



Summary :

The defeat of the Arabs during the siege of Constantinople in 678 weakened the Arab state. At the same time, the Byzantines counterattacked in Syria and Lebanon. The Byzantine victories perturbed Caliph Muwa'iyah, who asked for a peace treaty with Emperor Constantine IV. The treaty was signed in the same year and provided that the Arabs should pay taxes and the Byzantines should put an end to the conflicts in Syria and Lebanon.

Date

678

Geographical Location

Damascus

1. Historical Framework

The first period of the Arab conquests, which started in 634, ended with the long [siege of Constantinople](#) by Caliph Muwa'iyah ibn Abi Sufyan in 674-678. With the help of his fleet and the **Greek fire** Emperor Constantine IV (668-685) managed to repel the repeated Arab attacks and save the capital. Although the Byzantines were in defence, they dealt the Arabs heavy blows, especially during the last years of the siege. When the Arabs had to retreat to the Propontis in the middle of a storm the last parts of their fleet were destroyed. At the same time, an Arab army was ambushed and shattered by the Byzantines in Asia Minor. The heavy losses the Arabs suffered during the conflicts of 674-678 led the caliphate to a domestic crisis. Things were even worse in Syria and Lebanon. Taking advantage of the difficulties the Arabs were facing, the Byzantines counterattacked. The [Mardaites](#), people of debatable origin and possibly identified with the Djaradjima reported by Arab sources, occupied the mountains from the mountain range of Amanus as far as the outskirts of Jerusalem, and launched raids in [Syria](#) and Lebanon. They soon became very threatening for the Arabs, as their raids were launched against the very heart of the caliphate. Not being able to confront them successfully, Muwa'iyah sent a delegation to Emperor Constantine in 678 asking for a peace treaty.

2. Presentation and Analysis of the Event

In 678 Caliph Muwa'iyah sent envoys to Emperor Constantine IV in order to discuss his propositions about peace between Byzantines and Arabs. The head Arab representative was the official Phenakes of Byzantine origin, who had also participated in the negotiations that had led to the peace treaty of 659 between Muwa'iyah and Emperor Constans II (641-668). The emperor was sympathetic to the propositions of Muwa'iyah about peace and sent the Arab delegation back to Syria accompanied by the [patrikios](#) John Pitzigaudes (or Pitzikaudes, or Pitzigaudios), an experienced and prudent state official, according to the sources,¹ who was assigned by the emperor to negotiate the terms of the peace treaty. The negotiations were held in the caliph's court in Damascus and resulted in a peace treaty signed for a period of thirty years. According to the terms of the treaty, the Arabs had to pay an annual tax of three thousand **librae** of gold (216,000 gold coins) to the Byzantines and also give them fifty slaves and fifty thoroughbred horses. In return, the Byzantines should suspend any military activities of the Mardaites in Syria and Lebanon. Both sides should also avoid any armed conflict. The treaty was prepared in two copies attested under oath and exchanged between the two sides. John Pitzigaudes returned triumphantly to Constantinople carrying diplomatic gifts from the caliph.

3. Consequences

The peace treaty of 678 with the Arabs did not put an end to the Arabo-Byzantine conflicts right away. The successor of Muwa'iyah, Yazid (680-685), had to renew the treaty in 680 or 681, while new terms were included in the next renewal of the treaty between Caliph Abd al-Malik and Justinian II (685-695, 705-711). The repetition of the terms concerning the Mardaites shows that the latter were still active, while the Byzantine raids against the Syrian and Phoenician coasts were common and the Arabs were gaining ground in Byzantine northern Africa. However, broadly speaking, the 678 peace treaty (which actually reversed the situation in favour of the Byzantines after their victory in Constantinople, which led to the peace treaty) offered some peaceful years to Asia Minor during



which the two sides renewed their efforts. On the other hand, the peace treaty on the Arabo-Byzantine border gave the Byzantine Empire the opportunity to consolidate its position in the Balkans and Italy, where both Slav and Langobard sovereigns hastened to subordinate to the power that intercepted the Arab danger.

1. *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. de Boor, C., (Leipzig 1883), 355, 15-18: "ἄπέστειλε σὺν αὐτοῖς ἐν Συρίᾳ Ἰωάννην τὸν πατρίκιον, τὸ ἐπίκλην Πιτζιγαῦ διν, ὡς ἀρχαιογενῆ τῆς πολιτείας καὶ πολυπείρον ὄντα καὶ μεγάλης ἀντεχόμενον φρονήσεως" (he sent to them in Syria patrician John, who was called Pitzigaudes, because he was originated from the city and had much experience and prudence). Mango, C., *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 13, Washington 1990), pp. 34, 24-26.

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Webliography :

	Constantine IV (668-685 A.D.) http://www.roman-emperors.org/Constiv.htm
	Mu'awiyah I http://www.britannica.com/eb/topic-395758/Muawiyah-I

Glossary :

	caliph The supreme religious and political authority of Muslims, considered successor of Muhammad (Arabic: khalifa = deputy). He was the head of the Caliphate, the religious state of the Arabs.
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Greek fire

Incendiary mixture based on crude oil ('naphtha'), which was launched with the help of a pressure pump. Its used was spread in Byzantium towards the late 7th century and became one of the most powerful weapons of the Byzantine navy until the invention of canons.

litra (lat. libra)

A unit of weight varying according to size. The most common was the "logarike litra", established at the time of constantine I in 309-310 as the basis of the monetary system. It was estimated as weighing *ca.* 324 or 319 g and was divided into 72 golden coins (solidi). One hundred litrai made a kentenarion.

patrikios

(from lat. *patricius*) Higher title of honour, placed, according to the "*Tactika*" of the 9th and the 10th centuries, between *anthypatos* and *protospatharios*. It was given to the most important governors and generals. Gradually, however, it fell into disuse and from the 12th century did not exist any more.

Sources

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C. Mango (ed.), *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 13, Washington, D.C. 1990), pp. 34.21-31.

Gy. Moravcsik – R. J. H. Jenkins (ed.), *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 1, Washington, D.C. 1967), pp. 21.3-16.

Quotations

The 678 peace treaty between Byzantium and the Arabs according to the Byzantine historian Nikephoros

“ὁ δὲ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν βασιλεὺς τὸ τοῦ στόλου ἀκούσας δυστύχημα πρέσβεις ἀποστέλλει πρὸς Κωνσταντῖνον ὡς σπεισόμενος πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τελέσμασιν ἐνιαυσίοις. ὁ δὲ τούτους δεξάμενος καὶ τὰ δηλωθέντα ἀκηκοῶς συνεκπέμπει αὐτοῖς Ἰωάννην τὸν πατρίκιον, τὸ ἐπίκλην Πιτζιγαῦδιον, πολυπειρία καὶ φρονήσει διαφέροντα, ὡς τὰ ἐπὶ τῇ εἰρήνῃ διαλεχθῶσόμενον· ὃς πρὸς τὰ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν γενόμενος ἤθη συμβαίνει τε αὐτοῖς ὄρκους τὴν εἰρήνην βεβαιωσάμενος ἐπὶ τριάκοντα ἔτεσιν, ὥστε παρέχεσθαι Ῥωμαίοις ὑπὸ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν ἀνὰ ἔτος ποσότητα χρυσοῦ τρεῖς χιλιάδας ἄνδρας τε αἰχμαλώτους πεντήκοντα καὶ ἵππους πεντήκοντα.”

C. Mango (ed.), *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople, Short History* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 13, Washington, D.C. 1990), pp. 34.21-31.

The 678 peace treaty between Byzantium and the Arabs according to Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus

“Ἰστέον, ὅτι πρὸς τῇ τελευτῇ Μαυρίου, τῶν Ἀράβων ἀρχηγοῦ, εἰσηλθον οἱ Μαρδαῖται εἰς τὸν Λίβανον, καὶ ἐκράτησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ Μαύρου ὄρους ἕως τῆς ἁγίας πόλεως, καὶ ἐχειρώσαντο τὰς τοῦ Λιβάνου περιωπίας· καὶ πολλοὶ δούλοι καὶ αὐτόχθονες πρὸς αὐτοὺς κατέφυγον, ὥστε δι’ ὀλίγου χρόνου εἰς πολλὰς χιλιάδας γενέσθαι. Καὶ τοῦτο μαθὼν Μαυρίας καὶ οἱ σύμβουλοι αὐτοῦ, ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα. Καὶ ἀποστέλλει πρέσβεις πρὸς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Κωνσταντῖνον ζητῶν εἰρήνην. Ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ προφάσει πέμπεται παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως Κωνσταντίνου, τοῦ ὀρθοδόξου, υἱοῦ τοῦ Πωγωνάτου, Ἰωάννης ὁ ἐπίκλην Πιτζικαῦδης. Τούτου δὲ καταλαβόντος ἐν Συρίᾳ, Μαυρίας ἐδέξατο αὐτὸν μετὰ μεγάλης τιμῆς, καὶ συνεφωνήθη πρὸς ἀμφοτέρους ἐγγράφον γενέσθαι εἰρήνης μεθ’ ὄρκου λόγον ἐπὶ συμφώνου ἔτησιον πάκτου, παρέχεσθαι τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῖ παρὰ τῶν Ἀγαρηνῶν χρυσοῦ χιλιάδας τρεῖς καὶ ἄνδρας αἰχμαλώτους ὦ· καὶ ἵππους εὐγενεῖς ν’.”

Gy. Moravcsik – R. J. H. Jenkins (ed.), *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De Administrando Imperio* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 1, Washington, D.C. 1967), pp. 21.3-16.

The negotiations over the 678 peace treaty according to the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes



“Τούτω τῷ ἔτει εἰσηλθον Μαρδαΐται εἰς τὸν Λίβανον καὶ ἐκράτησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ Μαύρου ὄρους ἕως τῆς ἁγίας πόλεως καὶ ἐχειρώσαντο τὰς τοῦ Λιβάνου περσιώπας. καὶ πολλοὶ δούλοι καὶ αἰχμάλωτοι καὶ αὐτόχθονες πρὸς αὐτοὺς κατέφυγον, ὥστε δι’ ὀλίγου χρόνου εἰς πολλὰς χιλιάδας γενέσθαι. καὶ ταῦτα μαθὼν Μαυΐας καὶ οἱ σύμβουλοι αὐτοῦ ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα συλλογισάμενοι, ὅτι τὸ βασιλεῖον τῶν Ῥωμαίων ὑπὸ θεοῦ φρουρεῖται. καὶ ἀποστέλλει πρέσβεις πρὸς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Κωνσταντῖνον ζητῶν εἰρήνην, ὑποσχόμενος καὶ ἐτήσια τῷ βασιλεῖ παρέχειν πάκτα. ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς τοὺς τοιοῦτους πρέσβεις δεξάμενος καὶ τὴν αἴτησιν αὐτῶν ἀκηκοὼς ἀπέστειλε σὺν αὐτοῖς ἐν Συρίᾳ Ἰωάννην τὸν πατρικίον, τὸ ἐπικλην Πιτζιγαῦδιν, ὡς ἀρχαιογενῆ τῆς πολιτείας καὶ πολυτίμων ὄντα καὶ μεγάλης ἀντεχόμενον φρονήσεως, ἐπὶ τὸ ἀρμοδίως διαλεχθῆναι τοῖς Ἀραβῶσι καὶ τὰ τῆς εἰρήνης συμφωνῆσαι. τούτου δὲ καταλαβόντος ἐν Συρίᾳ, ὁ Μαυΐας σώρευμα πεποικηκὼς τῶν τε ἀμηραίων καὶ κορασηνῶν ἐδέξατο αὐτὸν μετὰ μεγάλης τιμῆς. πολλῶν οὖν ἀναμεταξὺ αὐτῶν εἰρηνικῶν λεχθέντων λόγων, συμφωνήθη πρὸς ἑκατέρους ἔγγραφον γενέσθαι εἰρήνης μεθ’ ὅρκου λόγον ἐπὶ συμφώνου ἐτησίου πάκτου, παρέχεσθαι τῇ Ῥωμαϊκῇ πολιτεῖᾳ παρὰ τῶν Ἀραβηνῶν χρυσοῦ χιλιάδας τρεῖς καὶ ἄνδρας αἰχμαλώτους ν' καὶ ἵππους εὐγενεῖς ν'. ταῦτα στοιχηθέντα μεταξὺ τῶν δύο μερῶν ἐπὶ χρόνους λ' φυλάττεσθαι πλατεῖαν εἰρήνην ἀνάμεσον Ῥωμαίων καὶ Ἀράβων <πεποιήκεν>. καὶ τῶν τοιούτων καθολικῶν δύο ἐγγράφων λόγων πρὸς ἀλλήλους μεθ’ ὅρκων γεγονότων καὶ ἀλλήλοις ἐπιδοθέντων, ὁ πολλαχῶς λεχθεὶς πανεύφημος ἀνὴρ πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα ὑπέστρεψε μετὰ καὶ δώρων πολλῶν.”

C. de Boor (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig 1883), pp. 355.6-356.2.

C. de Boor (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig 1883), pp. 355.6-356.2.

Chronological Table

674: The Arabs lay siege to Constantinople

678: The Arab forces are defeated in Constantinople and Asia Minor. Peace treaty between Byzantines and Arabs

680 or 681: The new caliph Yazid renews the peace treaty