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The Employment of Christian Mediators by Muslim Rulers in Arab-Byzantine Diplomatic Relations in the Tenth and Early Eleventh Centuries*

When the Hamdanids ruling in Aleppo were threatened by the Fatimid army commander Manǧūtakīn between 992 and 996, they sent – as we know from various Arab historians – the Melkite trader and cloth merchant Malkūṭa as-Suryānī[1] with gifts and an urgent request for military support to the Byzantine emperor Basil II (976-1025). The latter responded to the request for help, first by mobilising his *doux* Michael Bourtzes stationed in Antioch and then, after the latter's military failures, appearing in person at the theatre of war in Syria[2].

Fortunately, the sources have recorded the example of the Melkite merchant Malkūṭa, who functioned as the emissary of an Islamic potentate, as a perfect example for the topic discussed in this volume. Malkūṭa appears as the prototype of what we like to understand as a typical intermediary between cultures: the member of an indigenous border society that was in every respect heterogeneous, such as northern Syria in the late tenth century undoubtedly was, having been fought over for decades by the Byzantines and various Muslim powers. An experienced traveller – on account of his activity as a merchant – who through his intercultural soft skills, among which was also a multilingual know-how, represents the perfect mediator and intermediary between cultures. The religious affiliation is, as the example clearly shows us, among the secondary identity features of this prototype.

It is a shame that the spectacular circumstances of the case of the merchant Malkūṭa represent an exception, at least for the period discussed here, namely the core phase of the Macedonian dynasty (867-1025). Thus in Malkūṭa's case we are dealing with the only example recorded in the sources of a Christian emissary in the service of a Muslim potentate who held no official ecclesiastical office and can thus be described as a »man of the people«. All the other six examples of Christian intermediaries, with whom the present paper deals, belonged by contrast to the high clergy and were patriarchs or bishops. In the service of Muslim rulers, they either travelled to Constantinople themselves as emissaries or they functioned as intermediaries on a diplomatic mission.

In focusing on these persons we need to be aware that they hardly convey an accurate picture of the extent to which Christians played a role in relations. For we learn hardly any details about most of the intermediary persons recorded in the sources, who acted on behalf of Muslim rulers, and even their religious affiliation is not explicitly mentioned. In numerous examples, we can actually assume that they were Muslims on account of the names given and a further identification of the person is sometimes possible. However, in many other examples we are dealing with *anonymoi* about whom we know no more than that they were envoys[3]. In addition, there are all the legations about whose existence we know nothing, because they have not found their way into the sources. Also, the fact that the legates were high-ranking clerics in the case of six of the seven examples dealt with should not lead us to jump to rash conclusions regarding quantities. For even if there is no doubt about the religious affiliation in the case of these spectacular examples, in the case of numerous less important mediators further details about the person go by the wayside as a rule.

However, this paper concentrates on the few examples which we have at our disposal and looks into the question

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1 In the eleventh-century chronicle by the Abbasid vizier Abū Šuǧāʿ, Ḏayl 217,18-218,6; 220,9-13, he is designated as Malkūṭa as-Suryānī. The term »Suryānī« refers to the use of the Syriac language – at least as a liturgical language – by the Syrian Christians. Being an ambassador to the Byzantine emperor, we can at the same time assume that he was a Melkite who knew Greek (for the use of the Syriac language by the Melkites, see Kennedy, Melkite Church 338; Pahlitzsch, Griechisch 40f. I would like to thank Johannes Pahlitzsch and Dorothea Weltecke for advice concerning this issue). The eleventh/twelfth-century historian Ibn al-Qalānisī, History 41,14; 43,4-10, calls him Malkūnā as-Sayrāfī. In the thirteenth-century Aleppian history of Ibn al-ʿAdīm, Zubda 198,14-199,1, where he occurs as Malkūnā an-Naṣrānī (»Malkūnā the Christian«), he is mentioned relating the flight of the Hamdanid Abū l-Hayǧāʾ ibn Saʿd ad-Dawla to Constantinople in the year 1008. Malkūnā, who is specified here as a trader (*tāǧir*) and cloth merchant (*bazzāz*), is said to have helped Abū l-Hayǧāʾ to escape from Aleppo, then ruled by Manṣūr ibn Luʾlu. For Malkūṭa, see PmbZ II #24852 (with further references), as well as Beihammer, Strategies 389f.

2 For further details and references relating to this conflict, see n. 43.

3 Apart from multitudinous entries about envoys easily accessible by diverse search functions in the online version of the PmbZ II (www.degruyter.com/view/db/pmbz 05.12.2018), for a recent detailed overview of sources, themes and scholarly debates relating to diplomatic relations between the Muslim Arabs and Byzantium in the period referred to in this paper, see Drocourt, Diplomatic Relations. See also Beihammer, Strategies, who places special emphasis on the prosopographical details of Byzantine envoys to the Muslims in the time under discussion.

of what reasons moved the potentates of the great Muslim dynasties of the tenth century to employ Christian intermediaries in their diplomatic contacts with Byzantium. Are they, as was already hinted with reference to the merchant Malkūṭa, more of an accidental, practical nature, a not-further-reflected upon procedure in a multicultural society, in which one quite simply made use of those persons for certain purposes who could best fulfil them on account of certain capabilities? Or is the deployment of Christian intermediaries to be assessed rather as a deliberately calculated step of a ruler's strategy against the great power of Byzantium? Or do the sources suggest, for instance, precisely the opposite, namely the picture of a well-intended expression of religious tolerance in the sense of a declaration of friendship towards the Byzantines? And from this stems the final question: if the different Muslim rulers were guided by a common – presumably »typically Islamic«– motivation for action or not.

Christian Mediators on Behalf of the Abbasids in the Early Tenth Century

The first example is to be found in at-Tanūḫī (949-994) and Hilāl aṣ-Ṣābiʾ (969-1056) and concerns Abbasid Baghdad of the early tenth century. Here *wazīr* ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā learns through an envoy from the governor of the border areas that the Muslim prisoners of war in Constantinople were in a desperate position. Until then, prisoners of war in the land of the *rhōmaioi* had always been treated benevolently and courteously. Only since two young men had ascended the throne in Constantinople recently had prisoners of war become the object of mistreatment, which consisted of food and clothing being withheld from them, their being tortured and it being demanded of them that they convert to Christianity. The *wazīr,* who was extremely saddened by this report, received the advice from a close friend to let the patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem mediate in this matter. Their authority over the Byzantine emperor was so great, he said, that they could even pronounce anathema upon him and revoke it again. The *rhōmaioi* were namely of the opinion that disobedience towards these two patriarchs was tantamount to heresy, and that even the coronation of an emperor required their approval. But at the same time, they resided in Abbasid territory and were under the caliph's protection. The *wazīr* should induce the governors of both cities (thus Antioch and Jerusalem) to summon the patriarchs and inform them of the happenings in Constantinople. If they should not see to it that the situation of the prisoners of war changed, they should be made responsible for the crimes. ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā did as he was advised, and already about two months later the envoy of the emir of the border area appeared once again before the *wazīr* and reported that he had travelled to Constantinople with an emissary of the patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem. They had presented a letter from the patriarchs to the Byzantine rulers in which it had been pointed out to the emperors that their treatment of the prisoners of war was not in accordance with Christian belief, and that for this reason the patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem would impose anathema upon them, if they did not change their behaviour. The emperors are said to have rejected these reproaches and to have allowed the envoys a visit to the prisoners in the *praitōrion*, the imperial prison[4].

The time of this legation initiated by ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā and despatched by the patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem to Constantinople is dated by scholars as being either in the year 913 or in the year 922. For several reasons, I endorse the first dating, according to which the mission falls in the time shortly after the beginning of the first period of office of *wazīr* ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā in the summer of 913. Thus, the two aforementioned Byzantine emperors appear to be the approximately thirty-year-old Alexander and his just eight-year-old co-emperor Constantine VII, who had come to power after the death of Leo VI in May 912[5].

But at this point it is primarily the two patriarchs who interest us, who did not make their way as envoys themselves, but nevertheless did take on a key mediating function in the diplomatic contact between the Abbasid Caliphate and Constantinople. In one case it is Leontios I, who was Melkite

4 Tanūḫī, Nišwār al-muḥāḍara 30,11-32,16 (French. trans.: Vasiliev, Arabes II 2,286-290, and Nasrallah, Église 67); Ḥilāl aṣ-Ṣābiʾ, Kitāb al-wuzarāʾ 328,5-330,9. See also Ibn al-Ǧawzī, al-Muntaẓam 14,58,18-14,61,4.

5 The main reasons in favor of 913, quoted by Jenkins, Alexander 391-393, are the mention of ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā as *wazīr* (for he held this office from summer 913-917 and 926-929); the mention of two young emperors, what is probably a reference to Constantine VII and Alexander, who came to power on 12 May 912 (they are explicitly mentioned as *ḥadaṯān*, meaning »young man«; for the explanation why the thirty-year-old Alexander could be called a youth, see ibidem 391), after the death of Leo VI, who, in fact, is known for having been well-disposed towards Saracen prisoners (for the sources see ibidem 392); the suggested bad character of Alexander, who seems to have been most likely capable of the recorded treatment of Muslim prisoners. One weak point of dating the embassy to 913, namely the fact that Alexander died at the beginning of June 913, while the beginning of the vizierate of ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā was not before August 913, can be explained by a diplomatic delay. The two emperors whom at-Tanūḫī mentions were seen by the envoys during their mission in Constantinople must therefore be Constantine VII and his mother Zoe Karbonopsina. The main argument of Dölger/Müller, Regesten no. 595b to date the embassy in 922 is a letter of Nicholas Mystikos (Nikolaos Mystikos, Letters 102,43-51) stating among other things that a number of Muslim prisoners of war will be sent from Constantinople to Baghdad as well as some writings of Muslim prisoners, who remain in Constantinople in order to refute the accusations against the Byzantines. This letter was interpreted since Jenkins, Alexander 390, as an answer to the embassy in question. While Jenkins suggested that Nicholas wrote it in the period when he was the head of the regency council since the early death of Alexander, therefore from June 913 to February 914, Dölger/Müller, Regesten no. 595b states that the letter is dated in a marginal note of a manuscript to July of the tenth indiction (which is only compatible with the second patriarchate of Nicholas Mystikos [15 May 912-15 May 925] and therefore dates the epistle to July 922). In any case, it seems possible to me that the confusion is either a fault in the dating of the manuscript tradition or a lack of an immediate connection between the letter of Nicholas Mystikos and the embassy, thus an identical dating is not compulsory. In addition to Jenkins' arguments, the account of the embassy seems to me to fit best in the history of events of the year 913, as I will show in the following. For more explanations concerning the chronological disagreements in the sources relating to this issue, see Dölger/Müller, Regesten no. 595b. For ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā and the periods of his vizierate, see PmbZ II #20254, and above all Bowen, Life 99-287 and Sourdel, Vizirat 519-551.

patriarch of Jerusalem from 912 to 929. The other, Elias I, was patriarch of Antioch from 906/907 to 934[6].

Evidently both patriarchs were in a dependent relationship to the Abbasid Caliphate at the time in question, that was so marked that they had to bow to the will of the highest Muslim ruler in diplomatic matters. The threat that they would be made responsible for the crimes that were committed against Muslim prisoners of war if they did not give their support for an improvement in the situation in Constantinople, makes one thing above all clear: The patriarchs' action for the Abbasids' benefit is not to be understood as the fulfilment of a request, but rather as compliance with an order by the caliph or his highest official, *wazīr* ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā.

But how did a situation come about in which the Melkite Church was evidently under obligation towards the Abbasid rulers to such an extent that it saw itself forced to let itself be exploited for Abbasid political action against the great power of Byzantium? In order to look into this question, it is well worth following individual source references giving evidence of a particularly close involvement between the Abbasid court and Melkite functionaries at the time concerned.

Patriarch Elias I of Antioch, who has already been mentioned, worked as a secretary (*kātib*) in the Abbasid administration before taking up office in the year 294 AH (Oct. 906 - Oct. 907)[7]. It is highly probable that he himself came from among the Melkite population of Baghdad. We know this for certain about his successor, Theodosios II, who held the office of patriarch of Antioch from 936 to 943[8]. According to Eutychios, he was also an official (*kātib*) at the court of the Abbasid caliphs under the name of Istifān (Stephanos) from the year 296 AH (30.9.908-19.9.909)[9], and in turn we know from Hilāl aṣ-Ṣābiʾ that he (here specified as Iṣṭifan ibn Yaʿqūb) was head of the *dīwān* of the state treasury as *kātib bayt māl al-ḫāṣṣa wa-ḫalīfa*[10]. In this function he was a close confidant of Ibn al-Furāt, the predecessor and opponent of *wazīr* ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā already mentioned, who first held office in the years 908 to 912[11]. Thus Ibn al-Furāt, who was infamous for his corruption and venality, is said to have given the later patriarch a monetary gift of 100 000 dirhams from the public purse[12]. The bribery policy that Ibn al-Furāt pursued precisely among Baghdad's Melkite Christians[13] should have safeguarded not least of all his particular closeness to the power structure of the caliph's house. For Šaǧab, the influential mother of al-Muqtadir, was a Byzantine prisoner of war, whom Caliph al-Muʿtaḍid (892-902) had bought from a lady in Baghdad called Umm al-Qāsim bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh[14]. Like many other female slaves already before and after her, through the birth of a son to the caliph and after the death of her lord in 902, she also rose to the status of an *umm walad*[15]. As a result, she was not only liberated from her existence as a slave, but also gained the power to exercise considerable influence over the affairs of state for her son, who was just thirteen years of age when he acceded to power in 908[16]. It is known, not only about her, but also her brother, who was called Ġarīb (the foreigner), and his sons, that they protected Ibn al-Furāt for long stretches and acted in his favour[17]. And although Ibn al-Furāt also fell out of favour with the caliph and his relatives in 912, and was deposed owing to an intrigue by his successor al-Ḫāqānī, who held office for just one year (23 July 912 - 16 August 913)[18], he regained their confidence again already soon after and was appointed *wazīr* once more in 917[19].

There are thus several indications that the presence of Melkite influence in the direct proximity of the caliph, above all in Ibn al-Furāt's first period of office (thus between 908 and 912), led to a more comprehensive strengthening of the Melkites in Baghdad. A passage in the Church Histories of the East Syrian Marī ibn Sulaymān (twelfth century) and Bar Hebraeus (thirteenth century) also supports this. They report that the Melkites of Baghdad, probably shortly before ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā was appointed *wazīr* for the first time (thus in Au-

6 For Elias I as well as for Leontios I, patriarch of Jerusalem (912-929), see Sourdel, Vizirat II 547; Vasiliev, Arabes II 1 217 f.; Todt, Antiocheia 182 f.; PmbZ II # 21648, 24708.

7 Eutychios, Naẓm 74,19 f.; 85,11 f.

8 For Theodosios II, see Vasiliev, Arabes II 1 281; Nasrallah, Église 81; Fiey, Chrétiens 141; Todt, Antiocheia 183; PmbZ II # 27908.

9 Eutychios, Naẓm 87,5-7.

10 Ḥilāl aṣ-Ṣābiʾ 140,6.

11 For Ibn al-Furāt see Bowen, Life 99-107; Sourdel, Vizirat 387-394, 495-518; PmbZ II # 20062.

12 Ḥilāl aṣ-Ṣābiʾ 140,6. See also Sourdel, Vizirat 509.

13 After an unsuccessful revolt in December 908 against al-Muqtadir, the intended successor of Caliph al-Muktafī (d. August 908), Ibn al-Furāt was appointed vizier of al-Muqtadir. The revolt was supported by numerous Christian officials and is probably the reason for Ibn al-Furāt's vain attempt to apply the measures of al-Mutawakkil against the Christians (including the prohibition of practising professions other than physician and money changer) at the beginning of his vizierate. In any case, Christians again gained influence under Ibn al-Furat, and we know that among his confidants were numerous Christians, whom he invited daily to his house; for source references, see Bowen, Life 101 f.: Sourdel, Vizirat 370-375, 390 f., and 513; Fiey, Chrétiens 127 f.

14 Ṭabarī, Taʾrīḫ ar-rusūl wa-l-mulūk 2148,9-11 (Engl. trans.: Ṭabarī, History 38,25), mentions that »On Ramaḍān 22, 282 (November 14, 895), Nāʿim, a slave girl of Umm al-Qāsim bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh, gave birth to a son of al-Muʿtaḍid whom he named Jaʿfar. Al-Muʿtaḍid called this slave girl Shaghab«; further source references in Bowen, Life 99 f.; 102, and Mansouri, Femmes 174 with n. 17. For Šaǧab and her influence on Abbasid politics, see Canard, Relations 44 f.; Fiey, Chrétiens 127; Zetterstéen, al-Muḳtadir 541 f.; Wheatley, Places 262; Cheikh, Qahramâna 41-55; Bray, Men 135, 143; Cheikh, Gender 152-156; Kennedy, Court 192-197.

15 The birth of a son of a caliph produced many changes for a slave girl apparent at first in the alteration of her name, as in the case of umm al-Muqtadir from the slave-name Nāʿim to the new name of Šaǧab (see n. 14). Moreover, it brought a change to the legal as well of course to the social status of the concubines. While Muslim men were not allowed to marry slave women from the *ḏimmīs* and could take them only as concubines, the only possibility for concubines to attain freedom from slavery was to give birth to a son of their master and to become therefore an *umm walad*; see Kallfelz, Untertanen 91; Cortese/Calderini, Women 47 f.; Mansouri, Femmes 169-186; Bray, Men 133-135. There is a pronounced preference of the Abbasid caliphs for concubines, especially for Byzantine slaves (Mansouri, Femmes 173, counts from the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate to al-Mutīʿ [946-974], out of 24 caliphs, 22 were sons of an *umm walad*: see also Canard, Relations 45). This probably has a bearing on the opinion common in Arabic society that children of foreign women are stronger then children from a relative, see Nasrallah, Église 69 (with source references).

16 Ṭabarī, Taʾrīḫ ar-rusūl wa-l-mulūk 2280,18-2281,3 (Engl. trans.: Ṭabarī, History 38,187).

17 For the significance and influence of Ġarīb and other Christian relatives of Šaǧab, see Sourdel, Vizirat 388, 392, 404; Canard, Relations 44; Cheikh, Gender 156; Bray, Men 135.

18 See Bowen, Life 106-115; Sourdel, Vizirat 394-399.

19 See Bowen, Life 153 f.; Sourdel, Vizirat 406-414.

gust 913)[20], demanded a metropolitan of their own from the patriarch of Antioch[21], as the Greeks in Baghdad had greatly increased in number, above all among the secretaries and doctors[22]. The patriarch of Antioch, Elias I, whom we have already seen and who hailed from Baghdad, sent a certain John (Yānī) to the Abbasid capital in order to take up his see in the Melkite church there. According to Mārī, the patriarch himself came to Baghdad in order to consecrate the bishop. Only the Church of the East *katholikos* Abraham III (905-936) was not in agreement with this innovation. For his church had possessed the privilege since al-Mutawakkil (852) that all the Christian churches in the Abbasid Caliphate were united under an East Syrian head appointed by the caliph[23]. The East Syrians thus interrupted the consecration ceremony by force and prevented the Melkite patriarch from consecrating John as bishop. ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā, who had in the meantime (in August 913) taken up his office as *wazīr*, imposed a fine on Elias I and had him sign a decree in which he accepted that he was not allowed to consecrate a Melkite leader in Baghdad[24].

It is striking that here, too, just as in the case of both patriarchs' aforementioned mission to Constantinople, that it was *wazīr* ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā who showed the Melkites, and in particular Elias I of Antioch, the limits of their influence. Evidently it was a matter of importance for him to check the growing influence of the Melkites which had been observed since the accession to power of al-Muqtadir, or rather of his mother, Šaġab, in 908 and during the first period of office of Ibn al-Furāt (908-912). At the same time, ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā was evidently primarily concerned with not allowing the balance of power between the different Christian churches in Baghdad to begin to totter in favour of a possible Byzantine-Melkite alliance. The foreign political situation and thus also the deteriorating financial plight of the Abbasid Caliphate was worsening at the beginning of the tenth century, not only owing to the threat by the Carmathians, but above all through the increasing inroads by Byzantine forces into Abbasid territory[25]. The accusation by the Church of the East *katholikos* Abraham III, recorded in Bar Hebraeus, that the Melkites were the enemies of the Muslims and prayed for the victory of the emperor in Constantinople, whereas they, the Nestorians, recognised only the ruler of the Muslims[26], would here have served as a welcome pretext for ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā's course of action against the Melkites in 913. His taking sides with Abraham can also be explained better by the motives of political power than with any sincere sympathy for the East Syrians. Despite his impeding a Melkite leader in Baghdad, ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā is said to have responded to Abraham's accusation against the Melkites: »You Christians are all alike in your hatred, with which you pursue us; you like us only on the surface«[27].

The aforementioned events represent just a small section of Abbasid Melkite policy of the tenth century. Nevertheless, they do make clear the complexity of Melkite identity which was made up in a number of respects at the same time of Byzantine and Abbasid elements. The Abbasid rulers, in our examples with *wazīr* ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā, were able to exploit both elements in favour of their own power policy interests, and to the disadvantage of their great foreign policy adversary, Byzantium. If it was a matter of inflaming the mood against this opponent, which precisely at the beginning of the tenth century was becoming an increasing foreign policy danger for the Abbasids (who were showing signs of weakness in every respect), then it was an easy matter to steer the aggression of the Muslim population against the Melkites, who now stood as representatives of all that which made up the concept of the enemy, Byzantium[28]. If it was a matter of achieving diplomatic successes in Constantinople, the highest representatives of the Melkite church, the patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem, precisely on account of their double identity, represented ideal mediators: Byzantine rulers had to take them seriously as the highest representatives of their co-religionists in Muslim territory and be responsive to them. At the same time, they allowed the Abbasid potentates to demonstrate, not only to the Melkite church and its leaders, but also to the Byzantine emperors, their power and sovereignty over the regions in which the Melkite church was to be found.

Christian Mediators on Behalf of the Fatimids in the Late Tenth and Early Eleventh Centuries

Let us now shift the focus away from Baghdad to Fatimid Egypt around the turn of the millennium. Here, in the chronicle of the contemporary Melkite writer Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī[29], we come across two further examples of Christian clerics who acted as mediators in the name of a Muslim ruler. One of them is Orestes, Melkite patriarch of Jerusalem[30]. In the year 1000, he was sent to Constantinople by the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim[31], or his guardian Barǧawān[32], in order to head the

20 Bar Hebraeus dates the incident to the year 300 A. H. (18.8.912-6.8.913), see Fiey, Rūm 388 with n. 126.
21 Marī ibn Sulaymān, Aḫbār 92f.; .see the French translations in Nasrallah, Église 58f. and Fiey, Rūm 387f. See also Cheikh, Byzantium 99.
22 The latter detail is given only by Bar Hebraeus, see Nasrallah, Église 65 with n. 35; Fiey, Rūm 387. For the growing Melkite population in Baghdad of the tenth century see also Kennedy, Melkite Church 337.
23 For this privilege see Nasrallah, Église 58f. with n. 4.
24 See Nasrallah, Église 59, and Fiey, Rūm 389.
25 For the factors playing a role for the crisis of the Abbasid Caliphate at the beginning of the tenth c. see Kennedy, Court 295.
26 See Fiey, Rūm 388; Cheikh, Byzantium 99.
27 See Fiey, Rūm 388; idem, Chrétiens 129.
28 See also Kennedy, Melkite Church 338f.
29 On Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī, see Forsyth, Yahya 1-28, 297-358; PmbZ II, Prolegomena 247-249; Swanson, Yaḥyā 657-661.
30 For Orestes see below n. 48, 49.
31 For al-Ḥākim see van Ess, Erwartungen 21-23, 26-33; Halm, Kalifen 167-304; Krönung, al-Ḥākim 139-158; PmbZ II #22544 (with further references).
32 For the eunuch Barǧawān, who reigned in place of the underage caliph al-Ḥākim over the Fatimid Caliphate from October 996 to April 1000, see Lewis, Barǧjawān 1073f.; Halm, Kalifen 173-180; PmbZ II #20810 (with further references).

negotiations for a ten-year Byzantine-Fatimid peace treaty[33]. The second one is Nikephoros[34], also patriarch of Jerusalem, who was sent to Constantinople in the year 1022 by al-Ḥākim's sister, the regent Sitt al-Mulk[35]. His task was, among other things, to inform the emperor about the reconstruction of the churches destroyed by al-Ḥākim in the Egyptian and Syrian provinces, in particular the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and about the return of the foundations confiscated under al-Ḥākim[36]. In return, the patriarch called on the emperor to resume trade between Byzantium and the Fatimid provinces, which had previously come to a standstill, and to enter into peace negotiations[37]. Thus here too, as in the previous example, we are dealing with Melkite patriarchs who became active in diplomatic relations in favour of Muslim rulers.

In order to look into the question as to what extent the motives of the Fatimid rulers to make use of Melkite patriarchs for diplomatic negotiations with Constantinople coincide with those of the Abbasid *wazīr* ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā, it is worth having a brief look into the prevailing political and social conditions of Fatimid Egypt in the tenth century:

Just as in Abbasid Iraq, in Fatimid Egypt of the tenth century there was a long tradition of Christians and Muslims living together, although admittedly this did not always pass off free of conflicts here either. From the beginning of Muslim rule over Egypt from the mid-seventh century, the Coptic Church – as also the Melkite Patriarchate of Alexandria – had had a great influence over society and a centuries-old institutionally safeguarded *raison d'être*. Consequently, here too the Christian part of the population was also of great importance for filling numerous posts in the Muslim rulers' administration and royal household[38]. The fact that this did not change with the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 969 may be surprising at first glance. For the acceptance and integration of parts of the population belonging to other religions did not in any way really fit in with the conventional state ideology of the Shiite Fatimids. Rather, this ideology consisted of an aggressive expansionist policy at its core coupled with the conversion by missionary work of all subordinated regions[39]. These objectives were pursued under the first Fatimid caliph, ʿAbdallāh al-Mahdī, who seized power in North Africa in 910[40], as well as under his successors, also residing in North Africa, and which had led to the expansion of the Fatimid area of rule to Byzantine Sicily and southern Italy, and finally to the conquest of Iḫšīdid Egypt in 969[41]. Al-ʿAzīz (975-996)[42], the first Fatimid caliph residing in Egypt from the outset, continued the aggressive military offensives, above all against Byzantine Syria[43], but evidently quickly understood that holding onto the traditional Fatimid missionary ideology would have been incompatible with the maintenance of his power in Egypt. So he adapted the Fatimid administrative apparatus to the conditions on the ground by appointing members of the educated upper class of the indigenous population – who here included above all Christians and Jews, but also Sunni Muslims – to high offices[44]. As though he wanted to make the approach to heterogeneous Egyptian society easier for himself, he entered into a relationship with a Melkite concubine by the name of Maria, who bore him a son, the future Caliph al-Ḥākim[45]. As the sources report, the *umm walad* Maria gained great influence over the Fatimid caliphal house, which led to a strengthening of the Melkite Church compared with the Coptic Church, which had otherwise been more influential in Egypt since the Arab conquest of the country. This strengthening was accompanied by the

33 Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī (PO 23,3) [252f.] 460f.; Abū Šuǧāʿ, Ḏayl 230,6-8; Ibn al-Qalānisī, History 54,18-55,1. For further details concerning this embassy, see Vismara, Bisanzio 22; Canard, Sources 290 with n. 13; Felix, Byzanz 48f.; Lev, Fatimids 204f.; Halm, Kalifen 178; Dölger/Müller, Regesten nos 788, 789e, 792b; Krönung, al-Ḥākim 143f. with n. 14; PmbZ II #26197 with n. 5.

34 For Nikephoros, see below n. 50-52.

35 Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī (PO 47,4) [100-103] 468-471; ʿAẓīmī, Taʾrīḫ Ḥalab 326,5f. For Sitt al-Mulk, see Lev, Sitt al-Mulk 319-328; Cortese, Women 116-127; PmbZ II #27127 (with further references).

36 For al-Ḥākim's anti-Christian procedures, his demolition and confiscation of churches and foundations, lasting from 1008 to 1020, see van Ess, Erwartungen 9-26; Halm, Kalifen 217-228; Krönung, al-Ḥākim 141, 155; PmbZ II #22544 with n. 3-8.

37 While Yaḥyā reports on the failure of Nikephoros' long-lasting negotiations because of the death of Sitt al-Mulk during his stay in Constantinople (probably on 5 February 1023, for the chronology see PmbZ II #27127 P), ʿAẓīmī suggests the conclusion of a peace agreement for ten years. For further details concerning this embassy, see Halm, Kalifen 311; Dölger/Müller, Regesten no. 816c; Beihammer, Byzanz 190; Pahlitzsch, Melkites 488f. Concerning the chronological problems relating to this embassy and the interpretation of ʿAẓīmī's passage, which has not been noticed in the secondary literature, see PmbZ II #25674 P.

38 For the significance and development of the (Coptic and Melkite) Christian element in Egyptian society since the Arab conquest in the seventh c., see Müller, Grundzüge 160-169; Skerslet, Greeks 81-97, 140-153, 193-230; Eddé/Micheau/Picard, Communautés 34f.; Wilfong, Communities 175-193; Halm, Kalifen 132-139, 217f.; Swanson, Coptic Papacy 4-11, 28-31. I am grateful to Johannes Pahlitzsch for most of these references.

39 Concerning the Fatimid ruling ideology, which was closely connected with the goals of an all-embracing expansion and proselytization, see Madelung, Ismāʿiliyya 198f.; 203f.; Skerslet, Greeks 225f.; Brett, Rise 176-218; Halm, Mahdi 200-215; Lev, Fatimids 191f.; Lienhard, Marianos 114f.; Krönung, al-Ḥākim 145f.

40 For the beginning of the Fatimid Caliphate under al-Mahdi in Ifriqīya see Brett, Rise 135-175; Walker, Exploring 17-31; Halm, Mahdi 61-244; PmbZ II #24814.

41 For the Fatimid expansion until the conquest of Egypt by al-Muʿizz and his general Ǧawhar, see Canard, Fāṭimids 857f.; Lev, Navy 228; Brett, Rise 219-316; Walker, Exploring 29-39, 50f., 53f.; Halm, Mahdi 219-316; Lienhard, Marianos 113-115; PmbZ II #24814, 24863, 25444, 26784.

42 For al-ʿAzīz and his reign see Canard, ʿAzīz 823-825; Skerslet, Greeks 226-229; Halm, Kalifen 119-166; PmbZ #20711.

43 The Byzantine-Fatimid conflict under al-ʿAzīz from 992 to 996 in northern Syira was fought primarily by the Fatimid military leader Manǧūtakīn on one side and the Hamdanid Abū l-Faḍāʾil Saʿīd ad-Dawla ruling over Aleppo and his Byzantine allies Michael Bourtzes (992/94), Basil II (995) and Damianos Dalassenos (996) on the other side. For this conflict, which was not decisively won by either side and led finally to the peace treaty negotiated by Orestes in the year 1000, see Honigmann, Ostgrenze 105f.; Canard, Hamdanides 696-705, 855-858; Bianquis, Damas 195-227; Felix, Byzanz 46f.; Dölger/Müller, Regesten nos 781a, 781c-f, 782, 785d; Walker, Exploring 51; Halm, Kalifen 161-163; Beihammer, Byzanz 176, 182-184; Krönung, al-Ḥākim 144; PmbZ II #24858, 26962, 25253, 20838, 21379 (with source references).

44 Concerning the multireligious society in Fatimid Egypt as well as the significance of Christians and Jews in the Fatimid court and administration in Cairo, see van Ess, Erwartungen 31, Walker, Exploring 46f.; Halm, Kalifen 129-146, 214-223, 235-242; Krönung, al-Ḥākim 151-154.

45 The name of al-Ḥākim's mother is only known from Radulphus Glaber 3,25 (p. 157). For the mother of al-Ḥākim, see also Vasiliev, Arabes II 1 367 with n. 2; Forsyth, Chronicle 245; Skerslet, Greeks 228f.; Felix, Byzanz 48 n. 12; Halm, Kalifen 219; Krönung, al-Ḥākim 142 with n. 8; PmbZ II #24929.

rapid rise of two brothers of Maria to the highest offices of the Melkite Church[46]. One of these brothers was Arsenios, who acceded to the patriarchal see of Alexandria in 1000 under his nephew al-Ḥākim, but moved his official residence to Cairo[47]. The second brother, Orestes, probably acted already as an ambassador in the time of al-ʿAzīz[48], who consecrated him patriarch of Jerusalem in 986[49]. In 1000, under the rule of Maria's son al-Ḥākim, he headed the aforementioned mission to the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople. Also in the case of the Melkite patriarch Nikephoros, who was sent to Constantinople in 1022, we can assume a special closeness to the Fatimid caliphal house, which was possibly based on a relationship with al-Ḥākim. According to Yaḥyā, he was also a descendant of Byzantine slaves and had served as a cabinet-maker in the Fatimid caliphal palace. When he requested al-Ḥākim to appoint him patriarch, this wish was fulfilled for him on 10 July 1020[50]. And even a few months later, when Nikephoros appeared in person before the caliph and complained about anti-Christian violations inside the walls of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, his request was answered; in Ǧumādā II 411 AH[51] al-Ḥākim issued an edict, in which he assured Nikephoros not only the protection of the Christians within the Fatimid Caliphate, but also the conservation of all churches in Jerusalem and its vicinity and the restitution of Christian foundations[52].

It is easy to recognise that the relational ties and special closeness between Fatimid rulers and the Melkites were decisive for the deployment of the patriarchs Orestes and Nikephoros in Fatimid-Byzantine diplomacy. The fact that here, unlike in the Abbasid example, the patriarchs themselves travelled as envoys to Constantinople does not seem to have been an accident. Rather, the Fatimid rulers must have been aware of the symbolic effect which the personal appearance of the highest church leader of their Oriental fellow-Christians would be bound to have on the Byzantine rulers (the emperor and patriarch). In both cases – in the year 1000 and in the year 1022 – it was a matter of a symbolism of reconciliation which was intended to convince the Byzantine emperor to enter into peace negotiations with the Fatimids. In 1000, when al-Ḥākim's anti-Christian course of action was still not foreseeable, it was a matter of bringing the protracted armed conflicts between the Fatimids and Byzantium in Syria to an end. In 1022 it was then a matter of again improving relations with Byzantium, which had been impaired by al-Ḥākim's destruction and persecutions. ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā, on the other hand, at the time in 913 when he supported better treatment of Muslim prisoners of war by the Byzantines, was hardly interested in peace negotiations with Byzantium. According to at-Tanūḫī, he only therefore did not disclose his real plan to the caliph – to assemble an army and attack Constantinople – because it was already clear to him from the outset that the latter would not get involved in this[53]. Instead, ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā found in the plan to force the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch to make an intervention in the conflict with the Byzantines a welcome threatening gesture to demonstrate power and superiority to the foreign political adversary of the Abbasid Caliphate.

Christian Mediators on Behalf of the Umayyads of Andalusia in the Middle of the Tenth Century

The last two examples, recorded in Maqqarī's history of Muslim Spain, are situated in Umayyad Andalusia and are to be put chronologically roughly between the aforementioned Abbasid and Fatimid embassies, thus in the middle of the tenth century. Here we are not dealing with Melkite patriarchs, but with two Mozarabic bishops who were sent to Constantinople by Caliph ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān III (912-961)[54]. One of them, Hišām ibn Huḏayl, is described as a *katholikos* (*ǧaṭulīq*) in Maqqarī[55], by which the head of the Christian churches in Andalusia is probably meant[56]. As Maqqarī reports, in the mid-tenth century Hišām ibn Huḏayl was sent with two Byzantine envoys previously received in Cordoba to Constantinople, from where he returned again with another Byzantine embassy after two years[57]. It is not improbable that Hišām's mission is connected with a report conveyed in

46 The Coptic History of the Patriarchs 113, 15 (trans. 170 f.) mentions that the patriarchs Arsenios and Orestes owed their offices to the influence of their sister, the mother of al-Ḥākim, while Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī and the Copt al-Makīn emphasise the proximity of the two brothers to the caliph al-ʿAzīz because the latter's daughter was their niece (Sitt al-Mulk), Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī (PO 23,3) [207] 415; Makīn, Kitāb al-maǧmūʿ 247,7-25.

47 Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī (PO 23,3) [254] 462. For Arsenios, see Krönung, al-Ḥākim 143; PmbZ II #20621.

48 Ibn al-Ḫāṭib, Kitāb aʿmāl 478,22-479,6 mentions that a monk who was a brother of the Melkite concubine of the caliph al-ʿAzīz was sent by the latter to Sicily. His task was to claim from the Kalbid emir Ǧaʿfar ibn Muḥammad (983-985) the capitulation of several cities (Taormina, Rametta, Binqas) and the release of all the old prisoners. But instead of agreeing to the claim, Ǧaʿfar ibn Muḥammad mistreated the ambassador, with the result that he continued his journey after five months to Constantinople, from where he informed the caliph in a letter about Ǧaʿfar's disobedience. Burgarella, Chiese 205, identifies this ambassador with Orestes. See also Falkenhausen, Straußeneier 594-598; PmbZ II #26197 with n. 2.

49 Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī (PO 23,3) [207] 415. For Orestes, see PmbZ II #26197 (with further references).

50 Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī (PO 47,4) [64 f.] 432 f. For Nikephoros, see PmbZ #25674 (with further references).

51 22 September-20 October 1020.

52 Yaḥyā al-Anṭakī (PO 47,4) [68-71] 436-439. See as well Krönung, al-Ḥākim 155 with n. 62, and PmbZ II #25674, #22544; Pahlitzsch, Melkites 487.

53 Tanūḫī, Nišwār al-muḥāḍara 30,15 f.

54 For ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān III and his reign, see Dozy, Histoire 117-175; Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 1-164; Hoenerbach, Geschichte 107-127; Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 29-104; PmbZ II #20018.

55 Maqqarī, Nafḥ aṭ-ṭīb 235,2. The seventeenth-c. North African writer al-Maqqarī quotes this passage from Ibn Ḫaldūn (14th c.).

56 According to Signes Codoñer, Bizancio y al-Andalus 214 with n. 105, this *katholikos* could at the same time be the bishop of Cordoba with the Christian name of John, who in c. 953 received the envoy of Otto I, John of Gorze, in Cordoba (Life of John of Gorze 122-126, p. 148,12-152,18); for the meeting of John, the bishop, and John of Gorze, see El-Hajji, Diplomatic relations 217; Chrystis, Christians 110. For this meeting, see also below n. 82-83.

57 Maqqarī, Nafḥ aṭ-ṭīb 235,2-4. In the secondary literature Hišām's travel to Constantinople is connected with passages of the *Antapodosis* of Liudprand of Cremona (Liudprand of Cremona, Antapodosis 6,4 (p. 146,55-56); 6,5 (147,

Ibn Uṣaybiʿa's biography of physicians according to which the Byzantine emperor had sent Caliph ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān III a manuscript of the Greek *Dioskourides* and a copy of the Latin historical work by Orosius[58]. Because there was no suitable translator for the Greek *Dioskourides* in Cordoba, the caliph sent a return mission to Constantinople in order to ask the Byzantine emperor to send a translator and language teacher with a command of Greek and Latin to Andalusia. The Byzantine emperor met the caliph's request and sent a monk by the name of Nicholas[59] to Cordoba, who worked from then on for several years as a translator in a group of Christian, Muslim and Jewish scholars. Among them is also mentioned one of the most influential persons at the court of the Caliph ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān III, the Jewish physician Ḥasdāy ibn Šaprūṭ, who was not only a director of the caliphal fiscal administration, but is also known for having been integrated in a wide network of educated ambassadors from all over the Mediterranean world of the time[60].

The second example from Maqqarī is the famous bishop Rabīʿ ibn Zayd, who is commonly identified with Recemundus, bishop of Elvira, as well as with the author of the astrological Calendar of Cordoba, which was composed for al-Ḥakam II in about 961[61]. In the 950s Recemundus held a high post at the caliph's court (*inter palatina officia*), and he acted as an emissary of ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān III to Otto I, after John of Gorze had arrived in Cordoba in about 953 and was staying there for several months in a prison without being able to deliver the letter of his emperor to the caliph[62]. Recemundus, previously a layman, earned in return for his mission to Otto I in 956[63] the title of a bishop[64]. Moreover, Rabīʿ ibn Zayd is known to have travelled to Byzantium following his mission to Frankfurt shortly after the year 956, when he already was a bishop[65]. For Maqqarī reports in connection with the construction of ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān III's new residence Madīnat az-Zahrāʾ in around the middle of the tenth century of a journey by Rabīʿ ibn Zayd to the Holy Land and Constantinople[66]. A certain Aḥmad al-Yunānī is said to have returned with the bishop (who had come from Jerusalem) from Constantinople back to Cordoba. From this journey they had brought the caliph, among other things, one hundred and forty marble pillars as a gift from the Byzantine emperor. The exact routes and the reason for the journeys of Aḥmad and the bishop do not emerge from the report, although we can assume that Rabīʿ ibn Zayd was sent by Abd ar-Raḥmān III to the capital of Byzantium to bring back cultural assets from there[67].

Whatever the case may be, the missions mentioned demonstrate in an exemplary manner that in Andalusian Spain of the tenth century we are dealing with a society in

62-66) on the Byzantine ambassador Solomon (PmbZ II #26971) returning from Andalusia to Constantinople, as well as about Spanish ambassadors in Constantinople. This leads to a dating of Hišām's return travel to 948 (Kresten, Staatsempfänge 31-38 with n. 101) or to 949 (Zuckerman, Livre des ceremonies 658f., and following the latter Drocourt, Al-Andalus 70f.; 63 with n. 23). Due to lack of evidence, a decision for one of the dates is not possible; see Signes Codoñer, Bizancio y al-Andalus 216, 221f., 242. For the detailed arguments on behalf of both datings see Dölger/Müller, Regesten no. 657, and in summary PmbZ II #20018 with n. 4 and P. See also n. 58.

58 Ibn Uṣaybiʿa, Kitāb ʿuyūn 2,47,25f. (French trans. in Vasiliev, Arabes II 2 186f.; Engl. trans. in Christys, Christians 135; German trans. in Rosenthal, Fortleben 266f.) gives here a report of Ibn Ǧulǧul, the personal physician of the caliph Hišām (976-1009). Because of the lack of sufficient source evidence and because of chronological ambiguities it cannot be decided definitively if this embassy is to be identified with a couple of (here not discussed) reports about a Byzantine mission (or missions?) to Andalusia in Arabic sources, as was *communis opinio* in the scholarly debate for a long time (in this sense Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 151; Rosenthal, Fortleben 266; Vasiliev, Arabes II 1 324-328; Kresten, Chrysographie 161; Zuckerman, Livre des ceremonies 658f.; Beihammer, Auslandsbriefe 16; Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 72f., and lastly Dölger/Müller, Regesten no. 657) or if it concerns a separate embassy (as stated by Signes Codoñer, Bizancio y al-Andalus 177-245, who identifies the mission mentioned by Ibn Uṣaybiʿa with the Byzantine embassy accompanied by Hišām returning from Constantinople after two years). For the complex scholarly debate see Krönung, Schreiben 99 with n. 14 and PmbZ #20018. For the embassy mentioned by Ibn Uṣaybiʿa see also Stern, Letter 40f.; Signes Codoñer, Diplomatica del libro 181-183. Signes Codoñer, Bizancio y al-Andalus 218-220. For Orosius see also below n. 58.

59 See PmbZ II #25962 (with references).

60 Ḥasdāy ibn Šaprūṭ is known for having corresponded with the Byzantine emperor because of the difficult situation of the Jews in Byzantium, dispatching Isaac bar Nathan for negotiations to Byzantium and to the Jewish khan of the Khazars. For details and source references for the correspondence as well as for the embassy of Isaac bar Nathan, see Krönung, Schreiben 97 with n. 9. For Ḥasdāy's employment as an envoy to the king of León and to Barcelona in 940 and 955, see Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 71, 102. The idea of a diplomatic network including Byzantium, the Christian Occident and Umayyad Andalusia, to which belonged, apart from Ḥasdāy ibn Šaprūṭ, the aforementioned bishops Hišām ibn Huḏayl and Rabīʿ ibn Zayd (see below) as well as Liudprand of Cremona and Isaac bar Nathan, is presented by Drocourt, Al-Andalus 57-79. For Ḥasdāy ibn Šaprūṭ see also Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 69, 71; III 230f.; Vasiliev, Arabes II 1, p. 328f.; 331; Signes Codoñer, Diplomatica del libro 182f.; idem, Bizancio y al-Andalus 224-229; Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 102f.; 117f.; PmbZ II #22564.

61 For the calendar of Cordoba and Rabīʿ ibn Zayd, see Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 162; Lévi-Provençal, Califat de Cordoue 222. 239f.; El-Hajji, Diplomatic relations 219; Dufourcq, Coexistence 218; Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 102; Drocourt, Al-Andalus 58. Christys, Christians 116-134, accurately explains the reasons for the common identification of Recemundus, Rabīʿ ibn Zayd and the author of the calendar of Cordoba and remarks on the possibility of two or more different persons.

62 The Latin name and numerous details about his office as well as about his travel to Otto I are known from the Life of John of Gorze 128-130, p. 154,21-156,40, as well as from Liduprand of Cremona, who met him at the court of Otto I and dedicated to him his *Antapodosis* (Liudprand, Antapodosis 1,1 (p. 5); for all references concerning Recemundus in the *Antapodosis* see Christys, Christians 113-116; Drocourt, Al-Andalus 61 with n. 13). The date of John of Gorze's arrival in Cordoba is derived from a short passage by Ibn Iḏārī, Bayān 2,218 about an embassy of King Otto to the Umayyads in Spain in the year 342 AH (18.5.953-6.5.954). Recemundus' mission to Otto I has to be dated to the years 955/956, since he started his journey in June and returned from his embassy one year later, also in June (The Life of John of Gorze 130, p. 157,15-34 gives the months, while the year 956 for the return of Recemundus to Cordoba is clear from the remark in the Life of John of Gorze 131, p. 156,46, that John stayed for three years in prison until he was freed immediately after Recemundus' return from Frankfurt). On Recemundus' course of travel to Frankfurt, see Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 162; El-Hajji, Diplomatic relations 218-225; Christys, Christians 10f.; 108-113; Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 71f.

63 For the chronology, see n. 62.

64 John of Gorze 129, p. 156,13-15.

65 Signes Codoñer, Bizancio y al-Andalus 243 states that most probably this journey took place between 956 and 959 (thus still in the reign of Constantine VII). Even more likely are the years 958/959: 958 was the year of death of Gapio, the last documented bishop of Elvira, before Rabīʿ ibn Zayd took office (see Christys, Christians 111), while according to Signes Codoñer, loc. cit., as well as to the following remarks it is probable that the mission took place still in the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos.

66 Maqqarī, Nafḥ aṭ-ṭīb 373,20-374,2 (French trans. in Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 149 with n. 1; Engl. trans. in Christys, Christians 129).

67 For this embassy, see Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 148f.; Vasiliev, Arabes II 1 331 with n. 5; Signes Codoñer, Bizancio y al-Andalus 231f.; 243; Drocourt, Al-Andalus 58, 62f.; PmbZ II #26810, 20183. For the possible political reasons for this journey, see n. 80.

which the acculturation of a large part of the indigenous Christians to Muslim Arab society was far advanced[68]. The fact that Christians (and Jews) represented an integral component of an Arabized elite under Muslim rule, despite retaining their faith, is shown not only by external details, such as the double names in the case of the clerics mentioned[69]. It is also demonstrated by the fact that Christian and Jewish scholars held high offices, as we likewise have seen in the case of the above-mentioned bishops Hišām ibn Huḏayl and Rabīʿ ibn Zayd as well as in the case of the Jewish physician Ḥasdāy ibn Šaprūṭ[70]. In addition, the examples of Recemundus' collaboration in the composition of the Calendar of Cordoba as well as of the group of translators around the *Dioskourides* show that the Christian-Jewish elite was of central importance for the flourishing of culture and science that characterised Andalusia of the tenth century. This heyday was marked by a climate of intellectual openness, inspired by an all-encompassing interest in the sciences, in particular the natural sciences, philosophy and history. Indeed, it was not merely the Muslim Arab tradition that stood at the centre of interest, but everything in scientific literature somehow available at that time in the caliphate and elsewhere, including in particular the legacy of antiquity. A similar openness can be observed regarding the adaptation of foreign art and architecture, especially from Byzantium[71]. Of course, for the passing on of all these cultural assets Byzantium played a decisive role and an artistic and scientific elite made up of the members of the *ḏimmīs* as well as of Muslim scholars from all over the world was required to make it accessible[72].

The primary driving force for this cultural opening would have been Abd ar-Raḥmān's son, al-Ḥakam II[73], who was known for his passion for collecting books and, not least of all, for his particular curiosity about Christian history, still in the time of his father's reign[74]. We can only speculate if the latter's interest represents al-Ḥakam's desire of tracing back his own roots, for his mother, Marian, was a Christian slave[75] who rose to be an *umm walad*, just like the mothers of al-Muqtadir and al-Ḥākim[76]. In any case, al-Ḥakam's intellectual curiosity was all-encompassing, and when he took over the office of caliph in 961 at the age of 46, he possessed so many manuscripts that his library, which is said to have contained 400 000 volumes, was regarded as one of the largest and most important of his epoch[77]. Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī (eleventh century) reports about him »that he had the most important valuable books of ancient and contemporary science brought from Baghdad, Egypt and other places«[78]. How very much the caliph's son was interested, in particular in philosophical questions, is also made clear by the fragment of a letter from Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, which must have reached al-Ḥakam even before he came to power in 961[79]. From this emerges a passion for the works of philosophers common to the addressee and the recipient of the letter, with which a correspondence about philosophical questions preceding the writing must also have been concerned. It seems reasonable to conclude that Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos was fulfilling his promise formulated in the letter to send all the books requested by the addressee to Spain and that the emperor's letter arrived in Cordoba as an accompanying document for the consignment of books. This letter shows in all clarity that al-Ḥakam did not see the Byzantines merely as the suppliers of books and, at best, as the bringers of the technical know-how for the acquisition of foreign-language texts. Rather, a friendship even linked him with the Byzantine emperor which was based on an intellectual exchange on philosophical questions. It is highly possible that this shared interest – apart from the joint political mo-

68 For the process of Arabization of the indigenous Christians, sometimes conforming to an Islamisation, sometimes not, see Lévi-Provençal, Califat de Cordoue 214-226; Christys, Christians 12, 14-27; Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 12-18; the latter two authors rightly emphasise the problem of over simplistic generalisations derived from examples stemming from a single source that are applied to a whole society or epoch without considering the diversity of such an acculturation process.

69 Mozarab clerics of this time usually had an Arabic name besides their Latin one, such as Hišām ibn Huḏayl/Johannes, and Rabīʿ ibn Zayd/Recemundus; for this phenomenon, see Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 161; Lévi-Provençal, Califat de Cordoue 223; El-Hajji, Diplomatic relations 218 with n. 5; Dufourcq, Coexistence 218.

70 For this, with further examples, see Lévi-Provençal, Califat de Cordoue 217f.; Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 101f.

71 See for this Recemundus' journey n. 70. There are several other examples for the transfer of art pieces, building material and craftsmen from Byzantium to Andalusia, especially in connection with the construction of the Madīnat az-Zahrāʾ and the enlargment of the Mezquita in the reigns of Abd ar-Raḥmān and al-Ḥakam; see Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 148f.; Lévi-Provençal, Califat de Cordoue 393, 513; Cutler, Constantinople 417-436; Cheikh, Byzantium 59; Dölger/Müller, Regesten no. 706a; Signes, Bizancio 235; Christys, 129f.; Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 109, 112; PmbZ II #22543, 26810, 31473.

72 For the cultural openness which characterized Umayyad Spain in the tenth century, combined with a liberal attitude towards the *ḏimmīs* (in comparison with the preceding century, which was marked by many revolts and persecutions of Christians) and the immigration of scholars from the whole Muslim world, see Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 181; Lévi-Provençal, Califat de Cordoue 217-219, 232, 489-509; Dufourcq, Coexistence 216f.

73 For al-Ḥakam II, see Dozy, Califat umaiyade 176-200; Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 165-196; Hoenerbach, Geschichte 128-131; PmbZ II #22543.

74 The summary of Visigothic history might have been added to the Byzantine copy of Orosius on the initiative of the caliph's son, who may have sponsored the Arabic translation of the work (an introduction to the rather complex transmission history of the Arabic translation of Orosius is given in Christys, Christians 135-157; see also above n. 58); Godmar, bishop of Gerona, presented al-Hakam in 940 with a history of the Frankish kings as a gift; see ibidem 141, and Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 117f.

75 For the mother of al-Ḥakam, see Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 81, 90.

76 See above n. 14, 15 and 45.

77 For al-Ḥakam's library, his extraordinary erudition and knowledge in numerous fields of science as well as his promotion of works in many literary genres, see Dozy, Histoire II 183-185; Lévi-Provençal, Califat umaiyade 166; Lévi-Provençal, Califat de Cordoue 493-501 (with numerous source references), 506f.; Levi-Provencal, Civilisation 95-99; Hoenerbach, Geschichte 128 (with source references); Christys, Christians 137; Fierro, 'Abd al-Rahman III 117-125 .

78 Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī, Ṭabaqāt al-umam 66,1f. (French trans. by Blachère 125, and in Levi-Provencal, Civilisation 95).

79 The fragment of the letter is contained in a manuscript of the fifthteenth century, together with the Arabic version of a philosophical work attributed to Apollonios of Tyana. For a recent edition and German translation of the letter as well as the argumentation for the dating of the writing back to the time of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos and al-Ḥakam before 961 (and not in the reign of Romanos II [959-963], Nikephoros II Phokas [963-969] or John Tzimiskes [969-976], as Stern, Letter 40, suggested for the first time; while Signes Codoñer, Bizancio 229, argued for the reign of Romanos II, with Dölger/Müller, Regesten no. 742a arguing for the time of John Tzimiskes), see Krönung, Schreiben 93-99.

tives in the struggle against the Abbasid and the Fatimid Caliphates[80] – would have been decisive for a series of legations between Cordoba and Constantinople in the years around from 946 to 959, which also included those of the aforementioned bishops[81]. Constantine's gift of the *Dioskourides* and the historical work by Orosius to Abd ar-Rahman III would therefore have reached Cordoba at the initiative of Prince al-Ḥakam – perhaps together with the letter mentioned – and have been translated there.

Against this background, the dispatch of Christian clerics as emissaries to Byzantium (and also to other Christian rulers, such as Otto I) is to be explained not just by the lack of suitable Muslim dignitaries. Rather, it can be regarded as a consciously selected symbol for the humanistically-inclined spirit of the caliphal house, in particular of the caliph's son al-Ḥakam, which placed scientific interests above religious categories. Such an attitude was not common at all at the time under discussion, as is demonstrated in a passage in the *Life of John of Gorze*, where the Mozarab bishop John[82] has to justify the Christians of Andalusia against John of Gorze for putting themselves at the service of the Muslims[83]. And it is precisely that aspect of Christian Arabic diplomatic relations as a part of the cultural flourishing under al-Ḥakam which is hardly to be compared with the Abbasid translation movement approximately 150 years earlier, as is often read at times[84]. As is well known, many an important scholar of the so-called »Translators' School of Baghdad« was, it is true, Christian – thus, for example, the renowned East Syrian Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq or the Melkite Qusṭā ibn Lūqā[85]. Nevertheless, the rediscovery of ancient literature under the Abbasid caliphs served not least of all as an expression of a specific cultural and religious identity in contrast to the main adversary in foreign affairs, Byzantium, as first suggested by Dimitri Gutas[86]. From the comments of various Abbasid scholars, it emerges that here one attributed the great scientific and philosophical achievements above all to the advanced civilisation of the ancient Greeks. Moreover, the Byzantines were accused of having turned away from the ancient legacy with the assumption of Christianity and, through their disinterest in classical literature, of having declined into cultural inferiority, not only compared with the ancient Greeks, but also compared with the Muslims, who recognised the value of the ancient advanced civilisation[87]. It was thus really part of the ideology of the Abbasid rulers to substantiate their cultural superiority also with their different religious nature and to make a show of this different nature wherever possible. In this light, it seems simply inconceivable that an Abbasid leader would send a Christian, whether a cleric or not, as the representative of his rule to Byzantium.

The interest of the Umayyads under al-Ḥakam, in contrast, was a demonstration of cultural superiority less over the Byzantines then over the Abbasids, their most serious rival in competing for supremacy over the Islamic world. This is shown clearly enough by the statement of Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī: »He [al-Ḥakam] collected at the end of his father's reign and in the following time of his own caliphate an amount of books almost similar to what was collected by the princes of the Abbasids over a quite longer time«[88]. In fact, since the Abbasid climax in connection with the famous translators' school of Baghdad some 150 years earlier, the balance of power had changed. While the Abbasid Caliphate underwent a process of political (and thus cultural) decline, the Byzantines under Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos found themselves at the peak of their scholarly »renaissance«. It was the latter providing the standards of measure for the intellectual prince al-Ḥakam, expressed not least in the display of diplomatic relations with Byzantium.

Conclusion

As has been shown in the course of these observations, there is no one answer for the initial question of what motives impelled the potentates of the great Muslim dynasties of the tenth century to deploy Christian intermediaries in their diplomatic contacts with Byzantium. Just as the Islamicate world

80 The Shiite writers Nuʿmān, Mağālis 166,3 f., and ʿImād ad-Dīn Idrīs, ʿUyūn al-aḫbār 62,7 f., report for the year 344 AH (27.04.955-14.04.956) of an Andalusian mission to Constantinople in order to assure the Byzantine emperor of an alliance against the Fatimids in southern Italy, but the ensuing common Andalusian-Byzantine maritime offensive, probably under the command of the Byzantine *stratēgos* Marianos Argyros, was unsuccessful; see Lienhard, Marianos 120. According to the dating of Nuʿmān in the year 344 AH, an identification of this Andalusian mission with the journey of Rabīʿ ibn Zayd (see n. 66, 67), as suggested by Drocourt, al-Andalus 58 f. with n. 7, is not possible. For the Umayyad-Byzantine alliance mentioned by Nuʿmān, see also Stern, Embassy 241; Vasiliev, Arabes II 1 371; Eickhoff, Seekrieg 327 f.; Lev, Navy 234 f.; Halm, Mahdi 348 f.; Tibi, Relations 91. 99; Lev, Fatimids 197; Dölger/Müller, Regesten no. 663b; Fierro, ʿAbd al-Rahman III 72. Other possible political motives for the intensive diplomatic relations between Cordoba and Amalfi, Byzantium and Otto I in the middle of the tenth c. is given in Senac, Contribution 51-54.

81 Scholars do not agree about the number and chronology of the Umayyad-Byzantine embassies of this time. While Dölger/Müller, Regesten nos 657, 695, 663b, 706a, 742a counts altogether five Byzantine embassies to Andalusia (three of them under Constantine VII), Signes Codoñer, Bizancio y al-Andalus 177-245 assumes that there were eight Byzantine embassies to Cordoba (five under Constantine VII) and five Andalusian embassies to Constantinople (all of them under Constantine VII) within the years 946 to 972. An overview of all embassies and the related chronological problematic is given in PmbZ II #20018. See also above n. 57 and 58.

82 See above n. 56.

83 Life of John of Gorze 122, p. 148,12-30.

84 Cheikh, Byzantium 110; Signes Codoñer, Diplomatica del libro 183; Beihammer, Strategies 15 f.

85 For these persons and the translation school of Baghdad, see Gutas, Greek Thought 1-10; 14 f. 109, 119, 124, 126, 128 f., 131, 133-136, 138-145, 179, 185; Strohmaier, Homer in Bagdad 222-226; Swanson, Qusṭā 147-153; PmbZ II #22640, 26789 (with further references).

86 Gutas, Greek thought 83-94. See also Cheikh, Byzantium 104.

87 Numerous passages from Abbasid authors stressing the superiority of the ancient Greeks (and the Muslims) over the Byzantines are translated into English in Cheikh, Byzantium 102-110. For the return of the Byzantines to the ancient legacy in the ninth and early tenth century as a consequence of the translation movement in Baghdad, see especially Magdalino, Road 195-213, and Gutas, Greek Thought 175-186.

88 Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī, Ṭabaqāt al-umam 66,2 f. (French trans. Blachère 125 and in Levi-Provencal, Civilisation 95).

was diverse and heterogeneous in the tenth century, so too was there a variety of motivations in the individual Muslim potentates' way of diplomatic dealings with the great power of Byzantium. A uniform line, and thus one to be described as being Muslim, when sending Christian emissaries into diplomatic contacts with Constantinople is not to be found. Rather, the sources leave us with a complex picture of a series of individual rulers – caliphs, viziers and emirs – who made use of Christian members of their society or family, in order to meet a certain power policy or personal objective. This objective could be a demonstrative act of power and differentiation from the foreign policy adversary, as we have seen in the Abbasid example. It could be the achievement of peace negotiations and foreign policy de-escalation, as in the case of the Fatimid legations mentioned. It could be a symbolic act for the demonstration of an open-minded spirit, guided by scientific interest, as in the case of the Umayyad missions. But it could also have a far less calculated, official character than in the case of these examples when two high ecclesiastical dignitaries were used for communication between two rulers. It could have arisen from the necessity of the situation, as in the example of the merchant Malkūṭa, mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Necessity caused the ruler in dire straits to send the person to the emperor who was best suited for the rapid conveyance of a message on account of his intercultural abilities.

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Summary / Zusammenfassung

The Employment of Christian Mediators by Muslim Rulers in Arab-Byzantine Diplomatic Relations in the Tenth and Early Eleventh Centuries

A number of historical sources in Arabic refer to Christian ambassadors and other mediators, who were employed by Muslim rulers in the diplomatic contact with Byzantium in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. This paper deals not only with the question of who these mediators were, but also discusses the factors that led the Abbasid, Fatimid, Umayyad and Hamdanid potentates to draw on Christian intermediaries. What are parallels and differences in the choice of Christian mediators by rulers of the these dynasties? Was there a common motivation in their choice, which could therefore be described as typically Islamic?

Die Beschäftigung christlicher Vermittler durch muslimische Herrscher in den arabisch-byzantinischen diplomatischen Beziehungen im 10. und frühen 11. Jahrhundert

Eine ganze Reihe historischer Quellen in arabischer Sprache bezieht sich auf christliche Botschafter und andere Vermittler, die von muslimischen Herrschern im 10. und frühen 11. Jahrhundert für die diplomatischen Kontakte mit Byzanz bestellt worden waren. Dieser Beitrag befasst sich nicht nur mit der Frage, wer diese Vermittler gewesen waren. Vielmehr diskutiert er auch die Beweggründe, die die Herrscher der Abbasiden, Fatimiden, Umayyaden und Hamdaniden dazu veranlassten, christliche Vermittler heranzuziehen. Wo liegen die Parallelen und Unterschiede in der Wahl christlicher Vermittler durch die Herrscher aus diesen Dynastien? Gab es eine gemeinsame Motivation dafür, die man daher als typisch islamisch bezeichnen könnte?