



Summary :

The movement of the Mardaites was imposed by the terms of the treaty of 688 AD between Justinian II and caliph Abd al-Malik. Specifically, the Byzantines were obliged to move the Mardaites from the region extending from Mopsuestia to the borders of the province of Armenia IV, and resettle them elsewhere. The forced movement proved fatal to the Byzantine defences along the borders with the Arabs in the region of Taurus.

Date

688

Geographical Location

SE Asia Minor

1. Historical context

The forced movement of the [Mardaites](#) from the region of Lebanon following the signing of the [peace treaty of 688](#) AD between the emperor Justinian II and the Arab [caliph](#) Abd al-Malik (668-705 AD) was an event of great importance regarding the [defensive line of Byzantium](#) in the region of the mountain range of Taurus and [Armenia](#). This treaty was the second renewal of the [peace treaty of 678](#) AD, signed between the emperor Constantine IV Pogonatos (668-685 AD) and caliph Mu'awiya (661-680 AD) (the first renewal of the treaty was signed in 685 AD). According to the terms of the treaty of 678 AD, an annual toll of 365.000 golden coins, 365 horses and 365 slaves was to be paid to the Byzantines. These favourable terms were the result of the unsuccessful [siege of Constantinople](#) by Mu'awiya and the successful byzantine diversion in the region of Syria carried out by the Mardaites (677 AD). The available evidence of the presence and action of the Mardaites in the arab-byzantine frontier during the second half of the 7th cent. AD is fragmentary and incomplete, making further research extremely difficult. The main points of interest in the Mardaites concern the ethnographic nature of their origin and their fate following their forced movement from Lebanon, as well as the conditions in the abandoned region of Taurus in the subsequent years.

2. The forced movement of the Mardaites

2.1. The Mardaites

The role played by the Mardaites in the military events of the 7th cent. AD is easier to grasp by taking into account certain information regarding their past prior to the treaty of 688 AD. Their presence was attested to the mountains of Amanus and the mountain range of Taurus. Their Arab name was Djaradjima. The issue of their origin remains unclear. It is possible, however, that they were of Iranian or Armenian descent. With regard to their religious beliefs, the Mardaites were Christian adherents of [Monophysitism](#) or [Monotheletism](#). It is possible that they also provided their military services to the Byzantines prior to the Arab expansion. Following the conquest of Syria by the Muslims, a part of the Mardaites moved to the north,¹ while another part of their population remained in Arab territory and converted to Islam.²

2.2. The forced movement

The terms of the treaty of 688 AD renewed for a second time the treaty of 678 AD with the addition of two more terms, related to the causes which led the two sides to this renewal. The two extra terms provided the withdrawal of the Mardaites, allies of Byzantium, from the region of Lebanon and the prevention on behalf of the byzantine Emperor of their raids into arab territories; also, that the tax payed by the populations of Cyprus, Armenia and Iberia should be divided in two and payed to both sides.³ The first term was a prerequisite of the second, regarding the regions of Armenia and Iberia at least, due to the fact that the Mardaites were responsible for the defence of the border as far as [Armenia IV](#). The Mardaites were thus the main issue of the treaty of 688 AD for both sides.



3. Consequences

The forced movement of the Mardaites resulted in the alteration of the population of the Byzantine Empire and the readjustment of the military balance in southeastern Asia Minor. It is estimated that the removed Mardaites numbered 30.000. However, the removed population did not come from Byzantine territories only. No less than 12.000 Mardaites came from Arab territories, added to the 18.000 from the byzantine region of Taurus.⁴ At first, the Mardaites settled in southeastern Asia Minor ([Pamphylia](#), Caria, [Lycia](#)), serving as oarsmen in the fleet of the [theme of Kibyrrhaiotai](#). Later, during the 9th and 10th cent. AD, they served as oarsmen in the themes of Peloponnese, Nicopolis and Cephalenia,⁵ thus reinforcing the fleet of the themes of Byzantium.⁶ The Mardaites of the European provinces of the Byzantine Empire are mentioned in the sources as Mardaites of the West; however, whether these 9th- and 10th- cent. Mardaites are the same people as the Mardaites of the 7th cent., is an open question.⁷ The greatest consequence of the forced movement of the Mardaites was their absence from the arab-byzantine frontier, making the [defence of Byzantium](#) against the attacks of the caliphate insufficient. The Arabs, at the same time, reinforced their presence in the region. The region of [Mopsuestia](#) as far as Armenia IV became an area of conflict between the two empires. At the beginning of the 8th cent. AD, the Djaradjima of the caliphate met the economic oppression as well as persecutions by the authorities of the caliphate, forcing them to scatter in the mountainous regions of Amanus and Taurus.⁸

4. Criticism on these events

[Theophanes the Confessor](#), a contemporary to these events, criticizes in his [work](#) the decision of Justinian II to remove the Mardaites, believing that they were of great importance for the defence of the Empire against the arab threat. Having the advantage of witnessing how this affected the defence of Asia Minor, Theophanes points out characteristically that the borderline Arab cities from Mopsuestia to Armenia IV were once deserted for fear of the Mardaites, while after the latter's forced movement, Byzantium suffered greatly.⁹

1. Vasiliev, A. A., *History of the Byzantine Empire* (Madison 1952), p. 215.

2. al-Baladhuri, Kitab Futuh al-Buldan, Hitti, Ph. K. (ed.) *The Origin of the Islamic State* (Beirut 1966), pp. 246-247.

3. De Boor, C. (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig 1883), p. 363.3-20.

4. Treadgold, W. T., *Byzantium and its Army (284-1081)* (Stanford 1995), p. 72.

5. Ahrweiler, H., *Byzance et la mer. La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance au VIIe-XVe siecles* (Paris 1966), pp. 33, 44, 50, 52, 84-85, 100, 108, 399-400.

6. Treadgold, W. T., *Byzantium and its Army (284-1081)* (Stanford 1995), p. 26.

7. According to Treadgold, W. T., *Byzantium and its Army (284-1081)* (Stanford 1995), p. 72, the various sources of the 7th and 8th-9th cent. imply that the Mardaites of subsequent centuries were descendants of those removed from Asia Minor in the 7th cent. His belief is based on the assumption that the early Mardaites must have been granted military lands by the Emperor, which they later left to their descendants, or that their professions and privileges were hereditary.

8. al-Baladhuri, Kitab Futuh al-Buldan, Hitti, Ph. K. (ed.) *The Origin of the Islamic State* (Beirut 1966), p. 258.

9. De Boor, C. (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig 1883), p. 363.16-20: "πάσαι γαρ αι νυν οικούμεναι παρά των Αράβων εις τα άκρα πόλεια από



Μογουμεστίας και έως τετάρτης Αρμενίας ανίσχυροι και αοίκητοι ετύγχανον δια την έφοδον των Μαρδαϊτών· ων παρασταλλέντων, πάνδεινα κακά πέπονθεν η Ρωμανία υπό των Αράβων μέχρι του νυν”.

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al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān*, Hitti, Ph.K. (ed.), *The Origin of the Islamic State*, Beirut 1966

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.	
	monophysitism
A Christian heresy which developed in the 5th cent. Contrary to the orthodox dogmas, it argued that Christ did not possess two natures, but only one – a human nature. This heresy became widespread in the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire (mainly in Egypt) and in Armenia.	
	monotheletism
Doctrine developed in the 7 th century by Patriarch Sergios, who wanted to reconcile the Orthodox with the monophysites of the Byzantine Empire. Monotheletism supported that Jesus had two natures but only one will. Despite the efforts of Emperor Herakleios (610-641) to impose the new doctrine, monotheletism, was renounced as a heresy in 680.	

Sources

De Boor, C. (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig 1883), pp. 363.6-20, 364.3-5.

Quotations

The Byzantine chronographer Theophanes relates the terms of the treaty of 688:

Τούτω τῷ ἔτει ἀποστέλλει Ἀβιμέλεχ πρὸς Ἰουστινιανὸν βεβαιῶσαι τὴν εἰρήνην, καὶ ἐστοιχήθη ἡ εἰρήνη οὕτως· ἵνα ὁ βασιλεὺς παύσῃ τὸ τῶν Μαρδαϊτῶν τάγμα ἐκ τοῦ Λιβάνου, καὶ διακωλύσῃ τὰς ἐπιδρομὰς αὐτῶν· καὶ Ἀβιμέλεχ δώσῃ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν νομίσματα χίλια καὶ ἵππον καὶ δούλον· καὶ ἵνα ἔχωσι κοινὰ κατὰ τὸ ἴσον τοὺς φόρους τῆς Κύπρου καὶ Ἀρμενίας καὶ Ἰβηρίας. καὶ ἔπεμψεν ὁ βασιλεὺς Παῦλον τὸν μαγιστριανὸν πρὸς Ἀβιμέλεχ ἀσφαλίσασθαι τὰ στοιχηθέντα, καὶ γέγονεν ἔγγραφος ἀσφάλεια μετὰ μαρτύρων. καὶ φιλοτιμηθεὶς ὁ μαγιστριανὸς ὑπέστρεψεν. καὶ πέμψας ὁ βασιλεὺς προσελάβετο τοὺς Μαρδαῖτας χιλιάδας ἰβ', τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν δυναστείαν ἀκρωτηριάσας. πᾶσαι γὰρ αἱ νῦν οἰκούμεναι παρὰ τῶν Ἀράβων εἰς τὰ ἄκρα πόλεις ἀπὸ Μοψουεστίας καὶ ἕως τετάρτης Ἀρμενίας ἀνίσχυροι καὶ ἀοίκητοι ἐτύγχανον διὰ τὴν ἔφοδον τῶν Μαρδαϊτῶν ὧν παρασταλλέντων, πάνδεινα κακὰ πέπονθεν ἡ Ῥωμανία ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀράβων μέχρι τοῦ νῦν.

De Boor, C. (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig 1883), p. 363.6-20.

The forced movement of Mardaites in the work of Theophanes:

Τούτω τῷ ἔτει ἐγένετο λιμὸς ἐν Συρίᾳ· καὶ πολλοὶ εἰσηλθόντες εἰς Ῥωμανίαν. καὶ ἐλθὼν ὁ βασιλεὺς εἰς Ἀρμενίαν ἐκεῖ ἐδέξατο τοὺς ἐν τῷ Λιβάνῳ Μαρδαῖτας, χάλκεον τεῖχος διαλύσας.

De Boor, C. (ed.), *Theophanis Chronographia* (Leipzig 1883), p. 364.3-5.

Chronological Table

677: The Mardaites raid the Arabs in the region of Lebanon

678: Treaty between Constantine IV Pogonatos and Mu'awiya, consequence of the unsuccessful Arab siege of Constantinople

688: Treaty between Justinian II and Abd al-Malik. Forced movement of the Mardaites to the Byzantine territories of southeastern Asia Minor according to the terms of the treaty