

# Travelling as a Hostage: The Testimony of Kaminiates's *Capture of Thessalonike*

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## I. Introduction

According to Kaminiates, the aim of his book *On the Capture of Thessalonike*<sup>2</sup> was to provide a narrative of the raid of the city by the Arabs, which took place on 31 July 904.<sup>3</sup> He addressed this narrative, in the form of a letter, to a certain Gregorios Kappadokes,<sup>4</sup> a person he met during the time he was held hostage. The first part of his work is an ἐκφρασις, a description of the city of Thessalonike. In the second part, the author provides an account of the plans and provisions of the Byzantines preparing for the oncoming assault. He describes the siege of the city in great detail and afterwards recounts the destruction, slaughter, and abductions wrought by the Arabs after the city fell. Kaminiates and his family are at the centre of his descriptions, as eyewitnesses sharing the fate of many others inside the city walls during the Arab conquest. Whether the book was written while Kaminiates was still a hostage or

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<sup>2</sup> Text version by Gertrud Böhlig, *Ioannis Caminiatae De Expugnatione Thessalonicae* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> For more information on Thessalonike during the time of the capture of the city by the Arabs, see Élisabeth Malamut, “Thessalonique 830–904,” in *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie: Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. Lars Hoffmann and Anuscha Monchizadeh (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 159–170. The same researcher has published on the route of the Arab ships after the fall of Thessalonike. For this reason, we will only deal with this subject as part of the analysis of the conditions of the journey for those on board these ships. For the outline of the route, see É. Malamut, *Les Îles de l'empire byzantin (VIIIe–XIIIe siècles)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1988), 657.

<sup>4</sup> Although it is not at all certain if this was a historical figure.

not is a matter of contention.<sup>5</sup> The same is true of its dating. In 1978, Kazhdan published an article based on an older manuscript, now lost, arguing that the extant story was created in the fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Since then, an increasing number of researchers have provided further support for this thesis.<sup>7</sup> An alternate dating was convincingly argued first by Tsaras and then by Odorico, who dated the work to the tenth century.<sup>8</sup>

The fall of Thessalonike was a long time coming. Since 827, the Arabs had challenged Byzantine superiority at sea. After 867, however, when Basil I became Emperor, the tide gradually began to turn. In 879, the Byzantine fleet under Niketas Oripas gave a major blow to the Arabs, succeeding to dampen their pirate operations for almost two decades. The raids resumed once again in 901. The capture of Thessalonike in 904 formed the pinnacle of this resurgence.<sup>9</sup>

Kaminiates' testimony is of great importance because, contrary to the popularity of such narratives in the following centuries, travel writing sources from this particular period are scarce.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> While Eudoxos Tsolakis thinks that it is unlikely that Kaminiates was able to write a book under these circumstances. See: Eudoxos Tsolakis, *Ιωάννης Καμινιάτης, Εις την Άλωσιν της Θεσσαλονίκης* [Ioannis Kaminiates, The Fall of Thessalonike] (Athens: Kanaki, 2000), 13. Paolo Odorico argues convincingly in favour of this scenario, which is also considered the most plausible in the present investigation. See: Paolo Odorico, *Ιωάννης Καμινιάτης, Ευστάθιος Θεσσαλονίκης, Ιωάννης Αναγνώστης, Χρονικά των Αλώσεων της Θεσσαλονίκης* [Ioannis Kaminiates, Eustathios of Thessalonike, Ioannis Anagnostes, Chronicles of the Falls of Thessalonike] (Athens: Agra, 2009), 27–29.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Kazhdan, “Some Questions Addressed to the Scholars who Believe in the Authenticity of Kaminiates’ ‘Capture of Thessalonica,’” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 71 (1978): 301–314.

<sup>7</sup> Vassilios Christides, “Once Again Caminiates’ ‘Capture of Thessaloniki,’” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 74 (1981): 7–10, and later Angeliki Konstantakopoulou, *Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλονίκη – Χώρος και Ιδεολογία* [Byzantine Thessalonike – Locality and Ideology] (Ioannina: University of Ioannina Press, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> V. Christides, “Once Again Caminiates’ ‘Capture of Thessaloniki,’” 7–10, P. Odorico, *Ioannis Kaminiates*, 20, 22–25.

<sup>9</sup> Archibald Lewis, *Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean A.D. 500–1100* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951), 132–142.

<sup>10</sup> Catia Galatariotou, “Travel and Perception in Byzantium,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993): 221. There is another testimony of the raid, which proves that Kaminiates’s chronicle is trustworthy. It is written by an Arab, Abu Mādan, who took part in the raid of Thessalonike. See Grégoire Henri, “Le Communiqué arabe sur la prise de Thessalonique (904),” *Byzantion* 22 (1953): 373–378.

## II. Who was Kaminiates?

Kaminiates was probably born between 870 and 875.<sup>11</sup> He refers to himself, as well as to his father, uncle, and two brothers as members of the clergy (43.39.84–87). This, however, is contradicted later in the text. When the leader of the Arabs asked Kaminiates' father if he was the bishop of Thessalonike, the latter declined claiming that he was not part of the clergy (55.47.35–55.48.39). He may have been lying. However, there is no reason to make such an assumption because his life was at stake at the time and thus he would have wanted to appear as a significant person worth sparing. A leader of the Arabs claimed that he was the exarch of Greece.<sup>12</sup> The same person, however, only refers to the other captives that were with them concerning their relations to Kaminiates and his father (55.48.40–51). No one disagrees with his claims and it might be safe to assume that he was right. Perhaps the confusion is based on the fact that Kaminiates was an ἀναγνώστης,<sup>13</sup> the lowest rank of the clergy, living the life of a layman.

There is no doubt that the Kaminiates were rich. Their wealth must have been considerable and was used as a successful negotiation tool with the Arabs in exchange for sparing their lives. The treasure they had hidden must have been so valuable as ransom that it changed their captors' attitude towards them (54.47.11–20). Further on the subject of wealth, Kaminiates informs his readers that they had servants and that his other relatives, who were not captured with them, were also wealthy people who had hidden their valuables close to theirs (53.47.1–5).

## III. How did Kaminiates become a hostage?

After the fall of Thessalonike, the Arabs stormed the city massacring its residents. Kaminiates, his father, his two brothers, and his uncle

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<sup>11</sup> Herbert Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*. Bd. I *Philosophie–Rhetorik–Epistolographie–Geschichtsschreibung–Geographie* (München: C. H. Beck, 1978), 357.

<sup>12</sup> This honorific title was bestowed to clerics who were on a special mission irrespective of their rank. On this subject, see Georgios Tsaras, “Η Αυθεντικότητα του Χρονικού του Ιωάννου Καμινιάτη” [The Authenticity of Ioannis Kaminiates' Chronicle], *Βυζαντιακά* [Byzantiaka] 8 (1988): 47. The same author, however, doubts the validity of the information (p. 14).

<sup>13</sup> Sophia Patoura, *Οι Αιχμάλωτοι ως Παράγοντες Επικοινωνίας και Πληροφόρησης (4ος–10ος αι.)* [Captives as Agents of Communication and Information (4<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> c.)] (Athens: Institute of Historical Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1994), 83.

(42.88.65–70, 47.42.9–11) retreated to an isolated tower. The men were together when the city fell. It is unknown what happened to Kaminiates' mother, who was still alive at the time (43.39.11). The men who retreated in the tower had no illusion that they would remain unseen but they thought that being separated from the crowd could perhaps give them the opportunity to negotiate for their lives (42.88.74–79). Things eventually turned out as planned. When a band of armed Arabs noticed them, the group managed to negotiate a significant ransom if their lives were spared. The Arabs not only spared their lives but also offered them protection, placing them at the centre of their group, until they reached their leader who made the final decisions (46.41.99–48.43.45). The headquarters of the group was at a monastery. The highest authority decided to let Kaminiates and his relatives live in exchange for their treasure but no one else from the hundreds of Byzantines that had sought refuge at the same monastery was spared (51.44.13–52.46.63). From there, Kaminiates and the rest of his family were taken to the port to meet another Arab leader, who ranked higher than the ones they had already met (53.46.73–54.47.32).

#### **IV. What were the plans in place for hostages?**

The leader of the Arabs, Leo the Tripolean, informed his captives of their fate in person. He even did it speaking in Greek. Kaminiates and his family would be transferred to Syria and then sent to Tarsus in Asia Minor. More Byzantines were held there, waiting to be exchanged with Arabs captured by the Byzantines on other occasions.<sup>14</sup> He claimed that when this had happened, they would be free to return home (55.59–64).

The same fate awaited other wealthy Byzantines. Among them was Leon Chatziliakis,<sup>15</sup> a high-ranking soldier whom the Emperor had sent to Thessalonike (56.49.83–88). It is worth mentioning that the Arabs had also captured the eunuch Rodofilis, a traveller who ended up in Thessalonike through an unfortunate coincidence. As a

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<sup>14</sup> On the treatment of captured Arabs to be exchanged by the Byzantines, see Liliana Simeonova, "In the Depths of Tenth Century Byzantine Ceremonial: The Treatment of Arab Prisoners of War at Imperial Banquets," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 22 (1998): 75–104.

<sup>15</sup> E. Tsolakis, *Ioannis Kaminiates*, 145, n. 40.

κουβικουλάριος,<sup>16</sup> he was sent by the Emperor from Constantinople to Sicily on a mission to transfer money to the Byzantine troops who were fighting against the Arabs.<sup>17</sup> On his way to Sicily, however, he fell sick and had to stop in Thessalonike. His journey ended there, as in the meantime both he and the city fell into the hands of the Arabs. Amidst all of these events, he nevertheless managed to send the payments to Sicily, for which the Arabs never forgave him. When they realised that holding on to him was futile, they beat him to death (59.51.57–59.52.6).

These cases, however, were singular. The vast majority of people taken as captives were destined to be sold as slaves. Upon arriving in Crete, the captives were transported to the markets and the Arabs living on the island spared no expense in acquiring as many as possible. Their incentive was not to keep the new slaves on the island. Kaminiates informs us of a certain “custom” in place there that did not exist among the Arabs of Syria, according to which slaves bought by the Arabs in Crete could be released to the Byzantines if exchanged with an Arab prisoner. For this, the new owners would be compensated with twice the amount they had spent to buy the prisoner in the first place (73.63.7–19).

## **V. How did Kaminiates view his captors?**

The Arabs are mentioned as “barbarians” numerous times throughout the text, a term that underlines their lack of culture.<sup>18</sup> The same word is used to highlight their different language and, thus, the reason they cannot understand Kaminiates, who is speaking Greek (47.42.19–20).

In terms of their characteristics, Kaminiates mentioned the dark colour of their skin and the fact that they were almost naked. He adds that they acted irrationally, were sneaky and, when they got angry, they ground their teeth like boars, twisting their eyes and shaking their jaws in a way described as typical among the Arabs (45.40.48–52, 49.43.74–49.44.79). They were also pictured as cold-hearted sadists, who found joy

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<sup>16</sup> *Κουβικουλάριοι* were eunuchs who played an important role in imperial ceremony and were often appointed as governors and commanders of the army. A. Kazhdan, “Koubikoularios,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1154.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Thurn, *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973), 70–79, 183. See also E. Tsolakis, *Ioannis Kaminiates*, 151, n. 41.

<sup>18</sup> A. Kazhdan, Anthony Cutler “Barbarians,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander Kazhdan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 252–253.

in torturing and butchering people, leaving rivers of blood wherever they went (45.40.57–45.41.66, 53.46.74–79).

Upon their arrival in Crete, the Arabs held a celebration. The description of this celebration with people screaming and beating on drums reveals, once more, the attitude of the author towards them (71.60.95–4). Unsurprisingly, Kaminiates compared them to animals as his whole narrative strategy seems to be aimed at depriving them of everything civilised and human – unsurprisingly again, as they were responsible for the destruction of his hometown and people.

However, his captors were not the only ones he condemned. Kaminiates describes their country as evil, full of irrational sins, and a place where “men are treated like women” (72.62.77–84). He especially despised their religion and describes their prayers as disgusting (74.63.38–39).

Although Kaminiates had no positive words for the Arabs, they seem to have kept their promise and the 200 captives, including Kaminiates and the members of his family, were transferred to Tarsus to be exchanged.<sup>19</sup>

The attackers seem to have included several Muslims who were either of Byzantine origin or Greek speakers. This is not strange since Leo of Tripoli, the leader of this attack, was a former Byzantine Christian, who became a Muslim and eventually allied with the Arabs. It is of interest that Leo was a prisoner of the Arabs himself and it was during this time that he had converted to Islam.<sup>20</sup>

In any case, people speaking Greek frequently appear in the text. The first is a negotiator between Kaminiates’s family and the Arabs. Prior to his arrival, it seems that Kaminiates had a hard time communicating with the Arabs but things changed quickly when this person, the negotiator, joined them (47.42.19–22). This Greek-speaking soldier seems to have appeased their fears (48.42.38–48.43.45). He is described as a “God-sent person who arrived at the perfect time.” He proved useful again when, on their way to meet the leader of the Arabs, he kept away everybody who tried to harm them (49.43.72–49.44.88, 50.44.10–12). It must be mentioned, however, that this Greek-speaking individual had his own agenda, expecting to be compensated for his services from the ransom

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<sup>19</sup> S. Patoura, *Captives*, 83, 89.

<sup>20</sup> John Pryor, Elizabeth Jeffreys, *The Age of the Δρόμων. The Byzantine Navy ca 500–1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 62.

to be collected from Kaminiates' family. He was also among the invaders who sacked Thessalonike and slaughtered its people. Nevertheless, Kaminiates chose to describe him in a positive light. The negotiator is referred to again as translating, on behalf of the captors, the (Arab) words of Leo to his warriors (55.48.66–68).

The second person speaking Greek is described as the “leader of the whole army” by the negotiator mentioned above (48.32.33–35). This, however, seems to be an exaggeration and this second person is just one of the leaders, since there is another warrior at the port with him, who holds the same rank (55.48.40–41).<sup>21</sup> It seems that these two leaders are both of Byzantine origin. The first appears to speak both Greek and Arab (55.48.64–66),<sup>22</sup> while the other seems to be very well informed about the Byzantine hierarchy (55.48.40–50). Both, however, are Muslims, gathered at the port to pray, in what is described by Kaminiates as an “unholy ceremony” (55.48.33–36). It is interesting to note that when a leader of the Arab army does not speak Greek (like the Egyptian in charge of the ship on which Kaminiates travels), Kaminiates feels the need to acknowledge the fact (65.55.30–35).

Kaminiates does not hold back when it comes to speaking about Leo of Tripoli, the general leader of the attack, despite the fact that he was raised as a Byzantine. He especially portrays him as sneaky and cunning, greedy, fierce, and cold-hearted (62.53.63–64.55.23). He describes him as an igamous person (75.64.72), unable to show compassion, driven by his desire for wealth and deriving pleasure from injustice and murder (76.65.14–16).

We can assume that a significant factor for the description of the Arabs as barbarians and evil is their religion, which Kaminiates singles out frequently.

## **VI. Preparations for the journey**

Kaminiates states that all hostages destined to be taken away were gathered at the port. The ships did not leave for an additional ten days. During the first two days of their captivity (58.50.46, 65.55.28–29), the main problem was the lack of water. Given the Mediterranean climate

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<sup>21</sup> “ἄλλος δέ τις ἐγγύθεν ἐστώς, ὃς ἦν ἀρχηγὸς τοῦ ἐτέρου στρατοῦ.”

<sup>22</sup> He also appears to communicate with Kaminiates and his relatives without the presence of a translator (55.48.50–59).

and the fact that the fall of the city took place at the height of summer, people were unsurprisingly relieved when the Arabs granted them permission to get some water from nearby sanitation pipes, even if the water was unsafe to drink (57.47.89–57.50.25).

Finally, when everything worth pillaging from the city was gathered, the ships were ready to sail. First, the Arabs boarded their supplies and the younger among the hostages, men, and women. Kaminiates states that they selected the best-looking individuals, which implies that they were probably meant to be sold as slaves (60.52.7–18, 73.62.4–73.63.7). They used *óλκάδες*, carrier ships, which were wide enough to accommodate a big crowd. Despite their size and the fact that the Arabs had 54 such ships at their disposal, there were still more captives than could be boarded. In order to solve this problem, they commandeered merchant ships already in port and even repaired and refloated the ones sank by the Byzantines while defending the city. The captives were as young as infants and adolescents (61.58–34.48). It seems that people destined to be sold as slaves outnumbered by far the ones expected to be exchanged, because the second category was split into groups of only five people and embarked on different ships. Some of the older people had to be left behind because of lack of space on the ships (62.53.49–62.54.71). Kaminiates states that, overall, the number of people taken from Thessalonike was 22,000 (73.62.95–96).

The Arab historian al-Tabari states that the outcome of the raid was the massacre of 5,000 people inside the city. He also claims that Leo delivered to freedom 4,000 Arabs, who were kept as captives by the Byzantines, and that 60 ships were captured which transferred thousands of prisoners to their lands.<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting to note that, despite the difficult situation, Kaminiates' father was in the place to ask the Arabs for favours. Kaminiates states that he approached the leader of the ship that was about to carry them away from Thessalonike and asked that the Arab reunited his family, separated during the sack. The leader seemed to have complied with this request although only partly. He had his soldiers find and bring to the ship Kaminiates' mother and one of his brothers, as well as one of his sisters-in-law. They were not able or did not try as hard to find

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<sup>23</sup> J. Pryor, E. Jeffreys, *The Age of the Δρόμων*, 63. For more information on Leo, Rasiq al Wardâmi and Ghulâm Zurâfa for the Arab historians, his life before he was captured and the reasons why he was selected to lead this raid, see S. Patoura, *Captives*, 83, 85–86, n. 9.

Kaminiates' wife, his sister, his three children, and other relatives (65.55.32–65.56.44). The family was informed of the fate of the rest of its members when the ships arrived in Crete. The spouse of his brother was sold while on the island. Kaminiates' mother, his wife, and two of his children were among those taken to Syria. The same fate awaited his brother (who was not travelling with him) and his sister. Furthermore, one of his children was lost at sea (73.63.23–28).

## **VII. The journey**

The journey itself is described as a living hell. Kaminiates and his relatives had their feet tied to wooden structures so that they were not able to move (66.56.47–48, 68.58.33–41). It seems, however, that most people had their feet free. Despite the number of ships that the Arabs had gathered, the prisoners were so numerous that people were struggling for air and constantly feeling that they were suffocating (66.56.48–58). Kaminiates was on board a two-decked byzantine warship. The deck above was reserved for the Arabs, while the prisoners were held on the deck below (74.64.48–51). On board of this particular ship were 1,000 people, 200 of which were Arabs and the rest captives (67.56.66–68).

Following so many days at sea without basic sanitary arrangements in overloaded ships, people were smelling so badly that it took significant effort for the ones beside them to keep breathing (68.58.34–41). The struggle, however, was not only for space. The captives had to face hunger and thirst, as well as the distressing effects of the sounds of infants dying (67.56.64–70). As expected, even the simplest things such as bodily functions could not be performed privately and people had to decide whether they preferred to embarrass themselves or face the dangers of trying to control them (67.56.70–74). The situation was exacerbated by the storms of the Aegean (67.57.95–3) and the heat of the Mediterranean summer, which made thirst unbearable (69.58.54–59.56).

On top of all that, there was an infestation of fleas, described as “creeping death,” a torture that made the lives of the captives unendurable (69.58.42–45). The way their captors treated them only added to their misery. Kaminiates states that this treatment was only suitable for inanimate objects and not for human beings (66.56.48–49). The Arabs swore at them, insulted them, and beat them (69.58.45–49).

Even when the prisoners were given food and water, like in the incident when the ships stopped on the island of Patmos, they were of low quality. The water is described as undrinkable as those who drank it had to withstand its disgusting smell. The bread was similarly difficult to eat. Kaminiates states that not only was it insufficient but it was also leading to a slow death because it was dirty and full of worms. He laments that it was even unsuitable for animals (68.57.10–68.58.26). It is no wonder that under these conditions the captives suffered considerable casualties. The Arabs threw the bodies overboard. The younger ones were the first to suffer this fate, according to Kaminiates (68.58.27–41).

The situation only got better when they arrived in Crete. The Arabs disembarked leaving more space for the captives and the hostages were given fresh water (70.59.85–70.60.89). Families could be reunited. This gave Kaminiates the opportunity to describe several remarkable scenes of mothers reuniting with their children and others mourning as they were informed of the loss of their infants (71.60.11–71.61.56). This, however, did not last long. The Arabs wanted to distribute their booty, and people were a part of it. They would only make an exception for mothers whose babies were still nursing, probably because they wanted to make sure that the offspring would not starve, thus depriving them of further profit (72.61.57–72.62.77).

The Arabs are described as never missing an opportunity to make more profit from the raid. Kaminiates claims that before they got too far originally, people on horseback came to the shore and, upon seeing them, the ships returned and some women were exchanged for a considerable amount of gold (67.56.74–67.57.80). On another occasion, the Arabs buccanered a ship with a cargo of grain. Upon seeing the Arab fleet, the sailors abandoned their vessel and fled, but the Arabs managed to capture them and executed almost everyone (67.57.88–95).

Kaminiates describes the places the ship passed by, the topography and the resources available (e.g. 67.56.74–67.57.88). The way he writes about the locations they encountered remind of the descriptions we read in portulans, although none survive from that period.<sup>24</sup> Although the Arabs were familiar with the route, they did not choose the shortest way but, instead, preferred to wander around the Aegean, out of fear that they

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<sup>24</sup> For portulans, see Patrick Gautier Dalché, “Portulans and the Byzantine World,” in *Travel in the Byzantine World*, ed. Ruth Macrides (Cornwall: Ashgate Variorum, 2002), 59–71.

would encounter the Byzantine fleet that could be following them in pursuit (67.57.3–9).

The reports on these places are highly valuable for historians. For instance, we are informed that Naxos paid tribute to the ships that stopped there for two days and the men of the island gathered naval supplies and offered them to the Arabs (70.59.65–70). In Crete, the situation was more festive. After their initial fear that the fleet heading towards their island was Byzantine, the locals greeted the seamen and mutual “gestures of true love” between the raiders of Thessalonike and the inhabitants of the island were witnessed (70.59.77–85). Kaminiates also informs us that the island had an abundance of water, which contrasts with what he had seen thus far on other Aegean islands. He also states that there was a multitude of inhabitants in Crete and that they lacked nothing (70.59.85–70.60.91).

We are also informed that the voyage from Crete to Cyprus took about five days and that in Pafos, there were waters near the coast where the Arabs could take a bath (77.66.37–40). Another 24 hours were required for them to get to Tripoli, where the Arabs held a triumphal celebration for their success. During the celebration, the booty and prisoners from Thessalonike were displayed (77.66.40–56). From Tripoli, Kaminiates and the members of his family that were still with him (his father had died in Tripoli) were transferred to Tarsus, where they were kept as prisoners waiting to be exchanged with Arab hostages held by the Byzantines. Kaminiates states that this was the current situation at the moment of writing his book (77.66.56–77.67.65, 78.67.90–98). The rest of the prisoners, the ones destined to be sold as slaves, were scattered throughout the coast of Syria, and were bought, resold, and exchanged, ending up in places as far as Ethiopia (78.67.66–71).

### **VIII. Conclusion**

The narrative of Kaminiates is a valuable historical source. Not only is it a vast trove of information about the events that took place in Thessalonike in 904, the way that both sides fought, the composition of the Arab army, their weaponry and tactics, but it also provides insight into how the Byzantines and the Arabs viewed one another.

The journey of Kaminiates and his family gives us the opportunity to uncover more about the places they encountered, their topography, the available resources, their inhabitants, and the local dress, among other

things. Furthermore, it provides interesting information on the way the Arabs treated their prisoners, about piracy in the Aegean, the conditions in these journeys, and the time needed to get from one place to another.

It is no wonder that Kaminiates describes his journey the way he does. As a prisoner of the Arabs, he is the journey was difficult and unpleasant, all the more so since the Byzantines disliked travelling because “shipwreck, adverse winds, calms, and pirate raids were expectedly unexpected.”<sup>25</sup> Travelling, as a whole, was “dreadfully uncomfortable and highly dangerous,” not to mention the fact that most Byzantine sources imply that they would not like to leave their hometowns for any reason.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Margaret Mullett, “In Peril on the Sea: Travel Genres and the Unexpected,” in *Travel in the Byzantine World*, ed. Ruth Macrides (Cornwall: Ashgate Variorum, 2002), 259.

<sup>26</sup> C. Galatariotou, “Travel and Perception in Byzantium,” 221–241. Indeed, the prisoners of Thessalonike had to face storms twice, the first time just south of the island of Euboia (67.57.95–3), in a place that is still notorious for its heavy seas, and the second after they set sail from Crete. On this occasion, the storm was very dangerous and when a ship of their fleet began to sink, the Arabs were ready to offload their prisoners into the sea so they could make room for their fellow seamen who were in danger. Leo managed to get every single one of the 1,000 people on board the sinking ship, Arabs and prisoners alike, aboard his own just before the other vessel sank (75.64.66–76.65.24).

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