



## MILITARY EXPEDITIONS LAUNCHED BY MUSLIM ARABS TO THE BYZANTINE CAPITAL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

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### Abstract

Constantinople as “queen of cities” in respect to both natural beauties and strategic location and historical significance became the target of not only nations like Sasanids, Avars, Bulgars, Russians and Latins but also Muslim Arabs and Muslim Turks afterwards in different terms of history. Muslim Arabs launched expeditions to the Byzantine capital of Constantinople four times in total; three times in the Umayyad period and once in the very beginning of Abbasid period. In the first three, Constantinople was besieged by Muslims, in the fourth the army of Islam reached up to Uskudar and returned by accepting the peace offer of Byzantine. Although these expeditions failed, they showed that Muslims were a serious power against the Byzantine Empire and provided the opportunity for the armies of Islam to gain experience in land and sea warfare in terms of necessary equipment and tactics. From the viewpoint of Byzantine, imperial power and the importance of the capital were understood once again that they helped the army show resistance dynamically against external threats.

Many narratives located in the hadith sources shows that in Prophet’s lifetime Muslims believed that one day the territories of the two super powers of the period, Byzantine and Sasanid, would be conquered. This article examines the expeditions launched by Muslim Arab armies to Constantinople during Byzantine era.

**Keywords:** Constantinople, Byzantium, Muslim Arabs, Umayyads, Abbasids, Muawiya, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Maslama b. Abd al-Malik, Harun al-Rashid, Leo III, Irene.

### MÜSLÜMAN ARAPLAR TARAFINDAN BİZANS BAŞKENTİ İSTANBUL’A DÜZENLENEN ASKERİ SEFERLER

### Özet

Gerek tabii güzellikleri ve stratejik konumu gerekse tarihi önemi bakımından “şehirlerin kraliçesi” sayılan Bizans başkenti İstanbul, tarihin çeşitli dönemlerinde Sâsânîler, Avarlar, Bulgarlar, Ruslar ve Lâtinler gibi milletlerden başka Müslüman Araplar ve daha sonra da Müslüman Türkler tarafından kuşatılmıştır. Müslüman Araplar üçü Emevîler ve biri de Abbâsîler’in ilk döneminde olmak üzere toplam dört defa Bizans başkenti İstanbul’a sefer düzenlemişlerdir. Bunlardan ilk üçünde İstanbul müslümanlar tarafından kuşatılmış, dördüncüsünde ise İslâm ordusu Üsküdar’a kadar ulaşmış ve burada Bizans’tan gelen barış teklifini kabul ederek geri dönmüştür. Bu seferler başarısızlıkla sonuçlanmış olmakla birlikte, müslümanların Bizans İmparatorluğu karşısında ciddi bir güç olduğunu göstermiş, İslâm ordularının kara ve deniz savaşlarında gerekli donanım ve taktik bakımından tecrübe kazanmasına imkân sağlamıştır. Bizans açısından ise imparatorluğun gücü ve başkentini önemi bir kez daha anlaşılmış, ordunun dış tehlikelere karşı dinamik bir şekilde mukavemet göstermesine yardımcı olmuştur.

Hadis kaynaklarında yer alan pek çok rivayet müslümanların daha Hz. Peygamber’in sağlığında, dönemin iki süper gücünü teşkil eden Bizans ve Sâsânî topraklarının bir gün fethedileceğine inandıklarını göstermektedir. Bu makalede Müslüman Araplar tarafından İstanbul’a düzenlenen seferler ele alınmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İstanbul, Bizans, Emevîler, Abbâsîler, Muâviye, Ebû Eyyûb el-Ensârî, Mesleme b. Abdülmelek, Harun er-Reşîd, III. Leon, Irene.

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The introduction of famous historian Ismail Hami Danişmend (d. 1967) for the translation of French orientalist Marius Canard's article, written in 1926, about Istanbul expeditions of Muslim Arabs which is the product of a serious research starts with these statements: "It is not right to approach to the conquest of Istanbul as an isolated or abstract incident. This big incident that marked the last age of the human history in fact means the realisation of a sacred ideal which was formed with Islamism at the cost of spilled bloods in ages and waves"<sup>1</sup>.

These statements above allow us to understand why Istanbul as "queen of cities" in respect to both natural beauties and strategic location and historical significance became the target of not only nations like Sasanids, Avars, Bulgars, Russians and Latins but also Muslim Arabs and Muslim Turks afterwards in different terms of history. It is possible to say that the spirit of spiritual dynamics, which means conquering and *jihad* of Islam, of companions of Prophet Muhammed who heralded that Istanbul would be conquered and nine centuries later, of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror and his army who made this ideal real was transferred from generation to generation with a big excitement.

Many narratives located in the hadith sources shows that in Prophet's lifetime Muslims believed that one day the territories of the two super powers of the period, Byzantine and Sasanid, would be conquered. Because the Prophet was indicating referring to Sasanids and the Byzantine Empire that the possession of the treasures of Chosroes and Caesar would be taken by Muslims and that the treasures would be disbursed in the way of God.<sup>2</sup> In another hadith the Prophet announced the conquest of Istanbul with the following words: "Verily you shall conquer Constantinople. What a wonderful leader will her leader be, and what a wonderful army will that army be."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless the Prophet also announced that the soldiers who would attend the first naval warfare and the first army amongst my followers who would invade the city of Caesar, would be forgiven their sins. This narrative coming from one of the lady companions, Umm Haram bint Milhan (Malik) who is known as Hala Sultan amongst Turks is that the Prophet one day wakes up laughing in the house of Umm Haram who has a relationship with the Prophet by affinity in respect to kinship. When Umm Haram asks why he has been laughing, the Prophet says that some people from his ummah who opens up to the Mediterranean for conquering was shown to him in the nap and that they are rewarded with heaven. In response to this, Umm Haram begs the Prophet to pray for her to be amongst those people and he does pray. After a while, the Prophet falls asleep again and wakes up laughing one more time. When Umm Haram asks curiously why he has been laughing this time, the Prophet states that some of his ummah will set sail for conquering Constantinople,

<sup>1</sup> Marius Canard, "Tarih ve Efsaneye Göre Araplar'ın İstanbul Seferleri" (Turkish trans.: İsmail Hami Danişmend), *İstanbul Enstitüsü Dergisi*, II, (1956), Preface of the translator, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> al-Bukhari, "Jihad", 157, "Khumus" 8, "Manakıb" 25.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, İstanbul 1981, IV, 335. According to some other narratives, the Prophet had stated that Constantinople and Rome would be conquered and had responded to a question about which one would be conquered first that "First the city of Caesar city will be conquered". Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, II, 176; Darimi, "al-Mukaddima", p. 43.

the city of Caesar and these first armies will be forgiven their sins as well. And when Umm Haram wants him to pray for her to be amongst those, the Prophet responds to her that “You are with the first group”.<sup>4</sup>

Four military expeditions were launched to Istanbul (Constantinopolis, al-Qustantiniyye in Arabic), the capital city of the Byzantine Empire by Muslim Arabs. Three of them occurred during the period of Umayyads and the fourth one in the first period of Abbasids. It is necessary to indicate here that each one of these expeditions has the capacity to be the subject of separate studies in various aspects. Indeed there are some studies for this purpose.<sup>5</sup> In this paper, these expeditions will be mentioned in general and the importance of the expeditions with regard to the histories of Islam and the Byzantine Empire will be pointed out.

Before Istanbul sieges, it is helpful to give a brief information about naval expeditions of Muslim-Arabs against Byzantium. As is known, after death of the Prophet, Muslims succeeded to get Syria, Palestine, Egypt and North Africa which Byzantium struggled to hold in hands for long years against the other super power Sasanians, as a remarkable result of rapid conquest operations they performed. Meanwhile after ceasing the Sasanid Empire to exist by conquering the capital city al-Madain (Ctesiphon) they fixed their eyes on Anatolia and the centre of empire, Constantinople. Muslims who got the possession of Central and Eastern Mediterranean coasts as a whole conquering Syria, Egypt and North Africa, considered preparing a naval force necessary particularly against the Byzantine navy. Muawiya b. Abu Sufyan who was assigned to Damascus governorship by Caliph Umar had comprehended the importance of naval forces during the conquests in the region and had asked for permission of building a fleet for the defence of sea towns in Egypt and Syria against the Byzantine navy. But considering that Muslims were inexperienced in naval expeditions, Caliph Umar had not allowed on the grounds that it was dangerous for the safety of Muslim soldiers. Muawiya b.

<sup>4</sup> al-Bukhari, “Jihad”, 93; Müslim, “Imara”, 160; Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, VI, 361. Umm Haram with her husband Ubada b. Samit attended the Cyprus expedition which was the first sea expedition of Muslims in 28 (648-49) in times of Caliph Uthman. Umm Haram reached Cyprus and after disembarking from the vessel she became martyr by falling from her horse and was buried there. Today, the grave of Umm Haram in Tuzla near Larnaca in Cyprus is known and visited as Hala Sultan Tekke. See M. Yaşar Kandemir, “Ümmü Harâm”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, XLII, s. 321-322.

<sup>5</sup> For examples See E. W. Brooks, “The Campaign of 716-718 from Arabic Sources”, *Journal of the Hellenic Studies*, XIX (1899), pp. 19-31; Marius Canard, “Tarih ve Efsaneye Göre Araplar’ın İstanbul Seferleri” (Turkish trans. İsmail Hami Danişmend), *İstanbul Enstitüsü Dergisi*, II (1956), pp. 213-259; R. Guiland, “L’Expedition de Mesleme contre Constantinople 717-718”, *Etudes Byzantines*, Paris 1959, 89-112; Şahin Uçar, “Müslümanların İstanbul’u Fethetmek İçin Yaptıkları İlk Üç Muhasara”, *Selçuk Üniversitesi Selçuk Dergisi*, Year: 2 nr.: 1, December 1986, pp. 65-83; İsmail Yiğit, “Emeviler Zamanında Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul Seferleri”, *II. Uluslararası İstanbul’un Fethi Sempozyumu*, İstanbul 1997, pp. 45-61; Casim Avcı, “Müslüman Arapların İstanbul Seferleri”, *Fatih Sempozyumları I-II: Tebliğler (2005-2006)*, İstanbul: Fatih Belediyesi, 2007, pp. 108-115 (This article is the extended version of the report); Mehmet Adıgüzel, *Emeviler ve Abbâsiler Döneminde İstanbul Kuşatmaları*, Unpublished MA thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2010; Mustafa Sabri Küçükbaşcı, “Fethi Hadisi ve İstanbul Kuşatmaları”, *Antikçağ’dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*, ed. Coşkun Yılmaz, İstanbul 2015, II, 284-293.

Abu Sufyan was inducted as district governor of Syria in the reign of Caliph Uthman and convinced the new caliph about building a fleet. The fleet which was built in coastal cities of Syria and Egypt evaluating the shipyards remained from Byzantium and its masters and workers achieved significant success in a short period of time. Muawiya b. Abu Sufyan launched an expedition to Cyprus leading a union of volunteers in accordance with the order of caliph in the year of 28 (649). Muslim fleet with its large and small 1700 vessels sailed from Acre and besieged Cyprus. The Governor of Egypt Abd Allah b. Sa'd b. Abu Sarh also gave support dispatching a fleet which sailed from Alexandria. At the end of the siege, it was had an agreement with the conditions of no attacks on Muslims and 7200 gold coin as tax payment and the island was seized by peace. Important companions like Abu Ayyub Khalid b. Zayd al-Ansari, Fadala b. Ubayd al-Ansari, Abu al-Darda, Abu Zar al-Ghifari, Mikdad b. Amr, Ubada b. Samit and his wife Umm Haram had also participated in this siege which is foremost among the first marine expeditions organized by Muslims. As stated above, Umm Haram became martyr falling off her horse in Larnaca. After a while, as a consequence that administrators of Cyprus stopped paying taxes a second expedition with a fleet of 500 vessels was made to Cyprus in 33 (654) and 12.000 soldiers were placed to the island by battle.<sup>6</sup> In 32 (652) a fleet with 200 vessels reached up from Syria to Sicily and in the same year an expedition to Rhodes was made. After a short while, in 34 (655) Islam navy with 200 vessels leading by the Governor of Egypt Abd Allah b. Sa'd b. Abu Sarh and also by Busr b. Abu Artat representing Muawiya b. Abu Sufyan inflicted a heavy defeat on the Byzantine fleet with 500 vessels offshore Phoenician town of Antalya. Emperor Constans II (641-668) had led the Byzantine fleet himself in this battle which was known as the first major Byzantine-Arab naval battle and which passed into the history with the name of Dhat al-Sawari (Ghazvat al-Sawari) because of the abundance of masts. According to the expression of Byzantine historian Theophanes, because a devoted soldier giving the emperor his own clothes and wearing his took another vessel for going away from the region Constans II survived the death and then he went to Constantinople. The Byzantine Empire lost the control over Eastern Mediterranean after the battle of Dhat al-Sawari. It is remarkable that Theophanes indicated that in this battle the main target for Muslims was Constantinople.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> al-Balazuri, *Fütüh al-buldân* (Turkish trans. Mustafa Fayda), Ankara 2002, pp. 218-220; al-Tabarî, *Tarikh al-rusul wa al-muluk* (ed. Abu al-Fazl Ibrahim), Kahire 1972, IV, 258; Mustafa Fayda, *Hulefâ-yi Râşidîn Devri*, İstanbul 2014, p. 265.

<sup>7</sup> Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes* (Eng. Trans. Herry Turtledove), Philadelphia 1982, p. 45. For Dhat al-Sawari see al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, IV, 288, 330; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi al-tarikh* (ed. C. J. Tornberg), Beirut 1979, III, 117, 147; Y. Abbas Hashmi, "Dhat al-Sawari. A Naval Engagement Between the Arabs and Byzantines", *Islamic Quarterly*, 6 (1961), 55-64; V. Christides, "The Naval Engagement of Dhat as-Savari A.H. 34/ A.D.655-656, A Classical Example of Naval Warfare Incompetence", *Byzantina*, XIII/2, Thessaloniki 1985, 1331-1345; Murat Öztürk, "Zâtüssavârî", *DÎA*, XLIV, 152-153. There are some rumours that Dhat al-Savârî War occurred in 31 (652) See al-Tabaî, *Tarikh*, IV, 288.

## I. The Sieges in the Umayyad Period

The Umayyad Period was one of the periods which the fiercest struggles between the Byzantines and Muslims were experienced. Although it is occasionally interrupted, every year the expeditions which were named *saifa* (summer time expedition, *sawaif* in plural) were made to the Byzantine territories and armies of Islam and the Byzantine Empire faced off against each other not only on the land but for a few times also on the sea.<sup>8</sup> Obviously, amongst those struggles the expeditions targeting Constantinople as the capital of the Byzantine Empire were of particular importance for both sides.

Two of three Constantinople sieges in the Umayyad period were in the reign of Muawiya b. Abu Sufyan (661-680), and the third one was in the reign of Sulayman b. Abd al-Malik (715-717).

### I.1. The First Siege of Constantinople

Muawiya I<sup>9</sup> who had made his mark with his politics against Byzantium as well as in the country during his governorship in Syria, established himself as Umayyad caliph in 41 (661) and became more powerful with transferring the capital to Damascus. In the first years of the caliphate Byzantine-oriented land and sea expeditions which were interrupted due to internal political problems during his governorship restarted and continued uninterruptedly. It seems that his main goal was Constantinople as the capital of the Byzantine Empire to be conquered.

Meanwhile internal problems in the Byzantine Empire helped Muawiya I to take steps to realize his purpose. In 667-68 Saborios, the strategos of Armenian Theme, sent General Sergios who revolted against Emperor Constans II to Damascus, the capital city of Umayyads, for requesting help from Muawiya I in exchange of a promise that he would help him with the expeditions to Byzantine. Thereupon Constantine IV, the son of Emperor Constas II<sup>10</sup> who was

<sup>8</sup> For chronological assessment of the Arab - Byzantine wars in the Umayyad era See E. W. Brooks, "The Arabs in Asia Minor (641-750) from Arabic Sources", *Journal of the Hellenic Studies*, XVIII (1898), 182-208; J. Wellhausen, "Die Kämpfe der Araber mit den Romaern in der Zeit der Umayyiden", *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse*, 1901, Heft 4, Göttingen 1902, 415-447; Şahin Uçar, *Anadolu'da İslâm-Bizans Mücadelesi*, İstanbul 1990; Mustafa S. Küçükaşçı, "Anadolu'da Arap-Bizans Mücadelesi ve 'Sâife' Seferleri", *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi*, II (2000), 9-30.

<sup>9</sup> About the relations between Muawiya and the Byzantine Empire during his governorship in Syria see Casim Avcı, *İslâm-Bizans İlişkileri*, Ankara 2015, pp. 59-60.

<sup>10</sup> Constans II got reaction of the public and got started to be called "Kabil" because of the church policy pursued by him, forcing his brother Theodosios who wanted joint emperorship in 660 to be padre and then killing him, and his cruel attitude towards famous Orthodox scholar Maximos Confessor and Martinus who was brought to the papacy without his consent. The Emperor who was aware of the internal unrest went to Italy abandoning Constantinople for the purpose of cleansing Italy from the Langobards. But he failed against the Langobards, after he visited Rome for a short time, he went to Sicilia which might be defended against Arab attacks and established the capital city of Syracuse in 663. Constans II was killed in an assassination organized by his immediate surroundings on 15th September 668. And his son Constantine IV who was in the state administration for a longtime as the joint emperor came to the throne of the Byzantine Empire. See

in Sicily for a few years, who was conducting the affairs of the state on behalf of his father sent Andreas the Chamberlain (Cubicularius) as the messenger with various gifts to Muawiya I and asked him not to help rebellious General Saborios. Byzantine historian Theophanes gives place to many details about the meeting of the two messengers in Muawiya's palace and the conversation between the caliph and the messengers.<sup>11</sup> Muawiya I had sided with the rebellious Saborios who apparently promised a lot more and prompted an army under the control of Fadala b. Ubaid for supporting him. But in the meantime Sergios, the messenger of Saborios, was ambushed by the soldiers of Emperor and was tortured to death by Andreas. Saborios also died falling from his horse in Hadrianopolis and his soldiers sided with the Emperor (48/668).<sup>12</sup> In Arab sources which gives place to the Constantinople expedition under the control of Sufyan b. Awf in 49/669, there is no information about Fadala's being sent to Anatolia<sup>13</sup> and the diplomatic initiative between the Emperor and Saborios.<sup>14</sup>

The army which was sent to Constantinople in 48 (668) under the control of Fadala b. Ubaid al-Ansari by Muawiya reached Chalcedon (Kadıköy) and spent the whole winter there. When Fadala asked for help from Muawiya I, a large army was created under the control of Sufyan b. Awf al-Azdi. Sufyan reached Constantinople following the route of Melitene (Malatya), Caesarea (Kayseri), Amorion (south of Ankara) and Dorylaion (Eskişehir). Muawiya I wanted his son Yazid to join the army but he took it slow because of being unwilling for the expedition. Meanwhile Muawiya who received the information that the armies in Chalcedon were confronting with the risk of hunger besides fever diseases and smallpox gave Yazid the order to move immediately. In 49 (669) Yazid leading the backup forces under his order reached Constantinople and joined the siege. The siege continued throughout the Spring. However, could not get results due to high and firm walls of Constantinople, depletion of victuals, disease and starvation. Considering that the winter season was approaching, armies of Islam were forced to remove the siege and return. During this unsuccessful first siege<sup>15</sup> many Muslims were martyred.

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Georg Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi* (Turkish trans. Fikret Işıltan), Ankara 1991, pp. 112-114. Also See Birsnel Küçükspahioğlu, "Emeviler'in İstanbul Kuşatmaları Esnasında Bizans İmparatorluğu'nun Durumu", *Beşinci Uluslar Arası Orta Doğu Semineri: İslâmiyet'in Doğuşundan Osmanlı İdaresine Kadar Orta Doğu (Şam 2-4 Kasım 2010) Bildiriler* (ed. Mustafa Öztürk- Enver Çakar), Elazığ 2012, pp. 77-87.

<sup>11</sup> Theophanes recorded that Muawiya clearly replied the messengers who asked for help that "You both are my enemies. I support the side of who gives me a lot more". Besides it's also given place that the caliph set the exacerbated messengers against each other. (p. 49).

<sup>12</sup> Theophanes, p. 48-50; Ibn al-Ibri, *Abu'l-Farac Tarihi* (Turkish trans. Ömer Rıza Doğrul), Ankara 1987, I, 183, 184 (Giving the year of 46/666 as the year of the event, Ibn al-Ibri repeats the same narratives with Theophanes); Avcı, *İslâm-Bizans İlişkileri*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>13</sup> al-Ya'qubi, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, Beirut, ts., II, 240. Malik b. Hubaira, Abd Allah b. Kurz al-Bajali and Yazid b. Shajara al-Rahawi as well were mentioned among the commanders sent to the Byzantine expeditions together with Fadala b. Ubaid. See al-Ya'qubi, *Tarikh*, II, 240; al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, V, 232; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, III, 458.

<sup>14</sup> Avcı, *İslâm-Bizans İlişkileri*, pp. 60-61; Casim Avcı, "Emeviler Döneminde Bizans İmparatorluğu İle Diplomatik İlişkiler", *Beşinci Uluslar Arası Orta Doğu Semineri: İslâmiyet'in Doğuşundan Osmanlı İdaresine Kadar Orta Doğu (Şam 2-4 Kasım 2010) Bildiriler* (ed. Mustafa Öztürk- Enver Çakar), Elazığ 2012, pp. 91-92.

<sup>15</sup> Although Al-Tabari gave place to a rumour that Busr b. Abu Artat advanced towards Constantinople in 43

Famous companions such as Abd Allah b. Abbas, Abd Allah b. Umar, Abd Allah b. Zubair and Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (Khalid b. Zaid) also participated in the first Constantinople siege.<sup>16</sup> Famous companion Abu Ayyub al-Ansari who hosted the Prophet in his house for seven months after his emigration (Hidjra) to Medina and despite his old age who participated in this expedition got ill and died during the siege. During his illness he bequeathed that: “When I die, take my body to the farthest point that you can move across enemy territory and bury me there”.<sup>17</sup> When Abu Ayyub al-Ansari passed away, after the funeral prayer, he was buried at a place close to the walls by a troop in accordance with his will. Rumour has it that the Byzantine Emperor who got the information that Abu Ayyub who has a valuable place among Muslims was buried outside of the walls, told that he would remove the body from the grave to be ripped apart by wild animals after the siege. But when it was notified that churches and Christians living in lands of Islam would suffer if such an attempt was made in the reply sent by the commander of Muslim army, he assured that they would not touch the tomb. Moreover then he built a dome over the grave. In the Islamic sources it was narrated that Christian Greeks visited grave of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, particularly for praying in famine periods and for rain prayer in drought seasons.<sup>18</sup> It is understood that for centuries the grave was protected carefully as an important visiting place. Indeed Muslim pilgrim Ali b. Abu Bakr al-Harawî (d. 611/1215) in the memoirs about his trip to Constantinople noted that he visited Abu Ayyub al-Ansari’s grave near the city walls.<sup>19</sup> The grave vanished because of great looting and destruction during the Constantinople invasion of Latins by The Fourth Crusade in 1204. However after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 it was discovered by Ak Shams al-Din, the teacher and the sheikh of Mehmed the Conquerer.<sup>20</sup>

## 1.2. The Second Siege of Constantinople

The second Constantinople siege carried out by Muslim Arabs during the period of the Umayyads coincided again with the time of Muawiya I. During this period armies of Islam continued to land and sea expeditions against the Byzantine Empire under the control of the names such as Busr b. Abu Artat, Sufyan b. Awf al-Azdi, Fadala b. Ubaid, Abd Allah b. Mas’ada

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(663), he also added that this rumour was not acknowledged true. Al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, V, 181. Also see Şahin Uçar, *Anadolu’da İslâm-Bizans Mücadelesi*, İstanbul 1990, p. 77; Yiğit, “Emevîler Zamanında Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul Seferleri”, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, V, 232.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Sa’d, *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* (ed. İhsân Abbâs), Beyrut 1388/1968, III, 484-485.

<sup>18</sup> Zakariyya b. Muhammad al-Qazwini, *Asar al-bilad ve ahbar al-‘ibad* (ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld), Göttingen 1848, pp. 207-208. Also see Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ma’arif* (ed. Sarwat Uqqâsha), Kahire 1969, s. 274-275; Ibn al-Athar, *al-Kamil*, III, 459.

<sup>19</sup> Ali b. Abû Bakr al-Harawi, *Kitab al-Isharat ila ma’rifat al-ziyarat: A Lonely Wayfarer’s Guide to Pilgrimage* (ed. and trans. by Josef W. Meri), New Jersey 2004, pp. 144-145.

<sup>20</sup> Hüseyin Algül, “Ebû Eyyüb el-Ensârî”, *DİA*, X, 124; Yiğit, “Emevîler Zamanında Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul Seferleri”, pp. 51-52.

al-Fazari and Abdurrahman b. Umm al-Hakam. In order to control the Aegean and Marmara Sea, it was given priority to the conquest of strategically important islands on the route. By the conquest of those islands and then placing the troops Byzantine sailors were kept under harassment.<sup>21</sup>

Muslims have achieved an important base for operation Constantinople in 670 by seizing the peninsula of Kyzikos (Kapidagh) very near the capital after the islands of Cyprus, Rhodes, Kos and Chios. Then they penetrated to İzmir (Smyrna) in 672. In the same year or in 53 (673), Rhodes was able to be taken under control again by the Muslim fleet under the command of Junada b. Abu Umayya and the troops were placed on the island. The troops settled in Rhodes were living on agriculture and stockbreeding and in case of danger they were taking refuge in the castle. Rhodes Muslims with the expeditions launched from there made Byzantine sailors live difficult moments and sometimes they themselves faced with great danger.<sup>22</sup> In the Spring of 54 (674) armies of Islam leaned on the walls of Constantinople and they besieged the capital for the second time.<sup>23</sup> Until 58 (678) Constantinople was kept under siege for four years by Arabs.<sup>24</sup> Conflicts had began in the spring and had continued throughout the summer season, and Muslim soldiers had been taken to Kapidagh (Kyzikos) peninsula in the winter. During both land and sea sieges, conflicts between naval forces took place more than the attacks for the walls carried out from land. However in this long siege, Muslims could not get results they expected although the Byzantine Empire suffered partial loss. Herein; particularly the “grejuva” owned by the Byzantine Empire which is known as Greek fire had an important role besides reasons such as the walls of Constantinople giving no passage to Muslims who were

<sup>21</sup> al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, V, 234, 253, 287-288; Yiğit, “Emeviler Zamanında Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul Seferleri”, p. 52.

<sup>22</sup> Muawiya was reason to be criticising because Muslims in Rhodes exposure to hazards. That's why the troops there were withdrawn in Yazid b. Mu'awiya era. al-Balazuri, *Futuh*, p. 338; al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, V, 288; Yiğit, “Emeviler Zamanında Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul Seferleri”, p. 50; Adgüzel, *Emeviler ve Abbâsiler Döneminde İstanbul Kuşatmaları*, p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> al-Tabari citing Waqidi indicated that Junada b. Abu Umayya conquered “The Island of Arwad near Constantinople” in 54 (674), that military units were placed there and those units remained there for 7 years until Muawiya's death. Al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, V, 293. There are different opinions about the Arwad island; if it is an island off Kyzikos ( Kapidagh) peninsula, the island of Rhodes or Syria. See Canard, “Tarih ve Efsaneye Göre Araplar'ın İstanbul Seferleri”, p. 223; Lawrence I. Conrad's article is very important about this subject. See Lawrence I. Conrad, “The Conquest of Arwād: A Source-critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East”, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East: Papers of the First Workshop on Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, ed. Averil Cameron-Lawrence I. Conrad, *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, 1, vol. 1, *Problems in the Literary Source material*, Princeton 1992, pp. 317-401.

<sup>24</sup> Theophanes (p. 52) and Nikephoros (*Short History*, ed. and trans. by Cyril Mango, Washington D. C. 1990, p. 87) recorded that the siege lasted 7 years because the both chronicle writers took the date of the conquest of Kyzikos as the start of the siege. According to Bizantinists, the siege lasted 4 (or 5) years. (See Nikephoros, *Short History*, note of the translator, p. 194; Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi* (Turkish trans. Fikret İltan) Ankara 1991, p. 116; Andreas N. Stratos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Eng. trans. Harry T. Hionides), Amsterdam 1975, IV, 29.



not accustomed to the cold and harsh winter conditions and food shortages.<sup>25</sup> After heavy losses because of the Greek fire invented by Syrian Kallinikos (Callinicus) which could flame also on the water, Muslim navy was forced to retreat from Byzantine. During the retreat vessels survived was caught in a storm on the coast of Pamphlia (Antalya) and very few of them could return unharmed.<sup>26</sup>

In the process of Constantinople siege, army of Islam that performs various raids in Anatolia had been also defeated. On the other hand; Muawiya I had a difficult position due to Christian Mardaites (Djarajima) living in the mountains of Amanos in Lebanon and who were provoked to rebel by Byzantines hoping to stop Arab attacks. In the face of those extremely important developments in favour of the Byzantine Empire Muawiya I could not find any other option but to seek for peace and for this purpose he sent a delegation of messengers to the emperor. According to al-Mas'udi, Phanakis al-Rumi was the head of the delegation.<sup>27</sup>

Emperor Constantine IV (668-685) who met with the messengers sent Ioannes Pitzigaudis with diplomatic experience to negotiate peace terms with the caliph. The messenger of the Emperor was welcomed with a grand ceremony in the presence of state officials by Muawiya I. The agreement was reached after lengthy peace talks. According to this agreement valid for a period of thirty years Muawiya I was commitment to offering 3.000 dinars per year, 50 prisoners of war and 50 Arabian horses.<sup>28</sup>

Arab Muslims who were compelled to peace after decades of advance aroused great repercussions outside the country as well as within the boundaries of the Byzantine Empire. Avar khan and many leaders in the Balkan peninsula sent a delegation of messengers accompanied by valuable gifts to Constantinople for offering their condolences to the Byzantine Emperor and they won the friendship by recognising the high dominance.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Greek fire (liquid fire) of which composite was kept as a secret by the Byzantine was an explosive substance causing a large fire by spraying on the enemy ships in the distance in small barrels with the help of siphons. For further reading See Mikhail Psellos, *Mikhail Psellos'un Khronographia'sı* (Turkish trans. Işın Demirkent), Ankara 1992, notes of the translator, pp. 255-256 (IV).

<sup>26</sup> Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, s. 115-116; Adıgüzel, *Emevîler ve Abbâsiler Döneminde İstanbul Kuşatmaları*, p. 38.

<sup>27</sup> al-Mas'ûdî, *Muruğ al-zahab* (ed. M. Muhy al-din Abd al-Hamid), Beirut 1384/1964, I, 329; Stratos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, IV, 45.

<sup>28</sup> Theophanes, p. 54; Nikephoros, p. 85; Avcı, *İslâm-Bizans İlişkileri*, p. 63.

<sup>29</sup> Theophanes, p. 54; Nikephoros, p. 85; Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, p. 116. In fact, the situation in the Byzantine during the second Constantinople siege was not that good because of both domestic and external problems. Constantine IV who took the imperial rights of his brothers from their hands and removed them away from the throne had caused the reactions of the army and the public. The thought of Monotheletism (the presence of a single will in Christ) which was accepted in order to end the discussion on religious beliefs in church by the Emperor Herakleios (610-641) had not been approved seriously and had caused new conflicts. On the other hand, Bulgarians living in the west of the Azov Sea in Asparuh's leadership was forced to leave their lands with the Khazars' pressure and advancing westward they started to appear around the Danube probably since 670. Emperor Constantine IV found the opportunity to fight with the Bulgarians

Ostrogorsky, one of the leading Byzantine historians of 20th Century, mentions that Constantine IV evaluated this victory gained against Muslims together with the victory gained against Maslama b. Abd al-Malik who besieged Constantinople in 717, and the victory gained in 732 by Franks against the army of Andalusian Umayyad Dynasty (Caliphate of Cordoba) under the command of Abdurrahman al-Gafiki and ended Muslim's hopes of advancing in Europe over Andalusia and that those were the turning points worldwide. According to Ostrogorsky the victory of Constantine IV out of these three victories which saved Europe from the Muslim wave had been the greatest success within the indicate ones. Because the one thereat was undoubtedly the most strongest attack that Christian world had suffered due to the Constantinople invasions of Arabs. And Constantinople was the last dam to oppose the Arab's advance. This resisting dam had been the salvation not only for the Byzantine Empire but also for the whole European culture. By this victory, the Arab invasion had been exposed to a corresponding impact for the first time.<sup>30</sup>

### **I.3. The Third Siege: Expedition of Maslama b. Abd al-Malik**

Due to internal turmoil, caused by the death of Muawiya I, Constantinople expeditions were suspended for a while as well as the conquests in other fronts. This stagnation in the conquests lasted until the union was provided by Abd al-Malik b. Marwan (685-705) who ended the civil wars. Walid b. Abd al-Malik (705-715), son of Abd al-Malik, was inherited a strong stability ensured state and relaunched the conquests. Thus in his reign armies of Islam conquered Andalusia in the west and turned up the pressure on French border, and also reached deep into India in the east conquering Transoxania. Centres such as Tyana (Tuvana, Niğde), Amaseia (Amasya), Herakleia (Ereğli) and Antiocheia (Yalvaç) were conquered by winning important victories in Anatolia. Walid b. Abd al-Malik started to make preparations for Constantinople expedition to conquer the capital city of Byzantium. In response to land and sea attacks launched against the Byzantine Empire and particularly the preparations for Constantinople made by Muslims, the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius II (713-715) sent a delegation leading by Daniel from Sinop to Walid b. Abd al-Malik in order to ask for peace. According to Theophanes, the Emperor also asked the messenger to obtain information about the preparations and military power of Muslims.<sup>31</sup>

The news brought by the messenger confirmed that the Muslims were making preparations to besiege Constantinople from land and sea. Thereupon the Emperor asked the public

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after eliminating the danger of Muslim Arabs encompassing Constantinople. See Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, p.117; Küçükspahioğlu, "Emeviler'in İstanbul Kuşatmaları Esnasında Bizans İmparatorluğu'nun Durumu", pp. 82-84.

<sup>30</sup> Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, pp. 116-117.

<sup>31</sup> Theophanes, pp. 79, 80; Uçar, *Anadolu'da İslâm-Bizans Mücadelesi*, p. 106; Hugh Kennedy, "Byzantine-Arab Diplomacy in the Near East from the Islamic Conquests to the Mid-Eleventh Century", *Byzantine Diplomacy* (ed. J. Shepard-S. Franklin), Hampshire 1992, p. 135.

to prepare enough supplies for three years and the ones who can not to leave the town. On the other hand, during the war logistical and technical preparations such as storing enough food, repairing the walls, building warships, Greek fire, making arrows and tools hurling stones were made in order to defend Constantinople.<sup>32</sup>

While these preparations continued, Anastasius II was forced to withdraw from his throne as a result of the uprising of troops of Opsikion Thema. Anatolikon Thema Strategoi Leo from Germanicia (Marash) didn't recognise Theodosios III (715-717) who was enthroned by rebels and sided against him.

On the other hand, after Walid b. Abd al-Malik's death his brother Sulaiman b. Abd al-Malik (715-717) got the Umayyad throne and as the caliph, started the Constantinople expedition that the preparations were made all along. Caliph Sulaiman placed a great importance on the Constantinople expedition that his brother had failed. For this purpose, he came to Dabiq that was a centre near the Byzantine border and the general commandership of the army was given to Maslama b. Abd al-Malik who was one of the famous commanders of the period. Umar b. Hubaira was also assigned as the navy commander. According to al-Tabari, the caliph ordered his brother Maslama not to return without conquering the city.<sup>33</sup> It should be noted just to give an idea without ignoring the necessity of approaching with caution to the numbers given by Mediaeval history sources that it was narrated in some sources 120.000 soldiers were present under the command of Maslama and the navy under the control of Umar b. Hubaira was composed of 1000 vessels.<sup>34</sup>

Maslama departed from Dabiq near Aleppo with ground forces in the early days of 97 (Sept. 715) and in the late 715 conquered Hisn al-Saqaliba (Loulon) that was an extremely important gateway to Taurus. Maslama passed to Cappadocia region and then to Amorion over Marash and spent the winter in Anatolia. The navy under the command of Umar b. Hubaira also came up to Cilicia and spent the winter there. When Spring came, Maslama conquering Pergamon (Bergama) and Sardis Sardes went to Abydos (Cape Nara) and with the help of the navy under the command of Umar b. Hubaira passed to Thrace. In August of 717 he came to Constantinople. After a month the fleet coming from Marmara arrived and anchored at the mouth of the Golden Horn. Maslama, with the help of the fleet under the control of Umar b. Hubaira besieged Constantinople in the early 99 (August 717). Thus, the Byzantine capital was besieged by Muslims for the third time. By the way, Leo who had put up a power struggle against Emperor Theodosius III succeeded and came to the throne of the Byzantine Empire.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Theophanes, p. 80; Avcı, *İslâm-Bizans İlişkileri*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>33</sup> al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, VI, 530.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya ve al-nihaya*, Beirut-Riyad 1966, IX, 178; al-Zahabi, *Tarikh al-Islam: h. 81-100* (ed. Umar Abd al-Salam Tadmuri), Beyrut 1990, p. 269.

<sup>35</sup> In sources there are various narrations about Maslama who built friendship with Leo who were struggling to come to the Byzantine throne, who gave a promise to Leo that he would be supported on the throne if he helped him as well, and who was deceived by Leo in the end. To sum up, Leo as Anatolikon Thema

It is recorded that Leo III offered Maslama peace but Maslama who was aware that this was a trick turned down the offer and asked the caliph for reinforcing unit.<sup>36</sup> Maslama who obviously was intended on turning no back without conquering Constantinople, kept the capital city under siege sending reinforcements at intervals for all the year. But could not succeed due to negative reasons such as the winter passed very hard, supply and material vessels that left the port because of southwester burnt with the fire of grejuva by Byzantine soldiers, many warships fragmented hitting rocks as a result of severe storms, vessels full of supplies burnt after the uprised Christian crew in the Muslim navy came to Constantinople with the vessels they seized for reporting the location of the other vessels to the Emperor, and the onset of famine and hunger in the army of Islam. By the way, the siege was lifted (100/718) with the command of Umar b. Abd al-Aziz (717-720) who was elected as caliph after Sulaiman b. Abd al-Malik's death and Maslama had to return.<sup>37</sup>

Ostrogorsky indicated that an important circuit of Byzantine-Arab struggle was enclosed with Maslama's unsuccessful siege of Constantinople and then Arabs removed from Anatolia. He also referred drawing attention that Constantinople was not attacked by the Arabs once more after the Arab attack was broken in front of the Byzantine walls on the brink of Europe, and that although next Arab attacks caused trouble for the empire, they did not threaten its

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stratego entered into negotiations with Sulaiman who was the leading commander come up to Amorion and besieged the city in 716 against the Emperor Theodosius III. Rumours has it that Sulaiman writing a letter to Leo indicated that the emperorship is the right of him and that he would be supported. And Leo responded that the agreement would be made only if the Amorion siege was lifted. When Sulaiman answered in the affirmative, Leo came to him with his troops for making an agreement. Suleiman welcomed Leo with a military ceremony and hailed him as emperor. Eventually, agreement was achieved about lifting the siege. But it broke down in a short time because of the distrust between the two sides. While Sulaiman was withdrawing from Amorion due to an uprising of troops, Leo also departed from there leaving troops into the city. When Maslama b. Abd al-Malik who set off on Constantinople to besiege came to Cappadocia over Marash, he found out the hostility between Leo and Emperor Theodosios III and he wanted to advantage of this. For impressing Leo, he didn't let the soldiers loot the places seized. Leo also had wanted to make use of Maslama, so that he sent his messengers to him. Leo asked Maslama through the messengers of him for the guarantee of meaning no harm to him. Maslama after answering Leo in the affirmative departed for Akroinos and Leo moved towards the capital for coming to the Byzantine throne. Leo coming up to Uskudar with his soldiers entered into negotiations with the emperor. Theodosios abdicated the throne after receiving assurances for his and his son's life and went to Ephesus. And Leo came to the Byzantine throne. See Theophanes, pp. 82-85; al-Tabari, *Tarih*, VI, 530-531; Canard, "Tarih ve Efsaneye Göre Araplar'ın İstanbul Seferleri", pp. 225-231; Uçar, *Anadolu'da İslâm-Bizans Mücadelesi*, s. 109-113; Yiğit, "Emeviler Zamanında Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul Seferleri", pp. 55-57; Küçükspahioğlu, "Emeviler'in İstanbul Kuşatmaları Esnasında Bizans İmparatorluğu'nun Durumu", p. 86.

<sup>36</sup> Theophanes, p. 88.

<sup>37</sup> Theophanes, pp. 88-90; Tabarî, *Târîkh*, VI, 553; Uçar, *Anadolu'da İslâm-Bizans Mücadelesi*, pp. 113-116; Aikaterina Christophilopoulou, *Byzantine History II: 610-847* (Eng. trans. Timothy Cullen), Amsterdam 1993, pp. 119-120. For further reading about Maslama's Constantinople siege see Khanoglan Hacıyev, *Mesleme b. Abdülmelik: Hayatı, Siyâsi ve Askerî Faaliyetleri*, (unpublished MA thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İstanbul 2006), pp. 29-59.

existence.<sup>38</sup> P. Lemerle indicating that the Byzantine victory against the Arabs provoked strong reactions, recorded that Emperor Leo III ended the Arab advancing in the East with this victory as well as in the West Charles Martel stopped the Arab attacks coming over al-Andalus in 732.<sup>39</sup> Levçenko remarking that the siege resulted in quite serious consequences for the Arabs against the brilliant victory of Byzantine, indicated that the Umayyads lost prestige in response to Leo III or is glorified by the people as the savior of the empire after the siege.<sup>40</sup> According to Auguste Bailly, perhaps Leo III deserved to be seen as the savior of the whole West, not only of the Byzantine Empire, with this victory which was spectacular in terms of results.<sup>41</sup>

It is recorded in sources that Maslama built a mosque in Constantinople during the siege. Authors such as Ibn al-Faqih (d. 289/902), Ali b. Abu Bakr al-Harawi (d. 611/1215) and Shaikh al-Rabwa al-Dimashqi (d. 727/1327?) mentioned about this mosque.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, this mosque was brought to agenda in the agreements made between the Byzantine Empire and Abbasids, Fatimids, Ayyubids and Mamluks and especially about the *khutbah* that would be read in the name of which caliph.<sup>43</sup> It is noteworthy that it was confirmed in the work named *De Administrando Imperio* which was written/printed by the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (913-959) that a mosque was built in Constantinople by the request of Maslama.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, p. 146.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Lemerle, *Bizans Tarihi* (Turkish trans. Galip Üstün), İstanbul 1994, p. 71.

<sup>40</sup> M. V. Levçenko, *Kuruluşundan Yıkılışına Kadar Bizans Tarihi* (Turkish trans. Maide Selen, prepared for publication Yaşar Selçuk), İstanbul 1999, p. 124.

<sup>41</sup> Auguste Bailly, *Bizans Tarihi* (Turkish trans. Haluk Şaman), İstanbul ts. (Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser), I, 159.

<sup>42</sup> İbn al-Faqih, *Mukhtasar Kitab al-buldan* (ed. M. J. De Goeje), Leiden 1967, p. 145; Ali b. Abu Bakr al-Harawi, *Kitab al-Isharat*, pp 144-145; Shaikh al-Rabwa al-Dimashqi, *Nuhbat al-Dahr fi 'ajaib al-barr wa al-bahr* (ed. M. A. F. Mehren), Saint-Petersbourg 1866, p. 227.

<sup>43</sup> For example, in accordance with the agreement made with the Byzantines in the Fatimid caliph Hakim-Biamrillah (996-1021) era, *khutbah* was read in the name of the aforementioned caliph. In 441 (1049) Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomakhos sent not only valuable gifts to Tughrul Bey who saved the King of Abkhazia without ransom but he also made the mosque rebuilt and made the *khutbah* be read in the name of him for expressing the gratitude and thanksgiving. Yet, it is also known that *khutbah* was read in the name of the Abbasid caliphs via Tughrul Bey. Emperor Isaac II Angelos sending a messenger to the Sultan in 584 (1188), offered to make the *khutbah* be read in the name of the Sultan and the Abbasid caliph in the mosque in Constantinople in response to be given the old Orthodox churches in Jerusalem under the control of the Byzantine. Saladin welcomed the Emperor's offer. He sent a messenger with the emperor's messenger and a pulpit and religious officials such as *khatib* and *muazzin* for the mosque. Delegation arrived Istanbul by sea was welcomed with a ceremony by the Emperor, the Muslim community and the merchants of the Islamic countries. In Friday prayer with the attendance of Muslim traders and Muslim community, the *khutbah* was read in the name of the Sultan and the Abbasid caliph. See Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *al-Feth al-Qussi fi al-Fath al-Qudsi*, ed. Muhammad Mahmüd Subh, Kahire, nd. [Dâr al-Qavmiyya], p. 414; İbn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, IX, 556-557; Canard, "Tarih ve Efsaneye Göre Araplar'ın İstanbul Seferleri", pp. 231-233; Yiğit, "Emevîler Zamanında Gerçekleştirilen İstanbul Seferleri", pp. 58, 61; Casim Avcı, "Selâhaddin Eyyübî (1171-1193) ve Bizans", *I. Uluslar arası Sevgi Gönül Bizans Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiriler: On İkinci ve On Üçüncü Yüzyıllarda Bizans Dünyasında Değişim İstanbul 25-28 Haziran 2007*, İstanbul 2010, p. 21.

<sup>44</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio* (ed. Gy. Moravcsik; English trans. R. J. H. Jenkins), Washington, D.C., 1967, p. 93.

On the other hand, according to 10th century geographer al-Maḳḳisī (d. 380/990?) a mansion which was known as *Dar al-balat* for Muslim prisoners was built by the Emperor opposite to his own palace with the request of Maslama.<sup>45</sup>

## 2. The Expedition to Constantinople in the Abbasid Period

In the era of Abbasids which came to power after the fall of the Umayyads, many military expeditions were carried out against the Byzantine Empire but only one of them was over Constantinople. Considering the sieges in the Umayyad era as well, this forth and last Constantinople expedition carried out by Muslim Arabs coincided with the time of Mahdi-Billah (775-785) who was one of the first period caliphs of Abbasids. The third Abbasid Caliph Mahdi-Billah (775-785) decided to launch a Constantinople expedition for intimidating into the Byzantine Empire which had wanted to benefit from the difficult situation of the Islamic state and had exhibited an aggressive attitude. He took some precautions before the expedition and fortified the borderlines against the Byzantium. Meanwhile, Anatolia expeditions were launched under the command of caliph's uncle Abbas b. Muhammad in 159 (776), of Sumama b. Walid al-Absi in 160 (777) and 161 (778), and of Hasan b. Kahtaba 162 (779).<sup>46</sup> Mahdi-Billah deputing his son Musa al-Hadi to Baghdad, left here with his other son Harun in 163 (780). The caliph accompanied his son to Aleppo and sent him off to the Byzantine expedition inducting him as the commander of a great army collected from Khorasan and the other regions. In Harun's army there were also famous names of the era such as Isa b. Musa, Abd al-Malik b. Salih, Hasan b. Kahtaba, Yahya b. Khalid b. Barmak and Rabi' b. Yunus. Harun conquered some castles penetrating the Byzantine territory.<sup>47</sup> Mahdi-Billah the Caliph, sent his son Harun with famous commanders of the era over Constantinople for leading a great army<sup>48</sup> in 165 (781-782). Harun came to Uskudar on the Anatolian side eliminating the confrontations faced on the road. Meanwhile, after Leo IV's death, the state affairs in the Byzantine Empire were being conducted by Irene (detached reign 797-802) the mother of ten year old Constantine VI (780-797), the heir to the throne, on behalf of him. Because of the throne struggles after the new power shift, Irene had to send messengers with Harun for making a peace treaty. According to this three-year treaty, Irene accepted to pay 70.000 (or 90.000) dinars to the Abbasid Dynasty every year in the months of April and June. With the request of Harun, Irene was also taking upon herself that markets for supplying the needs of the army on the way back home to be established and guides for leading the way to be appointed. Furthermore, Irene was sending a messenger to Baghdad with Harun for presenting gold, silver and a number of valuable gifts

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<sup>45</sup> al-Maḳḳisī, *Ahsan al-taqasim* (ed. M. J. De Goeje), Leiden 1877, p. 147.

<sup>46</sup> al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, VIII, 116, 129, 136, 142, 150

<sup>47</sup> al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, VIII, 144-147.

<sup>48</sup> al-Tabari recorded that 95.793 soldiers were present in Harun's army. al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, VIII, 152. Ibn Kathir as well gave the same number. See Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya*, X, 147.

to Mahdi.<sup>49</sup> When Harun returned to Baghdad in the summer of 166 (August 782), he was welcomed with great demonstrations of affection. Due to his success in the Constantinople expedition, he was given the nickname “al-Rashid” (smart, mature moving) by his father and was inducted as heir to the throne for being caliph after his brother Musa al-Hadi.<sup>50</sup>

Consequently, Muslim Arabs launched expeditions to the Byzantine capital of Constantinople four times in total; three times in the Umayyad period and once in the very beginning of Abbasid period. In the first three Constantinople was besieged by Muslims, in the fourth the army of Islam reached up to Uskudar and returned by accepting the peace offer of Byzantium. Although these expeditions failed, they showed that Muslims were a serious power against the Byzantine Empire and provided the opportunity for the armies of Islam to gain experience in land and sea warfare in terms of necessary equipment and tactics. From the viewpoint of Byzantine, imperial power and the importance of the capital were understood once again that they helped the army show resistance dynamically against external threats.

<sup>49</sup> Theophanes, p. 141-142; al-Tabarî, *Târîkh*, VIII, 152, 153; Ibn al-Athîr, *al-Kamil*, VI, 66, 67; Ibn Kathîr, *al-Bidaya*, X, 147. Theophanes recorded that the peace offer came from the Arabs taking hostage Staurakios, Petros and Antonios and who were tasked with conducting negotiations in the name of the Byzantine Empire and Irene was forced to accept the agreement and that meanwhile both sides provided each other mutual gifts. Theophanes, p. 142. For a comparative evaluation of the narrations in Arab, Byzantine, Syriac and Armenian sources about this Constantinople expedition of Harun; See Anthony R. Santoro, *Byzantium and the Arabs during the Isaurian Period 717-802*, Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, New Jersey 1978, p. 331-338; Abdel-Rahman Salem, *War and Peace in Caliphate and Empire: Political Relations between the Abbasids and Byzantium (749-847)*, Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1983, pp. 72-76.

<sup>50</sup> al-Tabarî, *Târîkh*, VIII, 152-153; Avcı, *İslâm-Bizans İlişkileri*, p. 84; Casim Avcı, “Müslüman Arapların İstanbul Seferleri”, p. 113; Adıgüzel, *Emevîler ve Abbâsiler Döneminde İstanbul Kuşatmaları*, p. 62-66; Nahide Bozkurt, “Hârûnürreşîd”, *DİA*, XVI, 258-259.

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