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## The Miracles of St. Theodore Tērōn: An Eighth-Century Source?

Since it was first edited and published by Delehaye<sup>1</sup> in 1909, the anonymous enkomion commonly known as *Vita, educatio et miracula Sancti Theodori* has been the subject of several noteworthy studies. As the title suggests, the text – which survives on a single manuscript, the eleventh-century *Vindobonensis theol. gr. 60* – consists of the life of Saint Theodore Tērōn (the Recruit), one of the greatest military saints of the early church, and a collection of eight posthumous miracles that were claimed to have taken place in Euchaita, the cult center of the saint.<sup>2</sup> Although constituting the lesser part of the available text, these miracles have received the most attention first due to their “local character” and second because they provide invaluable information for precisely dating some of the events they describe.<sup>3</sup> The enkomion therefore offers a rare glimpse at life in a provincial town in Byzantine Asia Minor at a specific point in time before the eleventh century. Yet until recently, there had been little consensus among scholars on what this specific date is.

Most of the discussion in this context has centered on the contemporaneous fourth, sixth and seventh miracles, the first of which states that Arabs had occupied Euchaita “in the fourteenth year of the God-protected and Christ-loving reign of Constantine, after the peace between Romans and Saracens had been broken, at the beginning of the seventh indiction.”<sup>4</sup> Various attempts were made to place this event within the chronological parameters for the enkomion, that is from the mid-seventh century when the Arab raids on Asia Minor began to its *terminus ante quem* in the eleventh century.

By the late 1980s, there were two major theories. Delehaye himself identified the emperor in question as Constantine VII (913–955) and to this end corrected the text so that it reads “in the fourteenth year of the God-protected and Christ-loving reign of [Romanos, the twenty-first of] Constantine.”<sup>5</sup> Although Delehaye’s viewpoint found some early support, starting with Dorothy Abrahamse’s PhD thesis in 1967, an appendix of which discussed these miracles, a much earlier dating – second half of the seventh century – began to be pronounced.<sup>6</sup> Abrahamse’s suggestion of a seventh-century dating was later taken up

<sup>1</sup> H. DELEHAYE, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*. Paris 1909, 183–201. The Latin title comes from a later edition of the same text, also by Delehaye, which appeared in *AASS Nov. IV* (1920) 49–55. For the purposes of the present paper, I have used the 1909 edition of the enkomion unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Euchaita (modern Beyözü, which was until recently called Avkat, in Çorum province, Turkey) was situated in Pontos, about fifty-five kilometers to the west of Amasia, where St. Theodore was believed to have been martyred before his relics were taken to Euchaita by a local devotee named Eusebia. The town had originally been a bishopric under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Amasia, but presumably due to its growing importance as the cult center of St. Theodore, it became an autocephalous archbishopric by the seventh century and later a metropolis under Leo VI (886–912). See N. OIKONOMIDIS, *Le dédoublement de St. Théodore et les villes d’Euchaita et d’Euchaneia*. *AnBoll* 104 (1986) 328. The presence of a second cult and pilgrimage center, that of St. Theodore Stratēlatēs, in the nearby Euchania, has led to some confusion in Byzantine sources, see *ibidem* 330. An extensive survey of the village of Beyözü/Avkat and the surrounding area was conducted by Princeton University in the summer of 2007. Surface evidence found in the village of Elmapınar/Çağna less than four kilometers west of Avkat, while not conclusive, suggest that this settlement might be the site of medieval Euchania.

<sup>3</sup> See note 8.

<sup>4</sup> DELEHAYE 196.

<sup>5</sup> *AASS Nov. IV* 53.

<sup>6</sup> D. ABRAHAMSE, *Hagiographic Sources for Byzantine Cities, 500–900 A.D.* Ann Arbor (Michigan) 1967, 347–54.

by Trombley, who fixed the date of the Arab occupation of Euchaita on the autumn of 663 in an article in 1985. His article unfortunately received more attention with regards to its controversial interpretation of urban life in early medieval Byzantium than its admirable attempt at dating our text.<sup>7</sup>

In 1988, just three years after the aforementioned group of miracles was ascribed to the reign of Constantine IV (654–685) by Trombley, Constantine Zuckerman asserted that the miracles in question describe events which must have transpired in the mid-eighth century.<sup>8</sup> The basic premise of the latter article is that, although scholars such as Delehayé and Abrahamse have respectively corrected and ignored the dating provided by the anonymous author of our text, the date in fact precisely and reliably points to the year 754. Within the chronological parameters defined above, Zuckerman argues, the fourteenth regnal year of an emperor named Constantine corresponded to the seventh indiction year only once and this was during the reign of Constantine V (741–775).<sup>9</sup> In the nineties, this thesis came to be generally accepted by Byzantinists, even though there had been very little actual discussion of the subject.<sup>10</sup>

With the present paper I will argue that, upon closer inspection, Zuckerman’s arguments are not supported by our text and that the events described in the fourth, sixth and seventh miracles are much more likely to have taken place in 663–64.<sup>11</sup> We will begin by presenting how Zuckerman resolves some of the more important issues that emerge from dating this group of miracles to the year 754.

The most obvious difficulty is that the proposed date does not exactly conform to the one indicated by the fourth miracle: the fourteenth year of Constantine V on the throne lasted from 18 June 754 to 17 June 755 and therefore included the very end of the seventh indiction (1 September 753–31 August 754) and not its beginning as our text has it.<sup>12</sup> Zuckerman explains what appears to be a significant disparity by postulating that this is quite likely an intentional and purposeful mistake on the part of the author, whom he believes to be delivering this sermon, as an iconophile, in the wake of the iconoclastic council of Hieria in 754. The horos of the council had been pronounced in the summer of 754 and the author, at a later date, was tempted to portray St. Theodore as the savior of his city from an Arab attack which had been precipitated by God’s displeasure in the emperor’s religious policies even if, Zuckerman concludes, “one had to stretch Constantine V’s fourteenth year a few months back.”<sup>13</sup> As we will observe below, the stretch was in fact more than a few months and almost amounts to a full year, but this is nonetheless how the difference between the two dates is accounted for.<sup>14</sup>

A second, and related, difficulty also emerges from the very beginning of the same miracle. Constantine V is called by the supposedly iconophile author of the enkomion “God-protected” (θεοφύλακτος)

<sup>7</sup> F. R. TROMBLEY, *The Decline of the Seventh-Century Town: The Exception of Euchaita*. *Byzantina kai Metabyzantina* 4 (1985) 65–94. The article precipitated a debate on the former topic. See especially A. KAZHDAN, *Hagiographical Notes* (17–20). *Erytheia* 9.2 (1988) 197–200.

<sup>8</sup> C. ZUCKERMAN, *The Reign of Constantine V in the miracles of St. Theodore the Recruit* (*BHG* 1764). *REB* 46 (1988) 191–210.  
<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem* 192.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Kazhdan, perhaps independent of Zuckerman, has noted (also in 1988) that “the last event mentioned in the Miracles is to be dated (if we may trust hagiographical data), not in 663/4, but in 754.” See A. KAZHDAN, *The Flourishing City of Euchaita?* In: *Byzantine Studies Conference: Abstracts of Papers* 14. Houston (Texas) 1988, 4. M. WHITOW, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium 600–1025*. Berkeley 1996, 146 lists the miracles of St. Theodore among the “eighth-century sources” with a reference to Zuckerman’s article. Clive Foss simply writes that the miracles have been “dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century by Zuckerman”: C. FOSS, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor*. *DOP* 56 (2002) 131, note 12. J.F. HALDON, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture*. Cambridge 1990, 109, note 40 for the date of the attacks described in miracles 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 (the 750s). However it is noteworthy that in an earlier work, Haldon had agreed that wintering raids into Byzantine territory in the century after the ‘Abbāsīd revolution were extremely rare. See J.F. HALDON – H. KENNEDY, *The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Military Organization and Society in the Borderlands*. *ZRVI* 9 (1980) 113.

<sup>11</sup> An abstract of Trombley’s response to Zuckerman’s article is also available. See F.R. TROMBLEY, *The Arab Wintering Raid against Euchaita in 663/4*, in: *Byzantine Studies Conference: Abstracts of Papers* 15. Amherst (Massachusetts) 1989, 5–6. For the purposes of the present paper, I have considered Trombley’s discussion of Emperor Constantine’s regnal year as it appears in the abstract. See *infra* 11.

<sup>12</sup> ZUCKERMAN 192.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem* 193.

<sup>14</sup> See *infra* 5–6.

and “Christ-loving” (φιλόχριστος), which might at first seem highly improbable to those familiar with the language of well-known iconophile polemicists such as John of Damascus and Theophanes. Yet as Zuckerman rightly points out, the anonymous author neither lived outside the borders of the Byzantine Empire nor, according to his own suggested dating, at a time long after the end of the Isaurian dynasty. He was in Euchaita, in the heart of Byzantine Asia Minor and delivered his sermon while the imperial throne was occupied either by Constantine V or possibly his son Leo IV (775–780). In this context, a perceived attack against the reigning emperor or his father by denying either one the qualities of God-protected and Christ-loving would have been well over the line.<sup>15</sup> A considerable effort is then made on developing this theme of iconoclasm further – in particular the way in which our text might be revealing the iconophile beliefs of its author.

Zuckerman maintains that the miracles of St. Theodore were used by the author to refer to some of the major issues which were discussed during the course of the iconoclastic controversy under Constantine V’s rule. Namely these were “the sacredness of icons, the veneration of relics and the intercession power of the saints” and it is claimed that the said issues are alluded to one by one, starting with the first miracle in which St. Theodore miraculously posed for his own icon, then the second miracle in which Persians occupying Euchaita witnessed the power of the saint’s relics after having disrespected them and finally all remaining miracles whereby St. Theodore’s power of intercession is demonstrated.<sup>16</sup> It is moreover emphasized that the anonymous author’s civic loyalty to Euchaita must be taken into consideration to fully understand his position in the iconoclastic controversy: throughout the city’s troubled history, the saint had time and again interceded on behalf of Euchaita and its inhabitants. This is why the author’s devotion to St. Theodore, and therefore his iconophile position, is deemed to be inseparable from his devotion to Euchaita.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, two other potential clues linking our text to the iconoclastic controversy are explored. The first of these is that the author accounts for the Arab invasion of Euchaita by citing the sins of the Byzantines. This is thought to be a direct reference to the iconoclastic policies of Constantine V.<sup>18</sup> Hence, 754 was intended to be understood as both the year in which this sin (the council of Hieria) was perpetrated and when the punishment for that sin (i.e. the Arab attack on Euchaita) was administered.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore all the more significant that St. Theodore then graciously proved his power to intercede by saving the city from this divine retribution. The second clue is the use of the verb *ιστορεῖν* in the fourth miracle to describe how the memory of a previous miracle of the saint had been preserved.<sup>20</sup> While *ιστόρηται* can simply be translated as “he is recorded,” Zuckerman rather uses a more nuanced definition of the verb and renders it as “he is depicted,” for the same verb was occasionally employed to talk about the depiction of a saint’s feats in iconophile texts. Such a translation might especially make sense in this instance since the author could have been referring to the paintings in St. Theodore’s martyrion, the existence of which is known thanks to another, fourth century, enkomion for the saint.<sup>21</sup> Needless to say, Zuckerman’s suggestion becomes feasible only if one assumes that the text was indeed written during the iconoclastic controversy and pushing the argument too far would amount to circular logic on his part. It is perhaps for this reason that the whole issue is relegated to the footnotes.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>15</sup> ZUCKERMAN 193, especially see note 7.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem* 201–203.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem* 199.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem* 193.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem* 204.

<sup>20</sup> DELEHAYE 197.

<sup>21</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Laudatio Sancti Theodori* (*PG* 46, 737). Cf. ZUCKERMAN 196–97, note 21. It is worth noting that although Gregory of Nyssa describes such paintings in the martyrion of St. Theodore, this building had been burnt down by the Persians in the sixth century according to the third miracle in our text. See DELEHAYE 196.

<sup>22</sup> ZUCKERMAN 196, note 21.

The final problem with the proposed dating involves an apparent inconsistency with other available textual evidence. This concerns the Arab raids from which Euchaita suffered supposedly in the autumn of 753. The fourth, sixth and seventh miracles in particular portray Arabs arriving in the beginning of autumn, spending the winter in the city with the booty, livestock and prisoners they had gathered and finally leaving shortly before the beginning of spring. Yet the Greek sources are silent about an Arab incursion into Asia Minor in 753 and the surviving Arab records fail to mention any wintering raids during the same period.<sup>23</sup> Zuckerman tries to overcome this difficulty by bringing to our attention a previously overlooked event, one that followed Melitene's sack by Constantine V.<sup>24</sup> According to the Arab historian al-Ya'qūbī, at some point after the fall of Melitene, the °Abbāsīd Caliph Abū l-°Abbās had reprimanded, in writing, °Abdallāh the son of °Alī for his incompetence that had allowed this calamity to take place and had ordered him to "throw his forces into the frontier districts."<sup>25</sup> Subsequently, the account recorded by al-Ya'qūbī continues, Arab forces advanced through the pass and further preparations were under way until the death of Abū l-°Abbās put an end to the effort.<sup>26</sup> Zuckerman first attempts to resolve a discrepancy between the Greek and Arab sources concerning the year in which Constantine V captured Melitene and dates this important event to the autumn of 751.<sup>27</sup> He then states that the counterattack of °Abdallāh must have happened between then and the summer of 754 when the first of the °Abbāsīd caliphs passed away. The Arab occupation of Euchaita portrayed in the fourth, sixth and seventh miracles is hence identified as part of a larger campaign initiated by °Abdallāh and is once again dated to the autumn of 753.<sup>28</sup>

The date Zuckerman has established for the enkomion is appealing for several reasons. For one, it almost conforms to the pointers given by the text itself: it is a seventh indiction and relatively very close to the fourteenth regnal year of an emperor named Constantine. Second, in light of this dating, the text offers additional information on a poorly understood episode in the Byzantine-Arab wars. Most importantly, by linking our text's composition to the reactions to the council of Hieria, Zuckerman – if his dating is indeed correct – has provided us with a rare iconophile document dating to the early days of the iconoclastic controversy. These themes are artfully woven together and the solutions to the difficulties arising from the dating are all interconnected, which makes for a very powerful argument in its totality. Up to this point, I have tried to objectively present the article in question. What follows is a more detailed analysis of the arguments therein and why I am convinced that our text was not written in the second half of the eighth century.

In evaluating Zuckerman's dating for the enkomion, it will be useful to start from the very beginning and once again mention the suggested chronology of events in his article. It will be remembered that the Arab forces had taken over most of Euchaita "in the fourteenth year of the God-protected and Christ-loving reign of Constantine...at the beginning of the seventh indiction."<sup>29</sup> In Zuckerman's timeline of events, this points us to the autumn of 753, most probably the month September or October. At this point,

<sup>23</sup> Theophanes, *Chonographia* 427–29 (DE BOOR) reports only the death of Patriarch Anastasios and the events surrounding the council of Hieria. The year after, the narrative covers just the internal developments within the Caliphate after the death of Abu' l'Abbas. The account of Patriarch Nicephorus is even less satisfying, moving onto the council of Hieria, without actually naming where the council took place, after the sack of Melitene and the recounting of an unusual celestial event: Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople *Short History*, ed. and trans. C. MANGO (*CFHB* 20). Washington, D.C. 1990, 143; for the Arab sources see *infra* 8–9.

<sup>24</sup> ZUCKERMAN 195.

<sup>25</sup> Translated in E.W. BROOKS, Byzantines and Arabs in the Time of the Early Abbasids. *English Historical Review* 15 (1900) 732.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem* 732.

<sup>27</sup> It is worth noting that the exact date for Melitene's capture by Constantine V is yet to be established conclusively. For example, A.D. BEIHAMMER, Nachrichten zum byzantinischen Urkundenwesen in arabischen Quellen (565 bis 811) (*Poikila Byzantina* 17). Bonn 2000, 409 has more recently deemed the date provided by the Arab sources, that is to say sometime after the month of August in 750, to be more likely.

<sup>28</sup> ZUCKERMAN 196.

<sup>29</sup> DELEHAYE 196.



it had been barely four months since the beginning of Constantine V's thirteenth year on the throne. As previously noted, his fourteenth year would start on June 754. It would have been correct to state that the author had to stretch the beginning of the fourteenth regnal year just "a few months back" only if the Arabs had arrived in the middle of the seventh indiction. Assuming for a moment as suggested that the Arab forces had occupied Euchaita in early autumn 753, two full seasons (winter and spring) would have elapsed, in addition to much of autumn, between then and the fourteenth regnal year of Constantine V. This may seem trivial at first, but is in fact crucial since the strongest point of Zuckerman's dating is supposed to be its conformity to the one provided by the fourth miracle. Yet clearly, Arabs had arrived in the thirteenth year of Constantine V's rule. It is to be admitted that changing the regnal year from the thirteenth to the fourteenth may not have mattered in a text which might have been written years, and perhaps decades, after the said events – that is, if the author had a good reason for doing so, short of an honest mistake. According to Zuckerman, this reason is the desire to link the Arab attack to the council of Hieria. It remains to be seen, however, if the miracles indeed betray iconophile sympathies in any shape or form.

For a text that is allegedly "polemical to the core" with regards to the iconoclastic controversy, one finds surprisingly little about the icon of St. Theodore.<sup>30</sup> As a matter of fact, the icon is mentioned just once, in the first miracle, which incidentally recounts its miraculous origins, which conceivably may have been a source of local pride long before the outbreak of the iconoclasm. In this particular episode, the saint poses for his own icon when the painter is unable to produce one in his likeness based on the descriptions of lady Eusebeia, who had commissioned the undertaking.<sup>31</sup> Zuckerman acknowledges that the tradition of saints being concerned with the way in which they are depicted on their icons is characteristic of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Yet he also underlines the existence of at least one analogous legend concerning St. Thecla possibly dating to the iconoclastic period and observes that there is "in both cases...the same urge to establish an immediate link between the prototype and the replica."<sup>32</sup>

While these miracles do betray a desire to establish such a link between the prototype (the saint) and its replica (the icon) I disagree that this intention somehow points directly to the iconoclastic period. In fact, the mere existence of this tradition in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and being more widely seen in this period no less, proves that the motivation for establishing the authenticity of an icon cannot be restricted to the intensely polemical atmosphere brought about by iconoclasm.<sup>33</sup> More importantly, once again based on the hagiographic evidence from the tenth and eleventh centuries, and also taking into account the fact that *Vindobonensis theol. gr.* 60 is an eleventh-century MS, we must seriously consider the possibility that the first miracle may have been a later interpolation which reflects the hagiographic tastes of its period.

It is equally problematic to claim that the author had specifically the council of Hieria in mind when he blamed the sins of the Byzantines for the Arab attack on Euchaita. Calamities such as foreign invasions, natural disasters and outbreaks of disease were all commonly attributed to men's sinful nature and the resulting wrath of God in Byzantine literature of almost every time period and sin in this context

<sup>30</sup> ZUCKERMAN 193.

<sup>31</sup> DELEHAYE 194.

<sup>32</sup> These saints, who appeared miraculously to their mortal depictees in the tenth and eleventh centuries include St. Theodora of Thessalonica, St. Mary the Younger, St. Nicon the Repentant and St. Athanasius the Athonite. For the translations of the relevant passages in the lives of these saints, see C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453*. Englewood Cliffs (New Jersey) 1972, 210–14. Cf. ZUCKERMAN 202.

<sup>33</sup> There seems to be, in any case, little evidence for the widespread public veneration of icons before iconoclasm. On this important issue, see especially L. BRUBAKER, *Icons Before Iconoclasm?* In: *Morfologie sociali e culturali in Europa fra tarda Antichità e alto Medioevo II (Settimane di Studio XLV)*. Spoleto 1998, 1215–54. Despite the existence of a real theological debate on the issue, the ideological, and not religious, reasons for the crisis have already been persuasively emphasized. See for example P. SPECK, *Further Reflections and Inquiries on the Origins of the Byzantine Renaissance with a supplement: The Trier Ivory and other Uncertainties*, in: *Understanding Byzantium: Studies in Byzantine Historical Sources*, ed. S. TAKÁCS. Aldershot – Burlington 2003, 182–83.

must be considered as a *topos*.<sup>34</sup> Pinpointing “the sin” in question to a particular event without a firm dating is simply impossible. Assuming that this date is 754, the council of Hieria does indeed appear to be a likely candidate, but it cannot be used as additional evidence for the proposed dating to begin with – there is a sin waiting to be found literally at any given date. More importantly, the anonymous author appears to express elsewhere in the text that it is not a single event, but rather their “many transgressions” that had provoked God’s anger.<sup>35</sup>

The icon of St. Theodore, at the time of the *enkomion*’s composition, evidently was of some local importance, but none of the intercessions of St. Theodore on behalf of Euchaita and its citizens is attributed to his icon in any manner. It must be noted that at such an early point in the controversy (that is to say the second half of the eighth century), much of the later iconophile traditions and specifically those that attribute extraordinary powers to icons may not have had the time to develop. In the second miracle, healing qualities are attributed to the saint’s relics, but it should be obvious that this in and of itself cannot be used as an evidence to link the miracle’s composition to any particular period.<sup>36</sup> What Zuckerman does attempt to employ as evidence to that end is the constant reminder of St. Theodore’s power of intervention in our text. He admits that “such reminders are not uncommon also in miracle collections devoid of any polemical tendency,” but deems “their intensity [to be]...remarkable.”<sup>37</sup> Here, Zuckerman refers more specifically to the two long digressions in the text, one between the fourth and sixth miracles and the other between the seventh and ninth miracles.<sup>38</sup> Although I agree that these long digressions serve a particular purpose, I am not of the opinion that they are of a polemical nature. This topic will be discussed further below.<sup>39</sup>

The point I would like to emphasize is that there is absolutely no concrete evidence in the miracles, which might allow us to identify their author as an iconophile. If there is one thing we can somewhat confidently say about the issue of dating based purely on the *enkomion*’s religious contents, it is that our text was not written soon after the final victory of Orthodoxy.<sup>40</sup> Zuckerman appears to be fully aware of this problem, but attributes the lack of any overt iconophile views in our text to its alleged composition at a time and place in which the expression of such views was not possible.

This, to put quite simply, is non-evidence. While it may well be the case that an iconophile living within Byzantium, during the reign of Constantine V or Leo IV would choose (or would be able) to place a similar amount of emphasis on St. Theodore, his icon, his relics and his power to intercede as we encounter in the present text, I believe this is little different from what one would expect to see in a similar text composed at the time of Constans II (641–668) or even Constantine VII (913–959). Considering these factors the statement that our *enkomion* is an iconophile text, which is “polemical to the core,” appears to be at best an exaggeration. We may now turn to the last major component of Constantine Zuckerman’s proposed dating for the miracles, that is, the re-evaluation of Byzantine-Arab relations in the 750s.

Such a re-evaluation is necessitated by the fact that our current understanding of this topic as it pertains to the mid-eighth century does not easily accommodate the events described in the miracles of St. Theodore. According to Zuckerman, the military operations in the 750s were not recorded properly, because the attention of Byzantines writers was fixed on the iconoclastic council of Hieria in 754. At the

<sup>34</sup> On the interpretation of foreign invasions as punishments from God, see N.A. KOUTRAKOU, *The Image of the Arabs in Middle-Byzantine Politics. A Study in the Enemy Principle (8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*. *Graeco-Arabica* 5 (1993) 217. As is well known, this idea persisted until the very end of the Empire. See I. ŠEVČENKO, *The Decline of Byzantium Seen Through the Eyes of Its Intellectuals*. *DOP* 15 (1961) 179.

<sup>35</sup> DELEHAYE 193; also see *infra* 9.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem* 195.

<sup>37</sup> ZUCKERMAN 203.

<sup>38</sup> DELEHAYE 197 and 199.

<sup>39</sup> See *infra* 9–10. I do, however, agree with Zuckerman that these digressions are very likely to have caused the misnumbering of the miracles in the later manuscript tradition.

<sup>40</sup> 11 March 843, the official end of Byzantine iconoclasm with the council of Constantinople.

same time, he argues, Arab sources were preoccupied by the internal developments of the Islamic Empire as the Umayyad dynasty gave way to the ʿAbbāsids.<sup>41</sup> As far as Theophanes and Patriarch Nicephorus are concerned, our two main Byzantine sources on this period, the former statement appears to be correct. Although it must be pointed out that neither Theophanes nor Patriarch Nicephorus has recorded the Byzantine-Arab warfare of the seventh and the eighth centuries in as much detail and as consistently as Arab historians in the first place.

Zuckerman's latter claim is far more problematic. On the surface, one can readily agree with the statement that, since "the main attention of Arab historians was focused on the inner turmoil in the Caliphate," the Arabic sources for the Byzantine-Arab warfare in the 750s are "confused in details."<sup>42</sup> That the details of the Arab historians' accounts are indeed very much confused, especially in terms of their chronology of events, is evident – a comparative reading of al-Yaʿqūbī, aṭ-Ṭabarī and al-Balāḍurī quickly reveal this to be the case. As Zuckerman also notes, the sources in question are not "strictly annalistic" and such discrepancies are to be expected.<sup>43</sup> However, the implicit suggestion that the said confusion of our Arabic sources also involves major omissions, such as failing to record what would have been a very important wintering invasion, is difficult to accept. As we will shortly see, the most likely reason why only summer raids have been recorded by Arab historians for the years concerned is that the Umayyad frontier system in northern Syria had all but collapsed at the onset of the Abbasid revolution. In other words, it will be argued that Arab forces would have been unable to launch an attack as the one described in the miracles of St. Theodore in the early 750s. Let us turn now to our Arab sources in order to investigate the series of events following the Byzantine offensive that had left Melitene in ruins.

The accounts given by al-Yaʿqūbī, aṭ-Ṭabarī and al-Balāḍurī regarding the aftermath of the sack of Melitene are comparable in their broad outlines – Constantine V departs together with the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside, at least one summer raid takes place after ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī and Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī are ordered to retaliate, and Melitene is rebuilt by the latter commander. However, such a similarity in and of itself does not confirm the historicity of these incidents, given the fact that on this occasion all three Arab historians appear to have relied on a now-lost work by al-Wāqidī. It is even more difficult to establish a firm chronology of events, since the ones provided by al-Yaʿqūbī, aṭ-Ṭabarī and al-Balāḍurī often contradict each other. Nonetheless, the following remarks can be made: Both al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Balāḍurī agree that Melitene had been taken by Byzantine forces in A.H. 133 (750–51).<sup>44</sup> According to the former source, sometime between then and A.H. 136 (753–54), the Caliph Abū l-ʿAbbās (750–54) had ordered ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī to "go to the spot [i.e. Melitene] with the forces that he had with him, and to throw his forces into the frontier districts." The text, however, is unclear as to what extent this order had been carried out – ʿAbdallāh crossed the passes at the head of his troops and "continued making his dispositions" until the death of Abū l-ʿAbbās put a stop to the effort.<sup>45</sup> The end of the first ʿAbbāsīd caliph's reign is likely to have caused only a temporary disruption of the efforts to secure the northern frontier, for in al-Balāḍurī, we find his successor Caliph al-Manṣūr (754–775) commanding Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī to rebuild and fortify Melitene. This was achieved, according to the same source, in just six months and by A.H. 140 (757–58), the walls and a new mosque had been erected at the site.<sup>46</sup> A similar date, A.H. 139 (756–57), is provided by aṭ-Ṭabarī for this event, who notes that Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAlī rebuilt what had been destroyed in Melitene and that a summer raid was then conducted across the frontier.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>41</sup> ZUCKERMAN 194.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem* 194.

<sup>43</sup> See note 14 in *ibidem* 195.

<sup>44</sup> Translated in BROOKS, *Byzantines and Arabs* 731. Al-Balāḍurī, *The Origins of the Islamic State (Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān)*, trans. and annot. P. K. HITT, Beirut 1966, 290–91.

<sup>45</sup> Translated in BROOKS, *Byzantines and Arabs* 732.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Balāḍurī 291–92.

<sup>47</sup> Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī XXVIII: ʿAbbāsīd Authority Affirmed*, trans. and annot. Jane DAMMEN McAULIFFE, Albany 1995, 54.

The Arab accounts, as confused in details as they may be, portray the ʿAbbāsīd response to Byzantine attacks to be primarily concerned with defensive measures. The eastern campaigns of Constantine V had coincided with the turbulent final years of the Umayyads and the subsequent establishment of ʿAbbāsīd rule, which further accentuated the impact of this offensive. The surviving Greek, Arab, Syriac and Armenian sources unambiguously indicate that the sack of Melitene was not an isolated incident and that the frontier system developed under earlier Umayyad caliphs was not functional by the reign of Marwān II (744–50).<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the list of cities that had been captured by the Byzantines in this period includes some of the most important settlements in the region, including Mopsuestia, Kamachon, Germanicia and Theodosiupolis.<sup>49</sup>

The alleged inability of Constantine V to advance beyond the river Pyramus after the rebuilding of Melitene, due to the great number of Arab troops in the region, suggests that commanders such as Šāliḥ b. ʿAlī were able to partly reassert ʿAbbāsīd rule over the frontier around this time. Even so, that Constantine V was still campaigning effectively in Cilicia betrays the precariousness of the recent Arab recovery. More importantly, there is good evidence to suggest that in these early years of the ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate, Arab forces in the frontier were occupied chiefly with the repair or the reconstruction of numerous fortifications damaged and destroyed by the Byzantines.<sup>50</sup> Given these circumstances, how plausible is it be that Arab forces could have penetrated Byzantine Asia Minor, raided throughout the central Anatolian plateau and then wintered in Euchaita, some three hundred kilometres away from the Taurus range, in 753?

To be sure, this was a distance dedicated raiders could have covered without much difficulty – yet our group of miracles leave no doubt that the Arabs had wintered in Euchaita. Given the abovementioned conditions, it seems highly improbable that Arab troops could cross the Cilician passes, travel north and west hundreds of kilometres apparently unopposed, capture Euchaita except its strongholds (ὄχυράματα), collect booty and prisoners with impunity, spend the entire winter there and then depart only when they were threatened by famine (λιμῶ) and cold (κρύει).<sup>51</sup> More to the point, there is absolutely no textual evidence of Arabs wintering on Byzantine soil for the period with which we are concerned, and, just as importantly, in light of the military situation in the frontier districts, none is likely to have taken place at this time. The miracles four through ten, on the other hand, testify not just to a wintering raid, but also to a perennial Arab threat in the region of Euchaita, supposedly at a time (the early 750s) when ʿAbbāsīd forces are known to have been preoccupied elsewhere.

The assault on Euchaita had also come “once the peace between Romans and Saracens had been broken” (τῆς μεταξύ Ῥωμαίων καὶ Σαρακηνῶν περαιωθείσης εἰρήνης).<sup>52</sup> Zuckerman translates this part of the text as “after a period of peace” and claims that it refers to the interruption in the yearly raids between 743–50.<sup>53</sup> Such a translation of the phrase deviates from its original meaning and I suspect that this interpretation was actually forced upon Zuckerman by the absence of any record of a formal peace treaty between Byzantium and the Umayyads in this period.<sup>54</sup> To the contrary, this was precisely the time when intense military activity was taking place on account of the Byzantine offensive in the frontier districts. Coupled with the other factors already noted above, this leads us to the conclusion that Zuckerman’s

<sup>48</sup> See BEIHAMMER 408, note 1

<sup>49</sup> See Al-Balāḍurī 257, 288, 294–95 and 312 respectively.

<sup>50</sup> The fact that the Arabs in this period were forced into the defensive by the Byzantines and felt compelled to spend precious time, manpower and resources on the construction of fortifications in a frontier district is discussed most notably by Lilie, who cites specifically the cases of Mopsuestia and Melitene both of which had to be refortified. See R.-J. LILIE, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber (MBM 22)*. Munich 1976, 165. To these examples, we might perhaps also add Adana, which had been “built” (fortified?) by forces sent by Šāliḥ b. ʿAlī. See Al-Balāḍurī 260.

<sup>51</sup> DELEHAYE 198.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem* 196.

<sup>53</sup> ZUCKERMAN 196.

<sup>54</sup> On the lull in Arab summer raids against Byzantine targets between 743–750/754 also see HALDON – KENNEDY, *The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* 113.



proposed dating must be rejected – although this date almost, but not quite, fits the one provided by the anonymous author, the available contextual evidence simply does not support it.

If we review the history of the Byzantine-Arab warfare from the mid-seventh to the tenth century, it seems in fact far more probable that the years between 663 and 681 (A.H. 43–60) are the most likely to accommodate the events described in the miracles of St. Theodore. For roughly two decades, Arab forces had not only successfully penetrated the Byzantine defenses and eventually besieged Constantinople itself (674), but they were also able to winter on Byzantine soil year after year. Starting in A.H. 43 (663–64), according to a tradition preserved by both al-Yaʿqūbī and aṭ-Ṭabarī, Arab raiders spent the winter months in Byzantine Asia Minor until A.H. 60 (679–680) at which time a “summer raid” (*ṣāʿifa*) is recorded specifically for the first time by the former historian.<sup>55</sup> This *terminus* date also coincides with several important events: it came a year after the lifting of the siege of Constantinople (678), the accession of Yazīd II and the battle of Karbalāʾ (680) and consequently the onset of the second *fitna*, which seems to have put an effective stop to Arab raids against Byzantine targets until 692.<sup>56</sup>

The tone of our text makes it abundantly clear that Euchaita was, both prior to and at the time of its composition, threatened by Arab raids and on one occasion it is explicitly stated that they suffered from such attacks “each year” (κατ’ ἔτος).<sup>57</sup> In fact, after describing the life of St. Theodore at length and shortly before beginning the narration of his miracles, the anonymous author offers a dramatic prayer of supplication:

O blessed and thrice-blessed martyr [St. Theodore], we beg kneeling before our common Lord and savior Christ...gather together those who have been dispersed and those who have been taken hostage, because of our many transgressions (ἀνομιᾶς), by these wicked Hagarenes.<sup>58</sup>

The sermon was without a question shaped by a sense of urgency: some had fled, others enslaved by the Arabs and much property had been lost. It is not difficult to imagine that the remaining inhabitants of Euchaita, worn down by the annual Arab attacks and seeing no immediate reprieve to their plight, considered to abandon their town altogether for a safer settlement. This might be one of the reasons why they were pointedly reminded that when the inhabitants of Euchaita previously wanted to become migrants (μετανάσται) to other cities, St. Theodore had not allowed this to happen.<sup>59</sup> Except for the first miracle, which establishes the miraculous origins of the saint’s icon, every miracle narrated to the audience involves a dangerous situation created by the presence of enemies, whether Persian or Arab, from which an individual or the whole city is delivered, not always convincingly, thanks to St. Theodore.<sup>60</sup>

This desire to reassure the faith of the audience in the power of the saint gave rise to the long digressions Zuckerman has observed between the fourth and sixth and between the seventh and ninth miracles, but the author was clearly motivated to do so due to the unceasing Arab attacks and not out of any theological concern as Zuckerman would have us believe.<sup>61</sup> The message of the sermon is one of hope when there was none and a desperate attempt to convince the remaining inhabitants of Euchaita to not abandon their city and their saint who had interceded on their behalf so many times before.

Let us now reconsider the available evidence. To return once again to the fourth miracle, in which the author of our text mentions the year of the Arab attack, we find the necessary clues for a more precise dating. Within the time period indicated by Arab sources for the yearly wintering raids, from 663 to 680, the seventh indiction occurs once, beginning on 1 September 663 and ending on 31 August 664. Accor-

<sup>55</sup> Translated in E.W. BROOKS, *The Arabs in Asia Minor (641–750) from Arabic Sources*. *JHS* 18 (1898) 189.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem* 189.

<sup>57</sup> DELEHAYE 199.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem* 193.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem* 198–99.

<sup>60</sup> That the miracles seem less than convincing is also noted by Zuckerman, who seems to interpret this as a desperate attempt on the part of the enkomion’s author to bolster his iconophile arguments. See ZUCKERMAN 201.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem* 203.

ding to the accounts of both al-Ya<sup>c</sup>qūbī and aṭ-Ṭabarī, Busr b. Abī Arṭāt campaigned and wintered in Byzantine territory in that year, having reached as far as Constantinople according to the latter historian.<sup>62</sup> This was the first recorded wintering raid and more importantly the first attack on the Byzantine Empire after the revocation of the peace treaty of 659 by Mu<sup>c</sup>āwiya, thereby affirming the statement that the Arabs had attacked “after the peace between the Romans and the Saracens had been broken.”<sup>63</sup>

The direction of the raid, Constantinople, by which we may surmise that the Arabs plundered perhaps as far as Chalcedon, is also significant. Euchaita lies some 535 kilometers to the east of Constantinople, on the route to the eastern frontier and, for reference, about halfway between the Byzantine capital and the city of Antioch. For an Arab raiding force returning from Bithynia with prisoners, captured livestock and booty, Euchaita would have been a very convenient location to spend the winter.

So far, then, we are looking at a well-attested Arab raid that wintered in Euchaita in the beginning of a seventh indiction and after the end of a peace treaty between the Byzantines and the Arabs. I am therefore inclined to accept Trombley’s dating of the fourth, sixth and seventh miracles to 663–64. There is only one problem with this date, and that is the regnal year. The emperor on the throne was indeed named Constantine (IV), but it was his tenth year on the throne and not fourteenth as our text has it. Trombley in a later work postulated that this might be due to the *damnatio memoriae* of Constantine IV’s brothers Heraclius and Tiberius.<sup>64</sup> The argument basically suggests that due to “clerical carelessness” the year was once recorded as the tenth of Constantine IV, which it was, and the fourth of his brothers, rather than the correct year, which would be the fifth. Later, when the names of the two co-emperors were erased from documents after they had been deposed, what remained was probably “in the tenth year of the God-protected and Christ-loving Constantine IV and [...] the fourth year” leading to the present error when this was copied in the eleventh century.<sup>65</sup>

I find this suggestion improbable, above all because it is based on too many unknown variables for which we have no proof. Instead, I would like to propose that the error was of a simpler nature and might have even originated at the time of the text’s composition. Constantine IV was crowned co-emperor in the spring of 654, when he was still a child.<sup>66</sup> Although his year of birth is not known, it is estimated that he was born around the year 650 based on the year of his coronation.<sup>67</sup> I suspect that this year may indeed be correct and that the author of our text, relying perhaps entirely on memory, mistakenly put down in writing the age of Constantine IV (fourteen) at the time of the Arab raid, rather than his regnal year. Since the emperor was crowned at a young age, very close to the year of his birth, such a mistake becomes more plausible. While impossible to prove either way, I believe this to be a likelier scenario than a rather complicated case involving a clerical error in the provincial register and its subsequent alteration.

The collection of St. Theodore’s miracles preserved in *Vindobonensis theol. gr.* 60 constitutes a primary source of great importance for early Byzantine history. Not only is the written evidence for life in the centuries of Arab invasions uncommon, yet it is rarer still to have such evidence for cities other than Constantinople. For this reason alone, it goes without saying that putting the enkomion within its proper historical context is crucial. This paper has argued that Zuckerman’s suggestion of a mid-eighth-

<sup>62</sup> Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī XVIII: Between Civil Wars*, trans. and annot. M. MORONY. Albany 1987, 32. Also see BROOKS, *Arabs in Asia Minor* 184.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *supra* 10; on the peace treaty between the Byzantines and the Arabs during the reign of Mu<sup>c</sup>āwiya, see Theophanes 347 (DE BOOR); the treaty is also well attested in the Arab sources. For these and a number of other sources on the same treaty, see A. KAPLONY, *Konstantinopel und Damaskus: Gesandtschaften und Verträge zwischen Kaisern und Kalifen 639–750*. Berlin 1996, 40–1.

<sup>64</sup> TROMBLEY, *The Arab Wintering Raid against Euchaita in 663/4*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem* 6.

<sup>66</sup> The year in which Constantine became co-emperor (654) is known thanks to the Acts of the third council of Constantinople, which state the year 680 to be his twenty-seventh year on the throne. See J.D. MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*. Florence 1759ff., XI 208.

<sup>67</sup> *ODB* I 500–01, s.v. Constantine IV.

century dating, which is most frequently cited in relevant secondary literature, is in fact unsound based on its conflict with the contextual evidence offered by the miracles. Furthermore, I hope to have shown that the date proposed by Frank Trombley for the Arab occupation of Euchaita (663–64), deserves a much better hearing. The complete translation of the enkomion, which has never been attempted to date, may yield some literary clues for the date of our text's composition and a more in-depth look at all the available written sources in Arabic, Syriac and Armenian could similarly prove to be useful, especially for a better assessment of the alleged Arab attack in 754. Finally, the collection of paleoenvironmental material at the site of ancient Euchaita may provide us in the near future with an opportunity to establish an independent control for the textual evidence, a technique which has already been employed for the same period elsewhere in Asia Minor.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> I am most grateful to Professor John Haldon for allowing me to read an as yet unpublished article dealing with palynological material from Nar Gölü in western Cappadocia in the context of Arab raids and the disruption of agricultural activities in this area. It is to be hoped that the Avkat Archeological Project undertaken by Princeton University on the site of Euchaita will allow us in the near future to find material evidence, paleoenvironmental as well as archeological, which might cast further light on the events described in the enkomion.

