occupy a forward position in the Arab-Byzantine relations as a whole and in their mutual battlefields in particular. They always had a characteristic direct effect on soldiers' morale as being, opposite to other supernatural powers, the only concrete ones that the soldiers can carry, touch and supplicate to in times of need. Crosses and copies of the Qur'ān were specifically considered the

p.103. Also, this association might reach the cult shrines. As Peers has shown, the Byzantine church often introduced relics of mortal saints into shrines of angels. The reason that he gives is the concern to make the cult of angels palatable to authorities. Peers, *Subtle Bodies*, p. 175.

⁶⁵Genesios, *On the Reigns*, p. 106. This fame may also be attested by Constantine VII 's reference to 'the Archangel Michael', 'the Saviour', 'the Theotokos', and 'the warrior saints', as familiar military passwords that the generals were secretly received from the emperor. This reference may also attest the supposed usual angels' association with the Christ, the Virgin and warrior saints in the Byzantine Military writings. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, ed. & trans. A. Moffatt & M. Tall (Canberra, 2012), I: 481; Idem, *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, ed. & trans. J. Haldon (Wien, 1990), p.121.

⁶⁶Genesios, *On the Reigns*, pp.103-104; Skylitzes, *Synopsis History*, p.153. Undoubtedly, the role of demons here seems more helpful if is compared with the abovementioned negative angels' attitude toward Euchaïta during the Arab attack on it in 753/754.

supreme sacred symbols that can bring the victory. The Arab tradition always presents the battles of the two sides, particularly during the Arab conquests, as if between the "worshippers of the Cross" and the "bearers of the Qur'ān"⁶⁷, and it usually evaluates the size of the Byzantines' armies by numbers of crosses which they were carrying.⁶⁸ The considerable numbers of richly decorated crosses⁶⁹, standards of gold and silver crosses,⁷⁰ and copies of Qur'ān,⁷¹ which were captured and

⁶⁷Al-Wāqidī refers to the Arabs as “the bearers of the *Qur'ān*” and “the people of the *Qur'ān*”, while he does not consider, it seems, the Byzantines as true Christians but frequently refers to them as “worshippers of the Cross”, “infidel worshippers of the Cross” and “people of atheism who are believing in the Cross”. [Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 63, 65, 136, 206, 221, 225, 234, 246, 256, 274, 301, 302]. Also, Ibn Aṯṯam al-Kūfī frequently refers to the Arab-Byzantine wars as if they were between “the people of the *Qur'ān*” and “the infidels”. He presents the Arabs as true faithful who always recite verses from the *Qur'ān*, pray and supplicate to *Allah* (God) for victory, while the Byzantines, despite being carrying crosses and Bibles, are using to drink wine and play on the musical instruments: castanets, lutes and whistles. [Ibn Aṯṯam al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, I, pp.146, 148, 150, 189, 191, 263; II, p.126, 130]. The late historian Ibn Aybak ad-Dwādārī was still referring to the Byzantines as ‘worshippers of the Cross’. He refers to the Muslims' victory in Yarmūk battle by saying: “*Allah* insisted on supporting his religion and raising the word of His true believers over that of the worshippers of the Cross”. [Ibn Aybak, *Kinz al-Durar*, III: *Al-Dur al-Ṭamīn fī Aḥbār Sayed al-Mursalīn wal-Ḥulfā' ar-Rašādīn*, ed. M.A. Gamāl al-Dīn (Cairo, 1981), p. 167.

⁶⁸It is familiar in the Arabic sources that each Byzantine contingent is composed of 10,000 soldiers under a Cross and a leadership of a *Patrikos*. At the end of the battle of Agnādīn, the Emperor Heraclius sent “two crosses, and 10,000 soldiers under each of them”, he also sent before the battle of Faḥl (14/635) “two crosses placed at the head of 20,000 soldiers and two Patrikoi”. [Ibn Aṯṯam al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, I, pp.150, 175]. In 291/903, the Byzantine Emperor "sent two crosses, under each of them 10000 soldiers, to raid on the borders". [Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīḥ al-rusul*, 10: 116; Ibn al-Aṯṯar (d. 630/1232), *al-Kāmil fī l-Tārīḥ*, ed. M.Y. al-Daqaq (Beirut, 1987), 6: 423; Ibn Kaṯṯar (d. 774/1372), *al-Bidāyā wa l-Nihāya*, ed. A.A. al-Turkī (Cairo, 1998), 14: 724].

⁶⁹Arabic sources mention that the Arab army captured seven crosses of gold and silver, beside the Byzantine 'greatest cross' which was richly made of gold and decorated with priceless precious stones, during a battle near Ṭarsūs in 270/883 [Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīḥ al-rusul*, 9: 666; Ibn al-Aṯṯar, *al-Kāmil*, 6: 336; Al-Dahabī, *Tārīḥ al-Islām*, 20: 38; Ibn Kaṯṯar, *al-Bidāyā*, 14: 586-587; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaḏam*, 12: 229]. On the Byzantine side, sources refer to many crosses of gold and precious stones which were recovered by Nikephoros Phokas after capturing Tarsus in 965. These crosses are mentioned specifically as “military crosses” (*stavroi strategikoi*). Leo the Deacon, *History*, p.109; Skylitzes, *Synopsis History*, p.259. See also: J. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565–1204* (London, 1990), p.22.

⁷⁰ Leo the Deacon records that Nikephoros Phokas' assault against Crete in 960 was preceded by a huge standard of the cross. Leo the Deacon, *History*, p.61. Constantine VII in his *De Ceremonies* stresses on the presence of a standard-bearer carrying a

exchanged by both sides, are frequently revealed in the Arabic narratives of battles, diplomatic and captives' exchanges between them.

Within battlefields, the Byzantine familiar war cry was "Victory to the Cross"⁷², in opposite to the Muslim one "*Allāhu Akbar*" (God is the Greatest).⁷³ Each of the two sides naturally heard the other's war cry and interpreted it, besides being an enthusiastic factor, as a calling for the support of a divine power. Al-Wāqidī frequently refers to richly decorated crosses of gold and precious stones that were usually given by the Byzantine Emperors, monks or priests to the generals to be placed at the head of the imperial armies as a divine power that would insure their victory.⁷⁴ He also mentions many cases of Byzantine generals, and

bejeweled gold cross in the front of the army. Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, I: 485; Haldon, *Three Treatises*, p.125. According to □Arībb.Sa□d al-Qurṭ ubī (d. second half of tenth century), the Abbasid Leader al-Qāsim b. Sīmā returned from his victorious summer campaign against the Byzantine borders (298/910) with a great number of captives and standards of gold and silver crosses. [Ṣilat al-Ṭabarī, in: Al-Ṭabarī, Ta'rīḥ al-rusul, 11:37]. On the parade of these captives carrying standards of the crosses in Baghdad, see: Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāyā*, 14: 763. Also, Lances constructed in the shape of the Cross carried by Byzantine prisoners captured at Amida in May 956 are mentioned by the Arab poet al-Mutanabbī [See the French translation of the verse in: Vasiliev, A. A., *Byzance et les Arabes*, 3 vols. (Bruxelles,1935-1950), 2/2:304-48, esp.243].

⁷¹For example, the Byzantine Emperor sent as a gift many captives and copies of the Qur'ān, that had been captured from the border zones, to Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn in 265/878 [Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīḥ al-rusul, 9: 545; Ibn al-Aṭīr, al-Kāmil, 6: 285; Al-Ḍahabī, Tārīḥ al-Islām, 20: 16]. Ibn Kaṭīr mentions that each captive was carrying a copy of the Qur'ān [*al-Bidāyā*, 14: 565].

⁷²Unfortunately, I did not find any Arabic reference to the Byzantine war cry, while there is a plenty of such references in the Byzantine sources. Genesios, for example, refers to its frequent uses by the Byzantines in their wars against Arabs. According to him, the Byzantine General Manuel shouted "victory to the Cross" during his combat against the Arabs in 859. Genesios, *On the Reigns*, pp. 83, 109.

⁷³On the Byzantine conception of the Muslim war cry, see: Meyendorff, J., "Byzantine Views of Islam", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 18 (1964), pp. 113–32, esp.118–19; Khoury, A. Th., *Polémique Byzantine contre l'Islam*, Leiden, 1972, pp. 240–1; Roggema, B., "Muslims as Crypto-Idolaters: A Theme in the Christian Portrayal of Islam in the Near East", in: *Christian at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq*, ed. D. Thomas (Brill, 2003), pp.1-18, esp. 7-9, 18; Muhammad, T. M., "Allā Wa Koubar in the Byzantine Conception", *Pax Islamica: Selected Papers of the Second International Conference "The World of Islam: History, Society, Culture"*, Moscow, 28-30 October 2010 (Moscow, 2012), pp. 330-347; Idem, "The concept of *Al-takbir* in the Byzantine Theological Writings," *Byzantinoslavica* LXXII (2014), pp. 77-97.

⁷⁴Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 33, 50, 59, 384.

sometimes soldiers, who used to put such precious crosses on their heads or in necklaces.⁷⁵ In one case, a Byzantine champion called Aṣṭfān (Stephen) had kissed and prayed to a cross of gold in his silver necklace before a single combat with a Muslim one called Dirār.⁷⁶ Also, al-Wāqidī presents some cases in which the Byzantines resorted to place crosses on the walls of besieged cities for help and protection⁷⁷, the practice which would be attested later by a Greek account. According to Kaminiates, the defenders of Thessaloniki, when they were besieged by an Arab fleet led by Leo of Tripoli in 904, placed crosses on the city's walls to defend them.⁷⁸

Among all crosses, the True Cross, as a relic attributed to the Christ himself, was the most important spiritual sacred object that could be used or carried by the Byzantine armies during battles. Constantine VII, to ensure victory before a military encounter with Sayf al-Dawlā, had sought the prayers of holy men and monks throughout the empire, and dispatched to the army 'holy water', which emanated from the most holy relics of Constantinople, above all the True Cross.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, there is no Greek reference, as far as I know, on taking wood from this cross by the imperial armies in their Eastern campaigns, but this is very

⁷⁵Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 61, 115, 158, 198, 205, 246, 302; 2: 28.

⁷⁶Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 81. On another example of a Byzantine General who kissed the cross and made it with his hand on his eyes before the fight, see: Ibid, 1: 278. The tradition of putting the Cross on the heads of the Byzantine soldiers was still known by the Arabs till late period. In 422/1030, one of the leaders of the Arab tribe, called Ḥasān b. al-Jarāḥ, rebelled against the Fatimid authorities in Syria and resorted to the Byzantines putting a cross on his head. In the same year, he appeared leading a Byzantine army against the Fatimid Syria carrying this cross on his head. Al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441), 'Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā bi Aḥbār al-A'immah al-Faṭīmyīn al-Ḥulafā, ed. G. al-Šayāl (Cairo, 1996), 2: 180.

⁷⁷Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 48, 93.

⁷⁸According to Kaminiates, "those who were manning the wall invoked the aid of the saving weapon of the cross against the enemy forces". Kaminiates, *Capture of Thessaloniki*, p.45.

⁷⁹"Behold that after drawing holy water from the immaculate and most sacred relics of the Passion of Christ our true God – from the precious wooden fragments [of the true cross] and the undefiled lance, the precious *titulus*, the wonder-working reed, the life-giving blood which flowed from His precious rib, the most sacred tunic, the holy swaddling clothes, the God-bearing winding sheet, and the other relics of His undefiled Passion – we have sent it to be sprinkled upon you, for you to be anointed by it and to garb yourself with the divine power from on high".McGeer, "Two Military Orations", p.133.

conceivable.⁸⁰ In his dealing with the issue in the framework of the early Arab conquests, Walter Kaegi has similarly noted that "there are no significant episodes reported about efforts to use Christian relics to save various towns from the Muslims", and has convincingly considered such silence as an expected matter, "perhaps because no one wanted to demonstrate the weakness of Christian relics".⁸¹ Nevertheless, Kaegi's hypothesis can be applied for the period of his study, but may not be appropriate for the later Arab-Byzantine military confrontations, particularly when dealing with the tenth century Byzantine military expansion in North Syria. Here, the Arabic evidence seems more helpful. Al-Wāqidī, in his frequent references to the Byzantine crosses that were carried during the early Arab conquests, distinguishes a piece cross that had been inherited among the monks of Amorion from the time of the Christ. One of these monks, who was having this piece in his necklace on the eve of Yarmūk battle, gave it to a Byzantine champion before a single combat with a Muslim one.⁸² In another account, Emperor Heraclius (610-41), after losing most of Syria, sent an army under the leadership of the *Domestikos* Yūqanā (John) giving him a cross that "had been well-kept in the church, and which is forbidden to take out except in their great days".⁸³

Other Arabic pieces of evidence demonstrate both sides' use of other relics in their military encounters. Al-Wāqidī refers to a 'blessed cap' that was given by the Prophet to Ḥālīd b. al-Walīd, who used to carry it during his battles with the Byzantines, and seemed believing in its power. In one of these battles, as one story tells, his defeat by the Byzantines seemed imminent because he had forgotten to take this "blessed cap". A knight suddenly appeared in the battlefield carrying it to Ḥālīd. His soldiers had firstly thought that this knight should be an angel

⁸⁰There is a reference clarifies the presence of such relic in the imperial eastern campaign of tenth century. In a military treatise of Constantine VII, he refers to a *koubikoularios* carrying "the holy and life-giving wood of the Cross" that should be present in the imperial reception's ceremonies when the emperor was passing through in the Eastern *themata* going on campaign. Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, I: 485; Haldon, *Three Treatises*, p.125.

⁸¹Kaegi, W. E., *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge, 1992), p.265.

⁸²Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 289.

⁸³Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 384. According to the narrative, Heraclius advised him to place this cross at the head of his army and depend on it for victory.

sent by the heaven, but later they discerned that he is Ḥālīd 's wife herself in guise of a male fighter.⁸⁴

Epic of *Ḍāt al-Himma* frequently refers to the Prophet's relics which early Abbasid caliphs used to carry during their expeditions against the Byzantines, specifically his cloak (*burda*), turban (*'imāma*), stake (*qaḍīb*) and sword (*saīf*).⁸⁵ Also, it often presents the battles between both sides as if a "war of relics" in which each one used relics or counter-relics as trustworthy powers ensuring his victory. In one tale, the Byzantine Patriarch gave the General a piece of relic and advised him to made it with his hand over his soldiers' faces and heads in time of need, and thanks to it the Byzantines' victory seemed imminent. Logically, as the story reflects, the Byzantine General was confident in the divine power of such relic, but it is very striking to find the Arab narrator himself attributing to it the Byzantine superiority in the battle, the critical situation that required an intervention of a Muslim counter-relic.⁸⁶ Another tale relates a legendary episode of the Byzantines' capturing of Caliph Ḥārūn al-Rashīd (170-93/786-809) together with the Prophet's relics, whose release required the intervention of the Muslim heroic figure al-Baṭṭāl,⁸⁷ who "feared that the Byzantines may destroy these relics to deprive Muslims from their blessed power".⁸⁸

⁸⁴Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 163-165. Arab tradition used to describe Ḥālīd b. al-Walīd's characters and skills in terms of supernatural heroism. According to an Arabic legend, the Byzantines themselves ascribed Ḥālīd's title *Saīf Allah* (God's sword) and his supernatural skills in battles to a sword that had been descended from the heavens to the Prophet, who gave it to Ḥālīd. Ibn al-Aṭṭār, *al-Kāmil*, 2: 260. Worth to be mentioned that Ḥālīd's title was known among the Byzantines. Theophanes, *Chronicle*, p.466.

⁸⁵*Sīrat al-Amīra Ḍāt al-Himma*, 2: 647; 3: 249; 4: 259; 5: 63; 7: 686, 960.

⁸⁶*Sīrat al-Amīra Ḍāt al-Himma*, 1: 282-289. The Byzantine relic of this story is a piece of hoof that the writer attributed to 'the donkey' of the Christ, while the Muslim one is a copy of Qur'ān written by 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb, and which Maslamā b. 'Abd el-Malik, who gave it to the Muslim leader of the battle, had inherited from his father. These relics seem to be legendary.

⁸⁷Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl (d. 122/739) is one of the most popular heroic figures who were associated with fighting against the Byzantine, particularly in the late Arabic historiography. He was thought to be one of the main leaders who participated in Constantinople's siege of 717-18. As the Arab tradition goes, the Byzantines were humiliated by him in many battles and feared him to the extent that mothers used to stop their children's cries by scaring them off his name. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ al-rusul*, 7: 88; Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāyā*, 13: 110-115; Al-Ḍahabī, *Tārīḥ al-Islām*, 7:406-410; Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1175), *Tārīḥ Madānat Dimašq*, ed. M. O. al-'Amrūi (Beirut, 1997), 33: 401-408.

⁸⁸*Sīrat al-Amīra Ḍāt al-Himma*, 2: 647-648.

Despite the apparent legendary trait that is expected in tales of a heroic epic, the tradition of military utilizing of the Prophet's relics is attested in other Greek and Arabic historical accounts. As Theophanes records, Caliph Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr (136-58/754-75) resorted to the help of the staff and sandals of the Prophet against his enemies.⁸⁹ Also, Leo the Deacon refers to messengers dispatched by Nickephoros Phokas to the Fatimid ruler of Africa al-Mu'izz (343-64/954-75) carrying as a gift the sword of Muḥammad, which he had taken as plunder from one of the fortresses he had captured in Syria.⁹⁰ A variant of this tale is found in late Arabic narratives of thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. According to Ibn al-Aṭṭār (d. 630/1232) and Ibn Kaṭṭār (d. 774/1372), after the Byzantine defeat by the Fatimid forces in Sicily (at al-Magāz battle in 353/964), an Indian sword was captured from the Byzantines, and sent to al-Mu'izz together with the other booty. The sword was bearing the following words: "this is an Indian sword used in fight between the hands of the Messenger of God (*rasūlallah*) for a long time".⁹¹

Various pieces of evidence also demonstrate that capturing and recovery of holy relics were not only a matter of wars, but sometimes a main goal of the two sides' diplomatic communications. Besides the abovementioned embassy of Nickephoros Phokas to al-Mu'izz, the fourteenth century historian Ibn Aybak ad-Dwādārī (d. 764/1362) records one of such communications which has an apparent legendary feature. According to him, news reached Caliph al-Mu'taṣim that a blessed cloak of 'Umar b. Abd el-'Azīz, which miraculously cures all diseases, is preserved in a Byzantine monastery. Accordingly, the Caliph dispatched an envoy to the Byzantine Emperor to restore it. The latter transmitted the demand to the monastery's Abbot, who refused yielding the cloak asking to be sent as an official envoy to negotiate with the Caliph.

⁸⁹Theophanes, *Chronicle*, p.754.

⁹⁰As Leo the Deacon records, Nickephoros sent this embassy to demand the *Patrikios* Niketas, who had previously been taken prisoner at the time of the Byzantine defeat in Sicily and had been sent to al-Mu'izz. Leo the Deacon, *History*, pp. 126-127.

⁹¹Ibn al-Aṭṭār, *al-Kāmil*, 7: 285; Ibn Kaṭṭār, *al-Bidāyā*, 15: 266. Alice-Mary Talbot might misunderstand the account, since she mentioned that: "Al-Athir states that this was a sword 'often used in battles within sight of the Prophet Muḥammad,' not the Prophet own sword." I think the Arabic text does not mean this, and most likely it is harmonious with Leo the Deacon's account, which attributed this sword to the Prophet himself. Leo the Deacon, *History*, p.126 n.5.

Finally, as the story goes, the Abbot went to Baghdad and could persuade al-Mu'taṣim to leave the cloak in his monastery.⁹²

As we can note, this story tries to reflect, at least from the Arabs' point of view, a Byzantine belief in a Muslim relic. Perhaps its legendary nature and its late narrator make it an unreliable story, but there is another more famous and well-documented account of a diplomatic communication that implies a similar respect for the other's relics, and the other this time is Christian.⁹³ As the Arab tradition records, two years before capturing the *mandylion* of Edessa by the expedition of John Kourkouas against the city in 944,⁹⁴ the Byzantine Emperor sent a letter (in 331/942) to Caliph al-Muttaqī (329-33/941-45) offering the release of all Arab captives in Byzantium in exchange with "a *mandīl* that 'Īsā (Jesus) used to wipe his face with, and then his image imprinted on it". The Caliph seemed hesitant to take a single decision, or perhaps the *mandylion* was very important to both Eastern Christians and Muslims to the extent that he summoned the great statesmen, the *fuqhā'* (theologians) and the *quḍāh* (judges) to help him in taking such decision. Some of them advised him that: "This *mandīl* is preserved in the church for a long time without being demanded by a king, and surrendering it (to the Byzantines) will be a blemish for Muslims, since they have the right in the *mandīl* of 'Isā more than others".⁹⁵ Undoubtedly, the whole account has an implication of Muslims' respect for a Christian sacred object.

⁹²Ibn Aybak, *Kinz al-Durar*, 4: 351-352.

⁹³Exchange of relics, as a theme of Arab-Byzantine diplomatic communications, seems fascinating also the eastern Christian hagiographers. According to a legend recorded in the *Life* of St. Theodore of Edessa, Caliph al-Ma'mūn, now secretly a Christian with the baptismal name John, sent St. Theodore on an embassy to Constantinople to request a fragment of the True Cross. Michael and Theodora, who ruled jointly at that time, received the saint warmly and granted him the holy relic among other gifts. Swanson, M.N., "The Christian al-Ma'mūn Tradition", in: *Christian at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq*, ed. D. Thomas (Brill, 2003), pp.63-92, esp.74.

⁹⁴According to the Greek account, the people of Edessa sent to the emperor Romanos I Lekapenos asking for the siege to be lifted, and promising to hand over the *mandylion* as a ransom. The siege was lifted and the *mandylion* reached the imperial capital in 15 August 944. Skylitzes, *Synopsis History*, p. 224.

⁹⁵According to Arabic sources, the ex-vizier 'Alī b. □'Īsā rejected this opinion. He thought that releasing all Muslim captives is a precious deal that cannot be refused. Finally, the Caliph adopted this opinion and sent his acceptance to the Byzantine Emperor. What happened later is not clear in Arabic accounts. Muḥammad b. 'Abd el-Malik al-Hamḍānī (d.521/1127), *Takmilat Tārīḥ al-Ṭabarī*, in: *Al-Ṭabarī, Ta'rīḥ al-rusul*, 11: 340; *Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntaẓam*, 14: 27; *Ibn Kaḥr, al-Bidāyā*, 15: 150; Al-

Finally, there is another sort of sacred objects that was also sometimes present within the scene of Byzantine-Arab warfare, it is the icons. Theophanes Continuatus states that in 863, when the army of Michael III (842-67) was preparing to depart on a campaign against the Arabs, the *patrikios* Antigonos received advice from a certain monk named John to place the image of St. John on the shields of his troops to ensure God's aid in the battle.⁹⁶ The painting of a saint's image on a Byzantine shield is also attested in an Arabic account of a fight between a Muslim champion and a Byzantine one.⁹⁷

Icons of the Theotokos, as the imagined supreme protector of Constantinople, are expected to be carried or placed at the front of Byzantine armies during their battles with the Arabs. Anthony Kaldellis has recently discussed a set of Byzantine chronicle stories about the military role of icons of the Theotokos from the Avars' siege of 626 to twelfth century, but he has overlooked reference to such role in the context of Byzantine-Arab warfare.⁹⁸ Also, Paul Speck and Bissera Pentcheva have comprehensively discussed the role of the Theotokos during the Arab siege of Constantinople in 717-18, and both have debated over whether she appeared in person or there was a procession

Ḍahabī, *Tārīḥ al-Islām*, 25: 5. Other different account is recorded by Eastern Christian sources. As Yaḥyā al-Anṭākī recorded, while the Byzantine armies being near Nisibis in 331/942, they sent to the people of Edessa requesting the *Mandyllion*, the later transmitted the request to the Caliph, who accepted it after consulting his fellow men. Finally, an unlimited truce was concluded between the Byzantines and the people of Edessa, accordingly the Muslim captives were released and the *Mandyllion* was carried to Constantinople in the same year. Yaḥyā al-Anṭākī, *Annales*, ed. L. Cheikho (Beirut), pp.98-99. Bar Hebraeus adopted the Arabic account, but added that the Caliph gave the *Mandyllion* to the Byzantine messengers and sent with them his own messengers to receive the Muslim captives. Bar Hebraeus, *Tārīḥ Muḥtaṣṣ ad-Diwal*, ed. A. Ṣāḥḥānī al-Yasūī (Beirut, 1983), p.287; *Idem, Chronographia, Arabic trans. I. Armaleh, Tārīḥ al-Zamān* (Beirut, 2005), p.57.

⁹⁶Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, pp. 180-181.

⁹⁷This account is recorded by D. Nicolle, and quoted by P.L. Grotowski, without defining its source. I did my best to find it, but in vain. Nicolle, D., *Romano-Byzantine Armies 4th-9th Centuries*, illustrated by A. McBride (London, 1992), p.42; Grotowski, *Arms and Armour*, p.245 n.464.

⁹⁸Kaldellis, A., " 'A Union of Opposites': The Moral Logic and Corporeal Presence of the Theotokos on the Field of Battle", in: *pour l'amour de Byzance: Hommage à Paolo Odorico*, ed. C. Gastgeber et al. (Frankfurt am Main, 2013), pp.131-144; *Idem*, "The Military Use of the Icon of the Theotokos and its Moral Logic in the Historians of the Ninth-Twelfth Centuries", *Estudios bizantinos* 1(2013), pp. 56-75.

with the cross and her icon.⁹⁹ What can be added here is an unnoted Arabic account that refers to carrying of Marian icons by the Byzantine armies during a very early stage of their military confrontation with the Arabs. According to al-Wāqidī, there were among the booty that the Arabs got after the defeat of the Byzantines before Ḥemṣ in 15/636 a great deal of "standards and silk dresses decorated with the image (ṣūrat) of Mary and ʿĪsā" that was sent to be sold among the Christians of Yemen.¹⁰⁰

The imagined military role of the Theotokos' icons is also stressed in the expulsion of the Arabs from Nicaea in Bithynia in 626. According to Theophanes, during a long siege of the city, its inhabitants supplicated to God and placed their 'venerable images' on the city's walls, including an icon of the Theotokos.¹⁰¹ Also, the *Life* of St. Barbarus presents the Byzantine soldiers raising the cross and the icon of the Theotokos during a battle in which they inflicted a heavy defeat on the Arabs.¹⁰² Finally, there is a Greek account recorded by Theophanes Continuatus and Skylitzes implies an imagined direct intervention of an icon of the Theotokos on behalf of the Byzantines against the Arabs. According to it, in 878 the emir of Tarsus sent a letter "full of blasphemy" to Andrew the Scythian, a general of the Emperor Basil I, in which he insulted the Christ and his mother. Andrew, shedding many tears, hung the letter on the icon of the Theotokos and asked her help against this "insulting barbarian". Then he assembled his forces, marched out against Tarsus and achieved a remarkable victory.¹⁰³

⁹⁹Speck, "Classicism", pp.123-142; Idem, "The Virgin's Help", pp.266-271; Pentcheva, "The Supernatural Protector", pp.17-20; Idem, *Icons and Powers*, pp. 47-50.

¹⁰⁰Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 140.

¹⁰¹Theophanes, *Chronicle*, p. 560.

¹⁰²Constantine Acropolites, "Sermon on St. Barbarus", ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ανάλεκτα Τεροσολυμικῆς Σταχυολογίας* I (St. Petersburg, 1881), p. 409. See also, Sahas, D. J., "Hagiological Texts as Historical Sources for Arab History and Byzantine-Muslim Relations: The Case of a Barbarian Saint", *Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines* 1-2 (1996-1997), pp.50-59; Abouseada, A., *Byzantium and Islam (9th-10th Centuries): A Historical Evaluation of the Role of Religion in Byzantine-Muslim Relations*, Ph. D. Dissertation, The University of Birmingham, 2000, p.128.

¹⁰³*Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur liber quo Vita Basilli impratoris amplectitur*, ed. & trans. I. Ševčenko (Berlin-Boston, 2011), p.181; Skylitzes, *Synopsis History*, pp.140-141. While the intervention of the Theotokos' icon here might be a direct reaction to an Arab's blasphemy, another account implies that this intervention sometimes turned to be against the Byzantines themselves when being iconoclast. According to Theophanes, during the Arab siege of Nicaea 626, a *strator*

While this account reflects a very different Arab attitude opposite to the tolerated one which is cited above concerning the Christian relics, it also encounters other popular Arabic accounts that do not only present an Arab tolerated attitude toward icons,¹⁰⁴ but may also imply a positive response to their imagined supernaturalism. The epic of *Ḍāt al-Himma* relates a tale of some Muslim merchants who, while walking one night near a Constantinopolitan church, were suddenly stopped by one of the church wall's images, which spoke and informed them that God sent it to incite them to release a faithful Muslim captive in Byzantium.¹⁰⁵

Magical objects:

While all the pervious imagined powers have roots that stem from the religion itself, the popular imagination of both sides also created its own supernatural powers, some of them seem of a magical background. Besides the aforementioned 'blessed cap' of Ḥālīd b. al-Walīd which was thought to bring his frequent victories over the Byzantines, other caps, that were imagined to have a magical power of curing the headache,

called Constantine, on seeing an icon of the Theotokos had been set up, picked up a stone and threw it at her. He broke the image and trampled upon it when it had fallen down. The next day, when the Arabs attacked the walls and battle was joined, that man was struck by a stone discharged from a siege engine, and his head was broken. This divine punishment was necessarily interpreted by Theophanes as "a just reward for his impiety". Theophanes, *Chronicle*, p.560.

¹⁰⁴According to al-Azraqī (d.250/864), after the conquest of Mecca in 8/629, the Prophet ordered his followers to destroy all images inside al-Kaḥba, including those of Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and Ismā'īl, but he excluded an image of the Virgin Mary with her son. Al-Azraqī (d.250/864), *Aḥbār Makka wamā gā' fihā min al-Aḥār* [= *Geschichte und Beschreibung der Stadt Mekka*], ed. F. Wüslensfeld (Leipzig, 1858), pp.111-113. Also, there is a famous legend in Arabic sources mentions that Emperor Heraclius had kept images of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus and Muḥammad, which he showed to an embassy sent by Caliph Abū Bakr to invite him to Islam. The most striking side in this legend is that the Muslim envoys recognized the image of the Prophet Muḥammad saying: "he is our Prophet as if he is alive". Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamaḍānī, *Muḥtaṣṣ Kitāb al-Buldān* (= *Compendium Libri Kitāb al-Boldān*), ed. M.J. De Goeje (Brill, 1884), pp.142-143. For details see: El Cheikh, *Byzantium*, pp.52-53.

¹⁰⁵*Sīrat al-Amīra Ḍāt al-Himma*, 1: 359. Also, there is a famous legend in Arabic sources mentions that Emperor Heraclius had kept images of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus and Muḥammad, which he showed to an embassy sent by Caliph Abū Bakr to invite him to Islam. The most striking side in this legend is that the Muslim envoys recognized the image of the Prophet Muḥammad saying: "he is our Prophet as if he is alive". Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamaḍānī, *Muḥtaṣṣ Kitāb al-Buldān* (= *Compendium Libri Kitāb al-Boldān*), ed. M.J. De Goeje (Brill, 1884), pp.142-143. For details see: El Cheikh, *Byzantium*, pp.52-53.

appeared many times in the context of Arab-Byzantine diplomatic communications. According to al-Wāqidi, before Emperor Heraclius left Syria he had secretly written to Caliph 'Omar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb (13-23/634-644) asking him a cure for a severe headache that he was suffering from. The Caliph sent to him a cap that could calm the pain as soon as wearing it. This cap was sent again by a later Byzantine Emperor to Caliph al-Mu'taṣim when he suffered from a similar headache on the eve of his capture of Amorion in 223/838.¹⁰⁶ Also, late Arab historians refer to a similar cap that was sent by Emperor Leo III to Maslama b. 'Abd el-Malik when he was suffering from a hard headache during his long siege of Constantinople in 717-718. As the story tells, Maslama was still skeptical of this cap till he tested it on some horses and soldiers' heads.¹⁰⁷

Arabic sources frequently refer to the Byzantines as people fond of magic, spells and talismans.¹⁰⁸ But in contrary to this view, there is an absence of the role of magical objects as an imagined helpful military power in the Greek sources. The only available account that related to Byzantine-Arab warfare described magic as "the Devil's machinations" which deserved 'the divine wrath', and ascribed to it the reason of Pergamon's fall in the hands of Maslama b. 'Abd el-Malik in 716. As the legend tells, during Maslama's siege of the city, a magician instigated its inhabitants to take a pregnant who was about to give birth of her first child, cut her up, removed the infant from her, and boiled it in a pot of water, in which all those who were intending to fight dipped the sleeves of their right arms, and for this reason "their hands became incapable of taking up armies".¹⁰⁹

Dreams, predictions and Divine Signs:

Humans have an innate desire to gain knowledge of what the future has in store for them. The Arabs and the Byzantines were no different. They always believed in divine messages about their destiny

¹⁰⁶ Al-Wāqidi, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 405-406.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīḥ Madānat Dimašq*, 58: 36-37; Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāyā*, 13: 102.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn al-Faqīh stresses on the Byzantines' fondness of magic, cure of souls, demons, spirits, spells and talismans. Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamaḍānī, *Muḥtaṣr*, p.145. Also, Hārūn b. Yaḥyā refers to talismans which the Byzantines believed in as protective magical powers. Ibn Rustah, *Kitāb al-A'lāq al-Nafīsa*, ed. M. J. De Goeje (Brill, 1892), p.126. See also: El Cheikh, *Byzantium*, pp.147-148; Vasiliev, A.A., "Harun ibn Yahya and his Description of Constantinople", *Seminarium Kondakaovinium* 5(1932), pp.149-163.

¹⁰⁹ Theophanes, *Chronicle*, p.541; Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople, *Short History*, ed. & trans. C. Mango (Washington, D.C., 1990), p.121.

that delivered from the heavenly powers to the earthly world through prophetic dreams, visions, predictions and divine signs. Such belief was frequently utilized as means of legitimization in various aspects of religious and political life.¹¹⁰

In the early stage of Byzantine-Arab confrontation, Arab authors presented Emperor Heraclius as being expert in astrology and ascribed to him a series of dreams that predicted the emergence of Islam and its future expansion.¹¹¹ In the most famous of these dreams he saw a new conqueror of the world arising from amongst the circumcised.¹¹² Nadia El Cheikh has discussed this dream as "a means to establish the legitimacy of the Prophet Muḥammad's mission and to show that the Prophet's appearance was anticipated as part of the divine plan".¹¹³ There is no Greek evidence, as far as I know, referring to the issue, but there is a Latin one that presents a striking parallel to the Arabic story. According to the mid-seventh century Merovingian chronicle of Fredgar, Heraclius discovered, through the practice of astrology, that "his empire was to be

¹¹⁰Kinberg, L., "Literal Dreams and Prophetic Hadīths in Classical Islam: A Comparison of Two Ways of Legitimation", *Der Islam* 70(1993), pp.279-300.

¹¹¹El Cheikh, *Byzantium*, pp.40, 43.

¹¹²I think the story is worth to be quoted in full as follow: "Ibn An-Natur, the Governor of Ilya' (Jerusalem), narrates that once while Heraclius was visiting Ilya', he got up in the morning in a sad mood. Some of his priests asked him why he was in that mood. Heraclius, who was an astrologer, replied, 'At night, during a dream, when I looked at the stars, I saw that the leader of those who practice circumcision had appeared and would become the conqueror. Who are they who practice circumcision?' The people replied, 'Except the Jews nobody practices circumcision, so you should not be afraid of them. Just issue orders to kill every Jew present in the country.' While they were discussing it, a messenger, who had been sent by the king of Ġassān to convey the news of Allah's Apostle to Heraclius, was brought in. Having heard the news he (Heraclius) ordered the people to go and see whether the messenger of Ġassān was circumcised. The people, after seeing him, told Heraclius that he was circumcised. Heraclius then asked him about the Arabs. The messenger replied, 'Arabs also practice circumcision.' (After hearing that) Heraclius remarked that sovereignty of the Arabs had appeared. Heraclius then wrote a letter to his friend in Rome who was as good as Heraclius in knowledge. Heraclius then left for Ḥems (a town in Syria), and stayed there until he received the reply of his letter from his friend who agreed with him in his opinion about the emergence of the Prophet and the fact that he was a Prophet." This story was firstly recorded by 'Abd el-Razzaq al-Ṣan'anī (d. 211/827) [*al-Muṣannaḥ*, ed. H. al-Aḥḥāz amī (Beirut, 1972), 5: 343] and al-Buḥārī (d.256/870) [*Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Buḥārī (Damascus, 2002), p.11], both compilers of the Prophetic Ḥadīth, and then appeared in al-Ṭabarī (d.310/922), *Ta'riḥ al-rusul*, 2: 646-647. The English translation of Hosein, I.N., *Dreams in Islam*, (New York, 1997). See also, El Cheikh, *Byzantium*, p.43.

¹¹³El Cheikh, *Byzantium*, p.43.

laid waste by circumcised races". Therefore, he ordered the baptizing of Jews throughout his empire, and sent to the Frankish king Dagobert requesting to do the same.¹¹⁴This parallel led Benjamin Kedar to suggest a direct transmission of the story from the Orient to Gaul.¹¹⁵

Whatever the validity of Kedar's hypothesis, which still need answers for many essential questions,¹¹⁶this parallel extends to cover other Latin historical narratives. According to the Chronicle of 741, Heraclius warned his brother Theodore not to fight against the Saracens, for being expert in astrology he could foretell disaster.¹¹⁷ In the Chronicle of 754, Heraclius was forewarned through astrological prediction and a dream that "he would be ravaged mercilessly by rats from the desert".¹¹⁸ All these accounts and their dates, including the Arabic ones, may simply imply another different path of borrowing. Probably, the story originated in Gaul in the mid-seventh century, made its way to Spain before the mid-eighth century, and then was borrowed by the Arabs, sometime after their conquest of Spain in 711, to appear later in their sources from the first half of ninth century onwards, most likely to utilize it as a means of legitimization,¹¹⁹ and to do so, some rectifications were required. Later,

¹¹⁴*The Fourth Book of Fredgar with its Continuations*, ed. & trans. J.M. Wallace-Hardill (London, 1960), p.54. See also, Hoyland, R.G., *Seeing Islam as others saw it: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1997), p.218; Kedar, B.Z., *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims* (Princeton, 1984), p.28.

¹¹⁵Kedar, *Crusade and mission*, pp.27-28. According to him, "Evidently the story originated in the East, sometime after the Arab conquests in the 630s, and made its way to Merovingian Gaul, where it was soon committed to writing, whereas in the Orient it continued as oral tradition for about two more centuries".

¹¹⁶Kedar's hypothesis does not explain how the Arabic story was transmitted from Orient to the far Gaul during relatively few years, why it still unwritten in Arabic for about two centuries, despite being originated in the Orient, while was recorded as soon as it reached Gaul, and why the far Gaul not Byzantium, despite being the nearest.

¹¹⁷*Chronica Byzantina-Arabica*, in: *Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum*, I, ed. I. Gil (Madrid, 1973), pp.7-14, esp.8-9.

¹¹⁸*The Chronicle of 754*, in: *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, trans. K.B. Wolf (Liverpool, 1999), pp.111-160, esp.113.

¹¹⁹For the same purpose, I think, a number of Byzantine monks and clerics was said to have divine visions and prophecies that predicted the conquest of Syria by the Arabs. According to al-Wāqidī, a Byzantine wise called Samān (Simeon), who was well-aware of old books and prophecies, on seeing the Muslim armies under the leadership of Ḥālīd b. al-Walīd in Syria, recognized the signs of its fall. Another Byzantine cleric was said to have visions of the Prophet Danyāl (Daniel) which had predicted the

the story of Heraclius' astrological prediction/dream and his decree of baptizing the Jews would appear again in the Eastern Christian sources, nearly as Fredgar narrated it without the Arab rectifications.¹²⁰

As modern scholars have demonstrated, the most confusing question that confronted the Christians east and west, after unprecedented conquests that brought most of the former Christian Roman world, from Syria to Spain, under Muslim control, was "How can explain God's apparent abandonment of his Christian Empire?". While the Arab conquest was interpreted as a divine punishment for Christians' sins,¹²¹ it was also associated with divine signs, perhaps to prove that God did not completely abandon His fellow people but sent these signs as a portent, or as a bad omen for sinners and those who did not follow the right path of God. Such signs, which appeared to Heraclius through astrology or dreams, were not entirely absent in the Greek sources. According to Theophanes, a sign, which "foreboded the Arab conquest", took the shape of sword and appeared for thirty days in the heavens of

conquest. Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 43, 106. For other similar accounts, see: pp.130, 397-398.

¹²⁰This may also provide an additional proof of borrowing from Fredgar, or from another unknown Christian source. According to Severus ibn al-Muqafa, "Heraclius saw a dream in which it was said to him: "Verily there shall come against thee a circumcised nation, and they shall vanquish thee and take possession of the land". So Heraclius thought that they would be the Jews, and accordingly gave orders that all Jews and Samaritans should be baptized in all the provinces which under his dominion". [*History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, II, ed. & trans. B. Evetts, *Patrologia Orientalis* 1 (Paris, 1907), pp.383-518, esp.492; Arabic ed. A. Gamāl ad-Dīn (Cairo, 2012), 2: 29]. See also, Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, p.218 n. 12; Van Donzel, E., "The Dream of Heraclius and Islam in an Ethiopian Source", in: *Proceedings of the Symposium on Bilad al-Sham during the Byzantine Period*, ed. M.A. Bakhit & M. Asfour (Amman, 1986), 2: pp.206-211; Van Ginkel, J. J., "Heraclius and the Saints: the 'Popular' Image of an Emperor", in: *The Reign of Heraclius, 610-641: Crisis and Confrontation*, ed. G.J. Reinink & B.H. Stolte (Leuven, Paris, 2002), pp.227-240, esp.234-235. All these Christian accounts, unlike the Muslim ones, are harmonious with the fact of Heraclius' decree to baptize Jews in 643. On this decree and its suggested more realistic reasons see, Blumenkranz, B., *Juifs et chrétiens dans le monde occidental, 430-1096* (Paris, 1960), pp.97-138; Sharf, A., *Jews and other Minorities in Byzantium* (Jerusalem, 1995), pp.98-102.

¹²¹Kaegi, W.E., "Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab Conquest", *Church History* 38/2 (Jun., 1969), pp.139-149; Lamoreaux, J. C., "Early Eastern Christian Responses to Islam", in: *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays*, ed. J. Tolan (New York, London, 1996), pp.3-32; Tolan, J., *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York, 2002), pp.xiv, 47, 65, 100.

Palestine.¹²² Also in 654, while Emperor Constans II (641-668) was laying with the imperial fleet at Phoinix in Lycia, before a sea battle with the Arabs, he saw in a dream that he was at Thessaloniki. Despite the fact that the dream was interpreted as a prediction for the Arabs' victory, the Emperor ignored it and ordered the fleet to fight. Therefore, the outcome of the battle was a harsh defeat and escaping of the Emperor to Constantinople.¹²³

However, as pieces of evidence demonstrate, the belief in such heavenly messages and the bad consequence of neglecting them¹²⁴ sometimes left its impact on the Byzantine decisions of war, or at least on the popular interpretation of such decisions. On the eve of Dazimon battle (22 July 838), Theophilos refused the advice of his brother-in-law Theophobos, to take the Khurramites alone and attempt a night attack, for he had seen Theophobos in a dream as a conspirator against him.¹²⁵ Also, there is a legend on the Byzantine reconquest of Crete that took the form of prediction that whoever retook Crete would become emperor. This prediction was utilized by those who opposed the expedition planned by Emperor Romanos II (959-963) to scare him off the operation.¹²⁶ Finally, Skylitzes has totally ignored the rain, the number of defenders, and the strong defenses when interpreting why Nikephoros II, after leading his army in northern Syria, suddenly left Antioch (in 22 October 968) without recapturing it, ascribing his withdrawal to a spread prediction that "the emperor would die at the same time Antioch was taken" and, as Skylitzes believes, "it was indeed because of that he did not approach it".¹²⁷ On the Arab side, we cannot ignore the deep impact of the believing in Prophetic dreams and prophecies on the Muslim's perception of *Jihād* and on the soldiers'

¹²²Theophanes, *Chronicle*, p.467.

¹²³Theophanes, *Chronicle*, p.482.

¹²⁴Here we may remember the abovementioned severe outcome of Constantine VII's expedition of 949 against Crete which was ascribed by the Hagiographer of St. Paul the Younger to his neglecting the saint's prediction about this failure (see note 47).

¹²⁵Genesios, *On the Reigns*, p. 56.

¹²⁶Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia*, pp.474-475.

¹²⁷Skylitzes, *Synopsis History*, pp. 260-261. Skylitzes, when recorded this prediction, was certainly aware that Nikephoros II had shortly been murdered (in 11 December 969) after his recapture of Antioch in 28 October 969.

morale during battles against the Byzantines.¹²⁸ The frequent failed attempts to capture Constantinople by Umayyad Caliphs can be partially interpreted in light of a variety of such prophecies which predicted the city's future fall in the Arabs' hands.¹²⁹

Dreams and visions in particular were seen as a channel through which the living can personally meet the divine and receive messages about their destiny. The Prophet Muḥammad's tradition implies that while prophecy has ceased by his death, as being the Seal of the Prophets, messages of divine origin can still be communicated through dreams.¹³⁰ Reading of al-Wāqidi, for example, gives a strong impression that dreams and visions were familiar means through which the Prophet was still transmitting his messages to Muslim generals and soldiers while fighting the Byzantines. According to him, the Prophet appeared in a dream to the Muslim leader Abū 'Ubayda inciting him to wake up and haste to help Ḥālid b. al-Walīd, who was at this moment surrounded by a huge Byzantine force.¹³¹ Another account relates the Prophet's appearance in a dream to Caliph 'Omar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb at the same night of Yarmūk battle to announce him the good news of Muslims' victory.¹³²

Believing in the possibility of communication with the divine through dreams and visions was not unfamiliar for the Byzantine

¹²⁸On the impact of such prophecies on the Muslim notion of *Jihād*, see: Cook, D., "Muslim Apocalyptic and Jihad", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), pp.66-104.

¹²⁹For a comprehensive discussion of these prophecies and their impact on the frequent failed Arab sieges of Constantinople, see: El Cheikh, *Byzantium*, pp. 64-71; Canard, M., "Les expéditions des arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et la legend", *Journal Asiatique* 208-9 (1926), pp.61-121; Bashear, S., "Apocalyptic and Other Materials on Early Muslim-Byzantine Wars: A Review of Arabic Sources", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd series, 1 (1992), pp.173-207.

¹³⁰Siviri, S., "Dreaming Analyzed and Recorded: Dreams in the World of Medieval Islam", in: *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, ed. D. Shulman & G.G. Stroumsa (New York- Oxford, 1999), pp.252-273, esp. 252. Dreams are mentioned many times in the Prophetic *Ḥadīṭ*. According to it, "The veridical dream is one forty-sixth of prophecy", and "Whoever has seen me in a dream has truly seen me, for Satan cannot take my form". On dreams in a considerable number of the Prophet's *Ḥadīṭ*, see: Hosein, *Dreams in Islam*.

¹³¹Al-Wāqidi, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 163.

¹³²Al-Wāqidi, *Futūḥ al-Šām*, 1: 293-294.

mentality.¹³³ Here, we may not need to repeat the aforementioned chronicle and hagiographical stories that presented dreams as a bad omen through which a divine power, like the Theotokos, sent an alert message about a catastrophic outcome,¹³⁴ or as a tool through which saints fulfilled their familiar tasks in releasing war captives and defending cities.¹³⁵ However, the deep impact of believing in dreams on the Byzantine mentality may be manifested in the association of Dreams' interpreters with the armies of Emperor Constans II during the sea battle of Phoinix,¹³⁶ or in a military treatise of Constantine VII that mentioned books of Dreams' interpretation and divination as being among the few books that an emperor should carry with him while on military campaigns.¹³⁷ Finally, Emperor Leo VI (886-912) was certainly well-aware of the importance of utilizing such belief, particularly for raising his soldiers' morale, when he advised his generals that they should fabricate a dream in case of its absence. According to his *Taktika*:

¹³³Some scholars, judging by the number of dreams interpretation manuals, have suggested that dreams were less popular in the Christian world than in its Muslim counterpart. Sirriyeh, E., "Muslims Dreaming of Christians, Christians Dreaming of Muslims: Images from Medieval Dream Interpretation", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 17/2(2006), pp.207-221; Abouseada, "Supernatural Powers", p. 120. In contrary to this view, Steven M. Oberhelman has recently emphasized the popularity of Dreams among the Byzantines. According to him, "the Church and State may have tried to control divination, but even patriarchs and emperors had to admit that dreams had a solid scriptural basis, and tradition and cultural lore insisted that throughout history God has sent prophetic visions and dreams to people whom He favors". Also, as Oberhelman has pointed out, there were dreambooks available to the Byzantines, and they were sought out and consulted by people of all backgrounds, from members of the imperial court and educated savants to the "everyman" walking the streets of the Byzantine capital. See his *Dreambooks in Byzantium: Six Oneirocritica in Translation, with Commentary and Introduction* (Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1-2. Despite being useless for our topic, papers of the most recent book on dreams in the Byzantine historiography, hagiography and literature, have clearly demonstrated their popularity in Byzantium. See, *Dreaming in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Ch. Angelidi & G. T. Calofonos (Ashgate, 2014).

¹³⁴In the abovementioned story of the *strator* Constantine (see note 104), the Theotokos appeared in a dream to him before his catastrophic death by the Arabs, and warned him from such outcome as a divine punishment for his aggression against her icon. Theophanes, *Chronicle*, p.560.

¹³⁵As in the aforementioned case of the noble lady who envisioned St. Theodore Tiron defending Euchaita against the Arab attack of 753/754 (see note 32).

¹³⁶Theophanes, *Chronicle*, p.482.

¹³⁷Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, I: 467; Haldon, *Three Treatises*, p.107.

"You will make your soldiers stronger on the day of battle if you get up early and spread it about that you have had a dream ostensibly sent by God or by some holy power that urged you on attack the enemy and appeared in support of you".¹³⁸

Conclusion:

Legends and myths seem lacking a solid historicity, but they often, if not always, reflect the imagination, culture and ideas of the peoples who created them. As the recent study demonstrates, aside from the political rivalry, military confrontation and religious difference that arose between the Byzantines and the Arabs; they shared a similar popular belief in the supernaturalism of the divine powers.

Arab-Byzantine warfare, and in less degree the diplomatic communications, seemed as a fertile field in which each side used and carried his own imagined supernatural powers in battles to secure his superiority over the other. As the categories of the recent study demonstrate, the two peoples shared a similar popular belief in the supernaturalism of holy men, angels, demons, sacred objects, dreams, visions and predictions. Both sides imagined holy men as liberators of captives and patrons of cities, and believed in their predictions before battles. Even in the case of an evil power, as demons, both believed in the possibility of turning it to be a "good" one and thus using it in his favor.

Polemic, and sometimes chronicles and hagiography, usually give the impression that each side criticized and completely rejected the other's belief in the miracles of these powers,¹³⁹ but in contrary to this view, whose aim was to prove the superiority of one religion over the other, there is a plenty of evidence that draws a quietly different scene.

¹³⁸*The Taktika of Leo VI*, trans. G. T. Dennis (Washington D.C., 2010), p. 589.

¹³⁹On this polemic see, Swanson, M.N., *Folly to the Hunfā: The Cross of Christ in Arabic Christian/Muslim Controversy in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries AD*, Ph.D. dissertation, Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica, Rome, 1992; Abouseada, *Byzantium and Islam*, pp. 338-340 [on icons and relics in polemic], pp.340-344 [on miracles in polemic].

رابعاً: عروض الكتب

Book Reviews