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الدراسات الإسلامية والعربية

مجلة علمية محكمة

العدد السادس والثلاثون

ذو الحجة ١٤٢٩ هـ - ديسمبر ٢٠٠٨ م



مَجَلَّة

كَلِيَّةُ الدِّرَاسَاتِ الإِسْلَامِيَّةِ وَالْعَرَبِيَّةِ

مجلة علمية محكمة
نصف سنوية

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ملخص البحث

الرؤية الإسلامية لبيزنطا خلال فترة الحروب الصليبية

د. محمد الحافظ النقر

عُنيت هذه الدراسة بإلقاء الضوء على رؤية المسلمين لبيزنطا خلال القرنين الثاني عشر والثالث عشر الميلاديين، التي توافقت فترة الحملات الصليبية. وقد أوجدت الحروب الصليبية مناخاً جديداً تغيرت فيه رؤية المسلمين العدائية لبيزنطا التي كانت سائدة خلال القرون السابقة للفترة الصليبية، إلى رؤية أكثر اعتدالاً كما يتضح من دراسة المصادر العربية - الإسلامية والتي تظهر فيها اتجاهات تصور بيزنطا والبيزنطيين بصور جديدة تركز على الجوانب الإيجابية والتبادل الحضاري بين المسلمين وجيرانهم البيزنطيين.

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Conclusion

After what we have discussed, we may formulate the following observations:

This study has revealed both continuities and changes in the Muslim representation of Byzantium and the Byzantines during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Arabic-Islamic texts persist in extolling Byzantine artistic skills, and the fascination that the Muslim Arab writers had for Constantinople continues, although the city underwent some momentous events, the most serious of which was the Latin conquest of 1204, which led to its decline.

The Crusades created a new environment which forced Muslim Arab authors to view Byzantines in a new perspective. This new environment actually led to a transformation in the relations between Byzantium and Islam. Because the Muslims understood the religious and political motivations of the Crusading Franks, they were able to distinguish between al-Rum and al-Ifranj. Moreover, new political alliances appeared between Muslims and Byzantines, especially during the Mamluk period, which redirected Muslim animosity toward the Franks, while the Byzantines came to be viewed in much friendlier terms.

In addition to being influenced by the atmosphere of the period of the Crusades during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Arabic-Islamic texts continue the tradition inherited from earlier times. The presence of the Crusader states in Bilad al-Sham influenced the selection of the information on Byzantium, hence leading to some diversion from the previous pattern. The sources reiterate earlier positive themes, and incorporated new perceptions different from the traditional images.

walls of Constantinople. He adds that: “until the present day, the Rum light candles at his bomb”⁽⁹⁶⁾.

Al-Zuhri is definitely confusing the tombs of Abu Ayyub and Abu Ubayda, but the attachment of the names of such prominent and revered Muslim characters with Constantinople refers, undoubtedly, to the high esteem of the Byzantine capital in Arabic-Islamic sources. Grunebaum believes that the presence of Islamic tombs within the walls of Constantinople permitted the inclusion of the city “in a repertoire of places of pilgrimage, like that of al-Haram”⁽⁹⁷⁾.

The fascination of Muslim authors of the period of the Crusades with Constantinople was unabated despite the changing conditions in the city during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Arabic-Islamic sources never talk about a dilapidated, run-down city, but always refer to the city’s opulence, diversity and marvelous buildings and monuments. I believe, Muslim authors continued to define the Byzantine Empire by its capital, and because of amicable and peaceful relations between Muslims and Byzantines against their common enemies, Latin Westerners and Mongols, Constantinople continued to maintain its high reputation in Arabic-Islamic sources.

(96) Al-Zuhri, *Kitab al-Jughrafiya*, P. 117.

(97) Grunebaum, Von, “The Sacred Character of Islamic Cities”, in: *Islam and Medieval Hellenism: Social and Cultural Perspectives*, London, 1976, P.P. 25-37.

drought⁽⁸⁹⁾. Ibn al-Athir⁽⁹⁰⁾ and al-Dimashqi⁽⁹¹⁾ also refer to the tomb of Abu Ayyub in Constantinople .

Another important Islamic monument mentioned in Arabic-Islamic sources during the period of the Crusades is the mosque connected with Maslama b. Abd al-Malik, who led the Umayyad expedition against Constantinople in 97-99/715-717. This mosque is usually mentioned in conjunction with the restoration of Constantinople to the Byzantine emperors in 660/1261. Some Muslim authors mention that Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi had wanted at one time to reconstruct Maslama's mosque, but the Byzantines had refused. The historian Ibn Abd al-Zaher (d. 692/1291) states that while an ambassador from the sultan of Egypt was touring Constantinople with al-Ashkari (The Laskarid), they stopped at the mosque of Maslama, which was in bad shape⁽⁹²⁾. According to Ibn Abd al-Zaher, God postponed the reconstruction of the mosque, "so that it would be a reward for Sultan al-Zaher Baybars"⁽⁹³⁾.

Despite the destruction of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204, its symbolic importance did not diminish in Arabic-Islamic sources. The rebuilding of Maslama's mosque by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars indicates the development of peaceful and amicable relations between the restored Byzantine Empire and the Mamluk Sultanate. These relations were referred to in the context of the flourishing trade in slaves from the Black Sea-area.

A few Arabic-Islamic sources refer to some additional Muslim monuments in Constantinople. Both al-Dimashqi⁽⁹⁴⁾ and al-Harawi⁽⁹⁵⁾ mention a tomb of a descendant of al-Hussaien b. Ali b. Abi Talib. Al-Zuhri mentions the tomb of Abu Ubayda b. al-Jarrah, a Companion of the Prophet. He states that Abu Ubayda died during the expedition of Maslama, and was buried in front of the

(89) Al-Qazwini, Athar, P. 606.

(90) Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil, vol. 3, P. 93.

(91) Al-Dimashqi, Nukhbat al-dahr, P. 227.

(92) Ibn Abd al-Zaher, Al-Rawd al-Zaher fi sirat al-malik al-Zaher, ed. Abd al-Aziz al-Khuayter, Riyadh, 1976, P. 129.

(93) Ibn Abd al-zaher, al-Rawd al-Zaher, P. 131.

(94) Al-Dimashqi, Nukhbat al-dar, P. 227.

(95) Al-Harawi, kitab al-Isharat, P. 56.

Most Arabic-Islamic sources of the period of the Crusades are full of descriptions of Hagia Sophia. Al-Harawi explicitly states that “The great church is Hagia Sophia”⁽⁸⁵⁾. Al-Qazwini gives the most detailed description of Hagia Sophia. He says:

“The king’s church has a golden dome and ten gates; six of gold and four of silver. The place where the king stands is four by four arms’ length and is ornamented with pearls... All the walls of the church are covered with gold and silver. There are twelve columns and on top of each is a statute of a human, a king, a horse, a lion, a peacock, an elephant, or a camel. Next to it is a container which, when filled, brings water up to the statutes”⁽⁸⁶⁾.

Similarly, al-Dimashqi describes Hagia Sophia as: “The Great Church, where it is said that an angel resides, and where lies a colossal high altar with huge doors and columns”⁽⁸⁷⁾.

The descriptions of the Arabic-Islamic sources of the period of the Crusades of Hagia Sophia were not different from those of Latin and Western medieaval authors who were bedazzled by the unique constructional style, architecture, and fabulous decoration of the church⁽⁸⁸⁾.

In addition to the typically Byzantine monuments of Constantinople, the Muslim geographers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries mention some Islamic moments of the city. They mention the legend of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, in addition to referring to the Mosque of Maslama, the supposed tomb of Abu ‘Ubayda and some other few monuments.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries sources reproduce the legend of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, a Companion of the Prophet, who participated in the Islamic expedition against Constantinople in 49/669. Al-Qazwini mentions that his tomb lies beneath the walls of the Byzantine capital, and says that its soil is venerated by the Byzantines, who go there in prayer for rain during periods of

(85) Al-Harawi, *Kitab al-isharat*, P. 56.

(86) Al-Qazwini, *Athar*, P. 603.

(87) Al-Dimashqi, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, P. 227.

(88) For the description of Hagia Sophia, see:

Runciman, *The Byzantine Culture*, P.P. 218-219

(Apollonius)⁽⁷⁹⁾. He also refers to the talismanic nature of the monument to prevent the horses of Constantinople from making noise or neighing⁽⁸⁰⁾.

Al-Qazwini also gives some details of the Horologium, a unique clock in Constantinople. He states. "In the lighthouse of Constantinople there is a Horologium which is made up of twelve doors, each representing an hour. At every hour, one of the doors opens and a statute comes out... The Byzantines say that the Horologium is the work of Apollonius"⁽⁸¹⁾.

The majority of the Byzantine monuments and statutes mentioned in Arabic-Islamic sources are endowed with talismanic or magical power. The talismanic objects of Constantinople are not unique, and the talismani protection of cities is a repeated theme in medieval Arabic literature. Al-Qazwini states in the introduction to his geography that talismans were created by the wise philosophers (hukama') for the protection and defense of cities⁽⁸²⁾. Earlier Muslims also referred to talismans in various cities of the Near East. Ibn al-Nadim (d. 377/987) wrote in his book of al al-Fihrist a section dealing with books of magic in which he says: "one group of philosophers and servants of the stars assert that they have talismans based on astronomical observations"⁽⁸³⁾. He further states that: "This art is divulged openly among the philosophers". He also gives a biographical entry of Apollonius the Wise, whom he describes: "as one of the people of Tyana, in the Byzantine territory...He is the first to initiate speech about talismans"⁽⁸⁴⁾.

Apollonius was actually referred to in many Arabic-Islamic sources as father of talismans (sahib al-Tilasmal), and astrology, alchemy and magic are usually attributed to him. I believe the widely-held connection between Apollonius and talismans was the main reason behind the prevalent belief in the earlier Islamic sources of the excessive presence of talismans in Constantinople. This assumption continued in the texts of the period of the Crusades, especially al-Qazwini.

(79) Al-Qazwini, Athar, P. 605.

(80) Ibid, P. 606.

(81) Ibid, P. 605.

(82) Ibid, P. 8.

(83) Muhammed b. Abi Ya' aqub Ibn al-Nadim, Al-Fihrist, Cairo, 1947, P. 438.

(84) Ibn al-Nadim, al-fihrist, P. 443.

Some think that the globe is a talisman with power to inhibit the enemy from invading Byzantium; others say that the globe holds an inscription that say: I have possessed the world and I held it at my hand like this globe; I left it without carrying off any thing”⁽⁷⁴⁾.

Yaqut⁽⁷⁵⁾ and Al-Qazwini⁽⁷⁶⁾ include almost identical descriptions of Justinian’s column as mentioned earlier by Ibn Jubayr. From his side, Al-Harawi did not detail in the description of the statue of Justinian but talks about its talismanic nature, when he says: “in his hand is a talisman that prevents the enemy from invading the country”⁽⁷⁷⁾.

One other monument mentioned relatively often in the twelfth and thirteenth – centuries Arabic-Islamic sources is the column of Theodosius. Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395) was the founder of the Theodosian dynasty which ruled Byzantium for around eighty years (379-457) during which period the Roman Empire in the West was greatly threatened by the invasions of the barbaric tribes, especially the Goths. Theodosius’s death in 395 was decisive in history, as it ushered a new era in which the Byzantine Orthodox East finally split from the weakened Latin Catholic West.

Theodosius’s achievements were commemorated in a marble column of the emperor. Al-Harawi includes a description of the column by saying:

“There is a white marbled column in the market... covered with three-dimensional sculptures of admirable skill... it is surrounded by a grill that includes a talisman... if one climbs to the top of the column, he can have a panoramic view of the entire city... The inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire venerate the column and the figures that cover it”⁽⁷⁸⁾. Although al-Harawi mentions the talismanic element of Theodosius’s column, he does not explain what kind of power it holds.

Al-Qazwini describes the three bronze horses located at the gate of the imperial palace. He attributes the creation of the horses to Binas

(74) Ibn Jubayr, *Rihla*, P. 49.

(75) Yaqut, *Mu’jam al-buldan*, vol. 4, P. 349.

(76) Al-Qazwini, *Athar*, P. 605.

(77) Al-Harawi, *Kitab al-isharat*, P. 49.

(78) *Ibid*, P. 49.

is found in the bibliographical work of Ibn 'Asakir (d.571/1176) slightly modified, and the four cities of paradise are Mecca, al-Madina, Jerusalem and Damascus, while the four cities of hell are Constantinople, Tabariyya, Antioch and San'a⁽⁷¹⁾.

Aside from this tradition, the Arabic-Islamic writings on Constantinople during the period of the Crusades usually describe the Byzantine capital in neutral or positive terms. The famous geographer al-Idrisi, writing before the Latin conquest of 1204, states: "Constantinople is prosperous, having many markets and merchants, and most of its people are affluent"⁽⁷²⁾. This impression of Constantinople as prosperous and affluent continues to permeate Arabic-Islamic sources throughout the thirteenth century, and this is contrary to what we find in contemporary Latin sources and modern research. Runciman believes that Constantinople's role continued to decline after the restoration of the city by the Byzantines in 1261. He argues that the city actually lost around two-thirds of its foreign trade in the period between the massacre of the Latins in 1182 and the Latin conquest of 1204⁽⁷³⁾.

In addition to the description of the main events related to the history of Constantinople, the Arabic-Islamic sources of the Crusades period include a few sites that repeatedly appear in earlier Muslim sources. Although the authors copied one another, it is these sites, whether or not actually visited by the authors, that seem to have served as prototype symbols of Constantinople. The main sites described were: The column of Justinian, the column of Theodosius, the Bronze Horses, the Horologium, and Hagia Sophia.

The Muslim authors, Ibn Jubayr, Yaqut and al-Qazwini, all provide lengthy descriptions of the column of Justinian. Those descriptions are in fact the same version. Ibn Jubayr states that on top of a bronze column is placed the statue of Constantine. Constantine has his right hand upward and his palm opened as if pointing toward the realm of Islam. In his left hand he holds a globe. Ibn Jubayr states: "opinions vary concerning this monument.

(71) Ali b. al-Hasan Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh madinat Dimashq*, ed. Salah al-Din al-Munajjid, Damascus, (n.d.), vol. 2 section I, P. 210.

(72) Al-Idrisi, *Nuzhat al-mushtaq*, section 5, P. 801.

(73) Runciman, S., *The Byzantine Civilization*, New York, 1961, P. 201-

Despite the momentous events that happened in Constantinople during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, its image in Arabic-Islamic writings did not change much. Statements in our sources confirm earlier descriptions of the greatness and uniqueness of the Byzantine capital. Al-Harawi states that: "Constantinople is a city greater than its reputation"⁽⁶⁵⁾.

Yaqut states that stories related to the greatness and magnificence of Constantinople are abundant⁽⁶⁶⁾. Al Qazwini says: " Nothing was ever built like it, neither before nor after and if it is no longer that way, it remains a great city"⁽⁶⁷⁾.

The remarks of the Arabic-Islamic sources about Constantinople were almost similar to those of contemporary Western authors. Geoffrey de Villehardouin states on the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204: "Many of our men usually went to Constantinople to gaze at its many splendid places, tall churches and view all the marvelous wealth of a city richer than any since the beginning of time"⁽⁶⁸⁾.

However, the Western image of Constantinople contains some negative components during the period of the Crusades. This was natural due to the deep animosity between the Byzantines and the Latins since the Great Schism of late eleventh century. But although the Western view of Constantinople moves from praise to degradation, the Arabic texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries have hardly any negative comments. We actually see some negative comment about Constantinople in tenth-century sources, such Ibn al-Faqih, who accused the city of "arrogance and pride"⁽⁶⁹⁾, but the texts of the period of the Crusades mainly concentrate on the description of the opulence and magnificence of the city, without any judgemental undertones. The only explicit negative comments in Arabic sources are repetitions of earlier descriptions. An example of that is Ibn al-Adim (d. 660/1261) who mentions a hadith of Abu Hurayra which runs: "Four cities in this world are from paradise: Mecca, al-Madina, Jerusalem and Damascus. And four cities are from hell: Rome, Constantinople, Antioch and San'a"⁽⁷⁰⁾. This hadith

(65) Al-Harawi, *Kitab al-isharat*, p. 57.

(66) Yaqut, *Mu`jam al-buldan*, vol. 4, P. 247.

(67) Al-Qazwini, *Athar*, P. 603.

(68) Joinville de Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. Shaw M., New York, 1984, P. 76.

(69) Ibn al-Faqih, *Kitab al-buldan*, P. 146.

(70) Ibn al-Adim, *Kamal al-Din Umar, Bughiyat al-Halab fi tarikh halab*, ed. Suhail Zakkar, Damascus, 1408 A.H., vol. I, P. 97.

“The Franks in the city, who were numerous, around thirty thousands... rose with the help of the Franks who were besieging the city, throwing fire, thus burning one-fourth of the city. They entered the city and ravaged it for three days, killing and plundering. The Byzantines were all either killed or became destitute. A group of Byzantine aristocrats sought refuge in Hagia Sophia but were followed by the Franks, and although a number of priests, monks, and abbots came out, begging them with the crosses and Bible they were carrying, the Franks disregarded them, killing them all and plundering the church”⁽⁶¹⁾.

Ibn al-Athir’s narrative shows that he was aware of the systematic ransacking of Constantinople in 1204. His reference to the plundering of Hagia Sophia is very interesting and is confirmed by Latin sources and modern scholars. Ibn al-Athir was also aware of the Latin penetration of the Byzantine Empire when he mentions that the number of Latins in Constantinople on the eve of the 1204 incidents, was around thirty thousands. This large number of Latins comprised mainly merchants who resided in the city permanently or temporarily since the Komnenian period (1081-1204).

Ibn al-Athir also correctly refers to the coronation of Baldwin of Flanders as head of the Latin, Catholic, feudal empire established in Constantinople. He also mentions that al-Rum (Byzantines) never recognized the authority of Baldwin of Flanders, making Nicaea the provisional capital of the Byzantine Empire, headed by al-Ashkari, the Lascarid⁽⁶²⁾.

Ibn al-Athir was not the only historian grasping the political developments that occurred in the Byzantine Empire in 1204. Yaqut states that: “Today Constantinople is in the hands of the Franks”⁽⁶³⁾. Ibn Wasil likewise mentions the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins by saying: “In this year [600 A.H.] the Iفرانج left their lands in great crowds and conquered it... Constantinople remained in the hands of the Iفرانج until 660, when the Rum took it back”⁽⁶⁴⁾. Thus the three Muslim authors were not only aware of the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204, but appreciated the magnitude of the event.

(61) Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil, vol. 12, P. 191.

(62) Ibid, P. 192.

(63) Yaqut, Mu’jam al-buldan, vol. 4, P. 247.

(64) Ibn Wasil, mujarrij al-kurub, vol. 3. p. 160.

of Antioch, who was regent upon her son Alexios II, and usurped the throne in 1182, and thereafter killed the young Alexios II. Andronikos did not actually fall in love with his cousin, as mentioned by Ibn Jubayr, but he was notorious for his adventurous love affairs. He was named emperor in 1183, and then married the thirteen –years-old widow of Alexios II. Andromikos's short reign (1183-1185) started with the slaughter of the Latins in Constantinople, especially Italian merchants⁽⁵⁸⁾.

The last phrase of Ibn Jubayr's narrative is very interesting. He believes that the conquest of Constantinople is a sign of the Hour (ashrat al-Sa'a). Here Ibn Jubayr was definitely influenced by the Muslim apocalyptic literature that developed earlier in connection with the military expeditions against the Byzantine capital during the Umayyad period, when many traditions going back to Prophet Muhammed made the conquest of Constantinople "one of the signs of the Hour"⁽⁵⁹⁾. These traditions, found in the earliest sources, continued to be copied in the twelfth and thirteenth- centuries texts, and Ibn Jubayr was no exception. Nevertheless, these traditions were at times altered to fit in certain circumstances. The historian Jamal al-Din b.Wasil (d.697/1298) mentions that in a letter from Nur al-Din Zanki (d.569/1174) to the Abassid Caliph al-Mustadi' (566-575/1170-1179) it was included that": Constantinople and Jerusalem are both in deep darkness, waiting for the crow of familiarity. God Almighty will bring close the harvest of both conquests for the Muslims"⁽⁶⁰⁾. The addition of Jerusalem to the well-known tradition was not accidental but was undoubtedly due to the resurgence of the idea of the sanctity of Jerusalem widely circulated after the Crusaders' occupation of the city in 492/1099. Since Jerusalem still enjoyed the highest level of exaltation during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, it was natural that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries around fifty manuscripts were actually written on Fada'il bait al-Maqdis.

As to the conquest of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade, Ibn al-Athir is our main Arabic source. He describes how the Latin Crusaders devastated the city in 1204. He states:

(58) For more information on those events, see:

Magdalino R., *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, P.P. 112-126.

(59) Basheer, S., "Apocalyptic and Other Materials on Early Muslim – Byzantine Wars: A Review of Arabic Sources", in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (JRAS)*, 1991, P.P.173-206.

(60) Ibn Wasil, Jamal al-Din Muhammed, Mufarrij al-Kurub fi-akhbar bani Ayyub, ed. Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, Cairo, 1953, vol. I, P. 253.

that Constantine The Great (d. 337 A.D) moved to Byzantium and built a wall around it, and since then it became their “dar al-Muluk” (ruling capital) ⁽⁵³⁾. Al-Zuhri⁽⁵⁴⁾, Ibn Sa'id⁽⁵⁵⁾ and al-Dimashqi⁽⁵⁶⁾ all agree that Constantinople was built by Constantine The Great, and confirm the fact that it continued to be the capital of the empire.

Constantinople occupied a unique position in the Byzantine Empire, which continued to reflect its vital political, economic and cultural importance despite the gradual decline of the empire since the twelfth century. Muslim authors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were not fully aware of the inextricably interwoven factors leading to the empire's decline, but a few of them referred to some momentous events in the history of Constantinople. Of these events referred to by Muslim authors were: The massacre of the Latins in 1182, and the conquest of the city by the Fourth Crusade in 1204.

Ibn Jubayr is our main source for the events of the massacre of the Latins in Constantinople in 578/1182. He relates the following story:

“The report had it that the sovereign of Constantinople had died, leaving the kingdom for his wife and young son. But his cousin usurped the throne after killing the widow. The usurper then fell in love with the boy's sister yet he could not marry her because it was forbidden in the Rum tradition to marry one's kinswomen. The girl eloped with the usurper to prince Mas'ud of konya and got married after embracing Islam. Thereafter, with the backing of some Muslim armies, he entered Constantinople, killing almost fifty thousands of its inhabitants. The Muslims ransacked the city and looted the markets... This conquest is one of the signs of the hour (ashrat al-Sa'a) ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Ibn Jubayr's story is undoubtedly confused and totally inaccurate. Of course, no Muslim army captured Constantinople until the Ottoman conquest of Sultan Muhammed II (The Conqueror) of 857/1453, and it is clear that Ibn Jubayr confuses the slaughter of the Latin inhabitants of Constantinople by the Byzantines. Ibn Jubayr is also confused about the true identity of the usurper, who was, in fact, Emperor Andronikos Komnenos, cousin of Emperor Manuel I(1143-1180). History tells us that Andronikos killed Mary

(53) Yaqut, Mu' jam al-buldan, vol. 4, P. 247.

(54) Al-Zuhri, Kitab al-jughrafiya, P. 234.

(55) Ibn Sa'id, Kitab al-jughrafiya, P. 184.

(56) Al-Dimashqi, Nukhat ad-dahr, P. 259.

(57) Ibn Jubayr, Rihla, P. 328.

border the sea of Al-Andulas, and in the south their limits are al-Sham and Alexandria “(45).

Al-Qazwini states that Bilad al-Rum is a great country and kingdom. The reason for its power and long survival, he claims, lies in its distance from Bilad al-Islam, and in the strength of its administrative, economic and military institutions⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Almost all the Arabic-Islamic sources of the time of the Crusades agree on the fertility of Bilad al-Rum. Al-Zuhri, for instance, mentions that Bilad al-Rum is a fertile land, and most of its cities have abundant crops, fruits and cattle⁽⁴⁷⁾. Al-Qazwini states that: “Bilad al-Rum is a great land, most fertile“⁽⁴⁸⁾.

When describing Bilad al-Rum, Arabic sources refer to some of its most important cities like: Amorium, Antioch, Attaleia, Nicaea, Konya, Trebizond, and of course Constantinople. Most sources of the Crusades period reiterated information mentioned by earlier authors, and it seems that very few Muslim or Arab geographers or travelers had actually visited Byzantine territory. Nevertheless, Constantinople held a special place in Arabic-Islamic descriptions and writings.

The majority of the twelfth and thirteenth-centuries sources call the Byzantine capital al-Qustantiniyya. Some authors called it Byzantium, while few mentioned a third name, that of Istanbul. Yaqut relates that Constantinople was built by one of the Byzantine kings called Buzanti⁽⁴⁹⁾. Al-Mas’uadi (d. 346/957) was the first Muslim geographer to use the name Istanbul⁽⁵⁰⁾, a name later used by both Yaqut⁽⁵¹⁾, and Ibn al-Athir⁽⁵²⁾ (d. 630/1232). Some sources underlined the importance of the transfer of the Roman capital from Rome to Constantinople in the fourth century A.D. Yaqut, for instance, relates

(45) Yaqut, *Mu’jam al-buldan*, vol. 3, P. 98.

(46) Al-Qazwini, *Athar*, P. 530.

(47) Al-Zuhri, *Kitab al-jughrafiya*, P. 229.

(48) Al-Qazwini, *Athar*, P. 531.

(49) Yaqut, *Mu’jam al-buldan*, vol. 3, P. 98.

(50) Abu al-Hassan Ali Al-Mas’udi, *al-Tanbih wa-al-ishraf*, Leiden, 1894, P. 137.

(51) Yaqut, *Mu’jam al-buldan*, vol. 4, p. 247.

(52) Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kamil*, vol. I, P. 330.

of trade with Egypt. But the Byzantines had their own ideas. Most of the emperors of the Palaiologan dynasty (1258-1453), especially Andronicus II (1282-1328), were very conscious of the need to observe the protection and well-being of Orthodox Christians in Mamluk territories⁽⁴²⁾. Consequently, most Palaiologan emperors did not take part in the Western Christian schemes which started to formulate with the aim of recovering the Holy Land from Muslims. Those efforts were led by the papacy⁽⁴³⁾, but they led to no success.

Although the earlier Arabic-Islamic sources contain abundant references to the Byzantine trade with the Muslims, its structural organization and its main participants, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries sources tell us very little about the subject. I believe the Crusades, and the existence of the Crusader states, played a much greater role than modern scholars tend to allow, not only in the general pattern of trade in the eastern Mediterranean, but also in the conditions and mechanisms of trade between the Byzantines and the Muslims, and between the Byzantines and the Western Christians. Although Ibn al-Athir gives some references to embassies and treaties between the Mamlukes and the Byzantines, he did not understand the deep effects of the period of the Crusades on the trade pattern.

Description of the Byzantine Territory

The Arabic-Islamic sources of the twelfth and -thirteenth- centuries include extensive physical description of the Byzantine territory, especially of the Byzantine capital Constantinople. Here again the surviving earlier view is put side by side with the evolving image that reflects the new situation.

Arabic-Islamic sources call the Byzantine Empire Bilad al-Rum. Al-Zuhri states that Bilad al-Rum extends from Constantinople in the East to Barcelona in the West⁽⁴⁴⁾. Yaqut gives the frontiers of Bilad al-Rum as follow: "They have the Turks, Khazars and Russians on the north and east, in the west they

(42) Laiou, A., *Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II, (1282-1328)*, Cambridge, 1972, P.P. 65-72.

(43) For further information on such proposals and plans, see:

Schien, S., *The Papacy, The West, and The Recovery of The Holy Land, (1274-1314)*, Oxford, 1990.

(44) Al-Zuhri, *Kitab al-jughrafiya*, P. 228.

Rukn al-Din Baybars (658-674/1260-1276) exchanged embassies regarding the importation of slaves from the Black Sea via Constantinople. Ibn al-Athir refers to that embassy in the year 660/1261⁽³⁹⁾. A treaty, signed between the two sides in 1261, was renewed in 666/1267.

Another treaty was signed between Michael VIII and the Mamluk Sultan al-Mansur Qalawun (678-689/1279-1290) in 680/1281, and there was a clause in the treaty which says that the Byzantine emperor would not give anyone who wanted to attack Egypt free passage through Byzantium⁽⁴⁰⁾.

The treaty of 680/1281 includes many clauses, the most important of which are:

- 1- Free access of the merchants of both sides to the markets, against the payment of the appropriate dues.
- 2- Neither the Byzantines nor the Mamlukes would take reprisals against the merchants of the other for piratical activities undertaken in its territorial waters or by people who claimed to be its subjects. Reprisals could only be taken against the individuals guilty of the act of piracy.

Those two clauses were usual in the treaties of the thirteenth century. But there were some unique clauses that can be taken as clues to the new pattern of interconnections between the Byzantines and Muslims during the period of the Crusades. One clause in the treaty gave the Byzantines the right to buy off Christian slaves, while another clause allows the Egyptians to export Byzantine wheat. These were two concessions not given to Western merchants. But the Byzantine merchants were given some reciprocal privileges in return, such as the privilege to buy thorough-bred horses in Egypt⁽⁴¹⁾.

In their formal aspects, Byzantine trade relations with Egypt remained connected with political concerns and with the concerns of the Byzantine emperors for the non-Latin Christians of the East. This was very clear in the late thirteenth century. The security of the Byzantine merchants in Egypt started to be included in the treaties signed between the emperors and the Mamluk sultans.

After the fall of Acre in 690/1291, the Latin Crusaders lost their last stronghold in the East. Repeated calls were raised in the West for a boycott

(39) Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 12, P. 203.

(40) Geanakopulos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*, P. 294.

(41) Holt., P.M., "Qalawun's Treaty with Michael VIII in 1281", in: *Der Islam*, vol. 57, 1980, P.P. 101-108.

commercial duties, and their movements were not restricted⁽³⁵⁾. He informs us that Byzantine merchants paid: al-Khumas al-Rumi “ in Alexandria and Damietta⁽³⁶⁾, that is one-fifth of the value of their trade. Al-As’ad b. Mamatti (d. 606/1209) refers to the taxes levied from foreign merchants in Alexandria as follow: “ ships laden with merchandise of over one thousands dinars pay one hundred and fifty-one dinars... ships coming with merchandise worth around six hundred dinars pay one hundred dinars and all other ships carrying less worth commodities pay a flat tax of seventy five dinars”⁽³⁷⁾.

The pattern of the trade between Muslims and the Byzantines started to change during the Crusades. The Fourth Crusade (1204) reoriented the trade of the Byzantines, in fact the Empire of Nicaea, with the Muslims. Facing difficulties in the finances of the Fourth Crusades, it was diverted from Egypt, its actual intended destination, to attack Constantinople. This diversion was mainly due to the pressure put on the Crusaders’ leaders by the Venetian merchants. The Latins devastated the Byzantine capital, establishing a Latin Kingdom and a Latin Church for over half a century (1204-1261). The Byzantine emperors fled to Trebizond, where they established an interim empire, and started to fight the invading Latins to retain control.

One of the most important results of the Fourth Crusade is that it led to the disruption of trade relation between the Byzantine Empire and Egypt. Ibn al-Athir refers to only one embassy between the Empire of Nicaea and Egypt, but he did not mention its intention⁽³⁸⁾. The main reason behind the diminishing trade relations between the Empire of Nicaea and Egypt was the increasing relations between the Sultanate of Konya (Sultanate of Rum) and the Byzantines. The Sultans of the Rum developed an efficient trade network, including central Anatolia and the ports of the southern coasts and the Black Sea coast.

With the recovery of Constantinople in 1261, another reorientation, both political and economic, took place toward Egypt. Slave trade was the main factor behind that reorientation. The Mamlukes of Egypt desperately required slaves (Mamlukes) for their armies from the Crimea. Soon after the recovery of Constantinople, Emperor Michael VIII (1258-1282) and the Mamluk Sultan

(35) Abu Al-Hassan Ali Al-Makhzomi, *Al-Minhaj fi-ilm kharaj Misr*, ed. Claude Cahen, Cairo, 1968, P. 48.

(36) Al-Makhzomi, *Al-Minhaj*, P. 45.

(37) Al-As’ad b. Mamatti, *Abu al-Makarem, Kitab Qawanin al-dawwin*, ed. Aymen F. Sayyed, Shuttguard, 1992, P. 349.

(38) Ali b. Muhammed Ibn al-Athir, *al-kamil fi al-Tarikh*, Cairo, 1357 A.H., vol. 12, P. 195.

merchants on Byzantine territories became dominant, thus threatening the opportunities of the native merchants.

The Crusades had paramount effects upon the Byzantine Empire. Large armies, in the main Crusading expeditions, and small and large fleets often traversed Byzantine lands and waters thus hindering trade. From the other side, the Crusades resulted in the establishment of three Crusader states in addition to the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, which meant that there were three groups of Christians in the eastern Mediterranean: Byzantines, Crusader states and Italian merchants. The main questions facing the researcher are:

Did the Crusades influence the mechanism and methods of Byzantine trade? Did they help bring about any structural changes, or were they irrelevant? Did they effect the presence and dominance of the Italian merchants over trade?

The relations of the Byzantines with Muslim powers had always had a strong political and economic component, which overwhelmed private and commercial relations. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, trade relations continued between Muslims and the Byzantines as can be understood from the testimony of the Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudelo, who refers to the influx of Muslim merchants from Iraq, Egypt and Bilad al-Sham to Constantinople⁽³²⁾. Al-Qazwini refers to the active trade entering the Byzantine territories from Iraq, and mentions a number of seasonal Byzantine markets and trade fairs frequented by Muslim merchants⁽³³⁾.

Nevertheless, Arabic-Islamic sources abound with reference to trade relations between the Byzantines and the Mamlukes of Egypt. Byzantine merchants seem to have a sizeable presence in some Egyptian ports, especially Alexandria. It seems that during the twelfth century, trade relations between Egypt and the Byzantine Empire were closely connected with political relations. An example of this can be seen in the combined ambassadorial and trade mission of emperor Isaac II (1185-1195) to Salah al-Din in 588/1192⁽³⁴⁾. The embassy was seeking, among other things, an offensive and defensive alliance against Western Europeans. Al-Makhzumi (d. 585/1189) also mentions that Byzantine merchants used to visit Cairo and Alexandria in routine fashion, staying for certain periods of time. He adds that they paid

(32) Benjamin of Tudelo, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudelo*, trans. Adler M., ed. Singer, M., California, 1993, P. 70.

(33) Zakria b. Muhammed Al-Qazwini, *Athar al-Bilad wa-Akhbar al-ibad*, Beirut, 1969, P. 531.

(34) Brand, C.M., "The Byzantines and Saladin", in: *Speculum*, vol. 37, 1962, P.P. 173-78.

which were part of the Byzantine territories, in addition to further reductions and exemption from taxes, added to the precarious trade activities of the Byzantines⁽²⁸⁾. The success of the Muslim Seljuk Turks in consolidating their power in Asia Minor, after their victory over the Byzantines at Manzikert (464/1071), posed a great threat to the passage of Byzantine trade across the main land routes between East and West. A third factor affecting the Byzantine trade during the eleventh century was the appearance of the Normans in southern Italy. The Normans were gradually successful in establishing a free state in southern Italy at the expense of the Byzantine Empire, and by 483/1090, Roger II seized Cyprus from the Byzantines. By the closing years of the eleventh century, the Crusades started to usher a new era in the relations between East and West; an era characterized by imposing further threats to Byzantine foreign trade.

Regarding Byzantine trade with the Muslims during the period of the Crusades, the available information is sporadic in Arabic-Islamic sources. The ideology of “Holy War” did not interrupt trade between the Byzantines and the Muslims from one side, or between the western merchants and the Muslim world from the other side⁽²⁹⁾. The activities and presence of western merchants, especially Italians, actually increased in the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with a short notable interruption after the Battle of Hattin in 583/1187. Goitein argues, in the light of the Geniza documents, that the presence of western merchants in Egypt and the Near East was higher than the presence of Byzantines⁽³⁰⁾. Goitein believes that before the Crusades, the Mediterranean gave the impression of “a free-trade area”, but Angeliki Laiou argues that the Crusades and the Crusader states were instrumental in the development and spread of some institutions that facilitated Mediterranean trade⁽³¹⁾.

I believe, for the Byzantine Empire, the question of the economic influence of the Crusades is inextricably connected with the question of the influence of the Italian merchants on the Byzantine economy, which actually predates the Crusades and becomes closely tied to it. Indeed, the presence of Italian

(28) Dale, C., *Venice: An Aristocratic Republic*, London, 1940, P.33.

(29) For further discussion on the topic, see:

Labib, S., “Egyptian Commercial Policy in the Middle Ages” in: Cook M.A., *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, London, 1970, P.P. 63-77.

(30) Goitein, S., “Mediterranean Trade in the Eleventh century: Some Facts and Problems”, in: *Studies in The Economic History of the Middle East*, ed. Cook M.A., London 1970, P.P. 51-62.

(31) Laiou, Angeliki E., *Byzantine Trade with Christians and Muslims and the Crusaders*, Washington D.C., 2000, P. 157.

a maximum period of three months and this stay was restricted to the capital only. Those who disobey this term, were subject to punishment, which may include confiscation of wealth⁽²²⁾. Foreign merchants were restricted from carrying any amount of gold or silver without a special permission from the Questor or the Prefect of Constantinople.

Al-Shizari also refers to the organization of trade and merchandise in separate guilds⁽²³⁾ (collegia). Some guilds, like the silk trade guild (Pandio pratai), and the jewelry trade guild, were only allowed to deal in export trade, and were barred from dealing directly with foreign merchants.

The earlier Arab sources refer to other facets of Byzantine trade organizations. Ibn-Hawqal (d. 380/990) mentions that Muslim merchants were allowed to enter Byzantine territories through the Black Sea port of Trebozinds. He says: "Trebozinds is a city where Muslim merchants gather to enter Bilad al-Rum and they exit later through it"⁽²⁴⁾.

Al-Maqdisi refers to the flourishing trade of Constantinople in addition to his references to the low prices of commodities and the relatively low cost of living⁽²⁵⁾.

Ibn-Hawaqal mentions that the Byzantines used to levy a uniform tax of 10% on most items imported from the Muslim world, but taxes may reach higher proportions on certain luxury goods⁽²⁶⁾. Some items were exempted from taxes, such as iron and timber, which were necessary for official shipbuilding.

Until the tenth-century, the balance of foreign trade was in favor of the Byzantine Empire. But since the early eleventh century, Byzantium trade started to face some problems due to the fierce competition of the Italian Republics such as, Venice, Genoa, Pisa and Florence⁽²⁷⁾.

The eleventh century was actually a hard time for Byzantine foreign trade. The concessions and privileges granted by some of the Comnenos emperors (181-1185) to the Venetians, such as the free usage of Cyprus and Crete

(22) Al-Shizari, Kitab nehayat al-rutba, P. 156

(23) Ibid, P. 169-

(24) Abu al-Qasim Muhammed Ibn Hawqal, Kitab Surat al-ard, 2nd edition, Leiden, 1938, P. 344.

(25) Al-Maqdisi, Ahsn al-Taqasim, P. 148.

(26) Ibn Hawqal, Kitab surat al-ard, P. 199.

(27) Lewis, A., Maritime and Naval Powers in the Mediterranean, 600-1100, Franklin Foundation, Washington D.C., 1951, P. 335.

reaching agreements for exchanging trade. Because of the importance of trade relations between the Muslim and Byzantines, it was natural that Arabic-Islamic sources should refer to different aspects of trading activities between the two sides. The Islamic view confirms the consistent relations as well as the consequences of these relations, especially on the political side.

During the ninth and tenth centuries, Byzantium had the upper hand in the international trade of the Mediterranean, monopolizing the traffic of eastern commodities to Italy and France⁽¹⁷⁾. Eastern trade was carried to Constantinople through the Black Sea, with Armenia playing the role of a buffer zone between Muslims and the Byzantines. Trade was also carried along the land route coming from Asia Minor via Bilad al-Sham, and then across the Euphrates to Baghdad.

Earlier Arabic-Islamic sources refer to the efficient organization of trade between the Byzantines and Muslims. Ibn al-Fara' al-Hanbali (d. 4th century/10th A.D.) refers to the exchange of envoys and embassies between the Byzantines and 'Abassids since the Caliphate of al-Mansour⁽¹⁸⁾ (136-158/754-775). Embassies continued unabated throughout the Abassid period till the mid fourth century A.H./ tenth A.D. Al-Souli refers to a Byzantine embassy to Baghdad during the reign of the Caliph al-Radi (322-329/934-940)⁽¹⁹⁾.

Al-Maqdisi (d. 390/1000) refers to the easy access of Muslim trade and merchants to Byzantium. He refers to the establishment of hospices (nuzul) where Muslim merchants were accommodated during their stay in Constantinople⁽²⁰⁾. He also mentions that Muslims were allowed to perform their religious duties freely. Al-Shizari, who died in an unknown date, refers to the presence of specialized hospices for Muslim merchants visiting Constantinople. He mentions a hospice for spice traders, another one for those dealing in perfumes, a third hotel for silk merchants in addition to a number of smaller hotels for other Muslim merchants⁽²¹⁾. Al-Shizari also refers to the other rules regulating the conduct and activities of foreign merchants during their stay in Constantinople. Foreigners were allowed a stay-permit of

(17) Ashtor, E., *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages*, London, 1976, P.P. 37-39.

(18) Ibn al-Fara' al-Hanbali, *Rusul al-Muluk*, ed. by Salah al-Din al-Munjjad, Cairo, 1978, P.P. 76, 78.

(19) Al-Souli, Abu Bakr Muhammed, *Akhbar al-Radi bi-Allah wa'l-Mutaqqi li-Allah*, ed. Huorth, Cairo, No date, P.P. 100-104.

(20) Mohammed b. Ahmed Al-Maqdisi, *Ahsn al-taqasim fi ma' rifat al al-aqaleem*, Leiden, 1909, P. 147.

(21) Abd Allah b. Nasr Al-Shizari, *Kitab nehayat al-rutba fi talab al-hisba*, ed. al-Bazz Al-Uraini, Cairo, 1981, P. 155.

Rum were at times used to mean Christian, in general⁽¹²⁾. However, by the mid-Twelfth century, a new image of the Ifranj, dissociated from that of the Byzantines, started to emerge.

The Arabic-Islamic sources of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries used the term Banu al-Asfar to refer to the Byzantines. Nevertheless, Arab Muslim authors continued to trace the origins of the Rum back to Abraham in their quest to explain the reference Bani al-Asfar. Ibn Manzur (d. 711/1311) defines the Rum as a known people who may be traced back to Esau, son of Isaac⁽¹³⁾.

Ibn al-Qifti (d. 646/1248) copies the story found in the tenth-century al-Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadim, who says that the cAbassid Caliph al-Ma'moun (198-218/813-833) requested some ancient books from the "emperor of the Rum"⁽¹⁴⁾. Nevertheless, the later Arabic sources are silent on the effect of the Byzantine knowledge on the Muslim world. This was natural, since Byzantium had no salient effect on Arabic-Islamic knowledge and sciences which were fully-fledged by the twelfth and thirteenth countries. Norris, H. argues that earlier sources discussed the effect of Byzantine knowledge on Arabic culture within the context of the shu'ubiyya controversy⁽¹⁵⁾. Farouq

O. Fawzi, the prominent modern historian of the Abassid period, sees the problem from a different angle. He believes that Zandaqa and shu'ubiyya were correlated, and argues that they were short-lived since the stringent measures of the Caliph al-Mahdi (158-169/775-785), and the scientific writings of al-Jahiz and Ibn-Qutiba (d. 276/889) led to their demise and extinction⁽¹⁶⁾.

Byzantine skills in Trade and Trade Organization

Trade between the Byzantine Empire and the Muslim world flourished greatly during the `Abassid period despite the political tension and antagonism between the two sides at the beginning. The great demand for a wide range of commodities for both sides was vital, and emissaries and envoys facilitated

(12) Ibn Jubayr, Muhamed b. Ahmed, *Rihlat Ibn Jubayr*, ed. Hussien Nassar, Cairo, 1955, P. 25.

(13) Jamal al-Din Muhammed b. Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*, Beirut 1992, vol. 12, P. 258.

(14) Jamal al-Din Ibn al-Qifti, *Ikhbar al-Ulama bi-akhbar al-hukma*, Beirut, 1976, P. 30.

(15) Norris, H., "Shu'ubiyya in Arabic Literature", in: *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, P.P. 31-47.

(16) For a detailed discussion on the problem, see:

Farouq O. Fawzi, *al-Tarikh al-Islami wa-Fikr al-qarn al-ishrin*, Baghdad, 1985.

decline for both the Muslim world and the Byzantine Empire. The weakness of the Muslim world was manifested in the political fragmentation of Bilad al-Sham and Asia Minor among rival Turkish atabeqs (amirs). The ideological division between the Sh'ite Fatimid Caliphate and the ailing Sunni Abassid Caliphate was detrimental to the unity of the Muslim world. In short, the political disintegration of the Muslim world hindered any viable resistance to the invading Crusaders who were able to establish three principalities, Antioch, Edessa and Tripoli, in addition to a Latin kingdom in Jerusalem⁽⁹⁾.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries also witnessed the decline of Byzantium. After the resounding defeat over the Byzantines by the Seljuk Turks in the Battle of Manzikert in 464/1071, the empire failed to recover, and disintegration started to set in. Although Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118) strengthened the empire, his achievements and those of his successors, especially John II (1118-1143) and Manuel I (1143-1180), were not enduring and were followed by continued collapse of the Byzantine state⁽¹⁰⁾.

What actually distinguishes the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is that both the Muslims and the Byzantines became target of the Crusaders' offensive. In fact, the Crusades created an atmosphere whereby the Islamic image of Byzantium was greatly affected. In the light of this framework, this study will try to delineate the main aspects related to the Muslims appreciation of Byzantine origins, artistic skills, trade and its organization, and description of Byzantine territories, particularly Constantinople.

The Origins of The Byzantines:

The early Arabic – Islamic sources, like al-Tabari (d. 310/923), refer to the Byzantines as al-Rum. During the early period of the Crusades, the term al-Rum was also used to refer to the Franks since the Arabs tended to confuse the invading Crusaders with the Byzantines. But with time, the Arabs used the term al-Ifranj to refer to the Crusaders⁽¹¹⁾. However, both the terms Ifranj and

(9) For more information, see:

Elissee, N., "The Reaction of the Syrian Muslims After The Foundation of The First Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem", in: Shatzmiller, Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth Century Syria, Leiden, 1993, P.P. 162-72.

(10) Ostrogorsky, G., History of The Byzantine State, New Jersey, 1969. P.P. 20-28.

(11) Ibn al Qalansi, Hamza b. Asad, Dhayl Tarikh Dimashq, ed. Suhail Zakkar, Damascus, 1983, P.P. 121, 126, 137.

There are many problems facing research on this subject. These are:

Firstly: Since the third century A.H./ninth century A.D., a certain tradition depicting Byzantium and the Byzantines in the Arabic-Islamic sources started to emerge. Al-Jahiz (d.254 A.H./ 808 A.D.) describes the Byzantines as “very skilled in painting”⁽⁵⁾. Ibn al-Faqih (d.291/ A.H./903 A.D.) mentions the same information, quoting al-Jahiz’s identical words⁽⁶⁾.

Arabic-Islamic sources mention other information on the origin of the Byzantines, their morals, the description of Byzantine territory, especially Constantinople. By the eleventh century, Arabic-Islamic sources tend to juxtapose contemporary perceptions about Byzantium and the Byzantines side by side with earlier views. This was mainly due to the fact that compilation and straight forward quotation of earlier writings became the characteristic of almost all Arabic-Islamic sources. Thus, previous works were duplicated and reproduced, hence presenting a major problem for modern research.

Secondly: Very few Arabic-Islamic sources relate to firsthand accounts since a limited number of Muslims actually visited Byzantine territory. Most sources tend to rely heavily on secondhand information, sometimes oral traditions. The researcher faces the problem of scrutinizing such a wide range of Arabic sources.

Thirdly: During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Arab culture was mainly a palace culture⁽⁷⁾. We actually see the age through the eyes of the elites who were close to the centers of power, such as the ‘Ulama’ and the senior bureaucrats⁽⁸⁾. The information and views are thus limited socially.

Fourthly: Another problem for the modern researcher is how to assess the information extant in the Arabic-Islamic sources in the light of the historical context created by the crusades.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a period of political and military

(5) Al Jahiz says: (Their painters paint human beings without leaving any detail out, for the Byzantine painter is not satisfied with the painting until he turns the figure into a young man, a middle-aged man or an old man).

The passage is from al-Jahiz’s book *Kitab al-akhbar wa kayfa tusahh*, translated by Pellat, in *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 255, 1967, p.86.

(6) Ibn al-Faqih, *kitab al-buldan*, ed. Geeje, Leiden, 1885, P. 136.

(7) N. Faris, “Arab Culture in the Twelfth century”, in: *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 5: *The Impact of The Crusades on the Near East*, ed. Norman Zacour and Harry Nazard, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, P.P. 3-32.

(8) Talal khalidi, *Arab Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, Cambridge, 1994, P.191.

Since the rise of Islam in the seventh century and until the fall of Constantinople, the capital of Byzantium, to the Ottoman Turks in the mid-fifteenth century, Muslims and Byzantines were engaged in some sort of mutual relations, whether political, military, economic or cultural. Nevertheless, the interest on Muslim – Byzantine relations is still very limited despite the growing number of published works on various aspects of East-West interactions and mutual perceptions during medieval times⁽¹⁾.

The historiography of Muslim-Byzantine relations suffers from major problems. Pioneering historians of Byzantium, like Vasiliev, Canard, Oman, Hussey and Ostrogorsky, concentrated mainly on political and military relations between the Byzantines and the Muslims, ignoring many aspects of social, economic and cultural interactions. We find very little published research on Byzantine perceptions of the Arabic-Islamic culture, people and history⁽²⁾. Likewise, studies on Muslim perceptions of Byzantium are even fewer⁽³⁾.

This study addresses the Islamic view of Byzantium during the Crusades, mainly the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The literature on this subject is limited and scattered in a large number of Arabic-Islamic sources, including universal and local histories, geographical books, biographical dictionaries and monographs on individuals and ruling dynasties⁽⁴⁾.

(1) For example, see:

Daniel, N., *Islam and The West*, Edinburgh, 1960.

Southern, R., *Western Views of Islam in The Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, 1962.

Lewis, B., *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, New York, 1982.

(2) Vryonis, S., "Byzantine Attitudes Towards Islam During the Late Middle Ages", *Byzantine Studies*, Vol.2, 1981, P.P.263-86.

(3) Shbouł, A. "Arab Attitudes Towards Byzantium: Official, Learned and Popular"; in: *Essays presented to Joan Hussey*, London, 1988, P.P. 111-29.

(4) For a brief representation of the twelfth and thirteenth century Arabic sources, see:

Mohammed H.M. Ahmed, "Some Notes on Arabic Historiography During The Zengid Period 521/1227-648/1258", in: *Historians of The Middle East*, ed. Lewis B. and Holt, P.M., London, 1962, P.P. 79-97.

Abstract

The Islamic View of Byzantium During the Period of the Crusades.

Dr. M. El-Hafiz al-Nager.

Before the period of the Crusades in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Muslims viewed Byzantium and the Byzantines in negative terms. The Crusades created a new environment which forced Muslim Arab authors to view Byzantines in a new perspective. In this new environment, both the Muslims and the Byzantines were aware of their mutual enemies, namely the Crusaders in Bilad al-Sham and the Mongols, hence they strengthened their bilateral political and economic relations, especially during the Mamluk period.

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