

- 381 Murūj, para 877, 883, 893
 382 Ibid, para 874 ff
 383 Ibid, para 874, the name of the king is corrupted in the mss; probably Kubrā Ibn Surūr (or perhaps Kiyumī Ibn Surūr? as in Istanbul MS. Feyzullah, No 1372, folio 97v)
 384 Murūj, para 894-895
 385 Murūj, para 894 ff
 386 Murūj, para 873-4; 881-6
 387 Ibid, para 875, 876, 887, 893
 388 Murūj, para 876
 389 Ibid, para 844; and 880: (where he mentions having given many details "on their kingdoms" in the first chapter of his (now lost) Akhbār al-Zamān)
 390 Ibid, para 215, 244, 246, 872
 391 Ibid, para 215
 392 Ibid, para 872
 393 Ibid, loc cit
 394 Ibid, para 871, also 412
 395 Ibid, para 872
 396 Ibid, para 412 (for the kings of the world see Ibid para 395 ff)
 397 Ibid, para 872

Chapter VI: AL-MAS'ŪDĪ ON THE BYZANTINES

1 Introductory

Of all non-Islamic polities the Byzantine Empire held a special place for Muslims. The Byzantines were not a mere foreign nation beyond the frontiers of Islam; but ever since the beginning of the Islamic conquests the Byzantines became the chief military adversary of the Arabs. It is true that by the mid 3rd century AH/mid 9th century AD the earlier hopes of universal conquest were no longer feasible. In fact a state of co-existence with the Byzantines was more or less conceded in practice, but, of course, not in theory. Although Arab-Byzantine frontiers had become more or less stabilized (before the period that concerns us here), yet annual war-fare or seasonal raiding remained the main characteristic of Arab Byzantine relations.¹ In Arabic sources and in the thought-world of Muslims, Byzantium or the land of the Rūm was the 'house of war' par excellence.

Arabic authors before al-Mas'ūdī: historians, geographers and men of letters, despite their obvious interest in the Byzantines as the enemy of Islam, show very little or no interest in the Byzantines as a people in their own right. Thus earlier Muslim histories give a brief account of the early Roman emperors but they all terminate their accounts with the reign of Heraclius at the time of the rise of Islam. After that the history of the Eastern Roman Empire is of no further interest to them. Henceforth the Byzantines figure only as the enemy; and the occasional mention of a Byzantine emperor or other personage

is usually only in the context of Islamic-Byzantine warfare. As a rule the 'King of the Rūm' is not named, sometimes he is given the epithet 'tyrant' (ṭāghīya) or 'dog' (kalb) of the Rūm.²

It is noteworthy that even Christian historians who flourished in the Muslim world and wrote in Arabic did not include in their works a continuous account or even a list of Byzantine rulers after the Islamic conquests. (Although they do sometimes name emperors and mention certain events in Byzantium, and as Christians, they took special interest in the affairs of the Byzantine Church.)³

Arabic geographers offer a different type of information on Byzantium. Ibn Khurradādhbeh and Qudāma wrote about the administrative and military conditions of the Byzantine Empire, particularly on the military officials and the themes. Despite the value of their information and the fact that both writers were important men of letters it is evident that their interest as well as their main sources of information on Byzantium were directly related to the strategic needs of the Islamic State.⁴ Both writers were state officials - Ibn Khurradādhbeh was head of the Postal Department which included the intelligence service, and Qudāma was a state-secretary responsible for the revenues. Qudāma explicitly states that he gives an account of Byzantine lands because "the Muslims should guard against the Byzantines more than any other enemy".⁵ Other Muslim geographers who wrote before al-Mas'ūdī, most of whom were state officials such as Ibn Rusta, Ibn al-Faḳīh and al-Ya'qūbī, do not give any systematic treatment of Byzantine lands. (Ibn Rusta only preserves an account of the prisoner Hārūn b Yahyā on Constantinople.)⁶

This preoccupation with their own lands is equally true of the Muslim geographers who flourished in the time of al-Mas'ūdī and shortly after. This is explicitly stated by al-Iṣṭakhrī, Ibn Ḥawqal and al-Maqdisī (or al-Muqaddasī).⁷ Al-Maqdisī remarks that "we do not deal with non-Muslim countries for we have not seen them, and because there is no benefit from writing about them, anyway", but adds that "we do mention the conditions of Muslims in those lands."⁸ He has something to say about Constantinople - "for there is a special quarter for the Muslims ... which adjoins the palace of the 'dog' of the Rūm".⁹ Further examples could be added.¹⁰

In other types of early Arabic literary works there are very few references and allusions to the Byzantines as such.¹¹ It is true that the Byzantines were considered in Arabic literary circles to belong to the category of civilized nations, alongside Arabs, Persians and Indians.¹²

But there was a tendency to belittle the achievements of the Byzantines and to pick up and often exaggerate the weak points in their way of life. For example, they were generally considered as adept in crafts but not in philosophy or the sciences; and the practice of castrating their children is stressed and reproached; they are also accused of carelessness as regards hygiene.¹³ The historical and cultural connections between the Byzantines and the ancient Greeks, although vaguely realized by certain scholars (especially those versed in philosophy and medicine) were nevertheless ignored, sometimes even categorically denied. The dialectic and polymath al-Jāhīz (d 869) states that the Greeks (al-Yūnān) were a nation that had long vanished like the ancient Arabian tribe of Thamūd.¹⁴ He was anxious to deny that the Byzantines belonged to the same people as the ancient Greek philosophers whom he admired.¹⁵

It is evident that the picture of the Byzantines given in Arabic literature is not only confused but also sometimes deliberately distorted. Despite the requirements of diplomacy on an official level, and notwithstanding partial recognition of Byzantine cultural qualities, the general attitude of Muslims was characterized by a belief in the superiority and self-sufficiency of their own religion and civilization.¹⁶ In the eyes of Islamic authors it was important and necessary to know about the Byzantines as the enemy with whom Muslims were at war. It was not felt necessary or even worthwhile to inquire about the Byzantines as a people in their own right.

Al-Mas'ūdī presents a striking exception in the way in which he treats the history and affairs of the Byzantines. This is reflected in his systematic account on Byzantium; the wide range of his information on its geography, history, religion and culture; in his extensive use of Christian sources and his personal inquiries into Byzantine matters; and above all in his fair attitude of mind.

2 Scope and Sources

Al-Mas'ūdī devotes considerable space in both the Murūj and Tanbīh to the history and contemporary conditions of the East Roman Empire.¹⁷ The Tanbīh, though much smaller in size, contains a fuller treatment of Byzantium where the political history is updated to the time of writing (345/956), and a number of errors which occurred in the earlier account of the Murūj were amended. The Tanbīh includes in addition a description of the land of Byzantium, an account of the ransoming of prisoners between Muslims and Byzantines, and on the whole

it is more informative on the Christian Roman Empire of Constantinople. Al-Mas'ūdī's growing interest in Byzantine matters is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that his account on Byzantium in the Tanbīh is three times the size of the corresponding account in the Murūj, although the size of the Tanbīh as a whole is only about a fifth of the size of the Murūj.

Al-Mas'ūdī's knowledge of the history and contemporary conditions of Byzantium was based on his use of a wide range of authorities. His written sources include not only earlier Islamic writings, but more especially works written by Christian authors, both early and contemporary to al-Mas'ūdī himself. In addition his information on Byzantium after the rise of Islam and especially during his own life time, is derived from his inquiries among Muslim and Christian individuals especially Muslim officials and inhabitants of the frontier region. Here his journeys and sojourns in northern Syria are very important.

In considering al-Mas'ūdī's written Islamic authorities on Byzantine matters, it is necessary to make a distinction between histories or chronicles, works describing the land and administration of the Byzantine Empire and which it is customary to describe as geographical works, and finally other possible written sources, such as official documents. The first type of sources is restricted to the pre-Islamic history of the Romans and Islamic Byzantine relations; the other two types are concerned with matters primarily relating to Islamic warfare and the information considered essential for dealing with the Byzantines on the battlefield and in diplomacy.

For the first category, our starting point is perhaps to look at al-Mas'ūdī's own bibliographical list in the introductory chapter of Murūj and to consider those works in this list which have come down to us. Thus an examination of the works of al-Ṭabarī of the Traditional school of Islamic 'universal' history, al-Ya'qūbī or Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī, shows that what al-Mas'ūdī would have found in such works on Byzantine history, relates only to pre-Islamic times.

Among the earlier works listed by al-Mas'ūdī in his bibliographical introduction to the Murūj,¹⁸ the work of Abū 'Isā Ibn al-Munajjim, is of especial interest. Al-Mas'ūdī describes the book as "the history (Chronography) of Abū 'Isā Ibn al-Munajjim according to the Tawrāh and others concerning the Chronology of Kings and prophets". But again insofar as this work may have dealt with Roman/Byzantine history it would presumably have stopped with the advent of Islam.¹⁹

More important is al-Mas'ūdī's use of histories written by Christians. In his Murūj he alludes, without specifying, to some Christian histories which he consulted, especially among the Melkites,²⁰ and states that he saw Christian chronicles in the Qisyān church of Antioch. In the Tanbīh he names some Christian writers whose works were known to him.²¹ The earliest of these is a book by an Egyptian monk from Alexandria named Annianus.²² E Honigmann has shown that this is the same Annianus who lived in the fifth century AD and whose chronicle was utilized by later Eastern Christian historians like George Syncellus, Elias Nisibius, Ibn al-'Ibrī (Bar Hebraeus) and Michael the Syrian.²³ In fact al-Mas'ūdī's description of Annianus' chronicle agrees with what Michael the Syrian will have to say about it much later, namely that it was a "chronicle of world history from Adam to Constantine the Great".²⁴ Al-Mas'ūdī does not say whether he used an Arabic translation of this chronicle or whether he was able to consult it in the original (presumably Greek) language. He seems to have known something about the Greek language and he uses a few Greek terms,²⁵ and in one instance he even attempts to transcribe a word or two in the Greek script. It is however doubtful whether he could read Greek on his own. He does, however, state in a general way that he 'consulted' some Greek works. Speaking of the Roman emperors before Constantine the Great, he indicates that their names and length of their reigns were variously given in the histories of the Melkite Christians, "most of which are in Greek: but we have related of these what was possible for us to describe".²⁶ Al-Mas'ūdī may have relied on the services of some bi-lingual person for the purpose of translation or at least perusal - perhaps a Christian priest, a Greek convert to Islam, or an inhabitant of the frontier region. Elsewhere he states that he sought assistance of this kind in reading a Syriac inscription in Ḥarrān.²⁷ This practice of seeking the aid of a bi-lingual (especially in the case of Greek) was not uncommon among those Muslim authors who shared al-Mas'ūdī's type of intellectual curiosity.²⁸

The majority of the Christian sources used by al-Mas'ūdī were, however, written in Arabic. He consulted works written by representatives of various Christian churches: Melkites as well as Jacobites, Nestorians and Maronites. He names two major works written by two contemporary Melkite priests: The Patriarch of Alexandria, Sa'īd (Eutychius) b al-Biṭrīq (d 940) whom he knew personally,²⁹ and the Bishop of Manbij Maḥbūb (Agapius) b Quṣṭanṭīn al-Manbijī (wrote circa 942).³⁰ Both of these works are still preserved; though that of al-Manbijī only in an incomplete form. Eutychius' history is entitled al-Kitāb al-Majmū' 'alā al-Taḥqīq wa' l-Taṣdīq (the Book that is carefully and faithfully put together).³¹ It is a 'universal' history from

the creation until the year 326/938. As the book stands now it is divided into two sections: the first of which deals with biblical and Christian history up to the reign of Heraclius and the Muslim conquests; the second is devoted to Muslim history with only few and occasional references to Byzantine affairs.

Manbijī's book, entitled *Kitāb al-'Unwān*, is also a 'universal' history written more or less along similar lines.³² In its preserved form it goes only as far as the second year of the reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mahdī (that is 160/777).

It is not possible to trace actual quotations from either of these works in al-Mas'ūdī's accounts, although certain borrowings are discernible. This is particularly so in connection with the pre-Islamic period of Byzantine history. It is possible for example to point to certain cases where al-Mas'ūdī appears to be summarising details from Eutychius or from Agapius;³³ although there are some differences between his accounts and those of the two Christian historians. For example al-Mas'ūdī spells the names of some emperors, patriarchs or other persons differently from the way they are spelt by Eutychius or Agapius,³⁴ and the lengths of reigns in his account differ sometimes.³⁵ Al-Mas'ūdī, however, does not include certain details found in Eutychius or Agapius - especially those dealing with miracles and lives of saints, with consecration of patriarchs and bishops, or with certain theological disputes on which the two Melkite priests expounded their own views. On the other hand, he includes some details that are not to be found in either of the two Christian authors' accounts - for example two non-Christian traditions relating to the Conversion of Constantine the Great and to the apostasy of the Emperor Julian.³⁶ There are also some details which he probably derived from non-Melkite Christian authorities.

He does in fact allude to three books on world history including Byzantine and Church history written by three non-Melkite scholars or priests; one of these was a Jacobite priest whom he knew personally and whose name is given as Abū Zakariyyā Dankhā; the second was a Nestorian secretary (*Kātib*), named Ya'qūb b Zakariyyā al-Kaskarī (after Kaskar in northern Syria); and the third a Maronite scholar named by al-Mas'ūdī as Qays al-Mārūnī.³⁷ It is not possible to determine al-Mas'ūdī's indebtedness to any of these non-Melkite authors, for their works are not known to have survived. However, it appears that his information on the three Christian Churches of the Jacobites, Maronites and Nestorians and their respective positions as regards theological controversies, was on the whole derived from representa-

tives of those churches.³⁸

The sources of al-Mas'ūdī's account on Byzantine history after the rise of Islam cannot be easily determined. A comparison between this account and the scanty information available in the preserved works of Eutychius and Agapius shows very few similarities. The two Christian historians paid very little attention to the affairs of Byzantium in this period. Although they include, now and then, some information relating to the accession of an emperor or the consecration of a Patriarch in Constantinople, this is not done systematically.³⁹ It is true that some of the errors in al-Mas'ūdī's less developed account in *Murūj*, are to be found also in the work of Eutychius and can therefore be ascribed to his use of this work or of a common source.⁴⁰

Al-Mas'ūdī's additional information on Byzantine history after the rise of Islam, particularly the account in *Tanbih*, must be attributed to other sources. It is an open question whether some of this information goes back to the non-Melkite historians already cited. But if the Melkite Eutychius and Agapius had little to say on Byzantine history after the Islamic conquests, the non-Melkite historians would have had even less.

The impressive details and the generally accurate chronology given in al-Mas'ūdī's *Tanbih* suggest that he must have utilized further sources. This would also raise the question of whether he may have made use of Byzantine sources - books or reports that may have found their way to the Islamic side, perhaps through an ambassador, a convert, a prisoner of war or a merchant coming from Constantinople. The scarcity of details about events in Byzantium which is reflected in the preserved works of other Muslim historians cannot be attributed simply to unavailability of information in the Muslim world about such events. As al-Mas'ūdī's works clearly demonstrate the question is not merely one of existence of information, but rather of curiosity and attitude of mind. There is evidence, for example, that at least a list of Byzantine emperors up to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-959) was available in Baghdād soon after the beginning of the latter's reign, probably sometime before 306/918. Al-Mas'ūdī's younger contemporary, Ḥamza al-Isfahānī (wrote circa 350/961), who preserves this list, tells us that he copied it from a book written by a Baghdād judge called Wakī'. Significantly enough, Wakī' is quoted by Ḥamza⁴¹ as stating that he had obtained this list from a book (or perhaps a letter: *Kitāb*) of the Byzantine Emperor, and that it was translated into Arabic by a certain Secretary (*Ba'd al-kuttāb*). There is little doubt that this was the same

Wakī' (d 306/918) who was personally known to al-Mas'ūdī himself, and whose book, *al-Sharīf* (now lost) is mentioned in the bibliographical introduction of *Murūj*.⁴² Thus it seems that al-Mas'ūdī utilized this same list.⁴³

However, Wakī' 's account as preserved by Ḥamza is only a bare list of rulers with the length of their reigns. On the other hand, al-Mas'ūdī, as will be seen, gives more details about the same emperors, about political events in Constantinople, and Byzantine foreign relations. His information on these and other details must be attributed to other sources.⁴⁴

Al-Mas'ūdī's knowledge of the land of the Byzantines, the sea routes to their capital and main ports, was derived from a variety of sources different from the ones so far discussed. This includes earlier and contemporary written works as well as oral sources of information. Al-Mas'ūdī was familiar with earlier Arabic geographical works, which contained valuable information on the administration of the Byzantine Empire, such as the works of Ibn Khurradādhbeh and Qudāma. Similarities and differences between al-Mas'ūdī's account and the extant works of these authors will be indicated further below. More important in this connection is his use of the works (now lost) of an earlier Arabic writer - namely Muslim b Abī Muslim al-Jarmī, who wrote around the middle of the 3rd/9th century. The works of al-Jarmī were also used by Ibn Khurradādhbeh and Qudāma and the common details between the accounts of these two writers and that of al-Mas'ūdī may in part be attributed to this fact.

According to al-Mas'ūdī himself, who is incidentally our only known source on al-Jarmī's life and works,⁴⁵ al-Jarmī was a Muslim warrior of the Syrian marches who was captured by the Byzantines and subsequently ransomed in the year 231/845. Al-Mas'ūdī describes him as having been "an eminent man in the frontier region",⁴⁶ and "well acquainted with the lands of the Byzantines on which he wrote a number of books (or reports)". Al-Jarmī's works, as al-Mas'ūdī indicates, dealt with the political history as well as with the administrative and military matters such as the way in which Muslim raids should be conducted and the recommended seasons for such raids.⁴⁷ Al-Jarmī's writings also included information on the northern neighbours of Byzantium in his day, such as the Avars, Bulgars, Khazars and Slavs. It is possible that much of al-Mas'ūdī's account on the description of Asia Minor and Byzantine themes was derived from the works of al-Jarmī.⁴⁸

Al-Mas'ūdī also refers in a general way to works dealing mainly with Muslim-Byzantine warfare. Such books, or perhaps manuals, whose authors are not named by him, are described as *Kutub al-Ṣawā'if*: literally 'books of summer expeditions'. It seems that these manuals not only described raids against the Byzantines, but also, as al-Mas'ūdī indicates, included accounts of ransoming of prisoners.⁴⁹ Presumably written for the use of Muslim warriors and based on such reports as the works of al-Jarmī and other material available for the Muslim war intelligence service, these manuals also contained information on routes, fortresses, the topography of Asia Minor and the approaches to Constantinople.⁵⁰

Of particular significance is al-Mas'ūdī's personal inquiries, especially in the *thughūr* region, where he was able to obtain valuable information, from knowledgeable persons, on aspects of the Byzantine Empire. His inquiries among different individuals is in line with his practice of seeking information on lands which he did not personally visit, or recent events on which no written sources were available.⁵¹ Al-Mas'ūdī's informants on Byzantine matters were on the whole well-placed individuals from whom he derived first hand information on geographical details, or recent developments. It is significant to note that they included prominent Muslims and converted Byzantines, and possibly a Byzantine diplomat. Among these were Muslim naval admirals and sailors, other Muslim warriors, and dignitaries of the *thughūr*, ex-prisoners of war, Byzantine converts, and merchants who visited Byzantine lands.⁵²

Of these knowledgeable informants al-Mas'ūdī mentions a few by name. One of these is a certain 'Abd Allāh b Wazīr whom he describes as the master of the port of Jabala - near Laodicea on the north Syrian coast, who was an old admiral and had considerable experience of naval warfare against the Byzantines. Al-Mas'ūdī adds concerning this man: "there is no other living person at this date, 332 AH (= 944 AD) better acquainted with the Mediterranean, or more senior in years than he is; nor can any sea captain or sailor deny his knowledge, piety, or experience in the *jihād* in this sea".⁵³ It is curious that the activities and even the name of this Muslim admiral are not mentioned by other known Arabic sources.

An important Muslim admiral from whom al-Mas'ūdī obtained information on Byzantine matters was a well-known Byzantine convert to Islam. This was no less than Leo of Tripoli whose name is given by al-Mas'ūdī as Abū l-Ḥārith *Lāwī* or *Lāwun*, the page (*ghulam*) of

Zarāfa.⁵⁴ This man who came originally from the Byzantine port of Attalia,⁵⁵ attained a high position in the Muslim navy and was, according to al-Mas'ūdī, the master of the Syrian port of Tripoli. He is known for his naval operations against the Byzantines, especially his spectacular expedition in which he sacked Thessalonica in 291/904.⁵⁶ Al-Mas'ūdī met this admiral in Tripoli sometime "after 300 AH/912 AD" as he puts it.⁵⁷ Leo is believed to have perished in a subsequent naval expedition in 921 or 922 AD.⁵⁸ Al-Mas'ūdī is the only known Arabic author to give both the Arabic kunya: Abū 'l-Ḥārith and the original Greek name of this admiral: Lāwī or Lāwun (= Leo). Other Arabic sources refer to him simply as "the page of Zarāfa",⁵⁹ or in one case give his adopted Arabic name, Rashiḳ al-Wardamī.⁶⁰ Although al-Mas'ūdī only quotes him on details concerning the Mediterranean Sea,⁶¹ it may be presumed that he also obtained some historical information from him and from his crew. It is probably thanks to his acquaintance with this admiral and some of his sailors that al-Mas'ūdī was able to record certain details of the expedition against Thessalonica and to realize the importance of this city.⁶²

An even more important personage from the Islamic-Byzantine marches, was the Arab warrior and diplomat, Abū 'Umayr 'Adī b 'Aḥmad b 'Abd al-Bāqī. Abū 'Umayr was the chief of the frontier town of Adana for almost half a century (until his death in 337/949).⁶³ He came from a celebrated family of the tribe of Tamīm,⁶⁴ and was considered as the 'Shaykh' of the Syrian marches and the one most highly regarded and obeyed among his fellow men.⁶⁵ He was bi-lingual and his fluency in Greek and the prestige of his family, gained him an important position as the official entrusted to accompany Byzantine envoys to Baghdād⁶⁶ or Damascus,⁶⁷ and as Muslim ambassador to Constantinople on several occasions,⁶⁸ in addition to his responsibility in the thughūr. Abū 'Umayr was also a distinguished man of learning - who besides his knowledge of the traditional Muslim sciences, was an authority on the history and lore of Arab-Byzantine warfare.⁶⁹ Al-Mas'ūdī met Abū 'Umayr more than once between 309/921 and 334/948. He describes him as "the shaykh of the Syrian marches (Shaykh al-thughūr al-shāmiyya) in the past and in our own day" and as "highly esteemed among his people" as well as "a learned man". This latter quality of Abū 'Umayr accords him a special, if brief mention in one or two Arabic biographical works devoted to Muslim scholars.⁷⁰ Abū 'Umayr's knowledge of the history of Arab-Byzantine relations and diplomacy, of Byzantine lands and of the Byzantine capital was thus based on first hand

knowledge and experience. His knowledge and interest in the traditions of the frontier marches must have been further enriched by the fact that he belonged to a family with a long and distinguished record in warfare and diplomacy and in the administration of the important frontier town of Adana and possibly also Tarsus. These qualities and his first-hand acquaintance with the Byzantine capital and imperial court made Abū 'Umayr perhaps the most important and reliable of al-Mas'ūdī's oral authorities on Constantinople and the routes to it, and on recent events in the Byzantine Empire. As will be seen, al-Mas'ūdī actually quotes him on geographical, topographical and historical matters.⁷¹ It may well be that much of al-Mas'ūdī's information on recent events in Constantinople are due to this old Arab diplomat.

Al-Mas'ūdī may have also obtained further knowledge of contemporary Byzantium and its civilization, through the arrival of an important Byzantine envoy in Damascus during one of al-Mas'ūdī's sojourns there in 334/946. He may even have met this envoy and thus encountered an official representative of the Byzantines and their culture. Al-Mas'ūdī himself tells us that this Greek ambassador arrived in Damascus during the month of Dhū-l-Qi' da 334 AH/July 946 AD. Accompanied by the same Abū 'Umayr b 'Abd al-Bāqī, he was presented to the Muslim master of Egypt and Syria at the time, Muhammad b Ṭugh al-Ikhshīd (who died soon after that). Al-Mas'ūdī also tells us that when the Byzantine envoy and Abū 'Umayr arrived in Damascus "I was in the city that day".⁷² It is just possible that al-Mas'ūdī may have met this diplomat then. Such a meeting could have been arranged by Abū 'Umayr who was in charge of the movements of the envoy; moreover al-Mas'ūdī tells us elsewhere that he had access to the court of al-Ikhshīd.⁷³ Whether or not al-Mas'ūdī met this diplomat - it is certain that he was able to form some fairly good idea about him and what his country was like. This is reflected in the manner in which he gives his full name and titles as Yuānis al-Ansībaṭūs al-Batriḳūs al-Misdiḳūs al-Mutarrahib (ie John the proconsul, Patrician, mystic and ascetic). The manner in which al-Mas'ūdī transliterates the name and Greek titles of this envoy into Arabic is remarkable. So is his description of him as "a man of insight and understanding (wa kāna dhā ra' yin wa fahm)."⁷⁴

The identity of this envoy can be tentatively suggested. It is evident that al-Mas'ūdī is not here confusing, as thought by some scholars, between John 'Mysticus' and the 'Domesticus' John Curcuas the well-known army general, (active 923-944).⁷⁵ It is clear that al-Mas'ūdī's description perfectly fits an actual John Mysticus who is known to have

been created Patrician and Anthypatus (proconsul) as early as April 19th, 925; and to have been already active in the Byzantine diplomatic service earlier in 924, when he accompanied the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus on his visit to the Bulgar Symeon; and who after a successful but short career as the Chief Foreign Secretary was removed from court (925).⁷⁶ Although the Emperor Romanus continued for a while to have recourse to his sound judgement and resolution, John was soon forced by circumstances to flee to a monastery and become a monk.⁷⁷ It would appear that after the fall of Romanus Lecapenus (944), John Mysticus recovered his former position under Constantine Porphyrogenitus.

Al-Mas'ūdī's informants also included "some of our brethern who had been prisoners of war in the land of the Byzantines";⁷⁸ "a certain Byzantine who had embraced Islam and become a good Muslim";⁷⁹ "certain merchants who traded between Constantinople and the ports of Syria and Egypt".⁸⁰

It is evident that al-Mas'ūdī did not simply come across information on Byzantium in an incidental manner. His accounts reflect his genuine attempt to acquire knowledge and to verify reports by inquiry and constant questioning. Al-Mas'ūdī may to a large extent be justified in his statement concerning the manner in which he sought to obtain information on internal events in Byzantium - he speaks of "... our proximity to their [the Byzantines'] country, our inquiry into their akhbār (history and news) and our frequent movement between the Syrian marches, Antioch, [other parts of] Syria, and Egypt".⁸¹

Al-Mas'ūdī's information on the Byzantine Empire covers diverse aspects. He tries first to explain who the Rūm were and why they were thus named, and records more than one opinion concerning this. He gives the views of earlier Arabic genealogists who linked the Rūm with a certain personage of the same name and with biblical genealogy.⁸² But in accordance with his general approach when dealing with non-Islamic peoples he prefers the view which was, as he puts it, "held by the Rūm themselves", namely that "they were named after their city of Rūmiyya which is known in their language as "Rūmās" (ie Rome). He realized that the Byzantines "called themselves Rūmayus and the people of the frontier region knew them only by this name".⁸³ This is, of course, the Arabic transcription of Romaioi, the singular form of Romaioi (ie Romans) which is indeed the name the Byzantines applied to themselves. He also knew that the name of the city of Rūmiyya (Rome) was in turn derived from its legendary founders, and earliest

kings: "Romulus and Remus the twin sons of the she-wolf".⁸⁴ Al-Mas'ūdī also points out that the land of the Byzantines was called by them Rumānyā (Romania).⁸⁵ He compares this to the name Sūryā (Syria) which they applied to al-Shām and which is related to the name of the Syrians.⁸⁶

3 The land of the Byzantines

Al-Mas'ūdī's account of the Byzantine themes, though showing similarities to earlier Muslim accounts by Ibn Khurradādhbeh, Qudāma and Ibn al-Faqīh, nevertheless contains more details and shows considerable divergence.⁸⁷ It is true that he followed the view expressed by other Muslim writers to the effect that the Byzantine Empire was always divided into fourteen military provinces (ie themes) - an idea which probably goes back to the works of al-Jarmī. A comparison between al-Mas'ūdī's list of Byzantine military provinces and the earliest preserved lists of Ibn Khurradādhbeh, Qudāma, and Ibn al-Faqīh, indicates that he made better use of the works of al-Jarmī, and probably consulted other sources for this purpose.

Al-Mas'ūdī designates a Byzantine theme by the term Band (plural bunūd) probably from the Greek βάνδοον which denoted a small military division smaller than a 'thema'.⁸⁸ He however uses this term to denote a proper 'theme' and employs the Arabic term 'amal' to describe a smaller military unit.⁸⁹ It is interesting that al-Mas'ūdī draws an analogy between the Byzantine themes and the Islamic system of the ajnad (singular jund), which was especially prevalent in Syria. He does not however elaborate on this, but he does point out that the Byzantine themes were much larger in size than the Islamic ajnad.⁹⁰

Al-Mas'ūdī's account differs from earlier Arabic lists mainly in two respects. It is arranged in a considerably different order - whereas the earlier lists begin with European themes, al-Mas'ūdī's survey starts by enumerating the Asiatic provinces. And it contains three more themes which are not mentioned by Ibn Khurradādhbeh, Ibn al-Faqīh or Qudāma. These earlier Arabic writers list eleven Asiatic and three European themes.⁹¹ Al-Mas'ūdī states that there were nine Asiatic themes "on this side of the straits: Dūn al-Khalīj";⁹² but he actually mentions eleven Asiatic themes, three of which he regards as small military divisions. Thus he describes the Charsianon (Kharshana), Colonea (Qulūnya) and Seleucia (Salūqya) as small units, respectively within the larger themes of the Armeniacon, Paphlagonia and a third theme which he calls Decapolis (Diqābulī) or Banḥilyā. This

latter which is not mentioned by earlier Arabic writers, probably corresponds to the Cibyrraeots theme of Byzantine sources.⁹³ Colonea is not mentioned by either Ibn Khurradādhbeh, Qudāma or Ibn al-Faḡīh. On the other hand, al-Mas'ūdī omits the theme of Chaldia known to his predecessors. Whereas these earlier lists mention three European themes, Thrace, Macedonia and the enigmatic Tāblā,⁹⁴ al-Mas'ūdī gives five: adding the two important themes of the Peloponnese and Thessalonica.⁹⁵ Thus he in fact names seventeen themes, although in his list three of these are considered as sub-units within other themes.

With one exception the themes listed by al-Mas'ūdī are all identifiable with themes known from Byzantine sources. This exception is the so-called Tāfiā/Tāblā or Tāylā which is supposed to have comprised Constantinople and its environs.⁹⁶ But this has been shown to be most probably based on a misunderstanding, and no theme with such a name seems to be mentioned by Byzantine authors.⁹⁷ The other themes in al-Mas'ūdī's list are all mentioned by Constantine Prophyrogenitus in his treatise on the themes with the exception of two of them: Cappadocia and Charsianon which are missing from the emperor's work "(for no apparent reason)".⁹⁸

Al-Mas'ūdī's list of Byzantine themes however does not represent actual conditions in the Empire at the time of his writing the Tanbīh (345/956). In fact, at the beginning of the tenth century (ie before al-Mas'ūdī wrote any of his extant works) there were in the Byzantine Empire no less than thirty military provinces (themes).⁹⁹

Modern specialists who studied the Byzantine administrative system emphasize the fact that the origins of the theme system, which had been already overshadowed by the Exarchates, go back to the seventh century and most probably to the reign of Heraclius (610-641).¹⁰⁰ It has also been shown that the organization of the various themes was undertaken under several Byzantine emperors and "had been brought to a conclusion by the end of the ninth and the beginnings of the tenth centuries".¹⁰¹ "As a result of the gradual division of the original large themes into smaller ones and the introduction of the system into new regions the number of themes had considerably increased".¹⁰² This historical development was not perceived by al-Mas'ūdī or other Muslim authors.

This fact may be partly explained in the context of a notion among Arabic writers according to which the Byzantine Empire was always divided into 'fourteen' military provinces, a division which was wrongly thought to have been both old and final.¹⁰³ It may, however, have been

due also to lack of information available to these authors. It is noteworthy that the two European themes of the Peloponnese and Thessalonica - listed by al-Mas'ūdī but wanting in other Arabic lists - were already established as early as the beginning of the ninth century (ie before Ibn Khurradādhbeh or Qudāma or even al-Jarmī wrote).¹⁰⁴ Charsianon and Seleucia which are considered by al-Mas'ūdī as smaller units are actually known to have been created originally, together with Cappadocia, as small military units, most probably under Theophilus (829-842) forming three frontier zones or 'mountain passes', kleisurai.¹⁰⁵ But in the early tenth century the three zones appear as themes in Byzantine sources. Thus al-Mas'ūdī's inclusion of Cappadocia as a theme reflects the new status of this province. He does not, however, note a similar position in the case of Charsianon or Seleucia.¹⁰⁶ Similarly al-Mas'ūdī's description of Colonea as a small military unit ('amal, ie kleisura) does not in fact reflect its actual rank. For Colonea was a theme with a Strategus as early as 863.¹⁰⁷

Al-Mas'ūdī's account of the land of Byzantium is not confined to the military and administrative aspects. Unlike some earlier Arabic writers (eg Ibn Khurradādhbeh, Ibn al-Faḡīh and Qudāma), he includes no information on the hierarchy, numbers or finance of the Byzantine military organization. He is mainly concerned with geographical matters: thus he enumerates the crossing points from the Asian side to Constantinople, gives a description of the straits of the Hellespont, the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus, and offers some information on the Byzantine capital itself. These details, most of which are not found in the earlier Arabic accounts of Ibn Khurradādhbeh, Qudāma or Ibn al-Faḡīh, are probably based partly on the lost works of al-Jarmī, but perhaps more so on oral sources such as Muslim prisoners, warriors, sailors and envoys to Constantinople.

He gives an original description of the ports on the Asiatic side from which it was possible to reach Constantinople by sea or at which passengers or armies sailing from the capital could land.¹⁰⁸

Al-Mas'ūdī's description of the sea route to Constantinople is largely based on accounts of Muslim naval captains and reports of envoys who reached the capital itself. He actually quotes Abū 'Umayr b 'Abd al-Bāḡi, the leading frontier dignitary and sometime Muslim envoy to Constantinople mentioned above. The account of Abū 'Umayr is related to a description of the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus (the two are, as a rule, collectively denoted by the term 'Khalīj al-Qusṭantīniyya' (Gulf or Bay of Constantinople)).¹⁰⁹ Al-Mas'ūdī states that -

"Abū 'Umayr b 'Abd al-Bāqī ... who has long been and still is to our own day the Shaykh of the Syrian frontier region, and who is a learned man, told me that when he sailed on this Khalīj to Constantinople [to arrange] for a truce and a ransoming [of prisoners] he was able to distinguish the water current and its flow from the Black Sea; also he would find that the closer he came to the Mediterranean the warmer he could feel the water."¹¹⁰

The direction of the current in the Bosphorus seems to have interested al-Mas'ūdī as a geographical question. Abū 'Umayr's testimony must have convinced him that the current was actually from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean; for elsewhere al-Mas'ūdī states this as an established fact.¹¹¹

4 The City of Constantinople

Despite its brevity and shortcomings, al-Mas'ūdī's description of Constantinople is to be appreciated in comparison to earlier and contemporary Arabic authors. The knowledge which is preserved in works of Muslim writers on the Byzantine capital is partly legendary, often inaccurate, and sometime intentionally misleading. Whether legendary or factual Islamic concepts of the Byzantine capital reflect the general attitude of Muslims.¹¹² A true appreciation of how Constantinople looked was, on the whole, hindered not merely by the kind of reports arriving back with Muslim prisoners-of-war, but often also obscured or distorted by the attitude of Arabic authors. For example, Ibn Khurrādādhbeh's information is very meagre and sometimes false.¹¹³ And the account of Ibn Rusta (based on the report of the ex-prisoner Hārūn b Yahyā), despite its interest, contains only general and vague impressions about particular events and ceremonies rather than a description of the Byzantine capital.¹¹⁴

Similarly, al-Maqdisī's digressional remarks about Constantinople already alluded to would be of little significance if it were not for his comments which perhaps reflect the general attitude of Muslim authors towards the Byzantines. After having stated that he only mentioned Constantinople because there was a quarter in it for Muslims, al-Maqdisī adds that knowledge of the Byzantine capital and the route to it was also relevant to "Muslim needs, especially in the event of war or ransoming prisoners; for commercial and other purposes". He also observes that among Muslims "controversy and fabrications concerning it abounded, especially as regards its size, buildings and its conditions". What al-Maqdisī himself writes on the description of Constanti-

nople is however not only meagre but also misleading. He states that in size "it is as large as Basra or even smaller". On its fortifications he remarks that "it is fortified just like other cities, and protected only by a single wall, no more". He thought that only one side of the city faced the sea. The rest of his remarks are concerned with the residence of Muslim prisoners and their conditions there.¹¹⁵ In such accounts even the most outstanding features of the Byzantine capital are not apparent.

Al-Mas'ūdī's brief description of Constantinople though using some information from earlier Arabic authors, offers correctives for certain prevalent misconceptions, and adds fresh details. His account deals with several aspects of the Byzantine capital, thus giving a clearer picture of it to Muslim contemporaries. Moreover in his description one notes the absence of any prejudice or any attempt at distortion.

It is noteworthy that al-Mas'ūdī knew several names for the Byzantine capital. The name that is most frequently used by him is al-Qustanīniyya (ie Constantinople) which, with very few exceptions, was the only name of the city known to other Arabic authors.¹¹⁶ He also knew that the ancient name of the city was Byzantium (Būzantiyā)¹¹⁷ - a term which he also employs to denote environs of the capital.¹¹⁸ It is quite remarkable that al-Mas'ūdī uses two descriptions which were usually given to Constantinople by the Byzantines themselves. One is the description malikat al-mudun (ie 'queen of cities' βασιλις πόλις) commonly applied to Constantinople as early as the fourth century (eg Eusebius) and until later times, and which he may have known from a Byzantine informant or perhaps from a written Christian source.¹¹⁹

Perhaps even more significant is his knowledge of yet a fourth appellation applied to their capital by the Byzantines. He states that "in our days the Rum called it Ibulīs (ἡ πόλις) or Būlin (πόλις) and when they wish to refer to it as their greatest city they would say "Istanbūlin" (εἰς τὴν πόλιν)".¹²⁰ The Byzantines in fact often referred to their capital as 'the City'. Al-Mas'ūdī must have heard this term applied to Constantinople from a Byzantine person or from a Muslim who knew the Greek language and the Byzantine usage. This information preserved by al-Mas'ūdī constitutes a fairly early piece of evidence - actually the earliest known in Islamic sources to correct a general misconception and to

show that the name 'Istanbul' was not after all entirely a later name given to Constantinople by the Ottomans.¹²¹

As for the geographical location of the Byzantine capital, al-Mas'ūdī states that "Constantinople stands on the western side of the Khalīj [ie the Bosphorus] and is bound by water from three sides, and from the west it is connected with the mainland".¹²² He realizes that the Byzantine capital was in Europe: "Constantinople is in the great landmass (al-Arḍ al-Kabīra) which includes the land of Rome, al-Andalus and the countries of the Franks, Slavs as well as other peoples of the north".¹²³

His description of the walls and gates of Constantinople and his reference to some of its buildings, although occasionally showing a lack of specific details, reflect a considerable knowledge. Thus he knew that on the western side, the city had more than one wall, which varied in height - a reference to the series of land-walls and fortifications built on the western side of Constantinople, first by Constantine the Great (324-337) and especially by Theodosius II (408-450). He describes the southern wall as being the highest. He accurately mentions that along the water of the Khalīj the city had only one wall.¹²⁴ In this case the term Khalīj would obviously not only describe the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus as indicated above, but would also include the Golden Horn. He observes that there were numerous gates for the city: "It is said that it had thirty gates; some claim that there were a hundred gates large and small".¹²⁵ But he specifically mentions the "Golden Gate" of the Theodosian fortifications.¹²⁶

His knowledge of some of the buildings in the Byzantine capital although wanting in specific details, nevertheless, indicates the right locations. For example, he remarks that "there was a palace adjoining the western wall", and another "palace with numerous towers and watch-towers in the direction of the Khalīj".¹²⁷ The first palace may be identified with the Palace of Blachernae in the north-western part of the city, while the second probably refers to the Great Palace on the coast of the Sea of Marmara. He also notes that the city is "surrounded by numerous churches",¹²⁸ which may be a general allusion to the many churches and monasteries known to have existed in the outer regions and suburbs of Constantinople.¹²⁹

He also observes that the climate of Constantinople was influenced by its geographical location which makes it subject to high humidity and changeable winds.¹³⁰

5 Byzantine History

Al-Mas'ūdī's treatment of the history of the Byzantine Empire is equally significant; and certainly shows a living scholarly interest in its affairs. In his survey of Roman and Byzantine history, he distinguishes three main phases. The first is the period of the "Pagan (ḥunafā' or Ṣābi'ūn) Roman emperors whose capital was Rome",¹³¹ this contains a list of early Roman emperors to Diocletian (284-305). The second is what he calls the period of "the Christian Roman emperors of Constantinople" covering the reigns from Constantine the Great (324-337) to Heraclius (610-641).¹³² The third phase is actually a sub-division of the second, covering Byzantine history after the rise of Islam. Al-Mas'ūdī who alone among his earlier and contemporary Muslim (and also Christian Arabic) historians devotes an independent and systematic account to this period of Roman history - designates it as "the history of the Byzantine emperors after the rise of Islam",¹³³ or "the history of the emperors of the Rūm from the Hijra (622 AD) to the year 345 (956 AD)".¹³⁴

His account of the first of these periods (ie Roman History up to the reign of Constantine the Great) is beyond the scope of this study. His treatment of the second period (Constantine to Heraclius), although admittedly it does not add to our present knowledge of this period, nevertheless deserves a brief consideration. It is mainly due to his extensive

use of Christian sources that his remarkable accuracy in the survey of the successive emperors and the length of their reigns is maintained. His lists in Tanbīh as well as Murūj, containing twenty-two emperors, on the whole fits in with the number of imperial reigns in Constantinople in this period;¹³⁵ and the same is true of the length of reigns.¹³⁶

Apart from its accuracy and sheer length in comparison to the earlier Muslim accounts, al-Mas'ūdī's treatment of this early period of Byzantine history has three further significant characteristics. First, he places more emphasis on certain outstanding events or achievements, as for example the two most important undertakings of Constantine the Great (324-337): "his foundation of Constantinople - a city which he built and fortified and made his seat of government (dār mam-lakatīn lahu)";¹³⁷ and his adoption of Christianity.¹³⁸ Another example is his reference to some of Justinian I's buildings.¹³⁹

Secondly, al-Mas'ūdī gives more attention to the affairs of the Christian Church in this period. He gives a detailed account of the first Six General Councils of the Church¹⁴⁰ using the Greek term for Council (Sunūdus or Sunhūdus) which was used, as he states, by Christians in Syria and Egypt, and which he renders into Arabic by the words Majma' or Ijtimā' (Council or Assembly).¹⁴¹ He deals with the position of the various emperors as regards Christianity pointing out the role they played in supporting a certain doctrine or suppressing another.¹⁴² In his description of the Christological controversies and the triumph of Orthodox (Melkite) doctrines, he shows an interest in details and reflects a deeper understanding of the importance of the Christian Church in the Eastern Roman Empire.

The third important aspect of al-Mas'ūdī's treatment of this period is his remarkable familiarity with non-Muslim sources and traditions. For his information not only testifies to his acquaintance with Christian sources representing the views of Melkites, Jacobites, Nestorians and Maronites, but also shows his endeavour to incorporate the opinions of a non-Christian (and non-Muslim) party - namely the Ṣābians of Ḥarrān.¹⁴³ Thus in his treatment of the question of Constantine's conversion to Christianity he remarks that there was a controversy between Christians and Ṣābians regarding the circumstances of this event. He states that according to the Christians, Constantine saw an illuminated cross in the sky - "some say that the cross appeared to him in a vision, others claim that he actually witnessed it in daylight"; but in either case the Emperor was told: "seek victory with this and you shall conquer your enemy"¹⁴⁴ - clearly a free translation of the

well-known "in hoc signo vinces". He adds that in their opinion Constantine then adopted the cross as a sign on his standards, was victorious and as a result adopted Christianity.¹⁴⁵ He then introduces the opinion of the Ṣābians which he most probably obtained from some of their scholars at Ḥarrān, that Constantine suffered "from leprosy ... and this according to their creed rendered the person who had it unsuitable for government ... whereas Christianity does not ban such a man from becoming emperor".¹⁴⁶ Similarly, al-Mas'ūdī gives the views of both Christians and Ṣābians on the apostasy of the Emperor Julian (361-363). He writes: "the Byzantines call him Bārabadīs ie παραβάτης which means al-Murtadd (the apostate); and the Sabians: Usibiūs (Eusebius) meaning the 'faithful' or the 'pious'; all Christians, however, disassociate themselves from him, some of them call him al-Buztāt (ie Apostates)".¹⁴⁷

Far more significant is al-Mas'ūdī's treatment of Byzantine history after the rise of Islam. He is the only known Arabic historian to undertake research (within the terms of his time and place) on this period of the history of the greatest and closest enemy of the Muslims. It is evident that his knowledge of Byzantine affairs is based on various sources of information, both written and oral; and it would seem that it was oral information that most contributed to his knowledge of events which took place in Byzantium during his own lifetime.

The details which al-Mas'ūdī gives on Byzantine history, after the Islamic conquests indicate the type of knowledge available in the Muslim East about events in contemporary Byzantium and throw some light on certain aspects which most interested al-Mas'ūdī himself, such as contemporary history of non-Muslims, very recent events, and cultural aspects. His fair attitude towards non-Muslims is particularly reflected here.

His account in the Tanbīh contains an accurate list of successive emperors with the length of their reigns, corresponding more or less to the generally accepted Byzantine Chronology.¹⁴⁸ It is perhaps noteworthy that whereas al-Mas'ūdī's list in the Murūj on this period of Byzantine history is rather confused and sometimes inaccurate his account in the Tanbīh is more accurate, up to date, and all in all, more developed. It appears that when writing the Murūj al-Mas'ūdī could not find or establish an accurate chronological sequence and length of reigns of the East Roman emperors after the rise of Islam. In fact he begins his chapter dealing with this period of Byzantine history by indicating the confusion in Muslim chronicles and histories concerning the name of the

Emperor in whose reign the Prophet Muḥammad was born.¹⁴⁸ The interest of this account lies mainly in that within the framework of a list of Byzantine emperors after the rise of Islam (as opposed to Muslim Caliphs) he includes important details on Arab-Byzantine relations. The military and diplomatic exchanges between Nicephorus I (802-811) and al-Rashīd (786-809) are given considerable attention. It also reflects certain characteristics of method, style and literary taste that are peculiar to the Murūj as a whole - for example, vivid descriptions of events (such as details of the capture of Heraclia by al-Rashīd in 803,¹⁵⁰ a preference for the literary anecdote, and the inclusion of poetry composed at the time of the wars between the 'Abbāsīd Caliph and the Byzantine Emperor). But the Murūj account also shows al-Mas'ūdī's living interest in Byzantine affairs, especially in later years.

In both accounts, al-Mas'ūdī includes ecclesiastical as well as political history, takes account of external relations of the Byzantines not only with the Muslims, but also with others; and also pays especial attention to certain aspects of the Byzantine administration, Church and civilization.

He relates the main military, political and ecclesiastical problems of the Emperor Heraclius; his wars of restoration against the Persians and his defeats and losses before the Armies of the Islamic conquest.¹⁵¹ He also refers to the Monothelete controversy over the question of the Divine Will which was finally condemned at the Sixth General Council (680-1).¹⁵²

Among the internal events in the Byzantine Empire plots, coups, and similar developments which led to the deposition of one emperor and the accession of another, seem to have particularly interested al-Mas'ūdī. He gives fairly accurate details about such events, putting them in their historical context, and does not simply relate them as isolated anecdotes.¹⁵³ Thus he describes how Heraclius was chosen emperor after having come at the head of a fleet to Constantinople and was able to end the period of anarchy under Phocas (610).¹⁵⁴ He gives an interesting account of the two reigns of Justinian II (685-695 and 705-711) whom he describes as al-Akhram (slit-nosed - Rhinotmetus); his first overthrow and the ineffective slitting of his nose and tongue; his fruitless adventures seeking aid in Khazaria; and his final success in regaining his throne with the help of Tervel (Tarbalā) the Khan of the Bulgars.¹⁵⁵ He also mentions the successful efforts of Leo III (717-741) in obtaining the throne and withstanding the Arab siege of Constantinople (717-718).¹⁵⁶

Similarly he describes how the Empress Irene undertook to get rid of her son as partner on the throne, Constantine VI (780-97), by blinding him.¹⁵⁷ He describes this episode in a way which shows great interest in and knowledge of details. He writes:

[Constantine VI's] policies were renounced by his subjects and his mother plotted against him aiming to retain the authority for herself. She ordered that a mirror be heated and that [Constantine] be hastily woken up from his sleep and closely confronted with the [hot] mirror; having opened his eyes so suddenly, he lost his sight. The period of his reign was seventeen years jointly with his mother, and then she ruled alone for five years.¹⁵⁸

He also relates how Irene

was forced to pay tribute to Hārūn al-Rashīd, and that this caused anger against her and led to her overthrow by Nicephorus, the former Lughuthī (logothete) of the treasury,¹⁵⁹ who was supported and backed by others. She was deposed in the year 187 (ie in 802), while she was in her own palace known as Balāt al-Ibtārū (ie τὸ παλάτιον τοῦ Ἐλευθερίου) and with her was her counsellor al-Yāfus (ie the eunuch Aetius) who was a man of resolution and ability.¹⁶⁰

Al-Mas'ūdī's account of the reign of Nicephorus I (802-811) contains some interesting details which indicate an oral source of information; for some of these details reflect popular stories and do not precisely present known historical facts. For example, Nicephorus is credited with being the first Byzantine Emperor ever to wear a beard.¹⁶¹ It is however, known that a number of the late Roman or early Byzantine emperors were bearded - for example Julian (361-363), and Constantine IV (668-85). It is true that Julian the Apostate who is depicted with a long beard of a Greek philosopher had come to the throne after a succession of close-shaven emperors;¹⁶² and the long beard of Constantine IV was probably considered as unusual by his contemporaries who nicknamed him 'Pogonatus' (the bearded).¹⁶³ But it is also known that most emperors from the seventh century onwards are represented with beards on Byzantine coins.¹⁶⁴

Al-Mas'ūdī also records a tradition, prevalent among contemporary Muslims, which considered Nicephorus I of Arab stock either from the Ghassanid house of Jaina or from another Christian Arab tribe, Iyād.¹⁶⁵ Al-Mas'ūdī adds that this emperor was said to have ob-

jected to the Byzantine practice of calling the Arabs by the abusive name of Sārāqīnūs (Sarakīnoi, 'Saracens'), an appellation which according to al-Mas'ūdī "meant the servants of Sara - a defamatory reference to Hagar and her son Ismā'īl (Ishmael), and that she was a slave-girl of Sara".¹⁶⁶ He adds that, despite Nicephorus' disapproval of this name, "the Byzantines still call the Arabs 'Saracens' to our own time".¹⁶⁷ Al-Mas'ūdī's knowledge of this Byzantine usage was no doubt due to his acquaintance with the frontier region and with a number of Muslim warriors and diplomats.

Al-Mas'ūdī also states that Nicephorus I was the first Byzantine emperor to name his own son as his heir to the throne and to consider him as his co-emperor; and, adds that the imperial correspondence during Nicephorus' reign was in the name of "Nicephorus and Stauracius: Kings of the Rūm".¹⁶⁸ It is however known that earlier Byzantine emperors had appointed a son as co-emperor and heir to the throne in their own life-time, and therefore this institution was not really initiated by Nicephorus I.¹⁶⁹

Perhaps more interesting in this connection is al-Mas'ūdī's statement that "the kings of the Rūm prior to Nicephorus' reign used to write in their correspondence 'from the king of Christendom', but Nicephorus wrote 'from the King of al-Rūm'. "¹⁷⁰ Al-Mas'ūdī, who appears to consider this sudden change as a mere personal decision by Nicephorus, was obviously unaware of the significance of this change and its connection with the conflict between Byzantium and Charlemagne, the newly created Western Roman Emperor.¹⁷¹ However, al-Mas'ūdī's statement is true in one sense, namely that after Nicephorus' reign the official title 'Emperor of the Romans' βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων was almost always used. It is true that the Byzantines always considered their emperor as 'the Emperor of the Romans';¹⁷² and there is evidence of official, if rare, usage of this title prior to the days of Nicephorus I (for example the imperial seal of Leo III 717-744). But nevertheless it is recognized by modern scholars that "before 812 the title Basileus seldom appeared with the addition Ῥωμαίων and after 812 seldom appeared without this".¹⁷³

Among later events in Byzantium al-Mas'ūdī mentions the conspiracy of Leo the Armenian whom he calls 'the Patrician' (al-Bafrīq) against Michael I Rangabe (811-813) which led to the deposition of the latter and the accession of Leo the Armenian (Leo V, 813-820).¹⁷⁴ However, in summarizing the events which surrounded the subsequent downfall and murder of Leo V himself, al-Mas'ūdī attributes the rôle

of Michael the Amorian to the already deposed Michael Rangabe. Thus he states that Leo "detained his predecessor and made him suffer ... then the followers of Michael plotted against [Leo] and freed Michael who assassinated Leo and regained the throne. It is said that Michael had become a monk during Leo's assumption of authority".¹⁷⁵ As a result of this confusion al-Mas'ūdī postulates a second reign of Michael I for nine years instead of the reign of the founder of the Amorian dynasty, Michael II (820-829).¹⁷⁶

Al-Mas'ūdī also describes the circumstances in which Basil I 'The Macedonian' (867-886) was able to become emperor establishing a new dynasty. He relates how Basil originally came to seek his fortune in Constantinople and how his physical strength and courage as well as his knowledge in taming horses opened the way for him into the court of Michael III the Amorian (842-867).¹⁷⁷ Al-Mas'ūdī states that, "It is said that Tawīl¹⁷⁸ had brought Basil over when he knew his qualities"; and that Basil "moved from one position of authority to another including that of Barākunmīs: this means the manager of the emperor's affairs,¹⁷⁹ then he killed his master and became the sole emperor". It is evident that al-Mas'ūdī is here referring to the title of the Grand Chamberlain (Parakoimomenos) which Basil actually held in the imperial court, before Michael eventually made him his co-emperor.¹⁸⁰ Al-Mas'ūdī's understanding of the office of the Parakoimomenos, although perhaps rather vague, is not altogether inaccurate. He uses the Arabic term (al-mudabbir lil-Malik or lil-Mulk) and it is not clear whether this rendering is based on his knowledge of the theoretical function of the Grand Chamberlain (ie administration of the imperial household), or an awareness of the more considerable authority which Basil as Grand Chamberlain is known to have actually enjoyed.¹⁸¹

Al-Mas'ūdī describes Basil I as the Slav (al-Ṣaqlabī), and observes that he was so called after his mother who was a Slav - a tradition which was known to other Arabic historians.¹⁸² But it is noteworthy that al-Mas'ūdī knew that Basil came originally from the European theme of Thrace,¹⁸³ and realized that this Basil "was the grandfather of Constantine [VII Porphyrogenitus] son of Leo [VI the wise] ... - the present emperor of the Byzantines at the time of the writing of this book [Tanbīh] which is the year 345 [956]".¹⁸⁴

6 Recent History

Particularly interesting is al-Mas'ūdī's account of internal events during the times of the Byzantine emperors who were his own

contemporaries: Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-959) and Romanus I Lecapenus (920-944) - especially the successive plots and palace coups which culminated in the final fall of the Lecapeni. The account given by al-Mas'ūdī illustrates not only his knowledge of contemporary events in Byzantium, but also his endeavour to obtain information on the most recent developments in Constantinople. Towards the end of his account on Byzantine history in that part of Murūj written in 332/944 al-Mas'ūdī remarks:

At present the kings of the Byzantines are three: the most senior and the one who actually administers the affairs is Romanus the Usurper (al-Mutaghallib); the second is Constantine son of Leo son of Basil, and the third king is a son of Romanus who is also addressed as king and his name is Stephen (Istifānus); Romanus has also made another son of his as the 'master of the seat' of Constantinople, that is the great Patriarch who directs their religious affairs; he had previously had him castrated, and attached him to the Church. Thus the affairs of the Byzantines in our time evolve round these above-named kings ... Here ends the account of their history as we have mentioned; and God knows best what may become of them in future.¹⁸⁵

In the Tanbīh, written about ten years later, al-Mas'ūdī supplements his previous account and gives a fairly detailed description of the fates of these persons and their roles in subsequent events. He relates with vividness and considerable accuracy the main developments - elaborating on the usurpation of authority by Romanus, and describing the virtual confinement of Constantine Prophyrogenitus, the overthrow of Romanus by his two sons, Stephen and Constantine, the exile of the two young Lecapeni by their brother-in-law Constantine Prophyrogenitus and the final emergence of this latter as autocrator.¹⁸⁶

The details of this account appear to be based on more than one source. The information on the events leading to the two successive palace coups during the winter of 944-45, was most probably mainly derived from the Arab ambassador Abū 'Umayr b 'Abd al-Bāqī, already mentioned.¹⁸⁷ Abū 'Umayr was sent in 946 on a mission to Constantinople where in the month of May he was received by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus himself who now was the actual emperor after the fall of the Lecapeni.¹⁸⁸ Abū 'Umayr returned to Syria and was in Damascus in July of the same year, having brought with him a Byzantine envoy to complete the arrangements for a truce and a ran-

soming of prisoners. Al-Mas'ūdī who records the arrival of Abū 'Umayr and the Greek John Mysticus, was himself in Damascus at that time and met Abū 'Umayr and, possibly also the Byzantine envoy.¹⁸⁹

Al-Mas'ūdī's account, however, contains details of some later developments which took place after the return of Abū 'Umayr from the Byzantine capital and even after Abū 'Umayr's death.¹⁹⁰ For example, al-Mas'ūdī knew that Romanus Lecapenus had since died after having spent four years in a monastery (948),¹⁹¹ that one of his two exiled sons, Constantine Lecapenus, was killed on another island where he had been exiled and his head was sent to Constantinople where his brother-in-law the Emperor Constantine Prophyrogenitus expressed sorrow at his death;¹⁹² he also knew that Stephen, the other exiled son of Romanus, was still alive on yet another island at the time of writing (956).¹⁹³ Information about these later events was obtained, al-Mas'ūdī himself states, "from envoys (rusul) and merchants coming from Constantinople and arriving by boat at Fustāṭ in Egypt".¹⁹⁴

There is no record of an embassy between Constantinople and Fustāṭ in the period under consideration (946-956) and al-Mas'ūdī's statement must refer to some envoy or messenger of whose mission nothing more seems to be known.¹⁹⁵ There was, however, a ransoming of prisoners which took place in the port of Alexandria in the summer of 953,¹⁹⁶ and al-Mas'ūdī's informants may have been among such envoys involved in the negotiations of this ransoming.

Al-Mas'ūdī's details on these particular internal events in the Byzantine Empire are thus worth consideration as a non-Greek source of information and may be compared (not unfavourably) to the account of the Latin writer and ambassador Liutprand, Bishop of Cremona (wrote 958-962).¹⁹⁷ This contemporary author similarly obtained his information from an earlier Latin ambassador who was at Constantinople when some of these events took place.¹⁹⁸

It is interesting and important that most of al-Mas'ūdī's details are remarkably accurate - for example the fact that Romanus' two sons remained in power for about forty days after the deposition of their father;¹⁹⁹ that Romanus died after four years of monastic life;²⁰⁰ that father and sons spent their years of exile in three separate islands; and that Romanus was put in a monastery which he himself had built on an island quite near to Constantinople.²⁰¹

In addition to these details, a particular aspect of the fall of the Lecapeni is worth consideration. It is connected with the conspiracy of the two young Lecapeni co-emperors against their father. "Accounts

differ as to how the intrigue started", - writes Sir Steven Runciman in his study on the reign of Romanus Lecapenus; "later chroniclers, who for some reason disliked the Porphyrogenitus, accuse him of having incited the sons against their father; but ... such subtle villainy was very alien to his [Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus] amiable mildness".²⁰² The contemporary Latin account preserved by Liutprand of Cremona goes as far as saying that the plot was "without the knowledge of Constantine Porphyrogenitus".²⁰³ Al-Mas'ūdī on the other hand states that "the two sons of Romanus conspired with (wāṭa'a) Constantine son of Leo to overthrow their own father",²⁰⁴ and in fact his subsequent narrative may be taken to imply that the three actively participated in the execution of the plot with the support of others.²⁰⁵ It seems therefore that Constantine's implication in the plot against his father-in-law was not simply a product of later chroniclers. Al-Mas'ūdī's remark clearly contradicts the statement of Liutprand of Cremona who depicts Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus as unaware of the plot of the two young Lecapeni. It is true that al-Mas'ūdī's report does not actually describe Constantine VII as inciting his brothers-in-law against their own father. Nevertheless his words make it clear that the two young Lecapeni plotted against their father not only with the knowledge of the Porphyrogenitus but also with his connivance and possibly his active support.

Al-Mas'ūdī's interest in Byzantine history was by no means confined to palace coups or to internal political events alone. For he also gives considerable attention to the external relations of Byzantium with its neighbours and with other polities. For the pre-Islamic period he gives details on Sāsānid-Byzantine relations.²⁰⁶ For the period after the rise of Islam he not only deals with Arab-Byzantine relations, but also has something to say on the foreign policy of the Byzantines and their dealings with their neighbours such as the Bulgars, Khazars and Russians; and alludes to the Byzantine diplomatic position and influence in the West.

He refers for example to the relations with the Khazars and the Bulgars in connection with Justinian II's attempt to restore his throne, and states that the emperor had to pay a subsidy to Tervel (Tarbalā) the King of the Bulgars.²⁰⁷ He accurately dates the outbreak of the war between Krum's Bulgaria and Byzantium in AH 193 (AD 809) and states that Nicephorus I was killed in battle during these wars.²⁰⁸

More important however, is his knowledge of, and interest in, later developments on the northern frontiers of the Byzantine Empire connected with the attacks of the Bulgars under Symeon (893-927), and

of the Magyars and other warlike Turkic peoples.²⁰⁹ However, al-Mas'ūdī at one point (in the Murūj) confuses the Balkan Bulgars with the Bulgars of the Volga whose king had recently embraced Islam.²¹⁰ The latter are credited with raiding deep into Byzantine territory and threatening Constantinople itself.²¹¹ Al-Mas'ūdī also speaks of contacts in 312/924 between Muslims of Tarsūs and the Bulgars who were engaged in fighting against the Byzantines. He states that in this year a Muslim flotilla reached a certain bay past the Hellespont where it encountered certain Bulgars who told the Muslims that the camp of their king was nearby, some Bulgars came with the Muslim boats to the port of Tarsūs.²¹² These contacts do not appear to have been reported by other Arabic sources.²¹³ Al-Mas'ūdī's confused account may be partly due to his reliance on some informants who may have seen fit to attribute such wide-reaching activity to the newly converted northern Bulgars. But in Tanbīh - where a number of his errors are corrected explicitly or implicitly as in this instance - al-Mas'ūdī states that the Bulgars who ravaged the Byzantine themes of Macedonia, Thessalonica and Thrace, and who also threatened the Byzantine capital were in fact Christians.²¹⁴

Al-Mas'ūdī also knew of the impact of the westward migrations of the Magyars and Pechenegs upon the Byzantine territories in the Balkans. He states that some time after 320/932 these tribes were able to ravage most of the European themes of the Empire; and that the menace of these raiders was considerable.²¹⁵ He also knew that the Magyars raided far westward into other parts of Europe.²¹⁶

Al-Mas'ūdī's knowledge also extended to contemporary Byzantine-Russian relations. He refers to certain naval attacks by the Rūs on Constantinople stating that the Byzantines took special precautions in the form of fortifications or barriers to prevent these northerners from sailing down the Bosphorus and reaching the capital.²¹⁷ He knew, however, that there were also commercial relations between the Russians and the Byzantines,²¹⁸ and that certain Russians served in the imperial forces.²¹⁹

Of particular interest is his reference to the relations between Constantinople and the West. Al-Mas'ūdī speaks of the 'master of Rome' who, according to him, had long been subordinate to the 'master of Constantinople' even before the Islamic era and until about 340 (950), when this ruler, as al-Mas'ūdī puts it, "put on the purple and assumed the imperial title" which led the Byzantine emperor to attempt waging war against him, though he eventually resolved to maintain

peaceful relations with him.²²⁰ The identity of the 'master of Rome' can be established from al-Mas'ūdī's reference to a previous marriage alliance in which this ruler is said to have given his daughter as wife to Romanus, son of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and that the bride died later in Constantinople.²²¹ This is evidently an allusion to Hugh of Provence, who was not, of course, the master of Rome, but who in 944 betrothed his illegitimate daughter Bertha (Eudocia) to the Byzantine crown prince who became Romanus II.²²² Al-Mas'ūdī's statement that this ruler was the first western king to become emperor is inaccurate; for apart from anything else, Hugh was in fact never crowned emperor.²²³ Nevertheless his account reflects his knowledge of Byzantine diplomatic activities in the West, especially Italy, during the reign of Romanus I Lecapenus and particularly after 944 under Constantine VII's personal rule.

Al-Mas'ūdī, as may be expected, paid considerable attention to Islamic-Byzantine relations. His information on this aspect has been utilised by a number of modern scholars and there is no need to dwell on its details here.²²⁴ It is necessary, however, to point to important aspects of his account especially certain episodes on which he offers details or views not to be found in earlier or contemporary Arabic sources.

Thanks to his several visits to the frontier region and his acquaintance with Muslim warriors and diplomats, al-Mas'ūdī was able to preserve interesting information on Arab-Byzantine warfare. An example of this is his rather detailed account of the siege and capture of Heraclea by Hārūn al-Rashīd in 803 AD. In addition to information based on literary traditions, al-Mas'ūdī gives two other independent traditions which he obtained from people of the Syrian marches - one of these from Abū 'Umayr b 'Abd al-Bāqī who was among other qualities, well versed in the historical traditions of earlier Muslim wars against the Byzantines; and the second was based on oral information from "a number of people from al-thughūr".²²⁵

Two other important events in the Arab-Byzantine wars recorded by al-Mas'ūdī deserve particular attention; not only because his information on them is based on his contacts with Muslim warriors or inhabitants of the frontier, but also because these were two important contemporary events, one of them is not explicitly recorded, the other not mentioned at all by other Muslim writers of al-Mas'ūdī's age.

The first is the Sack of Thessalonica by the Muslim navy under the leadership of the Greek convert to Islam, Leo of Tripoli in 291/904.²²⁶ It is true that al-Ṭabarī mentions the sack by Leo of Tripoli of

an important Byzantine sea-port, but its name and location are not accurately recorded. As a result of this confusion in Arabic sources it used to be thought by modern scholars, even by A A Vasiliev and M Canard, that the expedition against Thessalonica and its sacking by the Muslims in 904, was only known from Byzantine sources and was not recorded by Arab historians.²²⁷ H Grégoire, thanks to a very brief passage in al-Mas'ūdī's Tanbīh, has shown that the 'attack on Attalia' recorded by al-Ṭabarī and others in fact relates to Leo of Tripoli's expedition against Thessalonica, which is well-known from Byzantine sources.²²⁸ This passage of the Tanbīh not only shows that al-Mas'ūdī gives the correct name of Thessalonica (Salūnika) but also that he realizes its importance and its location in the European theme of the same name.²²⁹ He writes of "the theme of Sālūnika, the town which Leo (Lāwn), the Ghulām of Zarāfa, conquered by sea in 290 (actually 291/904) in the Caliphate of al-Muktafī; it is a great city built before Constantinople itself, by Alexander son of King Philip."²³⁰ In fact he already speaks of the expedition against Thessalonica in the Murūj, although the name is preserved in a corrupted form (Salūqiya) in this earlier work.

It is noteworthy that al-Mas'ūdī not only realized the location of the sacked city but moreover indicates the sea-route followed by the Muslim war-ships. Other Arabic sources, the earliest of which being al-Ṭabarī's Tārīkh, while giving details of the date and the outcome of campaign (in terms of victory, and abundant booty), say nothing about the beginnings or other details of this naval operation.²³¹ Byzantine authors who give much fuller details on the actual siege and sacking of the city,²³² also speak of the intentions of the Muslim admiral to attack Constantinople itself, and state that the Muslim navy actually entered the Hellespont, occupied Abydus, and after navigating for a distance in the sea of Marmara, suddenly turned round and sailed back arriving later at Thessalonica.²³³

A passage in the Murūj actually reveals al-Mas'ūdī's knowledge of the early operations of the Muslim marines in this expedition - that they entered the Hellespont and the Sea of Marmara but had to make a speedy exit. What makes al-Mas'ūdī's remarks even more significant is the fact that he is quoting Muslim sailors who actually took part in this expedition. In his description of the Mediterranean and other seas connected with it, he writes:

I have heard it from more than one knowledgeable person among those who participated in the expedition against Thessalonica with

the page (ghulām) of Zarāfa [ie Leo of Tripoli] that having entered for quite a long distance into the Khalīj of Constantinople [Hellespont] they found that the water in this gulf receded and rose at certain times during daylight and at night, and that the ebb and tide were frequent; that there were towns and villages nearby, and a certain town [ie Abydos] near the entrance from the Mediterranean into the Khalīj. When they felt the decrease in the level of the water they started to pull out of it towards the Mediterranean.²³⁴

This passage does not seem to have hitherto attracted comment from modern scholars dealing with Byzantine-Muslim relations.²³⁵ Al-Mas'ūdī's report is mainly concerned here as in few other places in his works, with a geographical problem, but nevertheless this deserves to be considered alongside Byzantine accounts as evidence from the Arab side for the eruption of the Muslim fleet under Leo of Tripoli into the Hellespont and the Sea of Marmara.²³⁶ It is unfortunate that despite his acquaintance with the admiral Leo of Tripoli himself, and with a number of his crew, al-Mas'ūdī's preserved works contain no further details on this expedition.

The second important event recorded by al-Mas'ūdī and not mentioned by contemporary Muslim authors is the siege of Edessa by the Byzantines under the general John Curcuas in 944, and their obtaining of the sacred towel on which the portrait of Christ was believed to be imprinted.²³⁷ The siege of Edessa which ended upon the delivery of the sacred towel in the summer of 332/944 is recorded by al-Mas'ūdī in the very same year. For in this year al-Mas'ūdī was writing the first edition of his Murūj and his account of Byzantine affairs in this book does not in fact extend beyond this year.²³⁸ Speaking of the famous Cathedral of Edessa which was rebuilt by Justinian, he states that:

there used to be in this church a towel (mandīl) venerated by Christians, for Jesus of Nazareth dried Himself with it after Baptism. This mandīl had been constantly transferred until it settled in the Church of Edessa. Under the duress of the Byzantine siege of Edessa in this year which is 332 the mandīl was handed over to them and they accepted a truce. The Byzantines were greatly overjoyed when they received it.²³⁹

In addition to his information on the Byzantine-Arab wars, al-Mas'ūdī gives particular consideration to non-military exchanges bet-

ween the two worlds - although some of these were in fact peaceful sequels to previous military operations. Thus he devotes a separate chapter in the Tanbīh for the ransoming of prisoners on the Byzantine-Syrian frontier during the 'Abbāsid period and up to the last ransoming in his own life-time.²⁴⁰ He also refers to espionage activities by Muslims in Byzantine lands and indicates that Muslim spies (Jawāsīs, sing. Jāsūs) were apparently usually present in the Byzantine capital.²⁴¹ His reference to commercial relations between the two worlds has been already indicated above,²⁴² to which may be added his mention of an annual spice market in the town of Augustopolis in Asia Minor on the route to Constantinople.²⁴³

Most important perhaps is al-Mas'ūdī's special view of the Byzantines as a state, a civilization, and as a people; and his attitude towards this enemy and rival of the Islamic world. For although his general treatment reflects certain similar characteristics to his own treatment of other non-Muslim polities, the Byzantine Empire, in his view, represented a particular case which, for various reasons, deserved due attention.

This especial attention is not only implicitly reflected in his accounts but is explicitly reiterated. A most striking illustration of this special approach is his attempt to synchronize the reigns of successive Byzantine emperors with those of their contemporaneous Muslim Caliphs. Although he is sometimes inaccurate in this respect (which is probably due in part to his own miscalculations), the significance of his practice of synchronizing Islamic with Byzantine reigns lies in that it does not seem to have a surviving precedent in earlier Muslim (or even Christian Arabic) historians.

Certain Arabic historians (both Muslim and Christian) use this practice only in connection with pre-Islamic history, for example, synchronizing biblical and occasionally Persian, or Persian and Roman periods.²⁴⁴ Al-Mas'ūdī's systematic use of this method for Islamic-Byzantine history is a clear example of his living interest in Byzantine history and his positive appreciation of its place in Muslim annals. Al-Mas'ūdī employs this method consistently in both the Murūj²⁴⁵ and Tanbīh,²⁴⁶ covering the whole period from Heraclius (610-641 = part of the Prophet's life, and the caliphates of Abū Bakr and 'Umar) right up to that of his own contemporaries: Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-959, - corresponding to the later years of al-Muqtadir, the reigns of al-Qāhir, al-Rāḍī, al-Mutaqqī, al-Mustakfī and the early years of al-Mutī').

Similarly, al-Mas'ūdī takes account of the Calendar System and names of months of the Byzantines.²⁴⁷ Although he speaks briefly of the Byzantine system of Chronology, he does state that, in common with other peoples (except Israelites and Arabs) the Byzantines use the solar calendar year,²⁴⁸ and they date events according to various eras (eg Creation, Alexander, Diocletian).²⁴⁹ He also gives the Greek names of the twelve months of the year.²⁵⁰

Al-Mas'ūdī's especial interest in the Byzantine Empire, its history and culture, cannot be separate from his profound interest in Christianity and Christians. For he realized that the history of the rise and eventual victory of Christianity was closely linked with Byzantine history. This awareness is reflected in his detailed account of this gradual triumph; his description of the first Six Great Councils of the Church as important events in later Roman history;²⁵¹ and his appreciation of the position of the church in the Byzantine polity.

Al-Mas'ūdī viewed the Byzantine Church with the Patriarch of Constantinople at its head as a powerful institution with its administrative hierarchy and independent finances. He describes the Patriarch of Constantinople as:

The King of religious matters just as the emperor is the 'master of the sword' ... 'the master of the seat' [ie the Patriarch] is as it were, the partner (*sharīk*)²⁵² of the Emperor, and none but he is considered as equal to him. The Emperor himself pays homage to none but him. When the Emperor sits he does so on a golden throne while the Patriarch sits on an iron throne; whereas the administration of revenues, the financing of war efforts and the payments for soldiers are under the emperor's control; the financing of endowments for churches and monasteries [for payments and upkeep] of bishops and monks as well as for other affairs of their religion are under the Patriarch's jurisdiction. He has a representative (a deputy: *'āmil*) in every province similar to the emperor's deputy.²⁵³

This description may be a rather superfluous and distorted picture of the actual relationship between Emperor and Patriarch in the Byzantine Empire as now perceived by modern Byzantinists. It reflects an ideal-possibly derived ultimately from an ecclesiastical source - and obviously a static view of the position of the Patriarch and the Church in general; and al-Mas'ūdī's understanding of the situation would appear rather naive in the light of modern appreciation of a flexible interdepen-

dence between State and Church within the Byzantine polity. Nevertheless his remarks have a special significance as he is describing the Christian Church in the Byzantine Empire as an important institution which had no equivalent in the Islamic experience. (To appreciate al-Mas'ūdī's position here, one only needs think for a moment of a non-Muslim, say a medieval Christian or a modern Westerner - commenting on the unfamiliar special link between the religious and the political in classical Islam.)

Moreover, al-Mas'ūdī, who was well versed in Greek philosophy, took a particular interest in ancient Greek history.²⁵⁴ Although he was aware of the difference between the ancient Greeks (*al-Yūnān*) and the Byzantines (*al-Rūm*) he realized the historical, linguistic and cultural links between the two worlds. As indicated above, the traditional view among other Muslim authors was that the ancient Greeks not only lost their political power, but also their historical existence, at the hands of the Romans when Octavius (Augustus Caesar) conquered Egypt.²⁵⁵ But unlike other Muslim writers, al-Mas'ūdī realized that the Greeks, despite the loss of their earlier sovereignty still formed an integral part of the *Rūm*, and make their own contribution to Roman-Byzantine culture in the same way as he considered the ancient Babylonians, for example, to have contributed to Persian civilization.²⁵⁶ He states that "Greek learning which continued to flourish in the times of the ancient Greeks and early Romans, had been on the decline with the gradual triumph of Christianity."²⁵⁷ This view probably originated in the circles of the pagan Ṣābians of Ḥarrān who remained faithful to ancient Greek philosophy and sciences and lamented their decline which they attributed to the influence of Christianity.²⁵⁸ But al-Mas'ūdī observes, nevertheless, that the "legacy of Greek learning was still kept among Greek learned men and savants",²⁵⁹ and that "the *Rūm* in their language and literature followed the ancient Greeks although they could not equal them".²⁶⁰ Thus he was aware of a certain cultural continuity.²⁶¹ The Byzantines, in al-Mas'ūdī's view represented an extension - albeit an inferior one - of a culture that was worth getting to know.

As a striking example of al-Mas'ūdī's awareness and appreciation of the survival of ancient learning among the Byzantines, it is possible to cite his remarks on the personality of the Byzantine Ambassador John Mysticus who arrived at Damascus in the month of Dhū l-Ḥijja, 334/July, 946.²⁶² He describes this Byzantine dignitary as "a man of understanding, versed in the history of the kings of the Greek and *Rūm* and the philosophers who were their contemporaries: and was some-

what familiar with their [philosophical] views".²⁶³

In fact, al-Mas'ūdī more explicitly pronounces his appreciation of Byzantine civilization in a statement concerned with his special approach in the Tanbīh. In this last and much compressed work he explains why he confined his treatment of non-Muslim peoples to the Kingdoms of the Persians, the ancient Greeks and the Rūm. This selective approach is justified on cultural grounds - "for the two kingdoms of the ancient Greeks (al-Yūnān) and the Rūm came next to the Persians in greatness and glory, moreover they [the ancient Greeks and Rūm] are gifted in various branches of philosophy and sciences as well as in remarkable art and admirable craftsmanship."²⁶⁴

Furthermore, with his interest in the history of contemporary non-Muslim polities, he was aware of the special position of Byzantium as a political power, and as an empire of a long tradition of institutional and administrative organization. "The empire of the Rūm", he remarks, "is still to our own times in possession of firmly established institutions and highly organized administration (thābitat al-rusūm mut-tasīqat al-tadbīr.) So we did not wish to omit its history from our book."²⁶⁵

Al-Mas'ūdī was naturally conscious of the danger which Byzantium represented to Islam. He realized that in his own times - first half of the tenth century - it was no longer the Rūm but the Muslims who were on the defensive. As a Muslim intellectual concerned for Islam, al-Mas'ūdī laments the weak position of the Muslim world as a result of political fragmentation and other internal factors. In his view, this situation led, among other things, to strengthening the position of the Byzantines as shown by their "victories over the Muslims" and their "capture of many Muslim fortresses and towns".²⁶⁶ Again he observes with a note of regret that "Muslim war vessels used to invade the Byzantines, but now it is the warships of the Rūm which attack the Muslim shores".²⁶⁷

But this fact did not lead al-Mas'ūdī to turn a blind eye, or to adopt an attitude of prejudice towards the neighbouring enemy of Islam. In this, he certainly stands as an exceptional man among his contemporaries, and perhaps not only among his contemporaries.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 On Byzantine-Arab war and other political relations during the Amorian and Macedonian dynasties (813-959), see especially A A Vasiliev, Byzance et les Arabes, 2 vols in 3 parts, Brussels, 1935, 1950, 1968 containing French translations of extracts from Arabic sources by M Canard; see also M Canard, Histoire de la Dynastie des H'amdānides, I, Alger, 1951, p 715 ff; idem, 'Byzantium and the Muslim world to the middle of the eleventh century', C M H, IV, i, p 696-735; for the earlier period see for example E W Brooks, 'Byzantines and Arabs in the time of the Early Abbasids', E H R, XV (1900), pp 728-47; idem, 'The Arabs in Asia Minor (AD 641-750) from Arabic Sources', J H S, 18 (1898), p 182 ff; see also G Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, passim; A A Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, passim; and M Canard, 'La guerre sainte dans le monde Islamique', Revue Africaine, 79 (1936), p 306 ff
- 2 Examples in al-Ṭabarī, Annales, III, 1917, 2026, 2112 and passim; cf also al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, al-Majālis wa l-Musāyarāt, (ms S O A S Library, No 84); cf relevant extracts edited and trans by S M Stern, 'An embassy of the Byzantine Emperor to the Fātimid Caliph al-Mu'izz', Byzantion, 20 (1950), pp 239-258, where the words tyrant and 'ilj occur quite frequently; see also F Dachraoui, 'Le Crète dans le conflit entre Byzance et al-Mu'izz', Les Cahiers de Tunisie, 7 (1959), pp 307-318; idem, 'Qāḍiyat Iqrīṭish fī 'Ahd al-Mu'izz li-dīn-illāh', Hawliyyāt al-Jāmi'a al-Tūnisiyya, 2 (1965), pp 27-35; also Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, i, pp 420-425
- 3 On the works of Euty chius and Agapius see above, p 231 ff; the history of Yaḥyā of Antioch is a continuation of that of Euty chius, see P O, vol XVII (1912), and L Cheikho in C S C O, Arab ser vol 7 (Beirut-Paris, 1909); see M Canard, 'Les sources arabes de histoire byzantine aux confins des Xe et XI^e siècles', R E B, XIX (1961), pp 284-314. (Owing to the particular time and place in which he wrote, Yaḥyā was well informed on Byzantine affairs in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries.)
- 4 Cf B G A, ed de Goeje, Vol VI (Leiden, 1889), which contains the extant work of Ibn Khurradādhbeh, as well as extracts from Qudāma's Kharāj
- 5 Ibid, p 252
- 6 Ibn Rusta, in B G A, VII (Leiden, 1892); al-Ya'qūbī's Buldān in

- B G A, VII, incomplete; on Hārūn b Yaḥyā, see A A Vaṣīliev, 'Hārūn-ibn-Yaḥyā and his description of Constantinople', Sem. Kond., V (1932), pp 149-163
- 7 Iṣṭakhrī in B G A, I (Leiden, 1870), pp 2-3; Ibn Ḥawqal, Sūrat al-Ard, ed J Kramers (Leiden, 1938-39), passim; al-Maqdisī (or al-Muqaddasī), B G A, III, 1876, cf French translation (part) by A Miquel, Damascus, 1963; see on these writers in general the work of J Kramers, 'La littérature géographique classique des Musulmans', Analecta Orientalia, Vol I (1954), pp 172-204; idem, article, 'Djuḡhrāfiya', in E I (S), and the new article by S Maqbul Ahmad in E I 2; Krachkovsky, A G L, passim; Miquel, Géographie Humaine, passim, see above Chapter III
- 8 B G A, III, p 9; French trans p 27; cf a similar statement in al-Iṣṭakhrī, op cit, p 2-3; al-Iṣṭakhrī, and even more so Ibn Ḥawqal give more details on non-Muslim lands than al-Maqdisī (cf esp Ibn Ḥawqal, op cit, pp 6, 13-14, 128-9; cf also Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, p 418; M Canard, Ḥamdānides, p 718); but the information of both Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal on non-Muslims are only marginal to their descriptions of Muslim lands.
- 9 Al-Maqdisī, pp 147-148; cf Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, pp 422-424; see above, pp 242
- 10 Ibn Ḥawqal, op cit, p 200; Vasiliev-Canard, op cit, p 418. For later Arabic geographers who, with very few exceptions, only repeat or summarize earlier authorities, see for example al-Bakrī, Masālik, new partial edition by A El-Ḥajjī, Beirut, 1968, p 192 ff; V Minorsky, 'Marvaṣī on the Byzantines', AIPHOS, 12 (1952 - Mélanges Henri Grégoire, 2), pp 455-469; Idrīsī, Nuzhat al-Mushtāq, Bodleian Ms Pocock, 375, folio 206 ff
- 11 The picture of the Byzantines as mirrored in Arabic literature excluding historical and geographical works is to be treated in a forthcoming work.
- 12 See for example al-Jāḥiẓ; Bayān (ed Hārūn), I, pp 137, 384
- 13 Al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā, ed Finkel, p 16 ff; trans p 326; idem, Ḥaywān, I, pp 124, 136, 173 and passim; cf further M Canard, 'Quelques "à côté" de l'histoire des relations entre Byzance et les Arabes', Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida, I (Rome, 1956), p 114 ff
- 14 Al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Tarbi' wa' l-Tadwīr, Pellat's edition, Damascus 1955, p 30; idem, Bayān, I, pp 187-188; Radd, pp 16-17/326-327
- 15 Idem, Radd, pp 16 and 326
- 16 An attitude that was reciprocated by the Byzantines, see for example, J Meyendorff, "Byzantine Views of Islam", D O P, 18, 1964 pp 115-132
- 17 See Murūj, para 734-772 and passim; Tanbīh, pp 137-195 and passim
- 18 Murūj, para 8 ff
- 19 Cf Fihrist, FL, 144; (C), 207; Eng trans I, 315; see now the article of S M Stern, 'Abū 'Isā Ibn al-Munajjim's Chronography', in Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition, (Presented to Richard Walzer, ed S M Stern, and others) Oxford, 1972, p 437 ff; also above Chapter IV
- 20 Murūj, para 1293
- 21 Tanbīh, pp 154-155
- 22 Ibid, p 154. The text in de Goeje's edition reads: Athnāyūs but the variant A??anus is also given; Carra de Vaux, Livre de l'Avertissement, p 212, renders this as 'Athenée'.
- 23 E Honigmann, 'Notes sur trois passages d'al-Mas'oudi', AIPHOS, 12 (1952), (Mélanges Henri Grégoire, No 4), pp 178-179
- 24 Tanbīh, p 155; cf Michael the Syrian, Chronique, (French trans by A Chabot), I, pp 1-2, 9, 17 and passim
- 25 See for example, Murūj, para 1297 and passim; Tanbīh pp 142, 158 and passim; see also above Chapter II
- 26 Murūj, para 733: (fahakaynā min dhālika mā ta'attā lanā waṣfuh)
- 27 Ibid, para 1395
- 28 Apart from the well known cases of extensive translations made for the purpose of study of philosophical and scientific works (for example works described in Ibn al-Nadīm's Fihrist as having been translated for the Arab philosopher Ya'qūb al-Kindī), reference may be made to statements by Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, Tārīkh (ed Gottwaldt), p 48; and al-Bīrūnī, K al-Ṣaydana (quoted by F Krenkow, in Al-Bīrūnī's Commemoration Volume, p 195): see on this problem with special reference to Ottoman historians, B Lewis, 'The Use by Muslim Historians of non-Muslim Sources', Historians of the Middle East, p 185 ff
- 29 Tanbīh, p 154; on Eutychius see Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā', II, p 86 ff; G Graf, G C A L, II, pp 32-38; F Nau, 'Eutychius', in D T H C, V, cols 1609-1611
- 30 See G Graf, op cit, II, p 38 ff
- 31 Eutychius, Annales, ed L Cheikho, Carra de Vaux, and H Zayyat,

- Corpus Scriptorum Christ. Orient., ser III, Arab. Vols 6-7 (1906-9)
- 32 Agapius, K. al-'Unwān, ed with French trans by A A Vasiliev, in P O, Paris (1910-1912), Vols V, p 561 ff; VII, p 458 ff; VIII, p 396 ff; another edition by L Cheikho, in C S C O, Vol 5, (Beirut, 1912)
- 33 Compare for example Tanbīh, p 146 with Eutychius, I, p 141 (on the accession of Theodosius the Great (379-95); Tanbīh, pp 147-8 with Eutychius, I, p 150 (on the story of the youths of the Cave of Ephesus); Tanbīh, p 150 with Eutychius, I, p 153 (on the antagonism between St John Chrysostom and the Byzantine Empress Eudocia; Tanbīh, p 153 (where al-Mas'ūdī alludes to the buildings of Justinian and the religious controversy in his reign), with Eutychius, I, pp 201-204 (where details of these are given); Tanbīh, pp 152-53 with Eutychius, I, pp 204-206 (details on the 5th General Council of the Church, 553); Tanbīh, p 153, with Eutychius, I, p 210 (on St Maron, see below Chapter VII); and Tanbīh, p 156 with Eutychius, p 219 (on the circumstances leading to the accession of Heraclius); cf also Tanbīh, p 144 with Agapius (ed Cheikho), p 276 (on the conversion of Constantine the Great); Tanbīh, p 150 with Agapius, pp 307-8 (on the hostility between St John Chrysostom and Eudocia)
- 34 The names of ten emperors are spelt differently in al-Mas'ūdī and Eutychius. (It is of course not possible to know how far later copyists were responsible for such differences.) Some of these differences, however, involve the whole structure of certain names such as addition or omission of long vowels, replacing q with k, t with ṭ (or omitting the equivalent of the Greek nominative case ending; cf for example, Tanbīh, p 146, Eutychius, I, p 140; Agapius, p 300; Tanbīh, p 149, Eutychius, I, p 140, Agapius, p 304; Tanbīh, 148, Eutychius, I, p 156
- 35 Compare for example, Tanbīh, p 146 with Eutychius, I, p 138-139 and 140; Agapius, pp 300-301; it is worth noting that in al-Mas'ūdī's account some of the reigns are often calculated to the month, see for example Tanbīh, pp 137, 146, 153, 156
- 36 Tanbīh, pp 144-145; see below, pp 246-7
- 37 On Qays, see G Graf, GCAL, II, p 94; al-Machriq, 12 (1909), p 483; M Gabriel, al-Kanīsa al-Anṭakiyya a-Siryāniyya, Ba'abdā, 1904; p 140; on Dankhā, see Graf, op cit, II, p 250; al-Machriq, 12 (1909), p 484, on Kaskarī, see Graf, op cit, II, p 155; al-Machriq, loc cit
- 38 Tanbīh, 151 ff (for example). Al-Mas'ūdī also mentions other Christian authorities of a strictly ecclesiastical nature, see Chapter VII, p 292 ff
- 39 For example Agapius whose work in its preserved form goes as far as the year 160 (776-7) mentions only ten reigns out of thirteen (between Heraclius and Leo IV, crowned 775 AD); thus omitting the second reign of Justinian II (705-711) and those of Leontis (695-8) and Philippicus Bardanes (711-13), see K. al-'Unwān, (ed Cheikho), pp 355-6. Similarly, Eutychius' work which ends in 326/938 does not mention all Byzantine emperors. Thus out of twenty-six reigns mentioned by al-Mas'ūdī (from the reign of Heraclius's sons to that of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, Eutychius mentions only eighteen: omitting the reign of Constantine IV (668-685), that of Philippicus Bardanes (711-713), that of Irene (787-802), Michael I Rangabe (811-13), Leo V (813-820), and Michael II (820-829). Eutychius also ignores the second reign of Justinian II (705-711), and considers the rebel Artabasdes as an emperor; see Eutychius, Annales (ed Chiekhō), Pt II, p 40 ff
- 40 For example, the addition of the names of two hypothetical emperors: a Constantine and a Theophilus instead of Michael I Rangabe and Leo V; cf Murūj, para 770; Eutychius, Annales (Cheikho), II, p 40 ff
- 41 Ḥamza, Tārīkh (ed Gottwaldt), pp 70-79; cf also al-Bīrūnī, Chronology, p 97 ff (who copies this list from Ḥamza's work, adding that the list was originally copied by Wakī' from a translation of a Greek list)
- 42 On Wald', see above, Chapter II
- 43 This can be supported by the fact that Wakī''s list as preserved by Ḥamza, Tārīkh, p 79 ff; contains few chronological errors found also in the Murūj, para 770
- 44 See above, p 247 ff
- 45 Tanbīh, pp 190-191
- 46 Tanbīh, p 190: (wa kāna dhā maḥallin fi'l-thughūr); the above is perhaps a more accurate rendering than that of E W Brooks', 'Arabic lists of the Byzantine Themes', J H S, 21 (1901), p 69: "he had a post ..."
- 47 A description of a typical raid is given by Qudāma (probably after al-Jarmī?), see Kharāj, B G A, VI, p 255 ff
- 48 Marquart, Streifzüge, p xxxiii, and pp 28, 207, has suggested that al-Jarmī was (together with another prisoner of war - Ḥārūn b

- Yaḥyā) the principle source from which the earlier Muslim geographers derived their information on the Byzantine Empire; see also Minorsky, Hudūd, p 418; and Krachkovsky, A G L, p 131 ff; Arabic trans, I, p 134
- 49 Tanbih, p 190
- 50 Murūj, para 733
- 51 See for example, his statement in Murūj, para 895: "and this was always my practice with those countries that I have not reached".
- 52 Murūj, para 305-306, 739, 228, 715, 3201; Tanbih, p 174
- 53 Murūj, para 306
- 54 Murūj, para 305 and para 739; Tanbih, p 180.
- 55 Vasiliev-Canard, op cit, II, i, p 163 (note 2), (citing Theophanes Continuatus, p 366; Cedrenus, II, p 261)
- 56 Murūj, para 305. On Leo's naval activities against the Byzantines in the early 10th century see Vasiliev-Canard, op cit, II, i, p 163 ff and passim; see also above, pp 256-8
- 57 Murūj, para 305
- 58 See Vasiliev-Canard, II, i, 249, n.1
- 59 Ṭabarī, Annales, III, p 2250; 'Arīb, p 6; Ibn al-Athīr, VII, pp 368-69; cf Vasiliev-Canard, op cit, II, ii, pp 18, 56, 143
- 60 Al-Kindī, Wulāt Miṣr, ed R Guest, I, p 245; Vasiliev-Canard, II, i, p 163
- 61 See above, p 257
- 62 See above, p 256-7
- 63 According to al-Mas'ūdī himself (who incidentally supplies most of our information on his career), Abū 'Umayr was already responsible for Adana in 288/900: see Murūj, para 3336
- 64 Tanbih, p 193
- 65 Murūj, para 729; Tanbih, p 194
- 66 See al-Khatīb, Tārīkh Baghdād, I, p 104; Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, p 78
- 67 See Tanbih, p 194; and above, p 252
- 68 Tanbih, p 193, 194; cf also Miskawayh, Tajārib al-Umam, ed Amedroz, I, pp 53-54; Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, i, p 238 ff; II, ii, pp 66-67. On Abū 'Umayr's embassies to Constantinople see Murūj, para 738; Vasiliev-Canard, op cit, II, i, pp 314-315; it has been suggested that Abū 'Umayr himself was the Arab envoy during the reign of Leo VI the Wise (886-912), mentioned by Byzantine sources as (the Old 'Abd al-Bāqī); see Vasiliev-Canard, op cit, II, i, pp 193 and 315, note 2; S De Sacy who first pointed out the name 'Abd al-Bāqī in Greek sources thought that it probably referred to Abū 'Umayr's grandfather - See Notices et Extraits, VIII (1809), p 198; reprinted in Murūj, IX, p 375; cf also Carra de Vaux, Livre de l'Avertissement, p 162, note 1. It appears, however, that the envoy in question was most probably Abū 'Umayr's uncle - Abū l-Qāssim Yaḥyā b Ghānim b 'Abd al-Bāqī who, as we know from other sources, was the Muslim representative in connection with the ransoming of prisoners in the autumn of 283/895; see al-Ṭabarī, Annales, III, p 2153; Vasiliev-Canard, op cit, II, ii, p 12; Abū 'Umayr himself was not yet old enough then. The suggestion that the reference is to Yaḥyā b 'Abd al-Bāqī is also supported by a passage in the Murūj (para 3201) in which he is described as a Muslim war-hero well-known to the Byzantines.
- 69 See Murūj, para 760; and see above, p 256
- 70 See Muḥammad b Zabr al-Rab'ī (4th/10th century), Ta'riḥ Maw-lid al-'Ulamā' wa wafatihim (Chronology of the dates of birth and death of learned men) Brit. Mus. Ms Or 1019, folio 49v; Ibn 'Asākir, Tārīkh Dimashq, Zahiriyya, ms (Damascus), tarikh No 3374, Vol 10, folio 283v-284r.
- 71 See above, p 241 ff
- 72 Tanbih, p 194
- 73 See Murūj, para 895
- 74 Tanbih, p 194; see above, pp 261-2
- 75 See F Dölger, Regesten, I, No 653; (Curcuas is, in any case, known to have fallen from authority in 944; cf Runciman, Romanus Lecapenus, pp 69 and 235; H Grégoire, 'The Amorians and the Macedonians, C M H, II, i, p 143)
- 76 Runciman, op cit, pp 68, 91
- 77 Ibid, p 68
- 78 Murūj, para 228
- 79 Ibid, para 3201
- 80 Tanbih, p 174
- 81 Tanbih, p 159
- 82 Murūj, para 715; Tanbih, p 123; cf above, Chapters IV, V
- 83 Murūj, para 715
- 84 Tanbih, p 123
- 85 The text in Tanbih, (p 176) has: 'Urmāniā'; (cf 'Urmānūs' for

- Romanus), eg Murūj, para 770 ff; Tanbīh, pp 172-174, 193
- 86 Tanbīh, pp 176-177
- 87 Cf E W Brooks, 'Arabic lists of Byzantine themes', J H S, 21 (1901), p 67 ff; V Minorsky, Hudūd, p 418 ff; cf also A Pertusi's commentary in his new edition of Constantino Porfirogenito de Thematibus, see his table No 1 where the editor compares the lists of Ibn Khurradādhbeh and Qudāma but ignores that of al-Mas'ūdī. Ibn al-Faqīh's list which is very close to that of Ibn Khurradādhbeh is only preserved in Yāqūt, see Buldān, II, p 863 ff
- 88 On this term originally derived from the Latin bandum see Du Cange, Glossarium Graecitatis, I, p 173. Arabic lexicographers considered the word 'band' as borrowed from the Persian, meaning 'a banner of a military commander of ten thousand troops', see al-Jawālīqī, al-Mu'arrab min kalām al-'Arab, p 34; cf L A, sv
- 89 Tanbīh, p 179 ff; other Arabic geographers use the term 'amal to describe a Byzantine military province regardless of its rank.
- 90 Some scholars have suggested that the Syrian Ajnād "recouvrent" the Byzantine themes, see G Wiet, Les pays de Ya'qūbī, Leiden, 1937, p 169; cf also M Gaudfroy-Demombynes and S F Platonov, Le Monde musulman et byzantin jusqu'aux croisades, p 216; cf however M Canard's different view in A A Vasiliev, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, p 400, note 1, where it is argued that Byzantine Syria did not know the theme system. (The problem is still being debated)
- 91 See Ibn Khurradādhbeh, p 100-13; Qudāma, pp 252-60; Ibn al-Faqīh (in Yāqūt, Buldān, II, p 863); cf Minorsky, Hudūd, para 42 and p 418 ff; Brooks, op cit, p 67 ff
- 92 Tanbīh, p 179
- 93 Brooks, op cit, p 69; Banfilyā most probably corresponds to Pamphylia, cf Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, p 401 (note 2)
- 94 See below (note 97)
- 95 Tanbīh, p 180
- 96 See for example Ibn Khurradādhbeh, p 100; Qudāma, p 255; Yāqūt Buldān, II, p 863, (quoting Ibn al-Faqīh); Brooks, op cit, pp 71-72
- 97 See H Grégoire 'Le Thème byzantine de Tafla-Tablan', Nouvelle Clio, 4 (1952), p 388 ff; cf Ostrogorsky, op cit, p 194, note 1; also A Toynbee, Constantine Porphyrogenitus and His World, O U P, 1973, p 273
- 98 Ostrogorsky, op cit, p 247, note 4: "for no apparent reason", but both are mentioned in other Byzantine sources; cf Toynbee, op cit, p 255
- 99 See G Ostrogorsky, op cit, pp 247-248
- 100 On the formation of Byzantine themes see H Gelzer, 'Themenverfassung'; Ch. Diehl, 'L'origine du regime des thèmes dans l'empire byzantine' Études Byzantines, (1905), pp 276-92; E Stein, 'Ein Kapitel vom persischen und vom byzantinischen staat', B N J (1920), pp 50-89; N H Baynes, 'The Emperor Heraclius and the military theme system', E H R, 67 (1952), p 380 ff; A Pertusi's commentary to his edition of Constantino Porfirogenito De Thematibus (Vatican City, 1952) esp p 103 ff; idem, 'La formation des thèmes byzantines', Berichte zum XI Intern. Byz. Kong., I (Munich, 1958), pp 1-40; cf G Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p 96, note 1 where further bibliography is cited), also pp 132, 197 and passim
- 101 G Ostrogorsky, op cit, p 247; for later changes and the decline of the system see Ibid, pp 311-330, 332 et passim
- 102 Ibid, p 247 ff
- 103 See Ibn Khurradādhbeh, p 100; Qudāma, p 255; Ibn al-Faqīh (in Yāqūt, Buldān, II, 863 ff); cf also Hudūd, para 42 and p 418 ff; cf Brooks, 'Arabic Lists of Byzantine Themes', p 70 ff
- 104 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, D A I, C 49/13; for the mention of the Peloponnese as a theme, cf G Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p 194, notes 2 and 4
- 105 See G Ostrogorsky, op cit, p 207; cf the description of Ibn Khurradādhbeh, p 100 ff; Ibn al-Faqīh (Yāqūt, Buldān, II, p 863 ff; Brooks, op cit, p 75
- 106 In fact Cappadocia is described as a theme (under a strategus) as early as 863; and Charsianon is thought to have become a theme by 873, see Ostrogorsky, op cit, p 247
- 107 Ostrogorsky, op cit, p 70
- 108 Tanbīh, pp 139-141 (This needs a separate discussion)
- 109 See above however, p 244, for an exception
- 110 Murūj, para 739
- 111 Murūj, para 279, 293, 738; Tanbīh, p 139. Other Arabic geographers on the other hand took it for granted that the current came from the Black Sea; cf for example Ibn Khurradādhbeh, p 103; Ibn al-Faqīh, p 145
- 112 See G Levi Della Vida, 'Constantinopoli nella tradizione Islamica',

- Rendiconti Lincei, V, 8 (Rome, 1953), pp 363-373; M Canard, 'Les expéditions des Arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et dans la légende', J A, CVIII (1926), pp 61-121; L Massignon, 'Le Mirage byzantin dans le Miroir Baghdadien d'il y a mille ans', A I P H O S, 10 (1950 = Mélanges Henri Grégoire, 2), pp 429-448
- 113 See B G A, VI, pp 103, 104-105; for examples see below, pp 323-4, nn, cf Ibn al-Faqīh, B G A, V, pp 145-146 summarizes Ibn Khurradādhbeh and omits details of the city
- 114 See B G A, VII, p 119 ff; on Hārūn's account see especially A A Vasiliev, 'Hārūn-Ibn Yaḥyā and His Description of Constantinople', Sem. Kondakov, V, (1932), pp 149-163; M Izeddin and P Therriat, 'Un prisonnier arabe à Byzance au IX^e siècle, Hārūn b Yaḥyā', R E L, pp 194-7 (Paris, 1947), pp 41-62
- 115 Al-Maḳḳisī, Aḥsan al-Taḳāsim, B G A, II, pp 147-148; Byzance et les arabes, II, ii, pp 422-424. A relatively accurate though brief description of the Byzantine capital is contained in a later work by Ishāq b al-Ḥusayn (presumably writing in Muslim Spain in the tenth or eleventh century), see A Codazzi, 'Il compendio geografico àrabo di Ishāq b al-Ḥusayn', Rendiconti Lincei, ser VI, Vol V (Rome, 1929), pp 416-417; cf Canard's translation in A A Vasiliev, Byzance et les arabes, II, ii, pp 425-426
- 116 See Murūj, para 734-740 and passim; Tanbīh, pp 66, 67, 138-142, 171-174 and passim, cf index
- 117 Murūj, para 734, 1291; Tanbīh, p 146
- 118 Tanbīh, pp 136, 138, 146, 159; Ibn Khurradādhbeh also refers to Bizantiyā as the name of the place on which Constantinople was built; see B G A, VI, p 104
- 119 Murūj, para 736. This latter alternative would appear probable as al-Mas'ūdī mentions this term in the context of enumerating the General Councils of the Church which he presumably derived from some written Christian sources; see Murūj, loc cit; on his sources see above, p 230 ff. The term 'queen of cities' was used in the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus (AD 431); for other sources see E A Sophocles, Greek Lexicon of Roman and Byzantine periods BC 146 - AD 1100, sv; see also Anna Comnena, Alexiad, preface and Bk I, Chapter xiii, Bk XIII, Chapter xii (Eng trans by E R A Sewter, Penguin Classics, 1969, pp 20, 62, 430)
- 120 See Murūj, Istanbul MS, Fatih, No 4481, folio 214v (not in published editions); Tanbīh, p 138-9
- 121 See on this question, A Erzen, 'Über die Grundung und den Namen der Stadt Istanbul', Akten des XI Inter. Byzant. Kong., (Munich, 1958), pp 144-149; (al-Mas'ūdī cited, p 148)
- 122 Murūj, para 279, 739; Tanbīh, p 139. In the Murūj, para 739, he records the erroneous view of some Muslim authors that the city was bound by the sea from two sides. Cf corrections in Tanbīh, loc cit: "others claim that the Khalīj forms its boundaries on two sides"; cf Ibn Khurradādhbeh, p 104; cf al-Maḳḳisī (Aḥsan al-Taḳāsim, B G A, III, p 147), who states that it is bound by the sea on one side only.
- 123 Tanbīh, p 139; also p 31, where he mentions Arūfā/Arūbā as one of three continents according to the opinion of Greek and Roman scholars; cf Ibn Khurradādhbeh, p 155; cf on this B Lewis, 'The Muslim Discovery of Europe', B S O A S, XX (1957), p 409 ff; T Lewicki, 'L'apport des sources arabes médiévales (IX^e - X^e siècle) à la connaissance de l'Europe Centrale et Orientale', L'Occident e l'Islam nell' alto medioevo, I, Spoleto, 1965, p 461 ff esp p 464, see above, Chapter V
- 124 Murūj, para 740
- 125 Murūj, loc cit; cf Ibn Khurradādhbeh, p 105: "hundred gates"; Constantinople actually had about thirty gates; cf R Janin, Constantinople Byzantine, passim
- 126 Murūj, loc cit; cf Ibn Khurradādhbeh, p 105
- 127 Murūj, loc cit
- 128 Ibid
- 129 Cf on these R Janin, Constantinople Byzantine; idem in R E B, IX (1951), p 144 ff; idem, La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantine, Pt I, Vol 3: Les églises et les monastères, Paris, 1953
- 130 Murūj, para 740; Tanbīh, p 142
- 131 See Murūj, para 717-733; Tanbīh, pp 122-137
- 132 Murūj, para 734-754; Tanbīh, pp 137-156
- 133 Murūj, Chapter 30, para 755-772
- 134 Tanbīh, pp 156-196
- 135 Cf Tanbīh, pp 137-156; cf for example V Grumel, La Chronologie, pp 356-359. There are however minor discrepancies in al-Mas'ūdī's list in Murūj (para 734 ff) which he shares with his contemporary Christian historians Eutychius and Agapius. Like them he omits the name of Basilicus (475-6) and the second but longer reign of Zeno (476-91); but he does however realize that this latter returned to the

- throne after having given it up for his son who died before him; see Tanbīh, p 152. He also, in common with Eutychius and Agapius, lists the three Western Emperors: Valentinian I (364-375), Valentinian II (425-55), and Gratian (367-383); Tanbīh, p 145, which is also understandable.
- 136 Cf Grumel, Chronologie, p 356 ff. With one exception as far as the list of Tanbīh (p 152) is concerned where Justinian I's reign is given as twenty-nine years; but this is no doubt a slip, since in Murūj, para 753, it is correctly given as thirty-nine
- 137 Tanbīh, p 138; see also Murūj, para 734. Al-Mas'ūdī realizes that Rome remained the capital of the Western half for some time.
- 138 Tanbīh, p 144
- 139 Murūj, para 753; Tanbīh, p 153
- 140 Murūj, para 736, 747, 748, 451; Tanbīh, pp 142-146, 148, 150, 152, 159; a much briefer account is given by al-Ya'qūbī, Historiae, I, p 164 ff
- 141 He was however unaware of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787), and does not mention any smaller synods; cf also al-Ya'qūbī, op cit, I, p 176; (and the same is true of Eutychius).
- 142 For example, he states that Anastasius I (491-518) adopted the Monophysite creed of the Jacobites who were later to be persecuted under his successors Justin I (518-27) and Justinian I (527-565); cf Tanbīh, pp 152-153
- 143 For the Ṣābians, see Chapter VII, below
- 144 Tanbīh, p 138; see also Murūj, para 737
- 145 Loc cit
- 146 Tanbīh, pp 137-138; cf J B Segal, Edessa 'the Blessed City', p 51 (note 5)
- 147 Tanbīh, pp 145-146; cf Murūj, para 744, where al-Mas'ūdī states that he was called "the pagan (al-Hanīfī) and (al-Buztāṭ)"; cf Eutychius, Annales, p 137, who calls Julian "the infidel: (al-Kāfir)"; and Agapius, p 297, who describes him as "the hypocrite: (al-Munāfiq)". On Julian's connection with the Ṣābians of Ḥarrān, see J B Segal, 'Mesopotamian Communities from Julian to the Rise of Islam', Proceed Brit Acad, XLI (1955), p 109 ff; idem, Edessa 'the Blessed City', p 104 and *passim*
- 148 Cf Tanbīh, p 156 ff with Grumel, Chronologie, p 359 ff
- 149 Murūj, para 755
- 150 See above, p 256
- 151 Tanbīh, pp 156-158
- 152 Which he however wrongly ascribes to the reign of Constans II (641-668); Ibid, pp 156-58; cf Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p 127 ff
- 153 Other Muslim writers relate few such anecdotes; but these are often presented as instructive stories without mentioning names or dates, see for example, B Lewis, 'An Arabic Account of a Byzantine Palace Revolution', Byzantion, XIV (1939), pp 383-6 (from Ibn al-Dāya's, al-Mukāfa'a)
- 154 Tanbīh, p 105. Al-Mas'ūdī says that Heraclius came with his fleet from the city of Thessalonica and that he was formerly a patrician in some island; on this last point he is following Eutychius, p 219; Heraclius was actually the son of the Byzantine governor of North Africa. Al-Mas'ūdī's mention of Thessalonica may be explained by the fact that Heraclius may have called at this important port on his way to Constantinople; see Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p 85
- 155 Tanbīh, p 164; (these details are not mentioned by Eutychius or Agapius)
- 156 Ibid, p 165
- 157 The reign of Irene is not included at all in the works of either Eutychius or Agapius.
- 158 Tanbīh, pp 166-68
- 159 Tanbīh, p 168: "al-Lughuthīṭ ... wilāyat dīwān al-Kharāj".
- 160 Ibid, p 167; on these details as described by Byzantine sources (the main source being Theophanes, Chronographia, ed C de Boor, Vol I, Leipzig, 1883, pp 471-478) see G Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, pp 180-181, and p 186. The problem of Irene's conflict with her son and the reasons for her own downfall were, of course, more complicated than they appeared to al-Mas'ūdī - involving among other issues, the Iconoclast controversy, the dispute with Charles the Great and with the Papacy, and also financial problems; cf especially G Ostrogorsky, op cit, pp 177-186
- 161 Tanbīh, p 168
- 162 P Brown, The World of Late Antiquity, p 91
- 163 Cf E W Brooks, 'who was Constantinus Pogonatus?', B Z, XVII (1908), pp 455-62; Ostrogorsky, op cit, p 114
- 164 See A Grabar, 'L'empereur dans l'art Byzantin, Recherches sur l'art officiel de l'Empire de l'orient', Paris 1936, *passim*; on imperial portraits on Byzantine coins see for example W Worth, Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum, 2 vols, (London, 1908), see especially vol I, p xxx ff; cf illustra-

- tions in C M H, IV, ii, plate 42 and notes by P D Whitting, pp xxxix-xxxx.
- 165 Tanbīh, pp 167-168; cf Ṭabarī, Annales, ser III/Pt ii, p 695; E W Brooks, 'Byzantines and Arabs in the Time of the Early Abbasids', E H R (1900), p 743. The view that Nicephorus was of Arab origin has been accepted by a number of modern scholars, see for example A A Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, (Madison, 1958), p 271 and p 273; M V Amantos, 'Iconoclasm and Imperial Rule, 717-842', C M H, IV, i, p 91
- 166 Tanbīh, p 168: the word 'Saracen' is known to have been given popular etymology by the Byzantines which meant "those whom Sara sent away empty-handed"; see E Honigman, in A I P H O S, XII (1952), p 178 ff; see now V Christides, 'The Names Arabes-Sarakenoi, etc, and their false Byzantine Etymologies', B Z, 65 (1972), pp 329-333
- 167 Tanbīh, p 168
- 168 Ibid, loc cit
- 169 For example, Justinian II (705-711) is known to have appointed his son as co-emperor and heir apparent, although his son was killed with him; it is also known that Leo III (717-741) had his own son and heir presumptive crowned as co-emperor, and that the so-called Ecloga Isaurorum was published jointly under the names of the Emperors Leo and Constantine; cf G Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p 142 and p 159; English translation of the Ecloga by E H Freshfield, A Manual of Roman Law, the Ecloga Published by the Emperors Leo III and Constantine V of Isauria, (Cambridge, 1926)
- 170 Tanbīh, p 168
- 171 On this conflict see for example W Ohnsorge, Das Zweikaiser - problem im früheren Mittelalter, Hildesheim, 1947, idem, Abendland und Byzanz, (Darmstadt, 1958), pp 1-49 and 64 ff and G Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p 182 ff
- 172 See on this G Ostrogorsky, 'The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order', Slavonic and East European Review, XXXV (1936), pp 1-14; idem, History of the Byzantine State, p 199
- 173 See G Ostrogorsky, op cit, p 199 (note 2), and the literature cited there. The source of al-Mas'ūdī's statement is not known, and it may be that this, together with other traditions concerning Nicephorus (the emperor of supposedly Arab origin), were known to some circles in the frontier region or derived from some Christian Arabic

source that has not survived.

- 174 Tanbīh, pp 168-169
- 175 Tanbīh, p 169
- 176 See G Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p 203
- 177 Tanbīh, p 171; French translation by Carra de Vaux, p 233 ff; reproduced with some modifications by M Canard in A A Vasiliev, Byzance et les Arabes, vol II, Pt ii, p 395 ff
- 178 This is evidently a reference to "Theophilites - a favourite of the Emperor Michael who first took Basil as chief of the equerries or protostrator"; see H Grégoire, 'The Amorians and Macedonians 843-1025', C M H, IV, i, p 116
- 179 Tanbīh, p 171
- 180 See Constantine Porphyrogenitus, D A I, Moravcsik-Jenkins, vol I, Chapter 50, pp 225-6; Basil was appointed Parakoimomenos in 865 see D A I, vol II, Commentary, (ed R Jenkins), p 193; on the life and several offices occupied consecutively by Basil see N Adontz, 'L'âge et l'origine de l'empereur, Basile I', Byzantion, VIII (1933), p 475; Grégoire, 'Michel III et Basile le Macedonien dans les inscriptions d'Ancyre', Byzantion, V (1929/30), pp 327-346; idem, 'The Amorians and Macedonians 842-1025', C M H, IV, i, pp 116-117
- 181 Tanbīh, p 171; Carra de Vaux, p 233, followed by Canard, in Byzance et les Arabes, II, i, p 396, n.1, renders this as 'administrateur de l'empire'; J E Dunlap, The Office of the Grand Chamberlain in the later Roman and Byzantine Empires, New York, 1924, esp p 260 ff; H Grégoire, in C M H, IV, I, p 116 ff
- 182 Tanbīh, p 171; cf al-Ṭabarī, Annales (ed de Goeje), III, pp 1858-9 and pp 2026, 2105; Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, p 6 and pp 8, 9. Al-Ṭabarī, however, to derogate the emperor calls him "the son of the Slav woman (Ibn al-Ṣaqlabiyya)".
- 183 Tanbīh, p 171; Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, p 395; the ethnic origins of Basil I called 'The Macedonian' have been a topic of controversy among scholars - he is thought by some to have been an Armenian; see N Adontz, Byzantion, IX (1934), p 223 ff; S Nersesian, Armenia and the Byzantine Empire, p 20 (where Basil is described as "of Armenian parents"); also H Grégoire, CMH, IV, i, p 116; but this is by no means certain; see Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State p 232, note 1; A A Vasiliev, History of the Byzantine Empire, p 301, suggests that "Basil was of mixed Armeno-Slavonic origin". Most scholars, however, would accept the view presented in al-Mas'ūdī's account and in other (non-Arabic) sources

- that Basil's family was settled in Thrace probably in the region of Adrianople; see G Ostrogorsky, *loc cit*, and H Grégoire, *loc cit*
- 184 Tanbīh, p 171
- 185 Murūj, para 771-2; part of this passage is translated into French in Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, p 39
- 186 See Tanbīh, pp 172-174; Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, pp 396-398; for an account of these events based on Greek sources (and also on a Latin testimony) see S Runciman, The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and his Reign, Cambridge, 1929, esp pp 55-68 and pp 229-237; cf also A Rambaud, L'Empire Grec au X^{me} Siècle: Constantin Porphyrogenite, Paris, 1870, esp p 18 ff;
- 187 See above
- 188 A detailed account on the reception by the Emperor of an important Arab ambassador who came in the month of May, 946, on behalf of the emir of Ṭarsūs is mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus himself in the Book of Ceremonies (ed J J Reiske, C S H B, 1829-40), p 570 ff; cf Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, i, p 314 (note 3)
- 189 Cf above, p 236 ff
- 190 Abū 'Umāyir himself died four years after that, (337/948) - see Muḥammad b Zabir al-Rab'ī, Tārīkh Mawlid al-'Ulamā' wa-wafātihim, Brit Mus Ms Or 1019, folio 49v
- 191 Cf S Runciman, Romanus Lecapenus, p 236; see below, n. 201
- 192 Al-Mas'ūdī accurately states that Constantine Lecapenus tried to kill his chief gaoler, and was himself killed by other keepers of the prison; Tanbīh, p 173; Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, p 398; cf S Runciman, Romanus Lecapenus, p 235
- 193 Stephen died much later after spending nineteen years in exile; cf S Runciman, *op cit*, p 236
- 194 Tanbīh, p 173; Vasiliev-Canard, *op cit*, II, ii, p 398
- 195 See Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, i, p 311 ff; and chronological table, pp 395-6
- 196 Ibid, II, i, p 396
- 197 See Liutprand, Bishop of Cremona, Antapodosis, ed I Bekker, in Scriptores rerum Germanicorum in usum scholarum (1915); V, p 142 ff; English translation by F A Wright, The Works of Liutprand of Cremona, London, 1930, pp 189-194
- 198 Liutprand obtained his account from the Provençal Ambassador, Bishop Siegfried; Liutprand himself arrived in Constantinople on his first diplomatic mission in 949; cf Wright's introduction; also Runciman, *op cit*, p 233 (note 1)
- 199 Tanbīh, p 173; Runciman, Romanus Lecapenus, pp 232-233; the two young Lecapeni were actually arrested and exiled on 27th January, 945, just about forty days after their father's downfall which Runciman dates on 20th December 944 (but H Grégoire gives as 16th December; cf C M H, IV, i, p 143)
- 200 Romanus died on 15th June 948; cf Runciman, *op cit*, p 236 (citing Theophanes Continuatus, pp 400-1)
- 201 Romanus was exiled to the island of Prote, the nearest of the Princes Islands to Constantinople. According to Byzantine sources and to Bishop Liutprand, however, the two young Lecapeni were first taken to see their father on this island; Stephen was then sent on to a prison at Proconnesse and later was moved to Rhodes, then Mitylene; Constantine was taken to Tenedos and then to Samothrace; see Theophanes Continuatus, p 437; Liutprand, Antapodosis, pp 143-44; Eng trans p 190 ff; Runciman, *op cit*, pp 232, 234
- 202 Romanus Lecapenus, p 232; citing George Cedrenus, Synopsis Historiae, C S H B, 1838-9, II, p 32 ff
- 203 Liutprand, *op cit*, p 142 ff; Eng trans, p 190
- 204 Tanbīh, p 173
- 205 Ibid, al-Mas'ūdī writes of the imperial plotters in the plural and not in the dual which he only employs to describe the later unsuccessful attempt of Stephen and his brother against the Prophyrogenitus; some of the officials alluded to as helpers in the plot, are named in Byzantine sources; see Runciman, *op cit*, p 232
- 206 Murūj, para 605 ff; 620, 637 ff, 754; Tanbīh, pp 143-145, 155-157
- 207 Tanbīh, p 164; cf Ostrogorsky, History of the Byzantine State, p 142
- 208 Tanbīh, p 168; G Ostrogorsky, *op cit*, p 196 (Nicephorus was killed by the Bulgars in 811)
- 209 Murūj, para 456 and 493 ff; Tanbīh, pp 180, 183; cf Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, p 32 and pp 33-36 (and notes)
- 210 Murūj, para 455 ff; Vasiliev-Canard, *op cit*, II, ii, p 32; see also Chapter V
- 211 Murūj, para 455-6; see above Chapter V
- 212 Murūj, *loc cit*; Vasiliev-Canard, II, ii, pp 32-3
- 213 Cf however, Vasiliev-Canard, II, i, p 251 ff; and Canard, 'Arabes et Bulgares au debut du Xe siècle', Byzantion, XI (1936), pp 212-223

- 214 Tanbīh, pp 67, 181-2
- 215 Murūj, para 494 ff; Tanbīh, p 180; cf Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, pp 33-36 and p 404. On this see J Marquart, Streifzüge, p 60 ff; S Runciman, Romanus Lecapenus, pp 106-107; C A Macartney, 'The Petchenegs', in SEER, 8 (1929-1930), pp 342-355; idem, 'The Attack on Valander', BNJ, 8 (1930-1931), pp 159-170; idem, The Magyars in the Ninth Century, passim
- 216 Murūj, para 497
- 217 Murūj, para 738; Tanbīh, pp 140-141
- 218 Murūj, para 455
- 219 Tanbīh, p 141
- 220 Tanbīh, p 181
- 221 Ibid
- 222 See W Ohnsorge, Abendland und Byzanz, (Darmstadt, 1959), pp 273-274, (note 67)
- 223 Ibid, loc cit
- 224 See especially the extracts in A A Vasiliev, Byzance et les Arabes, I, passim; and II, ii, pp 31-43 and pp 395-408; and see II, i, pp 6, 199, 290, 415 and passim; Canard, Ḥamdānides, passim
- 225 Cf Murūj, para 758-764; esp para 760 (quoting Abū 'Umayr), and para 765 (quoting people of the thughūr); cf on this episode M Canard, 'La prise d'Heraclee', Byzantion, 32 (1962), pp 345-379, esp pp 363-365
- 226 See detailed treatment of this important expedition in Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, i, pp 163-181
- 227 Ṭabarī, III, p 2250; translation in Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, pp 18-19; the text reads Anṭākiya; later historians mostly reproducing al-Ṭabarī's account give Anṭaliya (ie Attalia) or Salūqiya (Seleucia), cf 'Arib, p 6; Ibn al-Athīr, Kāmil, VII, pp 368-9; Sibṭ b al-Jawzī, Brit Mus Ms Supple 1271 folio 27v; cf Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, pp 56, 143, 167; according to these sources the expedition of Leo of Tripoli in 904 would have been a considerably short-distance naval attack on Byzantine shores.
- 228 See H Grégoire, 'Le Communiqué Arabe sur la prise de Thessalonique (904)', Byzantion, 22 (1952), pp 373-378; cf earlier works by Vasiliev, Byzance et les Arabes, II, i, pp 135-153 (Russian edition cited by Grégoire, p 373), where Vasiliev considers the expedition of Leo of Tripoli in 904 as being against the port of Attalia; followed by M Canard, 'Deux épisodes des relations diplomatiques arabo-byzantine au Xe siècle', BE O I D, XIII (1949-50), pp 50-69, esp p 55; idem, Ḥamdānides, I, p 723. As Grégoire (op cit p 377) points out, the probability that Ṭabarī's account actually referred to Thessalonica was already suggested by G Weil, Geschichte der Chalifen, II, (Stuttgart, 1848), pp 532-3 (on Weil's History, see D M Dunlop, 'Some remarks on Weil's 'History of the Caliphs', in B Lewis and P M Holt, Historians of the Middle East, pp 315-329); cf see now the discussion of this expedition by M Canard in Byzance et les Arabes, II, i, p 163 ff
- 229 See above, p 240
- 230 Tanbīh, p 180; Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, p 404
- 231 Ṭabarī, Annales, III, pp 2249-2250; Vasiliev, II, ii, pp 18-19
- 232 The 'classic' Byzantine account of the sack of Thessalonica is that by John Cameniates, De excidio Thessalonicensi, ed I Bekker (at the end of Theophanes Continuatus, Chronographia, V, Bonn, 1838, p 491 ff); cf H Ahrweiler, Byzance et la mer, pp 104-105
- 233 See further in Vasiliev-Canard, op cit, II, i, p 164 (notes 1 and 2)
- 234 Murūj, para 739
- 235 Although it is included in the extracts from Arabic sources in Vasiliev-Canard, op cit, II, ii, p 38, this report is not considered in the discussion (amplified and updated by M Canard) of Byzance et les Arabes, II, i, p 163 ff; similarly H Grégoire who quotes the beginning of this report (cf 'le Communiqué arabe sur la prise de thésalonique (904)', Byzantion, 22 (1952), p 373) does not, however, extend his study to the question discussed here.
- 236 Al-Mas'ūdī does not tell us why the Muslim ships hastily abandoned the Sea of Marmara but he seems to imply that this was partly due to the shallowness of the water.
- 237 Murūj, para 753; on this relic and its significance for Christians see, among other works, S Runciman, 'Some remarks on the image of Edessa', Cambridge Historical Journal, 1931, p 238 ff; idem, Romanus Lecapenus, pp 145, 229-230; L Bréhier, 'Icones non faites de main d'homme', Rev. archéologique, 1932, p 168 ff; J B Segal, Edessa 'the Blessed City', pp 76-78, 178, 204, 214 and passim
- 238 See above
- 239 Murūj, para 753. This passage is not included among the extracts in Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes; the siege of Edessa by

- the Byzantines and their obtaining of the 'sacred towel' is described by the eleventh century Christian Arabic historian Yaḥyā b Sa'īd of Antioch, see Annales (ed and trans by A A Vasiliev), P O, XVIII, pp 32-35; Beirut ed (by L Cheikho and others), pp 98, 99; and later by Ibn al-Athīr, Kāmil, VIII, pp 302-303; cf Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, pp 91-93 and pp 156-157; see the detailed account in Vol II, Pt 1, pp 296-303; cf S Runciman, Romanus Lecapenus, pp 144-145; and also the brief remarks in J B Segal, Edessa, p 214
- 240 Tanbīh, pp 192-195; Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, pp 405-408; some of these are mentioned in Ṭabarī and other Arabic sources, but not in the same systematic manner or as a separate account.
- 241 See Murūj, para 3203 ff; cf M Canard, 'Djāsūs', in EI 2
- 242 See above, pp 235, 253
- 243 Tanbīh, p 177
- 244 See for example, al-Ṭabarī, Annales, I, pp 201, 296, 693, 702 and passim; al-Dīnawarī, Akhbār (ed Guirgass), p 53 ff; al-Ya'qūbī, Historiae, I, p 96 ff; Eutychius, Annales (ed Cheikho), I, p 88 ff; Agapius, al-'Unwān, passim
- 245 See Murūj, para 755 ff
- 246 Tanbīh, pp 156-158 and pp 164-174
- 247 Murūj, para 1297 ff; Tanbīh, p 196 ff
- 248 Tanbīh, p 214
- 249 Ibid, pp 197-198
- 250 Murūj, para 1297
- 251 See also Chapter VII
- 252 Tanbīh, p 172
- 253 Ibid, pp 172-173; Vasiliev-Canard, Byzance et les Arabes, II, ii, p 397
- 254 Greek political history according to al-Mas'ūdī and other Muslim historians begins with the Macedonian kingdom of Philip, father of Alexander the Great, and ends with the death of Cleopatra. See above, Chapter IV
- 255 See above, Chapter IV
- 256 Murūj, II, para 741; Tanbīh, pp 7, 182; cf for example the opposite views of al-Jāhīz and al-Ya'qūbī
- 257 Murūj, para 741
- 258 See P Brown, The World of Late Antiquity, (London, 1971), p 72
- 259 Murūj, para 707; cf the opinion of al-Ya'qūbī, Historiae, I, p 164; and Marvazī, (see Minorsky, in AIPHOS, 12 (1954), p 458 ff)
- 260 Murūj, para 664
- 261 This continuity is emphasized by modern scholars; see especially N H Baynes, 'The Hellenistic Civilization and East Rome', Byzantine Studies and other Essays, pp 1-23
- 262 See above, p 237
- 263 Tanbīh, p 193
- 264 Tanbīh, pp 6-7; compare the different view of al-Jāhīz cited above, p 229
- 265 Ibid, p 7
- 266 Murūj, para 504, 753; Tanbīh, p 400
- 267 Ibid, para 753; also Tanbīh, p 141