

Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times

Volume 8

Edited by
Michael Bonner



The Formation of the Classical Islamic World

THE FORMATION OF THE CLASSICAL ISLAMIC WORLD

General Editor: Lawrence I. Conrad

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in Early Islamic Times

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Volume 8

Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times

edited by
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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

Since the days of Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), generally regarded as the founder of Islamic studies as a field of modern scholarship, the formative period in Islamic history has remained a prominent theme for research. In Goldziher's time it was possible for scholars to work with the whole of the field and practically all of its available sources, but more recently the increasing sophistication of scholarly methodologies, a broad diversification in research interests, and a phenomenal burgeoning of the catalogued and published source material available for study have combined to generate an increasing "compartmentalisation" of research into very specific areas, each with its own interests, priorities, agendas, methodologies, and controversies. While this has undoubtedly led to a deepening and broadening of our understanding in all of these areas, and hence is to be welcomed, it has also tended to isolate scholarship in one subject from research in other areas, and even more so from colleagues outside of Arab-Islamic studies, not to mention students and others seeking to familiarise themselves with a particular topic for the first time.

The Formation of the Classical Islamic World is a reference series that seeks to address this problem by making available a critical selection of the published research that has served to stimulate and define the way modern scholarship has come to understand the formative period of Islamic history, for these purposes taken to mean approximately AD 600–950. Each of the volumes in the series is edited by an expert on its subject, who has chosen a number of studies that taken together serve as a cogent introduction to the state of current knowledge on the topic, the issues and problems particular to it, and the range of scholarly opinion informing it. Articles originally published in languages other than English have been translated, and editors have provided critical introductions and select bibliographies for further reading.

A variety of criteria, varying by topic and in accordance with the judgments of the editors, have determined the contents of these volumes. In some cases an article has been included because it represents the best of current scholarship, the "cutting edge" work from which future research seems most likely to profit. Other articles—certainly no less valuable contributions—have been taken up for the skillful way in which they synthesise the state of scholarly knowledge. Yet others are older studies that—if in some ways now superseded—nevertheless merit attention for their illustration of thinking or conclusions that have long been important, or for the decisive stimulus

they have provided to scholarly discussion. Some volumes cover themes that have emerged fairly recently, and here it has been necessary to include articles from outside the period covered by the series, as illustrations of paradigms and methodologies that may prove useful as research develops. Chapters from single author monographs have been considered only in very exceptional cases, and a certain emphasis has been encouraged on important studies that are less readily available than others.

In the present state of the field of early Arab-Islamic studies, in which it is routine for heated controversy to rage over what scholars a generation ago would have regarded as matters of simple fact, it is clearly essential for a series such as this to convey some sense of the richness and variety of the approaches and perspectives represented in the available literature. An effort has thus been made to gain broad international participation in editorial capacities, and to secure the collaboration of colleagues representing differing points of view. Throughout the series, however, the range of possible options for inclusion has been very large, and it is of course impossible to accommodate all of the outstanding research that has served to advance a particular subject. A representative selection of such work does, however, appear in the bibliography compiled by the editor of each volume at the end of the introduction.

The interests and priorities of the editors, and indeed, of the General Editor, will doubtless be evident throughout. Hopefully, however, the various volumes will be found to achieve well-rounded and representative syntheses useful not as the definitive word on their subjects—if, in fact, one can speak of such a thing in the present state of research—but as introductions comprising well-considered points of departure for more detailed inquiry.

A series pursued on this scale is only feasible with the good will and cooperation of colleagues in many areas of expertise. The General Editor would like to express his gratitude to the volume editors for the investment of their time and talents in an age when work of this kind is grossly undervalued, to the translators who have taken such care with the articles entrusted to them, and to Dr John Smedley and his staff at Ashgate for their support, assistance and guidance throughout.

Lawrence I. Conrad

INTRODUCTION

Byzantine–Arab Relations

Michael Bonner

THIS VOLUME on Arab–Byzantine relations begins and ends with war. The early Muslims exchanged with the Byzantines, they learned from them and about them, and they respected many of their achievements. Nonetheless, their relations with them tended to be colored by war,¹ and by a sense that in the end, there would only be room enough in the world for one of the two, or as André Miquel has put it: “Where do you come from, who put you in my path, which one of the two of us was created for the ruination of the other?”² This view receives poignant expression in the apocalyptic literature (see below). Variations occur in many other places; we may begin with the early fourth/tenth-century Iraqi administrator and geographer Qudāma ibn Ja‘far, who opens a long description of the frontiers of Islam as follows:

Islam is surrounded on all sides and directions by nations and peoples who are hostile to it, some of them near to and others far away from the abode [capital] of its Realm (*dār mamlakatihī*). The Kings of the Factions (*mulūk al-ṭawā’if*), over whom Alexander once ruled, paid tribute to the Emperor of the Rūm (Romans) for 511 years, until Ardashīr the son of Bābak united the empire after great exertion. . . . Accordingly, it behooves the Muslims to be most wary and on their guard against the Rūm, from amongst all the ranks of their adversaries. This is, indeed, confirmed by verses [of the Qur’ān], to make evident the truth of what I am saying. . . . Now since the Rūm are as we have said, we must begin our discussion with the [Muslim] frontiers that face them [the Romans], before we go on to discuss any of the other [frontiers]. . . .³

¹As stated persuasively by Marius Canard in “Les relations politiques et sociales entre Byzance et les arabes”, *DOP* 18 (1964), 35–56; = his *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient* (London, 1973), no. 19.

²André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman* (Paris and the Hague, 1967–88), II, 384: “D’où viens-tu, qui t’as mis sur mon chemin, lequel de nous deux fut créé pour la ruine de l’autre?”

³Qudāma ibn Ja‘far, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa-ṣinā‘at al-kitāba*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn

Qudāma does not say which verses of the Qur'ān support this view of the Rūm, and as we shall soon see, Qudāma here stretches the Qur'ānic evidence.⁴ His main argument is Iranocentric, identifying the Realm of Islam as the heir to the Sasanian empire in its perpetual opposition to Rome, and the contest of Muslims against Byzantines as the direct continuation of the ancient struggle between Persia and Rome. On this point he is in agreement with at least some Byzantine intellectuals, as well as with modern scholars, like Wellhausen, who lumped all this together as “the centuries-long conflict between the great powers of West and East”.⁵

Looking forward in time, the Arab-Byzantine wars are often treated as precursors to the more familiar Crusades.⁶ However, they lasted longer (over three centuries as opposed to the two centuries of Crusader presence in Palestine and Syria) and involved more resources, human and monetary, in aggregate. The Arab-Byzantine wars also brought the major regional powers of the time into direct conflict, unlike the Crusades, which were something of a peripheral affair, at least at their beginning. Yet we pay more attention to the Crusades than to the Arab-Byzantine wars, which often appear to us as ritualized, pointless events involving campaigns and raids, much bloodshed, rapine and enslavement, but never bringing much advantage to either side.

Until around the middle of the twentieth century, scholarship on Arab-Byzantine relations tended to concentrate mainly on the military and diplomatic aspects, and while this emphasis has since been modified and corrected, it was not entirely misplaced.⁷ This volume, as already stated, begins

al-Zubaydī (Baghdad, 1981), 185; ed. and trans. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1889; repr. 1967), 252. See also Paul L. Heck, *The Construction of Knowledge in Islamic Civilization: Qudāma b. Ja'far and his Kitāb al-kharāj wa-ṣinā'at al-kitāba* (Leiden, 2002), 101–102.

⁴Qudāma probably had in mind here the negative references in the Qur'ān to Christians in general. The term *Rūm* was often understood this way. See Nadia M. El Cheikh, art. “Rūm 1. In Arabic Literature”, *EI*², VIII, 601–602; A.H.M. Shboul, “Arab Attitudes towards Byzantium: Official, Learned, Popular”, in J. Chrysostomides, ed., *Kathēgētria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey* (Camberley, Surrey, 1988), 112.

⁵See beginning of Chapter 2.

⁶As in Carole Hillenbrand's excellent *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York, 2000), 15–16.

⁷The “heroic age” of Arab-Byzantine studies produced Julius Wellhausen's “Die Kämpfe der Araber mit den Römern in der Zeit der Umajjiden”, *Nachrichten von der Königlich-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, 4 (1901), 1–34, translated as Chapter 2 of this volume; Alexander Vasiliev's *Vizantsiia i araby* (St. Petersburg, 1900–1902), afterwards translated and expanded by Henri Grégoire, Marius Canard and others as *Byzance et les arabes* (Brussels, 1935–68); and the early work of Marius Canard, beginning in 1926 with “Les expéditions des arabes contre Constantinople

and ends with war, while giving an idea of the most important scholarly positions and controversies regarding Arab–Byzantine relations and their role in the formation of classical Islam. Its main thematic areas are as follows:

1. *War and Diplomacy*: How and why did Islamic and Byzantine governments and individuals devote so much blood and treasure to what seems (now) such a futile task? If their relations were dominated by war, then what was the nature of this war?
2. *Frontiers and Military Organization*: How did the two sides seek affordable, dependable fighting forces? How did the Muslims organize their frontier zone, both physically and conceptually? Did this frontier zone constitute a unique cultural zone?
3. *Polemics and Images of the "Other"*: How did the two sides view each other? What were the characteristics of the Byzantines in the eyes of early Muslims?
4. *Exchange, Influence and Convergence*: Where and how did the two sides come together? What was the nature of their commercial relations? And what became of their shared heritage in the visual arts, architecture, philosophy, historiography, and other things?
5. *Martyrdom, Jihād, Holy War*: Were these also a shared heritage? What was the place of the Byzantine wars in the development of these ideals in Islam?

War and Diplomacy

When Islam first arose in the early seventh century CE, the Arabs already had a long history of contacts with the Greco-Roman world. These contacts grew in intensity in the later years of the Roman Empire and were not at all consistently hostile.⁸ When we first find mention in an Islamic context

dans l'histoire et dans la légende", *Journal asiatique* 208 (1926), 61–121; = his *Byzance et les musulmans*, no. 1.

⁸See Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs from the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London, 2001), 102–103, 167–68, and throughout; Glen W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, MA, 1983); and the series of books by Irfan Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs: a Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs* (Washington, 1984); *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington, 1984); *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington, 1989); *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (Washington, 1995); and the Variorum selection of articles by him, *Byzantium and the Semitic Orient before the Rise of Islam* (London, 1988).

of *al-Rūm* (the Romans, Byzantines), it is in the *sūra*, or chapter of the Qur'ān known as the "Sūra of the Rūm", where these are favored over their bitter opponents the Sasanians:

The Rūm have been overcome, in a nearby land. But after their defeat, they shall be victorious, within a few years. God's is the Decision, for what has happened and for what is to come. On that day the believers shall rejoice.⁹

Here and elsewhere in the Qur'ān there is no sense that Byzantium constitutes a special enemy of the community of believers.¹⁰ However, this situation soon changed, as Muslim expeditions began to confront imperial frontier defences toward the end of Muḥammad's life. Then, after the death of Muḥammad in 632 and the two-year inter-Arabian war that followed, Arab fighters attacked the two great empires, for all intents and purposes simultaneously and successfully. It appears, however, that the first goal of the conquests lay in Byzantine Syria and Palestine.¹¹ Byzantium now took its place as the first and greatest enemy of Islam for this and other reasons, which included its simple survival. For while the Iranian Sasanian empire was overrun and conquered by mid-century, a truncated and transformed Byzantium held on to fight another day.

On the Byzantine side, the main theater of war, Anatolia, had already experienced devastation, especially of its cities, at the hands of Persian invaders in the first two decades of the seventh century, before the Islamic invasions began (as Clive Foss describes in Chapter 1). When the Arab Muslims did arrive in Anatolia, starting in the 640s (see Wellhausen, Chapter 2), they generally did not aim at (or at least did not achieve) the destruction of cities. Nonetheless, they made reconstruction nearly impossible for some time. But unlike the residents of formerly Byzantine provinces such as Syria and Egypt, the Byzantine Anatolians continued to resist. The present-day visitor to Cappadocia can still see their underground hideaways, testimony to the determination of the early medieval villagers, crowded underground in what must have been terrible conditions. A severe decline in urban life and

⁹Qur'ān 30: 2–4. The context is commonly assumed to be the fall of Palestine and Jerusalem to the Sasanians in 614–15. For the Byzantine–Persian war of the early seventh century, see Chapter 1 of this volume.

¹⁰Michael Bonner, art. "Byzantines: Historical Context", in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān*, I, 265–66.

¹¹Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1980), esp. 96–97; idem, *The Arab Conquests*, Volume 5 of this series.

monetary economy accompanied a transformation of the Empire's administrative and military structures. Cities eventually reemerged in Anatolia, but built in a new style. All these long-term processes proved just as important as the more spectacular events such as the great expeditions against Constantinople, most famously that of 717–18, which failed, but just barely, to bring the Empire down.

We might think that the confrontation was less vivid on the Muslim side: a no man's land separated them from their Byzantine neighbors, while fighting or residing in the war zone was a matter of choice for most Muslims, not necessity. Yet despite the thinness of the literary sources available to us now regarding Umayyad Syria, we can perceive anxieties over a Byzantine invasion, visible in the apocalyptic literature, and a preoccupation with Christian doctrine and practice—inseparable from the power of the Empire—visible in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Umayyad mosque in Damascus (see below).

When the 'Abbāsīd dynasty supplanted the Umayyads in 750, the Byzantine frontier zone was already acquiring the characteristics it would have for the following two centuries. Expeditions went out as before, but no more attempts were made against Constantinople, which is to say that no strategic attempts were made to eliminate or defeat the adversary. The yearly raids, by sea and by land, became the main characteristic of the warfare. Meanwhile, the Empire had regrouped and reorganized sufficiently to establish military parity. For many years, victories and defeats were fairly equally distributed between the two sides. Well-publicized expeditions, such as that of the caliph al-Mu'taṣim against Amorion in 838, did not alter this balance. Over time, however, the consolidation and growth of Byzantine power under the dynasties of the Amorians (820–67) and even more so, the Macedonians (867–959) coincided with the decline and fragmentation of the central power of the Caliphate in Iraq. The Muslims found themselves increasingly on the defensive.

In the tenth century, on the Muslim side we see a series of improvisations in the face of looming disaster. Various actors occupy the stage, including politically ambitious local commanders and volunteers arriving from outside. Despite efforts that were often brilliant and valiant, the Byzantine forces could not be stopped. The Empire reconquered Malatya (Melitene) in 936, Maṣṣīṣa (Mopsuestia) and Ṭarsūs in 965, and Anṭakya (Antioch) in 969, and created a new imperial province in northern Syria. Then the juggernaut ground to a halt, as the Empire sought to contain its new an-

tagonist, the Fāṭimid caliphate, through an Arab buffer state in Aleppo.¹² In 1071, the Saljuq Turks defeated the Byzantines at Manzikert, and drove the Empire out of most of the Anatolian peninsula. The Crusaders arrived in the following generation, but that is another story.

What did these wars cost? A few indications from fourth/tenth-century budgets show routine expenditures, apparently for support of the garrisons and expeditions.¹³ The major campaigns, mounted from time to time, cost a great deal, as our sources tell us (in numbers that may be exaggerated, but often not greatly; see Kennedy in Chapter 6). These expeditions rarely resulted in territorial gains or losses. Such territorial gains as occurred tended to be isolated outposts, inevitably lost over time.¹⁴ The most famous expedition of all, that of al-Mu'taṣim in 838, resulted in much killing and plunder, but then left the devastated countryside and cities in Byzantine hands. Of course these expeditions and raids presented economic opportunity in the form of plunder, especially slaves. However, the enemy could, and frequently did return the compliment. The net result must have been a loss.

Internal quarrels lingered beneath this long-term struggle between two great adversaries. For Byzantium, the age following the early Islamic conquests was a time of slow recovery, culminating in a new assertion of state power and military might in the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁵ The Islamic world in this period shows nearly the opposite, beginning with the universal (if loosely coordinated) empire of the Umayyads, and ending with a group of states, most of them ruled by military men, perhaps constituting a "commonwealth" in matters of religion and culture, but constantly at odds in politics and war.

¹²Suhayl Zakkār, *The Emirate of Aleppo, 1004-1094* (Beirut, 1971).

¹³These most often take the form of provincial revenues and expenditures for the frontier provinces. For example, the *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* of al-Muhallabī, no longer extant but quoted by Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī ta'rikh Ḥalab*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Damascus, 1988), I, 178, gives 100,000 *dīnārs* as the yearly income from all the frontier provinces (*thughūr*), and 150,000 as the expenditure on them.

¹⁴Thus Ṭuwāna (Tyana), occupied and built up by the Muslims under al-Ma'mūn but then abandoned by his brother and successor al-Mu'taṣim upon his succession in 833; see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje *et al.* (Leiden, 1879-1901), III, 1111-12. The fortress of Lu'lu'a (Loulon), guarding the western approaches to the Cilician Gates, was held for a time by Slavs who had gone over to the Muslim side, but then reverted to Imperial control in 877 (Canard, in *Byzance et les arabes*, II.1, 79-81). See also Chapter 6, nn. 158 and 159.

¹⁵As described in older works such as Gustave Schlumberger, *L'épopée byzantine à la fin du dixième siècle* (Paris, 1925); and in Warren T. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780-842* (Stanford, 1988); Romilly Jenkins, *Byzantium: the Imperial Centuries, AD 610-1071* (Toronto, 1987); and others listed in the Bibliography below.

In Islamic conceptions of sovereignty, as these became set down in juridical works beginning as early as the late second/eighth century, the conduct of war against the external enemies of Islam is one of the main responsibilities of the Imām, who is here identical to the caliph. Military expeditions cannot set out without his approval; he has responsibility for planning and providing for warfare, both offensive and defensive. But even as the role of the Imām/caliph grew in the theory of state and war, his actual power and authority declined. Beginning in the 860s, for over a century the Ṭulūnids and then the Ikhshīdids, powerful dynasties based in Egypt, operated intermittently in the Byzantine frontier district. However, although often at odds with Baghdad, they mostly did not challenge the role of the caliphs in the war against Byzantium, and at times contented themselves with sharing the contested space.¹⁶ The Arab dynasty of the Ḥamdānids were another matter. Coming to power in northern Syria in the early to mid-tenth century, when ‘Abbāsīd fortunes were at their nadir and the Byzantine juggernaut at its strongest, they staked much of their claim to legitimacy on their front-line role in the Byzantine wars.¹⁷ The Fāṭimid dynasty, in Egypt from 969 onwards, were Ismā‘īlī Shī‘īs who rejected the ‘Abbāsīd claim altogether and claimed the universal caliphate for themselves. For this reason they had a freer hand in the matter. However, the Fāṭimids tended to avoid military entanglement with Byzantium; their diplomatic relations with Constantinople were relatively frequent and intense.¹⁸

Such internal tensions run throughout the entire period. We see them already in the earliest extant works on the *jihād*, originating in the late eighth century (Bonner, in Chapter 14). We see them again at the end of the story, in an episode in the frontier city of Ṭarsūs, on the eve of its being handed over to the Byzantines under Nicephorus Phocas in 354/965. During the last Friday prayer, the time arrived for the *khuṭba*, the sermon in which it was customary to include a prayer for the ruling caliph. The dignitary to whom this task had been assigned refused to be the last preacher on the *minbar* (pulpit) of Ṭarsūs. Thereupon a man named Abū Dharr, a Ḥanafī

¹⁶For instance, see Canard in *Byzance et les arabes*, II.1, 100–101; Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War* (New Haven, 1996), 153–54, on the “cohabitation” of Ṭulūnid and caliphal representatives in Ṭarsūs.

¹⁷Marius Canard, *Histoire de la dynastie des Ḥamdānides* (Paris, 1953).

¹⁸Samuel Stern, “An Embassy of the Byzantine Emperor to the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu‘izz”, *Byzantion* 20 (1950), 239–58; = his *History and Culture in the Medieval Muslim World* (London, 1984), no. 9; Marius Canard, “Le cérémonial fatimite et le cérémonial byzantin: essai de comparaison”, *Byzantion* 21 (1951), 355–420; = his *Byzance et les musulmans du Proche Orient*, no. 16; Abbas Hamdani, “Byzantine–Fatimid Relations before the Battle of Manzikert”, *Byzantine Studies* 1 (1974), 169–79.

faqīh and native of the city, stood up and began to preach, reciting the prayer in the name of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Mu‘taḍid (r. 892–902), who by this time had been dead for over six decades but who, in his day, had made his power felt in the Byzantine frontier district. He did this, says Canard, “as if [Mu‘taḍid] were the reigning caliph, or rather as if there had been no caliph worthy of the name since his death”.¹⁹

Divided sovereignty is at the heart of the matter also for Qudāma ibn Ja‘far, who looks back at Iran after Alexander’s conquests as a time of subjection and of political fragmentation, summed up in the Qur’ānic phrase *mulūk al-tawā’if*, factional kings, party kings. The disunity lasts until Ardashīr, a strong king—though not an Islamic one!—unites the empire and throws off the Roman tribute. As Parthian history this is inaccurate, but as an appreciation of more recent ‘Abbāsīd history it hits the mark. In his description of the frontier regions and elsewhere, Qudāma refers not to the Islamic caliphate, but rather to the Realm of Islam (*mamlakat al-Islām*), an idealized geographical and political unit that notably lacks a head.²⁰

This crisis of sovereignty provides a partial answer to the question of why the Muslims devoted so much blood and treasure to their Byzantine wars. The Byzantine onslaught came to a climax at a time when the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate in Baghdad was hopelessly weakened and when the real holders of power in Baghdad, the Būyids, showed no interest in the Byzantine wars. Now the frontier zone had from the beginning seen a constant flow of immigrants, volunteers for military service, especially from the Persian-speaking East. In this crisis of the mid-tenth century, popular preachers such as Ibn Nubāta urged the crowds to make their way through mountains and deserts, to volunteer for the fight against the Rūm.²¹ At a time when there was no Imām (at least among non-Shī‘īs) able to fulfill the religious obligation of leading the community in its wars against external enemies; and moreover, at a time when armies were professionalized and reduced in size, and recruited largely from alien nations such as the Turks and Daylamis,

¹⁹Marius Canard, “Quelques observations sur l’introduction géographique de la *Bughyat at-t’alab*”, *AIEO* 15 (1957), 41–53, esp. 52. The source is Ṭarsūsī’s *Siyar al-thughūr*, quoted by Ibn al-‘Adīm in *Bughyat al-talab*, I, 196–97, and now published on its own: see C.E. Bosworth, “Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān al-Ṭarsūsī’s *Siyar al-thughūr*”, *GA* 5 (1993), 183–95. See also Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 155, 176.

²⁰See above, n. 3. The *mamlakat al-Islām* is a feature of several tenth-century geographical works. It harkens back to the political conditions of the previous century: see Miquel, *La géographie humaine*, I, 271–75.

²¹*Dīwān khuṭab Ibn Nubāta*, ed. Ṭāhir al-Jazā‘irī (Beirut, 1311/1893–94), esp. 202–207; Marius Canard, *Recueil de textes relatifs à l’émir Sayf al Daula le Ḥamdānide* (Algiers, 1934), 167–73.

volunteering for military duty became more important than ever. In this way the war against Byzantium remained a central activity.

Communication between the adversaries was necessary and no doubt occurred more often than our scattered information regarding diplomatic missions might lead us to think. A recent study by Andreas Kaplony examines the procedures followed in Umayyad-Byzantine diplomatic relations, which Kaplony considers part of the "unwritten rules of intercultural diplomacy", and "the common law of international affairs".²² Diplomatic relations throughout this period are summarized and discussed by Hugh Kennedy in Chapter 4. Byzantium's diplomatic relations with Islamic states differed from those with its other neighbors (Avars, Franks, Khazars, Rus, etc.), in their reactive, defensive and *ad hoc* character. For the Muslim side, diplomatic relations with Byzantium mainly involved caliphs, whether Umayyad, 'Abbāsīd or Fāṭimid.²³ From the point of view of Muslim law, diplomatic contacts could aim only at limited goals, such as ransoming prisoners, and at achieving a truce (*hudna*) of no more than ten years' duration. We must remember that the Islamic law of war itself came into existence during this period, largely in response to conditions on the Byzantine front. Nonetheless, we need to account for the letter sent by Nicholas Mysticus, patriarch in Constantinople in 901-907 and 911-25, to the caliph in Baghdad (perhaps al-Muktafī, r. 902-908):

All power and all earthly authority depend, O friend, on the authority and power of Him who is on high: there is no power among men, no sovereign who has obtained sovereignty on earth through his own intelligence, unless He who has power in the Heavens, who governs and is the sole sovereign, has conceded it to him. . . . What is the significance of these words for us? It is that two empires, that of the Saracens and that of the Romans, together hold the entirety of power on earth, have preeminence and shine like two great torches in the celestial firmament. For

²² Andreas Kaplony, *Konstantinopel und Damaskus: Gesandtschaften und Verträge zwischen Kaisern und Kalifen 639-750. Untersuchungen zum Gewohnheits-Völkerrecht und zur interkulturellen Diplomatie* (Berlin, 1996). Kaplony's detailed argument does not entirely answer the objection that the procedures described may have been retrojected from later times and thus reflect later practice and theory.

²³ The emperor Romanus Lecapenus (r. 920-44) indicated to the Ikhshīd Ibn Ṭughj, the ruler of Egypt, that he was accustomed to corresponding only with caliphs: see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* (Cairo, 1964), VII, 10-18; Marius Canard, "Une lettre de Muhammad ibn Tughj", *AIEO* 2 (1936), 189-209; = his *Byzance et les musulmans*, no. 7; Shboul, "Arab Attitudes towards Byzantium", 118-19.

this reason alone, it is necessary that we have relations of community and fraternity, and that we absolutely avoid—under the pretext that we differ in our way of life, our customs and our religion—maintaining hostile dispositions toward one another; and that we not deny ourselves the ability to communicate by letter, unless we should be able actually to meet.²⁴

Nicholas then goes on to complain about recent events in Cyprus, citing the depredations of the renegade Himerius there in 902, and going on to express the theory that there is “a law in vigor among all peoples, even those who know no laws, [a law that has now] been violated [in Cyprus] by the Saracens, who are governed by laws”. Now Cyprus did have an unusual status because of the sharing of its revenues and to some extent, of sovereignty over it between the rival empires.²⁵ However, this is not the way in which the early Muslim jurists understood the matter of Cyprus: for them the basic premise of God’s sovereignty did not lead to any sharing of earthly sovereignty.²⁶ We have to conclude that Nicholas’ theory of the “two torches” was, at least in the eyes of Muslim statesmen and jurists, ultimately unacceptable.

Frontiers and Military Organization

For all the importance of the ideologies of *jihād* and holy war (discussed below), none of all this could have happened without constant, grueling effort in recruitment, training, supply, the development of tactics, and other mundane areas. Each side depended for its survival and prosperity upon an

²⁴Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, CXI, 27–40, repr. by Sakkelion in *Deltion tēs historikēs kai ethnologikēs hetairias tēs Hellados* 3 (1889), 108–16; French trans. by Canard in *Byzance et les arabes*, II.1, 399–411 (403–404 for the passage quoted here). See also R.G.H. Jenkins, “A Note on the ‘Letter to the Emir’ of Nicholas Mysticus”, *DOP* 17 (1963), 399–401; = his *Studies on Byzantine History in the 9th and 10th Centuries* (London, 1970), no. 17. The recipient is the caliph and not the “Amir of Crete”.

²⁵The unusual position of Cyprus goes back to the agreement between Constantine IV and ‘Abd al-Malik in 685 and renewed in 688–89 with Justinian II; see Wellhausen in Chapter 2 below; Romilly Jenkins, “Cyprus between Byzantium and Islam, A.D. 688–965”, in George E. Mylonas, ed., *Studies Presented to David Moore Robinson* (St. Louis, 1953), II, 1006–1014 = his *Studies on Byzantine History in the 9th and 10th Centuries* (London, 1970), no. 22; Walter E. Kaegi, “Changes in Military Organization and Daily Life on the Eastern Frontier”, in Chrysa Maltezou, ed., *Daily Life in Byzantium* (Athens, 1989), 512.

²⁶See the discussion in the early ‘Abbāsīd period regarding the status of Cyprus and the Cypriots in al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), 155–58; Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām, *Kitāb al-amwāl* (Beirut, 1986), 188.

effective and affordable military organization; how to achieve this was a central question, to which each tried several solutions. The modern literature on this question of military organization is more complete for the Byzantine side than for the Arab.²⁷

Generations of Byzantine historians thought that a key to understanding this question was in the origins of the imperial military and administrative units known as *themata* or “themes”. Although the themes are best known from evidence of the ninth and tenth centuries,²⁸ their origins have often been located at or soon after the time of the early Islamic conquests.²⁹ Irfan Shahid has identified a direct, causal relation between the peculiar administrative geography of early Islamic Syria (the *ajnad*) on the one hand, and what on the other hand he identifies as a pre-Islamic Byzantine organization, a direct precursor of the thematic system, which the emperor Heraclius would have initiated in Syria during the few years between his reconquest of that province from the Persians and his loss of it to the Arabs.³⁰ However, others have argued convincingly that to the extent that there actually was a thematic system, it came as the result of gradual change; Heraclius did institute reforms, but not the ones that eventually prevailed.³¹ Chapter

²⁷The problem was stated already for Byzantium by F.I. Uspenskii in “Voennoe ustroistvo Vizantiiskoi imperii”, *Izvestiia Russkogo Archeol. Instituta v Konstantinopole* 6 (1900), 154–207. For more recent studies, in addition to Chapters 5 and 6 in this volume, see especially Ralf-Johannes Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber* (Munich, 1976); John Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription in the Byzantine Army c. 550–950: a Study on the Origins of the Stratiōtika Ktēmata* (Vienna, 1979); *idem*, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Cambridge, 1990); and Warren Treadgold, *Byzantium and its Army* (Stanford, 1995). For early Islamic military organization, see the new synthesis by Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (Cambridge, 2001).

²⁸Especially the *De thematibus* by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, ed. and trans. A. Pertusi (Vatican City, 1952); and ed. Gy. Moravcsik, trans. R.J.H. Jenkins (Washington, 1967); and Arabic sources such as the ninth-century Ibn Khurrādādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. and trans. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1889; *BGA* 6), esp. 77–81/105–10, as well as the ubiquitous Qudāma ibn Ja‘far.

²⁹Heinrich Gelzer, “Die Genesis der byzantinischen Themenverfassung”, *Abhandlungen der Kgl. Sächs. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Kl., 18, Nr. 5 (Leipzig, 1889); Charles Diehl, “L’origine du régime des thèmes dans l’Empire byzantin”, *Etudes byzantines* (Paris, 1905), 276–92; Uspenskii, “Voennoe ustroistvo”; E.W. Brooks, “Arabic Lists of the Byzantine Themes”, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 21 (1901), 67–77; and Georg Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick, 1969), 96–101.

³⁰Irfan Shahid, “Heraclius and the Theme System: New Light from the Arabic”, *Byzantion* 57 (1987), 391–403; “Heraclius and the Theme System: Further Observations”, *Byzantion* 59 (1989), 208–43; “Heraclius and the Unfinished Themes of Oriens: Some Final Observations”, *Byzantion* 64 (1994), 352–76.

³¹Ralf-Johannes Lilie, “Die zweihundertjährige Reform. Zu den Anfängen der The-

5, by John Haldon, provides a definitive study of the entire situation, and shows that we cannot accept Shahid's theory.

The military organization of the Caliphate differed significantly from its Byzantine counterpart. On the Byzantine side, the frontier zone seems to have been nearly coterminous with Byzantine Anatolia itself, at least throughout much of the first two centuries. The Byzantine society and polity that emerged in the ninth and tenth centuries as a military and political success was largely the product of a prolonged crisis on its eastern frontier (see Haldon in Chapter 6). On the Muslim side, the frontier was more truly marginal, in the sense that it constituted a distinct and (at least relative to the entire Caliphate) not-too-large area. Broadly speaking, the military organization of the Caliphate at first involved largely tribally based units, settled in encampments or towns (*amṣār*), enrolled in a central register (*dīwān*), and rewarded according to a system based, at least in its vocabulary, on gift ('*aṭā'*) rather than on compensation. From this a gradual transition occurred toward a situation involving the use of slave soldiers, "ethnic" units, and a complex distribution of horizontal and vertical loyalties.³² The point here is simply that the military organization of the Caliphate is a much broader affair than the frontier armies and garrisons. Nonetheless, the Arab side of the frontier has its own importance and its own fascination.

The Arab-Byzantine frontier, like most pre-modern frontiers, consisted of a wide zone rather than a specific boundary line. Also like other frontiers, it had a particularly strong *imaginaire*, evoking images of forbidding mountain barriers from poets,³³ a range of praises and laments from ge-

menorganisation im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert", *Byzantinoslavica* 45 (1984), 27-39, 190-201; *idem*, "Araber und Themen. Zum Einfluß der arabischen Expansion auf die byzantinische Militarorganisation", in Averil Cameron, ed., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, III: *States, Resources and Armies* (Princeton, 1995), 425-46.

³²In addition to the synthetic work by Kennedy mentioned above, see Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses* (Cambridge, 1980); Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven, 1981); David Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks on the Mamluk Institution in Islam", in V.J. Parry and M.E. Yapp, eds., *War, Technology, and Society in the Middle East* (Oxford, 1975), 44-58; *idem*, "The Military Reforms of al-Mu'taṣim", in his *Islam and the Abode of War* (Aldershot, 1994), 1-39; Matthew Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: a History of the Turkish Community of Samarra* (Albany, 2001).

³³Including the panegyricists of the 'Abbāsids, especially of the caliphs al-Rashid and al-Mu'taṣim; the famous Mutanabbī; Abū Firās, the Ḥamdānid prince held captive in Constantinople; and others. See Marius Canard in *Byzance et les arabes*, I, 397-408, II.2, 299-378; *idem*, "Mutanabbī et la guerre byzantino-arabe: intérêt historique de ses poésies", in *Al-Mutanabbī: recueil publié à l'occasion de son millénaire* (Beirut, 1936), 99-114; = Canard's *Byzance et les musulmans*, no. VI; Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*,

ographers,³⁴ and endless distinctions from lawyers. At the same time, it truly was a forbidding place, presenting countless practical difficulties that soldiers and civilians had to overcome as best they could.

Although the frontier zone lay not far from some of the major political and cultural centers of the early Islamic world, it was barred from these to some extent. Soon after Heraclius' retreat from Syria in the 630s, a no man's land emerged, known to the Arabs as *al-ḍawāhī*, "the outer lands".³⁵ Beginning around a century afterwards, when the frontier's center of gravity migrated to the Taurus and anti-Taurus ranges, and when the Muslim authorities began a policy of settling fighters in the region and building up the frontier outposts into towns of some importance,³⁶ the idea of a protective *cordon sanitaire* remained. Arabic geographers and historians described the frontier zone as divided into a front line called the *thughūr*, "the passageways", behind which (that is, to the east and south of which) lay an intermediate zone of towns and strongholds known as the *'awāṣim*, the "protectresses". These same writers further described the front-line *thughūr* as divided into regions named after and somehow appended to the great provinces behind them: the *thughūr* of Syria and the Jazīra. This division of the frontier district corresponded to reality, in the sense that a broad frontier zone, now called *'awāṣim* instead of *ḍawāhī*, did extend between the front-line strongholds and the main body of the Caliphate. But on the other hand, this division into *thughūr* and *'awāṣim* did not really make sense and did not correspond to the administrative realities of most times.³⁷ Once again, we cite Qudāma ibn Ja'far. In his chapter on the frontiers, Qudāma (like other geographical writers) divides the front-line strongholds of the

101–104, 134; and Shboul in Chapter 9, section 7, below.

³⁴Especially Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, ed. J.H. Kramers (Leiden, 1938; *BGA* 2), 178–89, 201–202. *Byzance et les arabes*, II.2, 379–428, provides a selection of translated geographical writings.

³⁵Described at the beginning of Chapter 2 (Wellhausen). The term *al-ḍawāhī* corresponds to the Greek *ta akra*, "the extremities", according to Kaegi, "The Frontier: Barrier or Bridge?", *The 17th International Byzantine Congress: Major Papers* (New Rochelle, 1986), 286. See also Kaegi, "Changes in Military Organization and Daily Life on the Eastern Frontier", in Chrysa Maltezou, ed., *Daily Life in Byzantium = E kathēmerinē zōē sto Vyzantio* (Athens, 1989), 514–17, discussing the devastated zone, of which Heraclius seems to have been the originator.

³⁶Kennedy in Chapter 6, below; Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 43–68; C.E. Bosworth, art. "al-Thughūr. 1. In the Arab–Byzantine Frontier Region", *EI*², X, 446–47.

³⁷Michael Bonner, "The Naming of the Frontier: 'Awāṣim, Thughūr, and the Arab Geographers", *BSOAS* 57 (1994), 17–24. Cf. Miquel, *Géographie humaine*, II, 475: "But the concept is more fluid, and the distinction between *'awāṣim* and *thughūr* is often unstable, in the vicissitudes of the frontier".

thughūr into two districts, and he even adds a third district in the north, *al-thughūr al-bakrīya*. However, this dividing of the frontier zone contradicts what Qudāma says elsewhere about the administrative divisions of the Caliphate.³⁸ Here Qudāma is not describing the lands of the Caliphate, nor of the ‘Hamdānids nor any other dynasty, but again, an idealized Realm of Islam (*mamlakat al-Islām*).

There are several reasons why the frontier zone should be so special and contradictory a part of this ideal entity. One of these is that when the frontier zone first emerged (in the second half of the second/eighth century and soon afterwards), a trend was beginning to prevail toward viewing the Islamic land and fiscal regimes as products of the early Islamic conquests. Jurists and historiographers were coming increasingly to view the arrangements of their own day regarding landholding, taxation and intercommunal relations as direct results of what had happened in those old glory days, especially in the 630s and 640s. This applied especially, but not only, to provinces that, like the Jazīra (upper Mesopotamia), were located near the Arab–Byzantine frontier.³⁹ In this context, the frontier district itself, still a site of warfare, raiding and conquest, presented a test case and an anomaly. When the settling of the frontier towns was underway, the Syrian jurist al-Awzā‘ī (d. 157/774), declared that only the caliph could make grants of agricultural lands in these lands. Afterwards, al-Awzā‘ī’s student and follower Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī (d. after 185/802) said that because of the uncertainty of that district’s previous status, it was best to avoid holding landed property there altogether.⁴⁰ Thus the unitary Caliphate comes into question once again, this time through the land regime of the *thughūr*.

This frontier, like others, has been described as a place of mixing and fusion, a region where the residents on both sides had more in common with one another than with the people of their own hinterlands and capitals.⁴¹ This impression certainly comes across in the popular epic, such as the

³⁸Qudāma (ed. Zubaydī), 180–85; (ed. de Goeje), 246–53.

³⁹Chase F. Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: the Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge, 2000), 1–32; Werner Schmucker, *Untersuchungen zu einigen wichtigen bodenrechtlichen Konsequenzen der islamischen Eroberungsbewegung* (Bonn, 1973); Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 2nd ed. in collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad, trans. Michael Bonner (Princeton, 1994); *idem*, “Zum Verhältnis von kalifaler Zentralgewalt und Provinzen in umayyadischer Zeit. Die *Sulh-‘Anwa* Traditionen für Ägypten und den Iraq”, *Die Welt des Islams* 14 (1973), 150–62.

⁴⁰Below, Chapter 14.

⁴¹A defining characteristic according to Oscar Martinez, *Border People* (Tucson, 1994), 18–20; cf. Linda Darling, “Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context”, *Studia Islamica* 91 (2000), 137 n. 13.

the *Digenis Akritas* cycle in Greek and the *Delhemma* (*Dhāt al-himma*) in Arabic. We must keep in mind, however, that this literature comes from a later time, at least in the form in which we have it. Certain defining differences between the two sides of the frontier marked it as a real barrier, at least during the three and a half centuries in question here. These differences include the emergence on the Byzantine side of a frontier aristocracy, drawn from the military leadership and imperial service,⁴² whereas on the Muslim side, as we have seen, the role of the caliphs and their representatives was often called into question. If certain elite groups eventually prevailed there, their identity is still not clear.⁴³ This is not to say that local strongmen, “warlords”, and their followings did not exist on the Arab side of the frontier. However, our information regarding them is spotty and, significantly, derives at least as much from Syriac as from Arabic sources.⁴⁴ In any case, we should take the Arabic sources seriously in their constant portrayal of the frontier district as an ideologically charged place where people came, not to mix with those different from themselves, but rather to fight them and to stake out more securely their own territory of self.

Hard-edged in these ways, the region of the *thughūr* did prove more porous in some others. Older populations mixed with newcomers arriving not only from Syria and Jazīra to the immediate south and east, but also from the more remote Islamic East. It may well be that relations with the Christian Byzantines just across the barrier, though not well documented, were friendly at times and perhaps even intimate, like those described in the

⁴²See Haldon in the first half of Chapter 6. This new aristocracy integrated various ethnic elements, including Arabs: see Jean-Claude Cheynet, “L’apport arabe à l’aristocratie byzantine des Xe–XIe siècles”, *Byzantinoslavica* 56 (1995), 137–46.

⁴³See Peter Von Sivers, “Taxes and Trade in the ‘Abbāsīd Thughūr”, *JESHO* 25 (1982), 71–99, and the critique in Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence* (New Haven, 1996), 136–37. In this way the frontier region was typical of Islamic society as a whole, in that it did not provide conditions for, and even blocked the progress, of any elite group seeking to establish itself for longer than a few generations. On this question more generally, see Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses*; and Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge, 1994).

⁴⁴This does not mean that Syriac sources are inherently untrustworthy, but only indicates the marginal place of this phenomenon in the Arabic sources. This especially applies to the years around the ‘Abbāsīd revolution. See Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 41–61; Claude Cahen, “Fiscalité, propriété, antagonismes sociaux en Haute-Mésopotamie au temps des premiers ‘Abbāsīdes d’après Denys de Tell-Maḥrē”, *Arabica* 1 (1954), 136–52; J.M. Fiey, “The Syriac Population of the Thughūr al-Shāmiyya and the ‘Awāṣim and its Relations with the Byzantines and the Muslims”, in Muhammad Adnan Bakhit and Robert Schick, eds., *Bilād al-Shām in the ‘Abbāsīd Period: Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām* (Amman, 1991), 45–54.

Spanish *Poem of the Cid* between Don Rodrigo and the Moor Abengalbón (Ibn Ghalbūn).

Polemics and Images of the “Other”

The images of Muslims and Islam that emerged in early medieval Byzantine polemical writings proved to have enormous lasting power, within and beyond the Greek-speaking world. To speak of this polemical literature as “Byzantine” is, of course, to use the term loosely, since much of it originated in the Islamic lands among Christians living in the protected status (*dhimma*) of “people of the Book” (*ahl al-kitāb*), some of them writing in Syriac, others in Greek, and some eventually in Arabic.⁴⁵ Whatever the provenance of these writings, however, they provided a roughly unified heritage for medieval and early modern Christian writers against Islam. Translated into Latin, they formed the foundation for a tenacious Western European vocabulary of misunderstanding, which included portrayal of the Saracens as the Scourge of God, sent to punish Christians for their sins; a leading role for the Saracens in a variety of apocalyptic scenarios; the identification of Islam as a Christian heresy and of Muḥammad as a heresiarch; and wide-ranging accusations of fraud, violence and lust, again leveled at both Muḥammad and his community as a whole. Polemicists in the medieval West expanded this heritage with such elements as the identification of Islam as a form of paganism, and the revival of the ancient theme of the flighty, inconstant Oriental.⁴⁶ However, the older “Byzantine” vocabulary continued to resurface, well into the modern period.⁴⁷

⁴⁵See below, Chapters 8 (Meyendorff) and 12 (Conrad); Daniel Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam, the “Heresy of the Ishmaelites”* (Leiden, 1972); *idem*, “Eighth-Century Byzantine Anti-Islamic Literature”, *Byzantinoslavica* 57 (1996), 229–38; Andrew Palmer, Sebastian Brock and Robert Hoyland, eds. and trans., *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool, 1993); Robert Hoyland, *Islam as Others Saw It* (Princeton, 1995); and Bibliography, below.

⁴⁶For a synthesis, see John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York, 2002); and Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image* (Edinburgh, 1993). For an even longer view, see Maxime Rodinson, *La fascination de l’Islam* (Paris, 1980), trans. as *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (Seattle, 1991).

⁴⁷As in the quarrels between Federalists and Republicans in the early years of the American republic, where Muḥammad and Islam were taken as paradigms of domestic and political tyranny, or else of anarchy, depending on the point of view. See Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: the United States and the Muslim World, 1776–1815* (Chicago, 1995). Of course Montesquieu enters the argument, but see pp. 37–41 on the Americans’ use of Humphrey Prideaux’s *The True Nature of Imposture Fully Displayed in the Life of Mahomet* (London, 1697), a work still largely in the medieval tradition.

Several chapters in this volume (8–11) deal with the question of how the Muslims viewed the Byzantines. Medieval Muslim sources at different times might use the term *Rūm* politically (subjects of the Roman/Byzantine emperor), linguistically (Greek-speakers), geographically (Anatolians), or religiously (Christians in general).⁴⁸ Nonetheless, they took a different view of the Christians in the Byzantine empire and those residing in the lands of Islam. Within lands that came under Muslim rule, conquerors and conquered soon agreed on the need for arrangements that would provide mutual guarantees, even if these arrangements sometimes involved a degree of mutual misunderstanding, as the anecdote at the beginning of Chapter 10 illustrates. So on the one hand, the juridical roots of *dhimma* (“protection”) were inseparable from those of *jihād*,⁴⁹ and those who lived under *dhimma* did not enjoy social and juridical equality with the Muslims; but on the other hand, *dhimma* also lay at the root of what historians of medieval Spain sometimes call *convivencia*, or “getting along together”. Accordingly, in early Islam we see the genesis and growth of an internal Other, separate from the external Other personified by the Rūm/Byzantine. This internal Other is the *dhimmī*, the non-Muslim native of the Abode of Islam, most often Christian or Jewish. Because the *dhimmī*’s juridical characteristics included both a long-term contractual relationship with the Muslims and the inability to carry arms, he was destined to participate in a never-ending negotiation with the Muslims over his own status, obligations and rights. Chase Robinson has recently shown the importance of such negotiations and discussions between Muslims and *dhimmīs*, not only in Islamic law, but also in the early development of Islamic historiographical and biographical writing.⁵⁰

Medieval Muslim legal and literary writers often used stereotypes to represent *dhimmīs* and Byzantines. This is not surprising: after all, representations of “Saracens” in Byzantine and Western European literature were at least as stereotypical as these. The point here is simply that for the medieval Muslims, while the internal Other was a figure of constant negotiation, the external Other on the whole was not. We see this in the evidence assembled by Nadia El-Cheikh regarding perceptions of Byzantine women in Arabic literature. These women were associated with immorality and often portrayed as prostitutes, while Byzantine men were singled out for their supposed lack

⁴⁸See above, n. 4. On the Rūm as “unbelievers”, “idolaters” (*mushrikūn*, *kuffār*), and the ambiguity of those terms, see Shboul, “Arab Attitudes towards Byzantium”, 124–25.

⁴⁹Best illustrated by the *Kitāb al-jizya* (not *Kitāb al-jihād*) in al-Shāfi‘ī’s *Kitāb al-umm* (Beirut, 1980), IV, 167–222, esp. 170–80.

⁵⁰Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 1–32.

of jealousy. Although some Arabic writers acknowledged other possibilities, these perceptions prevailed, built as they were out of social realities in the Islamic world (domestic slavery and concubinage) and above all, out of projected fears of social and sexual disorder.⁵¹ Chapter 9 in this volume, by Ahmad Shboul, provides a general outline of the image in Arabic literature of the Rūm/Byzantines, including the view of Byzantium as a great power; the identification of its ruler as the paradigmatic tyrant (*tāghīya*); the skill of the Byzantines in various arts and crafts, as well as in administration and warfare; and their alleged lack of generosity. Above all and throughout, the Empire figures as Islam's main antagonist and rival, its archenemy until the end of time. Likewise, when a long chapter of André Miquel's *Géographie humaine* allows us to view Byzantium through the keen eyes of the Arab geographers, we find constant repetition of the message that in the end the world will only be large enough to contain one of the two rivals.⁵² Consistently with this idea, the geographical writers greatly exaggerate (at least in our eyes) the physical extent of the Empire, on occasion drawing Europe as a mere appendage to it. They also tend to be uncharacteristically imprecise regarding such things as the course of the Empire's rivers. They describe its roads, especially those leading to Constantinople, more accurately, no doubt because of the accumulation of military intelligence over many generations. However, the powerful Byzantine state looms large in these descriptions, overwhelming the everyday reality that these writers elsewhere describe with such acuity and grace. The geographers show little interest in Byzantine climate, products and trade; Constantinople for them is a city without people, without daily life.⁵³ Rather like the frontier district of the *thughūr*, just described, the image of Byzantium is of something inflexible and unyielding, both at its ideological core and along its hard, practical edges. It is, in fact, precisely the image that Massignon identified over a half century ago, that of the gold coin, the concrete symbol of royal sovereignty, power, brilliance and wealth.⁵⁴

We have seen that in juridical theory and historical writing, the Islamic land and fiscal regime as a whole came to be seen as a direct result of the early conquests of the 630s and 640s. Even if this view was only theo-

⁵¹N.M. El-Cheikh, "Describing the Other to Get at the Self: Byzantine Women in Arabic Sources, 8th–11th Centuries", *JESHO* 40 (1997), 239–50.

⁵²Above, n. 2.

⁵³Miquel, *Géographie humaine*, II, 381–481, esp. 387–88, 408, 462.

⁵⁴Louis Massignon, "Le mirage byzantin dans le miroir bagdadien d'il y a mille ans", *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 10 (1950), 429–48, esp. 438–40. See also the end of Chapter 10 in this volume (O. Grabar).

retical, it provided ground for optimism: the community and its resources were bound to expand in God's good time, or at least to remain protected and stable. The major challenge to this comforting view came from the confrontation with Byzantium, with its endless ideological and physical conflict, its rugged frontier life, its peculiar *manière de combattre*, and the grudging respect that it evoked for the perpetual enemy, all of this taking place uncomfortably close to the nerve-center of the Islamic world.

In its origins the Arab-Byzantine confrontation was actually not a direct result of the early conquests, so much as of the period of the Umayyad dynasty (661-750). Medieval Muslims largely understood this, for instance in their interest in the (bad) precedents set by the caliphs Mu'āwīya and 'Abd al-Malik in paying tribute to Byzantine emperors while they were preoccupied with civil strife at home. For us, to understand the Arab-Byzantine confrontation, we need to look at the situation under the Umayyads first of all (Wellhausen and Gibb in Chapters 2 and 3). However, while the archaeological and artistic record for Umayyad Syria and Jazīra (the provinces bordering on Byzantium) is quite rich (Grabar in Chapter 10), the situation is less favorable for historiography. For as Wellhausen already noted (Chapter 2), the extant Arabic historians are mainly interested in Iraq and the East, and for the Byzantine frontier region they often give little more than bare data of commanders, battles and campaigns.

The Arabic apocalyptic literature helps to fill this gap. It is well known that the conquest of Constantinople was a transcendent, religious goal for the Muslims, especially after their failure in 717-18 to accomplish it.⁵⁵ Also well known is the prophecy that Constantinople would fall to a ruler who bore the name of a prophet. This in the event turned out to be true, though later than expected (in 1453, under an Ottoman sultan named Muḥammad). Beyond this, the Muslim apocalyptic literature has often been considered marginal and obscure. Recently, however, it has been studied and made better known (Suliman Bashear in Chapter 7).⁵⁶ In this apocalyptic liter-

⁵⁵Canard, "Expéditions des arabes contre Constantinople", 61-121; = his *Byzance et les musulmans*, no. 1.

⁵⁶See also Michael Cook, "The Heraclian Dynasty in Muslim Eschatology", *al-Qantara* 13 (1992), 3-23; *idem*, "Eschatology and the Dating of Traditions", *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* 1 (1992), 23-47; *idem*, "An Early Islamic Apocalyptic Chronicle", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993), 25-29; Lawrence I. Conrad, "The Arabs and the Colossus", *JRAS*, Third Series, 6 (1996), 165-87, esp. 181-87; David B. Cook, "Muslim Apocalyptic and *Jihād*", *JSAI* 20 (1996), 66-104; *idem*, "The Apocalyptic Year 200/815-16", in A. Baumgarten, ed., *Apocalyptic Time* (Leiden, 2000), 41-68; *idem*, "An Early Muslim Daniel Apocalypse", *Arabica* 49 (2002), 55-96. Especially important has been the publication of the *Kitāb al-fitan* by the third/ninth-century writer Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād

ature, the “portents of the hour” betray anxiety over a Byzantine invasion by sea of Muslim Syria. This invasion fits into a series of events, varying in the different versions, culminating in the conquest of Constantinople and the end of the world as we know it. Now in fact, a Byzantine naval invasion on such a scale never took place.⁵⁷ However, the fear itself—apparently widespread among Syrian Muslims at what we might have thought was a moment of great success and confidence—seems to have been real, especially in the mid-to-late seventh century, when Umayyad control over the seacoast was still insecure (Wellhausen, Chapter 2). The second half of the seventh century saw great intensity in apocalyptic speculation, among Middle Eastern Jews and Christians as well as Muslims, much of it connected to the rise and expansion of Islam. Then, around 700, this speculation began to cool down, especially since the Arabs and Muslims were clearly there to stay.⁵⁸ As the Byzantine threat receded, the *malāḥim* and *fadā’il* literature became objects of interest mainly in local Syrian scholarly environments, at least until the time of the Crusades, when it acquired new relevance and appeal.

How and why this material was transmitted in the ‘Abbāsīd period is still not entirely clear. In any case, in its literary form, this apocalyptic literature is *ḥadīth*. Since it refers to real, datable historical events (in addition to imaginary ones), it seems to provide scholars of *ḥadīth* with an opportunity to realize their dream of dating traditions securely. Moreover, most of the historical events in question took place before the year 100 of the Hijra, which Joseph Schacht declared the earliest limit of datable traditions. Michael Cook has taken up this challenge.⁵⁹ More recently, David B. Cook has identified “apocalyptic groups”, the presumed audience of these productions, as well as a “leadership”. However, the identities of all these still need to be made more precise.⁶⁰

(Mecca, 1991).

⁵⁷This undermines confidence in the theory that medieval apocalypses are prophecies *ex eventu*, or “chronicles written in the future tense”: see Paul J. Alexander, “Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources”, *American Historical Review* 73 (1968), 1018; *idem*, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, ed. D. de F. Abrahamse (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985); further references in Conrad, “The Arabs and the Colossus”, 182 n. 86; see also Cook, “The Heraclian Dynasty in Muslim Eschatology”, 3–23. Bashear (in Chapter 7 below) remains loyal, even though the theory seems to go against some of his own findings.

⁵⁸Conrad, “The Arabs and the Colossus”, 181–83.

⁵⁹Cook, “Eschatology and the Dating of Traditions”, 23–47. The most important statement of Schacht’s theory is in *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1950). Cook finds that the matter is “not as unambiguous and straightforward as one might have hoped”, but that basic Schachtian principles, including the “common link”, do come into question.

⁶⁰David B. Cook, “Muslim Apocalyptic and *Jihād*”, *JSAI* 20 (1996), 66–104.

Regarding theological disputations, Robert Hoyland remarks elsewhere in this series that these tended to be more “gentlemanly” when conducted within the frontiers of Islam than when they took place across the Arab–Byzantine divide.⁶¹ Indeed, a characteristic of the “sectarian milieu” that John Wansbrough described for early Islam was that each monotheist group or sub-group could say its piece, with considerable confidence that its opponents would understand the basic themes, principles and structure of its argument.⁶² Arab–Byzantine disputations, on the other hand, politicized and publicized events, often had a highly performative aspect, providing an occasion for rhetorical and poetic display.⁶³

Exchange, Influence and Convergence

Diplomatic exchanges have already been discussed. These occurred relatively infrequently and provided opportunities for theatrical display meant to impress domestic audiences as much as visiting delegations. There was considerable borrowing from Byzantine ceremonial at the Fāṭimid court, and likely elsewhere.⁶⁴ In general, the language and practice of diplomacy were well understood on both sides.

Trade between the two took place on a large scale. However, we have little hard evidence for this trade in Arabic sources, apart from a short work on trade falsely attributed to al-Jāḥiẓ.⁶⁵ We have already seen the reticence of the Arab geographers on this point; a thorough scouring of *adab* (*belles lettres*) works of the ‘Abbāsīd period would yield more references. Demand for objects of Byzantine origin was principally for high-prestige items, including the marvelous brocades mentioned often in Arabic texts. The Empire tried to keep secret the techniques of production for some of these expensive goods, which were often made from raw materials originating

⁶¹ Hoyland, Introduction to Volume 18 of this series, *Muslims and Others*.

⁶² John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford, 1978); M.A. Cook, “The Origins of Kalām”, *BSOAS* 43 (1980), 32–43.

⁶³ G.E. Von Grunebaum, “Eine poetische Polemik zwischen Byzanz und Baghdad im 10. Jahrhundert”, *Analecta orientalia* 14 (1937), 43–64; = his *Islam and Medieval Hellenism*, no. 19.

⁶⁴ Marius Canard, “Le cérémonial fāṭimite et le cérémonial byzantin: Essai de comparaison”, *Byzantion* 21 (1951), 355–420; = his *Byzance et les musulmans*, no. 14.

⁶⁵ *Kitāb al-tabaṣṣur bi-l-tijāra* (Cairo, 1994); French trans. by Charles Pellat, *Arabica* 1 (1954), 153–65. Walter Kaegi, in “The Frontier: Barrier or Bridge”, 293–95, points to Abū Yūsuf’s concern in the *Kitāb al-kharāj* (Cairo, 1962), 187–90, that spies can cross the frontier acting or disguised as merchants. Over a century later, a similar possibility is raised in the work attributed (probably incorrectly) to the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus Phocas, *De velitatione bellica* (Bonn, 1828), 196.

in the Islamic world. Byzantium was also a net exporter to the Muslims of coined money, especially gold. The Byzantines, for their part, imported a wide range of goods, especially high-quality raw materials; their balance of trade with the Islamic world was negative. But their role may better be described as that of an intermediary within the global trading network of Islam, or as Maurice Lombard described it, “encysted in the great currents emerging from the Muslim world”.⁶⁶ Muslim commercial relations with the Balkan and Slavic worlds, the Black Sea, the Caspian, the Russian river routes, the Baltic, and even with much of the Mediterranean (especially with the rise of the Italian merchant republics), often had no choice but to pass through Byzantine territory and Byzantine customs officers.

This raises the question of where this trade took place, or in other words, of markets. Despite the optimistic statements of some modern scholars, the frontier towns of the *thughūr* in Asia Minor and northern Syria—inland and up against the Taurus mountains—were centers of local trade at best. There is no evidence for long-distance trade going through them; their support came from other sources, including the State treasury and revenues from “immobilized” properties back in the Islamic heartlands.⁶⁷ But in cities that did have long-distance trade, we may perceive a difference between Byzantium and the Arabs. In early Byzantium, as in the later Roman Empire, the Empire and its fiscal agents had a central and in some ways controlling role in the functioning of the markets, which were, on their own, rather weak.⁶⁸ In the Islamic world, after attempts by the Umayyad caliphs (661–750) to create and control markets, at least in Syria, Palestine and the Ḥijāz,⁶⁹ the market (both in the concrete and the abstract sense) suffered fewer restrictions.⁷⁰ Of course this does not mean that Caliphal

⁶⁶Maurice Lombard, *L’Islam dans sa première grandeur, VIIIe–XIe siècle* (Paris, 1971), 226–33, esp. 232.

⁶⁷See Chapter 6, n. 107; also Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-ard*, 184 (support for Ṭarsūs).

⁶⁸Haldon discusses this issue regarding Byzantine markets and cities, in the first half of Chapter 6. See also Michael F. Hendy, “Economy and State in Late Rome and Early Byzantium: an Introduction”, in his Variorum collection *The Economy, Fiscal Administration and Coinage of Byzantium* (Northampton, 1989), 1–23. The early Islamic counterpart to all this has not yet been written.

⁶⁹The archeological evidence for Umayyad markets has been assembled in a recent Harvard dissertation by Rebecca Foote, which, however, has not been available to me. For the literary evidence, see the controversy over the market in Medina in al-Samhūdī, *Wafā’ al-wafā bi-akhbār dār al-Muṣṭafā* (Cairo, 1373/1953), II, 747–56; M.J. Kister, “The Market of the Prophet”, *JESHO* 8 (1965), 272–76; = his *Studies in Jāhiliyya and Early Islam* (Ashgate, 1980), no. 9.

⁷⁰See Thierry Bianquis and Pierre Guichard, art. “Sūḳ: 1. In the Traditional Arab World”, *EI*², IX, 786–89; Hugh Kennedy, “The Impact of Muslim Rule on the Pattern of

and provincial authorities had no role in the Islamic marketplace; but this role was substantially different from that of their Byzantine counterparts.

The extent and meaning of this difference remain to be spelled out. The difficulty of the task appears in the well-known example of the Islamic office of market inspector or *muhtasib*. It used to be thought that this office had its origins in the late Roman Empire, but this is no longer clear. The office itself was rather limited in its authority. However, the paucity of direct evidence for some such office in the Islamic lands from the seventh through the tenth centuries does not necessarily mean that it did not then exist.⁷¹ For now, we may simply point to a general pattern or trend. The two sides shared a common Hellenistic and late Roman heritage, and their productions and styles in many areas—economic, artistic, intellectual—had much in common. Nonetheless, each resolutely went its own way, as in this example of the marketplace. Frequent contacts did not bridge the gap.

Commercial and diplomatic contacts required what Islamic law calls the *amān*, or “safe-conduct”. Though we know a great deal about the theory of the *amān* from Islamic legal sources,⁷² we have no documentary (archival) evidence for it during the period of the Arab–Byzantine encounter. For later periods, where we do have such evidence, we find the *amān* negotiated between a host (such as the Mamlūk sultan) and a group that sends visitors (such as the Venetian commune). This is unlike the situation in Islamic law, where the *amān* is always negotiated between individuals.⁷³ Trading communities of Muslims resided in Constantinople and other important cities; their status, and especially the mosques built for their use, were negotiated in treaties.⁷⁴

The endless campaigns and raids resulted in large numbers of prisoners on both sides. One result of this was a fascinating, if small literature of captivity narratives, ranging from apparently sober autobiographical accounts

Rural Settlement in Syria”, in Pierre Canivet and Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais, eds., *La Syrie de Byzance à l’Islam, VIIe–VIIe siècles* (Damascus, 1992), 291–97.

⁷¹Sunayd (al-Ḥusayn ibn Dāwūd, d. 221/836), a scholar resident in al-Maṣṣīṣa in the *thughūr*, was known as “the *muhtasib*”. However, the sources do not describe his function, and the title is just as likely to derive from his Qur’ānic exegesis. See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’riḫ Baghdād* (Cairo, 1931), VIII, 42–44; Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 164.

⁷²Willi Heffening, *Das islamische Fremdenrecht* (Hannover, 1925).

⁷³John Wansbrough, “The Safe-Conduct in Muslim Chancery Practice”, *BSOAS* 34 (1971), 20–35; *idem*, *Lingua Franca in the Mediterranean* (Richmond, Surrey, 1996), esp. 133–34.

⁷⁴S.W. Reinert, “The Muslim Presence in Constantinople, 9th–15th Centuries: Some Preliminary Observations”, in Héléne Ahrweiler and Angeliki E. Laiou, eds., *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, 1998), 125–50.

to framing stories worthy of the *Thousand and One Nights*.⁷⁵ Redeeming and/or exchanging prisoners was a main object of Byzantine–Arab diplomacy over long periods of time, and received much attention from Arabic historical writers.⁷⁶ The tenth-century historian and geographer al-Mas‘ūdī described in detail the ceremony of redeeming prisoners that took place at intervals at the river Lamos, near Ṭarsūs. Significantly, the elaborate ceremony surrounding this event culminated in a market or fair, apparently under close supervision.⁷⁷

Questions of cultural influence are most vivid in the history of art and architecture. Oleg Grabar in Chapter 10 shows how Byzantine forms and motifs taken over in early Islam received new meanings in the process. Byzantine artistic tradition was only one among the many available to the world-conquering Muslims, but an especially important one.⁷⁸ Not surprisingly, once Islamic art and architecture had reached maturity, they had considerable prestige and influence in the court and high aristocracy of Byzantium itself.⁷⁹

Gustave von Grunebaum in Chapter 11 explores the vast reaches of Byzantine and Islamic intellectual history. In philosophy, *belles lettres*, and many forms of religious expression, time and again, he finds that “it is similarities rather than influences that we are able to observe”. For all the “similarity of atmosphere” between the medieval Greek epic (*Digenis Akritas*) and the Arabic stories of Sayyid Baṭṭāl and ‘Umar ibn al-Nu‘mān, they do not grow out of a shared development. Above all, the classical heritage had a different fate in the two civilizations. Each had its humanistic and

⁷⁵For the first type, see the adventures of Hārūn ibn Yahyā, in Ibn Rustah, *al-A‘lāq al-nafīsa*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1891; *BGA* 7), 119–30; French trans. by Marius Canard in *Byzance et les arabes*, II.2, 382–94; Eng. trans. by A.A. Vasiliev, in *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 5 (1932), 149–63; see also M. Izeddin, “Un prisonnier arabe à Byzance au IXe siècle”, *Revue des études islamiques* 15 (1947), 41–67. For the second type, see Marius Canard, “Les aventures d’un prisonnier arabe et d’un patrice byzantin à l’époque des guerres bulgare-byzantines”, *DOP* 19 (1956), 51–72; = his *Byzance et les musulmans*, no. 16. In general, see Ḥāmid Zayyān Ghānim Zayyān, *al-Asrā al-muslimūn fī bilād al-Rūm* (Cairo, 1989).

⁷⁶See below, Chapter 4 (Kennedy); Canard, “Relations politiques et sociales entre Byzance et les arabes”, 35–56; = his *Byzance et les musulmans*, no. 19; L. Simeonova, “In the Depths of Tenth-Century Byzantine Ceremonial: the Treatment of Arab Prisoners of War at Imperial Banquets”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 22 (1998), 75–104.

⁷⁷al-Mas‘ūdī, *al-Tanbih wa-l-ishraf*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1894; *BGA* 8), 189–96; Chapter 6, below (Haldon and Kennedy).

⁷⁸These themes are developed further in Oleg Grabar’s *The Formation of Islamic Art*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, 1987).

⁷⁹André Grabar, “Le succès des arts orientaux à la cour byzantine sous les Macédoniens”, *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, Dritte Folge, 2 (1951), 32–60.

philosophical traditions; each saw a new resurgence of “elements of popular feeling and popular modes of thought” around the middle of the eleventh century; and each arrived at its own synthesis of all these elements, independently of the other. Von Grunebaum does not dwell on the intellectual contacts that occasionally took place at the highest political level, including royal gifts of manuscripts and “lending” of scholars. However, such episodes did little to change the intellectual and spiritual picture, and are best viewed in the same light as the diplomatic missions and the prestige-laden giftgiving that accompanied them.

By contrast, Lawrence Conrad in Chapter 12 shows that a certain amount of intercultural transmission can be located in historical writing. One reason for this is the presence of an intermediary, Christian Syriac historiography, with its ties to both the Greek and the (emerging) Arabic traditions, together with the peculiar position of Byzantine and early Islamic Syria itself. Conrad’s conclusions regarding Theophilus of Edessa and Theophanes’ “Eastern Source” have been widely accepted. At the same time, all this does not prove von Grunebaum wrong: the Arabic and Byzantine historiographical traditions still proceeded in the main without significant recognition or even awareness of one another.

The frontier was the site of several dissenting or heretical religious movements and trends, notably the Paulicians.⁸⁰ Among the great religious controversies of the age, the Iconoclast crisis in eighth- and ninth-century Byzantium is particularly fascinating, as it involves both high authority and popular feeling. The edict against images by the Umayyad caliph Yazīd II (r. 720–24) clearly had some relation to the subsequent iconoclast legislation of the emperor Leo III (717–41),⁸¹ and there is good reason to think that the crisis was triggered in part by the recent military successes of Islam.⁸² At the same time, Byzantine iconoclasm had deep Christian roots, predating the rise of Islam.⁸³ Patricia Crone in Chapter 13 argues for the role

⁸⁰Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 223; Jenkins, *Byzantium*, 223; Nina G. Garsoian, *The Paulician Heresy: a Study of the Origins and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire* (The Hague, 1967); Paul Lemerle, “L’histoire des Pauliciens d’Asie Mineure d’après les sources grecques”, *Travaux et mémoires* 5 (1973), 1–144.

⁸¹A. A. Vasiliev, “The Iconoclastic Edict of Yazīd II”, *DOP* 9–10 (1955–56), 25–47.

⁸²Peter Brown, “A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy”, *English Historical Review* 88 (1973), 1–34, and in his *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1982), 251–301.

⁸³Ernst Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm”, *DOP* 8 (1954), 83–149; Paul Speck, *Understanding Byzantium: Studies in Byzantine Historical Studies* (Ashgate, 2003), 17–21, 50–83.

of a Judeo-Christian intermediary. In her view, the Muslims did not show that much interest in the question of images overall. More recent contributions have concentrated on Muslim-Christian polemics regarding crosses and images, both within the Islamic world and across the Muslim-Byzantine divide.⁸⁴ There is fertile ground for the study of the Islamic attitude toward figured images in Qur'ānic, *ḥadīth* and legal studies, as well as in the study of the images themselves.⁸⁵

Martyrdom, *Jihād*, Holy War

Chapter 14, an old article of mine, identifies a span of Arab-Byzantine frontier history, the last decades of the second/eighth century, as critical to the development of the ideology and practice of *jihād*. At issue is the migration, or temporary sojourning, of numerous Islamic religious and legal scholars and ascetics to the Byzantine frontier district, and their participation—whether symbolic or real—in fighting there. This phenomenon had been noticed earlier on by Albrecht Noth and has since been discussed by others, amidst disagreement over its historicity and meaning.⁸⁶ Here we may ask briefly what is at stake.

The activity of these scholars and ascetics, together with their literary production, led me and others to think that the *jihād* did not exist, in its full sense, before this time, the late second/eighth century. This may seem innocuous enough. However, most scholarly and popular accounts of the matter assume deep continuity between the early and later history of the Muslim community in this regard. This assumed continuity works diachronically, in the sense that the actions and motivations of Muslim armies, on the Byzantine frontier and elsewhere, are portrayed as essentially the same (if not always as successful) as those of their predecessors in the early wars of Islam in the early first/seventh century. The continuity also works synchronically, in the sense that *jihād* in the path of God is portrayed as at once spiritual and earthly: even if the spiritual reward (for martyrdom) is valued most, earthly rewards (victory, conquest, spoils) are not rejected.

⁸⁴G.D.R. King, "Islam, Iconoclasm, and the Declaration of Doctrine", *BSOAS* 48 (1985), 267–77; Sidney H. Griffith, "Images, Islam and Christian Icons", in Canivet and Rey-Coquais, eds., *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam*, 121–38.

⁸⁵For the *ḥadīth*, see Daan van Reenen, "The *Bilderverbot*, a New Survey", *Der Islam* 67 (1990), 27–77. Rudi Paret's work on images is collected in *Schriften zum Islam*, ed. Josef van Ess (Stuttgart, 1981).

⁸⁶Albrecht Noth, *Heiliger Krieg und heiliger Kampf* (Bonn, 1966); *idem*, "Les *ulamā'* en qualité de guerriers", in *Saber religioso y poder político en el Islam* (Madrid, 1994), 175–95; Jacqueline Chabbi, art. "Ribāt", *EI*², VIII, 493–506; Houari Touati, *Islam et voyage* (Paris, 2000), 237–58 ("Le séjour dans les marches").

Full continuity is also seen between, on the one hand, the norms of behavior regarding warfare, as these were set out in the early decades of Islam and embodied especially in the exemplum (*sunna*) of the Prophet; and on the other hand, the practice of the community in history.⁸⁷ Corollaries of this “continuous” *jihād* include the portrayal of Islam as utterly and essentially warlike; or else the opposite, namely the view that the “real” *jihād* does not involve war at all, but is rather the spiritual struggle against the self, with the result that Islam is portrayed as utterly and essentially unwarlike. For some historians, all this has resulted in a near-divorce between the study of the *jihād* and religious ideology on the one hand, and the study of “real” historical armies and military institutions on the other.

What was it that came into existence in the late second/eighth century? Or in other words, just what do we mean by “*jihād*”? The answer given in Chapter 14 is incomplete; more recent contributions carry the question further, but still do not resolve it. We would do well at this point to look at the controversy that has now gone on for a full century, over the origins of the Ottoman state and the history of fighting and holy war (*ghazā*) in thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Anatolia. Participants in that controversy have tended either to affirm or deny that the early Ottoman state, or enterprise, was devoted at its very core to warfare in the path of God. Linda Darling has recently suggested that rather than identify such a “foundational essence” for the Ottoman state, we should look for “contestation among groups with different agendas and different concepts of the relevance and value of *ghazā* for their own interests and goals”.⁸⁸ A similar lesson may apply to the early Caliphate and its presence on the Arab–Byzantine frontier. We must identify the groups in question, bearing in mind that ideological positions (regarding holy war, *jihād* and so on) are not necessarily the expressions or tools of easily identifiable social groups: after all, people engaged in these activities for a variety of reasons, often contradictory ones.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Alfred Morabia in *Le Ġihād dans l’Islam médiéval* (Paris, 1993), proceeds smoothly—but not naïvely—from historical narrative to normative and hortatory literature. More problematic in this regard is Reuven Firestone’s *Jihād: the Origins of Holy War in Islam* (Oxford, 1999).

⁸⁸ Darling, “Contested Territory”, 134. The word *ghazā*, which appears throughout the sources for Ottoman origins, is not used in the Arabic texts for the earlier period, which do distinguish between *ghazw* (“raiding”) and other types of activity. However, the underlying issues are at least comparable. More is at stake than the precise meaning of words such as *jihād*, *ribāṭ* and *ghazw*, which sometimes shifted and overlapped.

⁸⁹ Darling, “Contested Territory”, 134–35. Likewise, see Chabbi, “Ribāṭ”, 497, on the sociological vagueness of such expressions as “the Muslims” in texts relating to *jihād*; and Touati, *Islam et voyage*, 247: “The tension between *murābaṭa* and *mudjāwara* cuts across

The scholar-ascetics of the Arab-Byzantine frontier belonged to the group known (at least later) as the *'ulamā'*, so difficult to identify sociologically.⁹⁰ The collected biographies of many of these men⁹¹ emphasize their participation in scholarly activity, especially transmission of *ḥadīth*. Their economic activities rarely appear in the biographical sources, although some of them must have lived from commerce and trade.⁹² Some of the best-known ones held official positions, notably *qādī* of Ṭarsūs and al-Maṣṣīṣa.⁹³ But what they stand out for is their association with the frontier. Were they literally fighters? Perhaps not: they lacked the training and gear, and many must have been old or unhealthy. It is later sources—from the fourth/tenth century onward—that embellish these biographies with deeds of derring-do; earlier sources show more sobriety.⁹⁴ Their warfare is thus largely symbolic.⁹⁵ On the other hand, their identification with the frontier and with fighting in some sense does demonstrably go back to the later second/eighth century, and is not the product of later romantic imagining.⁹⁶

Similar figures and themes appear on the other great frontiers of medieval Islam, especially Central Asia, North Africa and Spain.⁹⁷ The scholar-ascetics of the Arab-Byzantine frontier stand out among these in some ways, including their general lack of interest in theological controversy. The anti-nomian trend of some other Islamic frontier zones has also been found lacking among them.⁹⁸ However, we may locate such a trend in some (later) biographies of the famous Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 161/777-78), which portray him as dwelling in the frontier region and obsessed with ritual purity and

the same groups and the same social environments”.

⁹⁰See R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: a Framework for Interpretation* (Princeton, 1991), 187-208.

⁹¹Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 156-84.

⁹²However, the *thughūr* were not a place of international, long-range trade, see above.

⁹³Including the famous Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 223/837); see Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb*, ed. D.S. Margoliouth (Leiden, 1923-31), V, 162; Touati, *Islam et voyage*, 247.

⁹⁴In addition to Chapter 14 below, see Chabbi, “Ribāṭ”, 498-99.

⁹⁵Touati, *Islam et voyage*, 256-57, says that Noth and I claimed literal truth for their participation in fighting. I don't think I actually declared for this; I did comment (*Aristocratic Violence*, 158) that in these hundreds of biographical notices of scholars and ascetics of the Byzantine frontier, not a single one of them dies in combat.

⁹⁶Touati, 247-48, against Chabbi's maintaining the contrary.

⁹⁷See Chabbi, “Ribāṭ”. For North Africa/Ifriqiya, see also Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: the Rise of the Fatimids*, trans. Michael Bonner (Leiden, 1996), 221-38; and for the eastern frontier, Bernd Radtke, “Theologen und Mystiker in Ḥurāsān und Transoxanien”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 136 (1986), 536-69.

⁹⁸Darling, “Contested Territory”, 149-50.

radical ascetic practice. All this corresponds to currents clearly identifiable in Ṭarsūs and the *thughūr* in the fourth/tenth century.⁹⁹

What stands out most regarding the scholar-ascetics is their relation to authority, both caliphal and prophetic, as I discuss in Chapter 14. The new ideology of *jihād* presented a challenge to the rulers, some of whom responded by projecting the *jihād* as part of their own identity, just as the scholar-ascetics had done before them. In this way the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809), a major actor in the Arab–Byzantine wars since his adolescence, became the first “*ghāzī*-caliph”.¹⁰⁰ He was followed in this by his son al-Mu‘taṣim, who led the famous expedition against Amorion in 838; by Sayf al-Dawla, the tenth-century Ḥamdānid *amīr*; and others. The point here, much emphasized by the panegyricists, is the ruler’s personal participation in the *jihād*, when he is under no constraint to do this. The poet Abū Nuwās says to Hārūn:

You could, if you liked, resort to some pleasant place
While others endured hardships instead of you.¹⁰¹

Hārūn takes on this role of fighting volunteer in addition to the role assigned to him by the Sacred Law (*sharī‘a*), that of leader, Imām, of the community in its wars.

Volunteering must therefore be at the heart of any working definition of the “new” *jihād* of the late second/eighth century. Volunteers, *muṭṭawwi‘a*, had always been part of the Islamic armies; we see them under the Umayyads, an often despised group serving next to the well-paid regulars (*muqātila*). Legal works on the law of war or *siyar* have a great deal to say about their status and their participation or non-participation in the spoils. Over the long term there is a reinterpretation of this volunteering, which acquires more and more ideological freight. In the *ḥadīth* ascribed to the Prophet that expresses so much of the ideal of *jihād* as this was current in third/ninth century, we find constant calls to self-sacrifice. At the same time, the jurists, notably the great al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/819–20), call upon the constituted authority to guard the frontiers by keeping them “stuffed with men” (*sadd aṭrāf al-muslimīn bi-l-rijāl*).¹⁰²

⁹⁹Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 125–30.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 99–106.

¹⁰¹Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān* (Beirut, 1962), 641.

¹⁰²On all this, see Michael Bonner, “*Ja‘ā’il* and Holy War in Early Islam”, *Der Islam* 68 (1991), 45–64; *idem*, *Aristocratic Violence*, 11–42, esp. 39–41. On “stuffing the frontiers”, compare the panegyric of Hārūn al-Rashīd by Marwān ibn Abī Ḥaṣṣa, quoted by al-Ṭabarī,

Chapter 15, a recent article by David Woods, casts new light on a pair of important Latin texts describing the martyrdom of the Byzantine garrison of Gaza (and, according to Woods, of the patriarch Sophronius) during the early Islamic conquests.¹⁰³ The fact that this episode does not appear in any Islamic texts does not imply that it did not happen. We have no contemporary Arabic accounts of any of these events; and as Woods says here, we simply do not know how Muslim commanders treated their prisoners of war in the 630s. It should be pointed out that commanders on both sides, throughout the Arab-Byzantine wars, could and often did execute their prisoners, just as they could, at discretion, release them, hold them for ransom, or include them among the spoils of war. What is at issue here is the Muslim authorities' attempt to convert the prisoners forcibly, which goes against Islamic law as known to all schools. However, the law of war, together with the *jihād* itself, were still in embryo in the 630s, as I have claimed here. The dating and historicity of the Christian texts is another matter. Delehayé said that the list of names—anything but neat and idealized—at the end of the first text argues for authenticity. On the other hand, the story has several legendary elements.

This Christian martyrdom narrative shows us once again that the ideology and practice of holy war constitute a shared heritage among the monotheist traditions, even if they have mainly employed this heritage in fighting and killing one another. This is especially true of martyrdom: beginning with Stoicism and late antique Judaism (these two converging in the Fourth Book of Maccabees), then forming a foundation stone of the early Christian church, martyrdom went on to constitute a basic element of the practice and ideology of *jihād* in Islam.¹⁰⁴ Martyrdom and holy war could easily be made the focus of another collection of articles dealing, among other things, with resemblances and convergences between the *jihād* and the various types of holy war practiced by the Crusaders as well as by Byzantium

Ta'rikh, III, 741: "The thughūr are blocked by Hārūn (*wa-suddat bi-Hārūna l-thughūru*), and through him / the ropes of the Muslim state are firmly plaited".

¹⁰³This article's welcome appearance spared me from including in this volume the influential but long-outdated article by Hippolyte Delehayé, "Passio sanctorum sexaginta martyrum", *Analecta Bollandiana* 28 (1904), 289-307.

¹⁰⁴A. J. Wensinck, "The Oriental Doctrine of the Martyrs", *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen*, Afdeeling Letterkunde, 53: A (Amsterdam, 1922); Noth, *Heiliger Krieg*; Etan Kohlberg, "Medieval Muslim Views on Martyrdom", *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen*, 60.7 (Amsterdam, 1997), 279-307; *idem*, art. "Shahīd", *EJ*², IX, 203-207; art. "Märtyrer", in Hans Dieter Betz *et al.*, *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4th ed., V (Tübingen, 2002), 861-78, esp. 871-72, "VII. Islam" (Michael Bonner).

itself.¹⁰⁵ Rather than produce such a volume, however, I conclude by repeating that in the formation of these Islamic ideas and practices, there was no environment more important than the Arab-Byzantine frontier and the centuries-long, tragic encounter between these two civilizations.

¹⁰⁵A good beginning is still Canard's "La guerre sainte dans le monde islamique et dans le monde chrétien", *Revue africaine* 79 (1936), 605-23; = his *Byzance et les musulmans*, no. 8. Byzantine notions have been discussed by Paul Lemerle in "Byzance et la Croisade", *Relazioni del X Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche*, 3 (Florence, 1955), 595-620; and now, but not critically, by Geoffrey Regan in *First Crusader: Byzantium's Holy Wars* (New York, 2001). Crusading ideology, including its possible relation to Islamic *jihād* are discussed by Noth in *Heiliger Krieg und heiliger Kampf*; Carl Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens* (Stuttgart, 1935); and Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia, 1986).

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