THE ROMAN TITLES OF THE CALIPH IN THE SEVENTH–ELEVENTH CENTURIES: A STUDY OF BYZANTINE TERMINOLOGY FOR THE COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL

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ABSTRACT

Built on the foundations of the prophet Muhammad's leadership, the Arabic-speaking Muslims established a continent-spanning empire in the seventh century with the figure of the caliph as their leader. Over centuries of diplomatic contact between the caliphate and their Greek-speaking Roman rivals in the west, a complex and multifaceted system of titles was developed for the caliph by the Romans. This thesis outlines the history of the Roman titles for the caliph, demonstrating how the Arabic titles *khalifah* and *amir al-muminin* were first created by the caliphs themselves, before being rendered into Greek by the Greek-speaking Christians living under the Caliphate. And from there, the reception of the titles within the Roman Empire itself, and the further elaboration by the court at Constantinople in the aid of maintaining diplomatic ties between the two empires. This thesis presents almost every title used by the Romans for the caliph between the seventh and eleventh centuries, categorising them into three separate classifications and explaining the history and context of each of these titles.

Contents

List of Illustrations

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to offer a comprehensive answer to the question of what the East Romans called the leader of the Arab Muslim state, whose title became "caliph" in English. In Roman literary sources from the seventh to eleventh centuries, whether that be letters, histories, hagiographies or papyri, the caliph possessed many different titles, with some authors even using different titles in the same text. For instance, in just one letter, the Constantinopolitan patriarch Nicholas Mystikos used eight different titles for the caliph al-Muqtadir:

- "τῷ κατά θεοῦ ψῆφον τοῦ Σαρακηνῶν ἔθνους τήν ἐπικράτειαν λαχόντι και κυριότητα" (the one who obtained dominion and lordship over the Saracen nation through the judgement of God).[1]
- "ὦ εὐγενεστάτη τῶν Σαρακηνῶν κορυφή" (the most noble *koryphe* of the Saracens).[2]
- "τοῦ Σαρακηνῶν γένους ὁ μέγας και ὑπερκείμενος ἄνθρωπος" (the great and lofty man of the Saracen race).[3]
- "ὦ τοῦ Σαρακηνῶν γένους ὁ παρά θεοῦ τήν ἐξουσίαν ἐγκεχειρισμένος" (the one entrusted by God with authority over the Saracen nation).[4]
- "τῷ ἄρχειν λαχόντι τοσοῦτον ἔθνους τῶν Σαρακηνῶν" (the one who obtained rule over that mighty race of the Saracens).[5]
- "ὦ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν δόξης καλλώπισμα" (the pride of the Saracen glory).[6]

[1] Nicholas Mystikos, Letter 102.2–3. The following translations are adapted to be overly literal by the author.
[2] Ibid, 102.4–5.
[3] Ibid, 102.57.
[4] Ibid, 102.111–112.
[5] Ibid, 102.120.
[6] Ibid, 102.159.

- "ὁ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος" (the first man of the Saracens).[7]
- "ὦ μεγίστη κεφαλὴ τοῦ Σαρακηνῶν ἔθνους" (the greatest *kephale* of the Saracen nation).[8]

Without a solid understanding of how the Romans understood the caliphs and their titles, it is difficult to interpret Mystikos' titles in any meaningful way. Therefore, in conjunction with understanding what the Roman titles for the caliph were, is the question of why they were used- what was the reason for Mystikos to use these six different titles in particular?

Historiographical problems

A major factor in why the titles of the caliph in Greek have received little attention in scholarship is because the development of the caliphal titles took place in the vacuum of the period commonly known as the "Byzantine Dark Ages"- the 200 years or so from the second half of the seventh century to the first half of the ninth century where comparatively few sources survive.[9] There are no independently extant Roman histories written between 628, when Theophylact Simocatta's *Histories* ends, and 790, when the patriarch Nikephoros' own *Short History* was composed.[10] Likewise for recorded diplomatic correspondences such as letters and embassies between Rome and the Caliphate (key sources for the caliphal titles alongside histories) none survive from the same period.[11] The contemporary sources we must rely on for this "Dark Age" are primarily religious texts and papyri, with the latter actually

[7] Ibid, 102.161.
[8] Ibid, 102.190–191.
[9] Decker, 2016, pp. 27–29.
[10] Treadgold, 2013, p. 27; Neville, 2018, p. 48.
[11] The famous correspondence of Leo III and Umar II between 717 and 720, whilst likely real, come down to us in polemical non-Roman accounts written in Latin, Armenian and Arabic and are therefore not discussed in the present study (Kim, 2017, pp. 47–48).

surviving in abundance in the eighth century before declining as Greek gradually stopped being used within the Caliphate.

The same problem also applies to the Arabic/Muslim sources but with the added complication that the seventh and eighth centuries was the very period in which saw the very formation of Islam and Muslim identity.[12] The first Muslim historian Ibn Ishaq, who compiled a biography of Muhammad, died in 767, but his work only survived in Ibn Hisham's recension written some time before the latter's death in 833, two centuries after Muhammad's death.[13] Importantly for this thesis, the two main Arabic titles of the caliph, *amir al-muminin* and *khalifah*, both said to have been created in the 630s, are only reliably attested to in the 660s and 690s respectively.[14] Yet it is very unlikely that the earliest recorded instances of the titles are in fact when they were created, and that the titles were in use sometime within the 30 year gap for *amir al-muminin* and 60 year gap for *khalifah* between the date of their supposed creation and their first attested use on Islamic coinage. Pinpointing who created the caliphal titles and when is impossibility with the current (lack of) contemporary evidence available. There is also less papyrological evidence available in Arabic when compared to Greek for the early Islamic period because Greek, not Arabic, was used as the language of administration in the former Roman provinces until the eighth century when the caliph Abd al-Malik instituted a policy of "Arabization" which started the gradual replacement of Greek with Arabic in the Near East.[15]

As a result, we are relying on texts written centuries later to tell us about the titles of the caliph centuries earlier, when the concepts of a "caliph" and Islam itself were in their

[12] For a modern overview: Donner, 2021, "Introduction", pp. 1–33.
[13] Guillaume, 2001, pp. xiii & xli.
[14] Hirschfeld and Solar, 1981, pp. 203– 204; Donner, 2010, p. 211.
[15] Kennedy, 2023, pp. 88–89.

infancy.[16] It is difficult then to explain the origins (both Greek and Arabic) of the caliphal titles when our most important sources are projecting the contemporary Islamic or Roman perception of the caliphs' titles onto the past. For Greek sources, Roman naming conventions were often anachronistic, using both ancient titles for contemporary rulers as well as contemporary titles for ancient rulers. Julius Caesar and Muhammad were two monarchs who occupied constitutionally unique positions as "dictator for life" and "prophet" yet some Byzantine historians accorded them the same titles as their successors: "basileus of the Romans" and "archegos of the Arabs" respectively.[17] Likewise for Islamic sources, the definitive "history" of early Islam was being codified under the Abbasid dynasty in the ninth and tenth centuries, who looked back to Muhammad and the Rashidun caliphs to legitimate their rule.[18] As an example, Abbasid historians stressed the elective office of the caliph under the Rashiduns and the Abbasids in contrast to the tyrannical, heredity rule of the Umayyads.[19] We cannot solely rely on sources from the ninth century onwards to reconstruct how the caliphal titles were initially developed and then rendered into Greek.

Why should we then navigate these murky waters to understand the caliphal titles? The study of titles has had a relatively small but important role within the discipline of Byzantine Studies; titles can tell us how the Romans formulated their world view through the bestowal of titles to foreign rulers, or domestically how the court at Constantinople operated.[20] Understanding the caliph's titles, as rendered by the Romans, can not only illuminate Christian-Muslim/Rome-Caliphate relations, but also give an insight into cross-cultural interactions (Roman-Arab) and the reception of parts of Arab Islamic culture by Roman elites

[16] Hoyland, 1997, p. 2.
[17] For Caesar, *Epitome of the Ages*, 187. For Muhammad, Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronicle*, p. 332.20–22. (De Boor); Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *To my own son Romanos*, 16.9–11.
[18] As seen by the use of the new title "caliph of the prophet of God". (Crone and Hinds, 2003, p. 16.)
[19] Arnold, 2016, pp. 21–22.
[20] For the former Chrysos, 1978, and more recently Grabar, 2007, for the latter Oikonomides, 1997.

by explaining how the Romans linguistically conceived the figure of the caliph. Chronicling the development of the caliphal titles will further contribute to the study of the nebulous early Islamic period as the Roman caliphal titles reflect how the caliph presented himself to both his new Greek-speaking subjects, and the emperor and Romans in Constantinople.[21]

The Romans themselves gave little explanation as to why there were so many titles and in what context each title should be used. At most, interjections are occasionally found in texts to inform the reader that one title is equivalent to another such as "εἰς τόν πρωτοσύμβουλον, ἤγουν εἰς τόν Ἀμερμουμνῆν" equating *protosymboulos* and *Amermoumnes* together.[22] The caliphal titles appear then to be ubiquitous in Roman society because no one found the need to properly explain the terms as they are not defined in any Byzantine lexicon either. It is therefore necessary to turn to modern scholarship for a deeper insight into how the Roman titles for the caliph were created.

Previous scholarship

Unfortunately, like the Romans they study, modern historians have also generally accepted the Roman titles for the caliph as mundane in the sense that there is nothing particularly different or unique in the caliphal titles, with little interest in the titles beyond defining them. Johann Reiske for instance, as one of the earliest scholars to discuss the matter of the caliphal titles in Greek, devotes two pages in his edition of *Account of the Order of the Palace* in which he attempts to reconstruct the etymologies of the titles "πρωτοσύμβουλος"

[21] In reference to the Ottoman sultans who had also come to rule over a large Greek-speaking Roman population in the fourteenth/fifteenth centuries: "Titulature is one of the most vital tools for pre-modern states in terms of legitimising their authority not only for their own subjects but also for the polities they had contact with." (Çolak, 2014, p. 5)
[22] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Account of the Order of the Palace*, p. 686.

(*protosymboulos)* and "διατάκτωρ" (*diaktator)* used by the author of the text, the emperor Constantine Porphyrogennetos.[23] Yet despite being published in 1830, some of his explanations continued to be accepted well into the twentieth century with little scrutiny.[24] Reiske's claim that *protosymboulos* resulted from the Romans confusing the "أمير الأمراء" (*amir al-umara)*, the *de facto* ruler of the caliphate, with the caliph himself is particularly egregious as *amir al-umara* is first attested in the tenth century, yet Reiske himself cites Theophanes the Confessor who, writing in the early ninth century, already called the caliph *protosymboulos*.[25] In the last few decades of the twentieth century and the first of the twenty-first century, historians posited rather timid suggestions explaining the caliphal titles but usually in isolated comments that appeared in a vacuum and didn't build on Reiske's work.[26] One rather popular example is that *protosymboulos* signified Muʿawiyah's supposedly democratic position as the "first among equals", an intriguing claim, but one that fails under scrutiny when considering the etymology of the title, as will be discussed in this thesis.[27] It was only in 2010, with the publication of Frederico Morelli's article dedicated (in part) to the titles of the caliph, that Reiske's theories were thoroughly disproven, and new origins for some of the caliphal titles were firmly established.[28] Namely, Morelli's article assessed the equivalence of the Arabic أَمِير (*amir),* a term used for the military governors of the Caliphate, with the Greek σύμβουλος (*symboulos),* meaning "counsellor", and concluded that *symboulos* was not in fact a translation of *amir* as had been previously thought, but of another, currently unknown, Arabic term.[29] Since then, although it appears general awareness of the Roman

[23] Reiske, 1830, pp. 806–807.
[24] Cited in Mango and Scott, 1997, p. 500, note 1.
[25] Reiske, 1830, p. 806. *amir al-umara*ʾ first referenced in The *Experiences of Nations* written circa 980–1030 which claims the title was created in 928; see Miskawayh, *Experiences of Nations,* pp. 212. For *protosymboulos* in Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronicle,* p. 356.15– 16 (de Boor).
[26] Hoyland, 2006, pp. 395–416.
[27] Hawting, 2000, p. 42.
[28] Morelli, 2010, pp. 158–168.
[29] Ibid, pp. 165–166.

caliphal titles has increased, little further progress has been made; Morelli's nine page article was a starting point rather than a finishing line because Morelli's focus was on early Islamic Egypt and the title of its governor, rather than the caliph itself.[30] What needs to be done to bring ourselves closer to that finish line is to analyse the caliphal titles not by themselves but as parts of a whole, through the Roman's own perspective, perhaps as the different "species" making up the "genera" of caliph. Moreover, the caliphal titles need to be tracked over a long period of time in order to see how the Roman understanding of the caliphal titles changed and developed. This thesis will analyse the wide variety of contexts in which Greek-speakers used each caliphal title in order to understand what the Romans took these titles to mean and how the titles became formalised as official modes of address for the caliph. Moreover, Morelli's previous research into the titles of *symboulos* and *amir* allows us to consider the implications of the Roman association and conflation of the caliph with his governors, a frequent occurrence in Roman sources.

Methodology

This thesis takes a broad approach to the subject of the caliphal titles in Greek - chronologically, geographically and linguistically - using sources composed in the seventh-eleventh centuries from across the Eastern Mediterranean in Arabic, Greek and Latin amongst other languages. Such a wide approach is adopted in order to encompass the many contexts in which Romans used the caliphal titles and to compare how, and explain why, the Caliphal titles changed depending on time, place and language. The first chapter begins in seventh-century Arabia, where we will see how the title of caliph was created in its original Arabic

[30] For instance, Vaiou, 2015, pp 201–202, note 413.

form; what the title meant and why it was chosen, using papyri and inscriptions as our main literary sources. Then in the second chapter, the act of translation is examined in order how to reconstruct how the titles of the caliph first entered into the Greek language, both through intermediary languages like Syriac and through direct contact with Greek speakers now living under the Caliphate - in particular, the word choices these translators made, consciously or not, when they translated the caliphal titles into Greek, and why they made the choices they did. As has been briefly discussed above, the majority of Roman titles for the caliph had different meanings to the Arabic titles for example *amir al-muminin* (commander of the faithful) having a completely different meaning to *protosymboulos* (first counsellor). This raises the question of whether something was lost in translation between Greek and Arabic, or were there other reasons behind the "imperfectly" translated Greek titles for the caliph? Moving west in the third chapter, the crux of the dissertation focuses on how caliphal titles were received within the Roman Empire itself in the histories, treatises and diplomatic correspondence produced at Constantinople where the titular continued evolving over the centuries of diplomatic contact between Rome and the Caliphate. The aim of giving ourselves such a wide context to work with is to find the reasoning or logic implicit in the Greek-speaking world that dictated how the caliphal titles were used.

In each chapter the Roman titles encountered will be sorted into three categories which will narrow the scope and focus slightly and allow a more in-depth analysis of the titles. The first category is "translated titles" which are Greek titles that attempted to approximate the meaning of the Arabic titles of the caliph such as the aforementioned *diaktator*. The second category is "transliterated titles" where the sounds of the Arabic titles were transcribed into Greek. For instance, like the English word "caliph", the Greek "χαλιφᾶς" (*chalifas)* is derived

from the Arabic "خليفة" (*khalifah)*.[31] The last category is "ethnic titles" that essentially ignores the Arabic and uses a Greek word for ruler combined with one of the various Greek ethnonyms for the Arab people. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, these categories are not discrete, and some titles did overlap into multiple categories. In certain points throughout the thesis, the Roman titles are compared alongside the caliphal titles of other languages whose speakers had relatively close contact with the Caliphate such as Latin, Armenian and Syriac. Likewise for the titles Romans used for other neighbouring rulers, both Christian and Muslim, in a similar timeframe (seventh-eleventh centuries). Doing so will shed light not only on the supposed uniqueness of the Roman titles, but also on the process of translation in multiple languages.[32]

The fundamental question to ask when a new title is encountered is why is that title being used. To answer this, the etymology of the title, that is the meaning of the title and where it originated from must be considered. Rustam Shukurov in his recent study on Roman nomenclature for Turks has provided us with a very constructive framework with which to conceptualize Roman nomenclature.[33] In particular, Shurukov's argument that the basis for Roman naming conventions (at least in literature) stemmed not from imitating classical Greek authors (so called archaization) but from Aristotelian principles, completely changes the lens through which the development of the Roman caliphal titles is viewed in regards to ethic titles.[34] Far from being markers of antipathy or delusion for the Romans, ethnic titles were a part of "those epistemological models according to which the Medieval Greeks [Romans] generated and reproduced knowledge."[35] Ethnic titles existed outside of time and could be

[31] Sophocles, 1900, p. 1158.
[32] Supposed uniqueness: Louis II, *Letter of the Emperor*, p. 388.11–13
[33] Shukurov, 2016, Chapter 1 'The Byzantine Classification of the Turks', pp. 11–64.
[34] Ibid, 15.
[35] Ibid, 15.

applied to any time period by Romans provided the subject shared the same universal and particular properties as defined by Aristotle through his two-part genus-species classification. Using the example in figure 1 below, the genus "archegos" is defined by the universal characteristic of "rulership" (Greek ἀρχή) or "monarchy" (Greek μοναρχίᾱ), whilst the particular of each species is the ethnic group each *archegos* rules over. Thus to a Roman, anyone who had the same universal and particular, whether that be a Christian king or a ninth-century Muslim caliph, could correctly be termed "*archegos* of the Saracens".[36] Through comprehending the Roman etymology of the caliphal titles, we will be able to understand how the Arabs shared Islamic ideas with the Roman world.

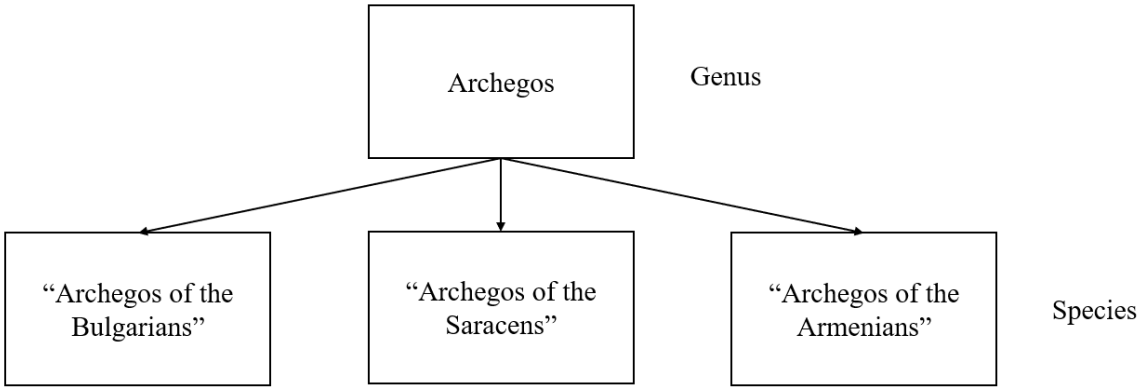

Figure 1. Theoretical Aristotelian classification of "archegoi"

"Roman" Identity?

The provenance of a source that uses a title for the caliph is also very important because of the wide range of sources being investigated. In particular, we must be mindful about the identity of the authors because we cannot assume that the author of every Greek source was a Roman,

[36] Ninth century *archegos*: Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronicle*, p. 493.15–17 (de Boor).

meaning in this case a monolingual or "native" Greek-speaker, theoretically loyal to the Roman emperor and subscribing to Chalcedonian Christianity. In chapter two, the sources are primarily Greek-speaking Christians from the Levant and Egypt and thus, whilst being the demographic majority, were a politically marginalized group living as *dhimmi* under the new Arab-Muslim regime of the Caliphate.[37] I am deliberately avoiding calling these authors "Romans" rather than "Greek-speaking Christians" because in most cases there is no indication the authors identified themselves as Roman. The most prominent part of their identity visible in our sources is the author's religion, with the majority being Chalcedonian or Melkite, which meant they followed the Constantinopolitan Church. Portraying Romans and the emperor in a positive light as pious and good Christians was an almost certain indicator that the author shared their religious affiliation (usually Chalcedonian). In the context of Syria-Palestine and Egypt however, where there was a mosaic of Romans and Romanised indigenous groups like Syrians and Copts, their "ethnic" identity could be any one of these.[38] One source that illustrates well the murkiness surrounding identity; a tenth/eleventh-century Greek translation of a Syriac hagiography from Palestine that greatly praises the emperor, Leo III. The translator's knowledge of Syriac and Greek and the fact they were in Palestine suggests they might have been a native Syrian and because of their positive attitude towards the controversial Leo III because of his Iconoclasm, the translator was likely also a Melkite Christian who supported Iconoclasm. [39] We cannot say with certainty whether this author was Syrian or Roman, to simplify their identity into a binary choice and to an

[37] Panchenko, 2021, p. 2. However some Greek speaking Christians in the Caliphate could and did attain high status in the early Caliphate as influential advisors and bureaucrats but always serving under the Muslim Arab amirs and the caliph himself.
[38] For a brief overview of the fifth century, sans Egypt: Millar, 1998.
[39] See Huxley, 1977.

extent the author's exact identity isn't important as long as we know they spoke Greek.[40] It is only when comparing the sources in chapter two (the Greek-speaking Christians within the Caliphate) with the chapter three sources (Romans within the empire itself) that the "Roman-ness" of the former matters. Indeed, even if they weren't Roman, all Greek-speakers had some element of "Roman-ness" because of their *paideia* influenced by close to a thousand years of Greek and Roman rule. Therefore, to disentangle the Greek-speakers from the Romans and vice versa begins to seem almost pointless.[41] For Greek *paideia,* meaning education, essentially taught how to think, write, speak and act like the Ancient Greeks of classical antiquity therefore making it difficult to distinguish a Roman from a non-Roman in writing as both groups were trained in the same way.[42]

To further complicate the issue of the effect "Roman-ness" might have on the caliph's titles, there was a great socio-economic disparity between the two groups; the majority of the authors in chapter 3 were from the upper echelons of the Roman Empire based at the court in Constantinople, including an emperor himself, in contrast to the Greek-speaking Christians of the Caliphate who, although able to attain positions of high influence, were still subordinate to the Arab Muslim ruling elite and could not obtain the position of caliph for themselves. The status of one such Christian John of Damascus will be analysed in chapter two, as later Greek writers even gave John the caliphal title *protosymboulos*. At the same time, *paideia* itself was a tool of the educated elite and thus an inhabitant of Umayyad Damascus with sufficient *paideia* may have found that their own perception of the caliphal titles was closer to that of a

[40] Monferrer-Sala, 2013, pp. 451–453 for his useful division of the Christian population in the Near East into "1. Greek groups of various ethnic origins whose culture was Greek. 2. Hellenized Syrian and Arab groups. 3. The largest group, comprising Aramaic- and Arab-speaking groups in Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia."
[41] See Awad, 2018.
[42] Kazhdan, 2005, "Paideia", in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Monferrer-Sala, 2013, p. 448.

Constantinopolitan with equal *paideia,* than fellow Christians of the Caliphate with no (or little) *paideia*.[43]

If we were to assume that all Greek-speakers were Roman (which is certainly incorrect), we would still be left with "imperial" (those living within the empire) and "non-imperial" (those living in the Caliphate or elsewhere) Romans. In comparing sources analysed in the first and last chapters, we would expect the titles of the caliph (and how they were used) to be different because the sources chosen are specifically non-Roman and non-Greek. In short, whilst employing a wide range of sources can allow broad trends to emerge around the use of titles, understanding what specific factors like ethnic identity, religion, and social status as well as geographic location and time period contribute to the use of titles is hard to discern. A solution to the question of identity that is implemented here is firstly to consider the Greek-speaking Christian authors as their own heterogeneous group called here the Greek *dhimmi,* and with emphasis that "Greek" refers only to the language and not an ethnic identity. This is not to deny that some of these authors likely would have been Roman, but an acknowledgement that as a subject of the caliph, their use and conception of the caliph's titles certainly differed from any Greek-speaker living outside the Caliphate. This is particularly important because the elements of the Greek *dhimmi* who were not ethnically Roman were bilingual, perhaps even trilingual, in Greek and their native language, supported by the fact that many of the sources used here are translations from another language into Greek.[44] The effect bilingualism may have on the writer's decision to render the caliphal titles in Greek in a specific way must be considered throughout. In particular because the native languages of Syria-Palestine spoken by sections of the Greek *dhimmi* such as Syriac and Aramaic are

[43] Wood, 2010, pp. 2–5. Kaldellis, 2008, p. 35.
[44] For Syria-Palestine see Silva, 1980 and Reynolds, 2022.

Central Semitic languages closely related to Arabic, and indeed some of the Greek *dhimmi* did indeed speak Arabic. Even within the Roman Empire, the nature of Roman identity has been a hotly debated topic regarding what it meant to be Roman, but specifically related to this thesis multiple emperors (the Isaurian and Nikephorian dynasties) have alleged Arab ancestry, with Leo III supposedly being a native speaker of Arabic![45] Possibly the result of anti-Iconoclast propaganda aimed at discrediting Leo as one of the "enemy", if true Leo's knowledge of Arabic would likely have contributed to the development of the caliphal titles in Constantinople. After all, native Arabic speakers were the original creators of the position and titles of the caliph and thus before we analyse how the Romans conceived the caliphal titles in Greek, we must first understand the etymology and history of the caliph in the *Dar al-Islam,* the lands of the Caliphate.

[45] See Kaldellis, 2019 for a more recent picture of Roman identity in Byzantium. For the supposed "Arab-ness" of the emperors see Ball, 2016, p. 505 note 119.

The Caliph in the *Dar al-Islam*

In this chapter, the concept of the caliph is explored in an Islamic context in order to explain why the early Muslims decided to call their ruler *khalifah.* In understanding how Arabic-speaking Muslims perceived the position of caliph, we can then see how Muslims presented the caliph and their titles to their Greek-speaking subjects and foreign nations like the Romans. No doubt the major contributing factor in the development of the caliphal titles was the fact that the caliphs inherited their rule directly from the Islamic prophet Muhammad, a unique situation that must be explored further.

Succession to the last of the prophets

Following the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632, a short power struggle emerged amongst his followers as to who would succeed him.[46] But what position were the prospective candidates hoping to succeed Muhammad *to*?[47] The tenth-century historian al-Tabari, through the voice of the future caliph Umar, described it as "the sovereignty (*sultan*) of Muhammad and his authority (*imarah*)."[48] Al-Tabari was writing over two centuries after Muhammad's death, and was certainly projecting his contemporary conception of Islamic rule living in Baghdad under the Abbasid caliphs onto the uncertain past.[49] In broad terms, the first caliph Abu Bakr succeeded Muhammad to leadership over the nascent Muslim *ummah* (Arabic for community) who had followed Muhammad as God's prophet.[50] This position of leadership however was unique to Muhammad for multiple reasons, and it wasn't an 'office' that could

[46] Kennedy, 2023, p. 46.
[47] Ibn Ishaq, *Life of the Messenger of God*, p. 683– 687.
[48] Al-Tabari, *History of the Prophets and Kings, Volume X*, p. 6.
[49] Donner, 2021, pp. 3–5.
[50] For a brief outline on traditional interpretations of the caliph's authority see Crone and Hinds, 2003, pp. 1–3.

necessarily be easily inherited by a successor. [51] Firstly, Muhammad's leadership was rooted in religion as a prophet; he claimed no formal political position or title but held religious authority as the *rasul Allah* (messenger of God).[52] Moreover, another of Muhammad's titles *khatam al-nabiyyin* (seal of the prophets) also meant that any potential successor could not similarly claim to be a prophet or an apostle without completely invalidating this new religion of Islam.[53] What formal political power Muhammad did have was tied to himself directly through a series of pledges of allegiance (*bay'ah)* and treaties like the so-called "Constitution of Medina." preserved in a ninth-century biography of Muhammad.[54] Muhammad had left no obvious successor to either his religious or political authority, hence the aforementioned power struggle. The importance of the figure of Muhammad in the cohesion of the fledgeling Islamic community is highlighted by the immediate rebellions following his death.[55]

As a result of Muhammad not selecting an obvious successor, the Muslim community were divided into three factions, each vying to fill the power vacuum left by Muhammad's death: the *ahl al-bayt*, Muhammad's close blood family, the *muhajirun,* the original Muslim converts from Mecca, and the *ansar,* the Muslims of Medina who took Muhammad and the *muhajirun* in.[56] After the *ansar* initially wanted separate leaders for themselves and the *muhajirun,* Umar nominated Abu Bakr (both part of the *muhajirun)* because the *muhajirun* wouldn't accept a leader from outside themselves, who was eventually accepted by all three groups.[57] An eighth-century biography of Muhammad ends, fittingly, with the *ummah* giving their *bayʿah* to Abu Bakr the day after the prophet's death, followed by preparations for the

[51] Madelung, 1997, pp. 16–18.
[52] Black, 2011, pp. 9–15.
[53] Quran 33:40. Kennedy, 2023, p. 45.
[54] Caruso, 2013, pp. 5– 6. See Ibn Isḥaq, *Life of the Messenger of God,* pp. 231–233 for the Constitution of Medina.
[55] See the Ridda Wars in al-Tabari, *History of the Prophets and Kings, Volume X.*
[56] Madelung, 1997, p. 2.
[57] Ibn Ishaq, *Life of the Messenger of God,* pp. 685–686.

prophet's funeral.[58] Due to Ibn Ishaq's silence on the matter, there didn't seem to be time to consider what the Muslims were actually going to call Muhammad's successor, rather confirming Abu Bakr as the new leader of the *ummah* was more important.

The Titles of the Caliph

Fortunately at least one tenth-century source, al-Tabari, provides us with an origin for the titles of the caliph, for in al-Tabari's account of the succession dispute with the *ansar,* Umar and another of the *muhajirun* explained that Abu Bakr should lead the *ummah* because he was "the apostle of god's deputy (*khalifah*) over the prayer" during Muhammad's illness.[59] This then is how "خَلِيفَة" (*khalifah)* became one of the titles of the caliph by the tenth century, deriving from the full phrase "*khalifat rasul Allah*" (deputy of the messenger of God) and from which the English word is derived. However, al-Tabari's account is problematic for two main reasons, firstly that the earliest references to the title of *khalifah* date to 60 years after Abu Bakr's accession in 632, first appearing on the coinage of his distant successor Abd al-Malik (reigned 685-705).[60] Secondly, this does not necessarily mean that *khalifah* wasn't used as early as Abu Bakr's reign, but Abd al-Malik's coins read "*khalifat Allah*" (deputy of God) not "*khalifat rasul Allah"* thereby disproving al-Tabari's etymology.[61]

Whether *khalifah* originally stood for *khalifat Allah* or *khalifat rasul Allah* as al-Tabari understood it, has been a hotly debated subject but current consensus leans to *khalifat Allah* as the original title, which is supported by *khalifah* being used in the Quʿran by God to designate

[58] Ibn Ishaq, *Life of the Messenger of God,* pp. 686–687.
[59] Al-Tabari, *History of the Prophets and Kings, Volume X*, p. 7.
[60] Donner, 2010, p. 211.
[61] Bacharach, 2010, p. 13.

both Adam and David (separately) as his deputies on earth.[62] *Khalifat rasul Allah* appears to have only started being used as a title by the Abbasid dynasty, under whom al-Tabari was writing, as a way to legitimate their rule through kinship with Muhammad, unlike the previous Umayyad dynasty the Abbasids had usurped.[63]

The second title of the caliph used by Arabic speaking Muslims was "أَمِيْر ٱلْمُؤْمِنِيْن" (*amir al-muminin)* which is typically translated into English as "commander of the faithful." Abu Bakr's successor Umar was purported to have adopted the title sometime after his own ascension in 634.[64] A *hadith* recorded in the mid-ninth century explained that the title was an innovation of the famed poet Labid ibn Rabiʿah and Adiy ibn Hatim, the leader of an Arabian tribe who both used the title for Umar because, as Amr ibn al-As commented to the pair: "you have certainly got the right title for him [Umar]: he is the commander (*amir*) and we are the faithful (*al- muminin*)."[65] Despite some Islamic sources doubting the veracity of this explanation, we do nevertheless have attestations of the title much closer to Umar's reign than with *khalifa.*[66] Curiously, the earliest surviving usage of *amir al-muminin* appears to be not in Arabic but Greek. As attested to an inscription dated to circa 662, 30 years after Umar's ascension, that refers to "'Αβδάλλα Μαάυια άμήρα άλμουμενήν" (*Abdalla Mauia amera almoumenen*), or as it would appear in Arabic *Abd Allah Muʿawiyah amir al-muminin*.[67] Muʿawiyah's coinage also from the early 660s used the title, again not using Arabic but Pahlavi, in which the title was rendered "*amir i-wrushnikan*."[68] This should not be surprising,

[62] Crone and Hinds, 2003, pp. 4–5. Quʿran 2:28, 38:25.
[63] Ibid, p. 16.
[64] Madelung, 1997, p. 49.
[65] Al-Bukhari, *Al-Adab al-Mufrad,* 47.1027 (pp. 840–841). Translation adapted by author.
[66] Al-Masʿudi, *Meadows of Gold,* p. 192.
[67] Hirschfeld and Solar, 1981, pp. 203– 204. Translation adapted by author.
[68] Walker, 1941, pp. 25–26.

for until the aforementioned Abd al-Malik's reforms, the Caliphate used Greek and Pahlavi as languages of administration and on coinage, not Arabic.[69]

Kingship in Late Antique Arabia

Now it has been established that the two primary titles of the caliph, *khalifah* and *amir al-muminin,* were certainly in use by the eighth century, a question arises: why didn't Abu Bakr (or any other caliph) crown himself king? Ultimately, it will be impossible to find the exact origins of the two titles and the reasons they were chosen, but it is clear that traditional Arabic "regnal" titles like *malik* and *sheikh* were purposefully avoided by the caliphs despite being used in Arabia for centuries prior to the advent of Islam.[70] In order to understand the aversion to kingship by the caliphs, it is necessary to examine the concept of kingship (*mulk* in Arabic*)* in both pre and post-Islamic thought primarily through the analysis of sources dealing with political theory. As we will see, the Islamic concept of *mulk,* and the caliph's relationship to it, were heavily influenced by ancient Greek philosophy and the Biblical past, two factors that also played a large part in the Romans' own conception of kingship (βασιλεία in Greek). Therefore, by comprehending how both the Muslim Arabs and Christian Romans conceived the idea of kingship, it will allow us to better understand the choices made by the Muslims and Romans when it came to giving a title to the caliph.

In the early seventh century, during Muhammad's lifetime, there were in fact three "kings" in pre-Islamic Arabia. In the northwest of the peninsula there were the two Christian kings - the Roman emperor and his vassal, the king of the Ghassanid tribe. The Ghassanid kings called themselves *malik* (king) in their native language of Arabic as attested to in one sixth-century

[69] Kennedy, 2023, pp. 88–89.
[70] Böwering, 2015, p. 39.

inscription calling the Ghassanid ruler "*al-Harith al malik*" (al-Harith the king).[71] However, Ghassanid rulers were only accorded the Greek equivalent *basileus* unofficially so as not to contend with the Roman emperor who was also *malik* and *basileus*.[72]The third and final king in Arabia was the Sassanian monarch in the east and in Yemen whose own corresponding vassal king of the Lakhimid tribe had been murdered at the turn of the century.[73] Despite all three being accorded rather different statuses when looking at Roman sources, the three kings were called *malik* in both pre and post Islamic Arabic sources.[74] Although most of the Arabian peninsula was not under the control of any *malik* including most of the Hejaz, the western coast of the peninsula which was the homeland of Muhammad and the first six caliphs (henceforth called the Hejazian monarchs).[75] However, this does not mean early Muslims were unfamiliar with kingship as we shall see.

In Mecca, there was already a tradition of monarchy as Qusayy ibn Kilab, the fifth-century founder of the Quraysh tribe, to which all the Hejazian monarchs belonged (and indeed all the Arab caliphs), was purported to have been the *malik* of Mecca, as one eighth-century biography of Muhammad records:

> "he behaved as a *malik* over his tribe and the people of Mecca, and so they made him *malik*… Qusayy was the first of the Banu Kaʿb ibn Luʿayy [the descendants of Qusayy's great grandfather] to assume kingship (*mulk)* and to be obeyed by his people as king. He held the keys of the temple, the right to water the pilgrims from the well of

[71] Shahîd, 1995, pp. 117– 121.
[72] Ibid, pp. 113–116.
[73] Ibid, p. 623, note 19.
[74] The Roman emperor was also called "qayṣar" in Arabic, a transliteration of Caesar (Shahîd, 1995, p. 26). For a thorough analysis of the Ghassanid titles in both Arabic and Greek, see Shahîd, 1995, pp. 95–124. P. 481, note 266 for "al-Mulūk" (of the kings) being attached to the Sassanid king's name to approximate the Persian *Shahanshah* (king of kings).

[75] Including here Hasan ibn Ali who briefly reigned after his father's death.

> Zamzam, to feed the pilgrims, to preside at assemblies, and to hand out the war banners."[76]

The biographer Ibn Ishaq's statement that Qusayy was the *first* of his family to assume *mulk* likely has a double meaning here referring to both Qusayy's direct descendants who immediately followed him as rulers of Mecca, but also to the caliphs of Ibn Ishaq's own lifetime who were also descended from Qusayy. For Qusayy's descendants continued to have control over Mecca until Muhammad's lifetime, however not as kings but rather as an oligarchy among Qusayy's progeny. Yet the Quraysh leadership still preformed the duties of kingship, shared among each other, which Ibn Ishaq mentioned in the quote above, like the right to water pilgrims that Muhammad's uncle later held.[77] Therefore, although not *maliks*, the leaders of the Quraysh could be considered to have held the *mulk* together, and this idea of *mulk* without a *malik*, or kingship without a king, is also found in post-Islamic literature in relation to the caliphs as will be discussed below.

The Hejazian monarchs themselves were also intimately familiar with foreign kingship too; one of the Quraysh clans - the Banu Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza - were Ghassanid allies, to whom Khadija, the wife of Muhammad and therefore aunt and mother-in-law of Ali ibn Talib, belonged.[78] Moreover, as the Quraysh were largely traders, there are accounts of several of the Hejezian monarchs themselves travelling to Syria where they would have traded in both Ghassanid and Roman cities and no doubt have become familiar with the coinage displaying the Roman emperor which the caliphs would later copy.[79] Roman coins found throughout the Hejaz and the wider peninsula dated before Islam further demonstrates that the *ummah* would

[76] Ibn Ishaq, *Life of the Messenger of God,* pp. 52–53.
[77] Ibid, pp. 55–79 for a narrative of the Quraysh leaders after Qusayy.
[78] Shahîd, 2002, p. 378.
[79] Muhammad: Ibn Ishaq, *Life of the Messenger of God,* p. 82. Umar: Al-Sallabi, 2007, p. 47. Uthman: Ibn Saʿd, *The Major Book of Classes*, p. 39.

have been familiar with the Roman, Christian presentation of kingship.[80] A tenth-century Islamic treatise on diplomacy recorded how the Quraysh used to send messengers to kings in the period before Islam.[81] Further north at Medina, the initial seat of power of the Hejezian monarchs, there appears to have been a *malik* who was appointed by the last Lakhimid king (reigned 582–c. 602), whose descendants were later companions of Muhammad.[82]

All this is to say that the founders of the Caliphate, despite not having a king of their own, were certainly familiar with the concept of one and not inherently opposed to the concept of kingship. In the Quʿran too, kingship is described in favourable terms, with *malik* being used primarily to refer to God. [83] For instance, in the verse below *malik* is one of God's many titles:

> "He is Allah - there is no god except Him, the *Malik*, the Most Holy, the All-Perfect, the Source of Serenity, the Watcher 'of all', the Almighty, the Supreme in Might, the Majestic"[84]

Malik as a title for God could be why Muhammad and the caliphs were not themselves *maliks*, because, as implied by *khalifah,* they were God's subordinate, not equal. Potential awkwardness is apparent when considering the name of the caliph Abd al-Malik for instance, which translates to "slave of the king". The king referred to here is clearly God, but it would certainly be awkward if Abd al-Malik himself had the title of *malik.* Curiously, distinguishing between the holy and earthly kings does not appear to have been a problem in Christianity, with both God and the Roman Emperor (and select few other monarchs) being called *basileus* in Greek. The late fourth/early fifth-century patriarch of Constantinople John Chrysostom

[80] Potts, 2010, pp. 74–75.
[81] Ibn al-Farra, *Messengers of Kings,* 58 (p. 82).
[82] Kister, 1999; Lecker, 2002.
[83] Böwering, 2015, p. 39.
[84] Quʿran 59:23.

explained in a commentary on the bible that ethnic qualifiers were only needed for foreign *basileis* because context makes it obvious that just "the *basileus"* must mean either the Roman emperor or God.[85] Presumably Abd al-Malik and the other caliphs had a similar thought process when referring to the Roman emperor as *malik al-Rum* as well as for other foreign kings.

Yet there was a palpable tension between the title of *malik* and *khalifah* when they are compared to one another, with *khalifah* clearly being superior to *malik*.[86] Ibn Ishaq throughout his biography of Muhammad presents a contrast between a prophet and king through non-Muslims, who judged whether Muhammad was indeed not a king but a prophet, usually through his words and actions.[87] Even the caliphs themselves were framed as unsure of how their title and its position differed from that of a king, as the second caliph Umar had to ask what the difference was between the two. His answer, from a fellow Muslim, was:

> "[The caliph] is the one who deals with his flock justly and apportions [resources] among them fairly, who shows compassion and concern for them the way a man has compassion for his wife or a parent for his child."[88]

This is recorded by al-Qalqashandi, a fourteenth-century Egyptian and should not be taken as fact, but nevertheless the quotation but is a perfect example of a later explanation for why the caliphs were not termed *maliks*; a *malik* did **not** deal with his subjects justly nor show compassion for them whereas a caliph did. The Arabs of the Hejaz heavily associated kingship with taxation and loss of independence as demonstrated by the *malik* in Medina who

[85] John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms, Homily on Psalm 44* I. Kaldellis, 2008, p. 66.
[86] Böwering, 2015, p. 244.
[87] Ibn Ishaq, *Life of the Messenger of God,* pp. 516, 638, 659.
[88] Al-Qalqashandi, *Maʿathir al-Inafah fī Maʿalim al-Khilafah,* 1:2, 8, 13– 14. Translation by Hassan, 2016, pp. 127–128.

collected taxes for the Lakhimids and Sassanids. Another story explicitly shows the dislike of kings, in which a certain Christian convert Uthman ibn al-Huwayrith, after abandoning pagan Mecca for Rome, was crowned *malik* of the Quraysh by the Roman Empire in exchange for becoming the Roman governor of Mecca.[89] However, upon returning to Mecca Uthman was rejected by the people because they refused to pay taxes to Uthman/Rome no matter how small an amount.[90] Needlessly heavy taxation (perceived or real) was commonly associated with tyranny in Late Antiquity, influenced by the likes of Plato and Aristotle who said that poverty through taxation and wasteful riches were a tyrant's method for keeping his subjects focused on daily survival rather than conspiring against himself.[91] Hence why in a ninth-century hadith, Umar is said to have lamented at the prophet's ascetic lifestyle whilst "Chosroes and Caesar live among fruits and rivers", implicitly funded through their tyrannical taxation.[92] As a much later example demonstrating the enduring association of taxation and kingship, one eighteenth-century Indian writer, Wali Allah, explicitly attributed the success of the Arab conquests to the decadent taxation and hereditary rule of the Romans and Persians.[93]

Hereditary rule is another common marker of kingship and therefore may be another reason why *malik* was not used as the caliph's title. As the beginning of this chapter demonstrated, the first caliph Abu Bakr was "elected" by the *ummah*, a practice theoretically undertaken with each new caliph, and all the Hejazian monarchs, sans Ali and his son Husayn, were only distantly related to their predecessor. Another hadith, undoubtably apocryphal, has Muhammad prophesising that "the caliph will be in my *ummah* for thirty years, then there will be monarchy (*mulkan ʿaduudan*) after that."[94] This refers to Muʿawiyah, who after becoming

[89] ʿAthamina, 1998, pp. 35–37. One version of the story in Ibn Ishaq, *Life of the Messenger of God*, p. 99.
[90] Osman, 2005, p. 69; Shahîd, 2010, p. 21.
[91] Plato, VIII.567a; Aristotle, V.IX.1313b.
[92] Ibn Majah, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, 37.11.4153.
[93] Shah Wali Allah, *The Conclusive Argument from God*, pp. 306–308. Black, 2011, p. 254.
[94] Imam At-Tirmidhi, *Jami At-Tirmidhi*, 31.48.2226

caliph following thirty years of Rashidun rule made his son his successor, beginning over a millennium of caliphal hereditary rule. Of course, these quotes show how later Muslims viewed the Hejazian monarchs, but they do indicate that at the time when *amir al-muminin* (and possibly *khalifah)* were first used for the caliph, there was virtually no reason for a title like *malik* to be used instead because the caliphs did not view themselves as kings, nor want to be viewed as such by their Muslim subjects.

To conclude, the development of the Arabic titles *khalifah* and *amir al-muminin* for the ruler of the Islamic state has a long and uncertain history. Islamic histories that narrate the origins of the caliphal titles were written over two centuries after the death of Muhammad and the reigns of the first caliphs. The claims of these historical sources that *khalifah* (deputy) was adopted by Abu Bakr following Muhammad's death is not corroborated by contemporary evidence where *khalifah* is first attested to in the Islamic coinage of the 690s, 60 years after Abu Bakr's rule. Moreover, the exact meaning of *khalifah* is a source of contention with Abbasid sources, keen to emphasise their own relationship to Muhammad in contrast to their predecessors, giving the full title as "*khalifat rasul Allah"* (deputy of the messenger of God). On the other hand, earlier sources from the Ummayad period understood the title as just "*khalifat Allah" (*deputy of God) and demonstrates that authors in the ninth and tenth centuries like al-Tabari who were canonizing Islamic history in their works were projecting contemporary perceptions of the caliph onto the past. Similarly, the title of *amir al-muminin* (commander of the faithful) was said to be first used by the second caliph Umar (reigned 634-644), yet our earliest evidence for the title comes from the 660s.

With the current evidence available, it is near impossible to ascertain what titles were used by the Islamic ruler before the 660s; whether *khalifah* and *amir al-muminin* were adopted by Abu

Bakr and Umar or perhaps some other title was used instead. What can be better ascertained is why two completely novel titles were chosen rather than something more conventional like *malik.* Muhammad was the last prophet, and thus the caliphs could not succeed him to that role, and Muhammad had no formal secular office that the caliphs could inherit. Adopting the title of *malik* appeared to have been untenable to the *ummah* because of the negative perception of kingship which was prevalent in Islamic political thought but appears to have been filtered down through the Hejaz's relationship with kings prior to Islam.

Having set out the significance of the caliphal titles among Arabic-speaking Muslims, the following chapter analyses the reception of the Arabic titles among the Greek-speaking Christians who lived under the early Caliphate. In rendering Greek titles for their new monarch, did the Greek *dhimmi* understand the meaning and significance of the Arabic titles or choose to ignore them in favour of traditional Greek naming conventions? Doing so will shed light on the relationship between the caliph and his Greek-speaking Christian subjects in the first two centuries of Islam, and how the Arabic language was received by Greek speakers. Moreover, the early Greek titles for the caliph can also aid significantly in constructing the early Arabic titles for the caliph because of the abundance of Greek papyri for the seventh and eighth centuries in comparison to the dearth of Arabic papyri.

The Caliph among the Greek *dhimmi*[95]

Looking beyond Arabic and Arabia, this chapter explores how the Greek *dhimmi* attempted to define their overlord the caliph in their own language. As has been previously discussed, some of these Greek-speaking Christians would have been Roman, others the Romanised natives of the now former Roman Near East. Nevertheless, all of these Greek-speakers had a vastly different relationship to the caliph than the earlier Arab Muslims and the imperial Romans of their lifetime. The ancestors of these Christians had been the subjects of the Roman emperor for over half a millennium before being incorporated into the Caliphate. The Romans own conception of kingship (βασιλεία in Greek) was also markedly different from the standard, or modern, idea of kingship and in fact was similar to the Islamic kingship discussed above.[96] For the Romans of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages had inherited the ancient Roman hatred of kings and republican values, with the emperor merely the highest elected magistrate of the state- "the first among equals" as established by Augustus himself.[97] Michael Psellos, in a didactic history meant for the young *basileus* Michael Doukas, summarised the end of the ancient Roman kingship as follows:

> "Monarchy among the Romans (βασιλική Ῥωμαίων πολιτεία) lasted two hundred forty years after the foundation of Rome. But under the last *basileus* Tarquinius it became a tyranny, which was only put down by very brave men… the aristocratic consuls' rule proved itself to the Romans to be stronger than the *basileia*."[98]

[95] This chapter is based on an article published in the University of Birmingham's postgraduate journal *Diogenes.* Butler, L. 2023. 'The end of the thousand-year *basileia*? The titles of the Caliph among the Greek *dhimmi*', *Diogenes,* 15.
[96] For an overview: Magdalino, 2017.
[97] For a recent revisionary take on Byzantine republicanism, see Kaldellis, 2015.
[98] Michael Psellos, *Brief History*, pp. 6–9. Translation adapted by author.

Despite the rather confusing terminology employed by Psellos seeing as *basileus* and *basileia* were terms also used for his contemporary Roman monarchy, there was a clear divide between the ancient Roman kings and their medieval counterparts.[99] For like the caliphs, the Roman emperor did not call himself king, conceived in Greek thought as "ῥήξ" and not "βασιλεύς", the traditional Greek title for a monarch, which was actually used as a title for the emperor.[100]

At the same time, the Roman emperor was also regarded as God's "deputy", or indeed *khalifah*, on earth.[101] In the Roman imperial titles, this concept was conveyed through epithets like "θεοστεφής" (god-crowned) that emphasised how the emperors were divinely appointed by God himself to their office.[102] The ideology of the Roman emperor as God's vice regent was expressed through the doctrine of *symbasileia* wherein the Roman emperor was portrayed as co-ruling (συμβασίλευσον) the Roman Empire with Christ.[103] Paul Magdalino has suggested that the rise in prominence of *symbasileia* in imperial ideology was from "an ever more explicit acknowledgement of imperial dependence on and conformity to the theocracy of Christ" in response to Islam and the rise of the Caliphate.[104] Much has been said

[99] Michael Psellos, *Brief History*, pp. 10–11: "[Caesar] was the first to transform the aristocratic *politeia* into a monarchy and to convert the consulate into a *basileia*." Translation adapted by author.
[100] For a contemporary explanation from John Lydos, *On the Magistracies of the Roman State*, pp.10–13: "the name of their [Romulus and Remus] rule was that which the Italians call *regium*, that is, "tyranny" for the term *regium* is not indicative of a lawful Roman *basileia*, as some assume; for this reason, after the expulsion of the *reges*, it was no longer used by the Romans, even when they were being governed by *basileis.*" Adapted by author.
[101] See Leo and Constantine, *Selection*, pp. 66– 70 for an imperial eighth-century perspective. Interestingly, we find in some fourteenth-century Turkish texts the patriarch of Constantinople being called the "caliph of the infidels": Yazıcızâde ʿAlî, *Jazığyoġlu ʿAli*, *Oġuzname* manuscript of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Orient. Quart. 1823, fol. 409v–410r (Shukurov, 2016, p. 117); *Danişmendname,* lines 58a–63b (Bayrı, 2019, p. 43).
[102] Θεοστεφής in seventh-century Heraclian papyri: SB 6 8986 (https://www.trismegistos.org/text/17839), for more examples: https://papyri.info/search?STRING1=%CE%B8%CE%B5%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%86&target1=TEXT&no_caps1=on&no_marks1=on&page=1. Romanos II as Θεοστεφής in Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *To my own son Romanos*, p. 44.
[103] Magdalino, 2003, pp. 251–253. The same terminology was used when there were multiple emperors, however *symbasileus* did not designate the "junior" emperor as proven in Zuckerman, 2010, pp. 887–889.
[104] Magdalino, 2017, p. 582.

about the ideological "war of images" between the emperor Justinian II and caliph Abd al-Malik that played out on the coinage of both empires around the 690s.[105] According to Humphreys' reconstruction, Justinian's coinage reforms displaying Christ for the first time triggered Abd al-Malik to move away from Roman imitation coinage and institute new purely Arabic and Islamic coins.[106] Christ, titled "king of kings" on the obverse and Justinian, titled "slave of God" on the reverse was a clear display of *symbasileia.*[107] As figures two and three below demonstrate, the senior emperor being relegated to the reverse which was usually reserved for the co-emperors makes it clear that Christ was meant to be seen as ruling with and over the Roman emperors. Moreover, the complete rejection of *symbasileia* by Abd al-Malik, spurred by the depiction of Christ, is indicative of how the office of caliph was constructed viz a viz the Roman emperor and vice versa.

Figure 2. Solidus with Constantine IV on the obverse and his two brothers on the reverse. British Museum B.11940.

[105]Originally posited in Grabar, 1984, pp. 77– 84 (first published 1957). Two recent studies on the topic: Humphreys, 2013 and Treadwell, 2012.
[106] Humphreys, 2013, pp. 239– 244.
[107] Magdalino, 2003, p. 253.

Figure 3. Solidus with Christ on the obverse and Justinian and his son on the reverse, British Museum G3,RIG.600.

Does this then mean that the Greek *dhimmi* were receptive of the caliph's unique titles because of their own experiences with the Roman imperial titles and ruling ideology? As this chapter will demonstrate, there is no simple answer, namely because extant sources using the caliphal titles in Greek are divided into two major categories: "official" government sources for the Caliphate like papyri documents, and (Christian) religious texts such as hagiographies. As might be deduced, the official sources were much more sensitive to the titles of the caliph which is heightened further by many of these documents existing in a multilingual context, with the Greek text a translation of the Arabic original or vice versa.[108] On the other hand, non-official sources were only intended for circulation among other Greek *dhimmi* and therefore there was no reason for the writers to use the official titles of the caliph. In order to allow a degree of subtlety in interpreting the Greek titles of the caliph, this chapter is structured around the methods through which the caliph was conveyed in the Greek language; either through translation of the Arabic, an original Greek title (ethnic titles) or transliteration of the Arabic into Greek.

[108] For Egypt, Sijpesteijn, 2010, pp. 116–120.

The Greco-Arabic Relationship

Before looking at the Greek titles however, it is necessary to discuss the relationship between the Greek and Arabic languages, and how Greek speakers perceived Arabic. Greek had been the *lingua franca* of the Eastern Mediterranean for close to a millennium by the time of Islam, after Alexandros the Great's conquests spread Greek language and culture throughout Anatolia, Syria-Palestine and Egypt. Educated Greek-speakers, the main authors of our sources, were also rather elitist with the language being seen as superior to "barbaric" languages such as Arabic and knowledge of Greek, particularly Attic Greek, was directly tied to *paideia.*[109] Even after centuries of Romanisation, Greek was never fully displaced by Latin in these regions, and eventually Greek even became the sole language of the Romans.

A similar phenomenon of the persistence of the Greek language initially occurred after the Islamic Conquests where the Greek *dhimmi* continued speaking Greek, which was still used as the language of administration in the western provinces of the Caliphate at least until the ninth century.[110] Whilst the authors of hagiographies could be wilfully ignorant of Arabic, many of the Greek *dhimmi* serving in government would have had regular contact with Arabs and/or Arabic speakers. An excellent example is the so-called Qurra dossier, a papyrus archive of Basil, the Greek-speaking *pagarch* of the village (*kome)* Aphrodito in Upper Egypt written between circa 705 and 721.[111] The dossier is named after Qurra ibn Sharik, the Umayyad governor of Egypt (709-714) with whom Basil had much correspondence. Of the letters that survive from Qurra to Basil there are approximately 40 Arabic ones and 90 Greek ones.[112] It has been suggested that each letter had two copies and whilst this would explain

[109] Kaldellis, 2008, pp. 21–27.
[110] Sijpesteijn, 2010, pp. 105–106.
[111] Richter, 2010, pp. 195–196.
[112] Ibid., pp. 197–198.

how early Arabic-Greek communication occurred, no letter has been found in both languages making the argument unconvincing and, as noted by Richter "the effort of producing two copies of each [letter] in two different languages must have been considerable."[113]

I think what is more likely is that Basil himself knew Arabic, or a member of his staff did who could translate the contents for Basil. Rachel Stroumsa has found that the papyri at Nessana in Palestine displays evidence of "two parallel systems of scribal notation and administration" by the eighth century when Arabic began being officially used in the government of the Caliphate, whilst the Greek speaking bureaucrats were still employed as the language continued to hold prestige as the language of governance in the Near East.[114] We do, in fact, have some evidence for this in the Qurra dossier because one letter refers to "Ἀραβικοῦ νοταρίου συνόντος ἐνδόξῳ παγάρχῳ" (the Arabic *notarios* belonging to the famous *pagarch).*[115] *Notarios* is the Roman term for a scribe and, combined with another scribe referred to as a "Γραικοῦ νοταρίου" (Greek *notarios),* indicates that Basil and other *pagarchs* in Egypt had separate scribes fluent in Greek and Arabic for writing, and possibly translating, documents.[116] Although Stroumsa may have stated that "the administrative system itself did not require bilingualism, and in some sense may be said to have discouraged it," there clearly were Greek-Arabic bilingual speakers working in the government because otherwise Basil would have had no way of understanding the Arabic letters addressed directly to him.[117]

Likewise, Qurra would also not have been able to dictate the Greek letters to Basil unless he, some member of his entourage, or the scribe himself was bilingual. For the same structure of two notary systems for each language applied to the Arab Muslims too, as another papyrus

[113] Bell, 1945, p. 533 for the theory of Arabic and Greek copies of the letters. Richter, 2010, pp. 200–201
[114] Stroumsa, 2019, p. 150.
[115] *P.Lond* IV 1434, 229–230. Trans. Richter, 2010, p. 212.
[116] *P.Lond* IV 1434, 301 and 311. Richter, 2010, pp. 212–213.
[117] Stroumsa, 2019, p. 150.

confirms that Qurra also had separate scribes for Greek and Arabic: "Σωλεειμ υἱοῦ Συμεαν Ἀραβικοῦ νοταρίου τοῦ συμβούλου" (Sulaym ibn Sim'an, Arab *notarios* of the *symboulos).*[118] The scribe's name being Arabic would suggest that Sulaym was an Arab Muslim and thus a native speaker of Arabic and onomastics can be a useful tool here because names can indicate whether a scribe was translating from one language into another. For example, on one of Qurra's Arabic letters, the scribe appears to also have the name Basil, a very unusual name if he were an Arabic Muslim, and thus making it likely this Basil was part of the Greek *dhimmi* and had learnt Arabic as a second language.[119] His "first" or "native" language however was not necessarily Greek as evidenced by the presence of many Coptic scribes in Egypt who had Greek names and shows that names are not a definitive method of determining one's ethnic or linguistic background, nevertheless it can separate the Muslims from the non-Muslims.[120] A problem presented for this study is that for the Qurra dossier, among others, it is only the Arabic papyri that have the scribes names and not the Greek papyri.[121] Therefore we will have to content ourselves by considering any names, like the sender and receiver, that are present on Greek papyri which may indicate the scribe was bilingual.

Transliterated Titles

The first caliphal title in Greek that survives is the inscription from northern Palestine dated to 662 which says:

[118] *P.Lond* IV 1447, 140. Richter, 2010, p. 212.
[119] *P.Qurra* 2. Richter, 2010, p. 213.
[120] Richter, 2010, p. 214.
[121] Ibid., p. 214.

Figure 4. Muʿawiyah inscription at Hamat Gader.

"Ἐπι Ἀβδάλλα Μαάυια ἀμήρα ἀλμουμενὴν ἀπελύθη καί ἀνενεώθη ὁ κλίβανος τῶν ἐνταῦθα διὰ Ἀβδάλλα υἱοῦ Ἀβουασέμου συμβούλου... εἰς ἴασην τῶν νοσούντων σπουδῇ Ἰωάννου μαγιστριανοῦ Γαδαρηνοῦ"

(In the days of Abdalla Mauias, the *amera almoumenen* the hot baths of the people there were saved and rebuilt by Abdalla son of Abuasemos the *symboulos*…for the healing of the sick, under the care of John, the official of Gadara). [122]

Amera almoumenen (ἀμήρα ἀλμουμενὴν) is a transliteration of *amir al-muminin* into Greek, referring here to the caliph Muʿawiyah I, and demonstrates that the Greek *dhimmi* had early familiarity with the title even if, generally being non- Arabic speakers, they did not understand the meaning of the title. The transliteration of foreign titles into Greek was a relatively common practice, illustrated by the Latin titles transliterated following the incorporation of the Greek speaking world into the Roman Empire such as Caesar to

[122] Hirschfeld and Solar, 1981, pp. 203–204. Adapted by Author.

"Καῖσαρ" (*Kaisar*) and Augustus to "Αὔγουστος" (*Augoustos*).[123] Transliterating *amir al-muminin* into Greek was likely already in practice before the inscription was set up and not an original invention of the inscriber. John was acting under orders from one "Abdalla, son of Abuasemos the *symboulos.*"[124] *Symboulos* (σύμβουλος), literally meaning counsellor, was the typical Greek title used for the Muslim governors of the Caliphate, called *amir* in Arabic.[125] In the inscription, Arabic vocabulary that entered the Greek language were both translated and transliterated; Greek speakers were not consistent with sticking to one or the other. Here, John, or Abdalla, decided to transliterate *amir al-muminin*, but Abdalla was called *symboulos* rather than *amir*.[126] This will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

From their names and status, we can surmise that John was a local member of the Greek *dhimmi*, and Abdalla was part of the ruling Arab Muslim elite, but it is difficult to know if either of them had knowledge of both Greek and Arabic.[127] Whoever chose to use "*amera almoumenen*" may have done so because it was already popular among the Greek *dhimmi* - the majority of the population in Syria-Palestine in the seventh century .[128] Therefore, transliteration facilitated the dissemination to as many people as possible the information that Muʿawiyah was **the** *amir al-muminin* in the aftermath of the 656–661 succession crisis. In fact, a transliteration may have been preferable to a translation in a non-literary context. For a Greek speaker hearing the Arabic *amir al-muminin* would likely understand who it was

[123] Sophocles, 1900, p. 28.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Green and Tsafrir, 1982, p. 96.
[126] See also Abdalla: his probable Arabic name Abd Allah ibn Abu Aṣim (Slave of God, son of the Father of Aṣim) is part-transcribed part-translated. The patronymic "Ibn" (son of) is translated to "υἱοῦ" whilst Abd Allah and Abu Aṣim are transliterated. Hasson, 1982, p. 100.
[127] Ibid., p. 97.
[128] Ibid., 98. Levy-Rubin, 2000, pp. 261–262.

referring to, as well as an Arabic speaker hearing the Greek *amera almoumen*, allowing useful crosslinguistic communication of a kind.

The engraved cross (see top left of figure 2) also indicates the extent to which the inscription was specifically targeting the Greek *dhimmi* yet raises more questions about transliteration in Greek. The whole tone of the inscription is very conciliatory towards the Greek *dhimmi*, using a Christian symbol in a Greek inscription that frames Muʿawiyah in the same light as a Roman emperor as a restorer of public facilities. Apart from the Arabic names, which were understandably included, *amera almoumenen* was the only distinctly foreign, non-Roman, part of the inscription. Even the use of dating by the Hegira was from a Roman perspective - "κατά Ἄραβα(ς) ἔτους μβ" (according to the Arabs, the 42nd year) - and was included alongside two other forms of dating.[129] John's decision to use *amera almoumenen* then seems out of place, why did he not adapt the title into a more Roman-friendly Greek term in line with the rest of the inscription?

On a papyrus from Nessana in southern Palestine written in the last decade of the seventh century, the caliph Abd al-Malik's name is followed by "ἀμιρᾶλ" (*amiral*) followed by a lacuna, and from other papyri at Nessana, ἀμιρᾶλ would be short for "ἀμιρᾶλμουμνιν" (*amiralmoumnin*).[130] The transliteration of *amiralmoumnin*, iotas in place of etas and the merging of the penultimate and antepenultimate syllables into one, appears to have been the popular transliteration for the Greek *dhimmi*. For papyri records all over Egypt at Herakleopolites, Antaiopolites and Arsinoites dating to the seventh and eighth centuries show *amiralmoumnin* being used in the Greek language.[131] Likewise for transliterations of *amir*:

[129] Green and Tsafrir, 1982, p. 95.
[130] Kraemer, 1958, Papyrus 92, pp. 294–296.
[131] For example: *CPR* 19 28, *P. Lond.* 4 1338: www.trismegistos.org/text/19796. See: https://papyri.info/search?DATE_MODE=LOOSE&DOCS_PER_PAGE=147&STRING1=%CE%B1%CE%BC%CE%B9%CF%81&target1=TEXT&no_caps1=on&no_marks1=on . Accessed 18th November 2022.

ἀμίρ (amir), ἀμίρα (amira) and ἀμίρᾶς (amiras), as well as the translation *symboulos,* are common on papyri.[132]

There appears then to have been no set transliteration of *amir* and *amir al-muminin* into Greek as these papyri record variations being used. Clearly though, ἀμιρᾶλμουμνιν became the de facto spelling among the Greek scribes because the άμήρα άλμουμενήν on the Muʿawiyah inscription was, to my knowledge, used after the inscription. One possible explanation for the favouring of ἀμιρᾶλμουμνιν is because in speech ἀμιρᾶλμουμνιν is five syllables rather than άμήρα άλμουμενήν's lengthy seven, and in writing ἀμιρᾶλμουμνιν is thirteen letters compared to sixteen for άμήρα άλμουμενήν. Since ἀμιρᾶλμουμνιν is first attested to in 685, two decades after Muʿawiyah's inscription, ἀμιρᾶλμουμνιν may have been the result of the elision of άμήρα άλμουμενήν. For άμήρα άλμουμενήν is an almost exact transliteration of *amir al-muminin* and maintains features of Arabic grammar like άλ, from the definite article "ٱلْ" in Arabic. As has been discussed, the inscription took great care to appeal to its Christian, Greek-speaking audience yet άμήρα άλμουμενήν is rather long and unwieldy for a Greek-speaker who has no knowledge of Arabic. On an inscription where space is a premium and which uses many abbreviations, it is striking that the inscriber inscribed άμήρα άλμουμενήν in its entirety, as opposed to something like ἀμιρᾶλμουμνιν which is shorter and much easier for Greek-speakers to say as well as to write. The special attention paid to transliterating *amir al-muminin* may therefore be indicative of how Muʿawiyah wanted to be referred to in Greek, because as mentioned above, transliteration was a method of demonstrating respect to the caliphs by using their "Arabic" title, and of course a transliteration as close as possible to the original would be preferable. Therefore, ἀμιρᾶλμουμνιν, a more "Hellenised" transliteration, likely reflected how the Greek *dhimmi*

[132] Sijpesteijn, 2013, p. 69. Kraemer, 1958, Papyrus 62, pp. 205–206.

adapted *amir al- muminin*/άμήρα άλμουμενήν over time to better fit the Greek language and by the end of the seventh century replaced άμήρα άλμουμενήν in official correspondence.

The use of papyri to keep formal records of legal agreements, transfers of property, intercity trade etc. indicates that transliteration of the caliphal title was used in formal contexts. For instance one papyrus document from the Qurra dossier ordering the requisition of materials for a palace of the caliph mentions only one Greek name compared to three Arabic names: Qurra himself (*symboulos)*, Basil (*pagarch*) and Ata and Yahya, two untitled officials.[133] Another papyrus recorded orders of grain shipments from Abd al-Malik, his brother who was the governor of Egypt, and likely the governor of Palestine too; the upper echelons of the Caliphate.[134] Similar to the Muʿawiyah inscription, documents coming directly from the caliph's court implies a seal of approval and recognition from the Caliphate's government for transliteration. The fact that *amirlalmoumnin* and *amir al-muminin* were written side by side on the official bilingual Greek/Arabic protocol on Papyri from the Caliphate proves that transliteration was official.[135] The prevalence of transliteration in papyri does not necessarily mean however that transliteration was exclusively used in formal contexts, rather that situations where the caliph and his title would be invoked were formal circumstances. Moreover, as mentioned above, the reason why the Caliphate allowed, or perhaps chose transliteration as an accepted way to render the caliph's title, may be because it was already popular among Greek speakers by the time our evidence appears.

[133] *P. Ross. Georg*. 4 7: www.trismegistos.org/text/20492. Accessed 28th February 2023.
[134] Kraemer, 1958, Papyrus 92, p. 291.
[135] Grohmann, 1960, pp. 6–13.

Ethnic Titles

An ethnic title is a two-part formula containing a Greek word for a ruler and the people (*ethne)* they rule over, for instance '*basileus* of the Romans' as used by the Roman emperors from the eighth century onwards.[136] The Bible was one factor behind using ethnic titles for the caliph and indeed for other foreign rulers too. There were no "caliphs" in the Old or New Testament, but there were terms like *basileus*, "ἀρχηγός" (*archegos*) and "ἄρχων" (*archon*) that denoted rulership of some kind.[137] Likewise, Greek ethnonyms for the Arabs -Hagarenes and Ishmaelites- were also drawn from the Bible.[138] Using biblical terminology was a way for Christians to link their own times with the biblical past and thus reinforced that the world of the Bible and the world of today were one and the same. The truth of the Bible would have been particularly reassuring to the Greek *dhimmi* because they would be reminded that their current occupation under the Muslim Arabs would be soon rewarded when Christianity triumphed.[139] Likewise, Greek-speaking writers also drew upon antiquity and classical literature (another world without caliphs) in order to display their *paideia*, as well as to make their work more exciting by rooting it in a romanticised, fantastical past. For instance, the sixth-century historian Procopius likely drew upon both biblical and classical tradition when he called a pre-Islamic Arab client ruler of the Romans "ὁ τῶν ἐκείνῃ Σαρακηνῶν ἄρχων" (the *archon* of the Saracens there).[140] Greek speakers were not necessarily being wilfully, or purposefully, ignorant by using ethnic titles. Using older terminology was a method of storing

[136]Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Seals Collection BZS.1955.1.4278: https://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/byzantine-seals/BZS.1955.1.4278. Accessed 28th February 2023.
[137] Archegos in the bible: Acts 3:15, 5:31. Example for the caliph: "*archegos* of Egypt" in Simeon, *Sixty-Three Martyrs of Jerusalem*, p. 142. Archon in the bible: Numbers: 2:3–29.
[138] Psalm: 83:6.
[139] Christians were rewriting biblical apocalypses to incorporate the Caliphate in the immediate aftermath of the Arab Conquests. See for instance the influential Pseudo-Methodius, in Alexander, 1985, Chapters I-II, pp. 13–60.
[140] Procopius, *On the Wars* I.IXI.10. Interestingly, he refers to the ancient Nabataean kings as *basileus* of the Arabs at ibid, I.XIX.21.

and reproducing knowledge in a method formulated by Aristotle in his *metaphysics* and *categories* so that objects that fit the same criteria (e.g. being a monarch *and* being Arabic) could be called the same thing (e.g. *archon of the Saracens*).

The caliph Abd al-Malik's coinage reforms provide us with a *terminus ante quem* of around 697 AD for the anti-Jewish polemic *Dialogue Against the Jews,* the earliest surviving reference we have to a caliph in Greek literature.[141] The text, attributed to Anastasius of Sinai, called the caliphs "βασιλεῖς…Αῤῥάβων" (*basileis* of the Arabs).[142] *Basileus* is somewhat atypical of the ethnic titles found in other Greek literature, particularly imperially sponsored works, because *basileus* was reserved in the seventh century only for the Roman Emperor and the Sassanid Shahanshah.[143] Anastasius decided to use "*basileus"* for the caliph because the title applied here to the caliphs, Shahanshahs and the biblical "kings of the gentiles" as a list of Rome's enemies who were apparently unable to "abolish or take from us [Romans] the seal of gold," referring to the Christian cross still being used on the Roman imitation coins of the Caliphate when the text was written. [144] As an invective against Jews, the title of the caliph, whether that be the "official" title or the local parlance, is irrelevant; Anastasius is only invoking the rulers rhetorically in order to bolster his Roman audience's pride in their obstinate defence against countless enemy *basileis*. Moreover, Anastasius alluded to Daniel's prophecy of the four kingdoms (*basileia* in the Greek Bible), further indicating that *basileus* was a deliberate choice by Anastasius and does not necessarily reflect popular usage of *basileus* for the caliph among the Greek *dhimmi*.[145] The implication being that Rome as the fourth kingdom will triumph over the other three kingdoms of the Persians, Arabs and

[141] Hoyland, 1997, p. 85.
[142] Anastasius of Sinai, *Dialogue Against the Jews,* p. 1224. *Papiscus And Philo,* p. 62.1. Translation by Author.
[143] Chrysos, 1978, p. 33.
[144] Anastasius of Sinai, *Dialogue Against the Jews,* p. 1224. Translation by Hoyland, 1997, pp. 84–85.
[145] Daniel 2:37–44.

Gentiles, as predicted by Daniel. The exact provenance of *Dialogue Against the Jews* is uncertain; however, scholars agree that it was written in the former Roman territories of the Caliphate in the Near East, with Egypt being a promising candidate.[146] From the limited evidence available, transliteration of *amir al-muminin* may have been the default title for the caliph among the Greek *dhimmi* like Anastasius, suggesting that Anastasius was purposefully ignoring the caliph's formal title.

To my knowledge, there are no extant Greek papyri where the caliph is called by an ethnic title, which would support the unpopularity of ethnic titles, at least in a formal capacity. Within the Caliphate, ethnic titles appeared mostly in hagiographies that were mostly hostile to Islam and the Caliphate. *Basileus* of the Arabs is used again for the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi in the *vita* of Elias of Heliopolis, likely written in Syria-Palestine before the twelth century, who was executed by the Caliphate for refusing to convert to Islam.[147] As with Anastasius, *basileus* was a deliberate choice by the anonymous author as the text is full of "anachronistic Byzantine terms" for Arab officials, perhaps as a rebuttal to the Arabicisation of the Greek *dhimmi* which began in the eighth century.[148] Ethnic titles then were used pejoratively compared to transliterated titles. They stripped a foreign title of all its importance and reduced the holder to one of the many generic barbarian rulers outside the Roman Empire. This explains why ethnic titles are attested to more frequently in sources written within the safety of the Roman Empire in comparison to sources in the Caliphate, along with

[146] McGiffert, 1889, pp. 43– 44. Kaegi, 1992, pp. 231–35.
[147] McGrath, 2003, p. 89. "βασιλέως Αράβων" in *Life of Elias of Heliopolis*, p. 51.26.
[148] McGrath, 2003, 85. McGrath's statement (page 100, note 48) that τετράρχης (*tetrarch*) referred to the caliph is incorrect because the *tetrarch*, who has been identified as the *amir* of Damascus (p. 100, note 49), is explicitly referred to as the nephew of the *basileus/* caliph. *Tetrarch* was a term regularly used in antiquity for Hellenisitc rulers of the Near East, for instance in the Bible, see Luke 3:1.

biblical and classical references not being a major influence on works on papyrus, our main source inside the Caliphate.

The question of "*amir*" in Byzantium

I have mentioned above that *amir*, an Arabic title for Muslim commanders and governors, were called *symboulos*, the Greek word for counsellor.[149]The translation into *symboulos* may derive from the eighth conjugation of the Arabic verb 'amara' (to command) which is equivalent to the Greek 'βουλεύεσθαι' meaning "to be counselled".[150] However, a more recent and convincing argument by Fredercio Morelli suggests *symboulos* was not a translation of *amir*, but a word such as "مشير" *mushir* (counsellor) or perhaps "صَاحِب" *sahib* (companion) as originally suggested by Anch Becker.[151] These terms could have been used to denote the original governors of the Caliphate's provinces who were drawn from the companions of Muhammed and the Rashidun caliphs.[152]A similar phenomenon occurred in the Roman Empire during the fourth century, when the Latin term *comes* (companion), previously used to denote those in the emperor's close circle, became an official title for certain provincial governors, such as the *comes Aegypti*.[153] Moreover, *amir* was a term which certainly could be used for the Muslim governors, however it also applied to other individuals who were subordinate to the governors.[154] The Arabic usage of *amir* would also help explain why both *symboulos* and the transliteration of *amir* were in simultaneous use because they

[149] Duri, A.A., "Amīr", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Accessed 2nd December 2022 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573– 3912_islam_SIM_0602
[150] Reiske, 1830, p. 806.
[151] Morelli, 2010, pp. 163– 164.
[152] Ibid, pp. 164– 166.
[153] Kazhdan, A., 2005." Comes", in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Accessed 27 April 2023 https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526– e-1168. John Lydos, *On the Magistracies of the Roman State*, p. 95.
[154] Morelli, 2010, p. 158.

originally had different meanings in Greek that became conflated when *amir* was made the title for an Arab governor.[155]

An addendum to John Moschos' *Spiritual Meadow*, likely dating to the earliest decades of the Caliphate, can be taken as supporting the hypothesis that *symboulos* did not mean *amir*.[156] The *Spiritual Meadow* was originally a collection of moralising Christian stories, geographically centred around the Roman provinces of the Near East, where Moschos himself had lived before his death in 619.[157] Because of the anthological nature of the text, many stories were added in later editions of the *Spiritual Meadow* which has led to concerns surrounding authenticity.[158] For the addendum in question, the story was certainly not penned by Moschos who died before the establishment of the Caliphate. Set in a village in Palestine, the addendum has two characters, the first being "the magistrate of the area whom they call the *ameras"* and the second, "what they call *symboulos*."[159] Sahas interprets the (possibly Christian) *symboulos* as a literal counsellor to the *ameras* who was the governor of Palestine.[160] However Hoyland's earlier reading of the *symboulos* as the governor, and the *ameras* as a local authority of some kind, appears more likely.[161] For the *ameras* acted as the subordinate, disappearing from the story after he reported a miracle to the *symboulos*, whereas it was the *symboulos* who had the authority to resolve the situation by executing the evil Rabbi.[162] We cannot say with certainty due to an unknown provenance, but if the addendum is an authentic account from the middle of the seventh century, then it is evidence that

[155] Ibid, p. 166.
[156] Sahas, 2021, pp. 215– 216.
[157] Booth, 2017, p. 90. To be specific, Moschos spent the last few years of his life in Rome.
[158] Ibid, pp. 91– 92.
[159] John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow,* p. 362.6 and p. 364.16. Translation (modified by author) by Wortley, 2019, p.206 and p. 208.
[160] Sahas, 2021, p. 216.
[161] Hoyland, 1997, p. 66.
[162] John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow,* pp. 208–210 (Wortley).

symboulos and *ameras* were initially two separate terms that had different meanings, with *symboulos* appearing to have superior status over *ameras*. From Greek papyri, we know that the *pagarchs,* the relatively low-level local officials serving under the Roman provincial *doukes,* began to be called by various Greek transliterations of *amir* in Egypt in the eighth century.[163] Therefore, supporting Morelli's view that *symboulos* was a Greek translation of another Arabic word originally used for the Muslim governors like *mushir*.

Translated Titles

Returning to the title of the caliph itself, the Greek *dhimmi* also called the caliph "πρωτοσύμβουλος" (*protosymboulos*) literally meaning "the first counsellor". Traditionally, scholars thought *protosymboulos* was a mistranslation of *amir al-muminin,* assuming as mentioned above that *amir* meant *symboulos*.[164] However, as Morelli points out, *protosymboulos* cannot be a translation of *amir al-muminin*, because the word *amir* was originally transliterated, so *protosymboulos* was the translation of another term.[165] It is not impossible that the Rashidun caliphs were originally called "the first of the *mushir*/*sahib*" in some capacity which Greek speakers then accurately translated. The title could also have been used alongside *amir al-muminin,* for the first few decades of the Caliphate were very experimental as Islam, and how an Islamic state operated, were still developing.[166] Unfortunately, there is no concrete evidence to support another title used by the caliph due to the paucity of sources for the early Islamic period. However, it is of note that the first full attestation of *amir al-muminin* is from the aforementioned bath inscription dated to

[163] Sijpesteijn, 2013, pp. 117–121.
[164] Reiske, 1830, pp. 806–807.
[165] Morelli, 2010, p. 160, note 9.
[166] Hawting, 2000, pp. 2–5.

Muʿawiyah's reign, when the Caliphate began to take its "recognizable" shape, because of Muʿawiyah's relationship to Muhammad and some of the other *sahabah*. Although he was a *sahib* of Muhammed, Muʿawiyah and his family only reluctantly converted to Islam and became a follower of Muhammed very late in about 630.[167] After the assassination of the third caliph Uthman in 656, Muʿawiyah refused to accept Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, as caliph, resulting in a civil war, Ali's assassination and Muʿawiyah's accession.[168] Muʿawiyah may then have made *amir al-muminin* the primary title of the caliph because attempting to draw legitimacy from his relationship to Muhammed was dangerous when Muʿawiyah had just deprived Muhammad's still-living grandsons (the sons of Ali) of the Caliphate.[169]

Whatever the etymology behind *protosymboulos*, the popularity of the term among the Greek *dhimmi* is uncertain. *Symboulos* is attested to in papyri as early as 643 and continues to be found frequently until Arabic replaced Greek as the language of governance in the Caliphate which began in the 690s.[170] In contrast, *protosymboulos* has only been found on one papyrus document from Egypt dated to around 700 that references the "οὐσίας τοῦ πρωτοσυμβούλου" (the property of the *protosymboulos*).[171] However there are some literary sources that used *protosymboulos* for the caliph, for example the late eighth/early ninth-century *Life of Stephen the Sabaite* written in Palestine on one occasion turned the title into an ethnic one: "τὸν πρωτοσύμβουλον τῶν ᾽Αράβων" (the *protosymboulos* of the Arabs).[172] Likewise another

[167] Ibid, p. 23.
[168] Kennedy, 2023, pp. 69–72.
[169] Crone and Hinds, 2003, pp. 24– 25.
[170] Abd al-Malik's Arabicisation policies: Kennedy, 2023, p. 89. Gascou, 1983, p. 101. For examples: https://papyri.info/search?STRING=(%CF%83%CF%8D%CE%BC%CE%B2%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BB%CE%BF%CF%82)&no_caps=on&no_marks=on&target=text&DATE_MODE=LOOSE&DATE_START_TEXT=600&DATE_START_ERA=CE&DOCS_PER_PAGE=15. Accessed 2nd December 2022.
[171] *CPR* 8 82: www.trismegistos.org/text/9886. Accessed 2nd December 2022. Berkes, and Haug, 2016, p. 203.
[172] Leontios of Damascus, *Life of Stephen the Sabaite*, II.19.

hagiography, *The Sixty Martyrs of Jerusalem*, also called the caliph *protosymboulos*.[173] The text is a Greek translation of the lost Syriac original, both possibly composed in eighth-century Palestine.[174] The translator appears to have translated directly from Syriac, a Semitic language like Arabic. For instance, the Syriac equivalent of the Arabic name Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik is accurately translated as "Σολομὼν ὁ τοῦ 'Ανακτοδούλου" (Solomon the [son] of the slave of the king).[175] The Greek *Sixty Martyrs of Jerusalem* then presents us with the author's possible motive for using *protosymboulos*; to translate the title as accurately as possible. Syriac sources usually used an ethnic title, calling the caliph the '*malka* (king) of the Arabs', but there are some cases of translations, such as '*amira da-mhaymne*' inscribed in a church in northern Syria.[176] The latter title was likely used in the Syriac original, because the former would have been left as a Greek ethnic title following the text's internal translation logic.

Protosymboulos is also found in the *Life of Saint John of Damascus.* The *vita* dates to the tenth century or later and was written in Syria-Palestine based on an Arabic original.[177] *Protosymboulos* is used once in the *vita* but in a peculiar manner: "ὁ δὲ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν ἀρχηγὸς τὸν 'Ιωάννην εὐσκαλεσάμενος, προεχειρίζετο πρωτοσύμβουλον." (Then the *archegos* of the Saracens having invited John in, appointed him *protosymboulos*).[178] The meaning of the passage is quite straightforward in context; the caliph, called by an ethnic title here, appointed John to be his chief advisor, *protosymboulos,* reverting to its original meaning. The account is entirely fictitious because neither does John receive such a lofty

[173] John, *Sixty Martyrs of Jerusalem,* p. 4.
[174] Gero, 1973, pp. 176– 180.
[175] Ibid, 180. Huxley, 1977, p. 369. John, *Sixty Martyrs of Jerusalem,* p. 2.
[176] Hoyland, 1997, pp. 415– 416, note 92. Other examples of Syriac translation in *Zuqnin Chronicle,* p. 258, p. 282.
[177] *Life of Saint John of Damascus,* p. 430.
[178] Ibid, p. 449. Translation by author.

position in the Arabic original nor do we have any other evidence suggesting he held such high status.[179] The Greek author was over-exaggerating John's role in the Caliphate, which could give *protosymboulos* a dual meaning here. The use of *protosymboulos* for the caliphal title heavily implies that the caliph had handed over all power to John and that John himself has become a sort of pseudo-caliph even using the same title as the genuine article.[180] It is unlikely that the Greek author was ignorant that *protosymboulos* meant the caliph because they identify themselves as John the patriarch of Jerusalem, a significant enough position to suggest a refined education and at least some communication with the central government of the Caliphate.[181]

If *protosymboulos* was not a direct translation of *amir al-muminin*, the question remains was there one? On one Egyptian papyrus dated to the second half of the seventh century, there is reference to "τοῦ Ἀμιρᾶ τῶν Πιστῶν" (the *Amira* of the Faithful).[182] A perfect translation of the Arabic, it is certainly more accurate than *protosymboulos* and further proves that *protosymboulos* was not a translation of *amir al-muminin*. The preference by Greek speakers to use transliteration or *protosymboulos* probably was because of the meaning of *amir al-muminin* (commander of the faithful) which made a direct translation controversial. Christians calling Muslims 'the faithful' or 'the believers' heavily implied that they recognised the primacy of Islam. Moreover, *"Amira* of the Faithful" directly contested the title of the Roman Emperor which since 629 had included the phrase "πιστὸς ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεύς" (*basileus* faithful in Christ).[183] It is clear why the Greek *dhimmi* were reluctant to include references to "the faithful" in their renderings of the caliphal title, and why the only reference surviving is

[179] Sahas, 1972, pp. 42– 43.
[180] Ibid.
[181] *Life of Saint John of Damascus*, pp. 429–430.
[182] *P.Apoll.* 37. www.trismegistos.org/text/39098. Accessed 26th February 2023.
[183] Chrysos, 1978, p. 31.

from within the Caliphate. Morelli goes so far as to suggest that ethnic titles should be considered as non-literal translations of *amir al-muminin* to some extent because Greek speakers used the less risky ethnonyms in place of the controversial "believers."[184]

This chapter has demonstrated how the Greek-speakers living under the early Caliphate interpreted and adapted the titles of the caliph for the Greek language. The three methods of rendering the caliphal titles into Greek (transliteration, ethnic and translation) were generally employed depending on the type of source and the attitude of the author towards the Caliph. By necessity, government documentation recorded on papyri employed transliteration and translation, both officially approved by the caliphal court. On the other hand, hagiographies and other religious Christian texts tended to describe the caliph with ethnic titles because of their hostility towards Islam. Only intended to be read by other members of the Greek dhimmi there was little risk of offensive ethnic titles being found out by Muslims. In the next chapter, the influence of the Greek dhimmi will be felt in how the Romans within the empire referred to the caliph.

[184] Morelli, 2010 p. 160, note 9.

The Caliph in *Romania*

The figure of the caliph was featured in a multitude of literary works written within the Roman Empire. Unlike within the Caliphate, where the caliph was mentioned in more popular, widespread Greek literature like papyri and hagiography, most of the surviving references of the caliph in Rome were composed at Constantinople by or for the elites of the imperial court. As well as court writers being under pressure to align with the present imperial opinion of the caliph, they were also more likely to use atticizing language to imitate the language of Classical Attic writers in order to demonstrate their own *paideia*. A consequence of Atticism is the rejection of transliteration (and to a lesser extent translation) and the promotion of ethnic titles for the caliph.[185] The majority of these texts are either historical or diplomatic, with a smaller amount of religious literature. The two present an interesting dichotomy for on the one hand historical texts narrating the epic, centuries spanning conflict between Rome and the Caliphate are mostly disparaging of the caliph. On the other hand, diplomatic texts which are about maintaining peaceful relations with the Caliphate via treaties and embassies etc are very polite towards the caliph. As a result, there is a marked contrast between the titles of the caliph and how they are used in *dhimmi* literature and Roman literature.

The Caliph arrives in Constantinople

When did the Roman emperor, and by extension the court at Constantinople become aware of the caliph and his titles? Traditional Islamic historiography dates correspondence between

[185] Sarris, 2015, pp. 95–97.

Constantinople and Medina to as far back as Herakleios and Muhammad which was said to have taken place circa 628.[186] Another semi-legendary story was the face-to-face meeting between the second caliph Umar and the patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronios in 638 to negotiate the surrender of Jerusalem. The submission to the Caliphate and recognition of Islam by Herakleios and Sophronius were used as an ideal framework for relations between Christian Romans and Muslim Arabs. Importantly, in one tenth-century Arabic history by the patriarch of Alexandria Eutychios, Sophronios repeatedly referred to Umar as *amir al-muminin.*[187] As Daniel Sahas noted: "it is interesting that Sophronios is presented as knowing this detail at such an early stage of Islamic history; or that Eutychios was aware that such a title was used by Umar!"[188] Eutychios, undoubtedly aware of the similarities between himself and Sophronios as Christian patriarchs living under Muslim caliphs, may well have put the title *amir al-muminin* which he himself used for the contemporary caliph in Sophronios' mouth in order to establish a prior model for patriarch-caliph relations.

Although undoubtedly anachronistic due to being recorded by historians writing two centuries later attempting to codify the Byzantine-Muslim relationship, both Christian and Muslim sources attest to direct communication between the caliph and the emperor starting in the latter half of the seventh century. [189] These correspondences, such as the embassy from the caliph Abd Al-Malik to the emperor Justinian II in 685 recorded by both al-Tabari and Theophanes, would likely have contained the caliph's titles, whether written or spoken.[190] Andreas Kaplony has identified 29 historical embassies between Byzantium and the Caliphate

[186] El-Cheikh, 1999, p. 10.
[187] Sahas, 2021, pp. 146, 162. Latin translation in Saʿid ibn Batriq, *Row of Jewels*, pp. 1099– 1100.
[188] Sahas, 2021, p. 162, note 42.
[189] El-Cheikh, 1999, pp. 10–12.
[190] Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronicle*, p. 506 (Mango and Scott), al-Tabari, *History of the Prophets and Kings*, *Volume XXI*, p. 169.

in the period spanning 639 to 750 demonstrating semi-regular contact, though the Roman sources for these early embassies did not usually record any use of titles.[191] The earliest confirmed usage of the caliphal titles in Greek within the Roman Empire that I am aware of dates to just after 787, from the proceedings of the Second Council of Nikaia. The purported speech by a certain John, a representative for the "eastern patriarchs" repeatedly called Yazid II *protosymboulos*, and once gave him the title of *"*Αμηραῖς" (*Amerais*).[192]

The mentioning of Yazid II in the *Acts* was presented as "an account that reveals the origin of the overturning of images", which meant the iconoclast "heresy" the second council of Nikaia was officially ending for the first time.[193] Whilst John has been identified with the John who was presbyter and *synkellos* of the patriarch of Jerusalem, his story is certainly fictitious and the authenticity of his words are in some doubt as the whole story is a piece of rhetoric designed to explain why Iconoclasm was heretical.[194] Richard Price, the English translator of the text, thought that John's speech was indeed read out at the council which would make *protosymboulos* and *Amerais* authentic titles used by a member of the Greek *dhimmi,* however the unreliability of recorded council acts and the circumspect editing of the text makes it near impossible to determine if the titles were used by John himself or were merely an invention of the Constantinopolitan scribe.[195]

Examining a previously unseen title for the caliph also used by John highlights the issue of uncertainty; for "τύραννος" (tyrant) was clearly meant to portray these iconoclastic caliphs negatively.[196] The writer of the acts was clearly drawing a parallel between the Iconoclast

[191] Kaplony, 2021, p. 401.
[192] *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, pp. 419–420.
[193] Ibid., p. 418, see note 131.
[194] John: Haldon and Brubaker, 2011, p. 268, note 83. The story as fake: Price, 2018, p. 385, note 14.
[195] Price, 2018, pp. 385– 387.
[196] Ibid.

caliphs and emperors, who were also regularly called tyrants by Iconophile authors.[197] The caliphs could also have been stand-ins for the iconoclast Roman emperors who were unable to be outwardly criticized because of their connections to the reigning empress Eirene and her son Constantine who were members of the infamous Isaurian dynasty.[198] In this case, when a "tyrant" in the *acts* persecutes pious Christians, whether that be Yazid II or Diocletian, it is easy for the audience to think of Leo III or Constantine V instead.[199] Moreover, the lack of criticism towards the iconoclast Isaurians in the *acts* confirms that the edition of the *acts* with the caliphal titles was written before Eirene's overthrow in 803 and thus may indeed be authentic recordings of what was spoken.

Of note also is when John first mentioned a caliph, the text says "the tyrant or counsellor of the godless Arabs" with an editor of the text suggesting that "or *symboulos" (*ἤτοι συμβούλου*)* is a gloss and creates an equivalency between two semantically opposing terms.[200] Likewise, the speaker just after John was Gaudiosos, the bishop of Messana who claimed that "I myself was a child in Syria when the *symboulos* of the Saracens destroyed the images."[201] As with John, Gaudiosos is certainly embellishing if not outright lying and his credential of authenticity, his childhood under Muslim Iconoclasm, cannot be taken at face value - assuming Gaudiosos existed at all as his existence has not been testified elsewhere. What can be said with more certainty is that the imperial Romans were already familiar with the titles of *protosymboulos* and *Amirais* by 787 and had no problem putting them in the mouths of John and Gaudiosos. The Romans likely correctly assumed the titles were also in

[197] Haldon and Panou, 2018, pp. 104–105 for examples of Leo III, Constantine V, Leo V and Theophilus as Tyrants.
[198] Price, 2018, 385– 386.
[199] Diocletian as tyrant: *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, p. 325. Example of a non-descript tyrant: ibid., p. 271.
[200] *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, p. 419, note 132.
[201] Ibid., p. 421.

use among the Greek *dhimmi,* who exhibited a level of casual familiarity with the caliphal titles through John switching between *protosymboulos* and *amirais.*

We must consider the audience John and Guadiosos were addressing; high-ranking imperial elites representing the clergy, military and court were Tarasios, the patriarch of Constantinople, the *patrikios* and *apo hypaton* Petronas who was the *komes* of the Opsikian theme and the eunuch John, *basilikos ostiarios* and *logothetes tou stratiotikou*.[202] Moreover, there were clergy from wide ranging parts of the empire such as Sicily, Cyprus, Sardinia, Greece and central Anatolia as well as from sees outside the empire in Italy, Egypt, eastern Anatolia and Syria-Palestine.[203] What this suggests is that by the 780's at the latest these titles of (*proto)symboulos* and *amirais* or its various other transliterations had proliferated sufficiently into the Greek-speaking world because the titles did not have to be explained. We have to be cautious however, as this text does not record the entirety of the council verbatim and presents an idealised or perfect performance and therefore would likely not include an attendee asking what a *protosymboulos* was.[204] Moreover, the ethnic clarifiers ("of the Arabs/of the Saracens") with the translated titles indicates that the titles alone are perhaps not sufficient, implying there are other, non-Arabic *protosymbouloi*. Coming back to the actual meaning of *symboulos* - counsellor - it is easy to see that for a general audience who were not all living under the Caliphate, *symboulos* by itself would not immediately bring to mind the caliph. Nevertheless, the scribe seems to assume the reader knew the titles just as John and Gaudiosos assumed their listeners knew the titles too, at the very least for *amerais* which has no explanation at all in terms of a potential gloss or ethnic clarifier.

[202] Ibid., p. 388.
[203] Session V does not list all the attendees, however some sense of the scale can be gathered just from the speakers throughout. *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, p. 388-423.
[204] Price, 2018, p. 386.

Diplomatic Correspondence

Diplomatic correspondence was an important part of Roman-caliphal relations as letters and embassies were used to negotiate war, peace and other treaties between the two states. Proper etiquette, including correct titles, was a vital part of maintaining good relations and was taken very seriously. The caliph al-Maʿmun's invasion of Anatolia in the ninth century was said to be in response to the emperor Theophilus putting his own name before al-Maʿmun's in a letter to the caliph.[205] Centuries later, the learned Michael Psellos was barred from writing letters on behalf of the Roman emperor Constantine Monomachos to the Fatimid caliph because Psellos' patriotism didn't let him "voluntarily humiliate [Monomachos] and glorify the Egyptian."[206] Ethnic titles, therefore, were rarely used in diplomatic correspondence by the Romans in comparison to translated and transliterated titles which the caliphs seemed to endorse judging from their prevalence among the Greek *dhimmi.*

Al-Tabari recorded an exchange of letters between the emperor Nikephoros I and the caliph Harun al-Rashid circa 803.[207] The authenticity of the letters is uncertain; al-Tabari is considerably more reliable about events in the ninth century than in the seventh and eighth, but the almost comical nature of the letters indicates they were certainly embellished, if not completely fictitious. [208] Nevertheless, the caliphal titles in the letters can still give an Arabic-speaking Muslim's perspective on how the Romans treated the titles of the caliph to an extent. The attitudes of Nikephoros and Harun in the letters are indicative of how al-Tabari and his general audience - other educated Arabic-speaking Muslims - would have expected the

[205] Vaiou, 2019, p. 234, note 552.
[206] Michael Psellos, *Chronicle,* VI.190.
[207] A Roman chronicler, George Harmatolos, does record correspondence between Nikephoros and Harun but not these letters, see George Harmatolos, *Brief Chronicle,* pp. 772–774.
[208] Bosworth, 1989, p. xxi.

Roman emperor, or perhaps foreign rulers in generals, to address the caliph, even if they were inaccurate.

The letters have two points of interest: firstly, Harun called himself *amir al-muminin* demonstrating that Rome was certainly familiar with the title, although it is important to remember that Nikephoros, and indeed the majority of Roman Emperors, did not understand Arabic and therefore would have had the letter translated. Secondly, in Nikephoros' first letter he called Harun "ملك العرب" (*malik* of the Arabs).[209] *Malik* is typically translated as "king" in English and in Greek as *basileus*. This is supported by the fact that Nikephoros also called himself "*malik* of the Romans" and therefore we can surmise that the Roman emperor did call the caliph "*basileus* of the Arabs" in diplomatic correspondence. *Basileus* appears to be used here as a mark of respect, with Nikephoros according himself and Harun equal status as they are both *basileis'* of their respective people, just as between Rome and Persia two centuries prior.[210]

However, the context of the letters somewhat confuses things; Nikephoros' letter threatens war if Harun does not return all the tribute previously paid to the caliph by Nikephoros' predecessor. The polite usage of *basileus* is at odds with the outrageous nature of the letter, and this is reflected in Harun's response who does not even give Nikephoros a title but calls him "the dog of the Romans!"[211] In a much more conciliatory second letter from Nikephoros requesting one of Harun's slave girls as a wife for his own son, having being defeated by Harun and forced to resume paying tribute, Nikephoros this time called Harun *amir al-muminin,* although he is still addressed directly as *malik.*[212] From al-Tabari's point of view,

[209] Al-Tabari, *History of the Prophets and Kings*, *Volume XXX*, p. 240.
[210] Chrysos, 1978, p. 70.
[211] Al-Tabari, *History of the Prophets and Kings*, *Volume XXX*, p. 240.
[212] Ibid., p. 263– 264.

Nikephoros acknowledges Harun's superiority by referring to him by his proper title of *amir al-muminin*, who in Islamic political thought was certainly superior to a *malik.*[213] Judging by Nikephoros' previously hostile attitude to Harun and again assuming that al-Tabari had a genuine Arabic translation of the Greek original, I would tentatively suggest that Nikephoros transliterated *amir al-muminin* in his letter. As Kaplony states transliterations were "foreign words and do not convey recognition of the caliph's rule."[214] In short, whilst to Harun and al-Tabari Nikephoros' use of *amir al-muminin* shamefully ceded authority to Harun, to Nikephoros and the rest of the Romans, he has simply cited a meaningless phrase and lost nothing and in fact addressing Harun as *basileus* keeps up the charade that both parties are equal.

In the latter half of the ninth century, relations began to normalize between the Romans and Abbasids, resulting in the formalization of diplomatic correspondence at both Baghdad and Constantinople.[215] Manuals of prior embassies were compiled at both courts by Ibn al-Farra's at Baghdad and the emperor Constantine Porphyrogennetos at Constantinople, both written in the second half of the tenth century.[216] Porphyrogennetos also wrote another manual, the *Account of the Order of the Palace* that explicitly explains how foreign rulers should be addressed. In the preface of the manual, Porphyrogennetos explained that:

> "So that the text will be clear and easily understood, we have used both ordinary and quite simple language and the same words and names applied and used for each thing from of old."[217]

[213] Crone and Hinds, 2003, p. 115.
[214] Kaplony, 2021, p. 414.
[215] Vaiou, 2019, p. 4.
[216] Ibn al-Farra, *Book of Messengers and Kings*; Constantine Porphyrogennetos: *Treatise of Material on Embassies of the Romans to Foreigners* and *On Embassies of Foreigners to the Romans.*
[217] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Account of the Order of the Palace*, p. 5.

Constantine wanted everyone to be able to understand the *Account* and so its terminology reflects the common naming conventions for the caliph used in Constantinople rather than the atticizing language of most of our sources. At the same time, the emperor explicitly acknowledged the use of anachronisms in order to maintain consistency and clarity.[218]

On the forms of address for the Abbasid caliph Constantine wrote:

> "To the *protosymboulos*, that is, to the *amermoumnes*, a four-solidi gold seal: 'To the most distinguished, most nobly-born and admirable so-and-so, *protosymboulos* and *diataktor* of the Hagarenes, from so-and-so and so-and-so, the faithful *autokrators*, *augoustoi* and great *basileis* of the Romans.' 'So-and-so and so-and-so, having faith in Christ our God, *autokrators*, *augoustoi* and great *basileis* of the Romans to the most highly distinguished, most nobly-born and admirable so-and-so, *protosymboulos* and *diataktor* of the Hagarenes'"[219]

As well as Constantine directly equivalating that *protosymboulos* and *amermoumnes*, what immediately stands out is the unique appellation *diataktor* (διατάκτωρ) which the translator renders as "administrator" in English. However, *diataktor* also has connotations of "command" similar to *amir*, as one scholion for the Iliad defines "κοσμήτωρ" (*kosmetor)*, used as a title for the two *basileis* Agamemnon and Menelaus as meaning "*diataktor, hegemon"* and thus all three titles refer to someone who is a leader of others.[220] Morelli's statement that "*diataktor* of the Hagarenes" is the most accurate Roman approximation of *amir al-muminin* certainly rings true here, and the repeated formulation of "πρωτοσύμβουλος

[218] Constantine also employed a simpler style of writing in another manual on Roman foreign policy; Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *To My Own Son Romanos*, p. 49.
[219] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Account of the Order of the Palace*, p. 686. Translation adapted by author.
[220] Morelli, 2010, p. 160, note 9.

καί διατάκτωρ" (*protosymboulos* and *diataktor)* is further evidence that πρωτοσύμβουλος was not a translation of *amir al-muminin* .[221]

Poryphyrogennetos' great attention paid to foreign titles is demonstrated in the Germanic kings addressed as *rex*, the Khazarian khan as *khagan,* the Egyptian and African *amirs* as *Amera* and the Bulgarian tsar as *basileus.*[222] The final two were of particular importance because the "*Amera* of Africa" was in reality the Fatimid caliph who was directly contesting the Abassid claim to the Caliphate by also styling themselves as *khalifah* and *amir al-muminin.*[223] Constantine only according the Fatimid caliph the title of *Amera* and a two-solidi gold seal instead of the four-solidi gold seal given to the Abbasid caliph implies that, when the *Account* was written around 950, Byzantine official policy was to only recognise the Abbasid caliph as legitimate. Similarly, after a tumultuous struggle in the early part of Constantine's reign, the Romans were forced to recognise the Bulgarian tsar as *basileus* in 927.[224] At the same time however, there appears to have been tacit, if not explicit, recognition of the Fatimid ruler as caliph because they were addressed in the letter formula itself as "ἔξουσιαστήν τῶν Μουσουλημιτῶν" (*exousiastes* of the Muslims) which does imply leadership of the entire *ummah* as *amir al-muminin* also suggests.[225]

Foreign titles in the *Account* raise many questions; under the heading "titles with which the *basileus* should honour the chiefs and foremost men of foreign nations", many "generic" titles used in ethnic titles like *archon, archegos, hegemon* and *phylarch* are recorded.[226] Bestowing

[221] Ibid.
[222] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Account of the Order of the Palace,* pp. 689–691.
[223] Constantine is fully aware of the Fatimid pretensions to the title of caliph in Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *To My Own Son Romanos,* pp. 106–109. The *Amera* of Egypt referred to the Ikhshidids who were still nominal vassals of the Abbasid caliph; Luttwak, 2009, pp. 150–151.
[224] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Account of the Order of the Palace,* p. 682: Roman diplomacy on display here as Constantine recognises the change in title for the tsar but refuses to address him directly as *basileus.*
[225] Ibid., p. 689.
[226] Ibid., p. 679.

honorary titles upon foreigners was a strategy regularly employed by the Romans in order to gain new allies who were brought into the Roman world hierarchy as theoretical subjects of the emperor.[227] Therefore, a list of the titles an emperor should bestow on foreign rulers makes perfect sense and the absence of *protosymboulos* and *amermoumnes* demonstrate that they are specific to the caliph and that, being derived from the caliph's Arabic titles, these titles were not for the Roman emperor to give to others.

Strangely out of place however, *diataktor* is also recorded in the list, which would suggest that *diataktor* was in fact not a translation or equivalent of *amir* because no other "unique" foreign titles like *amir* are included under this heading. However I have not found any instance where *diataktor* was used for a ruler other than the caliph, which lends support to the title being specific to the caliph. As the translator notes "[some of the titles] convey little meaning out of context and even less in translation."[228] The lack of meaning may in fact be on purpose which again points to *diataktor* being essentially meaningless as an honorific reserved for the caliph alone, for as Edward Luttwak noted:

> "This great diversity was obviously useful, because it hopelessly confused the hierarchy of ranks. If a chieftain proudly bearing the magnificent title of *megaloprepestatos* encountered a most distinguished *megalodoxos*, both could feel that they had received the greater honor from the emperor, and both could therefore feel impelled to show the greater loyalty."[229]

Like Luttwak's analogy of two barbarian chieftains occupying ambiguous places in the Roman world hierarchy, *exousiastes* also appears in the list of titles to bestow upon foreign

[227] In the context of Porphyrogennetos' own world: Luttwak, 2009, pp. 131–132.
[228] Moffatt and Tall, 2017, p. 679, note 1.
[229] Luttwak, 2009, p. 133.

rulers therefore making it unclear whether the title of *diataktor* or *exousiastes* held more honour. With neither "*diataktor* of the Hagarenes" and "*exousiastes* of the Muslims" being obviously superior to each other, the Romans appear neutral and maintain more-or-less favourable relations with both Caliphates by not having to explicitly recognise either party as caliph. However, the addition of *protosymboulos* and the extra epithet of *"*μεγαλοπρεπεστάτῳ" (most highly distinguished) for the Abbasid caliph does make it clear that the Abbasid caliph was "above" the Fatimid caliph in the world hierarchy established in the *Account*. Unlike *diataktor*, *exousiastes* was also used by Constantine for rulers other than the caliph, notably the rulers of Alania and Abasgia, which devalues the title and confirms that *exousiastes* was not supposed to mean *amir* as Reiske suggested.[230]

Moreover, in the *Account*, *diataktor* is only used for the caliph in letters because the *logothete* is instructed to ask ambassadors from the Abbasid caliph "how is the most highly distinguished and most nobly-born and admirable *amermoumnes*?" and Roman ambassadors to the Abbasid caliph address the caliph directly as *amermoumnes*.[231] One explanation for *diataktor* and *protosymboulos* used for written letters and *amermoumnes* for spoken embassies is perhaps because of the audio element; the caliph would hear the ambassador say his proper title of *amir al-muminin*, or at least an approximation of it, rather than a foreign Greek word like *protosymboulos.* Not concerned with imitating the ancient Greeks, the repeated usage of *amermoumnes* does appear to confirm that transliteration was the popular method for rendering the caliphal titles among Greek speakers in the Roman Empire, just like in the Caliphate.

[230] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Account of the Order of the Palace*, p. 688. Reiske, 1830, p. 815.
[231] Ibid, pp. 683– 684.

Let us also consider that when an ambassador was not bilingual in Arabic and Greek, seemingly in most cases, an interpreter would be employed.[232] Interpreters were of great importance if we consider that as well as recording what the Romans should say in embassies, the *Account* also recorded what the Muslims should say in Greek.[233] In effect, the onus was on the interpreters because an ambassador could say whatever they wished and rely on the interpreter to render the message appropriately in Greek or Arabic (and vice versa). Accuracy was of course an important quality for interpreters but not necessarily expected; according to a first person report from an Abbasid ambassador to Michael III, the three Abbasid interpreters (including one described as a veteran) "asked me how they should translate my words to him [Michael III], and I answered, 'Don't add anything to what I say to you.'"[234] Typically in Roman-caliphal embassies, both the ambassadors and the court each had their own interpreters and thus the Roman interpreter would translate for the Romans, and the Abbasid interpreter for the Abbasids.[235] In a situation like Nikephoros' correspondence with Harun, the humiliation would be confined to the Roman interpreter using the Arabic titles for the caliph, whilst the Roman ambassador would use whatever title the emperor felt appropriate.

Records also survive of non-imperial correspondence between Romans and the caliph. Nicholas Mystikos, two-time patriarch of Constantinople and former regent of Constantine Porphyrogennetos, in a letter to the caliph al-Muqtadir in 922 used eight different caliphal titles, all ethnic such as "ὁ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος" (first man of the Saracens).[236] The heading of the letter is of particular interest:

[232] For examples of Roman-Muslim embassies with interpreters: Vaiou, 2019, pp. 194–195, note 2.
[233] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Account of the Order of the Palace*, pp. 682– 683.
[234] Al-Tabari, *History of the Prophets and Kings*, *Volume XXXIV*, p. 169.
[235] Vaiou, 2019, p. 221, note 471.
[236] Nicholas Mystikos, Letter 102, pp. 373–383.

> "τῷ ὑπερφυεστάτῳ πανευγεστάτῳ μεγαλαδόξῳ φιλῳ ἡμῶν ὁ δεῖνα τῷ κατά θεοῦ ψῆφον τοῦ Σαρακηνῶν ἔθνους τήν ἐπικράτειαν λαχόντι και κυριότητα"
>
> (To our most excellent, most noble, most glorious friend, NN, by God's appointment sovereign lord over the Saracen nation).[237]

Despite the flagrant disregard of proper titles, Mystikos' myriad use of epithets, in particular "πανευγεστάτῳ" (literally "the most all nobly-born") which resembles the "ευγενέστατος" (most nobly-born) found in the *Account,* manages to avoid the ethnic titles being construed as all-together rude. Moreover, Mystikos calling al-Muqtadir as caliph "τῷ κατά θεοῦ ψῆφον" (by God's appointment) almost mirrors the Roman emperor's own formula of " εν χριστώ" (in Christ).[238] Rather than the typical Roman view of Muslims as heathens in contrast to Jews and Christians, Mystikos recognised Muslims as a fellow people of the book, even going so far as praising Muhammad "ἡμετέρου προφήτου" (your prophet) for his treatment of Christians.[239] Mystikos' letter was an admonishment to al-Muqtadir, exhorting the caliph to respect the Christians in his empire like the Romans did the Muslims in theirs. The letter reads as a "mirror of princes" where the Roman emperor is portrayed as an exemplar of a tolerant ruler for the caliph to emulate and Mystikos is the caliph's advisor or "φιλῳ" (friend).[240] In Mystikos' role as a teacher and spiritual leader sitting outside the political secular world, the patriarch claimed moral superiority over al-Muqatidr and could afford to ignore the caliph's formal titles in exchange for flattering the caliph with illustrious-sounding ethnic titles.

[237] Nicholas Mystikos, Letter 102, p. 373.
[238] For example, Porphyrogennetos, *Account of the Order of the Palace* p. 3. Mystikos used a slightly different formula for the caliph "παρα θεοῦ" in Letter 102, p. 378.
[239] Muslims as heathens: Shukurov, 2016, 53– 55. Muhammad: Mystikos, Letter 102, p. 380.
[240] Prinzing, 2022, p. 114. Prinzing identifies one of Mystikos' earlier letters to al-Muqtadir as a "mirror of princes" but neglects to mention this one.

Diplomatic correspondence certainly had the most unusual title conventions for the caliphs as they are the only sources we have where the caliph is addressed directly. As a result, the Romans tended to use formal titles for the caliph as a way to maintain good diplomatic relations. The following section concerns the titles of the caliph in Roman histories which were almost the opposite of that in letters and speeches in that the caliph himself was hardly a consideration when rendering his titles because histories were written by Romans, for other Romans, in Greek.

Histories

The earliest extant Roman history dealing with the caliph is the *Brief History* of another patriarch of Constantinople, Nikephoros I, composed around 790 that covered the period 602-769.[241] Nikephoros wrote his history in a classicizing style as a continuation of Late Antique historians like Procopius and Theophylact Simocatta so it is of no surprise that Nikephoros used only ethnic titles for the caliph.[242] Despite writing before the Caliphate's establishment, Procopius and Simocatta dealt extensively with Roman-Ghassanid relations, providing an inspiration for Nikephoros' caliphal titles. *Basileus* of the Saracens was the most common caliphal title Nikephoros used with "ὁ τῶν Σαραχηνῶν ἡγεμονεύων" (*hegemon* of the Saracens) also being used once.[243] Nikephoros also appeared to have conflated the first Rashidun governor of Egypt, Amr ibn al-As, with the caliph because Cyrus the patriarch of Alexandria recommended in 640/641 that the emperor Heraclius should betroth his daughter to "τῷ Ἀμβρῳ τῷ τῶν Σαραχηνῶν φυλἀρχῃ" (Ambros the *phylarch* of the Saracens).[244] It is curious that Amr was the only character called a *phylarch* in the entirety of Nikephoros'

[241] Neville, 2018, pp. 72–73.
[242] Howard-Johnston, 2011, p. 242.
[243] *Basileus:* Nikeporos, *Brief History,* 34, 41, 44, 49. *Hegemon*: Ibid, 34.
[244] Nikeporos, *Brief History,* 23, 26.

history which may suggest that Nikephoros equated *phylarch* with *amir* in his attempt to maintain a classicizing style, imitating Procopius' usage.[245] The term *phylarch* was the official Roman title for the Ghassanid kings in their role as Roman governors of Syria-Palestine and well reflected Amr's position as an Arab ruler of a specific geographical area.[246] However, Cyrus suggesting that the daughter of an emperor marry a "mere" regional governor rather than the caliph himself (or a close relative) does seem unusual and points to confusion on Nikephoros's part and given that he was chronicling events some 200 years before his own time here, it is not surprising that he was liable to make mistakes.

Where did Nikephoros get information on events that took place centuries ago from? We know that one of the patriarch's main sources was likely Trajan the Patrician who wrote a history covering roughly 630–720.[247] However, Trajan's account appears unreliable for the period before his own time as Nikephoros relied on another history, the continuation of John of Antioch for the period 610–641 and left a 40 year gap in his *Brief History* before picking up Trajan's narrative in the 680's.[248] *Phylarch* appears in Nikephoros' text for the years 640/641 which could mean either a mistake in John of Antioch's continuation or Trajan's history that Nikephoros copied. Fortunately, the second earliest extant history, the *Chronicle* of Theophanes the Confessor written in the 810s, also used Trajan as a source and, importantly, was not aware of Nikephoros' work.[249] Through the analysis of the caliphal titles in Theophanes it may be possible to reconstruct the caliphal titles used by Trajan and therefore what titles Romans used for the caliph around the eighth century.

[245] Procopius, *On the Wars*, I.XIX.10.
[246] Shahîd, 1989, pp. 500–501.
[247] Treadgold, 2013, pp. 9–10.
[248] Ibid, pp. 3–8.
[249] Treadgold, 2013, p. 9. Treadgold, 2011, p. 589.

Despite sharing Trajan as a common source, Theophanes' *Chronicle* was very different to Nikephoros' *Brief History*, primarily because whilst Nikephoros wrote a narrative history, Theophanes' was chronological and separated into years. At the beginning of each new year, Theophanes recorded the regnal year of important figures like the Roman emperor, the patriarchs and the Persian emperor, who was later replaced by the caliph.

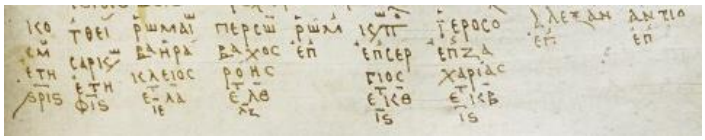

Figure 5. Theophanes' list of rulers for 623/624. Christ Church MS 5, Folio 215r.

Year of the world	Year of the divine incarnation	*Basileus* of the Romans	*Basileus* of the Persians	Bishop of Rome	Bishop of Constantinople	Bishop of Jerusalem	Bishop of Alexandria	Bishop of Antioch
		Heraclius	Chosroes		Sergios	Zacharias		
		31 years	39 years		29 years	22 years		
6116	616	15th year	37th year		16th year	16th year		

Figure 4. Translation of Theophanes' list of rulers for 623/624 in the style of Folio 215r, recording their titles, names, total reign lengths, and regnal years.

The figure above is taken from Christ Church MS 5, one of the earliest manuscripts of Theophanes dating to the ninth century and shows the list of rulers for the years 623/624. The table above, figure 4 is an English translation following the format of the manuscript where the name, total reign length, and regnal year are displayed for those seven rulers below their titles. When the Arab rulers begin to be included, figure 5 below shows how the scribe of this manuscript inserted "Ἀράβων ἀρχηγός Μουάμεδ" (Muhammad *archegos* of the Arabs). It is likely that Trajan's lost history also used a similar chronological system, so it is plausible that

Theophanes took *archegos* of the Arabs from Trajan.[250] An ethnic title like *archegos* is also exactly the sort of title expected from a classicizing historian like Trajan apparently was judging from Theophanes' statement that "the patrician Trajan states in his History that the Scythians are called Goths in the local dialect."[251]

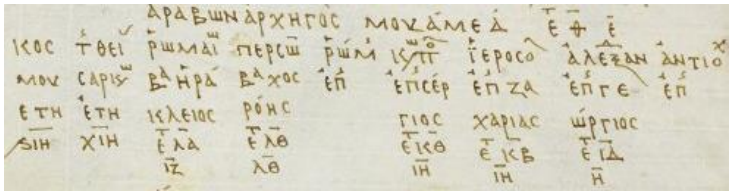

Figure 5. Theophanes' list of rulers for 625/626. Christ Church MS 5, Folio 217v.

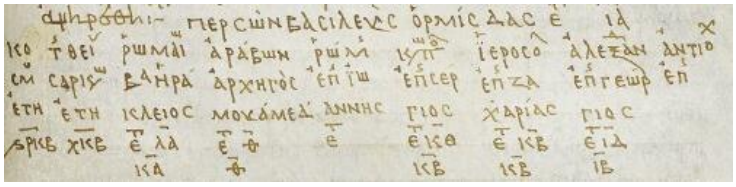

Figure 6. Theophanes' list of rulers for 629/630.Christ Church MS 5, Folio 225r.

For 629/630 however, shown in figure 6 above, a reversal takes place, and the *archegos* of the Arabs swaps places with the *basileus* of the Persians who is now above the main list, as the focus of the history switches to the Arab conquests following the end of the Roman-Sassanid war in 628. Then for the rulers in 631/632 years (figure 7 below) the *basileus* of the Persians completely disappears from the list as the Sassanids became irrelevant to the Romans in the midst of their own civil war and Arab invasions. This year also, Muhammad is replaced by Abu Bakr as *archegos* of the Arabs demonstrating that Theophanes didn't distinguish between the titles of Muhammad and that of the caliphs. What is quite remarkable is that Theophanes did ***not*** use the title *basileus* of the Arabs, or even still Persians, for Muhammad and the

[250] Treadgold, 2013, pp. 15–16.
[251] Ibid, p. 9. Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronicle*, p. 100 (Mango and Scott).

caliphs despite physically and thematically replacing the *basileus* of the Persians with the *archegos* of the Arabs. Rather, Theophanes pointedly distinguished the Muslim rulers as *archegoi*, and they continued to be labelled as such for the rest of his chronicle.

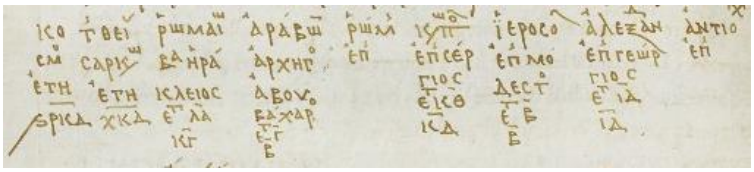

Figure 7. Theophanes' list of rulers for 631/632. Christ Church MS 5, Folio 226v.

Inside the body of the text, alongside *archegos*, Theophanes also used *protosymboulos*, beginning with the caliph Muʿawiyah and "άμηρεύσας" (*amereusas)* starting with Abu Bakr.[252] In Theophanes, *amereusas* is clearly distinct from "ἀμηρᾶς" (*ameras)* used for the *amirs*, for instance when the caliph Umar appointed Muʿawiyah "*strategos* and *ameras* of all the territory under the Saracens from Egypt to the Euphrates."[253] Again, there is a dual title formula, where Theophanes distinguished Muʿawiyah's military command, *strategos* (general), from his governorship (*ameras).* Therefore, to Theophanes *ameras* appears to have had an explicitly non-martial context.

In Theophanes' *Chronicle*, translation, transliteration and ethnic titles were all used for the caliph, in stark contrast to Nikephoros' *Brief History* which only used ethnic titles despite sharing Trajan the Patrician as a common source. *Protosymboulos*, *amereusas* and *archegos* appear to be used interchangeably by Theophanes. Two examples demonstrate the fluidity of these terms: "in this year Uthman, the *archegos* of the Arabs, was assassinated… after he had

[252] *Protosymboulos:* Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronicle*, p. 356.15, p. 370.14, p. 395.16, p. 404.15, p. 431.30. *Amereusas:* Ibid., p. 336.28, p. 361.1, p. 401.13, p. 403.24– 24, p. 439.9. As the verb "αμηρεύσαντα" (being *amereusas)*, Ibid., p. 343.11.
[253] Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronicle*, p. 340.13– 14 (de Boor). Translation with adaption in Mango and Scott, p. 473.

been *amereusas* ten years" for 654/655, and "in this year Muʿawiyah, the *protosymboulos* of the Saracens died… He had been *strategos* twenty years and *amereusas* 24 years" for 678/679.[254] Writing a chronicle, Theophanes did not introduce "antiquarian or anachronistic terminology" which would certainly explain the use of translated and transliterated titles.[255] Moreover, Theophanes and Nikephoros diverged significantly on some of their other sources, with Theophanes appearing to have used Greek translations of Syriac histories based on similarities shared with later Syriac histories. There have been attempts to identify the source or sources that Theophanes used such as the lost work of Theophilus of Edessa said to supply Theophanes for the years 630–780.[256] Theophilus of Edessa's chronicle has been reconstructed by Robert Hoyland by comparing Theophanes' *Chronicle* with other sources that used Theophilus of Edessa, chiefly being the Syriac *Chronicle of 1234* and Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle,* and the Arabic Agapius' *Book of the Title.*[257]

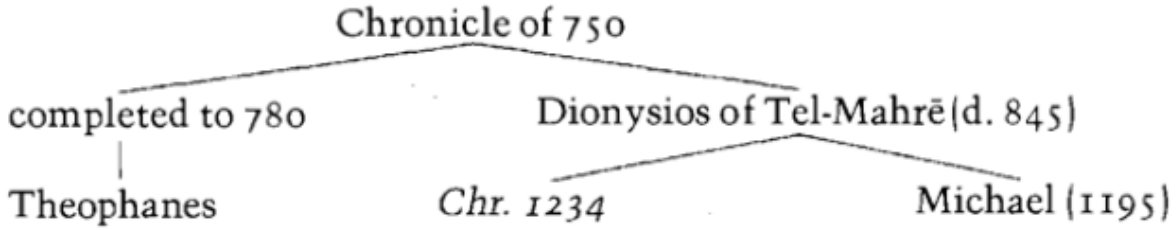

Figure 8. Dependencies of the "Chronicle of 750" attributed to Theophilus of Edessa.

Whilst assigning Theophilus of Edessa as the singular author from which the later histories are derived as has been criticised by some scholars, Hoyland's reconstruction does suggest

[254] Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronicle*, p. 347 and p. 356 (de Boor). Translation with adaption in Mango and Scott, p. 484 and p. 497.
[255] Howard-Johnston, 2011, p. 308.
[256] Mango and Scott, 1997, pp. lxxxii–lxxxiii. See pp. lxxiv–lxxxviiii for a list of 20 sources used by Theophanes. On pp. lxxxix–xc, Mango and Scott dismiss Trajan as a certain source for Theophanes in contrast to Treadgold, 2013, pp. 9– 10.
[257] Hoyland, 2011.

that Theophanes' caliphal titles were not taken from Theophilus or any other Syriac source.[258] In comparing similar passages between the Theophanes, the *Chronicle of 1234*, Michael the Syrian and Agapius, the other sources used almost exclusively *malka/malik* for the Caliphs as an ethnic title.[259] As has been discussed above, Theophanes would have been quite reluctant to render *malka/malik* directly as *basileus* so he, or the Greek translation he copied, took a widely different approach by intermixing ethnic, translated and transliterated titles. It is somewhat remarkable that whilst the caliph was consistently titled "*archegos* of the Arabs" in the manuscripts for the headings for each new year, within the text itself Theophanes used a wide variety of terminology for the caliph. One may ascribe this to inconsistency on Theophanes' part for not editing his earlier sources, in particular the writings of George the *Synkellos*, who wrote the first part of Theophanes' chronicle before dying after writing up to Diocletian's reign. George's influence on Theophanes' part of the chronicle is a matter of debate because Theophanes himself stated that:

> "I did not set down anything of my own composition but have made a selection from the ancient historians and prose-writers and have consigned to their proper places the events of every year, arranged without confusion."[260]

This would imply that Theophanes wrote nothing of his own but copied the likes of Trajan the Patrician and whatever Syriac sources he had available. Moreover, based on personal comments within the *Chronographia*, much of the part of the chronicle attributed to Theophanes was actually written by George who had lived part of his life in the Caliphate.[261] However, in the context of the other Greek sources written within the Roman Empire, the

[258] For opposition to Hoyland: Papaconstantinou, 2013.
[259] For instance, comparing the passages for Muʿawiyah's death: Hoyland, 2007, pp. 171–172.
[260] Theophanes, *Chronicle*, 1997, p. 2 (Mango and Scott). For George and Theophanes and their relationship to the chronicle: Mango and Scott, 1997, pp. xliii- lxiii.
[261] Treadgold, 2013, pp. 38–51.

casual switching between *protosymboulos, amereusas* and *archegos* by Theophanes heavily implies that his titles for the caliph were simply those that were popular among the Constantinopolitan elite.

With Nikephoros and Theophanes we see two separate traditions emerge surrounding the titles of the caliph in Roman literature, one following classical tradition and the other contemporary usage. Of the two, Theophanes' *Chronographia* was much more popular among Romans and had a larger influence on later Roman histories in the tenth and eleventh centuries.[262] For instance, their immediate successor George Harmatolos, writing in the 840s, adapted a passage from Theophanes calling Muhammad "ὁ τών Σαρακηνών αρχηγός και ψευδοπροφήτης" (*archegos* and pseudoprophet of the Saracens) and later the caliph Sulayman is *protosymboulos.* [263] Harmatolos however appears to favour the title *phylarch* as it is used regularly when he is not taking from Theophanes.[264] Unlike with transliterated and translated titles, ethnic titles allowed a greater degree of freedom; as has been discussed, calling the caliph *basileus* was a somewhat touchy subject as it could impede on the Roman emperors' pretensions, but between a *phylarch* or *archegos* there was no functional difference.

In the tenth century, as part of the "Macedonian Renaissance", traditional history writing became the preferred vehicle for writers rather than chronicles, with the last major chronicler being Symeon Logothete. As expected, Symeon used "ἀμερμουμνῆς" eleven times and *protosymboulos* and *archegos* both six times each, all interchangeably with each other.[265]

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[262] Treadgold, 2013, p. 31: "The Concise History seems to have been inferior to its sources both as history and as literature, and inferior as history to the parallel summary of the same and other sources in Theophanes' chronicle."
[263] *Archegos:* George Harmatolos, *Brief Chronicle*, p. 697.13. Theophanes, Chronicle, p. 333.1–2 (de Boor). George Harmatolos, *Brief Chronicle*, p. 767.5–6 for *archegos* used for an actual caliph. *Protosymboulos:* George Harmatolos, *Brief Chronicle*, p. 745.2. Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronicle,* p. 395.17 (de Boor).
[264] George Harmatolos, *Brief Chronicle*, pp. 772.26–773.1, p. 801.8.
[265] See Index verborum Byzantinorum in Wahlgren, 2006: p. 381 (*amermoumnes)* p. 382 (*archegos)* and p. 390 (*protosymboulos)*.

Thanks to the large number of manuscripts that survived, we can see the difficulty in transcribing the transliterated title, for instance in one passage *amermoumnes* is found in the accusative case as "ἀμερμουμνῆ", but manuscript variations included: "ἀμερυμνῆ," "ἀμερμουμνῆν," "ἀμερουμνὴν," "ἀμερουμνῆ" and "ἀμεροὐμνην."[266] The removal of the unwieldy second "μ" in particular demonstrates how *amir al-muminin* was being increasingly Hellenized by the Roman scribes and that there still was not a consensus on exactly how the title should be transliterated.

Even when examining later traditional histories in the style of Nikephoros', "Basileus of the Arabs" remained a largely unpopular tile for Roman historians. Two histories written under the auspices of Constantine Porphyrogennetos (*Chronicle written by Order of Constantine* and Joseph Genesios' *Emperors*) used the same schema of calling the Abbasid caliph *protosymboulos, archegos* and various transliterations.[267] Both histories clearly preferred transliteration, with Genesios recording fourteen instances of transliteration compared to translation only once, and the *Chronicle* having twelve instances of transliteration with translation only once again. Moreover, in the *Chronicle,* transliteration was used for two de facto independent emirs in the middle of the ninth century: *amermoumnes* for Abu Hafs, *amir* of Crete, and *ameramnounes* for Ziyadat Allah I, *amir* of Africa.[268] As Abu Hafs is portrayed as the emir of Cordoba, assigning the title of *amir al-muminin* to both figures may be an echo of the contemporary Fatimid and Umayyad caliphs rather than confusion with *amir* by the author. In the semi hagiographic, semi historical *Life of Basil,* attributed to Constantine

[266] Wahlgren, 2006: p. 222.
[267] *Protosymboulos:* Genesios, *Emperors*, III.14 ; *Chronicle Written by Order of Constantine*, III.35.17. Transliteration*:* Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn, 1973, p. 105; Featherstone and Signes Codoñer, 2015, p. 329. *Archegos:* Genesios, *Emperors*, II.12; *Chronicle Written by Order of Constantine*, III.22.4
[268] *Chronicle Written by Order of Constantine*, II. 27.15 (Africa) and II.21.13 (Crete).

himself, whilst Abu Hafs' son was explicitly titled *amir,* a later Aghlabid emir was also called *amermoumnes*.[269]

Here, we may divide our sources into those written before the formal recognition of the Fatimid caliph as *amir al-muminin* and those written after. For as the Fatimids replaced the crumbling Abbasids as the Romans' foremost rival in the Near East, a peace treaty concluded between the two powers in 988 provisioned that all the mosques in Constantinople would read out the name of the Fatimid caliph in place of the Abbasid caliph during the Friday sermon (khutba).[270] Another treaty in 1027 ensured this extended to all mosques in the Roman Empire, not just the capital, solidifying the Roman recognition of the Fatimids. Earlier around 969, the emperor Nikepheros Phokas was purported to have gifted one of the legendary swords of Muhammad to the Fatimid caliph which further indicates that the Romans had begun to formally recognise the Fatimids as legitimate caliphs by the second half of the tenth century.[271] Two questions arise here in regards to Roman histories: did the Roman historians recognise the new status of the Fatimids and change their titles accordingly, and if so, was this retroactive and even the Fatimid rulers prior to 988 were accorded the caliphal titles? Some Romans were certainly aware of Fatimid (and Umayyad) pretensions even before 988, as Porphyrogennetos explained to his son the future emperor Romanos that:

> "there are three *amermoumnes* in the whole of Syria, that is, in the empire of the Arabs, the first of whom has his seat at Bagdad and is of the family of Muhammad, the second has his seat in Africa, and is of the family of Ali and Fatima, daughter of

[269] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Life of Basill*, 62.2 (Africa) and 60.3 (Crete).
[270] Walker, 2012, p. 124.
[271] Leo the Deacon, *History*, p. 127, see note 5 (Talbot and Sullivan).

> Muhammad, whence the Fatimids are so called; the third has his seat in Hispania, and he is of the family of Muʿawiyah."[272]

Leo the Deacon, writing a particularly classicising history around 1000, used solely ethnic titles for the Fatimid caliph such as the rather rare "*katarchon (*καταρχων) of the Africans," a term also used for the Kyivan prince Sviatoslav.[273]

Unfortunately, the Abbasids do not feature in Leo's history because of their increasing geopolitical irrelevance to the Romans, however John Skylitzes' *Synopsis of Histories* which spanned from 811 to 1057 includes both the Abbasids and Fatimids. Again, we see a historian label Abu Hafs as caliph, as Skylitzes wrote: "So they [the Spaniards] went to Abu Hafs, their *archon* (called *amermoumne* in the language of those parts)."[274] This may be the first time that a Roman writer explicitly acknowledged that the title derived from the Arabic *amir al-muminin*. In contrast to the seemingly liberal usage of the title here, Skylitzes is precise when it comes to the Abbasids and Fatimids because prior to 988, only the Abbasid ruler is accorded *amermoumnes* whilst the Fatimid ruler is styled using ethnic titles such as "*katarchon* of Egypt" and "δυνάστης" (*dynast)* of the Africans which the translator renders as "hereditary ruler".[275] This is not to say that Skylitzes, or any Roman, regarded 988 as the definitive date when the Fatimids should be regarded as *amermoumnes*, for when Skylitzes narrates the events of 978, the Abbasid caliph is then specified as the "*amermoumnes* of Babylon" which heavily suggests that the Abbasid ruler is not the only caliph.[276] Then, when the Fatimid caliph next appears in the narrative during the reign of Romanos Agyros (1028-

[272] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *To my own son Romanos*, pp. 106–107. Translation adapted by author.
[273] Leo the Deacon, *History*, p. 76.5 (caliph), p. 77.5– 6 (Sviatoslav) (Hase).
[274] John Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories*, III.16.
[275] Ibid., XVI.33.
[276] Ibid., XVI.10.

1034), the caliph is styled as "*amermoumnes* of Egypt" showing that Skylitzes defined two separate *amir al-muminins* by their geographical location.[277]

Skylitzes is also extraordinary in his transliteration of *khalifah* into "χαλιφᾶς" (*caliphas*) because previously only *amir al-muminin* was transliterated into Greek and *khalifah* was largely ignored by the Romans. Skylitzes use of the term is also quite unusual as *caliphas* is only used in one passage:

> "The Sultan was served as ambassador to the emperor by one whom they call *seriphos*, a word which signifies for them a man who stands in the same relationship to the *caliphas* as that in which the *synkellos* used to stand to the patriarch here; when the caliph died, he was immediately installed on the vacant throne."[278]

Skylitzes presents the *caliphas* here as a religious leader equivalent to that of the Roman patriarch of Constantinople and it is not clear if Skylitzes' *caliphas* is supposed to be one of the two *amermoumnes*, or a separate office. Skylitzes was certainly misinformed about the title of *seriphos* (Arabic *sarif)* which was given to the descendants and relatives of Muhammad and not an ecclesiastical office like *synkellos*.[279] However, considering that the Abbasids were related to Muhammd, *sarif* could then potentially mark someone as a successor to the caliphate. John Kinnamos, writing circa 1180, used the title *caliphas* in the same way as *Skylitzes*, describing the *caliphas* as "παρ' αύτοις αρχιερέα" (the *archiereus* among them), with *archiereus* (high priest) being frequently used as a title for the patriarch of Constantinople demonstrating that Kinnamos, like Skylitzes conceived the *caliphas* as the

[277] Ibid., XVIII.7.
[278] Ibid., XXI.16.
[279] Ibid, note 145.

utmost religious authority in Islam.[280] Although technically inaccurate as the Abbasid caliphs were still secular rulers of a reduced territory centred on Baghdad in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Kinnamos' and Skylitzes' perception of the caliph corresponded to the Abbasid reinterpretation of the office of caliph along religious lines in the same period which ironically saw the promotion of the title of *imam* and the sidelining of *khalifah.*[281] Within the Roman Empire, *khalifah* does appear to have become more popular from the eleventh century onwards, and the historian George Akropolites in the late thirteenth century does use the term as a secular title explicitly for the Abbasid caliph: "[the Mongols were] pitching battle against the Babylonian, whom the tribes of the Muslims are accustomed to call '*caliphas*'."[282]

Finally, there are two historians who represent the end of Rome's relationship with the *amir al-muminin*, as the Roman Empire's own decline in the second half of the eleventh century permanently limited the Romans' geographical horizons. The first was Michael Psellos who lived before and after the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 and surprisingly, seeing his opinion of the Fatimid caliph discussed earlier, accorded the Abbasid caliph the title of *basileus* which have may been influenced by the Romans calling this particular caliph Chosroes, an echo of the great Persian *basileus* of the same name.[283] As for the Fatimid caliph, Psellos imitated Skylitzes in calling him "the *dynast* in Egypt", which is certainly disparaging in this case.[284] The second historian was Anna Komnene, born after Manzikert and thus never experienced first-hand Rome's diplomacy with the Caliphate(s). Komnene's biography of her father, the *Alexiad*, covered his life (1057-1118), so it is expected the figure of the caliph only appeared in three passages. In the Fatimid caliph's introduction, he is introduced as "ἐξουσιαστῇ

[280] John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Komnenos,* p. 289.20 (Meinke). Index of *archiereus* in Nikephoros's history*:* Mango, 1990, p. 238.
[281] See El-Hibri, 2021, chapter 5: "The Caliphate as a Religious Authority (990– 1225)", pp. 193– 245.
[282] George Akropolites, *Historical Writing*, 42.
[283] Michael Psellos, *Chronicle,* I.9.
[284] Ibid., VI.190.

Βαβυλώνο Ἀμεριμνῇ" (*Amerimnes, exousiastes* of Babylon).[285] Komnene's confusion of the caliph's title for his proper name does indicate that by the time she was writing circa 1140, knowledge of the caliphal titles had declined among the Romans, especially because the Fatimid caliphs were never in control of Baghdad. On the other hand, *exousiastes* may in fact be based on Constantine Porphyrogennetos' use of the title in the *Account* for the Fatimid ruler, or whatever dictated Porphyrogennetos' own usage. The fact that both Psellos and Komnene used exclusively ethnic titles for the caliphs does show the increasing Roman disinterest towards the caliphate as the two worlds gradually drifted apart. With little diplomatic contact with the caliphs, there was no need for Romans to remember or use foreign titles, and the caliphs were fully relegated to one of the many minor foreign polities on Rome's periphery.

[285]Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 832.

Conclusion

In closing this thesis, we have seen that the Romans had a complex relationship with the caliph and his titles ranging from a complete disregard of the proper caliphal titles in favour of standard Byzantine naming conventions to a meticulous observance of the Arabic titles accurately rendered in the Greek language. I have argued that far from being arbitrary and of little importance, the Roman titles for the caliph are important in understanding not only imperial Roman diplomatic relations with the Caliphate, but also the reception of Arabic-Islamic political thought in the wider Byzantine world constituting the Greek-speaking Christians living within the Roman empire and the Caliphate from the seventh to eleventh centuries.

A challenge this thesis has faced was establishing an accurate chronology of the origins of the caliphal titles because of the lack of evidence from the seventh century. In the Islamic historical tradition that emerged in the ninth century, *khalifah* was first used by Abu Bakr (632–634) and *amir al-muminin* by Umar (634–644). However, the available evidence only provides a *terminus ante quem* of circa 697 for the former and 662 for the latter. The Greek title of *symboulos* has cast doubt on assigning these titles to an earlier period and demonstrate the advantages of integrating the study of the Arabic and Greek titles into one study. For the Greek titles, transliteration also dates to before 662, and *protosymboulos* to before 700, and we only see the caliphal titles as late as 787 in Byzantine terminology which may indicate that Greek speakers within the empire primarily used ethnic titles, at least in the first century of the caliphate. It has also been difficult to ascertain how the caliphal titles actually entered the Greek language; did the caliphate consciously impose the use of transliteration and/or *protosymboulos* on their Greek speaking subjects, or did the Greek *dhimmi* take the initiative

in interpreting the Arabic terms in a familiar language, which were then adopted by the caliphate owing to their popularity?

By treating the development of the Arabic titles as part of the history of the Greek-language titles of the caliph, this thesis demonstrated in the first chapter the challenges faced by speakers of both languages in conceptualising the office of the caliph, a title completely new to both Arabic and Greek-speakers, regardless of their religion. In 632, Muhammad, the final prophet of God, died and left behind the burgeoning religion of Islam and a nascent state that had begun to unify the fragmented Arabian Peninsula under one ruler for the first time.[286] As the believers and state grew, the early Muslim community had to consider what it meant to be a Muslim, and what a Muslim leader looked like.[287] The traditional pre-Islamic title *malik* (king) was rejected for its association with foreign and oppressive rule, and by the eighth century the Muslim leader had assumed the novel Islamic titles of *amir al-muminin* (commander of the faithful) and the less-popular *khalifa* (deputy [of God]).[288]

As discussed in the second chapter, for the Greek-speaking Christians who were now subjects and neighbours of the Caliphate, such explicitly Islamic titles were problematic to accept.[289] There was no consensus on what to call this new type of ruler which resulted in writers employing a wide variety for the caliph in the Greek language. In the second chapter of this thesis, I sorted each title into one of three categories in order to explain why and in what context the titles were used, using some of the earliest attestations of the titles in Greek as examples. In the final chapter, I used these categories to survey the caliphal titles employed at the Constantinopolitan court and the Romans' carrying attitudes towards the caliph.

[286] Kennedy, 2023, p. 48
[287] Ibid, p. 45.
[288] See pages 17–25.
[289] See pages 47–48.

The first and simplest category "transliteration" were Greek approximations of the Arabic title, such as ἀμιρᾶλμουμνιν for *amir al-muminin*. There were two main advantages to transliteration; the title was meaningless to Greek speakers and thus could be used without reservation whilst remaining respectful to the caliph, and when spoken aloud both the Arabic original and the Greek transliteration would be understood by speakers of the other language. Transliteration was the most popular method for rendering the caliphal titles for scribes working in the caliphal administration as attested to by its abundance in papyri and may have been officially endorsed by the caliphate.[290] Likewise, within the Roman empire itself, transliteration was used often by court historians and the emperor Constantine VII even instructed ambassadors to the caliph to directly address him as *amermoumnes.*[291]

The second category this thesis employed was "translation" wherein the Arabic titles were translated into Greek. However, because of the religious differences between the Arabic and Greek speakers, a direct translation of "commander of the faithful" was very rare, only found on one papyrus document.[292] Rather, the term "πρωτοσυμβούλος" (the first counsellor) was the most commonly used "translation" of the caliphal titles.[293] The etymology of the title is rather simple to explain, as the provincial governors (*amir)* of the caliphate, were often called *symboulos* in Greek texts, and therefore *protosymboulos* means "the first *amir"*. However, this thesis has followed Morelli's argument that *symboulos* does not mean *amir* because of the semantic difference between "counsellor" and "commander". Rather, *symboulos* may be a translation of the Arabic *mushir* or *sahib* which indicates that in the first decades of the

[290] Grohmann, 1960, pp. 6–13.
[291] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Account of the Order of the Palace*, pp. 683–684.
[292] Richter, 2010, p. 210. *P.Apoll.* 37.
[293] See pages 44–47.

caliphate, the *emirs* and possibly even the caliph himself used different titulature that later became discarded in favour of the traditional titles.[294]

Protosymboulos was a rather neutral title for the caliph, again occasionally used by Greek scribes in the caliphate in the eighth century and more commonly in the Byzantine empire for official correspondence with the caliph between the ninth and eleventh centuries. As a unique Greek title for the caliph, it indicated that the Romans recognized the status of the caliph whilst continuing to deny the Islamic part of the title. At the same time, the literal meaning of *protosymboulos* as "the first counsellor" trivialized the office of the caliph as inferior to that of the Byzantine emperor; hence why Byzantine authors had no problem using the title even when denigrating the caliph. In imperial formulae, the Roman government also used the unique title of *diataktor* for the caliph, a semantically closer term to *amir* than *symboulos* was, and possibly the direct Greek translation of *amir*.[295]

The final category I employed was "ethnic titles" to broadly encompass all titles that used the formula of a leadership title and an ethnic group, for instance "*archegos* of the Arabs." Ethnic titles were commonly employed by the Romans to refer to foreign rulers, and generally disregarded the titles the rulers themselves used and relegating the caliph to one of many foreign rulers on Byzantium's periphery. For this reason, ethnic titles were the first titles used by Greek speakers for the Caliph in the seventh century and continued to be employed until the fall of the three caliphates in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Ethnic titles were more popular in Christian literature, such as Anastasius of Sinai's *Dialogue Against the Jews*, disparaging the caliph and Islam, in which there would be no repercussions for ignoring the caliph's proper titles.[296] Contrary to the belief that Greek writers were stubbornly ignorant of

[294] Morelli, 2010, pp. 163–164.
[295] Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *Account of the Order of the Palace*, p. 686. Morelli, 2010, p. 160, note 9.
[296] See pages 39–41.

foreign titles in pursuit of imitating Classical authors, ethnic titles constituted a Byzantine classification system that disseminated information across time and space by using consistent naming conventions.[297] In this context, ethnic titles for the caliph were not always pejorative and were simply the easiest method for referring to the caliph among other Greek-speakers. As the caliphs themselves had rejected the title of *malik*/*basileus*, it would not necessarily be seen as offensive to use a lesser title like *archegos* or *archon*, and the ethnic qualifiers (in particular the religious "Hagarenes" and "Ishmaelites") substituted for the religious *mumiminin* (believers).

The multitude of caliphal titles used by the Romans reflected their different experiences with Islam and the caliph. The rapid expansion of the caliphate in the seventh and eighth centuries resulted in a large population of Greek-speaking Christians living within and bordering the first Muslim state. Some like the notaries of the caliphate and the Byzantine imperial court were forced to adopt transliterated and translated titles for the caliph based on the Arabic. Others, freed from the constraints of geopolitics in writing histories and hagiographies for a non-Islamic audience, could afford to use the traditional ethnic titles for the caliph if they wished. Many writers even used the different title types interchangeably which led to previous confusion among scholars on the nature of the titles. This thesis demonstrates that the caliphal titles had meaning to the Romans and should be treated as such, however the scope of this thesis has only allowed a partial picture to emerge of how the caliphal titles were treated by Christian subjects and neighbours of the Caliphate. A study surveying the reception and transmission of the caliphal titles in other languages, such as Latin or Armenian, may shed

[297] Shukurov, 2016, p. 15.

further light on the dialogue that took place between Muslims and Christians in the first centuries of the caliphate.

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