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MILOŠ CVETKOVIĆ
Institute for Byzantine Studies of the SASA, Belgrade
milos.cvetkovic@vi.sanu.ac.rs

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE MARDAITES AND THEIR MILITARY-ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION IN THE *THEMATA* OF THE WEST: A CHRONOLOGY*

The paper discusses questions about the chronology of the settlement of Mardaite soldiers in the Balkans and their military-administrative position in the *themata* of the West: Peloponnesus, Cephalaria and Nicopolis. It presents arguments in favor of the hypothesis of the Mardaite settlement in Peloponnesus as the result of the colonization policy of Nicephorus I in the early 9th century. This view largely rests on information contained in the *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, a source hereto unused in discussions about the Mardaites. The Mardaites were moved in the territory of the *themata* of Nicopolis and Cephalaria at the close of the same century in a bid to reinforce Byzantine positions on the eastern coast of the Ionian Sea at the time of the Arab threat to this region. Finally, in the concluding passages the author touches on the military-administrative status of Mardaites in the *themata* of the West, who operated in units headed by *tourmarchai*, comparing them to other ethnic *tourmai* in the Byzantine Empire.

Keywords: Mardaites, *themata* of the West, Peloponnesus, Cephalaria, Nicopolis, *tourmarchai*.

In the 7th century Mardaite soldiers played an important role in Arabo-Byzantine relations in the eastern border regions. A few centuries later, in the late 9th and in the first half of the 10th century, they were an important part of Byzantine seafaring forces in Asia Minor and the Balkans. Their ancestry, ethnic identity and religious

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affiliation, however, have remained a controversial subject in scholarship. Researchers have suggested theories about the Iranian and Armenian ancestry of the Mardaite community, associating their origin with various toponyms and ethnonyms.¹ Some scholars believed that the name of this was group was derived from a word of Semitic origin meaning ‘rebel’.² Another old hypothesis asserts the identification of the Mardaites with the Maronites,³ but this view has generally been refuted.⁴

What can be said with a high degree of certainty is that the Byzantine Mardaites were in fact identical to the al-Jarājimah tribe, which is mentioned in various Arab sources. The claim that these groups were one and the same has a long history in academic circles⁵ and rests on the fact that the earliest information on Mardaites in Byzantine sources largely corresponds to the reports on the al-Jarājimah tribe provided by Muslim authors, first of all al-Balādhuri.

Theophanes the Confessor provides the earliest reports on Mardaites that have reached us in Greek sources, informing us that the Mardaites invaded Lebanon on behalf of the Byzantines in the ninth year of the reign of Constantine IV (668–685) and occupied the territory from the Black Mountain to the Holy City. These events had a strong impact on the Arabo-Byzantine conflict during the period when the Muslim fleet laid siege to the Byzantine capital. The Mardaite incursion into the territory of Lebanon led to a peace treaty between Constantinople and the Caliphate in 678, which forced the Arabs, led by Muawiyah I (661–680), to pay an annual tribute to the Byzantines.⁶ The activities of the Mardaites are also evidenced in the reports of Patriarch Michael the Syrian, the senior priest of Antioch in the second half of the 12th century, who states that in the ninth year of the reign of Constantine IV, the Byzantines – known as *Marīdayē* (Mardaites) or *Liphourē*, or *Gargoumayē* as they were called by the Syrians – captured the territory from the hills of Galilee all the way to the Black Mountain.⁷

¹ *Paparrēgopoulou*, Ἱστορία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους, 248; *Amantos*, Μαρδαῖται, 130f; *Stratos*, Τὸ Βυζάντιον στὸν Ζ' αἰῶνα Ε', 46f; *Bartikian*, Ἡ λύση τοῦ αἰνίγματος τῶν Μαρδαῖτων, 28f; *Zakeri*, Sāsānid Soldiers, 154; *Harris*, Lebanon, 35f.

² *Bury*, History of the Later Roman Empire, 312; Chronique de Michel le Syrien II, 455 n. 4.

³ *Noeldeke*, Zur Geschichte der Araber, 82, n. 2.

⁴ For more details on the views of Maronite authors who argued in favor of the identification of Mardaites with Maronites, as well as on opposing views, cf. *Moosa*, Relation, 597f.

⁵ *Noeldeke*, Zur Geschichte der Araber, p. 82, n. 2. Cf. *Moosa*, Relation, 597f.

⁶ Theophanes, 355f; cf. DAI I, c. 21, p. 84, 86. Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople, however, underlines that the defeat of the Arab fleet was the key factor in the decision of Caliph Muawiyah to agree peace terms with the Byzantines, Nicephorus, 86. Younger Byzantine sources also provide information on the Mardaites and their role in these events, cf. Leo Grammaticus, 160; Cedrenus I, 765. The peace treaty was binding for 30 years and stipulated the annual tribute of 3,000 gold coins, 50 slaves and 50 horses, Theophanes, 355; Nicephorus, 86. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus repeats Theophanes's information, but provides a different number of prisoners – 800 slaves instead of 50, DAI I, c. 21, p. 86. F. Dölger dates the peace treaty to 678, *Dölger*, Regesten I, n° 239, p. 28.

⁷ Chronique de Michel le Syrien II, 455; IV, 437. In the 10th century Agapius of Hierapolis wrote that in the 17th year of Muawiyah's reign the Byzantine fleet landed on the shores of Lebanon and attacked Arab territories together with the al-Kharaniqah tribe (= Mardaites). Agapius also mentions their irruption to the Black Mountain, *Kitab* (Agapius), 492–493 n. 4.

Less than a decade later, the Mardaites attacked Arab positions in Lebanon once again. This attack, as well as the famine and plague that struck Syria, forced the new caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (685–705) to agree a peace treaty with Constantine IV in 685, on the condition of paying him an annual tribute.⁸

The agreement was confirmed during the reign of Justinian II (685–695, 705–711), but its conditions were somewhat altered. The agreement between Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan and the Emperor did indeed force the Caliph to pay an annual tribute to Constantinople, but for his part the Emperor promised to resettle 12,000 Mardaites from the Arab border. Theophanes saw this agreement as unfavorable for the Byzantine side, believing that such a measure would weaken the eastern border of the Empire from Mopsuestia to the province of Armenia IV.⁹

Muslim authors have also left records about the conflicts in this area. The most notable among them is al-Balâdhuri, who writes that the Byzantines took advantage of the period when Abd al-Malik was occupied in Iraq to attack the Arabs in Lebanon, namely in the area of al-Lukâm (= Black Mountain). The warriors from the al-Jarâjimah joined their attack. The Byzantine offensive forced the Caliph to accept peace terms; however, al-Balâdhuri mentions that the Caliph agreed separate peace treaties with the Emperor on one hand and the rebels from the al-Jarâjimah tribe in Lebanon on the other. The peace treaty with the rebels was made void soon thereafter: having pacified the situation in Iraq, the Caliph launched an offensive against the tribe and defeated them. According to al-Balâdhuri, some were then resettled in the areas around Homs and Damascus, while the majority returned to their city on the al-Lukâm mountain.¹⁰

⁸ Under the terms of the treaty the Arabs were required to pay 1,000 gold coins, 1 slave and 1 horse per day, Theophanes, 361, cf. *Dölger*, Regesten I, n° 253, p. 31. The peace agreement is also mentioned by Agapius, *Kitab* (Agapius), 497. The terms of the abovementioned treaty seem to correspond more to the agreement between Constans II (641–668) and Caliph Muawiyah of 659 (Theophanes, 347; cf. *Dölger*, Regesten I, n° 230, p. 27) than to the terms of the previous Arabo-Byzantine peace agreement between Constantine IV and Muawiyah of 678 (see footnote n° 6). The analogies between the treaties of 659 and 685 were the result of similar political circumstances that led to their signing. In both cases the civil wars in the Caliphate forced the Arabs to agree peace terms with Byzantium, while the treaty of 678 was negotiated after the defeat of their fleet and the Mardaite invasion of the region of Lebanon, cf. *Ohta*, Expansion, 82–83.

⁹ In addition to the payment of 1,000 gold coins, a slave and a horse per day, the treaty also included the removal of Mardaites from the border, as well as the equal division of tax revenue from Cyprus, Armenia and Iberia between the two sides, Theophanes, 363; DAI I, c. 22, p. 92, 94. Reports on this are also provided by other Byzantine sources, Leo Grammaticus, 162; Cedrenus I, 771; Zonaras III, 228–229. Cf. *Dölger*, Regesten I, n° 257, p. 31. The tribute, sharing of tax revenue from Cyprus and the relocation of 12,000 Mardaites is also mentioned by Michael the Syrian, although he reports that the 10-year treaty also gave control over the regions of Armenia, Gourzan, Arzôn, and Adhorbigan to the Empire, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* II, 469; IV, 446. Agapius writes that Abd al-Malik agreed to pay a tribute and that the Emperor returned the favor by removing his forces from Lebanon. He also mentions the division of Cyprus under the terms of the 10-year treaty, *Kitab* (Agapius), 497.

¹⁰ Origins of the Islamic state (al-Balâdhuri), 247–248. Other Muslim authors provide similar accounts, cf. *Ohta*, Expansion, 81. Theophanes mentions two treaties in a single sentence, but this has been interpreted as a reference to two copies of the same agreement, Theophanes, 355, 356. Cf. *Mango*, Theophanes, 497 n 4.

The victory over the rebels in Lebanon recounted by al-Balâdhuri probably contributed to the redefinition of the peace terms with Constantinople. The changed situation allowed the caliph to ask Constantinople to move the rebels from the border regions, which led to the resettlement of 12,000 Mardaites reported by Theophanes.¹¹ Theophanes adds that they later participated in Byzantine campaigns in the territory of Armenia.¹²

However, some Mardaites remained on their own land even after the peace treaty.¹³ Al-Balâdhuri records their presence in border regions in the early 8th century, noting that the members of the al-Jarâjimah tribe still lived in their city of al-Jur-jûmah in 707, when the Arab caliph finally destroyed the city. This led to the forced displacement of the members of the al-Jarâjimah tribe. They were offered to stay and fight in Arab campaigns, but were allowed to retain their Christian faith.¹⁴ A part of the rebels fled to Byzantium.

The semi-independent Christian group of Mardaites that played an important military and political role in Arabo-Byzantine relations from the 630s and the time of the Muslim invasion of Syria¹⁵ were finally relocated in the opening years of the 8th century.¹⁶ Using their peace treaties with Constantinople as well as violent means, the

¹¹ Theophanes, 363. The resettlement of 12,000 Mardaites as a result of their defeat is also underlined by *Ohta*, Expansion, 83.

¹² Theophanes, 364.

¹³ Recounting how Justinian II violated the terms of the peace treaty with the Arabs, Nicephorus of Constantinople mentions the inhabitants of the mountains of Lebanon (i.e. Mardaites), but uses the term ὀπλιῖται instead of this name, Nicephorus, 92. Cf. Theophanes, 365.

¹⁴ Origins of the Islamic state (al-Balâdhuri), 249.

¹⁵ K. Sathas has suggested that the Mardaites were a special type of frontier forces ἀπελάται who were settled in Syria during the reign of Justinian I, *Sathas*, Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη II, 45. After the Arab conquest of Syria, a substantial part of the Byzantine army and the local population that had previously acknowledged the rule of the emperor in Constantinople began their westward withdrawal to territories still controlled by Byzantium. However, this was not the case with the al-Jarâjimah tribe. Despite their defeat, they negotiated an agreement with the new rulers of Syria, which gave them a semi-independent status of sorts that imposed no tribute but instead required them to provide military assistance to the Muslims in border regions, Origins of the Islamic state (al-Balâdhuri), 246–247. In the 7th century, however, they often sided with the emperor of the *Rhōmaioi* and fought for him against the Caliphate. For more details on the al-Jarâjimah tribe, see cf. *Ohta*, Expansion, 74f. Mardaites and their role in the Byzantine policy in Syria in the 7th century are discussed in *Howard-Johnston*, Mardaites, 35f. The thesis *G. Chalhoub*, Recherches sur les Mardaïtes-Ġarâġima au VIIe siècle, Thèse de 3e cycle: Histoire: Paris 1, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris) 1986, also analyzes the problem of Mardaites in the 7th century; however, the author of this paper has not had insight into its contents.

¹⁶ D. Woods has recently suggested another interesting hypothesis on the origin of Mardaites that completely diverges from previous views. In his work D. W. hypothesizes that the Mardaites were in fact Byzantine soldiers who fled to the Arab state sometime after their conflict with Constantinople. Woods suggests that they deserted and defected to the Arab side during the revolt of the Byzantine *stratēgos* Saborios in 667. These Byzantine deserters were called ‘maridoye’ (rebels) by the local population after they fled to Syria. According to Woods, less than two decades after their flight, the peace treaty between the Byzantine Empire and the Caliphate forced the Mardaites to return to their homeland, *Woods*, Corruption and Mistranslation. In the absence of information in the sources that would provide unambiguous grounds for such a claim, it is difficult to accept Woods’s hypothesis.

Arabs largely managed to remove the rebels from the border. A part of the Mardaites was moved from the eastern border to the inner provinces of the Empire. Neither Theophanes nor other authors who reported on these events specify the regions where the Mardaites had resettled. However, other sources, first of all Porphyrogenitus, inform us that in the following centuries they inhabited Attaleia in the Theme of the Cibyrhaeots, as well as the *themata* of the West – Peloponnesus, Cephalonia and Nicopolis.

In the 50th chapter of his treatise *De Administrando Imperio* Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus mentions a Mardaite division in the Theme of the Cibyrhaeots in the early 10th century. Like other army officers of a similar rank, the commander of the Mardaites (*katepanō*) was appointed by the Emperor in a special ceremony held in the Chrysotriclinus. Although his information on the Mardaites pertains to the time of Leo VI (886–912) and his brother and successor Alexander (912–913), the emperor clearly indicates that this was an older practice.¹⁷ It might have been introduced as early as 688, after the removal of some Mardaites from the eastern border under the terms of the Arabo-Byzantine treaty.¹⁸

Another work by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus also mentions the Mardaites in the Theme of the Cibyrhaeots. In some excerpts of *De Cerimoniis* the emperor recounts Byzantine military expeditions to Syria and Cretes in the first half of the 10th century (910–911, 949). The Mardaites of Attaleia were among the participants of these offensives. They were organized into a military naval unit headed by a *katepanō*,¹⁹ who commanded their galleys – rowing warships.²⁰ One of the duties of the Mardaite *katepanō* and his unit was to patrol the sea route to Syria together with other naval detachments of the Theme of the Cibyrhaeots.²¹ In addition to Attaleia, during this period the Mardaites of Cibyrhaeots were probably stationed in Antiochia ad Cragum and the island of Karpathos.²² Naval duties were the main occupation of Mardaite soldiers.

¹⁷ DAI I, c. 50, p. 240, 242.

¹⁸ J. Bury suggests that it was Tiberius III (698–705) who established a separate Mardaite unit headed by a *katepanō* in Attaleia, *Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire*, 350 n. 5. Bury also hypothesizes that a part of the Mardaite frontier soldiers was settled in Cyprus at this time, *Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire*, 356. This emperor came from the Theme of the Cibyrhaeots and hence insisted on strengthening Byzantine presence in this region. According to Bury, it might have even been Tiberius III who raised the commander of the Cibyrhaeot Theme to the rank of *stratēgos*, *Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire II*, 350 n. 4. On the establishment of the Theme of the Cibyrhaeots in the late 7th century, cf. *Cvetković, Reforma*, 24–27.

¹⁹ The office of the Mardaite *katepanō* is evidenced by several seals from the 9–11th century, cf. *Nesbitt – Oikonomides, Catalogue II*, n° 70.2; *Zacos – Nesbitt, Seals II*, n° 331; *Oikonomides, A propos d'une nouvelle publication de sceaux byzantins*, 265; *Zacos – Nesbitt, Seals II*, n° 901; *Nesbitt – Oikonomides, Catalogue II*, n° 70.1.

²⁰ *De cerimoniis*, 656, 660, 668; *Haldon, Theory*, 209, 213, 223.

²¹ *De cerimoniis*, 660; *Haldon, Theory*, 213.

²² This conclusion rests on the fact that special warships γαλέα (*De cerimoniis*, 665; *Haldon, Theory*, 221; cf. *Makrypoulias, Navy*, 161) characteristic of the Mardaites were stationed in Attaleia, Antioch and Karpathos. Porphyrogenitus refers to the Mardaites as λαὸς τῶν γαλεῶν, *De cerimoniis*, 662; *Haldon, Theory*, 217.

* * *

Apart from the Mardaites of Attaleia, Constantine Porphyrogenitus informs us about the Mardaites in the *themata* of the Balkans in his biography of Basil I and *De Ceremoniis*.

The first mention of the Mardaites of Peloponnesus refers to their participation in the defense of Syracuse against an Arab offensive in 877/878. The Byzantine fleet that tried to repel the Saracen attack included a detachment of Mardaite seamen from Peloponnesus. However, the *Rhōmaïoi* were defeated and the Muslims captured the city. Some Mardaite soldiers who had managed to escape and return to Peloponnesus brought news of the defeat.²³ A few years later the Mardaites of Peloponnesus took part in a naval expedition led by the Byzantine commander and admiral Nasar against the Arabs. This was the counteroffensive launched by Constantinople in 880 in response to the Arab sacking of Cephalonia and Zante.²⁴

A few decades later, during the campaigns in Syria and Cretes of 910–911 and 949, the Mardaites of Peloponnesus – this time together with the Mardaites from the other two *themata* of the West, Nicopolis and Cephalonia – fought against the Arabs as part of the Byzantine fleet.²⁵

Some researchers believed that the Mardaites of the 10th century did not constitute a distinct ethnic group and instead argued that the term denoted a special category of naval soldiers.²⁶ In this regard, it is noteworthy that Porphyrogenitus describes the Mardaites as λαὸς τῶν γαλεῶν.²⁷ Academic literature on the subject underlines the fact that the scholar emperor mentions the Mardaites along with other distinct categories of soldiers – ταξῆται and στρατιῶται (*Vita Basilii*, 242, 224), and hence

²³ *Vita Basilii*, 242.

²⁴ *Vita Basilii*, 224. D. Zakythēnos and A. Bon hold that Nasar's campaign should be dated to 881 (*Zakythēnos*, Οἱ Σλάβοι ἐν Ἑλλάδι, 91; *Bon*, La Péloponnèse byzantine, 75), while R. Guiland believes that it took place in 879, *Guiland*, Recherches, 171f. A. Vasiliev argues that the year in question was 880 – a view accepted by J. Cheynet, and I. Ševčenko, the editor of the critical edition of the fifth volume of *Theophanes Continuatus*, *Vasiliev*, Byzance et les Arabes, 96–99; John Skylitzes (comm. *Cheyne*), 149 n. 129; *Vita Basilii*, 224). For more details on Arabo-Byzantine conflicts in this period, cf. *Vasiliev*, Byzance et les Arabes, 96–99.

²⁵ *De cerimoniis*, 655, 656, 666, 668; *Haldon*, *Theory*, 207, 209, 221, 223.

²⁶ *Sathas*, Documents inédits, LXVIII; *Amantos*, Μαρδαῖται, 136; *Bartikian*, Ἡ λύση τοῦ αἰνιγμα-τος τῶν Μαρδαῖτων, 38–39. Other scholars have not recognized the distinction between the ethnic identity of the Mardaites discussed by Theophanes and the later Mardaite seamen, *Zakythēnos*, Οἱ Σλάβοι ἐν Ἑλλάδι, 91–92; *Ahrweiler*, Byzance et la mer, 399–400. D. Zakythēnos and E. Ahrweiler also provide an overview of various views on this problem in older scholarship, such as J. P. Fallmerayer's claim about the Mardaite ancestry of Peloponnesian Maniots, cf. *Fallmerayer*, *Geschichte*, 294f, 302f. A. Rambaud associates Madaites in the Balkans with the younger Albanian Mirdites, *Rambaud*, L'Empire grec, 223. He also accepts Fallmerayer's claim about the Mardaites and Maniots, *Ibid.*, 214 n. 5. Rambaud mentions Mardaites in Thrace, Thessaly and the islands, *Ibid.*, 214. J. Bury also mentions Mardaites in Thrace, *Bury*, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 321. None of these claims about the potential connection between the Mardaites and Maniotes or Mirdites, or about their presence in Thrace and Thessaly, can be confirmed by information provided in the sources and can therefore hardly be taken as more than speculations.

²⁷ *De cerimoniis*, 662; *Haldon*, *Theory*, 217.

concludes that they are also to be considered a military branch rather than an ethnic group. In favor of this view, it has also been pointed out that the sources offer no direct information on the colonization of ethnic Mardaites in the region of Peloponnesus.²⁸

This leads us to the following question: if in the 9th and 10th century the term ‘Mardaites’ denoted a naval branch and not an ethnic group, why is there no mention of them in all coastal *themata* that had their own fleets? In the same passages from *De Ceremoniis* that mention the Mardaites of the *themata* of the West, Porphyrogenitus provides a list of all troops that took part in the expeditions of 910–911, including oarsmen and soldiers on warships – naval troops from some coastal *themata* such as Samos, Hellas and the Aegean Theme.²⁹ Similarly, in his account of the campaign of 949, the scholar emperor also mentions various naval *themata* such as Samos, the Aegean Sea and Dyrrhachium. However, there were no Mardaites in these coastal and island *themata*, as it would have been expected if the term Mardaites denoted a naval branch in the military. Mardaites are only ever mentioned in the Theme of the Cibyrrhaeots and in the three *themata* of the West, which certainly supports the view that they were a distinct ethnic group. There is no doubt that life in the Greek milieu must have contributed to the transformation of their ethnic identity, perhaps even to the point of assimilation; nevertheless, the fact that they had a special status in the military-administrative system indicates that they were characterized by a certain distinctiveness that separated them from the Greek majority in Byzantium.

The Mardaites of Peloponnesus appear for the first time at the beginning of the last quarter of the 9th century, while the earliest reports of the Mardaites of Cephalonia and Nicopolis recount events that occurred in the first half of the 10th century. The time of the Mardaite resettlement in the *themata* of the West has yet to be established. J. Bury suggests that the colonization of Peloponnesus occurred as part of the campaign led by *prōtospatharios* Theoctistus, the Peloponnesian *stratēgos*, in the early years of the reign of Michael III (842–867), basing his conclusion on Porphyrogenitus’s account of Theoctistus’s campaign in the region.³⁰ However, Bury allows for the possibility that the resettlement took place a few decades earlier, under Nicephorus I (802–811).³¹ Similarly, W. Treadgold placed the resettlement of the Mardaites in the context of Niciphorus I’s colonization policy discussed by Theophanes. Drawing on the reports of the chronicler, Treadgold dates their resettlement to 809/810.³² He then proceeds to elaborate his reconstruction of Mardaite colonization, arguing that they came to Peloponnesus from the Theme of Hellas, where they had relocated in the late 7th century after their removal

²⁸ *Bon*, *La Péloponnèse byzantine*, 116. He also points out that it is not entirely clear if the mentioned Mardaites of Peloponnesus were local recruits or if they were simply an army stationed in Peloponnesus at the time, *Bon*, *La Péloponnèse byzantine*, 115 n. 1.

²⁹ *De cerimoniis*, 653–654; *Haldon*, *Theory*, 205.

³⁰ *Bury*, *History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, 378 n. 4.

³¹ *Bury*, *History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, 378.

³² *Treadgold*, *Byzantine Revival*, 160.

from Syria and Lebanon. According to Treadgold, Justinian II split the Mardaites into two groups – the eastern and the western – and settled them in the themes of the Cibyrhaeots and Hellas.³³ However, the sources offer no information on the colonization of Hellas. Besides their largely seafaring activities, there is nothing to connect the Mardaites with this theme. As the reports of neither Theophanes nor Constantine Porphyrogenitis reveal any information that could unambiguously answer the question of the time and circumstances of the Mardaite migration to the West, these views can hardly be accepted. Theophanes generally discusses the relocation of Christians from the *themata* to *Sklaviniai*,³⁴ while Porphyrogenitus mentions Theoctistus's campaign against the Slavs in Peloponnesus with the support of the members of other Western *themata*, but provides no information that could be associated with the Mardaites.³⁵

Both Bury and Treadgold were however correct when they placed the colonization of the Mardaites in the 9th century. It seems improbable that the resettlement of the Mardaites to the West could have occurred before this time, especially not in the late 7th century – at the time the peace treaty between Abd al-Malik and Justinian II was agreed, because at this time Constantinople did not have a firm hold in Peloponnesus. Therefore it is difficult to believe that a part of them was moved to the Balkans concurrently with their resettlement in Attaleia. Byzantine rule in Peloponnesus was not consolidated until a century after the treaty between al-Malik and Justinian II or, more accurately, after Stauracius's campaign that led to the Byzantine conquest of a substantial part of Peloponnesus in 783.³⁶ Therefore, the stationing of a Mardaite garrison in the southern Balkans could have occurred between 783 and 877/878, when they appear in this region for the first time. Consequently, it can be inferred that the Mardaite colonists did not arrive in the Balkans from Syria or Lebanon but from Attaleia in the Theme of the

³³ Treadgold, *Army*, 118.

³⁴ Theophanes, 486.

³⁵ DAI I, c. 50, p. 232.

³⁶ There are different opinions about the time of the establishment of the Peloponnesian theme. H. Gelzer believed that it was founded at the beginning of Michael III's reign and associated its establishment with the arrival of *stratēgos* Theoctistus, *Gelzer*, *Die Genesis*, 91. Based on the information on the *stratēgos* of Peloponnesus provided in the anonymous work *Historia de Leone Bardae Armenii Filio*, E. W. Brooks writes that the theme must have been established before 811, *Brooks*, *Arabic Lists*, 69 n. 4; cf. Leo Grammaticus (*Scriptor Incertus*), 336. In view of the emperor's political and ecclesiastical activity in Peloponnesus, J. Bury was of the opinion that Nicephorus I had been responsible for the establishment of this theme, cf. *Bury*, *History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, 224, 378. A. Bon suggests the time frame of 802–812, *Bon*, *La Péloponnèse byzantine*, 46. Similarly, D. Žakythinos and W. Treadgold also attribute the establishment of the theme to Nicephorus I, *Zakythinos*, *Le thème de Céphalonie*, 310; *Treadgold*, *Byzantine Revival*, 160. The editors of the *Dumbarton Oaks Catalogue of Byzantine Seals* propose that it took place around 800, *Nesbitt – Oikonomides*, *Catalogue II*, 62. P. Lemerle holds that the establishment of thematic institutions began under Nicephorus I, but notes that the first official reference to this theme dates from the middle or second half of the 9th century, *Lemerle*, *La Chronique*, 31–32 n. 49. On the other hand, G. Ostrogorski believed that the theme was established as a result of Stauracius's conquest, *Ostrogorski*, *Postanak tema Helade i Peloponez*, 73. T. Živković dates its establishment to the period 784–788 and sees it as part of Empress Irene's active Western policy, *Živković*, *Date of the Creation of the theme of Peloponnesus*, 153. P. Charanis claims that the theme was founded in the first half of the 8th century and associates its establishment with the division of the Theme of the Karabisianoi, *Charanis*, *Observations*, 11. However, there is little in the sources to support this view.

Cibyrrhaeots, where they had lived since the late 7th century and constituted a part of a separate military-administrative unit led by a *katepanō*.

The accounts provided by Theophanes and Porphyrogenitus cited by Bury and Treadgold in favor of their claims cannot be associated with the Mardaite migration. There is, however, another source that reports on the resettlement of soldiers from the East – soldiers that might have included Mardaites. The source in question is the *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, whose author recounts the settlement of the Thracians, Armenians and certain *Kafēroi* (... Καφήρους τε καὶ Θρακησίους καὶ Ἀρμενίους καὶ λιπουὺς ἀπὸ διαφόρων τόπων ...) in the Theme of the Peloponnese.³⁷ Building on the hypothesis of P. Charanis that the *Kafēroi* denote the inhabitants of the Theme of the Cibyrrhaeots,³⁸ it can be assumed that these were in fact the Attaleian (or Cibyrrhaeot) Mardaites. Charanis believes that the author of the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* had access to information about the settlers while recounting these events, and that the original used the abbreviated form *Kibyrr/Koibair* (Κιβυρρ/Κοιβαιρ) for those from the Theme of the Cibyrrhaeots, which the chronicler then miscopied as *Kafēroi*.³⁹

Scholars have yet to reach a consensus on the identity of the mysterious *Kafēroi*. F. Dölger finds Charanis's identification of the *Kafēroi* with the Cibyrrhaeots too daring.⁴⁰ P. Lemerle is of the opinion that the name of this group derives from the Arab word *kafir*, which meant 'convert' and that hence the *Kafēroi* were probably Christianized Muslims who were resettled in Peloponnesus after their conversion.⁴¹ S. Lambros and A. Vasiliev sought a connection between these *Kafēroi* and the *Kabaroi/Kabeiroi* mentioned in other sources (Porphyrogenitus's *De Administrando Imperio*, *Theophanes Continuatus*, Genesisius' chronicle, Scylitzes's *Synopsis of Histories*, and the *History* by Nicephorus Bryennius).⁴² I. Dujčev, who edited the critical edition of the *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, does not explicitly espouse any of the suggested answers.⁴³

³⁷ Cronica di Monemvasia, 22.

³⁸ Charanis, *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, 154 n. 50.

³⁹ Ibid. 154 n. 50.

⁴⁰ Dölger, P. Charanis, *The Chronicle of Monemvasia*, 218–219.

⁴¹ Lemerle, *La Chronique*, 20 n. 28. This interpretation is also seen as viable by Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, 162. T. Živković accepts Lemerle's view and associates the converts (*Kafēroi*) with the barbarians of Peloponnesus who at one point denounced Christianity and rebelled against the Empire, as recounted in *Vita Basilii*, Živković, *Južni Sloveni*, 128 n. 287; cf. *Vita Basilii*, 216, 218.

⁴² Lambros, *Περὶ κτίσεως Μονεμβασίας χρονικόν*, 113 n. 1; Vasiliev, *Slavjane v Grecii*, 657 n. 2. Porphyrogenitus mentions a Turkic ethnic group named Κάβαροι, *DAI* I, c. 39, 40, p. 174, 176; *DAI* II, 149; Cf. Scylitzes, 445, 449. Theophanes's continuator, Genesisius and Scylitzes include an ethnic group called Καβείροι among the participants in the rebellion of Thomas the Slav, Theoph. Cont (edd. Featherstone – Codoñer), 82; Genesisius, 24; Scylitzes, 32. In his commentary of Scylitzes's *Synopsis of Histories*, J.-Cl. Cheynet emphasized that this refers to the inhabitants of the classical city of Cabira (later Neocaesarea) in Pontus, John Skylitzes (comm. Cheynet), 35 n. 37. P. Charanis is of the opinion that this ethnonym should be read as Σαβείροι, as this form appears in the manuscript of Genesisius's chronicle, which is the more reliable source in this case, Charanis, *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, 154 n. 50. Nicephorus Bryennius mentions the non-Christian Καβείροι in the 11th century in the East, Niceph. Bryennius, 95.

⁴³ Cronica di Monemvasia, 23 n. 68.

In view of the fact that the quoted passage from the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* mentions the *Kafēroi* together with the Thracians (the inhabitants of the Thracian Theme) and the Armenians (probably the members of the Armeniac Theme),⁴⁴ Charanis's suggestion that the name *Kafēroi* was derived from the name of a theme seems correct. In this case, the theme in question was certainly the Theme of the Cibyrrhaeots. The Cibyrrhaeots who were resettled at the time could have easily included the Mardaites of Attaleia. Accordingly, Nicephorus I can be assumed to have been responsible for the resettlement of the Mardaites of Asia Minor in the Balkans. The emperor is generally known to have implemented comprehensive colonization measures throughout the Empire, resettling the Byzantine *stratiotai* in *Sklaviniai* of the Southern Balkans.⁴⁵ If the local tradition recounted by the *Chronicle of Monemvasia* is to be believed, Nicephorus I also organized the return of Peloponnesians from Italy, where they had fled after a Slavic invasion in the 6th century, to their homeland.⁴⁶ Their return was meant to strengthen Byzantine rule in the Peloponnesus and to suppress the Slavic ethnic element in the region. There is no doubt that the Mardaite settlement should also be interpreted in this light.

Coming back to Porphyrogenitus's reports about the battles for Syracuse and Nasar's expedition – the first reference to the Mardaites in the West, we notice that the scholar emperor offers no mention of the Mardaites of either Cephalonia or Nicopolis, limiting his information to those of Peloponnesus. The first reference to the Mardaite units of Cephalonia and Nicopolis appears in relation to the expedition of 949,⁴⁷ although the *Mardaites of the West* are mentioned – but not individually listed – during the campaign of 910–911.⁴⁸ Writing about the participation of Mardaite seamen in this expedition, the author uses the phrase *Μαρδαῖται τῆς δύσεως*, suggesting that at the time they not only made up a part of the Peloponnesian Theme, but that they were also stationed in a wider territory defined by the author first as the *West* and in the following passage as the *themata of the West*. Therefore it can be inferred that in the time of the campaign of 910–911, the Mardaites were already settled on the territory wider than the Peloponnesus, i.e. that they were already part of the other two *themata* of the West. Consequently, the *terminus ante quem* of their stationing in Nicopolis and Cephalonia seems to have been 910–911. Their resettlement certainly could not have occurred before Nasar's expedition of 880. Accordingly, their transfer

⁴⁴ P. Charanis believes that these were probably the members of the Armeniac Theme, but allows that the author of the *Chronicle* could have meant ethnic Armenians, *Charanis*, *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, 155 n. 51. I. Dujčev again remains undecided on the problem, *Cronica di Monemvasia*, 23 n. 70.

⁴⁵ Theophanes, 486.

⁴⁶ *Cronica di Monemvasia*, 12, 20. On the colonization measures of Nicephorus I, cf. *Treadgold*, *Byzantine Revival*, 157f.

⁴⁷ *De cerimoniis*, 665; *Haldon*, *Theory*, 221 (*Μαρδαῖται τῶν τῆς δύσεως θεμάτων Νικοπόλεως, Πελοποννήσου, Κεφαλληνίας*), *De cerimoniis*, 668; *Haldon*, *Theory*, 223 (*Μαρδαῖται τῶν τῆς δύσεως θεμάτων*).

⁴⁸ *De cerimoniis*, 655; *Haldon*, *Theory*, 207 (*Μαρδαῖται τῆς δύσεως*), *De cerimoniis*, 656; *Haldon*, *Theory*, 209 (*Μαρδαῖται τῆς δύσεως*).

to Nicopolis and Cephalonia should be dated to 880–910/911.⁴⁹ Their colonization could have happened immediately after Nasar's campaign (as a result of this offensive) and was probably meant to reinforce Byzantine military power in Cephalonia and the nearby coast of Epirus, which were exposed to Arab naval attacks. In view of Constantinople's practice of settling soldiers in newly established thematic divisions in order to boost their recruiting potential, the resettlement of the Mardaites in Epirus could be associated with the formation of the Theme of Nicopolis in the 880s or 890s.⁵⁰ The settlement of Mardaite units in Peloponnesus in the early stages of the establishment of Peloponnesian thematic institutions followed a similar scenario.

* * *

The Mardaites of the *themata* of the West were organized into units headed by *tourmarchai*. Describing the campaigns against Syria and Crete, at one point Porphyrogenitus mentions three Mardaite *tourmarchai*.⁵¹ As the Mardaites are known to have been resettled in three Balkan *themata*, it seems logical that there was a Mardaite unit led by a *tourmarchēs* in each of them.

In terms of their recruiting potential, 5,087 Mardaites of the *themata* of the West took part in the expedition of 910–911 with 87 officers (three *tourmarchai*; 42 *droungarioi*; 42 *komētes*) and 5,000 troops.⁵² A total of 3,000 Mardaite troops fought in the campaign of 949 in three Balkan *themata*.⁵³ Accordingly, the number of recruits in a single Mardaite unit varied from 1,000 to 2,000. This number generally corresponds to the number of troops in one thematic *tourma* in this period.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ It seems that the Theme of Cephalonia was established before 809. The author of the *Royal Frankish Annals* mentions Paul, the Prefectus of Cephalonia, who at this time fought against the Franks on the Dalmatian coast, *Annales regni Francorum*, 130f. The Cephalonian prefectus Paul is usually believed to have been the *stratēgos* of this theme, *Ostrogorski*, *Postanak tema Helade i Peloponez*, 74; *De thematibus*, 174f; *Les listes de préséance*, 352. The Cephalonian *stratēgos* was included in the list of officials in *Tacticon Uspensky* (842–843), *Les listes de préséance*, 49. Sigilographic evidence suggests that the theme could have also been founded in the 8th century, *Laurent*, *Vatican*, 96 n. 1; *Nesbitt – Oikonomides*, *Catalogue I*, 1.

⁵⁰ The first mention of this theme or, more accurately, to the *stratēgos* of Nicopolis appears in the *Klētorologion* of Philotheos, which has been dated to 899, *Les listes de préséance*, 101. As the previous *Tacticon Uspensky* (842–843) contains no reference to the *stratēgos* of Nicopolis, the formation of the theme seems to have occurred in the period between the writing of these two works. Unlike the Western *themata* of Sicily, Cephalonia, Dyrrhachium and Peloponnesus, this theme did not provide troops for the Italian expedition of 885, which seems to suggest that the Theme of Nicopolis had yet to be formed at this time. For more information on this campaign, see Theoph. Cont. – Georg. Monachus (ed. *Bekker*), 845, Leo Grammaticus, 258. Cf. *Les listes de préséance*, 351; *De thematibus*, 176; *Nesbitt – Oikonomides*, *Catalogue II*, 9.

⁵¹ *De cerimoniis*, 656; *Haldon*, *Theory*, 209.

⁵² *De cerimoniis*, 656; *Haldon*, *Theory*, 209.

⁵³ *De cerimoniis*, 665, 668; *Haldon*, *Theory*, 221, 223.

⁵⁴ The *Tactica* of Leo VI provides important information about the recruiting potential of military divisions, *Taktika*, c. 4.47, p. 60, c. 18.146, p. 496. Generally, this work repeats much of the contents of older (Late Roman) military treatises (on the sources for Leo's *Tactica*, cf. *Haldon*, *Critical Commentary*, 39f); fortunately, a few works on Byzantine *themata* by Arab and Persian geographers have survived from the same

Porphyrogenitus even provides their payroll, informing us that the Mardaites of the West were paid 4 *kentēnaria*, 66 *litrai* and 32 *nomismata* for their participation in the campaign (910–911). In addition, 1,000 soldiers were to be paid 8 *nomismata* each or 1 *kentēnaria*, 11 *litrai* and 8 *nomismata* in total.⁵⁵ Elsewhere in the text, the emperor writes about the recruitment remuneration and reports that the three Mardaite *tourmarchai* were paid 36 *nomismata* each; the 42 *droungarioi* 12 *nomismata* each; the 42 *komētes* 6 *nomismata* each; and the remaining 5,000 soldiers received 4 *nomismata* each.⁵⁶ The payment of 36 *nomismata* for Mardaite *tourmarchai* corresponds to the wages of other *tourmarchai* in the Empire at the time. This is suggested by a passage in the *Tactica* of Emperor Leo VI, which lists the wages of thematic functionaries and informs us that the *stratego*i received 1 *litra* of gold (72 *nomismata*), while the *tourmarchai* were paid 36 *nomismata*, the *droungarioi* 24, and the *komētes* 12.⁵⁷

period, allowing a comparative analysis. Writing in the 9th and the first half of the 10th century respectively, Ibn-Khordādhbeh and Kodāma also provide insight into the structure and recruiting potential of Byzantine *themata*, Kitāb, 84 (Ibn-Khordādhbeh), 196 (Kodāma). The number of available troops varied from theme to theme, as evidenced by the information provided by Ibn al-Faqih in the early 10th century, *Brooks*, Arabic Lists, 74, 76. According to these sources, in the 9th and early 10th century the number of troops in a single *tourma* varied between 2,000 and 6,000. However, these figures refer to the full military potential of a *tourma*. Usually only a part of the available recruits was used in campaigns. Hence in some campaigns a *tourma* numbered less than 2,000 and in some cases several hundred men. Porphyrogenitus's *De Cerimoniis* mentions that the Thracian Theme participated in the offensive against Syria and Crete in 910–911 with 3,000 troops divided into four *tourmai*, *De cerimoniis*, 655; *Haldon*, Theory, 207. This suggests that the *tourmarchai* commanded units that numbered less than 1,000 men. The situation was similar in previous centuries. For example, a 300-strong unit led by Christopher, the *tourmarchēs* of the Thracian Theme, participated in a punitive expedition against Cherson organized by Justinian II in 711, *Theophanes*, 378–379. In 715/716 Leo, the *stratēgos* of the Theme of the Anatolics who would go on to become emperor, sent a detachment of 800 troops led by the *tourmarchēs* Nikaias to defend Amorium against an Arab attack, *Theophanes*, 388–389.

⁵⁵ Totalling 5 *kentēnaria*, 77 *litrai* and 42 *nomismata*, *De cerimoniis*, 655; *Haldon*, Theory, 207. The scribes who later copied the manuscript miscalculated the totals. The total should be 5:77:40, *Haldon*, Theory, 206 n. 15.

⁵⁶ Totalling 2 *kentēnaria*, 99 *litrai* and 56 *nomismata*, *De cerimoniis*, 656; *Haldon*, Theory, 209. The calculation is again inaccurate and the total should be 2:89:56, *Haldon*, Theory, 208 n. 21. Treadgold finds the information about 42 *droungarioi* and 42 *komētes* dubious. Since the *komētes* usually commanded units of 200 men and the *droungarioi* units of at least 400, the total number of Mardaite troops would have amounted to 8,400 or 16,800. In his opinion, the scribe mistakenly included this data in his copy, *Treadgold*, Army, 119. However, the following lines in the same work describe the command chain of the Armenians from the Theme of Sebasteia, which numbered around 1,000 troops commanded by 5 *tourmarchai*, 10 *droungarioi* and 8 *komētes*, *De cerimoniis*, 656; *Haldon*, Theory, 209. This would suggest that the *droungarioi* led detachments of 100 soldiers. Obviously, the recruiting potential of the units could vary (notably, the *komētes* could command a *bandon* with no more than 50 troops, *Sylloge Tacticorum*, c. 35.5, p. 56). In view of these facts, the reports on the number of Mardaite *droungarioi* and *komētes* quoted above should not be discarded as inaccurate or impossible, cf. *Haldon*, Theory, 249 n. 45.

⁵⁷ *Taktika*, c. 8.26, p. 152. In *De Cerimoniis*, Porphyrogenitus lists the wages of the officers in the thematic fleet in the campaign against Crete in 949: the *tourmarchai* were paid 30 *nomismata*, the *droungarioi* 20, and the *komētes* 6, *De cerimoniis*, 662; *Haldon*, Theory, 215, 217. The officers of the Theme of Charpezikion and the Armenians in the Theme of Sebasteia received slightly lower wages. For example, in the campaign of 910–911, *tourmarchai* received 12 *nomismata*; *droungarioi* 6, and *komētes* 5, *De cerimoniis*, 656; *Haldon*, Theory, 209. In the Theme of Charpezikion, for their participation in the Cretan

The hierarchy of the army officer ranks in Mardaite units of the *themata* of the West in the first half of the 10th century (*tourmarchēs – droungarios – komēs*)⁵⁸ was identical to that of the commanding officers under the *strategoī* in Byzantine *themata*, as described in the *Tactica* of Leo VI,⁵⁹ the works of Arab authors such as ibn-Khordādhbeh and Kodāma,⁶⁰ and to a certain extent the *Klētorologion* of Philotheos⁶¹ (these works were written in the span of a century – from the mid-9th to the mid-10th century).

The similarities between the command hierarchy in Byzantine *themata* and their subdivisions on one hand and Mardaite units led by *tourmarchai* on the other provide grounds for a comparison of the military-administrative competences of their commanders. This is also indicated by the same wages received by Mardaite commanders and the leaders of other *tourmai* in the Empire. The military-administrative purview of the *tourmarchai* of the Byzantine *themata* was very limited and mostly related to military duties such as preparing for planned campaigns; securing the necessary supply of food, equipment, tools and weapons;⁶² and ensuring the safety of the population, land and cities.⁶³ The *tourmarchai* were also in charge of the construction and upkeep of forts.⁶⁴ Like the *strategoī*, they enjoyed a level of judicial power. According to the anonymous *Tactica* from the 10th century, the judicial competences of the *strategoī* were twofold: personal, which involved their jurisdiction over their subordinate troops (... κρίνων τούς ἐγκαλοῦντας ἐπὶ τοῖς στρατιωτικοῖς πράγμασιν ...); and territorial – their judicial authority in the thematic district (... διοικῶν τὰ ἐν τῷ θέματι ἀνακύπτοντα ...). In this territory the *stratēgos* acted as the Emperor's executive organ, resolving legal disputes and passing judgments. Similarly, the author of the *Tactica* informs us, the *tourmarchai* performed governance duties in their respective *tourmai* (... εἶχε δὲ καὶ ὁ τουρμάρχης τῆς ἰδίας αὐτοῦ τούρμας παρὰ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῆς βασιλικῆς προστάξεως ἐπ' ἐξουσίας τὰς κρίσεις, κατὰ τοὺς ἐπικρατήσαντας τύπους καὶ τὰ τούτων προνόμια).⁶⁵ It is important to note that in interior of the Empire in the middle Byzantine period, judicial duties were mostly entrusted to thematic

campaign of 949, grand *tourmarchai* (μεγάλοι τουρμάρχει) and *merarchai* received 5 *nomismata*; the lower *tourmarchai* (ἐλαττότεροι τουρμάρχει) 4; and *droungarioi* 3, De cerimoniis, 662; Haldon, Theory, 217. For the wages of thematic soldiers and officers and related questions see Lemerle, "Roga", 77–100; Treadgold, State Finances; Yannopoulos, Une liste des thèmes, 241–246; Cheynet, Malamut, Morrisson, Prix et salaires, 366–367.

⁵⁸ De cerimoniis, 656; Haldon, Theory, 209.

⁵⁹ Taktika, c. 4.6, p. 50; c. 4.11, p. 52; c. 4.47, p. 60; c. 14.59, p. 326; c. 18.146, p. 496.

⁶⁰ Kitāb (Ibn-Khordadhbeh), 84; Kitāb (Kodāma), 196.

⁶¹ Les listes de préséance, 109.

⁶² Taktika, c. 7.35, p. 122; c. 11.41, p. 212.

⁶³ Theophanes, 388–389.

⁶⁴ This is attested by an inscription on the fortress of Philippi, which credits *stratēgos* Romanus (probably the governor of the Theme of Strymon) and *tourmarchēs* Leo for the construction of the fortress, Lemerle, Le château de Philippes, 107.

⁶⁵ Le traité sur la guérilla, 111; Three Treatises, 216.

judges (*kritai*) who were assisted by the *protonotarios*, as evidenced by the information provided in the quoted section from the *Tactica*. Although the sources provide no information that could unambiguously confirm this, there is no reason to doubt that the competences of the Mardaite *tourmarchai* at least partially mirrored the duties performed by *tourmarchai* in typical Byzantine *themata*.

The peculiar organization of the Balkan Mardaites, who were spread over three *themata* in the Balkans and organized into *tourmai*, partially corresponds to the organization of the so-called Persian *tourmai*, which were scattered in *themata* throughout the Empire. These *tourmai* were comprised of Persians or Khurramites – the members of a religious and political movement that had originated in Persia. In the early 830s, under the leadership of Nasr, a commander of Kurdish or Persian ancestry, they rebelled against the Abbasid Caliphate in the area of Jibāl. The uprising was quickly put down and Nasr found refuge in the Byzantine Empire.⁶⁶ Scholars have identified the figure named Nasr in Arab, Armenian and Syrian sources as the military commander known in Byzantine sources as Theophobus.⁶⁷ Having entered Byzantine service, Nasr/Theophobus fought in Theophilus's campaigns against the Arabs. At one point, however, his soldiers cancelled their allegiance to the Emperor and proclaimed their commander the new emperor. The revolt took place after the Battle of Dazimon in 838. Theophilus's retaliation was reflected in the position of this group in the Byzantine military-administrative apparatus. As a punitive measure, instead of constituting a single group the Khurramites were split into several 2,000-strong *turmai* (τοῦρμαι Περχῶν) and stationed in different *themata*.⁶⁸

The sources record various types of military-administrative units through which ethnic communities were integrated into the theme system. The most notable among them were *archontiai*, which enjoyed a degree of self-government but were subordinated to central authority and its representatives – the thematic *strategoï*. The *archontiai* were the usual means of integrating Slavs; the Peloponnesian Maniots; the enigmatic *Ebiditai*; the *Bēchetai* of Hellas; and the Vlachs of the same theme.⁶⁹ In the early stages of integration, Constantinople acknowledged the authority of their tribal leaders and institutionalized it by granting them the title of *archōn* and a corresponding honorific rank. However, from the very beginning the central authorities tended to appoint their own men to these offices in the aim of fully integrating and assimilating these ethnarchies.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Rekaya*, Théophobe, 43f.

⁶⁷ Although some Byzantine authors recount legendary stories about Theophobus's background, there is little doubt that this was in fact the name given to Nasr after he entered Byzantine service and converted to Christianity, *Grégoire*, Manuel et Théophobe, 186f.

⁶⁸ *Theoph. Cont.* (edd. *Featherstone – Codoñer*), 178, 180; *Genesisius*, 41. Cf. *Treadgold*, *Byzantine Revival*, 314; *Cheyne*, Théophile, 39f; *Rosser*, Theophilus' Khurramite policy, 269f.

⁶⁹ On the integration of different ethnic groups in the theme system, cf. *Cvetković*, Niže jedinice, 190f.

⁷⁰ This policy is aptly illustrated by a passage in the *Tactica* of Leo VI, where the author recounts how his father Basil I subjugated the Slavs to Byzantine *archontes*, and Hellenized and Christianized them to secure their military support, *Taktika*, c. 18. 95, p. 470.

A somewhat lower degree of self-government than that of the *archontiai* was enjoyed by the ethnic *tourmai*, which were used to integrate some groups (such as the Khurramites, the Goths in Crimea,⁷¹ Bulgarians⁷² in Chalcidice, or the mysterious *Ebiditai*)⁷³ into the theme system. Since the term *tourma* denoted a lower unit within a

⁷¹ The seal of Leo, the imperial *spatarios* and the *tourmarchēs* of Gothia, bears evidence to the existence of a separate, ethnicity-based military-administrative unit in the thematic organization of Crimea, which was used to integrate the local Goths into the Byzantine military-administrative system. The seal seems to have been made in the second half of the 10th century, more accurately after 970/971, when John I Tzimiskēs defeated the Russians and Pechenegs and facilitated the rise of Byzantine influence in Crimea, *Aleksēenko*, *Un tourmarque de Gothie*, 271–275. Considering the principles of thematic organization at the time, the *tourmarchēs* of Gothia must have been subordinated to one of the *strategoi*, probably the one in Cherson. On the Byzantine administration in Cherson, cf. *Alekseyenko*, *L'administration byzantine de Cherson*. However, little can be said of the nature and later fate of this unit, as the sources offer very scarce information about them. Since the Empire began to withdraw from its positions in Crimea in the 11th century, the *tourma* was probably short-lived. In the 11th century the Goths were exposed to a new political and military element in the plains of Southern Russia – the Cumans. On Cuman domination, cf. *Vasiliev*, *Goths in the Crimea*, 136f. The gradual retreat of the Empire from Crimea led to the disbandment of the Gothic *tourma*.

⁷² A document kept in the archives of the Monastery of Iviron on Mount Athos – an act passed by judge Nicholas from 996 – informs us that in the late 10th century there was a military-administrative unit in Chalcidice headed by a certain Basil, the *tourmarchēs* of the Bulgarians, *Actes d'Iviron* I, n^o. 10, p. 169f. The sources generally either mention a *tourmarchēs* with the name of the theme they belonged to or the *tourma* they governed. In this case, the reference to Bulgarians certainly does not refer to the Theme of Bulgaria (which had yet to be formed), but to the name of the ethnic group led by this functionary. On the establishment of the Theme of Bulgaria, cf. *Krsmanović*, *Byzantine*, 192f. There is no doubt that this unit was established in a bid to integrate the local Bulgarians into the Byzantine theme system. Based on the fact that Chalcidice belonged to the administrative-territorial framework of the Theme of Thessalonica, the *tourma* was probably part of the same theme, *Nesbitt – Oikonomides*, *Catalogue* I, 77.

⁷³ Three extant seals dated to the 8–9th century bear evidence to the existence of a separate military-administrative unit of the *Ebiditai* (or *Ebilitai*), *Zacos – Veglery*, *Seals* I, n^o 2647; *McGeer, Nesbitt, Oikonomides*, *Catalogue* V, n^o 95.1; *Konstantopoulos*, *Βυζαντινά μολυβδόβουλλα*, n^o 299; *McGeer, Nesbitt, Oikonomides*, *Catalogue* V, n^o 95.2. Since there is no information on the mysterious *Ebiditai* except this sigilographic evidence, little can be said of their origin, identity and nature. E. Ahrweiler is of the opinion that they were an ethnic group, *Ahrweiler*, *Byzance et la mer*, 58. On the other hand, in the commentary for the first and third seal, the *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks* highlights the similarity between the name of the *Ebiditai* and the toponym Euboea, suggesting that these seals belonged to functionaries who governed the island of Euboea, *McGeer, Nesbitt, Oikonomides*, *Catalogue* V, p. 139. The only piece of information that could offer an indication of the origin of the *Ebiditai* is the partially illegible name of an *archōn* on the first of these seals. The researchers of the *Zacos – Veglery* Collection, which was the first to publish the seal, offered no interpretation of the name, *Zacos – Veglery*, *Seals* I, n^o 2647. The editors of the *Dumbarton Oaks* edition propose that the name in question is Μορτάγος, but allow for the possibility that this was a similar name of proto-Bulgarian origin, *McGeer, Nesbitt, Oikonomides*, *Catalogue* V, n^o 95.1. Consequently, they highlight the possible link between the *Ebiditai* and the Bulgarians who rose against Krum and fled to Byzantium around 800, after which the Bulgarian ruler demanded that they return home, *McGeer, Nesbitt, Oikonomides*, *Catalogue* V, n^o 95.1. Cf. *Theophanes*, 497, 498. In his discussion of this problem, W. Seibt hypothesizes that the name in question might be Βοηδράγος, hypothesizing that it referred to a Slavic tribe, *Seibt*, *Weitere Beobachtungen*, 462–464. T. Živković also believes that the *Ebiditai* could have been a Slavic tribe (and does not quote Seibt's conclusions), *Živković*, *Južni Sloveni*, 235–236. However, since none of the suggested interpretations can be accepted as unambiguous, the question of the origin of the *Ebiditai* remains open. Interestingly, the *Ebiditai* are reported to have been led both by *archōn* and *tourmarchēs*. The *archōn* office was probably the result of their non-Hellenic ethnicity and semi-independent status, like that of the Slavic tribes. On the other hand, the office of *tourmarchēs* indicates that the

Byzantine theme, it suggests that the integration of these ethnic groups was fuller than that of ethnic *archontiai*. This is also evidenced by the fact that most of these *tourmai* were formed in Constantinople's planned colonization programs. The *tourmai* of the Khurramites and Mardaites are known to have been formed as a result of the centralized decision to have them redistributed in different *themata*. This could have been the case with the Bulgarians in Chalcidice. The only exception would have been the Goths of Crimea, who had inhabited the Crimean peninsula for centuries before their integration into the theme system. The commanders of these units were directly subordinated to the *strategoi* of the *themata* to which their *tourmai* geographically belonged. On the other hand, the fact that the names of the listed *tourmai* were derived from the names of ethnic groups disallows their classification into the same category with regular thematic *tourmai*, which were usually named after the fort that served as the seat of the *tourmarchēs*.⁷⁴

Although the Mardaites of the West were scattered in different *themata*, in military campaigns they fought as a single unit, as indicated by the phrase 'Mardaites of the *themata* of the West' used to collectively refer to them. The hypothesis that they lived in different *themata* but fought together in campaigns is also attested by the payroll provided by Porphyrogenitus: instead of sums for each theme, it lists the total of 166 *litrai* and 48 *nomismata* for the four-month engagement of all Western Mardaites in the campaign of 949 (each of the 3,000 soldiers received a monthly salary of 1 *nomisma*, while a certain *patrikios* named Krinitēs received 36 *litrai*).⁷⁵ The mention of Krinitēs suggests that he perhaps commanded all Mardaite units of the *themata* of the West during the expedition.

leader of this unit was directly subordinated to a local *stratēgos* and had very limited autonomy. In view of Constantinople's tendency to unify provincial governance and integrate barbarian groups into its theme system in the 8th and 9th century by gradually reducing their autonomy, it can be assumed that the *Ebiditai* initially enjoyed an autonomous status and were headed by an *archōn* until they were eventually transformed into a *tourma* and integrated into one of the Byzantine *themata* based on the geographic principle, as had been the case with Gothia in Crimea.

⁷⁴ For more details, cf. *Cvetković*, Niže jedinice, 52f.

⁷⁵ De cerimoniis, 668; *Haldon*, Theory, 223. On the possible kinship ties of Krinitēs, cf. *Haldon*, Theory, 290f. n. 195; *PmbZ*, n° 24202. Krinitēs was to be paid by *patrikios* Michaēl Ouranos. For more details on the latter, cf. *Haldon*, Theory, 290f n. 195; *PmbZ*, n° 25186.

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Милош Цветковић

Византолошки институт САНУ, Београд
 milos.cvetkovic@vi.sanu.ac.rs

ХРОНОЛОГИЈА НАСЕЉАВАЊА МАРДАИТА И ЊИХОВ ВОЈНО-УПРАВНИ ПОЛОЖАЈ У ЗАПАДНИМ ТЕМАМА

Мардаитски војници су током VII века били значајан чинилац у византијско-арабљанским односима у пограничним областима на истоку Царства. Неколико столећа након тога – крајем IX и у првој половини X века – представљали су важан део ромејских поморских снага у Малој Азији и на Балкану; извори их помињу као морнаре у теми Кивиреота и у западним темама Пелопонезу, Никополу и Кефалонији. Њихово измештање са источне границе последица је уговора цара Јустинијана II са Арбљанима; историчари, међутим, нису пружили одговор на питање када је спроведена колонизација у три поменуте теме на западу.

Мало је вероватно да је до пресељења Мардаита на запад дошло крајем VII века – када је склопљен споразум калифа Авимелеха и цара Јустинијана II – јер Цариград у то доба није имао чврсту власт на подручју Пелопонеза и Епира. Тешко је, дакле, поверовати да је тада, упоредо са колонизацијом Мардаита у кивиреотску тему, део њих био пресељен на Балкан. Власт Византије на Пелопонезу је

утврђена читаво једно столеће после склапања поменутог уговора, тачније након Ставракијевог похода 783. године. Према томе, време насељавања мардаитског гарнизона на југу Балкана треба тражити у интервалу између 783. и 877/878. године, када се пелопонески Мардаити први пут јављају. Следствено реченом, може се закључити да су мардаитски колонисти на Балкан дошли, не из Сирије и Либана, већ из Аталеје у кивиреотској теми, где су живели од краја VII века, чинећи део посебне војно-управне јединице са катепаном на челу.

Иако не постоје изворни подаци који изричито говоре о колонизацији Мардаита на Пелопонез, поједини извори, попут *Монемвасијске хронике*, пружају обавештења о колонизационим мерама које би се посредним путем могле довести у везу са мардаитском сеобом. Аутор поменуте хронике говори о досељавању, поред осталих, Тракесијана, Јермена и извесних Кафира на подручје пелопонеске теме у време цара Нићифора I. Византолог Петер Харанис сматра да су загонетни Кафири, у ствари, били становници теме Кивиреота, претпостављајући да је аутор *Монемвасијске хронике*, пишући о том догађајима, пред собом имао податке о досељеницима, при чему су они из теме Кивиреота у предлошку наведени у скраћеној форми као Кивири (Κιβυρρ/Κοιβυρρ), што је хроничар погрешно преписао као Кафири. Имајући у виду да се у цитираном одељку *Монемвасијске хронике* Кафири наводе у равни са Тракесијанима, који су били становници тракесијанске теме, као и Јерменима, вероватно припадницима арменијачке теме, исправним се чини Харанисово тумачење по којем је и име Кафир изведено од назива одређене теме. Реч је у том случају о теми Кивиреота. Међу Кивиреотима који су тада пресељени свакако је могло бити и аталејских Мардаита. Према томе, може се претпоставити да је управо цар Нићифор I био заслужан за пресељење малоазијских Мардаита на Балкан. Њихово насељавање могло је имати за циљ јачање византијске власти и надјачавање словенског етничког елемента, у време када је формирана нова тема на Пелопонезу. Поменути цар је, иначе, предузимао опсежне колонизаторске мере широм Царства.

С друге стране, насељавање у преостале две теме на западу – Никопољу и Кефалонији – спроведено је нешто касније у односу на Пелопонез, будући да се први помен никопољских и кефалонијских Мардаити везује за догађаје у првој половини X века. Њихово пресељење је остварено у склопу јачања византијских положаја у Јонском мору након борби са Арабљанима у тој области око 880. године. Мардаитска сеоба у Епиру текла је вероватно упоредо са формирањем никопољске теме, у циљу јачања њеног регрутног потенцијала.

Мардаити западних тема су функционисали у јединицама под руководством турмарха. У свакој од три поменуте теме на Балкану постојала је по једна мардаитска турма, слично моделу персијских етничких турми које су биле распоређене у темама широм Царства током IX века. Налик њиховој војно-управној структури функционисале су и друге етничке турме стациониране у различитим ромејским темама, попут турми Гота, Бугара или Евидита.