The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II
A.D. 721.

Introduction

The iconoclastic edict of the Caliph Yazid II (720-724), which was issued in 721, has been usually mentioned and discussed in connection with the iconoclastic policy of the Byzantine Emperor Leo III the Isaurian or the Symeon (717-741), and with the question whether Yazid's edict is to be regarded as a potential stimulus or cause for the similar policy at his contemporary ruler on the shores of the Bosphorus.

In the history of the iconoclastic movement in both countries, in the Christian Empire and in the Muslim Caliphate, a certain analogy and, at the same time, a considerable difference may be pointed out. In the Christian East and West, the opposition to image-veneration in the eighth and ninth centuries was not entirely new and unexpected phenomenon; it had already gone through a long period of evolution. From the beginning of the fourth century, the opposition to the excessive veneration of the icons may be signalled in many places; and it has not been limited to theoretical suggestions. It sometimes resulted in serious upheavals and riots,
during which icons were destroyed. But these iconoclastic incidents had no connection with the central government which took no part in such facts of the violation of the public order. They belonged to private initiative. But, of course, they had been gradually paving the way to those rulers who were affected themselves by iconoclastic tendencies. Such a ruler proved to be Leo III, from the remote south-eastern regions of Asia Minor, which were deeply affected by iconoclastic ideas, "a Syrian by birth," according to some sources, who "spoke correctly in Arabic and in Roman," as says an Arab historian.  

But we know, however, that, on ascending the imperial throne in 717, Leo was not an open iconoclast. Only in the tenth year of his rule, i.e. in the year 726, did he, according to Theophanes, "begin to speak of the destruction of the holy and all-honored icons."  

3. Theophanes, 404. A remarkable molybdobull (seal) of Leo's reign, from this initial period, has been preserved. On one side, is represented a young clear-skinned emperor crowned with a diadem bearing a cross; on the other side, the Virgin holding on her left arm the Infant Jesus. Since the seal bears the legend "Leo and Constantine, the Faithful Emperors of the Romans," the seal is to be attributed to a year after 726, when Constantine V was associated to the power. See N. Lihačev, "Sceaux de l'Empereur Leo et de sa famille."
This is a striking confirmation of the conjecture of Bury, who, in 1889, wrote: "One circumstance suggests the possibility that he may have known Arabic." J. B. Bury, A History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene, II (London, 1889), 380, n. 2.

**Addition to Footnote 2**

Léon III l'Isaurien, Byzantium,
XI (1936), 473-474.

**Continuation of Footnote 3**
Only then the iconoclastic movement officially started in Egypt.

Dealing with the rule of Yazid II, we must always remember that it has come down to us heavily coloured by the anti-Umayyad tradition of the Abbasids, who regarded Yazid as an incapable, useless ruler, an impassionate amateur of sport and music, as well as raping girls, who left the concern of his vast empire to his governors.
Only then the iconoclastic movement officially started in Byzantium like in Byzantium, as
in the Caliphate. Iconoclastic Edict of Yagid was
likely not a new or unexpected phenomenon. Like in By-
zantium, the iconoclastic movement in the Muslim Empire
had gone through a period of evolution; but the latter,
of course, was much shorter than in the Christian
Empire, because the Islam itself as religion had made
its appearance only about a hundred years before Yagid's
time; and in contrast with the Byzantine iconoclasm,
the iconoclastic policy in the Caliphate had been,
from the beginning, proclaimed and regulated by the
Caliphs themselves.

Now we know well that the former popular idea
that all forms of representations of living beings,
either in painting and in sculpture, are forbidden by
explicit passages in the Koran has been definitely
rejected; now we are aware that such a prohibition
comes not from the Koran but from the hadith, i.e.
from traditions concerning the actions and sayings
of Muhammad, which circulated orally and were
collected and written down for the first time in
the ninth century of our era, in other words, from
an unreliable source. These traditions are uniformly
hostile to all representation of living forms.

In this connection, here may be cited a story referring to Muhammad himself, which is told by the Arabian writer Agaazi (died A.D. 858), the author of the earliest extant history of Mecca. The story deals with the very well-known fact that Muhammad, after his triumphal entry into Mecca, in 630, went inside the Kaaba and smote, as tradition says, many idols. But according to Agaazi, he ordered the pictures in the Kaaba to be obliterated, saying: "Rub out every picture herein, except that under my hand. And he lifted his hand from a picture of Jesus, son of Mary, and his mother, o., as Arnold translated, "from a picture of Mary, Jesus rested on her lap."


Referring evidently to this Meccan episode, Ernest Renan wrote: "The Kaaba became the Pantheon of all the gods. When Muhammad drove the images out of the holy dwelling, among the number of the expelled gods was a Byzantine Virgin, painted on a column holding her son in her arms." R. de Hommeaux et les origines de l'islamisme, Études d'histoire religieuse, 5 ed. (Paris, 1863), 275. In English, Studies of Religion, History (London, 1892), 194.
In the process of the religious evolution in the Caliphate, the details of which it would be out of place to discuss here, one important fact must be pointed out that no representation of living beings can be found anywhere in mosques, but in several cases we find such representations in palaces, earliest and in miniatures. The best known palace of this sort is Qusayr Amra (the Little Castle), which was discovered by Alois Muller in 1898, and which was probably built between 712 and 715 by the Caliph Walid I (705-715). On the walls of this pleasure-house of the Umayyads, there are some frescoes representing the pictures of six exceptional personages. Mentioning the Empress Zaghban, and other symbolic figures representing Victory, Philosophy, History, and Poetry.

royal personages, the six great
potentates of the world at that
time, whose power shrunk before
the victorious advance of the Arab
armies; among them, there was
the “Qaysar” (Emperor) of Constanti-
ople. In the same building
there are

ADDITION TO FIRST PARAGRAPH
Since the Moslem shrines, the mosques, were deprived of any representation of living beings, the Caliphs determined to spread the same rule over the shrines of other religions, in our case, over the Christian churches. The Caliphs did not need apply the similar regulation to the Jewish synagogues, because the Jews, at that time, were themselves violent iconoclasts; so that the Caliphs, in their anti-Christian and, sometimes, in their iconoclastic activities, were influenced and supported by the Jews. It may be not out of place to produce here a few passages from a rather recent study of J.-B. Frey, who wrote that in the fifth and sixth centuries, in Palestine, there was a true campaign against images. According to him, the recent discoveries have established most evidently that, at that period, the representations of living beings which were found in the sculptures and in the mosaics of the Palestinian synagogues were intentionally destroyed; and Frey quotes "the very brief but heavy of consequences words" of St. Bellermine (1542-1621), from his book "De imaginitibus Sanctorum," "Prima iconomacli sunt Judaei."

1 J.-B. Frey, C.S.Sp., "La question des images chez les Juifs à la lumière des récentes découvertes," Biblica, XVI (Roma, 1935), 248-249. With this statement of St. Bellermine compare Theodori Stoudtiae Epistolæm C.S.E., ep. XXIII. Epistola, in laudem Constanse, Migne, P.G., XCIIX, 1189. It was different in the third century. H. D. See, for instance, the synagogue at Dura-Europus, "with a brilliant scheme of pictorial decoration unfolding before the eyes of the
worshippers the pageant of Israel's national and religious history. The Excavation at Dura Europos. Preliminary report of sixth season of work October 1932 - March 1933, D. by M. Rostovtzeff, A. Bellinger, C. Hopkins and C. Weller (New Haven, 1936), 338.
Greek Sources

I begin this study with a discussion on the sources referring to the edict of Yazid II and start with the Greek ecclesiastical evidence.

The oldest and contemporary source which mentions the Saracen religious superstitions similar to idolatry fails to give any information of Islamic iconoclasm. It is the letter of the patriarch Germanus of Constantinople (715-730) to Thomas of Claudiopolis, in Asia Minor, one of the iconoclastic bishops, written about 724, shortly before the opening of the iconoclastic policy of Leo III, which has been preserved in the acts of the second council of Nicaea of 787. In this letter, Germanus, after having accused the Jews, who, not only just now but often, reproached us for such things (i.e., idolatry in the form of images) and calling them true worshippers of idols (οἱ τὴν Ὀρθοδόξον Νατρείαν Ἐπισκόπων), Germanus says that also the Saracens seem to hit upon something similar, "they, up to our own days, venerate in the desert an inanimate stone (λίθος ἐφυσοῦς) which is called Khobar (Χοβάρ)."

1 Mansi, XIII, 109 B-E.
2 ib., 109 D-E: Σαράκενοις δὲ ἔστω καὶ ἑτοῖς τῷ τοῦ Σταν συγγραφέων συντομοῦν δικαστήρια, ἀκολούθησά τίς ἐλεύθερον καὶ ἐντυπωσά προσφέροντας τὴν μέρα τὸς νῦν ἐν τῇ διαφορᾷ ἐργασίας τελοῦμένην παρακάταλλος 
λίθος ἐφυσοῦς προσφέροντας, τὸν τοιοῦτον Ἐξοβαρ ἔπισκοποῦ, ἄμβωμα ἔστω καὶ τοιαύτης ἐπιτροπῆς σύν ἐκ τῆς Μεσοποταμίας ἐν τῇ Αἰγυπτίων ἐπι νησίῳ.
Here is the earliest mention of the name Khobar in the sense of the Kaaba in Mecca, in 691. Later, but in the same eighth century, John of Damascene, in his *De haeresibus Liber*, gives for the Kaaba different forms: Ἰῳβαδίου and Ḫabı. Like the Patriarch Hermias, he reproaches the Saracens with adoring and kissing the stone, which is said to represent the head of Aphrodite.

The Niv'os ἐγγίσκω in the letter of Patriarch Ger-

mans reminds me of a saying ascribed by Isma'il a
Mamlūm writer to the second Caliph Omar, who, supposedly
said: "I know that thou ous a stone, without power to
harm or to help, and had I not seen the Messenger of God
kiss thee, I would not kiss thee".

1. Le Recueil des traditions méhometanes par Abû Abdallah
Mohammed ibn Isma'il el-Bokhari. Publié par M. L. Keel, 1
(Leiden, 1862), 406, r sq. El-Bokhari, les traditions islamiques
traduites de l'arabe avec notes et index par O. Houidas et
W. Marçais, I (Paris, 1903), 520. Quoting this saying, C.H.
Becker remarks: "That such fetish-worship disturbed some
of his own (i.e. the Prophet's) followers appears evident from
a saying ascribed to the Caliph Omar", Cambridge Medieval
History, IV, 325.
The letter of the Patriarch Germanus, seeking to supply with any information on the iconoclastic edict of Yazid II, shows that, from his own point of view, the real idolaters were the Jews and Arabs. In the person of the Patriarch we have a man who was strongly opposed to the iconoclastic policy of Leo III, who, refusing to sign the edict of 730, was deposed, against whom the iconoclastic council of 764 proclaimed "Anathema to the Patriarch Germanus, the worshipper of wood!"

Since the deposition of this strong opponent of Leo's policy took place in 730, it shows the iconoclastic policy of Leo before 730 was too violent, too intolerant, because during the preceding years the Emperor could tolerate as the head of the Church his open adversary. Ostrogorsky and Ladner, who follows him, assert that Leo III had between 724 and 726 tried by peaceful means to convert his subjects, before enforcing the first iconoclastic measure.

The most important Greek source concerning the origin of iconoclasm, which connects it with the Jewish and Arab influences, is the report of the most revered presbyter John, representative of the Anatolian bishops, who, at the fifth session of the Second Council of Nicaea, 787, read it.

* Mansi, XIII, 196 E-200. John's report was also published separately by Compenius, in his edition of Theophanes Continuatus. See Bonn, ii, 481-484. There is an old English translation of the Acts of this Council. The Seventh General Council the Second of Nicaea, held A.D. 787, in which the Worship of Images was Established, with copious Notes from the "Caroline Books" compiled by order of Charlemagne for its computation. Translated from the originals by the Rev. John Mendham, M.A. (London, 1850); on John's report, 294-297. For the indication of this edition, I am greatly indebted to Professor E. Kitzinger. In spite of some errors and misunderstandings, the translation is satisfactory. In an abridged English version, John's report is reproduced by K. A. C. Creswell, "The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam," Ars Islamica, xi-xii (1946), 164. On John of Jerusalem, who was presbyter, monk, and the former synode of the Patriarch of Antioch, see B. M. Mellitius, George of Cyprus and John of Jerusalem, the Two Little Known Champions for Orthodoxy in the Eighth Century (St. Petersburg, 1901), 77-102 (in Russian). According to Mellitius, the report which John read at the Council had been compiled not in 787 but much earlier, in 769 (pp. 98).
At this session, the Patriarch Tarasius said: "It will now be right for us to hear our brother and beloved lord (κυρίος) John legate from the Apostolic Throne of the East, for he has with him a writing which will explain how the subversion of Images commenced (πώς ἦν τὸ ἱερὸν ἱεραρχεῖον καταστροφή)." The Holy Council said: "We should like much, my lord, to hear about this."

Here follows, in an abridged form, the contents of John's report, which he read from the beforehand written paper (εἰς τὸν προαιρετικὸν ἱεραρχεῖον).

"I, your unworthy brother and humblest of you all, wish to lay before this holy and sacred Council, with all truth (πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἰδιϊν ἡγεμόνας), how, when and where, this vilest and most God-detested heresy of Christians' destroyers and iconoclasts had its rise; and, being anxious to leave what brevity I could, I have determined to read to you from a written document, that so, at the same time, I might make no mistake or omission in my account." Then after mentioning the death of the Emperor Sulaiman (οὐσιομορφος Συλλαμπίρ, 715-717) and telling a few words about his successor Omar (Ομαριν, 715-720), John proceeded: "On Omar's death, Egidios (Ἐγίδιος, Yaqid 111, 720-724), a man of a finer voice and more turn of mind, succeeded him.
There lived, at that time, at Tiberias a ringleader of the lawless (παράνομοι) Jews, a magician and fortune-teller, an instrument of evil-destroying demons, whose name was Τςαλακαντα πεχυς, a bitter enemy of the Church of God. On learning of the prudence (κοβ-

cητος) of Yazid, he approached him and began

I ΤΣΑΛΑΚΑΝΤΑ ΠΕΧΥΣ, i.e. 40 cubits high (Mansi, XIII, 197 B).
I believe that this Jewish wizard from Tiberias may
I be identified with an individual employed by Leo III, who
I is mentioned in an Arabic historical work entitled Kitab
I al-Uyun (Book of the Wells), of the eleventh-thirteenth
I century (?), and nick named "Forty Cubits." E. W.
I Brooks, "The Campaign of 716-718 from Arabic Sources," I
I The Journal of Hellenic Studies, XIX (1899), 26 and
I n. 2. On this Arabic source see A. Vasiliev-M. Canard, I
I Since Theophanes mentions a certain Syrian freedman I
I Bese (Bese') who gained the high esteem of Leo III I
I for his bodily strength and his concurrence in the I
I emperor's Iconoclastic policy (p. 402), we may surmise, I
I that the ringleader of the lawless Jews mentioned I
I in the Acta of the Council and named Τςαλακαντα- I
I perhaps was this Bese, although the latter was I
I not a few. This name in the abridged form Saanta- I
I perhaps occurs twice in the later part of Theophanes' I
I Chronicle. See Joshua Starr, "An Iconodulic Legend I
I and Its Historical Basis," Speculum, VIII (1933), 500-503. I
I The author of this article gives two other instances I
I of this name. Below, I shall produce some other instances.
to utter prophecies... saying: "You will live long and reign for thirty years if you follow my advice." That foolish tyrant eagerly wishing to have long life (for he was luxurious and dissolute) answered: "Whatever you say, I am ready to do, and, if I obtain my desire, I will "recompense you with highest honours". And then the magician (ὑπερακοπήρ) Jew said: "Give order immediately without any delay or postponement that an evangelical letter (Ἐφ κύκλῳ ἔτων ἐκ τῆς ὁλίγαι) be issued throughout your empire to the effect that every representation painting (Πάσαν ἕκκοκικήν σιδήρῳ ἔργῳ) whether on tablets or in wall-mosaics or on sacred vessels and on altar coverings, and all such objects, as are found in all Christian churches, be destroyed, and totally abolished, and so also all representations of any kind whatsoever that adorn any embellish the market places in cities (ἐν τοῖς ἐφοροῖς πόλεων)."
And money by enigmatic riddles, the false prophet added: "Every likeness, so enduring, thine own to release its

47 committing 824 re: Kerkoupirneta, Rovinjavos of Pergamum's
46" ... A.D. 1970. In the text, these
i.e. and the diabolical wickedness of the enemy of God concealed cunning that indirectly (Mνδένδρων), along with the destruction of every likeness, the beauty of our sacred paintings should be also thrown down (Migne, P.G., C, 529). In the Latin version of this text, the Greek adverb Mνδένδρων is translated tacito artificio.

The above cited Mendenhall translates this passage in such a way: the false prophet with Satanic cunning added this "every image", contriving thereby to display his hatred against us without being suspected" (p.296). Hefele, after producing the statement "those should not destroy also all the profane images which serve the ornamentation of the cities," writes: "The Jew added this last point, in order that one could not suspect him, speaking in such a way, of his hatred against the Christians." (Hefele, Concilien geschichte, III, 2d ed. (Freiburg in Breisgau, 1877), 374; in French, trans. by Dom H. Leclercq, Histoire des Conciles, III, 2 (Paris, 1910), 630. According to the two just quoted writers, and particularly according to Hefele, the Jew who had suggested the destruction of images and "any likenesses" was very sensitive to the opinion of the Christians about him signifying that he was not exclusively against icons which had been dear to many Christians, but was against the representations of the living beings in general; knowing that the latter feeling already existed in many regions of the Empire.

I am greatly indebted to Professor E. H. Tigges, who called my particular attention to the interpretation of this text and who is inclined to accept the point of view of these writers.
The impious tyrant, yielding to his advice, had sent (officials) and most frivolously destroyed the holy icons and all other representations in the whole province under his rule and, thanks to the Jewish magician, thus had ruthlessly robbed the churches of God under his sway of all ornaments, before the evil came into this land (Πρὸ τοῦ εφάτωσε ἐν τῇ γῇ τις τιάτη τῇ Κυκλων). As the Christians fled lest they should have to overthrow the holy images with their own hands, the emirs who were sent for this purpose pressed into service abominable Jews and wretched Arabs; and they burnt the venerable icons, and either smeared or scraped the ecclesiastical buildings.
On hearing this the pseudo-bishop of Nicaea and his followers imitated the lawless Jews and impious Arabs, astounding the churches of God. When after doing this the Caliph (ṣūkh Būrūk) 'Azīz died no more than two and one-half years later, the images were restored to their proper position and honor. His son Walīd (Dūdīs)², filled with indignation, ordered the magician to be ignominiously put to a parricide's death as a due reward for his false prophecy. Such was the report read from his defaced written paper by the praepositus John, representative of the Anatolian bishops.

Another very important statement was made about the iconoclastic activity of Ṭāqīd II, he was given by the bishop of Messana (Mēsōn, Messane) who was present at the same council of Nicaea. He said: "I was a boy in Syria, when the caliph of the Saracens was destroying the icons."

1. Ṭāqīd II died 25 July A.D. 745 (13 March 762). He was a supporter of the iconoclasts.
2. Herein the praepositus John errs: Ṭāqīd's successor was Hishamsāh (724-743); and then came the brief rule of the Caliph Walīd III (743-744).

Theophanes, who wrote his Chronicle at the beginning of the ninth century, relates that Yazid issued his iconoclastic edict under the influence of a Jewish magician from Laodicea, who promised him forty years of the reign if he had destroyed the holy icons in all the Christian churches of his empire. Yazid decided to do so, but he died in the same year, so that the majority of the population were still unaware of his decision. But the Emperor Leo was informed about this by a certain Beser (Besar), who had been born in Egypt as a Christian, but had apostatized to Mohammedanism and escaped to Constantinople, where he became a very friendly and informed about his physical strength and of the same heretical views as he. 1

1. Theophanes, 401-402. Continued:

So, from Theophanes' testimony, we may come to the conclusion, that Yazid issued his edict exclusively under the influence of a Jewish magician, Beser (Besar), whom...
The Arabian historian Tabari mentions that a certain few foretold Yazid forty years of reign. But he fails to mention the suggestion to destroy icons.

Tabari, D. de Goeje, T, 1463 l. 20 - 1464, l. 1.

ADDITION TO FOOTNOTE I
I am inclined to identify with the Tessarakontakes in John's report, is not a legendary figure, as Orthodox sources suggest, but a real personality, because Theophanes, in the later parts of his chronicle, mentions him twice, calling him, in one place, "Ibn, the companion, apostate and a helper in his madness; and, in the other place, he mentions the patrician Beser who he qualifies as "saracenonsind" (σαρασανώνσις), who was killed in the war of Constantine V against the Monaper Artavasdes.²


2) Theophanes, 405-414. See A. Lombard, Études d'histoire byzantine: Constantin V, empereur des Romains (Paris, 1902), 24. L. Brehier erroneously says that Beser was killed in 740, i.e. before the death of Abgar III, in other words, before the rebellion of Artavasdes. Beser, 1171.
The Patriarch Nicephorus III of Constantinople, in the early part of the ninth century (805-812), wrote, "Antirebatici" against the most violent iconoclast, the Emperor Constantine V Copronymus. In his third Antirebaticus he mentions a Jew very much among his companions, and whose surname was Tessaex = Κοῦρειος, took advantage of the weakness (Νησεία) of the Saracen chief Yaqid (Qāzī dos) and, by promising him thirty years of reign, suggested him all the erected images, and any living beings to be thrown down and destroyed. When the profane had been made, along with other images and statues, it also destroyed the sacred images in the Churches of Christ: some of them they scraped off, some they destroyed by covering them with dust (Κοῦρειας); some, not the temples, vases, and vestments, they burnt down. They forced to desist by this profane work the enemies of Christ, Jews and Saracens, because Christians, even in spite of compulsion, refused to execute the order. From there the evil of iconoclasm expanded over the Roman Empire.

1. S. Nicephori Antirebaticus III adv. Constantinum Copronymum, 84, Migne, P. G., C. 528-534. If I am not mistaken, there has not been pointed out that the unusual surname Tessaex that occurs in Nicephorus' Antirebaticus. On Nicephorus, especially from the point of view of the manuscript tradition of his works, see a very useful article of R. P. Blake, "Note sur l'activité littéraire de Nicephore III patriarche de Constantinople," Byzantium, XIV (1939), 1-15.
And then Nicephorus proceeds, "And the diabolical wickedness of the enemy of God (τοῦ ἔχων) concealed cunning that indirectly (ἀπαγόρευτος) along with the destruction of every likeness, the beauty of our sacred part-
ners should be also thrown down."


In his Ιστορία οἱ Τομοί on Breviarium Nicephorus does not mention Yapi's diet.

ADDITIONS TO PAGE 22.
According to Nicephorus, Tepid died two years after the promulgation of the edict. His son Walid (Othidros) ordered the magician to be executed. Nicephorus closes his enumeration with the following statement: "From the above said, you know the Jewish point of view (on this subject), and your are well informed on the Christian doctrine." (Cod. 533).

23

Like Theophanes, Nicephorus mentions Walid as Tepid's successor, for Hisham. In his 'Chorograph of Antiochum', Nicephorus does not mention Tepid's edict.

οὐδὲ ἔπρεπή ἦσας ἵνα ἐκείνος ὅπως ἔπεσεν πρὸς μὴν εἴς ἐγκύους τοῦ Σαχν καὶ ἔτρυφοντος (Comm. 532).
Theron, a little farther, Yazid is mentioned once more not by his own name but by the word "Barbarian" (Βαρβαρός). We read: "The root of this evil has been planted in the Roman empire, and it reaches the then ruler, who was Leo (λύον) both by his name and by his disposition, indulging in debauchery and wantonness like that Barbarian (i.e. Yazid), he, in his fury against piety, having to exterminate God" (col. 359, l. 57).

In addition to Nicephorus' three Anti-Arschetics, there is the very little known Fourth Anti-Arscheticus, the first part of which was published in 1852 by the Cardinal Pitra under the title Sancti Nicephori Anti-Arscheticus. Libri quatuor. Pars prima. Eusebii Caesariensis. Contra episcopum Hieronymum, Simeonum. Pitra's edition, the noted author of the Imperium Orientale, Anselme Banduni (1676-1743), had been the fourth Anti-Arscheticus. "Adversus Eusebium sectae iconoclasticae principem," but he failed to have it published.

In the third chapter of the Anti-Arscheticus IV, we read the usual story of a Jew from Tiberias, who suggested "the king of the Arabs" (i.e. Yazid) to embark on the iconoclastic policy, but in the latter story a new, probably

Legendary detail occurs, that the Jew approached the eclipse at the time when he was critically ill, so that, among other promises, the Jew promised him the complete restoration of his health. Since this test is not easily available, I wish to give it here in Greek text and in its English version. The latter runs as follows: 1 (Iconoclasm) has been shown for the first time from a certain Jew by his rec courses, a wicked man and sorcerer, who was greatly enraged against the faith of the Christians. According to some good authorities, he had lived at Tiberias, being there prominent among his contemporaries. He comes to the king of the Arabians, who was then critically ill, promising him the relief from his illness, if he destroys all the statues and images among his subjects, a happy and prosperous life in the wonderful conditions. As it has been said in the previous writings on this subject in more detail, this error had made its appearance indeed from Jews and Saracens; from them, by the will of God, the evil falling upon the Christians has set in.

3 Pitra, op. cit., 375–376.

4 The statement may refer to the above quoted Antiphonarius III.

5 Obiyo δὴ τικτά τε τεστίν έκ τίνος ὑστάλων μὲν τῶν ἀθροκτέων, μικρόν δὲ καὶ γόνης, καὶ μέγα καθ’ τὴν Χριστιανοῦσαν διάλειται κόσμος πίστεως, 6 ἐόντα καὶ τὰ τίνες τῶν εἰσόδων, τῷ τῇ Τίβεριϊδι, ἐν τῇ προφθασίᾳ τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἀναπαύσεως. Πρὸς δὲ τὸν τῶν Ἀράμων θησαυρισμένα, ἐξήγησαν τὴν τιμίαν τοῦ Βαλαϊντίου Φωκᾶ, ὃς τὸν σκότος, ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τῶν δυνάμεων τῶν ἑλληνιστῶν καὶ ἐκονομοκρισίαν τῶν βασιλέων Καθαλόου, τούς μὲν νόσους ξαναδημήτουσαν, ἐν δὲ βιώσεως καὶ ἐθικομονήσεως ἐς τέτοια μῆλα διακρέπεται. Μὲ πάντων ἐπὶ ὀποίους πλατύτερον εἰρήνην, ὡστε διεκκυρανθῆς ἢδη ἐς τοὺς ὑσταλούς καὶ εἰς Καπανάν τῆς τοιαύτης ἐργαθείας πλάνην. ἐκ δὴ τούτων, καταλιγότσας ἔθεσιν, ἐς τὸν Χριστόν νῦν εὔχημα τὸν Ἐραδότος ἐξεδόθημεν.
Georgians all concurred in exceedingly severe terms on the Jews, and their part in the issue of Yazid's death. He writes: 'When Yazid (713-5) was the ruler of the empire of the Arabs, two iconoclast youths from the Jews - and they always are arrogant (τεχνητοί θεατές) in regard to our Lord Jesus Christ, being proud of juggleries and buffooneries (ὑπατάρπαι) διππαράτων καὶ διακόμων), being devoted to diabolical observations, pretending to the astrological knowledge, - they come to the imperial court of the Arabs, present themselves before the above said Yazid, promise him a life of long prosperity and many years, if he has consented to destroy the adornment (Πίνακος σφυρίου) of the Christians, to withdraw, wipe out (καθαρίσεις) from the church confines the Images of the God-Man our Saviour Jesus Christ and the Mother of God who gave birth to him. And this man found of his life and living a swine's life (τὰ γεμιστὶς) acceded the suggestion of their deceivers, and shook violently (πέτυτον ορίζετο) all the Churches of the East in the whole of his empire. But the wicked man was deceived, for a year has not yet past when the divine wrath has befallen him; and his son who received his empire wishes to kill them as false prophets. Then they terrified returned again into the Bavarian border country.'

The unusual story of a certain Jew from Laodicea who urged Yazid, "the then ruler of the Syrian land" (731–740), to start the destruction of the holy icons, is told also in the "Life of the Constantinopolitan Martyrs", whose memory is celebrated on the ninth of August.


In the Life of St. Stephen, martyr under Constantine V, whose life was compiled by a

there is no mention of a Greek, although, in the text itself, Stephen, among other peoples, names also the Syrians, i.e. the Arabs, responsible for the origin of iconoclasm. 1

1 Τὰς ρωσιανὰς ἀλαστρὰς ὑπεράφης, ἐνδοκρασίας Πυρὶ παρῆκαν Καὶ Πούμνος, καὶ Συριάς, καὶ Τῆς Ἱπποτικῆς ἤτοι ἤπειρως. Vita S. Stephani junioris, Migne, P.G., C. 1116 B-C. See Ladner, 131, n. 22.

In the seventeenth century, Comnens inserted the text of "The Letter to the Emperor Theophilus Concerning the Holy and Venerable Images" which has long been proved spurious and apocryphal. In 1864 was published and in 1912-1913 revised—which is exactly dated, in April 836—a text of the authentic and authoritative letter with the title, "The Letters of the Three Oriental Orthodox (i.e. Patriarchs to the Emperor Theophilus)." The difference

2. I use the first apocryphal text in the edition of Migne, P.G., V, 345-385 (among the works of John of Damascus), and the second original text in the edition of L. Duchesne, Roma et l'Oriente, V, November, 1912 – April 1913.
between these two texts, as far as it concerns our present study, is that the spurious text
which here gives a
story of the edict of Yazid (683-691) almost exactly reproduces the text of Georgius
Monachi (89; col. 356-357), and the original text fails to mention the
story at all. Therefore for our study the story which has been included into the original text is to be
discarded as an interpolation reproducing the text of Georgius
Monachi. 1

Ardwok tells about the several Jews from Laodicea in Phrygia, who came to the ruler of Arabs Yajid (399/9) and promised him forty years of the reign, if he destroys the icons in all the Christian Churches of his realm. The foolish Yajid decided to issue such an edict. But by the grace of Christ and by the prayers of the Mother of God and all the Saints, he soon died, having not time to send his decree through his empire; a year has not yet when the Divine Wrath has befallen him. His son wished to kill them as false prophets. On learning this, they returned into the Baurian region.


Zonaras seems to abbreviate the story of Georgius Monachus. During the reign of Yajid (399/9), two Jewish magicians, pretending to know the future through their astrological knowledge, came to him and promised a long reign if he threw out the images of Christ and the Mother from the churches. The Barbarian did not delay, and destroyed the holy icons in his empire. But the Divine Wrath, has befallen him very soon. A year has not yet passed after the issue of the edict. When he died, his successor wished to kill the false prophets, but they succeeded in escaping to Bauria.

2 Zonaras, XV, 3, 1-5; D. Bomk, III, 257-258.
Latin Sources

The Latin sources are devoid of interest for our study, because they reproduce their Greek counterparts in sources in a Latin

Anastasius Bibliothecarius, who lived in the eighth ninth century, in his Chronographia Tripartita, reproduced exactly the Greek text of Theophanes (de Boor, 401-402), which has been discussed above.

The same text of Theophanes has been reproduced in Latin by another writer, Landulfus Saguax. This historian about whom we know nothing but his name, lived during the time of the Byzantine emperors, Basil II (976-1025) and Constantine VIII (976-1028), and according to the latest edition of his Historia Romana, wrote before the year 1025, when Basil II died. Prior to the new edition, the work of Landulfus Saguax had been usually known as Historia Miscellae and has been always connected with the work of the

1. Anastasius Bibliothecarius, Chronographia Tripartita, Ed. de Boor, 263.
2. Landulf: Saguax, Historia Romana, a cura di Amedeo Cicci-Vellucci, MAA vol. I (Rome, 1912); vol. II (Rome, 1912). Istituto Storico Italiano, Roma: per la storia d'Italia. The text which interests us here is p. 17-193 (17-194). The volume one opens with an ample preface (pp. V-VI). Previously there were eleven editions of the work, all incomplete and interpolated. Notably, by mistake, the date of the death of Basil II is indicated 1023 for 1025 (p. XXXVIII). I have also used the text printed in Migne, PL, XCV, col. 1082, under the lengthy title: Historia Miscellae, ab incepto auctore consacratas, completiones Europis Histonum, quam Paulus Diaconus, multi, additis, rogati Aelbertae Beneventanae Ducis, a Valentiniani imperio usque ad tempora post-Octobrii dedit. Et Landulfus Saguax, sen qui quum alea continuationis ad annum Christi 116.
This title is taken from Muratori, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, Vol. I. On Landulfus Sages, see also M. Manzoni, Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters, I (1911), 263.

ADDITION TO FOOTNOTE 2
But one Latin text referring to Yagid's edict, although failing to supply us with any new material, deserves special attention.

As we know, there was a certain repercussion of the Iconoclastic Troubles in the West, in the Frankish Kingdom. The Frankish Bishops and Charlemagne rejected the Second Council of Nicaea. But this rejection did not mean that they openly sided with the Iconoclasts, because, at the same time, they equally rejected the Iconoclastic Council of 754. They had holy images and wanted to keep them; but they thought that the Fathers of the Council of Nicaea had gone too far encouraging what would be real idolatry. In the time of Charlemagne, the Synod of Frankfurt, in 794, condemned the Second Council of Nicaea. Some discrepancies continued after Charlemagne's death, and, under Louis the Pious, in 821–825, at Paris, the Synod was held which followed the decisions of the Synod of Frankfurt. At this Synod, the Bishops tried to find a middle way but decided, leaning towards Iconoclasm, they said that pictures might be tolerated only as ornaments.¹

For this study, the synod at Paris is interesting, because, when the question arose "Whence for the first time the destruction of images had originated in the Oriental Church?" (inde primum exorta sit in ecclesiis Orientalium imaginarum destruction) to answer this question, in the Synod of Parisiennis was included, in an abridged form, the report of the Priscillianist John, which he had read at the fifth session of the Council of Nicaea, and in which the names of the Caliph, Sulaiman (Selemon), Omar (Humurus), and Yazid (Ezibus) have been mentioned.

Here is the text of the fourteenth chapter of the Acts of the Synod of Paris: Tyrannus quidam fuist Seleman nomine, Apophemon genere, unde duxit successit Humerus in regno, cui iterum succederit Ezibus vir valde levis et insipiens. Hujus eum temporibus esse quidam in Beriade maleficus ac divinus, Sarantaprius nomine, praepositus, iniquorum, Hebraeorum et Iramicus Dei Ecclesiae, qui ut convenerit ex litigatum Ezidi fictosymboli, accessit ad eum, ac propter illi quaedam divinare ac praedicae. Illi autem ex hoc acceptabilius factus, ac non multa postea diceret coepit: Renovitam tuae exponere volo, unde, me si audies, adduxisse habenda longitudo vitae et perseveres in hunc Principatus annos triginta, si quidem obscurarum mentis desiderii longi vitae: Quisquis mihi, De quid praepotens, paratus ad perficiendum existo.
et si consequeris, tamen, quod publicitus est, maximos tibi honoribus redderam. Maleficius vero et divinus atque in speum: tibi maxime generalem scribere epistolam, quatenus omnis imaginaria in omnibus Christianorum ecclesiis sive in parietibus, sive in vasis sacris et in vestibus altarum, et non solum haece, sed quae in civitatibus plateis sunt adornatae. Quod audientes pertinues ille tyrannus praecipit omni praefecturae in omnis locis Ecclesiastarum imagines et ceteras similitudines aboleat et ita adornavit ecclesias Dei. Nihil enim corrigunt corruptores imaginum hinc venire. Sed ipse tyrannus anno altero mortuus est, et imagines in pristinum statum restitutae cum honore et cetera."

(Hic desunt nominis et modi examinandi in causae imaginum celebrati annum, 826. Manus, XIV, caput XIV, col. 760.)

Concilium Parissiense, 826, mens Novembris. Concilia aevi Karolini, Tomus I., ann. II., nec. A. Werninghoff, Concilia, T. II., pars II., 4560.

MGH, Legum Secct. III. Concilia, Tit. II. Tomus II. Concilia aevi Karolini, I., pars IV. A. Werninghoff, pars III. (Hannoverae et G. parva, 1908), 514-520. Ad haec Manus, XIV, col. 460. In Manus, at the end of this text we read: His desunt nominia. As we see, in the Libellus of the Synod of Paris only John's conclusive statement has been omitted. It is not to be forgotten that the West has a very imperfect translation of the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea.
If we turn to oriental sources, we find that the Syriac sources are interesting for our question, because they give a detailed information about the contents of 'Urayid's edict. 2) Because they indicate that the execution of the edict was entrusted to the brother of the caliph, afor an Arab general, Maslama, who had saved unsuccessful siege to Constantinople in 717; and 3) because they emphasize that he subsequently opened his iconoclastic policy following 'Urayid's example.

In the ninth century (Dionysios of Tell-Mahre tells, according to the Seleucid edict, in the year 1835, 723-724), 'Urayid ordered all the images to be torn, in all the places where they could be found, either in the temples, or in the churches, or in the (private) houses. Therefore he had sent the workers to destroy the images everywhere where they were found.

Then the so-called "Chronicon Dumnun Domini" 819

pertaining records that Pilgrim ordered that all images and likenesses in his dominions of bronze and of wood and of stone and of pigments should be destroyed.

1. Chronicon Anonymum ad A. D. 819. Interpretatione est
I. B. Chabot. CSCO, Scriptores saga. series tertia, version.
T. XIV (1937), 11. The text of this chronicle has been exactly
reproduced by the anonymous author of the Chronicon
ad annum Domini 846 pertaining. Ed. and transl. by E. W.
Broos, in the Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen
Gesellschaft, LI (1897), 574; transl. by Chabot, CSCO,
Scriptores saga. series tertia, version. T. IV (1904), 178.
In the twelfth century, Michael the Syrian writes about Yaghi's decree in two places, evidently referring to two different sources. In the first passage he says that "Yaghi, King of the Arabs (Taqiy-i), commanded to tear off and put to pieces the paintings and statues of everything that lives and moves, from the temples and buildings, from wells, from woods, from stone; the images which were found in the books were lacerated." A little further, after the above word, dealing exclusively with the Caliph, Michael reproduces another version of the same text where he speaks about the iconoclastic policy of Leo III, and connects it with the decree of Yaghi. He says:

"At that time, the emperor of the Romans, Leo, also commanded, following the example of the King of the Arabs, to tear down images from the temples; and he destroyed the images which were in the churches and in the houses, yea those of the saints as well as of the emperors and others. For this reason, there was a revolution in the empire of the Romans, and many protests of the Romans arose against the emperor." 2

1 Chronique de Michel le Syrien, ed. et traduite par J.-B. Chabot (Paris 1907), 489.
2. ibid. 491. On this passage see a very interesting remark of André Grabar, L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin (Paris, 1936), 156-157. Grabar mentions a fact which occurred in the sixth century, when some oriental monks had torn a portrait of an emperor which was in their monastery, without giving it this act of vandalism any character of any manifestation against the person of a determined emperor, sovereign. They should have acted rather as enemies of any image with figures, so that the analogous attitude of the iconoclastic emperors appeared to them natural. Then, after producing
"the above passage, Graber remarks: "Writing ten from Byzantium, Michael attributed to the iconoclastic emperors who were sympathetic to him, the acts which he should have committed himself as good Semite and monophysite Christian."

CONTINUATION OF FOOTNOTE 2
In the thirteenth century, the Syrian Jacobite Catholicos, Gregorius Abul-Faraj, commonly known as Bar Hebraeus, also writes that Yagid commanded, and the images of every living being were obliterated from the temples, and from walls and wooden panels, and from stones and from books. And Leo, king of the Romans, also acted in this manner.


A new detail we learn from the anonymous Chronicle known as Chronicum anonymum ad annum Christi 1234 pertinent, which carries events from the erection down to 1234 A.D. (= 720-721):

We read in the Chronicle: "In the following year (102 FT) Maslama, the king (Yagid), commanded that all the images should be destroyed, either in temples, or on walls, or in the private houses, as well as in books. And wherever was found a statue or an image, or on a stone or a piece of wood, or on a wall, they broke it."

2) From this Chronicle we learn that Maslama was committed to carry into effect the Dict.
Arab Sources

The Arab Muslim writer who recorded the edict of Yaqid II lived in the tenth and eleventh centuries and wrote in Egypt.

The historian Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Kindi, who flourished under the short-lived dynasty of the Ikshidids (935-969) and died at al-Fustat in 961, wrote: "Yaqid, son of Abd-al-Malik, wrote in 104 A.H. (722-723) commanding the statues to be broken; and all of them were broken; and the likenesses were obliterated. Among them was broken a statue in the bath of Zabban ibn Abd-al-Aziz ..."

Then, from the tenth century, we must turn to the fifteenth. The most eminent historian under the Mamluk dynasty (1250-1517), the last dynasty in Egypt before the conquest of their country by the Ottoman Turks in 1517, was Taqi-al-Din Ahmad al-Maghrizi (1364-1443). In his fundamental work, "Al-Khitat" (meaning "the quaternary or a town") or "Dhikrat al-Mustashf," a Historical and Topographical Description of Egypt, al-Maghrizi writes: "Then the churches were destitute; the crosses were broken; and the churches were obliterated. All statues were destroyed, and the synagogues were burned in the year 104 (722-723). At that time, the caliph was Yazid, son of Abd-al-Malik. But after his death, Abd-al-Malik had become caliph; he wrote to Egypt that the Christians would follow their customs, and that they should not be disturbed since then."

1. Here I am using the fifth volume of the French translation of this part of Al-Khitat, Paul Cassoviau gives a much shorter text: Yazid ibn Abd-al-Malik wrote in 104, to break idols and statues; that all of the statues disappeared. "Memoires publies par les membres de l'Institut Francais d'Archeologie orientale du Caire IV (Cairo, 1901), 168. A new critical edition of Al-Khitat, by G. Wiët, which began in Cairo in 1911, has not yet been completed.

If I am using the fifth volume published in 1927. It deals with the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs.

The other Egyptian historian, of Mamluk origin, Abūl-Mahāsin ibn-Taqlībī, (1411–1469), wrote a history of Egypt from the Arab conquest down to 1453. He devotes three lines of his text to the edict of Yaqūbī. We read: "Then came to the governor of Egypt a letter from the caliph Yaqūb ibn-Abd-al-Malik ibn-Abd-al-Malik ibn-Murwan (commanding) statues and pictures to be destroyed. All the statues, were broken, and the pictures in the houses of all the other places were obliterated."

After we have discussed the information about Yaqūbī's edict given by the two above-mentioned Arab historians, it is rather unexpected to read a statement that no Arab author mentions the edict.


2. See A. Vasiliev-M. Camard, op. cit., II, 2, 269; Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabischen Literatur, see D., I (1944), 51–52.

3. R. de Vaux, O. P., "Une mosquée byzantine à Mafîn (Transjordanie)," Revue biblique, XLVII (1938), 256.
For this study is of very great interest the work of the Egyptian Christian Monk and Diplomat, Severus ibn al-Magalla, who lived during was a contemporary of the Alexandrian Patriarch Philotheos (979-1003) and wrote a history of the Alexandrian Patriarchate from St. Marcus to on. He was the first among the Coptic Christians who has introduced the Arabic language into the church literature.  

In his work, not a mere statement of the strict of Yazid II as it is in the Moslem chronicles. As a Christian, Severus describes the iconoclastic and other anti-Christian events which took place in Egypt with indignation, and hatred against the violators of the and offenders of the Christian faith in general. The history may be interesting for this study. The first record refers to the end of the seventeenth century, to the time of the Patriarch Isaac, A.D. 686-689. The Governor of Egypt, the Emir, commanded to destroy all the crosses which were in the land of Egypt, even the crosses of gold and silver. And the Christians in the land of Egypt were troubled. Moreover, he wrote certain inscriptions and placed them on the doors of the churches at Misr and in the Delta, saying in them: "Muhammad is the great Apostle of God, and Jesus also is the Apostle of God. But verily God is not begotten and does not beget." 1

Severus's records are of great importance, because they reveal that the religious life within Egypt had been full of troubles and trials before the edict of Yazid; in which the latter may be regarded as the conclusive point of the preceding troublesome period which came to a close after Yazid's death, in 724, when his successor, Hisham (724-743), rescinded the edict.

**Addition to First Paragraph**
The second record which I wish to bring here, refers to the time of the patriarchate of Alexander II, A.D. 705-730, which covers the time of Tegid II, A.D. 720-724; but since his name is not mentioned, the story probably belongs to the period preceding years.

Wiet mentions an anti-Christian ordinance issued by the Caliph Abd-al-Malik in 694; as he says: "after five years after 689, Précis de l'Histoire de l'Egypte, III, 133.m But I could not find any evidence for this dict.

Here is the story: On the Saturday of light (i.e. the Saturday before Easter) al-Ishagh (the ruler of Egypt) entered into the monastery of Hulwan, and looked at the picture of the Pure Lady Mary, which was adorned according to the rule. And there was a picture of our Pure Lady Mary and of the Lord Christ in her lap; so when he looked at it and considered, he said to the bishops and to several people who were with him: "Who is represented in this picture?" They answered: "This is Mary, the mother of Christ." Then he was moved with hatred against her, and filled his mouth with saliva, and spat in her face, saying: "If I find an opportunity, I will root out the Christians from this land. Who is Christ that you worship him as a God?"

The story ends with a miserable death of al-Ishagh.

1) Ebnet translates these words: "being carried in procession according to the rule."

There is the year 95 A.H. = September 26, 713, - Sept. 16, 714, (according to Castani). New troubles within the Egyptian church occurred. As Severus writes: "A wicked edict was issued that the colored pillars and the marble which were in the churches should be taken away, and they were all carried off. And the Father Patriarch (i.e., Alexander III) was put in the name of his church."


Later, according to Castani, in the year 99 A.H. = August 14, 717 - Aug. 2, 718, the Caliph Ummar had set the churches and bishops free from taxes, so that "the Christians were in security and prosperity, and so were the churches." But after that, continues Severus, Omer began to do evil, for he wrote a letter charged with address to Egypt, in which were written the following words: "Omer commands saying: Those who wish to remain as they are, and in their own country, must follow the religion of Muhammad as I do; but let them who do not wish to do so, go forth, from my dominions." And the Christians were oppressed by the governors and the local authorities, and by the Muslims in every place. The old and the young, the rich and the poor among them; and Omer commanded that the poll-tax should be taken from all men who would not become Muslims.

Then in another

[missing word] record, which belong also to the time

of the Patriarch Alexander II, (deals with the reign of

Yazid II.) Then Yazid reigned after him. 

[missing text]

But we have no mind to relate nor describe what
happened in his days, on account of the miseries and
trials; for he walked in the path of Satan, and deviated
from the path of God. As soon as he undertook the

[missing text]

government, he restored the taxes which Omar had relieved
the churches and bishops for one year; and he required
great sums of money from the people, so that everyone
was distressed in his dominions. And he was not satis-

[missing text]

fied with this only, but he even issued orders that the
crosses should be broken in every place, and the
pictures which were in the churches should be wiped
out. For he commanded this, but the Lord Christ
destroyed him for this reason, and took his soul
after he had endured before his death many sufferings: for

[missing text]

he reigned two years and four months. And after him reigned
Hisham, his brother, who was a God-fearing man, according
to the rule of Islam, and loved all men; and

he became the deliverer of the orthodox. 1

1) Seybold, 144, p. 9-17. Evetts, 72-73 (326-327). See Caetani: Chrono-

[missing text]

grafia Islamica, 1265 (in the year 101 AH = July 24, 719 - July 11, 730).
Severus does not limit himself to the fact of the issue of the edict only; but he tries also to sketch a picture of Yazid's general administration which was very harmful to the Christians and unjust. Severus relates:

**ADDITION TO FIRSTPARAGRAPH**
The last record belongs to the later time of the patriarchate of Michael I, A.D. 744-768. It completes the picture of certain uneasiness and animosity in the relations between Christians and Moslems under the Arian domination, soon after the reign of 'Yazid's sister.' In his time, the iconoclasm, of rather legendary character, of a Christian episode takes place in Alexandria. Severus narrates: "And on a certain day, the governor of Alexandria desired to launch the ships of the fleet on the sea. And there was a congregation of the orthodox in the church of our Lady Mary, of about ten thousand persons. And a young man of the Moslem saw, painted on the wall, a picture of the Lord Christ upon the Cross, while the soldier with a spear was piercing his side. So he said to the Christians, tempting them: 'What is this man upon the cross?' They answered: 'This is the sign of our Lord Christ, who died upon the Cross for the salvation of the world.' Therefore, that young man took a rod and mounted to the upper gallery, and pierced the picture in the other side, namely, the left, mocking and blasphemying at the Christian's words." The story ends with his miraculous punishment, which led him to the confession of the Christian faith; he departed to a monastery and was baptized there.

1 Seybold, 179, c. 15-24, 180, c. 1-4. Evodio, V, 149-150 (403-404).
I have delayed on this Severus' History longer than I perhaps should. But, in my opinion, this work on the Coptic writer has not been adequately employed or explained for the history of Iconoclasm.
The Armenian sources are not devoid of interest for our study. First of all, here is to be discussed the historical work of the vardapet Chevond entitled "A History of the Wars and Conquests of the Arabs in Armenia." The author who lived in the second half of the eighth century and at the outset of the ninth is almost a contemporary source. He relates: "After the death of Omar, Yazid II (in the text Yeghegod) ascended the throne and reigned six years." This man of cruel character and guided by fanaticism, signaled his accession by a deplorable persecution of Christians. At his orders which have been impressed with a sort of diabolical frenzy, they broke and destroyed the pictures representing the Verigraph Incarnation of our Lord and Saviour and the Images of His disciples, as well as the cross, erected in certain places, in order that the faithful would be able to venerate before them the Holy Consubstantial Trinity. Still more excited by fanaticism, he attempted to attack the unbreakable rock (Christ and His Church), and being unable to subjugate it, he himself was broken against it. Reaching the top of his frenzy, he declared war on herbivorous and impure foes and exterminated a great number of them in the entire area of his dominions.


2. Here is an error: Yazid ruled 720-724, i.e. four years.

1944-215-216.


Jeffery's General Comment: 1944, 215-216.
This was the frenzy of the Satan which drew him into this worse of extermination. A suffocating illness which has been produced by the Satan’s frenzy, miserably destroyed him: a worthy chastisement inflicted upon his crimes by our Lord.”

This piously written story of Ghewond confirms once more the fact itself of the edict. Without supplying us with any new material. But another text from the same source allows us to state almost with certainty that the iconoclastic movement under Yazid II was very severe. Describing the Arab campaign upon Constantinople in 717-719 which was conducted by Yazid’s brother, Maslama, Ghewond lets us make a rather long reach to Byz. I wish to produce here one passage of it which pictures the ambitions and energetic character of the Arab general. He supposedly said: “Know that if thou refusest to become subject to our power, I declare to thee that I have committed myself by oath not to return to my native country before having broken thy empire, the pull down the sanctuaries of this capital in which thou hast put all thy trust, and before having made not the place of thy cult, the basilica of Saint Sophia, a bathhouse for my troops, and broken the wood of the cross which thou admiring (upon thy head).”

op.c.it., l04.
If we take into consideration the information found in the top above-discussed Syriac anonymous Chronicle anonymous Christian Chronicles, we may conclude that the man who threatened to make of Saint Sophia a bathhouse for his troops and to hang the wood cross upon Leo's head, should have been a violent executor of Yazid's edict; and we know, that according to the Arabo-etnic chronicle of Severus ibn al-Mughaffar, that the iconoclastic persecution in Egypt was unusually severe.
As historian of the eleventh century, Stephen Asoglig of Taron (Darun), reproduces, in a very abridged form, the text of Ghevond, including his remains six years of Yazid's rule. In his turn, an historian of the thirteenth century, Varden (Vertan), resumes in one phrase the brief story of Asoglig.


2) I use La Domination arabe en Arménie extraite de l'Histoire Universelle de Vardin traduit de l'arménien et annoté par J. Magydermans (Louvain-Paris, 1927), 104 (in French).
The Russian sources, i.e. the Chronography of the
redaction of the year 1512, and the Chronography of
West-Russian redactions, which was compiled approximately
at the beginning of the second half of the sixteenth century,
mention deal with the iconoclastic activities of Leo VI.

But mentioning the campaign of the Arab general
Musulma, whom they call Malsaman, against Constanti-

City, they fail to tell the iconoclastic episode
of Yezid II. 4

4) Complete Collection of Russian Annals, or in Russian,
Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisey (PSRL), XXI, 1 (1911),
315–318; XXII, 2 (1914), 130–132.
If we turn to the secondary sources referring to the historical literature which deals with the edict of Yazid II, we see that the historians who deal with Yazid's edict, with a very few exceptions, treat it as a firmly established historical fact. They are at variance only as to the problem of its connection with the iconoclastic policy of Leo III, as well as to the question whether this decree was carried into effect in the dioceses of the Eastern Empire, and whether the author of this decree was Yazid II or his son, Omar II or Yazid II.

At the very end of the fourteenth century and at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Cardinal Baronius, using the Chronicle of Theophanes and the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea, thought that the edict of Yazid II seems not to have been executed.

1 I use here Baronius, Annales Ecclesiastici, St. A. Theiner, XII (1867), 308, 7. The earliest editions of these Annales came out in 1590-1627.
I wish to say a few words on the iconoclasts, perhaps the oldest writers on the iconoclasm, although perhaps not the most important. The author of this work was a French church historian of the seventeenth century, Louis Maimbourg (1613-1680), who in 1626 entered the Society of Jesus, but for his defense of the liberties of the Gallican Church against the Apostolic See, was later expelled from the Society and died in 1680. Since this book, which mentions Yagid’s decree, is in Latin, it may be read of some interest to those who want to say a few words about the author’s opinion about the question.

According to Maimbourg, Leo III was acting directly under the influence of Yagid’s edict. Leo was not shocked by the fatal example of Yagid II, who had pitifully punished some time after having started the same thing. After giving a description of Yagid’s personal dissolute life, according to the Arab historian al-Makri (in a Latin translation), the author, following the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea and Theophanes, narrates that one of the Jewish chiefs, who was the head (Prince) of their synagogue at Tiberias, which is called Saranta pechy's.


2. Here, evidently, the author erroneously takes the name Saranta pechy for the name of the synagogue: “Prince de leurs Synagogue à Vitaeziade, appelle Saranta pechy.” (p. 54).
a great impostor and magician, thought that he taking
advantage of his weakness would be able to get from him
the same that other Jews had tried to get from
the Yazid I. some time before, but without success. The Jews
succeeded in their task, and, the miserable Prince took
immediately decision, and in order not to lose his opportunity
like the other Yazid - as he thought - had lost his own by
procrastination, he immediately sent Jews and Muhamma-
dans who joyfully executed the order of breaking all
statues and effacing all the painted icons; but he was
punished before long... As soon as Leo had known Yazid's
order, this impious one undertook the same thing in
his own church, with much rage and fury, as if he himself
were Saracen... The Saracens abhor the images like
the Jews do. 2

2 See reference to Maimbourg im J. Hergenrother, Photins, Patriarch
von Constantinopel, I (Regensburg, 1867), 227, n. 5. Hefele remarks
about Maimbourg, that he, as usual, adds various details to his
story, which are not to be found in the original documents, in
order to give a more romantic color to his tale. G.J. von Hefele,
Conciliengeschichte, III, 2nd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1877), 375,
n. 1; in French, Hefele, Histoire des Conciles, trans. by Dom
H. Leclercq, III, 2 (Paris, 1910), 631, n. 1. Francis Brunskill writes:
"The book on the schism written by L. Maimbourg is less scholarly
than less Allatins' works), but in some places more violent than
anything ever written on this subject (i.e. on Photins) in the West.
the

some later, writers taking Yagigd's decree as a historical
fact limit themselves to reproducing the story of his
Theophanes and other by
the Priests John from the Acts of the Second Council of Nicea,
for instance, Lebeau. 1) Most of the historians emphasize the
fact that the first official iconoclastic act came from
the East, from the Arab Caliphate. 2) Some state that
Yagigd's decree became a suggestion to Leo for opening
his Iconoclastic policy. 3) Some historians thought that
the policy of Leo is to be explained by his desire to
become reconciled with the most dangerous enemy of his
Empire, who abhorred the veneration of images. 4)

There are some who are inclined to believe that the story
told by Theophanes and recorded in the Acts of the Second
Council of Nicea is nothing but fiction. 5)

1. Lebeau, Histoire du Bas-Empire, 2. Saint-Martin, XII (Paris
1831), 133-134.

2. See, for instance, J. Marx, Der Bilderstreit der byzantinischen
Kaiser. Eine historisch-kritische Abhandlung (Teheri, 1839), 14-
(Gotha, 1890), 38-40 (from Arabia). 5. Ostrogorsky, Les débuts de la

24 (the connection between Yagigd and Leo is not, however, direct); also 31.
L. E. Brownie, The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia (Cambridge, 1933), 71.

4. F. C. Schller, Geschichte der Bilderstürmenden Kaiser des ostchristlichen
Reichs (Frankfurt am Main, 1812), 169; Marx, op. cit., 15.
Council of Nicaea are nothing but fiction and lies. It is
not the Arab, A. Gfröer, who regards Yazid's decree as a veiled war declaration against the Byzantine Empire:
Finlay and Bees cannot attribute the edict not to
Yazid II but to Yazid I (680-683). A. Leclercq, positively
affirms that this edict was issued not by Yazid II but by his predecessor
Omar II (717-720) who, under the influence of a pantheistic
party, violently persecuted the Images and all their
artistic manifestations.

1 Schlisser, op. cit., 162, note: The monk John, telling the story in the
Act. of the Council, naturally lies (natürlich lügt). The Russian
historian, Constantine Uspensky says that this story is nothing but
a vulgus and rather commonplace edict, a simple fiction,
which we cannot believe, although, besides Theophanes, it is
stated in the Acts of the Council. C. N. Uspensky,"Outlines of the
History of Byzantium", 1 (Moscow, 1917), 238 (in Russian).

2 A. Gfröer, Byzantinische Geschichte, 2. by J. Weiss, 8 (Graz,
1873), 463: eine deutliche Kriegserklärung gegen das by
Zanzibar-Reich.

3 E. Finlay, A. History of Greece, 2. by H. F. Tozer, 3 (Oxford, 1877),
2. J. B. Bury, A History of the Later Roman Empire from
Ascendancy to Irene (395-641), ed. by AD. 1.2. 580 (A. D.), I (London, 1889), 2, 388,
no. 2 (Yazid I), but see pp. 430 where Bury speaks about Leo III and
Yazid's decree against the Icon worship, which was this Yazid I,
and II. This is a certain confirmation in J. Herenmather, Photius,
1 (Regensburg, 1867), 527-528.

4 W. Heidelre. H. Leclercq, Histoire des Conciles, 3, 2 (Paris, 1910), 627, no. 3;
630, n. 1. H. Leclercq, Images (Culte et querelle des images), Diction-
naire d'archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie, VII (Paris, 1926), col. 231;
the whole article, coll. 180-302.
In 1902, J. Wellhausen, without any serious grounds, expressed some doubts (schwere Bedenken) against the existence of the diabolical decree of Yazid II, the Caliph (Yazid II), that it is said to have been known only to the very few. 

F. Uspensky, mentioning Yazid's edict, writes: "Yazid himself, issuing his act or his message to Leontius, was also acting under the suggestions of the Jews of Haedicphea. This tradition of the considerable participation of the Muslims and Jews in the question of iconoclasm ... will, in due time, ... As far as I know, Uspensky has not fulfilled his intention. I do not understand well the whole of our own deep historian C. Amann, and I find it hard to see any connection between the edict of Yazid II and that of Leontius. In 1923, J. Paragin wrote that neither the influence of Islam nor the intervention of some Jews suffices to explain the iconoclasm."


In 1907, A. Musil denied the reliability of Theophanes' account on the iconoclastic edict of Yazid II, which would have been quite contrary to his indifference to Islam and accepted Theophanes' information about the iconoclastic activities of Omar II.

5. A. Musil, Kusejir Amra, I. Text= Band I (Vienna, 1907), 155. See Creswell, op. cit., 163, n. 27: The objections of Wellhausen and Musil are invalid.

ADDITION TO PARAGRAPH 1


ADDITION TO FOOTNOTE 1

my Jewish or Arab influence "ausgeschlossen"
In 1938, J. Crowfoot wrote that "the fruits of Yazid's decree have been found in many places in Palestine, Transjordan and Egypt. In Gerasa (in Transjordan) the order was executed with the most punctilious discrimination. Inscriptions, decorative patterns, and pictures of buildings were spared, but all representations of living creatures were ruthlessly destroyed. The sorry way in which the mutilations, including mosaics, were repaired and patched up after the iconoclastic outbreak in Yazid's reign, shows the wretched plight of the Christians, though it proves also that the community survived and still used the churches."


The archaeologist J. E. Quibell attributed to the time of Yazid II the mutilation of the paintings and sculptures found during his excavations, in 1908-1909, at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Sakkarah, in Egypt.

2 Creswell, op. cit., 163, n. 28.
The Year of the Edict

To the year of the issue of the Edict, the
sources are at variance. Yazid died, at the age of 25-38
years, on January 27, 724 A.D. (Shaban 25, 105 A.H.), after
four years of the rule of Yazid.

In his report, at the Council of 787, John of Jerusalem
stated that Yazid died two and a half years after the
issue of the edict. It is not to be forgotten that this is
the earliest document indicating the time
of the edict which may have been compiled before
the year of the Council, perhaps in 764, as
B. Melionarmy infers. 2 The same two and one half years
are indicated by the Patriarch Nicephorus, in the early
part of the ninth century. 3 Following the statements of
these two writers and taking into consideration the exact
date of Yazid's death, January 27, 724, the date of the
edict should be July, A.D. 721. For further confirmation
of this date, we may refer to the Egyptian historian on
the end of the tenth century, Severus ibn-al-Muqaffa, who
writes, as we have seen above, that the edict was
issued, as soon as Yazid undertook the government.

1. Mansi, XIII, 260; see notes two above. See Melinearmy, George of Cyprus and John of
Jerusalem, 93.

2. Migne, P.G., coll. 529-532. The text is given above.
Then, John himself, as the former
Syracabus of the Patriarch of Antioch,
had come from Syria, in other words,
from the territory of the caliphate,
and reported concerning the fact,
which had taken place in his own
region not too many years previous,
so that his indication
must have been correct.
The later Syriac source known as Chronicorum anonymorum ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens, which we have mentioned above, evidently going back to an earlier evidence, places the edict in the 102 A.H., i.e. July 12, 720 – June 30, 721. Georges Monachus as well as Cedrenus and

1 CSCO, Sec. syri., 3rd series, 364, version, XIV (1937), 240.

Zonaras, who followed him, says that Yezid died when a year has not passed after the issue of the edict, i.e. in 723. The Arabic sources, al-Kindi and al-Maqrizi, also attribute the edict to the year 722/723 (104 A.H. = June 12, 722 – June 9, 723).^2


in Old Slavonic, István, I, 468.
Theophanes defines the year of Yazid's edict by five chronological rules. According to him, the edict was issued in the year 6215 from the creation of the world. Since he uses here the so-called Alexandrian era, which started in 31 B.C., the year for the issue of the edict should be 723. Then, Theophanes says that it was in the seventh year of the Emperor Leo IV (717-741), i.e. in 724; in the fourth year of Yazid (720-724), i.e. in 724; in the ninth year of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Germanus (715-730), i.e. in 724; in the eighteenth year of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, John, or John V (767-774), i.e. in 724. Since Yazid II died on January 27, 724, all the data of Theophanes should mean that the edict was issued in 723, at the end of his rule. The Syrian chronicle of Pseudo-Syrius of Tell-Mahre attributes the issue of the edict to the year 1035, according to the Seleucid era, which starts on the first of October, 312 B.C., i.e. to the year 723 A.D.

1. Theophanes, D. de Rasse, 461. On the very complicated problem of the eras used by Theophanes see G. Ostrogorsky, Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates, 2 Ed. (München, 1952), 72-73, where the respective literature is indicated. The scholars vary in their opinions whether the Alexandrian era starts from the first of September or from the 25 of March. If I am not mistaken, the Western European scholars are not familiar with the Russian study by


The decisive source for the exact fixation of the year of Yazid's edict is the report, which was read at the Council of 787 by John of Jerusalem, who lived in the same eighth century, in the territory of the Caliphate, where the edict had been promulgated. As we have pointed out above, the time of two and one half years which, according to the report, elapsed from the moment of the issue of the edict to Yazid's death, on January 27, 724, supply us for the time of the edict, with the month of July, 721 A.D. This year is the exact date of the issue of the 721st decree, which is confirmed by the Patriarch Nicephorus, by Severus ibn-al-Maghaffar, and by the latest Syriac chronicle. Almost immediately on his accession, Yazid promulgated the edict, which was carried out into effect violently. The information of these sources which state that his edict has hardly been known among the population, and that he had no time enough to see his decree executed, should be dismissed.  

1 The year 721 is indicated by Caetani in his Chronographia Islamica, 1284 (19), and by Creswell, "The Lawfulness...", 164, n. 32 (The End of July 721 A.D.). Muret attributes the decree mentioning Yazid's decree in 721 AD. Muret, Essai de chronographie byzantine, I (St. Petersburg, 1855), 340.
We have signalized above that Leedeyn affirmed that the iconoclastic edict had been issued not by Yaqid II but by his predecessor Omar II (717-720). In such wording, Leedeyn’s statement is, of course, incorrect, but it became Yaqid’s edict is a very firmly established fact. But, on the other hand, the religious policy of his predecessor and, of course, Omar II, had also had an iconoclastic character, so that the religious policy of Yaqid II may be considered as a continuation of the policy of his predecessor.

The Umayyad dynasty (661-750), to which these two caliphs belong, although claiming to stand on the foundation of Islam, carried on rather its own religious policy; so that Moslem theologians, who had no influence at all in Damascus, the capital of the caliphate, accused the Umayyads of their regime of impiety. As Zap Wellhausen, of the Umayyads had to be constantly on the alert to keep down the opposition which rose up against them in the name of Allah and the religion. Omar II was an exception.

He has enjoyed a reputation for piety and asceticism, for 1 J. Wellhausen, Das arabischen Reich und sein Sturz (Berlin, 1902), 192; in English, The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall (University of Calcutta, 1927), 307.

2 C. H. Becker, "Studien zur Omajjaden-Urlogie", A. "Omar II" Zeitschrift für bisherige Seele (1900), 17. In this study, Becker does not mention Omar’s religious policy.
Who, according to one scholar,
regarded him as their own, whom
they raised upon the shield as their
champion. 2)

I could not find M. de Goeje, Omari II,
Yaqūbi II et Hischami... (Leiden, 1865, etc.)
indicated by J. Sauvaget, Introduction à
l'histoire de l'Orient Musulman, 120.

CONTINUATION OF FOOTNOTE 2
Omar II, 2

Even the historians of the Abbasid period, who following the new trend of the triumphant dynasty, even down the fall of the Old dynasty on every possible occasion, were seduced in Omar's case and praise him highly. His tomb was left undisturbed when those of the other Umayyads were desecrated after the victory of the Abbasids.

Our sources on the rule of Omar II may be divided into two categories: one that normalizes particularly his anti-christian tendency; the other stresses emphatically his pro-christian policy. In view of such features in the sources, the modern authorities also vary in their appreciation of Omar's religious policy.

1) See, for instance, Michael the Syrian, XI, 19: Omar had the reputation of being very pious and removed from evil. Charlot, III, 489.

2) Jaffé (Mahbub). C. Vasiliev: "Omar and His Time." Omar's behaviour was very free. Patr. Or., VIII, 3 (1912), 522-533 (242-243).

Most of our sources on the rule of Omar II signalize his anti-christian policy, including its iconoclastic tendency.
His anti-Christian policy is testified by Arabic, Greek, Syriac, and Armenian sources. The very most authoritative passage belongs to the Arab jurist Al-Mālik Ibn Ansār (731–795), who wrote that the book on land-tax (kharadji, which he opened with a lengthy exhortatory preface addressed to the caliph Harun-al-Rashid (786–813). According to Abu-Yusuf, a man named al-Yāḥ, written in the eighth century A.D., and was the author of the book on land-tax (kharadji, which he opened with a lengthy exhortatory preface addressed to the caliph Harun-al-Rashid (786–813). According to Abu-Yusuf, Al-Mālik Ibn Ansār (i.e., Omar II) wrote to one of his governors: "Do not let any cross be exhibited without breaking it and destroying it; not any man or Christian make use of the usual saddle but employ the pack-saddle; not any woman of their religion employ the pack-saddle, but only the pack-saddle. Announce the formal prohibition on this subject and forbid thy attendants to violate them." In this important text, the Christians were not allowed to exhibit their crosses; the other restrictions regarded both Christians and Jews.

Abū Yūsuf Yāʼqūb, Le livre de l'impôt foncier (Kitaib al-Kharadji), traduit et annoté par E. Fagnan (Paris, 1924), 196 (in the chapter, Du coutume et de l'extérieur des tributaires).

See M. de Goeje, Mémoire sur la conquête de la Syrie, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1900), 148.
Turning to other sources, we see that, according to Theophanes, Omar was forcing the Christians to apostatize; and those who had apostatized he exempted from taxation, and those who had not converted to Islam, he killed; there were many martyrs, and the witness of a Christian against a Saracen was not accepted.

The Syrian historian, Michael the Syrian, gives the
same story, but in more detail. In addition, he tries to explain why Omar began to mistreat the Christians. He had for this two reasons: first, because he wished to confirm the laws of the Muslims, and, secondly, because of Constantineople, of which the Arabs could not take possession and before which a great number of them had perished. The Oman ordered the Christians to be oppressed by every means in order to force them to become Muslims, etc.

Michael the Syrian, following Michael the Syrian, enumerates all sorts of persecutions on the Christians of Oman II, but failing to mention any iconoclastic acts.


For some more iconoclastic facts see
This text may be compared with the evidence of Arabian writers, who state that Omer II re-established the old principle of his earlier namesake, Omer I, that a illegalon, whether Arab or non-Arab, every Islam (mawla) need pay tribute whatsoever.
This is the version of the letter of Omer II to Leo III, which has been preserved in the History of the Armenian writer C Maxim. We find the testimony that Omer II was acting not only against the cross but also against the icons. In his letter, among other things, he asked Leo: "Why do you adore the bones of the Apostles and Prophets, and also pictures and the cross, which anciently served according to the law as an instrument of torture?" 1) C Maxim, trans. of G. Chechnazarian, 42. A. Jeffery, "C Maxim's Text of the Correspondence between Omer II and Leo III," The Harvard Theological Review, XXXVII (1944), 273.

This letter is also mentioned by three later Armenian historians, who may be dependent on C Maxim: Thaddeus Ardzruni, trans. by Brosset, St. Petersburg, 1874, 93-94. Kirazos of Garnizac, trans. by Brosset, I (1870), 2435. Vardan, trans. by Miydler-Maimis (1927), 101. See also, Les origines de l'iconoclasme, 143.

Theophanes mentions this letter saying: "Omer sent a dogmatic epistle to the Emperor Leo threatening that he might persuade him to accept Islam." 2) Theophanes, 399. See also Cedrenus, I, 1792. The Christian Arabian historian of the tenth century, Makbul (Agapius) also knows Omer's letter, 2 which he calls on Leo to become a Muslim. Kitab al-Imar. D. A. Varlamov, Patrologia Orientalis, VII, 3 (Paris, 1912), 503.
In Arab writer of the thirteenth century, Ibn al-Jawzi (died 1258 A.D.), in his monograph on Omar II entitled, "The Deeds of Omar the Abd el-Adziz." "Manaqib Omar ibn Abul-\hspace{1cm}\hspace{1cm} Mervat (Manaqib) of Omar ibn Abd al-Adziz," tells a story of this pious 'Umayyad, who, finding a picture in a bathroom, had it rubbed out, adding, "If I could only find out who painted it, I would have him well beaten." But this story, if true, may not have no connection with iconoclasm, and it has been suggested that this painting was most probably pornographic, as was often the case in bathrooms (hamams) and that this was the real cause of Omar's anger. But taking into consideration the general


true of his religious policy, this fact I think that
this fact cannot be overlooked when we deal with Oman's
iconoclastic tendencies.

As an enemy of excessive luxury and adherent to simplicity,
Oman found that the famous mosque of Damaus was too
rich in mosaics, so, according to the Arab geographer of
the tenth century, al-Ilughadasi, he, it is said, wished to
demolish the Mosque and made use of its materials
in the public works of the Moslems; but he was for-
ced to abandon the design."

1 J. de Goeje, Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum III (Leyden,
1879), 160, p. 1-2. There is a new edition of this work by the same de
Goeje (Leyden, 1906). See Guy Le Strange, Palestine under the
Moslems (London, 1890), 229.

Plan for Construction around the Mosque of Damascus.

W. K. Lehmann, Geschichte der Gute, T. & P. X.m.
Lorimer, J.r., 1865

Pl. Saken, Quellen der Gute, T. & P. X.m. de
Kroonem. J. & P. X.m. 1883, correct in "Die Geschichte 1363"

4 11176
This story has been recorded in other writings. I wish to dwell a little here on an Arabian historian of the twelfth century, Ibn-Asakin (died in 1176), who sketched in eighty volumes the biographies of distinguished men connected with his native town, Damascus. He gives some more information on the above tradition. We read: "Omar ibn-Abd-al-Aziz (i.e. Umar II) said: "I see that too much wealth was illegally expended (for the construction of this mosque); I shall remedy this abuse as far as I am able to do so, and shall enter this wealth into the (public) treasury. I have determined to tear off the mosaics and the marble, and to put instead briars. I shall take out the chains and put instead zephyr. I shall take out the precious clothes, sell them and eat (their price) into the treasury." Informing about his intention, the inhabitants of Damascus went to see the caliph at the monastery of St. Simeon, in the district of Hims (Emesa), and were admitted to his presence. Then follows a rather lengthy, interesting conversation between Omar and a certain certain inhabitant of Damascus, as well as the arrival of the ambassadors of the Byzantine Emperor, who admired the beauty of the mosque. Finally Omar gave up his plan and left the mosque intact."

Ibn-Asakin, Tarikh al-Kabir, II (Damascus, 1329=1911), 207.
Another Arabic historian of the fourteenth century, Muhammad ibn Shaker, who died in 1363 (764 A.H.), has incorporated Ibn 'Abbas's account, almost in its entirety, in his work, Uyun-al-Tawarih (The Sources of Historian). As far as I know, his work has not yet been published in the original; but, on the basis of manuscript material, the above story has been long ago known in a French version:


There is a record that, in 717-718, Omar ordered that all the Christian employees in Egypt should be replaced by the Muslims.

2. Caetani, Chronografia Islamica, 1225, 30, with reference to the Arabic historian, al-Kindi, 67, l. 1-68, l. 10.
In the spring of 1937, in Transjordan, in the village of Ma'ain, south-west of Madaba, an interesting mosaic was discovered. It belonged to a church which has almost entirely disappeared. The mosaic, which has survived in a state of considerable deterioration, is surrounded with a broad, topographic border, which represents the most important cities of the three provinces of Palestine and of the province of Arabia. At the entrance of the church, there is a Greek inscription. The inscription, which consists of five lines, is barely damaged. But R. de Vaux, by rather successful restorations in the text, based on the date which has remained in the inscription, and in good accordance to the era of Rome, 614, corresponding to the year 719/720 of our era, comes to the ingenious conjecture, that in this year the church was repaired after the desolation made by the Muslim iconoclasts. R. de Vaux connects these iconoclasts who destroyed all representations of living creatures in this church with the iconoclastic policy of Omar II. The restoration is dated in the year 720, when the caliph died (February, 720), and when the change of the ruling might have given some hope for certain beliefs.

1 R. de Vaux, O. P. "Une mosaique byzantine à Ma'ain (Transjordanie)," Revue Biblique, XLVII (1938), 227-258. The                     author says that the decree of Yezid II is not accepted by all the historians and, surprisingly enough, states that there is no Arabian writer who mentions it (236). See R. Devèsèse, Le patriarcat de l'Antioche (Paris, 1945), 220. P. Goubert, Byzance avant C'islam, 2 (Paris, 1956), 267.
On the basis of the above data, we come to the inescapable conclusion that, in his religious policy, under the influence of the Muslim theologians of his time, Omar II must be recognized as an anti-Christian and iconoclastic ruler. And the historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are not very explicit in their judgment on this side of Omar's rule. A. Müller, in 1885, remarked that the idea of the equality between Muslims and the non-Arabs, embracing Islam, the Neo-Muslims (maawali - clients), was offensive (unstörbar) to him. In 1890, Goldziher wrote that Omar tried to bring the calm wish of the theologians of the first century A.D. into practice, and called his religious policy a transient (flüchtige) episode in the religious policy of the Umayyad dynasty. 2 De Goeje, in 1900, after mentioning Omar's religious policy, stated that he probably introduced no innovation, but wished to re-establish the religious prescriptions, which were neglected. 3 The historians of our own day are more categorical. In 1924, Aigrain said that the opposition on Omar II to the icons is not doubtful; and Frey, in 1934, explained Omar's iconoclastic activities by Jewish influence. 4

1. A. Müller, Der Islam im Morgen- und Abendland, I (Berlin, 1885), 440.
2. I. Goldziher, Muhammadische Studien, II (Halle, 1890), 34.
3. M. de Goeje, Mémoire sur la conquête de la Syrie, 2e ère (Leyden, 1900), 148.
From all the data quoted above, it is not easy to find any serious ground for the opinion of those historians who represent Omar III as a ruler favorably inclined towards the Christians. I suppose that they were under the influence of the Armenian writers, on whom I wish to say a few words. They mention with great satisfaction the fact that Omar decided some Armenian captives to be returned to their own country, and connect the change of his attitude towards Christians in their favour with the reply of Leo III to his letter, which produced on him a very happy effect. But in this respect, their records are sometimes full of striking exaggeration. For instance, Zadkuni, after calling Omar more magnanimous than any other caliph, tells that, after reading Leo's letter, he rejected many tables of the Koran, denied the lie which have been related in the imperial letter, and from that time on became very benevolent towards all Christian peoples. Following Zadkuni, Kirazos writes that, under the influence of Leo's letter, Omar was ashamed, improved abuses and manifested benevolence to the Christians, particularly to the Armenians.

Leo's answer to Omar is in a lengthy dogmatic treatise, which in Chervon's text occupies fifty-five pages (42-97); with this text as it stands in Chervon's work represents a later version of the original message, which belongs to the end of the ninth century or to the outset of the tenth. There is a Latin version of this letter wrongly attributed to his more theologically-minded namesake, the Emperor Leo VI the Wise (Philosopher, 886-912). But the Latin version is not an exact copy of Chervon's text (published in Migne, P. C., CVII, coll. 315-324). A Greek document may be assumed as source both to the Latin version and to Chervon's text. See Hildebrand and Beck, op. cit., 44; B. Jeffery, op. cit., 273-275. W. Eichner wrongly states that Leo's letter to Omar has survived only in Latin. "Die Nach-richten über den Islam bei den Byzantinern", Der Islam, XXIII (1936), 142, n. 5 (compiled circa 1020).

Addition to footnote 3
In contrast with these statements, John Catholicos says that, under the rule of Omar, an Armenian prince, Vahan, was cruelly tortured and suffered martyr's death for the name of Jesus Christ.

Taking into consideration all these data, I am rather surprised to find the scholars who praise Omar's tolerance and benevolence to the Christians. I give here a few examples.

In 1902, J. Wellhausen, from the writings of the twelfth century:

In 1902, J. Wellhausen was rather moderate in the appreciation of Omar's religious policy, saying: "One of Theophanes' account is a mixture of truth and falsehood. It is true that Omar was a zealous Muslim and that the Christians had cause to know it. But he did not force them to conversion or paid of death, for then he would have been infringing the existing law, and that he did not do, being a good Muslim. With respect to the Christians he kept absolutely within the bounds of justice even though it might seem otherwise to them. He protected them in the possession of their old churches, which was assuaged to them by the terms of their capitulation, and only did not allow them to build new ones."


2 J. Wellhausen, Das Arabische Reich und sein Sturz (Berlin, 1923), 187-188; in English (Calcutta, 1927), 299-300.
In 1903, E. Filler, who wrote a special study on the "History" of Chevond, stated that, according to the latter, Omar was a great benefactor to the Christians, and that Theophanes' account in his "Travels" is not trustworthy at all (nulla fides habenda est). K. Zettersten writes that "as a devout Muslim he was gracious to members of other creeds, so far as this was possible without breaking the principle of Islam. Christians, Jews, and fire-worshippers were allowed to retain their synagogues, churches, and temples but not to build any new ones." In 1939, C. Brockelmann said that "Omar I consolidated the Christians wherever possible; in compensation for the Church of St. John in Damascus, which had been absorbed by Walid, he ceded them the Church of St. Thomas in the Ghufah, although even since the conquest it had served as a mosque, in violation of the terms of capitulation."  


There are some scholars who attribute the edict not to Yazid II but to Yazid I (680-683), or who, in their discussion on this subject, failing to distinguish clearly the participation of both Yazids in the iconoclastic movement, result in considerable confusion. Finlay and Bury, who evidently followed Finlay, attribute the edict to Yazid I; but Bury, writing a little later, wrote about Leo III and Yazid's decree, failing to clarify whom of these two Yazids he meant, although, from the context, here Yazid II should have been meant.

A certain confusion in regard to the two Yazids as 'iconoclast' occurs also in the work of Hergenrother on Photius. A rather striking confusion we find in the study of Leon on the origin of iconoclasm. He opens his discussion with a very strange statement that "a Jewish intrigue suggested the caliph Yazid I, whose role as persecutor of Christianity in all its forms is well known, destruction of images." And for confirmation of this statement, he cites all the Greek sources which refer to Yazid II. At first sight, one may see here nothing but a mere misprint, Yazid I for Yazid II. But it is not the case. He writes that, after Yazid's death, his son Valid (Walid) chased the intriguing Jews. First of all, the caliph Walid I (705-715)


2 J. Hergenrother, Photius, I (Regensburg, 1867), 227, 228.
Was not Yazid's son. In addition, a little further, Lonsa gives the name of Yazid I with the correct year 720, and produces the text of the Armenian historian Chhvond who describes his iconoclastic destruction. 1

Once for all, the name of Yazid I as iconoclast must be eliminated from the list of the iconoclastic caliphs. On the contrary, he is known to have been very favorable to the Christians, and his attitude towards those who approached him, and particularly towards the Christians, has been signalled in the best works on his reign.


As we have tried to show above, the decree of Yazid II was not an isolated and unexpected fact. It must be regarded as the continuation and, to a certain extent, consummation of the preceding period marked by the anti-Christian and iconoclastic activities of his predecessor, 'Omar III. The latter, in his turn, was not an innovator either as far as his policy is concerned. In order to understand better the continuity of this process, we must go back to the caliphate of Abd-al-Malik ibn Marwan, who ruled from A.D. 685 to 705.

The twenty-five years reign of this famous 'Umayyad, the so-called 'Father of Kings', is of particular interest for our study.

Under his rule and that of his successor al-Walid I (705-715), the empire reached the zenith of its expansion, power and brilliance. But the rule of Abd-al-Malik left also a deep impress in the internal reorganization of the vast empire's realm. It was the era of the nationalization and Arabization of the country, when the Arabic language began to have been employed as the official language in all government documents.

The caliphs al-Walid I (705-715), 'Abd-al-Malik (715-740), and Hisham (740-743) were the sons of Abd-al-Malik. Only 'Omar II (730-732), a son of Abd-al-Malik's brother, interrupted the filial succession.
Then the figure of the Byzantine Emperor was adapted, on the obverse of the coin, to the standing facing figure of the Caliph, with hands on sword, which substituted the former staffs with a cross or it in the hand of the Emperor; and, on the reverse, the cross standing on four steps altered into a column with a ball on its top. The coins bear Arab inscriptions. The name of the represented Caliph is sometimes given, sometimes not. There are coins bearing the name of Abd-al-Malik.

1 Nützel, op. cit., 10-16; Plate I, 34, 39, 43, 44, 45 (no name); 47 (Abd-al-Malik). Lavoix, op. cit., p. 13-26; especially, 17-26 (Abd-al-Malik’s coins). I do not understand the statement of one of the best authorities on Arabic coins, Stanley Lane-Poole, who, in 1897, wrote: “The Omeyyad Caliphs did not put their names on their gold or silver coins, and it is therefore needless to divide the coinage under the heads of their several reigns.” Catalogue of the Collection of Arabic Coins presented to the Khedivial Library (London, 1897), 4, note.
In the middle of his twenty years' rule (the exact year is unknown), following the policy of the nationalization and arabization of his empire, 'Abd-al-Malik established a new type of coinage, in which the effigy of the caliph was replaced by more Arab inscriptions. The new coins were struck in the name of Allah and bore various phrases inscriptions, particularly sayings from the Koran.

This purely Islamic coinage was instituted for the whole of the empire, so that all sorts of previous coins should have been replaced and made invalid.

In this respect, the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes, gives an interesting information. After an unsuccessful war with the Byzantine Emperor Justinian II, 'Abd-al-Malik, who had been compelled to purchase peace by the payment of a tribute, paid it in the new coins; and Justinian refused to receive this new unknown coinage.¹

¹ Theophanes, de Brun, 565. From him, Anastasius, Historia Tripartita, de Brun, 282, and anon., XXXII, 11-12; Mommsen, IV, 230, Cedrenus, I, 772.
In Western Europe, however, the Islamic gold dinar without images known there as mancus was largely used beginning with the eighth century, and became the standard coin for business transactions, particularly in Mediæval England.

On mancus see F. Fehr. V. Schröter, Wörterbuch der Münzwende (Berlin-Leipzig, 1930), 366-367. An interesting passage on the usage of mancus in England, see in R. S. Lopez' article "Le problème des relations anglo-byzantines au septième et dixième siècle" Byzantion, XVIII (1946-1948), 150. Among other things, he mentions a gold dinar of the Caliph al-Mansur (774) bearing on the reverse the Latin legend Offa Rex side by side with a defective Arabic inscription. The word itself mancus is the participle passive of the Arabic verb nagasha - to part, to chisel, to engrave - and means an engraved dinar.
The Arab-Sassanian coins passed through the similar changes. Conclusion

It seems to me that we may connect Yazid's edict and the iconoclastic policy of his predecessor with the famous reform or counter-reform by Abd-al-Malik, which put an end to the representation of the human figures on the coins. And this innovation, originally regarding the coins, has been soon applied to other objects bearing the representations of living beings, including the icons.

1. See John Walker, A Catalogue of the Arab-Sassanian Coins (London, 1941), 26. Arab-Sassanian coins with Abd-al-Malik's name and title "Commander of the Faithful" in Persians are by no means common and those with his own and his father's name are still rarer. On the coins with Abd-al-Malik's name, p. 27-29; plate, V, 4, XXXI, 7-9.