

How Peace was achieved in Byzantium and Medieval Europe

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War is no pastime; it is no mere joy in daring and winning, no place for irresponsible enthusiasts. It is a serious means to a serious end.”¹

*Aristophanes*² (446–386 BC), *Thucydides* (460–c. 400 BC),³ and *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (1466–1536)⁴ were concerned with the importance of maintaining peace among peoples and wrote about this concept. The latter author even speaks about the ‘Arts of Peace’ in his third book dedicated to the education of a prince. But recent literature, especially that within the field of Byzantine and European Medieval culture, does not contain

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1. Since I have not found a very significant work about peace, I am quoting from Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Col. J.J. Graham. New and Revised edition with Introduction and Notes by Col. F.N. Maude (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & C., 1918), vols. 1-3; the quotation is from vol. 1, Chapter 1: “What is war?” See also John Bright, “Speeches on Questions of Public Policy,” edited by Professor J. E. Thorold Rogers, 1868, vols. 1-2; the popular edition has only one volume published in 1878, 1892; “Public Addresses,” edited by Professor J. E. Thorold Rogers, 1879; “Public Letters,” collected by H. J. Leech, 1885; “Life and Speeches of John Bright,” by G. B. Smith, 1881. The latter publication states: “By kind permission of Mr. J. A Bright, M. P and of Messers. Macmillan and Co., Limited, the text has been taken from Mr. Thorold Rogers' edition of the Speeches and Public Addresses, which had the advantage of Mr. Bright's own revision.”

I hope the publication of my volume fills the gap with regard to literature concerning the notion of peace.

2. There are many translations and editions of Aristophanes' play “Peace”. The most recent is Aristophanes, *Peace*, translated and edited by S. Douglas Olson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

3. Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* recounts the fifth-century BC war between Sparta and Athens until the year 411 BC. His text is still studied at universities and military colleges worldwide. The Melian dialogue is regarded as a seminal text of international relations theory.

4. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 1516; Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince with the Panegyric for Archduke Philip of Austria*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Also Desiderius Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, Book III: The Arts of Peace, translated by K. Lester, Columbia University Records of Civilization, New York: Octagon Books, 1963. See also Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, “Antipolemus, or, the Plea of Reason, Religion, and Humanity against War”, reprinted in *The Book of Peace: A Collection of Essays on War and Peace*, Boston: George C. Beckwith, 1845. Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, edited by P. S. Allen and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1906-1958, vols. 1-12. Additionally see, for instance, William Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus Concerning the Aim and Method of Education* (New York: B. Franklin, 1971).

substantial works dedicated to the notion of peace. My main research question is why this is the case since this notion connects many others and should be central to academic research. Within the paper I elaborate on several types of peace agreements: those confirming a 'complete' victory of one of the opponent parties involved in a war, those reached mainly by exchange of territories, those having the exchange of prisoners as central, and those referring to the payment of tribute for various purposes.

Introduction

The justification for my entire work on this project is, firstly, the importance of its theme: peace. I expected a much richer literature on this subject-matter, and at least a major one with respect to Byzantium and Medieval Europe. But there are no extensive publications on this topic for the periods my investigation covers and in the geographical areas it focuses on. Therefore, my article adds something towards filling this gap. Secondly, the Byzantine Empire and Medieval Europe, of which study have constituted my area of research for many years, were interspersed by a multitude of conflicts and armistices (perhaps the most numerous within the human history), hence the subject is fertile from the point of view of research. A few types of peace treaties were signed then and I consider that a systematic categorization of these has to be carried out.

The types of treaties agreed in the time on which I concentrate on are not in themselves unique, i.e., other nations and cultures achieved peace in one or another manner/manners I mention. But I cannot certainly affirm that with respect to situations outside my area of specialisation, and anyway, to do so will be a task much more extensive than a simple paper allows. Additionally, some of the Byzantine and medieval clauses within Byzantine/medieval peace agreements are out of fashion nowadays; while, unfortunately, wars still take place in modes not very different from those in the Byzantine period (except for the weapon used), when peace is reached now, that does not happen, for instance, because the leaders of modern nations marry within the family of their opponents (which was a very popular means of attaining peace in the geographical area and periods treated in my article).

So far, the research undertaken indicates the following ways of achieving peace in Byzantium and Early Medieval Europe:

- By a treaty that marked the decisive victory of one of the parties involved
- By the payment of a ransom for captives
- By exchange of prisoners
- By the periodical payment of a tribute
- By marriage
- By a combination of some or of all of the above except no. 1.

Of course, none of the stipulations within the peace treaties mentioned above are exclusive to one another or were seen as such when the documents were signed; it is just that each of these agreements emphasized one such provision more than another.

Within this particular publication I will refer to three means of reaching peace practiced in Byzantium and early Medieval Europe. These are as follows: peace treaties that marked the decisive victory of one of the belligerents; the payment of ransom for captives and of tribute under various pretexts; and peace agreements reached *via* a combination of some of the elements referred to here earlier. Concerning the first type, I speak about the truce agreed in 716 between the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius III and the Bulgarian Kormesiy; about that of 1014 between the same empires; also about that of 1071 sealed at Manzikert between the Byzantines led by Romanos IV Diogenes and Alp-Arslan, the commander of the Seljuq Turks. With regard to the various ransoms paid, I will refer to those on behalf of Bohemond I of Antioch; Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem and the second Count of Edessa, and Louis IX of France. I elaborate also on a complex peace treaty with a mixture of stipulation: that which affirmed the so-called 'The Perpetual Peace' signed in 532 between Justinian I of Byzantium and Khosrau I of Persia.

A. Examples of Peace Treaties that Marked the Decisive Victory of One of the Parties Involved

A 1. An example of this type of peace treaty is that signed in 716 between the Byzantines represented by Emperor Theodosius III (d. after 717; ruled 715–717) and Kormesiy (to rule later, in 721–738); he was the son of the Bulgarian Khan Tervel (675–721; ruled 700–721).⁵

The main cause of this treaty – unfavourable to the Byzantine – was the fact that Justinian II (c. 669–711; ruled 685–695; 705–711) lost a crucial battle to Tervel at Anchialus (near the modern-day town of Pomorie, Bulgaria)⁶ in 708. The events

5. Yordan Andreev and Milcho Lalkov, *Българските ханове и царе/Bulgarian Khans and Tsars (Kings)* (Veliko Tarnovo: University of Tarnovo, 1996); Nikephoros, *Short History*, edited by Cyril Mango (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Texts 10, 1990); Theophanes Confessor, *The Chronicle*, trans. and edited by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also Именник на българските ханове/*Nominalia of the Bulgarian Khans*, edited by Mosko Moskov and C. Petar Beron, 1988, pp. 24–25 (on-line (2005) with an English translation (2007; D.A. Trifonov): dtrif/abv: Name list of ... (archive.org); and Peter Dobrev (ed.), *Universum Protobulgaricum, Band I, Inschriften und Alphabet der Urbulgaren* (Sofia: Orion, 1995).

6. Athanasys Pencev et al., *Години на стража/Years of guard* (Sofia: The Military Publishing House, 1984). See also Aleksandr Stoyanov, "The Size of Bulgaria's Medieval

leading to that battle are as follows: in 705 AD the former Byzantine emperor Justinian II of the Heraclian dynasty, known as Rhinotmetus, i.e. 'the Slit-Nosed', asked Tervel for help to take back his throne after ten years in exile. The Bulgarians sent an army of 15,000 men, Justinian II entered Constantinople, and was recognized again as an Emperor. He offered the title 'caesar' to Tervel, as well as the region called Zagore to the south of Stara Planina. However, in 708, when Justinian II considered himself strong enough in terms of political power, he invaded Bulgaria and restored his rule over territories earlier lost by the Byzantine Empire. He reached the fortress of Anchialubut Tervel's army, especially his cavalry, organized a surprise attack and won a decisive victory. He took many prisoners, and Justinian was among the few who escaped and reached Constantinople. Later, in 711, Justinian was again forced to ask for the help of the Bulgarians – this time to suppress a rebellion and to escape an attempt to have him replaced. Tervel gave him 3,000 soldiers, but the Emperor lost, and was executed by the next ruler, Philippicus (ruled 711-713) from the Bardanes family. Anastasius II (ruled 713-715; d. 719) followed Philippicus; the conflicts with the Bulgarians continued and the Byzantine emperor won a victory against the Bulgarians. After Anastasius II on the throne of the Byzantine Empire followed Theodosius III (ruled 715-717). As indicated above, it was he who signed the treaty with the Bulgarians in 716.

As a consequence of it, the Bulgarian Empire won new territories (Zagore was regained) and the Byzantines recognized its borders (those with Byzantium were declared to begin at Mileoni in Thrace), and continued to pay the annual tribute established in 679.⁷ The two empires were to exchange refugees charged with plotting against their rulers (this stipulation was especially important to the security and the benefit of the Byzantines since the Bulgarians had often

Field Armies: A Case Study of Military Mobilization in the Middle Ages," *Journal of Military History*, 83, no. 3 (2019): 719-746.

7. This annual tribute was established in 679 or 681, during or after a war between the Byzantines and the Bulgarians. The Byzantine Empire at that time was led by Constantine IV (c. 650/652-685; ruled in 654-668 with his father, Constans II, and alone in 668-685). That year the Byzantines lost the battle with the Bulgarians led by Asparukh/Isperikh (643-701). They signed a treaty only in 681. This was the first time when the Byzantines clashed with the Bulgars/Bulgarians. Asparukh, who was Khan Kubrat's youngest son, moved westward, occupying today's southern Bessarabia. He defeated the Byzantines with a combined land and sea operation and successfully besieged their fortified camp in Ongala. Constantine IV, suffering from bad health, had to leave the army, which panicked and was defeated. In 681 Constantine was forced to acknowledge the Bulgarian state in Moesia. The tribute constitute protection money to avoid further inroads into Byzantine Thrace. Eight years later, Asparuh led a successful campaign against Byzantine Thrace.

Alexander Kazhdan gives 650 as the year of birth of Constantine IV. Alexander Kazhdan (Ed.), "Constantine IV", *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 500-501. Other sources mention 652.

intervened in Byzantium's political situation). A reciprocal trade was discussed, and that was to be officially endorsed by the two governments (this arrangement was very beneficial to the Bulgarians because they obtained access to the markets of Constantinople).⁸

The peace signed by the Byzantines and Bulgarians in 716 was to last until 756.

A. 2. Another treaty that formalized a decisive victory was that agreed on the 29th of July 1014 between the Byzantines and the First Bulgarian Empire; this is the most known among many that existed between the two states.

The Byzantine Emperor Basil II *Porphyrogenetos* (957/958–1025; ruled 976–1025) extended his Empire at the expense of the Balkans nations (especially Bulgaria). He did the same with regard to Mesopotamia, Georgia, and Armenia. Basil defeated the Bulgarians at Kleidon in 1014, during Tsar Samuel's reign (958–1014; ruled 997–1014). The victory was decisive and his army captured 15,000 soldiers, who soon after the event were blinded on Basil II's order (as we know, that act made the emperor known in European history as *Boulgaroktonos*, i.e., "the Slayer of the Bulgars").

A 3. Another example of a peace agreement that ended up with a definitive victory was that agreed at Manzikert in 1071. The Battle that resulted in this document was between the Byzantines under the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (1030–1072; reigned 1068–1071) and the Seljuq Turks led by the sultan Alp-Arslan (1029–1072; ruled 1063–1072). The Byzantine lost the battle and the treaty was signed on the 26th of August 1071. Romanos had to cede parts of Armenia, to promise the payment of a ransom and of an annual tribute, as well as a marriage alliance (to provide a Byzantine princess as a wife for Alp-Arslan himself or for his older son, Malik Shah, who was 17 years old). In exchange, he was released along with his men after eight days at the Court of the Sultan. Concerning the ransom, at first Alp Arslan asked for an amount of 10,000,000 *nomismata*, but he later reduced it to 1,500,000; additionally 360,000 *nomismata* were to be paid annually.⁹

As Romanos IV was to soon be betrayed by Doukas family, he only once managed to send some money to the sultan with an explanation about his circumstances. Alp Arslan was to be himself killed in 1072.¹⁰ In the Byzantine

8. Y. Andreev and M. Lalkov, *Balgarskite hanove i tsare, Българските ханове и царе/The Bulgarian Khans and Tsars*.

9. Carole Hillenbrand, *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol: The Battle of Manzikert*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh: University Press, 2007; Alfred Friendly, *The Dreadful Day: The Battle of Manzikert, 1071* (London: Hutchinson, 1981).

10. George Finlay, *History of the Byzantine and Greek Empires from 1057 to 1453*, vol. 2, (William Blackwood & Sons, 1854), 44. See also Matthew (of Edessa), *The Chronicle*, The University of Michigan, digitized 24 June 2008, and *Armenia and the Crusades: Tenth to Twelfth Centuries: the Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, trans. and edited by Ara Edmond

Empire Michael VII Doukas was declared the sole emperor. Romanos retreated to Cappadocia, where he was supported by the ruler of Antioch, Chatatourios. After fighting with Constantine and Andronikos Doukas and was defeated, Romanos retreated further into the mountains of Cilicia. As known, he was bought to Constantinople and eventually sent on the island of Proti/Prote in the Sea of Marmara.

The Battle of Manzikert did not radically affect the Byzantine Empire in a negative way; it lasted almost four hundred years after the event. For the Seljuq this battle and victory marked the beginning of the conquest of Anatolia.

A 4. With regard to Medieval Europe, a similar truce (with clear victors) was signed after the battle of Fariskur in 1250 (on the 6th of April). The conflict and the peace agreement that followed it was between the French led by Louis IX (1214-1270; ruled 1226-1270) and the Mamluks Dynasty in Egypt; the Sultan in that period was Salih Ayyub (1206/07-1249; ruled in 1240 and 1245-1249). I will discuss more about this treaty further, when mentioning the payment of a ransom.

B. Peace Treaties that Refer Mainly to the Payment of Ransom for the Liberation of War Captives

Another type of peace treaty concerns situations in which a king, prince, or another important dignitary was held prisoner at an imperial European Court until someone paid a price for their release. A few examples of people involved in such situations follow:

B.1. Bohemond I of Antioch (c.1050/1054-1111). He was prince of Otranto (in 1089-1111) and of Antioch (in 1098-1101, 1103-1104). Bohemond reached such positions because he was one of the leaders of the First Crusade; in such a capacity he conquered Antioch in 1098 (on the 3rd of June). Eventually he was taken prisoner by the Danishmends, but was released after Baldwin II, the second Count of Edessa, paid a ransom for this purpose.

B.2. The same happened in the case of Baldwin II himself (1075-1131). He was the second Frankish Count of Edessa in 1100–1118 and the King of Jerusalem in 1118-1131).

Dostourian, Yerevan: National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, 1993. See also Carole Hillenbrand, *Symbol: The Battle Turkish Myth and Muslim of Manzikert* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

Baldwin II accompanied his cousins Godfrey of Bouillon and Baldwin of Boulogne on the First Crusade (1096-1099). There is a connection with Byzantium here because Baldwin II fought against the Empire in Cilicia in 1104 with Antioch's co-operation (after freeing Bohemond I who ruled there, it is no surprise that the two leaders fought in the same camp).

Baldwin II was very involved in the affairs of northern Syria and Asia Minor. At the Battle of Harran that took place on the 7th of May 1104 between the Principality of Antioch and the County of Edessa on one side, and the Seljuk Turks on the other, Baldwin II was captured by the leader of Mosul, which confronted his forces directly. Baldwin was ransomed in the summer of 1108 by his cousin, Joscelin of Courtenay, Prince of Galilee, Lord of Turbessel, and later Count of Edessa.¹¹ During Baldwin II's captivity Richard of Salerno governed Edessa as his regent. His cousin, Tancred (c. 1075-1112), the Crusader ruler of the Principality of Antioch at that time, was co-regent with him. Baldwin had to struggle in order to regain control of the city of Edessa. It was Tancred who opposed him, and who was eventually defeated, after Baldwin formed alliances with some of the local Muslim rulers.

On the 18th of April 1123 Baldwin II was taken captive by the Seljuq Turks led by Belek Ghazi (d. 6 May 1124). The Crusader prince was imprisoned in the Citadel of Aleppo, where he was held captive by Husam al-Din Timurtash (c. 1105-1154). Timurtash was an Artuqid emir of Mardin (1122-1154) and ruler of Aleppo (1124-1125). He delegated Sultan, the emir of Shaizar, with commencing negotiations between the Turks and Morphia (Baldwin's wife), as well as with Joscelin (his cousin) for Baldwin's release. An agreement was reached. According to it, Baldwin was to pay 80,000 dinars and to give Atarib, Zardana, Azaz and other Antiochene fortresses to Timurtash. Baldwin also promised that he would aid Timurtash in his fight against the Bedouin Dubais ibn Sadaqa. After a quarter of Baldwin's ransom was paid and some hostages (including Baldwin's youngest daughter Ioveta and Joscelin's son, Joscelin II) were handed over to Timurtash to secure the payment of the balance, Baldwin II was released on the 29th of August 1124.

B.3. Another famous case that involved ransom is, as mentioned earlier, that concerning Louis IX of France (1214-1270; reigned 1226-1270). That happened towards the end of the Seventh Crusade (1248-1254), which the king led. This campaign was organized in the hope that what the West lost in the Holy Land will be recovered (Jerusalem had fallen in 1244). Through the attack of the

11. Joscelin of Courtenay, Prince of Galilee, Lord of Turbessel, and Count of Edessa. He ruled over the County of Edessa from 1118 to 1131, when this land reached its maximum of prosperity. Captured twice himself, Joscelin once liberated (in 1123) and continued to expand his county, even participating in the Battle of Azaz in 1125, when the Crusader won.

Egyptian Mamluks it was hoped that this purpose will be achieved.¹² But Louis's army was routed at the Battle of Fariskur on the 6th of April, 1250. The king was made a captive and taken to Mansurah with his entourage and the surviving soldiers.

Within the treaty the King had to sign with Salih Ayyub the French agreed to give up the fort of Damietta and to pay a ransom to have Louis freed; that happened through the intervention of the Latin patriarch Robert of Nantes.¹³ The payment consisted of a million bezants (later reduced to 800,000), i.e. 400,000 *livres tournois*. On the 6th of May Damietta was submitted to the Egyptians.

After his release, Louis went to Acre, within the Kingdom of Jerusalem, where he remained until 1254; he also went to Caesarea, Jaffa, and Syria. The Battle of Fariskur and its immediate consequences are considered to mark the end of the Seventh Crusade.

C. A Peace Treaty that Involves a Combination of Stipulations from the Agreements Mentioned Above

C1. A good example of a treaty that combines many of the stipulations from the agreements mentioned above is that known in the literature concerning the Byzantine Empire as 'The Perpetual Peace'. That was signed in 532 between Justinian I of Byzantium (483-565AD; ruled 52–565) and Khosrau I (ruled 531-579) of Sassanid Persia; it concluded the Iberian War. Through this agreement the two rulers promised each other mutual military and political help and declared that they were equal. They also were to exchange some fortresses and eventually did so with reluctance. Khosrau had to return Scanda and Sarapanis in Lazica,¹⁴ and the Byzantines Bolum and Pharangium in Persian Armenia. The Byzantines agreed as well to move the base of the *dux Mesopotamiae* from the fortress of Dara(s) [Justiniana Nova] to the city of Constantina. In addition, Justinian was to pay a contribution of 110 *centenaria* of gold per year for the defence of the

12. From the multitude of books on the Crusades, see a comprehensive one relatively recent, thus: Peter Lock, *The Companion to the Crusades* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

13. Steven Runciman, "Louis in captivity", *A History of the Crusades, Volume Three: The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1954).

14. Procopius mentions Scanda and Sarapanis within *De Bello Persico/The Persian War*. Procopius, *De Bello Persico/The Persian War*, 1. 22. 17-18, Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, on-line Loeb Classical Library-Harvard University Press, 2023 (originally 1914); Procopius of Caesarea, *The Persian Wars of Procopius. A Historical Commentary*, edited by Geoffrey Greatrex with Averil Cameron (new translation, which has at its basis one published fifty years ago by Averil Cameron), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. See also Agust Alemany, "Sixth Century Alania: Between Byzantium, Sasanian Iran and the Turkic World", *Transoxiana: Journal Libre de Estudios Orientales (Transoxiana Webfestschrift Series)* (2003): 1-8.

passes that existed throughout Caucasus against the people living beyond these mountains.

But in the summer of 540 the war between the Byzantines and the Sassanids began again; the immediate pretext was the control of Lazica. Khosrau, supported by the Goths, took advantage of the fact that Justinian was involved in fights with the Vandals and the Goths and that the Eastern part of the Empire was not strong enough to oppose him with real chances of success.

Conclusion

As one can see, there were indeed many peace agreements signed by the Byzantines and the medieval people of Europe. A discussion about their typology and systematization is a valuable contribution to the field of History that focuses on these areas and periods.

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