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**The Paulicians (Al-Bayāliqa) in Muslim Sources and Their Role
in Wars between Arabs and Byzantines**

In Armenia during the middle of the fifth century, a group of Christians named the Paulicians whose ancestry were the followers of Paul of Samosata appeared in remote areas of Eastern Asia Minor.¹

Those people were known by their contemporaries as “Paulicians”. Most probably they formed a sect which continued an earlier form of Christianity in Armenia.² Recently scholars propounded a theory that the Armenians gave them the name Pauliakus in degradatory sense, most probably because of their faith. The Arabic word bayāliqa is possibly a derivation going back to an Armenian term.³

Almost the whole preserved history of the Paulicians has been entirely written by their enemies who viewed them as a dualistic, heretical sect, derived originally from Manichaeism and therefore they were not considered real Christians.⁴ Most of our intimate knowledge about Paulicians and their faith derives from Christian sources.

According to Runciman, the Paulicians were a group of people who settled among the Armenians in the mountains of Lesser Armenia on Upper Euphrates where Manichaeism flourished.⁵

¹ S. Runciman, *Manicheizm średniowieczny*, transl. J. Prokopiuk, B. Zborski, Marabut, Gdańsk 1996, p. 33.

² A. Fortescue, *The Church in the Wilderness* article in: *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Kevin Knight Remy. 1999, vol. XI.

³ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 52

⁴ Other authors go to say that the Paulicians were probably the remnant of an old Judeo-Christians Church, which had spread up through Syria into Armenia. J.B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene*, Macmillan & Co., London 1889, p. 151; Runciman, *Manicheizm średniowieczny*, *op.cit.*, p. 33-34.

⁵ Runciman, *ibid.* About Mani faith and its influences over the area of Asia Minor see Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūğ aḍ-ḍahab wa-ma‘ādin al-ğawhar*, ed. by M.M. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Dār ar-Rağā‘*, Al-Qāhira 1938, vol. I, p. 114.

Recent studies revealed that they became acquainted with the New Testament and conceived the idea of blending the theory of two independent principles with Christian doctrines.⁶

A. Miquel analyzed the rich information on the Paulicians and their relationships to the Muslim caliphate contained in the works of Al-Mas'ūdī, Ibn Ḥurradābih and Qudāma.⁷ Nevertheless, Muslim sources add but little to our knowledge about the Paulician doctrine, their social life and historical developments of their small community.

It seems that the Byzantine idea of connecting Paulicians to Manichaeism is not clearly reflected in Muslim material. Although the Arabs have good information about the Manichaeism and its adherents, there is no direct mention about the Paulicians as far as this information is concerned.

The Muslim sources on many occasions give details about Manichaeism. For instance, Ibn an-Nadīm in Al-Fihrist devotes more than twenty pages to Manichaeism, its doctrine, sects and followers inside and outside the caliphate does not however mention the Paulicians.⁸

Most probably the only Arabic writer who reflects on the Paulicians and their connection with dualism is Al-Mas'ūdī. The author in his presentation on Christianity and its creeds states that there are many Christian faiths, the widely known among them are the Malikaniyya (Melchites), Al-Ya'qūbiyya (Jacobites) and An-Nasṭūriyya (Nestorians). He adds that among others there is the Al-Ariyūsiyya (Arians), Mārūniyya (Maronites) and the Bayāliqa (Paulicians). According to Al-Mas'ūdī, the Paulicians were adherents of Būluṣ as-Simsāṭī (Paul of Samosata), one of the Patriarchs of Antioch, considered to be the founder of a new sect uniting elements of Christianity, the faith of the Magians and Dualism.⁹

In this point, Al-Bīrūnī gives a very interesting account about the first contact between Christianity and Manichaeism. He states that when the

⁶ J.B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, London 1912, vol. II, pp. 33-35; J. Assfalg and P. Krüger, *Słownik chrześcijaństwa Wschodniego*, transl. A. Bator and M.M. Dziekan, Wydawnictwo „Książnica”, Katowice 1998, article: Paulicjanie, p. 258.

⁷ A. Miquel, *Ġuġrāfiyyat dār al-Islām al-bašariyya (La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11^e siècle)*. Translated by I. ((r(, Wizārat Awqāf, Syria 1985, pp. 170,228.

⁸ Ibn an-Nadīm, *Al-Fihrist, Dār al-Ma'rifa*. Beirut n. d., pp. 445-447.

⁹ The term *ṭanawīyya* in Arabic means dualism, Al-Mas'ūdī knows that according to thire fundamental doctrine there are two principles: an evil God and a good God; the light against the darkness and all the kinds of contrasts. Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūġ aḍ-ḍahab wa-ma'ādin al-ġawhar*, op.cit., pp. 113-114; Al-Mas'ūdī, *At-Tanbīh wa-āl-išrāf*, ed. by V.R. Baron Rosen, Caro Amico, republished by Maktabat Ḥayyāt, Beirut 1965, p. 151

disciples (apostles) of Jesus spread through the countries, one of them came to Persia, and both Bardaysān and Marcion were among those who followed his call and heard the word of Jesus. So each created his own separate doctrine, containing the dogma of the eternal existence of two principles, Each of them produced a gospel the origin of which he traced back to the Messiah, and declared everything else to be a lie.¹⁰ No wonder that, some scholars maintain that their beliefs may represent a survival of Persian and ancient Zoroastrian traditions.¹¹

The identification of Al-Mas'ūdī has been challenged by modern scholarship on the ground that he attributed to the Paulicians Magian-Manichean and not Adoptionist doctrine. The most fundamental support for the theory identifying Paulicianism and Adoptionism is the double similarity between the doctrine of the Key of Truth—the Paulician main Book—and the condemned dogma of Paul of Samosata.¹²

E. Gibbon—most probably due to the fact that Armenia in the fifth century seemed to be threatened by a Marcionite irruption from Syria—maintains that the Paulicians were descendants of a dualistic sect reformed to bring it into closer accord with primitive Christianity and there is a strong Marcionite element in their faith. The author further maintained that it was closely related to the early Christian heresy of the Marcionites.¹³

Al-Mas'ūdī also refers that the Marcionites as a Christian was adherents of a dualistic faith and maintains that the basis of Marcion and Marcionite theology is similar to the faith of Mani.¹⁴ The author mentions a number of Marcionite books which most probably survived till his time. Among these are the book of Sifr al-asfār and Ḥazā' in ad-dīn wa-sirr al-'ālamīn.¹⁵

¹⁰ Abū ar-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, *Al-Āṭār al-bāqīya 'an al-qurūn al-ḥāliya*. Translated into English and edited by C. Edward Sachau, W.H. Allen & Co., London 1879, pp. 189 and 27.

¹¹ Nina Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy. A Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire*, Mouton, The Hague 1967, p. 192.

¹² Adoptionism is a Christian heresy that developed during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. It opposed the doctrine of an independent, personal subsistence of the logos, affirmed the sole deity of God the Father, and thus represented the extreme monotheistic view. Though it regarded Christ as redeemer, it clung to the numerical unity of the deity. Garsoïan, *op.cit.*, pp. 211-212.

¹³ Gibbon, *Idmiḥlāl al-imbirāṭūriyya ar-Rūmiyya*, *The Decline of the Roman Empire*, translated into Arabic by F. Ğuwayda, *Al-Hay'a al-'Āmma li-l-Kitāb*, Cairo 1960, p. 346.

¹⁴ Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūğ*, *op. cit.*, p. 79

¹⁵ Al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, *op. cit.*, pp. 101, 135.

Unfortunately Al-Mas'ūdī's information is vague due to the fact that it is mentioned in his third book *Tanbih*, thought to be the second abridgment of his lost voluminous *Aḥbār az-zamān*. It is therefore difficult to assert that there was a close link between the Paulicians and some gnostic sect, particularly the Marcionites.

The Paulicians and the Iconoclastic movement

The study of religious paintings shows that Mani himself was a painter¹⁶. Manichaeism spread rapidly in the Middle East and in the eastern provinces of Persia and Central Asia.¹⁷ On the other hand, the essential principle of the Paulician faith was the rejection of images and figures.¹⁸

Al-Mahdī (ruled 775-785) actively persecuted the Manichaeans, whom he defined as heretics so as to deny them the status of a protected community. He also tried to identify Manichaeans who had joined the Muslim community without abandoning their previous ideas and practices. During the reign of Al-Muqtadir (908-932), the Manichaeans in the Muslim caliphate were treated as atheist and generally they were persecuted by Muslim. Accordingly, the caliph Al-Muqtadir ordered the transfer of the seat of their leader from Baghdad to Samarkand. Contrary to the Manichaeans the Paulicians were accepted and considered by the Muslims as Christians subjects.¹⁹

As contemporary studies show, the identification of the Paulicians and Marcionites is difficult on doctrinal ground, and proofs supporting the hypothesis of historical contact between them are not satisfying.²⁰

Generally, the hypothesis that Paulicians had direct links with the religion of Mani are difficult to assert. In this subject, Bury offers the

¹⁶ In the field of art, this kind of drawing is known by the name "the Manichaean Painting". See S. Okasha, *An Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Cultural Terms. English-French-Arabic*, The Egyptian International Publishing Co. Longman, Giza-Egypt 1990, pp. 273-274.

¹⁷ In the year 923 during persecutions of the Manichaeans, the Muslims of Baghdad collected all the Manichaean paintings and burned thousands of gilded and silver paintings. It is said that silver and gold streamed from them on the ground. *Ibid.*

¹⁸ About the Manichaeans and their faith see the chapter singled out by Al-Bāqillānī: *At-Tamhīd fī ʾar-radd ʾalā al-malāḥida*, pp. 68-74.

¹⁹ According to Al-Mas'ūdī the word Manichaean was used as a synonym for miscreant or atheist. See Al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, op. cit., p. 212.

²⁰ Garsoïan, op.cit., p. 205.

following opinion: although the doctrine of the Paulicians was similar to the dualist doctrine of Mani, there were many differences between them.²¹

It has been shown that the Paulicianism, both in Armenia and in Byzantium, were iconoclastic. It seems, however, that there is no direct connection between the early teaching of Paul of Samosata and the later Paulician doctrine. The doctrine was founded by Constantine of Mannalis (mid-VII century), under whose leadership, the sect grew in number and influence.

The founder of the Paulician doctrine was, like Paul, born in Samosata in the province of Commagene (the Taurus the mountains). The area was apparently the abode of the Iconoclasts and the Paulicians faith.²² Constantine of Mannalis, established the first Paulician community at Kibossa, near Colonia in Armenia, and there its members spread to organize other communities all over Asia Minor. With time they grew in number, so much so that soon they posed a real threat to the Byzantine government.²³

Because of their faith, the Paulicians became the target of frequent campaigns of the Byzantine army against them. Since the time of Constantine IV through the reign of Justinian I the persecutions were especially cruel.²⁴ These constant persecutions made them decide it right to conceal or even deny their ideas and beliefs.

Another person to play an important role in the history of the Paulician prior to the eighth century was a man called Baanes. As the leader of the sect he promulgated a doctrine of military retaliation, which inclined most of the Paulicians to take part in warfare against their persecutors. It was also under his leadership that the Paulicians decided to defend themselves against their Byzantine enemy by entering into an alliance with the Arabs who were then making serious incursions into the Byzantine territory.

Another element which linked them to the Muslims were their teachings. The greatest was their opposition to mariolatory common for Paulicians and

²¹ Bury, *op.cit.*, p. 397.

²² Bury maintained that the Paulician sect was born in Commagene and that the inaugurator of iconoclasm was, if not born at Germanicia, closely connected with it. Bury, *op.cit.*, p. 398.

²³ A. Fortescue, Paulician, article in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. XI, Kevin Knight Remy 1999

²⁴ It is a noteworthy to mention here that the first iconoclastic emperors (Leo III and his successors) protected the Paulicians and these emperors even were considered by Paulicians as practically Paulicians. This is probably attributed to the fact that the Paulicians were also iconoclasts. G. Ostrogorski, *Dzieje Bizancjum*, PAN, Warszawa 1968, p.197.

Muslims was the undue respect for relics and symbols, figures and images.

Generally, Christians considered the Paulicians to be a small group of heretics who rejected the Old Testament and a part of the New Testament (they apparently honoured only the gospels of St. Luke and St. Paul). For them Christ was an angel sent into the World by God. The task of Christ, according to the Paulicians, consisted only in teaching. The true baptism and Eucharist are just hearing his words.²⁵ They did not respect any ecclesiastical hierarchy nor sacraments and rituals.²⁶

Like the monophysites they strongly opposed the worship of the mother of Christ, and entertained but small veneration for the cross. For them Mary was merely a human agent and the wood of the cross merely a material instrument.²⁷ To honour the crucifix was specially reprehensible, since Christ had not really been crucified.²⁸ The Paulicians also regarded the Trinity, purgatory and intercession of the saints as unscriptural.²⁹

According to J.B. Bury, the monotheletism of the seventh century was a connecting link between monophysitism and iconoclasm; but there were two new influences that affected the eighth century movement and gave it a peculiar character, namely the Muslim religion and the Paulician doctrines.

Bury maintained that iconoclasm for the Paulicians appeared more important than in Islam.³⁰ Even the establishment of the Paulicians in Samosata from the beginning was connected with the opponents of iconolatry.³¹ It could be said that the appearance of iconoclasm in the 8th century in some respects was animated by the Paulician spirit.³²

²⁵ Hans-Wilhelm Haussig, *Historia kultury bizantyńskiej*, przełożył Tadeusz Zabłudowski, Warszawa 1969, p. 302; Ostrogorski, *Dzieje*, op.cit., pp. 191, 192.

²⁶ Fortescue, *ibid.*

²⁷ Bury, op.cit., p. 397.

²⁸ Fortescue, *ibid.*

²⁹ In 1828 the manuscript of an ancient book entitled "The Key of Truth" was discovered in Armenia. It provides us with the greatest detail of the teachings of the Paulicians. It was translated into English by F. Coneybear at the beginning of the 20th century. Most of our information concerning the Paulician doctrine are derived from this book. Runciman, op.cit., p. 59.

³⁰ Bury, op.cit., p. 431.

³¹ C. Diehl et G. Marçais, *Histoire du Moyen Age*, Les Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1936, p. 234; Haussig, op.cit., p. 302; Bury, op.cit., p. 397.

³² Of the Paulician sects may be mentioned the Albigenses who probably belonged to them. The derivation of Albigensian doctrine particularly in their attitude towards worship of pictures and the main principals of two confronted power controlling the world are notable here. C. Stephenson, *Mediaeval History*, New York 1943, pp. 445-446; Painter A., *A History of the Middle Ages*, New York 1954, p. 306; Bury, op. cit., p. 397; A. Nazmi, *The Cluniac tradition in Oriental Studies*, SAI 4, Warszawa 1996, p. 109

The Paulician doctrine appeared not long before the birth of the great iconoclast Leo the Isaurian, whose religious movement in some respects was animated by the same spirit. It could be thus said that there exists a connecting link between monophysitism, Paulicians and iconoclasm.

It is not necessary to go here into further details concerning the Paulician creed, but their relation to the Arab Muslims is of special importance here.

The Paulicians and Muslims in History

It seems that the Paulician idea had among Muslims more respect than that of any other Christian sect, and therefore the Muslims seem to have shown more sympathy for the Paulicians than for the Byzantines.³³

It could be said that from historical and dogmatic point of view there was some link between Monophysitism, Paulician doctrine and iconoclasm, none of these doctrines was new in the region and they were revealed connection with some old controversies.³⁴

The Arabs term Al-Bayālīqa derives from the form "Paulikianoi" which seems to have been used by their opponents or, as mentioned above, from the Armenian word Pauliakus. The Arabs used the name Al-Baylaqānī as an Arabic epithet (nisba) describing the head of the Paulicians.³⁵

In their reports on the sect, the Muslim writers do not say much about the Paulician creed and they concentrate above all on military cooperation with the Arabs against Byzantium.

During the frontier wars between the caliphate and the Byzantine Empire the Paulicians lived in remote areas of eastern Asia Minor near the Euphrates River springs. Supported by and allied with the caliphate, the Paulicians grew in power, actively participating in Muslim war against the Byzantium.

It seems that a great number of them rebelled and fled to the Muslims. The Arabs, as mentioned above, treated their Paulician allies in Asia Minor in a special way. The Muslim caliphs had generally afforded them hospitable shelter: first, the Paulicians were the main enemy of the Byzantines; second,

³³ Runciman, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

³⁴ According to S. Runciman, In the year 727 during the reign of Leo III, a meeting between the Patriarch of Constantinople and Genesisios, the chief of Paulician took place in the capital of the Empire concerning the iconoclast, accordingly the Emperor issued his decree against the worship of images. Runcimann, *Manicheizm średniowieczny*, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

³⁵ LeStrange, *Buldān al-ḥilāfa aš-šarqiyya*, translated by Bašīr Fransīs and Kurkīs 'Awāḍ, *Maṭba'at ar-Rābiṭa*, Baḡdad 1954, p. 151.

they were west Armenian natives who knew the region well, and who could serve as guides during the Muslim marches against Byzantine frontiers.

The alliance with the caliphate was attractive for the Paulicians as well; it seemed to offer them the solution to their problems with the Byzantines.

The early Muslim efforts were aimed at subduing the fortifications along with the Byzantine frontier. The first military expeditions were sent towards Armenia in the times of the caliph 'Uṭmān.³⁶ 'Ayyād Ibn Ġanam attacked Armenia in 640. Then in 24H./ 645-6 the Muslim commander Ḥabīb Ibn Maslama al-Fihri directed his army towards Armenia³⁷ where he invaded Ṣimšāt (Arsamosate) and later subdued the fortifications of Kamaḥ (Kamcha).³⁸ These events are regarded by Hitti as the final Arab conquest of Iran, Aḍirbayġān and parts of Armenia.³⁹

This region was entirely subdued by the Muslims after a prolonged war ended in 59 H/ 678. The Arabs concluded a treaty of peace, received Tbilisi and the Arab suzerainty was there recognized by the payment of ġizya. The second main town in the region invaded by the Arab was Malāṭiyya (Melitene) near the Euphrates.⁴⁰ Muslims under the same commander marched against Byzantium, though they had secured a footing in Armenia already during the reign of Mu'āwiya, the first Umayyad caliph. The Byzantines lost Armenia as a result of the revolt of Patrician who concluded a treaty with Mu'āwiya, sending his son to the court in Damascus.⁴¹

In 655, the Arabs extended their rule over the whole of Armenia with its capital Qālīqala (Karin). In the first half of the eighth century, conquests on the frontiers became a constant trait of the Umayyad policy aimed at establishing a long cordon of Muslim fortifications consisting of ṭuġūr and 'awāṣim⁴².

³⁶ According to M. Canard, the Armenian tradition differs from the Arab in matter of dates and in some minor details. Canard, M., article: Armenia, E.I. New Edition, vol. I, 1960.

³⁷ The Arabs divided Armenia to four sectors starting from the north-east of Armenia to the south-west. This division existed from ancient times, was adopted by the Byzantines (partition of Justinian in 536) and remained in force until the Arab invasion. This system which includes Armenia prima, secunda, tertia, quarta was also taken over by the Arabs. The Arabs usually located the Paulicians and their capital in Fourth Armenia (Lesser Armenia). See Ibn Ḥurradāḍbih, Kitāb al-masālik wa-āl-mamālik, ed. by De Goeje, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1889, p. 123; Canard, *ibid.*

³⁸ According to Ibn Ḥurradāḍbih, Kama(r) is located about 4 persangs from Malāṭiyya; Ibn Ḥurradāḍbih, *op.cit.*, p. 97

³⁹ Ph. Hitti, *The History of the Arabs*, Macmillan and Co., London 1943, p. 176.

⁴⁰ Al-Balāḍurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, Maktabat al-Hilāl, Beirut 1983, p. 185.

⁴¹ Bury, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

⁴² The word ṭuġūr in Arabic means "gaps" as those places were weak points along the borders which the enemy might attack and penetrate. Behind those

These fortifications stretched from Melitene to ʿAṣṣ (Tarsus) near the Mediterranean coast, included Al-Maṣṣīṣa (Mopsuestia) and Mar'aš (Germanicia), as well as major strategic points situated at the intersections of military roads or at entrances of narrow mountain passes⁴³.

Generally, it can be said that war between Byzantium and the Arabs during the Umayyads and 'Abbasids continued without interruption and at times were transferred to Armenia. The Muslims succeeded in subduing the region in 59/678. The principal task of the caliphate consisted in protecting the Muslim empire from its external enemies. This aim served an army stationed there at the disposal of the governor of Al-Ġazīra (Mesopotamian gates).

It seems that the Arabs had different concerns and did their best in carrying on raids against Byzantium from aṭ-ṭuġūr aš-šāmiyya (Taurus gates). Afterwards these raids were launched regularly in summer and winter.

In Al-Ġazīra region the Arabs had another strategic plan, namely to fortify aṭ-ṭuġūr al-ġazariyya and Armenia in order to protect the Muslim borders against any Byzantine incursion⁴⁴.

Throughout the 'Abbasid period, the external threat became very serious: the aggressive offensive attack of the Khazar in Armenia near the heart of the caliphate and the Turkish penetration from the east, were a real danger to the Arab rule in these regions. The Muslim army in Armenia had to fight against both Byzantines and Khazars who at the end of the Umayyad dynasty formed an anti-Arab alliance. The Muslim troops were not able any more to control the borders and the invaders' attack without making alliance with other people.

The demography of the Islamic Byzantine frontiers was composite. On the Muslim side there were Muslims and non-Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs. The Muslim political and military aim was to create a zone between the caliphate and the Byzantium in this area. As a consequence the Arabs had to rely on non-Arab and non-Muslim garrisons stationed in Asia Minor in order to protect the fortified points. A great number of non-Arab and non-Muslim soldiers served in Muslim armed forces already at the end of the first century of Hiġra. The force consisted mainly of Persians, Berbers and other Asian and African peoples.⁴⁵ Peoples such as the Slavs were settled in

sensitive centers the frontier zone included another line, which was called 'awāšim that means defence-centres.

⁴³ Hitti, *op.cit.*, p. 199-200.

⁴⁴ F. Osman, *Islamic-Byzantine Frontiers between Military Struggle and Cultural Commercial Relations*, The Arab Writer, Cairo 1966, vol. I, pp. 366-367.

Lu'lu'a (Lulon), Paulicians lived in Tephrike and the Zutt̄s in Melitene. Turkish peoples from Transcaucasus and Paulicians were enrolled into the advancing Umayyad army and fought against the Byzantines.⁴⁶

As far as the Paulicians are concerned, various narratives indicate the existence of a relationship between them and the Arabs, since the Paulicians constantly formed a solid resistance against the Byzantines.

According to Qudāma Ibn Ğa'far, the author of *Kitāb al-ḥarāğ*, "the Bayāliqa (Paulicians) are a people living in the front of the Gazīra gates, they are from the Rūm but they are different in religion and for that reason they helped Muslims against the Byzantines."⁴⁷ From this statement of Qudāma it appears that Al-Bayāliqa were a minor Christian sect. They were Byzantine subjects settled in Asia Minor and as dissidents they supported the Muslim army during Arab-Byzantine wars.

Qudāma, himself a Christian converted to Islam, does not make any remarks about their religion, since unlike Christian historians he apparently did not have any objections to dualist or Manichaean beliefs.

Al-Mas'ūdī in his work *Tanbīh* gives a short note about the Paulicians providing us with further details on the sect's history: "The castle of Abrīq was the town of the Bayāliqa (Paulicians), many of their Patriarchs ruled there, among them was Qarbiyās (Karpeas)⁴⁸ who was the follower of Ṭāhir Ibn al-Ḥusayn, Ḥirshāris (Chrysocheres) and others. The Rūm regained the Abrīq castle from the Muslims".⁴⁹

This paragraph includes some information that would be vainly sought elsewhere, either in earlier or later sources. It is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it shows the nature of the relations between the Muslim government and the Paulicians. It is clear that Al-Mas'ūdī has in mind the reign of the 'Abbasid caliph Al-Ma'mūn or his successor Al-Mu'taṣim, because at that time Ṭāhir was the governor in Ḥurāsān and Armenia.⁵⁰ It is

⁴⁵ R. Levy, *The Social structure of Islam*, 2nd Edition, Cambridge 1962, pp. 410-411. See also A. Nazmi, *Some Aspects of Military relations between Arab and Slavs (Aṣ-Ṣaqāliba) during the Umayyad Dynasty*, SAI 3, 1995, pp. 29-38.

⁴⁶ Nazmi, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Qudāma Ibn Ğa'far, *Kitāb al-ḥarāğ*, ed. by De Goeje, E.J.Brill, Leiden 1880, p. 245.

⁴⁸ Aṭ-Ṭabarī gives the name Qarbiyās where Al-Mas'ūdī gives Qarībās. See Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ ar-rusul wa-al-mulūk*, ed. by M.A. Ibrāhīm, Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo 1979, vol. IX, pp. 207, 219; Al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, op.cit., p. 182.

⁴⁹ Al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, op. cit., p. 183.

⁵⁰ Ibn A'ṭam al-Kūfī, *Al-Futūḥ*, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Bayrūt 1986, vol. VIII, p. 452.

possible to infer that the Paulicians enjoyed a kind of autonomy and self rule under the 'Abbasid and their rulers was vassals of the governor of Ḥurāsān.

Secondly, Al-Mas'ūdī's information about the Muslim losing the castle of Tephrike, the capital of the Paulicians⁵¹, indicates that there was an Arab garrison stationed in the town.⁵² The author also quotes two names of two Paulician rulers: Qarībyās (Karbeas) and Ḥirshāris (Cheysocheir)—the latter was killed in a battle by the Byzantines in 872.⁵³

Thirdly, Al-Mas'ūdī points to the religious nature of the Paulicians leaders by giving them the title patriarch⁵⁴ and not prince or leader.

The close relation between Muslims and Paulicans may be dated to the time of the violent persecutions during the reign of Leo V, Michael II and Michael III. As a consequence of these persecutions a thousand Paulician refugees crossed the frontier to the Muslim lands. The governor of Melitene according to Byzantine sources, received them and their leaders with great honours and granted them land on which they built the cities of Argaous and Amara.

Another report by Theophanes states that the persecutions by Theodora drove Karbeas out from the empire and forced him to ask the caliph for help. As a consequence, Karbeas shifted his capital from Argaous further north to Tephrike, nearer the Muslim lands.⁵⁵

Effectively, the establishment of the Paulicians on the upper Euphrates constituted a direct threat to Byzantium, whereas the military coordination and cooperation between the Arabs and the Paulicians became very close.

Other testimonies which merit also to be considered here are the statements of Aṭ-Ṭabarī. The first one belongs to the events which took place in 242H./850. The author relates that "in this year the Byzantines attacked Muslim borders from Samosata, killed and captured many people and ravaged a number of villages. This was at the same time when 'Alī Ibn Yaḥyā al-Armīnī, the commander of aṭ-ṭuḡūr aš-šāmiyya was busy in attacking the Rūm through Taurus mountains. The Rūm entered the Muslim

⁵¹ The Paulician fortified the city of Taphrike and made it their headquarters. From there they launched continuous raids on the Byzantine Empire aided by the Muslims. Bury, *ibid.*

⁵² Al-Balāḍurī gives further details in this point. He says that to the region of Malaṭiyya Muslim soldiers were regularly sent in summer and returned back in winter when snow started to fall, *op.cit.*, p. 185.

⁵³ Ostrogorski, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ The loanword *baṭrīq*— patriarch means in Arabic 'leader, commander and bishop'. See Al-Ġawālīqī, *Al-Mu'arrab min al-kalām al-a'ġāmī*, edited by A.M. Šākīr, Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub, Cairo. 1969, p. 124.

⁵⁵ Garsoīan, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

land from the side of Abriq, the city of the (patriarch) Qarībiyās. According to him, ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Aqṭa’ (the Muslim commander of aṭ-tuḡūr al-ḡazariyya) with Qarībiyās and other volunteers pursued the fight outside Muslim lands.⁵⁶

Another interesting event also recorded by Aṭ-Ṭabarī took place in the year 246 H./854, when the Muslim army invaded Byzantine borders in one of the routine summer incursions under the command of ‘Alī Ibn Yaḥyā al-Armīnī⁵⁷. The author states that “in this year ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Aqṭa’ with ten thousand and Qarībiyās with about five thousand warriors had attacked the Rūm (Byzantium) in a summer raid.”⁵⁸

The above quotations show how close was the military coordination between the Arabs and the Paulicians: when the circumstances demanded this they launched together attacks and defended themselves together. It is clear in the light of these details that the leader of the Paulicians himself fought arm in arm with the Muslim commander. This explains why the patriarch of Antioch continually insisted on the Byzantine government to evacuate the Paulicians as far as possible from Armenia to any other place in order to separate them from the Muslims.⁵⁹ In this context H. W. Haussig comments that “the Paulicians in the Byzantine history were similar to the ḥawāriḡ in Muslim history.”⁶⁰

Byzantine sources also mention this cooperation, pointing out to the outstanding success of the Paulicians and their Muslim allies, when they together prepared a great expedition and captured Amisus on the Black Sea.⁶¹ Most probably this was one of the expeditions lead by ‘Umar Ibn al-Aqṭa’, the Muslim governor of Melitene.

Most of those events, though in slightly different version, are also recorded in the chronicle of Ibn al-Aṭīr. The author states that: “In 246 ‘Amr (‘Umar) Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Aqṭa’ invaded the Rūm with an army of seventeen thousand men, while Qarībiyās had five thousand men.”

In 249, ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Aqṭa’ attacked again the Rūm with a great army from the Malaṭians soldiers in Burḡ al-Asquf: there he was

⁵⁶ Aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol. IX, op.cit., p. 207.

⁵⁷ There were Armenian in the Muslim territories. serving in Muslim army. but converted to Islam. like the Armenian commander ‘Alī ibn Yaḥyā al-Armīnī who became the amīr—governor of Armenia and Aḡarbayḡān. He was highly regarded by the Muslims as a hero, died during the month of Ramaḡān of the year 249H/863 in a battle with the Byzantines. Aṭ-Ṭabarī, op.cit., p. 252.

⁵⁸ Op.cit., p. 217.

⁵⁹ Runciman, op. cit., p. 48.

⁶⁰ Haussig, op.cit., p. 302.

⁶¹ Garsoīan, ibid.

defeated and killed. 'Alī Ibn Yaḥyā, who was coming from Armenia to help him, was also killed.⁶² This military operation gave the Byzantine chroniclers the pretext to accuse Karbeas of rejecting Christianity and embracing Islam, it also made the Byzantine authorities attempt to exterminate him.⁶³

The theatre of operations

It is necessary to have a closer look at the place of these events. It was a field of constant struggle between the two powers. For the Rūm it was on the one hand a dispute over sovereignty, and on the other hand Armenia for a long time belonged to Byzantium, moreover it was inhabited by Christians.⁶⁴

As for the Arabs, they considered the region as a buffer state. The importance of this area resulted from it being nearest to Baḡdād, the capital of the caliphate. Armenia played an important role in the prosperous trade to the Black Sea, Transcaucasus and to the Slavonic lands.⁶⁵ As mentioned above in 860 one of Paulician-Arab invasion reached the coasts of the Black Sea.⁶⁶

Most probably this expedition was undertaken in order to secure a footing for the caliphate on the Black Sea for trade purposes. During other invasions the Paulician penetrated Asia Minor as far as Ephesus.

Muslim geographical sources speak about the fortified town of Abriq, Tafrīq or sometimes Al-Abriq and places around it. The three words seem to be a misspelling of the name of Tephrike⁶⁷, a town fortified by the Paulicians

⁶² Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Al-Kāmil fī at-tārīḥ*, ed. by C.J. Tornberg, vol. VII & VIII, pp. 31, 41.

⁶³ Runciman, *op.cit.*, pp. 46-47.

⁶⁴ It is noteworthy to mention here that native Armenians formed the main part of the population in this area. There were strong Arab colonies at Dabīl, Qāliqala, and likewise at Barḡa'a in Arran and Taflīs in Ġurzān which were the chief bases of Arab power. Canard, *ibid.*

⁶⁵ The commercial importance of Armenia arose also from the existence of numerous transit routes which crossed the land, and from where Armenia communicated with Byzantium, the Pontic region and the northern coast of the Black Sea reached through Trebizond.

⁶⁶ Runciman, *Manicheizm średniowieczny*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁶⁷ According to V. Minorsky, the name Abriq is derived from the Greek Tephrike or Aphrike; *Ḥudūd al-'ālam. The Regions of the World*, translated and explained by V. Minorsky, University Press, Oxford 1937, p. 218.

and turned to their main centre.⁶⁸ Ibn Rusta for instance, the compiler of the geographical work *Al-A'lāq an-nafisa* refers that “the Euphrates rises in the Rūm land from above the locality of Abrīq”; however he does not give any additional information about this toponym.⁶⁹

Topographically Armenia is divided into a number of basins separated one from another by high mountains which allow to create along them a chain of fortified points. This natural geographical setting of the region gave the Paulicians a perfect quarter: it protected them from the invaders and provided with ideal military base from where they could safely attack Byzantine troops.

The military value of the area is best described by Ibn Ḥurradāḡbih and Yāqūt. Yāqūt in his geographical dictionary gives a full description of Al-Abrīq, the Paulician capital. He mentions that the place is situated in the heart of a mountain; one can enter it through the main gate and then, having crossed an underground passage, emerges in a very vast area with farmhouses and plantations. There is also a church and a mosque for Christians and Muslims. There is also a hall with mummies laid on the ground. There are signs of sword strokes and stabs by spears on their bodies.⁷⁰ A similar description is also found in the work of Ibn Ḥurradāḡbih; the author, however, does not quote the place's name, and does not refer to Al-Abrīq, but rather refers here to the cave of the seven sleepers in Asia Minor.⁷¹

The Paulicians in Literature

The memory of Karbeas, Chrysocheir and in general the Paulicians and their association with the Muslims, passed into folklore. They appear in two national epics, one Muslim another Greek. In the literature of both the Muslims and the Byzantines we find frequent reflections on the hostile relations between the two parties. It has already been stated that the ḡamāsa—war poetry, flourished during the frontier wars. The poems of Abū

⁶⁸ Ibn Rusta, *Al-A'lāq an-nafisa*, ed. by M.J. De Goeje, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1892, p. 89; Ibn Ḥurradāḡbeh, *Al-Masālik wa-āl-mamālik*, edited by M.J. De Goeje, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1889, p. 174; *Al-Mas'ūdī, At-Tanbīh wa-āl-iṣrāf*, op.cit., p. 214. Yāqūt *ar-Rūmī*, *Mu'ḡam al-buldān, Dār Ṣādir*, Beirut 1977, vol. I, p. 52.

⁶⁹ Ibn Rusta, *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu'ḡam al-buldān*, vol. I, p. 71.

⁷¹ Ibn Ḥurradāḡbih, op.cit., p. 107.

Tammām, Al-Buḥturī, Abū Firās al-Hamādānī and Al-Mutanabbī are its best examples.⁷²

In addition to poetry, the war with the Byzantine Empire was also recorded in one of the most popular folk epics in Arabic language: the story of *Ḍāt al-Himma*. It is considered as the longest one of the kind⁷³, covered almost three centuries (from the Umayyad period until the death of the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Wāṭiq) of continuous wars between the Arabs and the Byzantines.⁷⁴

Though some scholars do not admit that historical could anything in common with legendary stories⁷⁵, it is necessary to stress that in this story we have many authentic persons who played a real historical role. From the Muslims side there are the ‘Abbasid caliphs such as Hārūn ar-Rašīd, Al-Ma’mūn, and Al-Mu‘taṣim. Also there is the prince ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, As-Sayyid al-Baṭṭāl who are known Arab heroes from the wars between the Byzantines and the Muslims.⁷⁶

From the Paulician side there is the king Kuršarāš (most probably a misspelled of the last Paulician Patriarch, Chrysocheres), besides we also encounter other persons who were of Byzantine and Paulician origin.⁷⁷

The Byzantine Muslim wars not only had a great influence on the whole of the *Ḍāt al-Himma* epic, but also on the famous Byzantine epic *Digenis Akritas*, where we also find traces of Paulician–Arab relation. The main hero of the epic was a certain Byzantine warrior named *Digenis*, whose mother was an Arab woman. The second hero was *Mawṣūr* (the name may be refer to Arabic name *Maṣūr*)—the son of the Paulician Patriarch John

⁷² F. Osmān, *op.cit.*, vol. III, pp. 288-295.

⁷³ The epic of *Ḍāt al-Himma* consists of about 23,000 pages of medium size, its events cover the continental wars that broke out with the advent of Islam and continued for four centuries during its outspread between the Muslims and the Byzantines during the Umayyads or ‘Abbasids, cf. D. Madeyska, *Historia i legenda w “Siracie Zat al-Himma”*, “Przegląd Orientalistyczny” 1991, no. 3, p. 233-235; Shawqi Abd Al-Hakim, *Princess Dhat Al Himma*, Ministry of Culture, Egypt, 1995, pp. 1-2; Nabīla Ibrāhīm, *Sīrat al-amīra Ḍāt al-Himma*, Cairo n.d., pp. 19-22.

⁷⁴ Canard, M., *E.I. New Edition*, vol. II. Article: *Dhū’ l-Himma*.

⁷⁵ D. Madeyska, *Historia i legenda w siracie Zat Al-Himma*, *op.cit.* p. 237. N. Ibrāhīm, *Sīrat al-amīra Ḍāt al-Himma*, *op.cit.*, p. 87

⁷⁶ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Ibn Ibrāhīm was the governor of Upper Mesopotamia in 757. As-Sayyid al-Baṭṭāl one of the Arab heroes in the war between the Byzantines and the Muslims during the Umayyad dynasty; he died in 122 H.

⁷⁷ Nabīla Ibrāhīm, *Sīrat al-amīra Ḍāt al-Himma*, pp. 134, 170

Chrysocheres the successor of Karbeas⁷⁸ and his grandmother was an Arab princess.⁷⁹

The fate of the Paulicians in History

The first campaign in 870 of Basil I to put an end of Paulicians' power was unsuccessful, but in 871/2 the Emperor defeated the Paulicians and destroyed Tephrike. The result of this campaign appeared decisive for the fate of the Paulicians—they disappeared as a military power.⁸⁰

In fact Basil spared no effort to contact with the Paulicians to conciliate them to their fatherland or at least to neutralize them in peaceful way, but without any factual result. In the ninth century, the emperor Constantine V had transferred most of them from Eastern Anatolia to the area of Thrace in southeastern Europe near in what is today Bulgaria. Some of them were forcibly resettled in the Balkans as a bulwark against the Bulgarian attacks, others were sent to the Balkan to defend it against the Slavs.

Exiled Paulicians formed a significant part of the population and they infiltrated into more westerly regions along the Balkan. Their influence over the region was to last for centuries.⁸¹

In the later time, probably at the end of the tenth century many of Paulicians-Bogomils spread westwards to Serbia. Many of them by the end of the twelfth century found refuge in Bosnia, where they established numerous colonies; but their position was always tenuous due to their challenges to the authority, and both Catholic and Orthodox powers had conducted sustained campaigns of persecution against them.

The war against the Byzantine Empire was not the only case when the Paulicians joined in alliance with the Muslims. The European Medieval sources of the first Crusade refer to the presence of the Paulicians, whom they normally call Publicani, in the Muslim army.

Nina Garsoïan asserts that the Publicani appeared to cooperate with the Crusaders, but their normal position was in the enemy camp. The Publicani

⁷⁸ John Chrysocheres was the cousin of Karbeas. He was made the chief of Paulicians after the death of Karbeas by the Byzantines because of his military skills. See Runciman, *Manicheism*, op.cit., p. 47.

⁷⁹ N. Ibrāhīm, *Sīrat al-amīra Dāt al-Himma*, p. 170.

⁸⁰ Runciman, op.cit., p. 48.

⁸¹ H.T. Norris, *Islam in Balkans. Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World*, University of South Carolina Press 1993, pp. 16-17.

are numbered by the chroniclers among the Muslims rather than among the Christian sectarians.⁸²

The ascendancy of the Ottomans put an end to the oppression suffered by the Paulicians. Large numbers of Paulicians-Bogomiles accepted Islam, which found a responsive hearing among them. According to H.T. Norris, it is arguable that Islamic heterodoxy, or sufism at a popular level, may well have found a fertile ground in some regions, where Balkan Paulicians had become established during the Byzantine age.⁸³

Most probably the Muslim policy towards the Paulicians was caused by their doctrine, which did not accept veneration of the cross and, like Islam, stood strongly opposed to the worship of Holy Mary in whom they refused to see any religious value or import.

In any consideration of Arab relations with the Byzantines, the key fact is that Asia Minor was common ground for both cultural and warlike contacts between them, and the Paulicians were one of the main protagonists in these contacts.

Finally, the Paulicians as well as much of their history and their role in the Byzantine Muslim wars remain obscure to this day. After the first Crusade, no more is heard of the Paulicians as a generic name in Middle Eastern history.

⁸² Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy*, op. cit., p. 14-15.

⁸³ H.T. Norris, *Islam in Balkans*, op.cit., p. 44.