



Błażej Cecota¹

Could a Caliph Be Virtuous? Selected Aspects of the Image of Mu‘awiya ibn Abi Sufyan in the *Chronography* of Theophanes the Confessor

1. Introduction

In the introduction, it is worth recalling the opinion formulated by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott, contained in their English translation *Chronographia* – no other Byzantine historian, apart from Theophanes (or also George Syncellus)², showed such interest in Muslim matters and the history of Christians people under Muslim rule, nor was so determined to incorporate these experiences into a narrative that had, after all, the ambition of *summa* of world history³. This is one of the most striking features of the chronicle discussed in this paper. However, most often, Theophanes lim-

¹ Dr Błażej Cecota, Adjunct at the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, Poland, email: blazej.cecota@ujk.edu.pl; ORCID: 0000-0002-4746-0325.

² It may have been George Syncellus prepared most of the material on Muslim issues for Theophanes. The question about relations between Theophanes and George Syncellus is a subject of many papers. Discussion described for example A. Kompa, *Gnesioi filoi. The Search for George Syncellus and Theophanes the Confessor's Own Words and the Authorship of Their Oeuvre*, "Studia Ceranea" 5 (2015) p. 155-230; A. Kompa, *In search of Syncellus' and Theophanes' own words: the authorship of the Chronographia revisited*, in: *Studies in Theophanes*, ed. M. Jankowiak – F. Montinaro, TM 19, Paris 2015, p. 73-92; W. Treadgold: *The Life and Wider Significance of George Syncellus*, in: *Studies in Theophanes*, ed. M. Jankowiak – F. Montinaro, TM 19, Paris 2015, p. 9-30.

³ C. Mango – R. Scott, *Introduction*, in: *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern history A.D. 284–813*, tr. and ed. C. Mango – R. Scott – G. Greatrex, Oxford 1997, p. LII.

ited himself only to giving the dates of the reign of the caliphs. He wrote about the Arabs as a group much more often than about the individual rulers. There are, however, important exceptions to this rule.

Theophanes repeatedly condemned the actions of the caliphs by using specific terms to describe the rulers. For example, he called Walid I “wretched man” or “sinner”⁴. However, this term should not be taken literally. The Byzantine made it clear through this word that the person who persecutes Christians, and therefore a sinner, must be infelicitous or calamitous (cursed by God). And this is also the meaning of *ho alitērios*, used in this passage, discussing the circumstances of converting the Christian cathedral of St. John the Baptist into a mosque. Theophanes also mentioned that the reason why believers were taken away from their basilica was the jealousy of Walid (*phthonō*)⁵, one of the deadly sins. Overall, the phrases seem to have a more spiritual than a material dimension here. The second caliph to be described with one or two insults was Yazid II. He was called by Theophanes “thoughtless”, “unreasonable”, or simply “stupid” (*ho anoētōs*)⁶. In this way, the Byzantine chronicler summed up the caliph’s policy of iconoclasm. On the other hand, the words used by Theophanes may have been intended to imply that Yazid was merely a mindless (or passive) tool in the hands of a “Jewish magician”. Definitely one “villain” example among the Muslim rulers depicted by Theophanes was ‘Umar II. In the passages devoted to this caliph, the Byzantine chronicler collected most of the information about the persecution of Christians by Muslims, giving the impression that it was the main occupation of this ruler⁷. Very symptomatic is the way of presenting the stay of one of the most important Muslim caliphs of the conquest period ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab – a model example of a negative image. It is likewise the most extensive of the text fragments that have been devoted to the caliph in *Chronography*. Definitely, Theophanes did not present a positive image of the Muslim ruler in this passage. Rather, he emphasized his rough, dirty clothes, made of camel hair, completely incongruous with the nature of the visited place, i.e. the Temple Mount⁸. Using a quotation from the *Book of Daniel* supposedly uttered by patriarch Sophronius, Theophanes considered the behavior of ‘Umar to be

⁴ *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. C.G. de Boor, Lipsiae 1883, Annus Mundi 6199, p. 376.

⁵ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6199, p. 375-376.

⁶ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6215, p. 402.

⁷ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6210, p. 399.

⁸ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6127, p. 339.

“the abomination of desolation”⁹. It is worth adding that in contrast to the case of the righteous caliphs and representatives of the Umayyad dynasty Theophanes did not pay much attention to the Abbasid caliphs. He certainly did not portray As-Saffah in a good light, whose legitimacy seems to be undermined by describing the meeting in Trachontis¹⁰. The author emphasized al-Mansur’s tendency to fraud and trickery¹¹. He mentioned al-Mahdi’s anger¹². Not much information, considering that they were the rulers of his times.

2. Mu‘awiya ibn Abi Sufyan

As can be seen, it is difficult to find in the above-mentioned references any premises allowing the presumption that Theophanes saw in the behavior of any of the caliphs any evidence of virtues¹³. However, after this brief introduction, I would like to draw our attention to two unique figures of the caliphs described in the chronicle – Mu‘awiya and ‘Abd al-Malik. In the case of both these rulers, Theophanes’ descriptions are not limited to two or

⁹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6127, p. 339.

¹⁰ According to Theophanes, he was not actually elected a new caliph, but randomly selected by the representatives of the Abbasid family gathered in Samaria and Trachonitis (eastern Jordan) as the supreme leader: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6241, p. 425. Let us remember that from the point of view of the Byzantine chronicler this could seem like a total aberration, while according to the principles of choosing a leader raised by the Abbasid circles, i.e. *al-rida min al-Muhammad* (chosen from the Prophet’s family by Muslims and the choice was not imposed in any way) and *al-kitab wa’l-sunna* (according to the Book and Tradition, solely on the basis of God’s law), such a choice would not be strange. On these principles, see: A. Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire*, Edinburgh 2009, p. 183-191.

¹¹ I am referring primarily to the way in which the conflict between al-Mansur and Abu Muslim was described: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6246, p. 429; but also a description of tricks against another competitor to the dignity of the caliph – Isa ibn Musa: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6256, p. 435-436. Theophanes also mentioned the end of another competitor to the caliph’s throne, ‘Abdallah ibn Ali, importantly – in two passages of the chronicle. He wrote both about the death in the famous tower (without giving any details) and directly about the assassination committed in the ruins of the building – Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6246, p. 428-429; Annus Mundi 6258, p. 439.

¹² Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6271, p. 452.

¹³ In the case of this work, using the word “virtue” I understand the example of the positive traits of character of a ruler described by the Chronicler.

three-sentence mentions with blunt epithets, but the chronicler tried to provide a bit more information about these two specific caliphs. Due to editorial requirements I will limit my considerations in this article to the first one¹⁴.

At the outset, attention should be paid to the passage from AM 6129, in which Theophanes stated that ‘Umar chose Mu‘awiya as leader and emir over all the armies and lands conquered by Muslims from Egypt to the Euphrates¹⁵. Similar phrases marking the boundaries between the two great rivers of that region – the Nile and the Euphrates, appear in the context of the Promised Land to Abraham, the ancestor of both progenitors of great Jewish and Arab nations – Israel and Ishmael¹⁶. The essence of the problem, however, is the extension of Mu‘awiya’s authority beyond the area that was actually under his control, taken over from his brother Yazid¹⁷. Mu‘awiya controlled Damascus, possibly Jordan as well. He later received from ‘Uthman control over Palestine and also al-Jazeera¹⁸, but

¹⁴ Some discussions of how to describe both caliphs have already been found in one of my previous articles: B. Cecota, *Islam, the Arabs and Umayyad Rulers According to Theophanes the Confessor’s Chronography*, “*Studia Ceranea*” 2 (2012) p. 97-111. Background information on the life and reign of Mu‘awiya: S. Humphreys, *Mu‘awiya Ibn Abi Sufyan. From Arabia to Empire*, London 2006, p. 23-114; I.M. Fil’shtinskiy, *Khalifat pod vlast’yu dinastii Omeyyadov (661-750)*, Moskva 2005, p. 37-62; G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam. The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, London – New York 2000, p. 24-45; H. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates. The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, London – New York 1986, p. 82-90.

¹⁵ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6129, p. 340.

¹⁶ Overview of the messages concerning the “Promised Land”: U. Bechmann, *Genesis 12 and the Abraham-Paradigm Concerning the Promised Land*, “The Ecumenical Review” 68/1 (2016) p. 62-80; Sh. Sheinfeld, *The Euphrates as Temporal Marker in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*, “Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period” 47/1 (2016) p. 104-118; G. Alroey, *Mesopotamia – ‘The Promised Land’. The Jewish Territorial Organization Project in the Bilād Al-Rāfidayn and the Question of Palestine, 1899-1917*, “Middle Eastern Studies” 50/6 (2014) p. 911-935; W.C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promised Land. A Biblical-Historical View*, “Bibliotheca Sacra” 138 (1981) p. 302-312.

¹⁷ Yazid was predestined by the first two Rashidun Caliphs to perform important military functions in the Muslim state and the role of leader of Abu Sufyan’s family. Unfortunately, he died prematurely of the plague in 640: E. Bosworth, *Yazīd b. Abī Sufyān*, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman – Th. Bianquis – C.E. Bosworth – E. van Donzel – W.P. Heinrichs, in: https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/yazid-b-abi-sufyan-SIM_8004 (accessed: 10.07.2022).

¹⁸ About Muawiyā’s rule in Syria and the expansion of its territories, see: S. Humphreys, *Mu‘awiya Ibn Abi Sufyan*, p. 43-64; W. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge 1997, p. 60-61.

he never consolidated in his hands the governorship of Egypt and Syria at the same time, especially in the times of 'Umar. This fragment can only be explained by a specific prediction – Theophanes “announced” a later great career of Mu'awiya, pointing out that his taking power over the Muslim community was, among others, the result of the decision of 'Umar. It seems possible that Theophanes absorbed some fragment of the Umayyad traditions in which the connection with 'Umar emphasized¹⁹. The discussed sentence of Theophanes may be another interesting reminiscence of the period of shaping Muslim historical memory, preserved in the Byzantine material, in which at some point a conflict can be observed between the traditions related to the Prophet and the power of the caliphs, with particular emphasis on 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. After all, many years ago Avraham Hakim noticed that the preserved traditions in which it is strongly emphasized that the authority of Muhammad is higher than that of 'Umar may be a trace of the period in which the importance of the caliph as a religious and political leader began to replace the memory of the role of the Prophet. This process was finally stopped and the Muslim community chose the way of referring to the authority of the Prophet as the supreme leader, nevertheless the trace of the confrontation was preserved, for example, by the over-representation of 'Umar in collections of hadiths²⁰. In summary, the fragment seems to be part of one of the Umayyad traditions, referring to the second Rashidun Caliph as one of the undisputed Islamic authorities. The narrative of the receipt of power by the founding of the Banu Umayya dynasty from this caliph was certainly

¹⁹ About the image and promotion of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab in Umayyad narratives see: A. Hakim, *'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb: l'autorité religieuse et morale*, “Arabica” 55/1 (2008) p. 21-23. Elements emphasizing the relationship of the Umayyads with Ibn al-Khattab can be found for example in panegyric poetry written at the Damascus court: A. Alajmi – Kh. Keshk, *Umayyad Ideology and the Recurrence of the Past (Ideología omeya y el recurso al pasado)*, “Anaquel de Estudios Árabes” 24 (2013) p. 15-17. See also the pro-Umayyad traditions preserved in the writings of al-Jahiz – according to which 'Umar ibn al-Khattab noticed the superiority of Mu'awiya over other members of the *shura*, appreciating his honesty, simplicity and fairness in governing Syria, not taking away his governorship despite the fact that he did so in relation to others, and even extending his power – there are threads of appointing him the sole ruler (in his territory), later confirmed by 'Uthman: Ch. Pellat, *Le culte de Mu'āwīya au IIIe siècle de l'hégire*, “Studia Islamica” 6 (1956) p. 59-62.

²⁰ A. Hakim, *Muḥammad's Authority and Leadership Reestablished: The Prophet and 'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb*, “Revue de l'histoire des religions” 226/2 (2009) p. 181-200; A. Hakim, *'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb: l'autorité religieuse et morale*, p. 1-34; A. Hakim, *'Umar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb, calife par la grâce de Dieu*, “Arabica” 54/3 (2007) p. 317-361.

more convenient than referring to the controversial figure of ‘Uthman, their true relative.

In this context, the clash between Mu‘awiya and Ali ibn Abu Talib could be presented as the efforts of son of Abu Sufyan to maintain the established order, as a ruler with stronger legitimacy than Ali. Theophanes seemed to pass over the complicated situation that arose after the murder of ‘Uthman (perhaps due to a lack of knowledge), and yet one should realize, as John McHugo rightly emphasized in his cross-sectional studies of the rise of Sunni and Shi‘a, that: *something that would once have seemed unbelievable had happened. A son of Abu Sufyan and Hind had become the ruler of the empire of the Muslims*²¹. Indeed, a man whose family was very much committed to fighting Islam became leader of the Muslim community. The narrative of Theophanes in some passages seems to indirectly appreciate Mu‘awiya’s greatness as a ruler. The chronicler was particularly impressed by the way son of Abu Sufyan took power from Ali through the use of a ruse that cut him off from the water and forced his warriors to withdraw from the battle without a fight²². Theophanes emphasized the cunning of Mu‘awiya in other cases as well. A good example is the attempt to use the bishop to try to conquer the city on the island of Arados²³. Interestingly, emphasizing his cunning was also one element of the Arab classical tradition²⁴. It is worth adding that such a way of behaving – considering the battle as a last resort carrying the risk of unnecessary defeat – was also recommended in Byzantine military manuals.

Although Theophanes was aware that the caliph was ‘Uthman (which is reflected in the chronological tables), he seems to treat Mu‘awiya, at least from the account of AM 6142, as a ruler who is not only the military leader of the expeditions against Byzantium, but an independent partner in diplomatic negotiations. The Confessor clearly stated that Constans II sent Procopius to Mu‘awiya to inquire about peace conditions. Additionally, by the same principle, Mu‘awiya, not yet a caliph, acts as the main diplomatic player in the game for control of Armenia. The Chronograph mentioned that Theodore Rshtuni (he called him *Pasagnathes*)²⁵ made a treaty with

²¹ J. McHugo, *A Concise History of Sunnis and Sh‘is*, Washington 2017, p. 67.

²² Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6148, p. 347.

²³ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6140, p. 343-344.

²⁴ *Classical Arabic Stories. An Anthology*, ed. S. Kh. Jayyusi, New York 2010, p. 103-108.

²⁵ On the career of the Armenian marzban, who probably managed (briefly) to regain the independence of Armenia from both, Byzantine empire and Islamic state, see:

Mu'awiya when the Armenian rebelled against Constans II²⁶. There is some summary of Mu'awiya's diplomatic skills, as set forth in the *Chronography* in AM 6169, in which Theophanes described the manner in which the caliph received the imperial ambassadors. The leader of the faithful gathered a group of emirs around him, with whom he welcomed the envoy with great honors. Then there was an exchange of mutual courtesies and speeches calling for peace, which ended with the signing of a real treaty. The visit concluded with the endowment of the embassy with many gifts for the emperor²⁷. Despite the lack of any more detailed descriptions, it should be noted how much the tone of this account differs from the above-mentioned description of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab's visit in Jerusalem. One could say that this is a revolutionary change that puts the Umayyad caliph in the ranks of recognized, "civilized" rulers²⁸. Interesting in this context is also the reference to "the kingship" of Mu'awiya rule²⁹. The caliph's internal actions are related to a fragment of an account from AM 6170, in which Theophanes mentioned the earthquake in Mesopotamia, which also struck Edessa, causing the destruction of one of the churches³⁰. There would be nothing particularly interesting about it if the *Chronograph* had not added that son of Abu Sufyan rebuild of the temple³¹. It is difficult to say whether the caliph simply issued a permit to start the reconstruction works, or whether he really helped in this restoration financially or materially. Anyway, the

A.K. Shaginyan, *Armeniya i strany Yuzhnogo Kavkaza v usloviyakh vizantiysko-iranskoy i arabskoy vlasti*, Sankt-Peterburg 2011, p. 96-132; W. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquest*, Cambridge 1992, p. 196-197.

²⁶ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6143, p. 344.

²⁷ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6169, p. 355-356.

²⁸ As it was done later, certainly in the time of the Abbasid's: A.M.H. Shboul, *Byzantium and the Arabs: The Image of the Byzantines as Mirrored in Arabic Literature*, in: *Byzantine Papers Proceedings of the First Australian Byzantine Studies Conference Canberra, 17-19 May 1978*, ed. E. Jeffreys – M. Jeffreys – A. Moffat, Leiden – Boston 2017, p. 43-68; G.E. von Grunebaum, *Parallelism, Convergence and Influence in the Relations of Arab and Byzantine Philosophy, Literature and Piety*, "Dumbarton Oaks Papers" 18 (1964) p. 91-111; M. Canard, *Les relations politiques et sociales entre Byzance et les Arabes*, "Dumbarton Oaks Papers" 18 (1964) p. 35-56.

²⁹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6151, p. 347. The question is whether this reference to the "kingship" exercised by him results only from the belief of Theophanes himself about the nature of the office of caliph, or some kind of reminiscence of the debates about the Umayyad way of exercising power. Accusations of irregularities in this regard became, after all, one of the constitutive elements of the Abbasid revolution.

³⁰ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6170, p. 356.

³¹ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6170, p. 356.

Confessor emphasized that Mu'awiya's activity in this area was a response to the requests of the local Christian community.

At the same time, it should be remembered that the Chronograph limited a significant part of the fragments concerning Mu'awiya to the mention of military expeditions. It can therefore be assumed that the Byzantine saw the founder of the Umayyad dynasty mainly as a conqueror. In these fragments we also find a lot of negative information about the caliph as a man who destroyed cities and killed Byzantines, e.g. in Caesarea Maritima³², as well as on Arados³³ and Rhodes³⁴.

Important for understanding the role that Theophanes seems to assign to Mu'awiya in establishing the function of the caliph, which is particularly evident in the above-mentioned references to his diplomatic activity, is the last fragment devoted to this ruler, regarding his death. In this fragment the Confessor named him *tōn Sarakēnōn prōtosymboulos*³⁵. In the Cyril Mango and Roger Scott editions, it was proposed to translate the title as *the Caliph of Saracens*³⁶, while Harry Turtledove suggested to translate as *the chief counselor of the Saracens*³⁷, but the following phrase *gegone de stratēgos etē k', kai amēreusen etē kd'*³⁸ as he had been a general for twenty years, then caliph for twenty-four³⁹, while the aforementioned authors pass it on as *he had been military commander 20 years and emir 24 years*⁴⁰. In summary, respected the above-mentioned translators of these passages tend to emphasize that Mu'awiya was the first Muslim ruler to be called a caliph by Theophanes. The matter, however, does not seem so simple. In the context of the first of the terms *prōtosymboulos* used in this account, it seems clear that it is a combination of two terms – *prōtos*, which we can translate as the first, most worthy or the highest; and *symboulos*, which corresponds rather to the meaning of counselor, adviser, not the council (which would

³² Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6133, p. 341.

³³ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6141, p. 344.

³⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6145, p. 345.

³⁵ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6171, p. 356.

³⁶ *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, tr. and ed. C. Mango – R. Scott – G. Greatrex, p. 497.

³⁷ *The Chronicle of Theophanes. An English translation of Anni Mundi 6095-6305 (A.D. 602-813)*, tr. and ed. H. Turtledove, Philadelphia 1982, p. 55.

³⁸ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, Annus Mundi 6171, p. 356, 16-17.

³⁹ *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, tr. and ed. C. Mango – R. Scott – G. Greatrex, p. 497.

⁴⁰ *The Chronicle of Theophanes. An English translation of Anni Mundi 6095-6305 (A.D. 602-813)*, tr. and ed. H. Turtledove, p. 55.

be more suited to the wording *symbolē*). The word *symbolos* was used to describe specific officials in the Greek polis, but importantly – the Roman legate. It is true that Theophanes, in his earlier reports does not give us any premises to recognize that he knew how the caliph's election procedures were performed, he rather emphasized the family relationships of the first rulers, however, the form used in the fragment which is interesting to us seems to be a premise for admit that he might have had some knowledge of how the Arabs elected their supreme leader. The translation of the title as the first of the councilors or councils would be consistent to the Islamic traditions of the first decades, such as the *shura*, that is a form of a council advising the caliph⁴¹. However, this was quite a surprising observation, taking into consideration the classical Islamic tradition (with its present-day continuators, even defending Mu'awiya's decision to introduce in fact a hereditary monarchy)⁴², according to which the first Umayyad was accused primarily of contradicting the principle of the caliph's rule as "the first among equals".

Regarding to the other two titles used in the fragment – *stratēgos* and *amēreusen*, the first seems to be a reference to the military activity of Mu'awiya, repeatedly emphasized by the Confessor, while the second is probably a distorted form of *amermounēs* – "the leader of the faithful"⁴³. One way or another, the titles included in the *Chronography* used by Mu'awiya are consistent with the conclusions of contemporary research on this topic, according to which the Umayyads (or rather Marwanids) have permanently put into use the title of the caliph as the viceroy or God's deputy on earth. The earlier Muslim rulers were satisfied with the more modest term *amir al-mu'minin*, the leader of the faithful. From this point of view the emergence of the commonly used title of caliph is somehow a response

⁴¹ On the importance of this council as an advisory institution as well as a traditional electoral institution, see: P. Crone, „*Shūrā*” as an Elective Institution, „Quaderni di Studi Arabi” 19 (2001) p. 3-39.

⁴² In some present-day Muslim interpretations of this reign, this reference to Byzantine models in the context of the administration of the early Islamic state was actually due to Mu'awiya, who, through these reforms, reintegrated the divided *umma* and adapted it to the new social and economic conditions in which it had to function after its incredible success what were the great conquests of the first two Rashidun caliphs. The adaptation of the Sassanid and Byzantine patterns allowed to save the caliphate from rapid disintegration through tribal and religious wars: A.A. Bewley, *Mu'awiya. Restorer of the Muslim Faith*, London 2002.

⁴³ About the meaning of this title: R. Pennell, *What is the significance of the title 'Amīr al-mu'minin'?*, „The Journal of North African Studies” 21/4 (2016) p. 623-644.

to the need for a more expressive emphasis on the function of the first Muslim and, in fact, reformatted for the needs of Islam, to return to the royal titles according to old Arabic traditions⁴⁴.

3. Conclusions

Summarizing the above considerations, one more aspect should be emphasized. Khaled Keshk, who researched the Muslim stories about Mu'awiya several years ago, indicated that his image differs depending on the specific period described – in one sentence, the son of Abu Sufyan as a companion of the Prophet and one of the leaders of conquering expeditions to Syria was someone other than the leader from the period of governorship of this province, while both of these figures differ from the person of the caliph Mu'awiya presented by historians. The main turning point in the way of describing this character was First Fitna anyway. And although the main elements of Mu'awiya's biography remain the same in all these narratives, Khaled Keshk proved that individual historians tried to manipulate the details to take into account their version of events, often hostile to Banu Umayya⁴⁵. Looking from this perspective, it should be noted that the concept of Theophanes in terms of building the image of this ruler seems to be quite consistent in comparison with Muslim literature⁴⁶. Confessor emphasized in a fairly orderly manner several elements important for the positive image of Mu'awiya: no doubts as to the legitimacy of the caliph, his importance in the context of conquests, and diplomatic abilities. And

⁴⁴ A.A. Shahin, *An Interpretation of the Title Khalīfat Allāh in Light of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions and Early Islamic Documents*, in: *Re-defining a Space of Encounter. Islam and Mediterranean: Identity, Alterity and Interactions: Proceedings of the 28th Congress of the Union Europeenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, Palermo 2016*, ed. A. Pellitteri – M. Grazia Sciortino – D. Sicari – N. Elsakaan, Leuven – Paris – Bristol 2019, p. 335-344.

⁴⁵ K. Keshk, *The Historians' Mu'āwīya: The Depiction of Mu'āwīya in the Early Islamic Sources*, Saarbrücken 2008.

⁴⁶ Although it is believed that Theophanes did not use this work, the positive image of the first Banu Umayya caliph was found also in the anonymous *Maronite Chronicle*, the author of which clearly sided with Mu'awiya in his conflict with Ali: *Extract from the Maronite Chronicle*, in: *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, tr. and ed. A. Palmer, Liverpool 1993, p. 29. About other similar narratives, also in the context of Theophanes' account: O. Heilo, *Seeing Eye to Eye: Islamic Universalism in the Roman and Byzantine Worlds, 7th to 10th Centuries*, Die Universität Wien 2010, p. 43-44 (PhD Thesis).

this is a narrative that, after all, differs significantly from the classic Muslim versions created in the Abbasid period, for example Tabari, where we find numerous moments of criticism: dubious legitimacy of power against the claims of the Alid's, instability of the state, incorrect personnel decisions (concerning the election of Yazid as his successor)⁴⁷. The possibility that Theophanes' narrative about Mu'awiya might have been a reflection of Umayyad propaganda about this ruler was also noted by Kemal Bozkaya⁴⁸. The next research step should therefore be to make detailed comparisons of the content of Theophanes with those that we can consider representative of Pro-Umayyad's Muslim narratives. Of course, the difficulties arise immediately, from the issue of comparing translations and originals, through a completely different way of narrating and, in fact, incompatible literary genres represented by Byzantine and Arabic historiography, which can be seen, for example, in the work of by Khalifa ibn Khayyat⁴⁹, who seemed to favor figures such as Mu'awiya. Anyway, Theophanes' method of presenting Mu'awiya allows us to state that the *Chronography* is absolutely not a one-dimensional work in the context of accounts concerning Muslims. It also allows to note that the Byzantines also saw among Islamic leaders people distinguished by positive qualities or virtues.

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(summary)

The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor is one of the few Byzantine historiographical works in which so much space is devoted to the Islamic world and the first ruling caliphate. Of course, most references to Muslims concern mostly military issues – numerous Muslim invasions on Byzantine lands that were happening almost since the beginning of Islam. Also important was the way Theophanes treated Islam itself as a religion – as he-

⁴⁷ On the image of Mu'awiya in Islamic literature, see: A.A. Shahin, *In Defense of Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan: Treatises and Monographs on Mu'awiya from the Eighth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, in: *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner*, ed. P.M. Cobb, Leiden – Boston 2012, p. 177-208.

⁴⁸ K. Bozkaya, *Bizans Tarih Yazıcılığı (Başlangıçtan XI Yüzyıla Kadar)*, Edirne 2017, p. 60-63 (Tez Danışmanı, Trakya Üniversitesi).

⁴⁹ Recently, a new translation of his work into English is available: *Khalifa ibn Khayyat's History on the Umayyad Dynasty (660-750)*, tr. and ed. C. Wurtzel, Liverpool 2015, p. 51-314.

resy. Therefore, it is hard to expect that the descriptions of the caliphs can be considered positive. In most of them, we find rather “evidence” of the greed, stupidity, or propensity to violence, which were to characterize the caliphs. Nevertheless, in the context of the answer to the question posed in the title – whether the caliph could be virtuous – it is worth taking a closer look at the image of the two rulers in the *Chronography* – Mu‘awiya and ‘Abd al-Malik. This text is dedicated to the first of these rulers.

Keywords: Byzantium; Caliphate; byzantine historiography; Theophanes the Confessor; Mu‘awiya ibn Abi Sufyan

Czy kalif mógł być cnotliwy? Wybrane aspekty wizerunku Mu‘awiji ibn Abi Sufjana w *Chronografii* Teofanesa Wyznawcy

(streszczenie)

Chronografia Teofanesa Wyznawcy to jedno z niewielu bizantyńskich dzieł historiograficznych, w którym tak wiele miejsca poświęcono światu islamskiemu i pierwszym władcom kalifatu. Oczywiście większość wzmianek na temat muzułmanów dotyczy raczej zagadnień militarnych – licznych najazdów na ziemie bizantyńskie, jakie miały miejsce praktycznie od początku powstania islamu. Istotny był też sposób, w jaki Teofanes traktował sam islam – jako herezję. Trudno więc spodziewać się, aby opisy dotyczące kalifów można było uznać za pozytywne. W większości z nich znajdziemy raczej „dowody” na chciwość, głupotę czy skłonność do przemocy, jakie charakteryzować miały kalifów. Niemniej jednak w kontekście odpowiedzi na zadane w tytule pytanie (czy kalif mógł być cnotliwy) warto przyjrzeć się bliżej wizerunkowi dwóch władców w *Chronografii* – Mu‘awiji oraz ‘Abd al-Malika. Niniejszy tekst poświęcony został pierwszemu z wymienionych kalifów.

Słowa kluczowe: Bizancjum; kalifat; historiografia bizantyńska; Teofanes Wyznawca; Mu‘awija ibn Abi Sufjan

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