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# **Belief systems of Roman Empire during the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)**

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**ABSTRACT**

In Islamic scriptures either in Quran or in Sunnah, Byzantine Empire was mentioned as a powerful empire. It was a major player back in the early days of Islam, because of its vast colonial area that neighbours the Arabian Peninsular, huge sum of wealth and a large army. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), before his prophethood, traveled to Levant, a Roman colony, to trade thus acquiring the trust of his future wife Khadijah. After his prophethood, there are few encounters with them either directly or indirectly. Some of it through exchanging sword blows and some them through interacting with the Roman Empire inhabitants such as Suhaib Ar-Rumy. Nevertheless, the objective of the study is to understand the belief systems of the Roman Empire during that time. I hope throughout this study, I can understand the context of what was stated in Islamic scriptures about Roman Empire, and generally about Christianity, since it was the official religion of it.

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**References**

**CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Objective of the study**

Roman Empire was a huge and strong empire existed during the prophet Muhammad. Geopolitically, It is a very important and any events happened to the empire will echo through the neighbouring regions. It's connection to Islam was significant as the Empire adopts Christianity, a religion that came from the same origin as Islam. This study aims to learn what is the belief systems in that empire, which version of Christianity do they adopt, is there any other ideologies came to play in that empire. This information soon can be used to interpret and understand the context of revelations mentioning Roman Empire, wether Quranic verses of Hadith.

### **1.2 Limitation of the study**

In this study, I will limit the study of Roman Empire, only in the area of their belief systems. This paper will not discuss on its military strategy, administration, politics, agriculture, relics, artefacts nor any other materials that are unrelated to their belief systems. The time period was specific too and this will be explained later in chapter 2. The limit is also exercised in geographical term. As you can see later, the Roman Empire hold vast land from the river of Tigris in Mesopotamia, modern day Iraq to the strait of Gilbaltar. These are called the Pillar of Hercules. I will not cover all lands because it is too wide. Instead I will only focus on what matter to the emperor in Constantine, because it will effect majority of its inhabitants through enforcement.

### **1.3 Method used in this study**

This study utilise library research either online and offline. This method includes reading through secondary sources such as books, journals, magazine articles, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, handbooks, periodical indexes, and reviews. This study also involved analysing primary sources like artifacts such as the David Plates. I also used interview method where I interviewed expert in Christianity. Dr Majdan b Alias, a professor at International Islamic University Malaysia has provided me with useful insights.

### **1.4 Past studies**

Needless to say that there are quite an extensive researches done in studying in Roman Empire and it's relationship with the Muslims during the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). And by

mentioning Roman Empire, I was referring to Eastern Roman Empire or Byzantine Empire. Walter E. Kaegi had written 2 books: 'Byzantium and the early Islamic conquest' that record interactions and clashed between the two empire and another one called 'Heraclius the Byzantine Emperor' that explains the origin and actions of Heraclius in detailed manner. Laila bte Abdul Jawad Ismail, through her book ( دولة البنزنطية في عصر الامبراطور هرقل وعلاقتها بالمسلمين ) which translated as : 'Byzantine Empire during Heraclius era and it's relationship with the muslim', is a similar work with Kaegi's 'Byzantium and the early Islamic conquest' but she provided the Islamic perspectives on that events. Nadia Maria El-Cheikh through her work, 'Muhammad and Heraclius: A Study in Legitimacy' discussed the civilian point of views on both figures.

In contrary, there is not much research done discussing specifically about belief systems in that era. There is, but are done separately as they are treated like a different subject, and some also focused on certain sub-topics. Deno J. Geanakoplos in his work 'Church and State in the Byzantine Empire: A Reconsideration of the Problem of Caesaropapism' discussed thoroughly about the nature of power between the Church and the state. Kurt Weizmann started to explore the meaning of David Plates in 'Prolegomena to a study of Cyprus Plates and soon followed by Mariette van Grunsven-Eygenraam, Steven Wander, Suzanne Spain Alexander and James Trilling.

This paper shall fill that gap by providing a comprehensive view on belief systems in the Roman Empire : it's religion, ideologies, values and superstition plus uniquely look again to the revelation mentioning them. I hope it can offer a new perspective on that matter.

## **CHAPTER 2 : INTRODUCTION OF ROMAN EMPIRE**

### **2.1 Background of Roman Empire**

Notable historians such as Edward Gibbon and Dio Cassius agreed that the accession of Emperor Commodus in 180 AD marks the beginning of the declination of Roman Empire that centered in

Rome, Italy.<sup>1</sup> Few emperors come and go, but none can fix Roman Empire that was dragged down by invasions, civil strife, economic disorder, and plague.<sup>2</sup>

Order was eventually restored by Constantine the Great, who became the first emperor to convert to Christianity, and who established Constantinople as the new capital of the eastern empire in 306 AD. During the decades of the Constantinian dynasties in the east and Valentinian dynasties in the west, the empire was divided along an east-west axis, with dual power centres in Constantinople and Rome. Theodosius I, the last emperor to rule over both East and West, died in 395 AD after making Christianity the official religion of the empire. His death also mark the official separation between west and east. The west continue to collapse but the east, from now on called The Byzantine Empire, will continue to strive.

The Byzantine Empire, also referred to as the Eastern Roman Empire or Byzantium, was the continuation of the Roman Empire in its eastern provinces during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, when its capital city was Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul, and formerly Byzantium). It survived the fragmentation and fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century AD and continued to exist for an additional thousand years until it fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. During most of its existence, the empire was the most powerful economic, cultural, and military force in Europe. Both "Byzantine Empire" and "Eastern Roman Empire" are terms created after the end of the realm; its citizens continued to refer to their empire simply as the Roman Empire (Greek: *Βασιλεία Ῥωμαίων*, tr. *Basileia Rhōmaiōn*; Latin: *Imperium Romanum*), or Romania (*Ῥωμανία*), and to themselves as "Romans"<sup>3</sup>

There are three Byzantine emperors that dubbed 'the most important caesar due to their achievements and direct effects to the empire. First was Constantine the Great, obviously for founding the empire and setting up the Constantine that soon became the capital for the new

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The Decline And Fall in the West*, Herts, United Kingdom : Wordsworth Editions Ltd (1776), pg 511

<sup>2</sup> Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, London : W.W Norton & Company (1971), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Liz James, *A Companion to Byzantium* Chichester: John Wiley. (2010), pg. 14

empire. Second was Emperor Justinian I that ascend the throne in 527 AD. He was the one that restructure public administration and reform the judiciary system.

In 529 AD, Justinian appointed a ten-man commission chaired by John the Cappadocian to revise Roman law and create a new codification of laws and jurists' extracts, known as the "*Corpus Juris Civilis*" or the Justinian Code. In 534, the Corpus was updated and, along with the enactments promulgated by Justinian after 534, formed the system of law used for most of the rest of the Byzantine era. The Corpus forms the basis of civil law of many modern states. <sup>4</sup>

The third was Emperor Heraclius, the one that will be extensively discussed in this paper, for his masterful victory over the Persians, a war that lasted for 26 years. This war have huge effect on nearby states, also most devastating for both sides and was mentioned in Quran in 30 : 2-5. He also changed the identity of the empire from Latin-based to Greek-based. During his reign, the term 'Caesar' that officially applied to the emperor was changed to 'Basileus', a Greek word for caesar. During the campaign against Persia, he retake Jarusalem and True Cross that was captured before by Persia. These two entities are considered the utmost sacred among Christians.

## **2.2 The Emperor and land of Roman Empire during the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)**

The aim of this study is to understand the belief system of Roman Empire during Prophet Muhammad's era, specifically to understand the context of revelations regarding the Roman Empire. Thus, The term 'Prophet Muhammad's era' can be narrow down to his years of revelation, in other term, his prophethood until his death. That time period consist between the year of 610 AD to 632 AD.

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<sup>4</sup> Merryman, John Henry; Perez-Perdomo, Rogelio, *The Civil Law Tradition: An Introduction to the Legal Systems of Europe and Latin America*, California : Stanford University Press (2007) pg 203.

Within that time period, only Heraclius serve as the caesar which date back from the year 610 AD to 641 AD. Although Prophet Muhammad's prophethood started on 10th of August 610<sup>5</sup> and Heraclius official coronation is on 5th of October 610 which makes Muhammad's prophethood precedes by 54 days, I still limit my study on Heraclius and exclude emperor Phocas before him for two reasons. One, those 54 days Phocas was not actually in control anymore because Heraclius is at the end of the process of sacking him. Two, because earlier days of revelation did not mention Byzantine Empire.

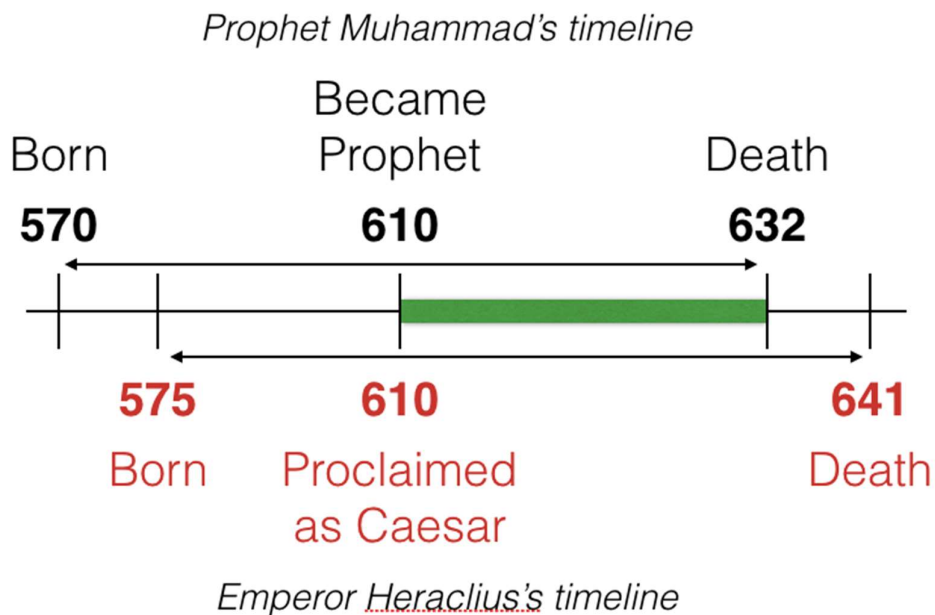


Table 1 : Timeline of both figures. Green line emphasis the time period of the study

### 2.2.1 The emperor : Heraclius the Younger

According to Walter E. Kaegi, Heraclius the Younger was born son of Heraclius the Elder and Epiphania in 575 AD, and was probably of Armenian descent. ( one early and one late source call him Cappadocian, but that is not irreconcilable with being Armenian ). His father, also named Heraclius, had been a prominent general in 585 AD, apparently second in command to Philippikos, the supreme regional commander, the Master of the Soldiers in the East. These soldiers are the one that guard from Sassanian threats before Byzantine-Sassanid war erupted in 602. This

<sup>5</sup> Safi Ar-Rahman Al-Mubarakfoury, In the Shade of the Message and Prophethood". Ar-Raheeq Al-Makhtum. Cairo : Darrussalam ( 2010 ) pg. 68.



position made his father learned the Persian tactics in battle and later teaches his son which turn out that lessons is a golden asset during his reign. By approximately the year 600, or any event by 602, Heraclius the Elder had received appointments as axarch in Africa on the authority of Emperor Maurice, where Heraclius the Younger would spent 10 years before he rise against emperor Phocas that murdered Maurice.<sup>6</sup>

After Heraclius the Younger ( later will recognize as Heraclius the emperor ) seized the throne in 610, Byzantine was in the middle of war against the Persian. He was able to sue for peace with Persian King in exchange for an annual tribute of a thousand talents of gold, a thousand talents of silver, a thousand silk robes, a thousand horses, and a thousand virgins to the Persian King. The peace allowed him to rebuild the Empire's army by slashing non-military expenditure, devaluing the currency, and melting down, with the backing of Patriarch Sergius, Church treasures to raise the necessary funds to continue the war.

Late in 627 he launched a winter offensive into Mesopotamia, where, despite the desertion of his Turkish allies, he defeated the Persians under Rhahzadh at the Battle of Nineveh. Khosrau, the Persian king was overthrown and killed in a coup led by his son Kavadh II, who at once sued for peace, agreeing to withdraw from all occupied territories. In 629 Heraclius restored the True Cross to Jerusalem in a majestic ceremony.

In that same year, he encountered Muslim for the first time in the battle of Mu'tah. A small Muslim skirmishing force attacked the province of Arabia in response to the Muslim ambassador's murder at the hands of the Ghassanid Roman governor, but were repulsed.

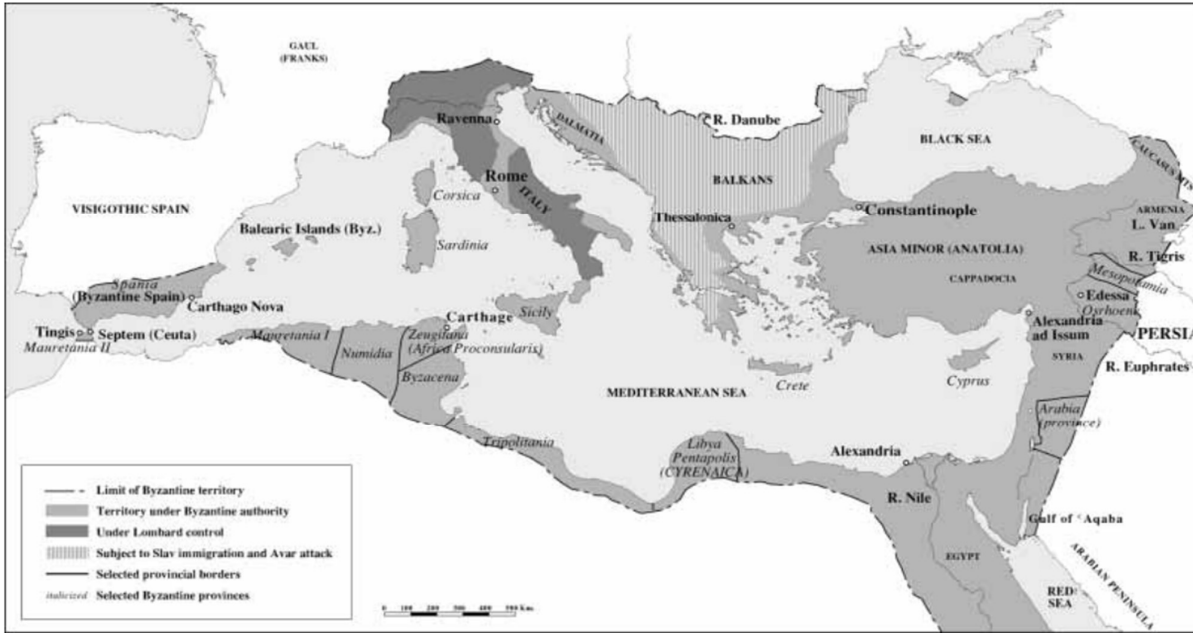
Later in 634, Heraclius had fallen ill and was unable to personally lead his armies to resist the Arab conquests of Syria and Roman Palestine. In a battle fought near Ajnadayn in the summer of 634, the Rashidun Caliphate army achieved a decisive victory. Jerusalem surrendered to the

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<sup>6</sup> Walter E. Kaegi, Heraclius : Emperor of Byzantine, Cambridge : Cambridge Univeristy Press, (2007 ) pg 19-50.

Arabs in 637, following a stout resistance; in 638, the Caliph Omar rode into the city. Heraclius stopped by Jerusalem to recover the True Cross whilst it was under siege. Eventually he died of natural cause in 641.

**2.2.2 The land and population of Roman Empire during that time.**



*Map 1 : Roman Empire in 600 AD<sup>7</sup>*

There is no accurate statistics exist for the population of Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian and Mesopotamian cities and villages. It is probable that the population on the eve of the Muslim conquest was much smaller that it had been in the fourth or early sixth centuries. Plague and war presumably were the most main contributors to the demographic shrinkage.

It is conceivable that the population of the Greek East in the second century Roman principate reached 28 million to 34 million at the maximum, although by 630 AD, that total had

<sup>7</sup> Ibid page. 20.

probably declined by 20 percent to 40 percent, if not more, to between approximately 17 million and 27 million.<sup>8</sup>

#### **2.4 Text of Quran and Hadith mentioning Roman Empire**

There is only one place in the Quran that mentioned Roman Empire directly that is in Surah Rum verse 2-5 ( 30 : 2-5 ). Ibnu Kathir gave comment about these verses that it was revealed 2 years before the hijrah, and Musyrikin sided with the Persion because they also worship pagan but Muslim sided with the Romans because they are the people of the book ( ahlu kitab ). At that time, the Persian advanced to Contantinople thus weakened Muslim's motivation whom are, at the same time, was also pressured by the dominance of Quraish in Mecca.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Walter E Kaegi, Byzantium and early Islamic conquest, Cmbridge : Cambridge University Press ( 1993 ), page 27.

<sup>9</sup> Abū l-Fidā' Ismā'īl, Tafsir Ibnu Kathir, Cairo : Darussalam ( 2010 ) pg 297

The Romans gained victory when the Hudaibiyah treaty took place, that is seven years later. And when Heraclius went to Damascus, on his way to restore the True Cross, he invited Abu Sufyan, whom at that time still uphold paganism faith and also travelled to Damascus for business purposes. The reason for Heraclius invited Abu Sufyan is to gain more knowledge about Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) because by this time, the letters that was sent to all kings had reached him, thus happened the famous chat that Heraclius asked about Prophet Muhammad ( pbuh ) and his faith.

The complete dialogue between Heraclius and Abu Sufyan has been recorded in the authentic book of Hadith, Sahih Bukhari, which is a collection of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad ( pbuh ) and his companions, and the traditions of the Prophet ( pbuh ).

Abu Sufyan retold this story after he embraced Islam. Abdullah bin Abbas narrated :

Abdullah bin Abbas narrated,

“Abu Sufyan bin Harb informed me that Heraclius had sent a messenger to him while he had been accompanying a caravan from Quraish. They were merchants doing business in Sham (Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan), at the time when Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) had truce with Abu Sufyan and Quraish infidels. So Abu Sufyan and his companions went to Heraclius at Ilya (Jerusalem). Heraclius called them in the court and he had all the senior Roman dignitaries around him. He called for his translator who, translating Heraclius’s question said to them, “Who amongst you is closely related to that man who claims to be a Prophet?”

Abu Sufyan replied, “I am the nearest relative to him (amongst the group).”

Heraclius said, “Bring him (Abu Sufyan) close to me and make his companions stand behind him.”

Abu Sufyan added, Heraclius told his translator to tell my companions that he wanted to put some questions to me regarding that man (The Prophet) and that if I told a lie they (my companions) should contradict me.” Abu Sufyan added, “By Allah! Had I not been afraid of my companions labeling me a liar, I would not have spoken the truth about the Prophet.”

The first question he asked me about him was:

“What is his family status amongst you?”

I replied, “He belongs to a good (noble) family amongst us.”

Heraclius further asked, “Has anybody amongst you ever claimed the same (i.e. to be a Prophet) before him?”

I replied, “No.”

He said, "Was anybody amongst his ancestors a king?"

I replied, "No."

Heraclius asked, "Do the nobles or the poor follow him?"

I replied, "It is the poor who follow him."

He said, "Are his followers increasing decreasing (day by day)?"

I replied, "They are increasing."

He then asked, "Does anybody amongst those who embrace his religion become displeased and renounce the religion afterwards?"

I replied, "No."

Heraclius said, "Have you ever accused him of telling lies before his claim (to be a Prophet)?"

I replied, "No."

Heraclius said, "Does he break his promises?"

I replied, "No. We are at truce with him but we do not know what he will not do it." I could not find opportunity to say anything against him except that.

Heraclius asked, "Have you ever had a war with him?"

I replied, "Yes."

Then he said, "What was the outcome of the battles?"

I replied, "Sometimes he was victorious and sometimes we."

Heraclius said, "What does he order you to do?"

I said, "He tells us to worship Allah and Allah alone and not to worship anything along with Him, and to renounce all that our ancestors had said. He orders us to pray, to speak the truth, to be chaste and to keep good relations with our kin."

Heraclius asked the translator to convey to me the following, "I asked you about his family and your reply was that he belonged to a very noble family. In fact all the Apostles come from noble families amongst their respective peoples. I questioned you whether anybody else amongst you claimed such a thing, your reply was in the negative. If the answer had been in the affirmative, I would have thought that this man was following the previous man's statement. Then I asked you whether anyone of his ancestors was a king. Your reply was in the negative, and if it had been in the affirmative, I would have thought that this man wanted to take back his ancestral kingdom."

I further asked whether he was ever accused of telling lies before he said what he said, and your reply was in the negative. So I wondered how a person who does not tell a lie about others could ever tell a lie about Allah. I then asked you whether the rich people followed him or the poor. You replied that it was the poor who followed him. And in fact, all Apostles have been followed by this very class of people. Then I asked you whether his followers were increasing or decreasing. You replied that they were increasing, and in fact this is the way of true faith, till it is complete in all respects. I further asked you whether there was

anybody, who, after embracing his religion, became displeased and discarded his religion. Your reply was in the negative, and in fact this is (the sign of) true faith, when its delight enters the hearts and mixes with them completely. I asked you whether he had ever betrayed. You replied in the negative and likewise the Apostles never betray. Then I asked you what he ordered you to do. You replied that he ordered you to worship Allah and Allah alone and not to worship anything along with Him and forbade you to worship idols and ordered you to pray, to speak the truth and to be chaste. If what you have said is true, he will very soon occupy this place underneath my feet and I knew it (from the scriptures) that he was going to appear but I did not know that he would be from you, and if I could reach him definitely, I would go immediately to meet him and if I were with him, I would certainly wash his feet.' Heraclius then asked for the letter addressed by Allah's Apostle which was delivered by Dihya to the Governor of Busra, who forwarded it to Heraclius to read. The contents of the letter were as follows: "In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful (This letter is) from Muhammad the slave of Allah and His Apostle to Heraclius the ruler of Byzantine. Peace be upon him, who follows the right path. Furthermore I invite you to Islam, and if you become a Muslim you will be safe, and Allah will double your reward, and if you reject this invitation of Islam you will be committing a sin by misguiding your peasants. And I recite to you Allah's Statement:

"O people of the scripture! Come to a word common to you and us that we worship none but Allah and that we associate nothing in worship with Him, and that none of us shall take others as Lords beside Allah. Then, if they turn away, say: Bear witness that we are Muslims (those who have surrendered to Allah)." (Holy Qur'an 3:64).

Abu Sufyan then added, "When Heraclius had finished his speech and had read the letter, there was a great hue and cry in the Royal Court. So we were turned out of the court. I told my companions that the question of Ibn-Abi-Kabsha) (the Prophet Muhammad) has become so prominent that even the King of Bani Al-Asfar (Byzantine) is afraid of him. Then I started to become sure that he (the Prophet) would be the conqueror in the near future till I embraced Islam (i.e. Allah guided me to it)."

The sub narrator adds :

"Ibn An-Natur was the Governor of Jerusalem and Heraclius was the head of the Christians of Sham. Ibn An-Natur narrates that once while Heraclius was visiting Jerusalem, he got up in the morning with a sad mood. Some of his priests asked him why he was in that mood. Heraclius was a foreteller and an astrologer. He replied, "At night when I looked at the stars, I saw that the leader of those who practice circumcision had appeared (become the conqueror). Who are they who practice circumcision?"

The people replied, "Except the Jews nobody practices circumcision, so you should not be afraid of them (Jews). Just issue orders to kill every Jew present in the country."

While they were discussing it, a messenger sent by the king of Ghassan to convey the news of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) to Heraclius was brought in. Having heard the news, he (Heraclius) ordered the people to go and see whether the messenger of Ghassan was circumcised. The people, after seeing him, told Heraclius that he was circumcised. Heraclius then asked him about the Arabs. The messenger replied, "Arabs also practice circumcision."

Heraclius remarked that sovereignty of the Arabs had appeared. Heraclius then wrote a letter to his friend in Rome who was as good as Heraclius in knowledge. Heraclius then left for Homs, a town in Syrian, and stayed there until he received the reply of his letter from his friend who agreed with him in his opinion about the emergence of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the fact that he was a Prophet.

On that Heraclius invited all the heads of the Byzantines to assemble in his palace at Homs. When they assembled, he ordered that all the doors of his palace be closed. Then he came out and said, "O Byzantines! If success is your desire and if you seek right guidance and want your empire to remain then give a pledge of allegiance to this Prophet (i.e. embrace Islam)."

(On hearing the views of Heraclius) the people ran towards the gates of the palace but found the doors closed. Heraclius realized their hatred towards Islam and when he lost the hope of their embracing Islam, he ordered that they should be brought back in audience.

(When they returned) he said, "What already said was just to test the strength of your conviction and I have seen it." The people prostrated before him and became pleased with him, and this was the end of Heraclius's story (in connection with his faith).<sup>10</sup>

Ibn Hisyam also narrates about the ambassador that was sent to Heraclius, saying :

"He ( Prophet Muhammad pbuh ) dipatched Dihya ibn Khalifa Al-Qalbi to Heraclius, emperor of Byzantine, Abbdallah ibn Huzaifa As-Sahmi to Chosroes, emperor of Persia, Hatib ibn Abi Baltaah to Muqawqis, ruler of Alexandria, Amir ibn As-Sahmi to Jaydar and Ayyad, sons of Al-Jalandi Al-Azdi, king of Oman, Salit ibn Amr of the Banu Amr ibn Luay to Thumama ibn Athal Al-Hanafi and Hawdha ibn Ali al-Hanafi, chiefs of the Yamama, al-Ala ibn Al-Hadrami to Al-Mundhir ibn Sawi, ruler of Bahrain, and Shujja ibn Wahb al-Asadito al-Harith ibn Abi Shamr Al-Ghassani, ruler of the Syrian border country."<sup>11</sup>

Imam At-Tabari recorded Heraclius response to Dihyah Al-Kalbi :

" By God, I know that your master is a prophet sent by God, that he is the one for whom that we are waiting and who is to be found in our scripture. Were I not afraid by Byzantium, I would follow him."<sup>12</sup>

The Prophet Muhammad ( pbuh ) also gave phropercy that Constantine would one day became under Muslim's control:

"Verily you shall conquer Constantinople. What a wonderful leader will her leader be, and what a wonderful army will that army be!"<sup>13</sup>

And there is a hadith when Prophet Muhammad ( pbuh ) gave the prophecy in the middle of digging work prior to The Battle of The Trench ( Khandaq ) :

"I have seen some sparks. After the first spark, I saw the shadow of the White Palace in the state of Yemen in the air. After the second spark, I saw the shadow of Kisra

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<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Ibn Ismail Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari, Lahore : Al-Saadawi Pubns ( 1996 ) Book 1, Hadith 7. Transelated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan

<sup>11</sup> Abd al-Malik Ibn Hisham, d. 834, Mustafa Al-Saqa, Ibrahim Al-Abyari, Abdul Hafiz Syalabi, and Fadhli Bahri. Sirah Nabawiyah Ibnu Hisyam. Shah Alam: Pustaka Dini, 2006. pg 384

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Tarikh At-Tabari, Vol. XXXVIII. New York: State University of New York, pg 1591.

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Ibn Ismail Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari, Lahore : Al-Saadawi Pubns ( 1996 ) Book 1, pg 3595.

Castle in the Land of Persia and after the third spark, I saw the king's palace in Constantinople."<sup>14</sup>

#### **2.4.1 Indirect mention about Romans**

In Quran, Allah s.w.t mention in Surah Quraish verse 2 that the Quraish of Arabian tribe has a habit of making business travel to Yemen on winter and to Damascus, a Roman Empire vessel state, on summer. This explain Prophet Muhammad ( pbuh ) journey to Damascus before he got married to Khadija, and Abu Sufyan's regular travel to Damascus to trade.

I also concluded that Quran and Hadith mentioned the Romans indirectly when they speak about 'ahli kitab' ( the people of the book ), because it defines as the Christians and the Jews. The Roman Empire, not only majority of them were Christians, but they also made it the official religion. In Quran there are approximately 12 verses that mentioned 'ahlu kitab'.<sup>15</sup> In summary, Quran categorise them as non-believers because they worship God other than Allah and they changed the holy scriptures that fit their suitings. Alas, they enjoy special position in Islam because they all share the same origin and have connection through belief in Allah s.w.t. They can pay jizyah if they want to enjoy living in Muslim land, their slaughters can be eaten and Muslim men can marry their women.

A notable hadith mentioning ahlu kitab was the story of Adi bin Hatim. `Adi was the son of Hatim, the chieftain of Tai' tribe, which lived in Najd Province in the central part of Arabian Peninsula. `Adi and his tribe were Christians. When Islamic conquests came near to his tribe's boundaries, `Adi decided to flee to Syria that was under a Christian King. Due to his haste in leaving his people, he could not take his beloved sister along with his caravan proceeding to Syria.

His sister and a group of his tribe were taken as prisoners. Later, the Prophet (pbuh) released her and she returned to her brother (`Adi) asking him about converting to Islam. `Adi

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<sup>14</sup> Muhammad Ibn Ismail Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari, Lahore : Al-Saadawi Pubns ( 1996 ) Book 1, pg 2919.

<sup>15</sup> <http://quranbysubject.com/category.php?category=5125b5b6-3e25-11e4-8652-000c29db8d9b> retracted on 27 May 2019



came at the head of a group of his tribe to meet the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Madinah.

`Adi's father was known for his generosity, so the people of Madinah were pleased with his coming to the Prophet. `Adi came to the Prophet with a cross of silver around his neck while the Prophet was reciting:

They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah... (At-Tawbah 9:31)

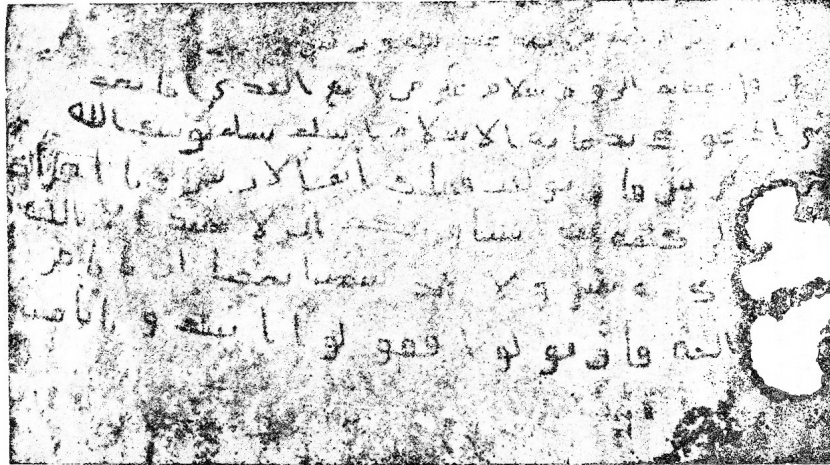
`Adi said that they did not worship them, but the Prophet replied, "Yes, but they prohibited to the people what was lawful and permitted them what was unlawful, and the people obeyed them."

By analysing the revelation that mentioned Roman Empire, I can conclude that they are very powerful and have significant importance in Arabian economy as well. Christian religion is also widely discussed in the Quran especially in Surah Ali Imran. At-Taubah and Al-Qasas. Some of them embrace Islam and some of them became arch-enemy of Islam.

## **2.5 Muslim's encounter with Roman Empire during the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)**

### **2.5.1 Hudaibiyah Treaty**

After the treaty of Hudaibiyah in 628 AD, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) sent letters to head of states inviting them to embrace Islam. Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) letter reached Heraclius and it says :



*Image 1 : Purported letter sent by Muhammad to Heraclius, emperor of Byzantium; reproduction taken from Majid Ali Khan<sup>16</sup>*

### **2.5.2 The battle of Mu'tah**

The Battle of Mu'tah was fought in September 629 AD, near the village of Mu'tah, east of the Jordan River and Karak in Karak Governorate. The Byzantines were reoccupying territory following the peace accord between Emperor Heraclius and the Sasanid general Shahrbaraz in July 629. The Byzantine sakellarios Theodore, was placed in command of the army, and while in the area of Balqa, Arab tribes were also employed.

Meanwhile, Prophet Muhammad had sent his emissary to the ruler of Basra. While on his way to Basra, he was executed in the village of Mu'tah by the orders of a Ghassanid official. Prophet Muhammad dispatched 3,000 of his troops in 629, for a quick expedition to attack and

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<sup>16</sup> Majid Ali Khan, Muhammad The Final Messenger, New Delhi : Islamic Book Service, New Delhi (1998). pg 121

punish the tribes for the murder of his emissary by the Ghassanids. The army was led by Zayd ibn Harithah; the second-in-command was Ja'far ibn Abi Talib and the third-in-command was 'Abd Allah ibn Rawahah. All three were killed and Khalid Al-Walid, seeing that the situation was hopeless, prepared to withdraw and retreated to Medina.

### **2.5.3 Expedition to Tabuk**

Prophet Muhammad received intelligence and there's reason to believe that Roman army was prepared to invade Mecca and Medina. Right after the Conquest of Mecca in January 630 AD, Prophet Muhammad waste no time calling all his alliances and raised an army to face the Byzantine.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his forces marched northwards to Tabuk near the Gulf of Aqaba in October 630. It was his largest and last military expedition. After arriving at Tabuk and setting up camp there, Prophet Muhammad's army prepared to face the Byzantine invasion. Prophet Muhammad spent twenty days at Tabuk, scouting the area, making alliances with local chiefs, and with no sign of the Byzantine army, he decided to return to Medina. Though Prophet Muhammad did not encounter an Byzantine army at Tabuk, according to the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World, "this show of force demonstrated his intention to challenge the Byzantines for control of the northern part of the caravan route from Mecca to Syria"<sup>17</sup>

### **2.5.4 Second expedition to face Byzantine**

Tabuk expedition was seen by Byzantine as a challenge to their territory. So, they prepared an army at southern border of Levant to claim back and to crush the Muslim. After the 'Farewell Pilgrimage' in 632 AD, Prophet Muhammad actively prepared a new army to face the threat. He appointed Usamah bin Zayd, the son of Zayd bin Haritha, the commander that was killed in the battle of Mu'tah to be commander in chief, at that time he was 17. This expedition was halted

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<sup>17</sup> Alford T. Welch,; Ahmad S. Moussalli, Esposito, John L. (ed.), Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World.. Oxford : Oxford University Press (2009) "Muhammad' pg. 211

because the death of Prophet Muhammad. The expedition resumes in Abu Bakr's era and Muslim were victorius.

## **CHAPTER 3 : BELIEF SYSTEMS OF ROMAN EMPIRE**

### **3.1 Definition of belief systems**

According to Cambridge Dictionary, the word 'belief' means : 'the feeling of being certain that something exists or is true'.<sup>18</sup> According Collins Dictionary, belief means "a feeling of certainty that something exists, is true, or is good"<sup>19</sup>. Merriam Webster defines it as 3 things : 'a state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing', 'something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion, something believed' and 'conviction of the truth of some statement or the reality of some being or phenomenon especially when based on

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<sup>18</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/belief> Retracted on 27 May 2019

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/belief> Retracted on 27 May 2019

examination of evidence'.<sup>20</sup> It can be concluded that belief means something abstract whether its a feeling, faith, credence or conviction that was believed to be true either by a person or by a group of people.

The use of the term "belief system" can be highly confusing. Psychologists, political scientists and anthropologists tend to use the term in rather different senses. There is some network of interrelated concepts and propositions at varying levels of generality. J.L. Usó-Doménech and J. Nescolarde-Selva defines belief systems are : the stories we tell ourselves to define our personal sense of reality'. They added : "every human being has a belief system that they utilize, and it is through this mechanism that we individually, "make sense" of the world around us."<sup>21</sup>

They both go on by not explaining what is belief system per se, but rather break down what is the elements in belief system and its characteristics. It includes values, substantial beliefs such as religion, orientation, culture, perspective and ideology. In this study, I am going to use this interpretation of Belief Systems which include all 6 of the characteristics that was mentioned.

### **3.2 Paulism**

Paulism, or known as Pauline Christianity, is a set of renditions of Jesus's teachings that became what known today as Christianity. Paul was the most influential apostle among the 12 apostles, therefore have the most authority on how Christianity should be developed. The term 'Pauline Christianity' only emerged in 20th Century according to Hantz Lietzmann.<sup>22</sup>

Early Christian was only embraced among Jew community. According to Paul, he initially persecuted those early Christians, but then converted, and started to proselytise among Gentiles. Paul made some renditions to appeal the Gentiles. The most significant renditions were abolishment of circumcision, the allowance of eating pork and changing the Sabbath day from

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/belief> Retracted on 27 May 2019

<sup>21</sup> J.L. Usó-Doménech and J. Nescolarde-Selva, What are belief systems? Foundations of Science 21 (1):147-152 (2016) pg 1

<sup>22</sup> Hans Lietzmann, History of the Early Church, Cambridge : James Clarke Lutterworth ( 1993 ) Vol. 1 p. 206

Saturday to Sunday. There is a lot of motivation behind the renditions, but according to Robert Eisenman, the main motivation was “as a method of taming a dangerous sect among radical Jews and making it palatable to Roman authorities”.<sup>23</sup> In this view, Paul is to be taken as pro-Hellenization or Romanisation.

The effect was phenomenal as people from outside Jew community flocking to embrace Christianity. At this point, according to James Dunn, the real distinction between Christianity and Judaism began to develop, although it takes centuries before the breaking of both religion to manifest completely.<sup>24</sup>

There are mixed reviews on Paul's renditions from Christian bishops and scholars alike. In the process where influential Paul teachings started to spread, a sect group began to emerge. They were known as the Ebionites. They reject Paul's rendition and use only a version of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, known as the Gospel of the Ebionites.

On scholarly views, James Tabor disapproves Paul's action because it triggers the first sect in Christianity, thus the beginning of other sects to form and further divide the adherents of Christ. For Robert Eisenman, the move was necessary as Jesus himself was considered as a threat to Roman dominance and was seen as natural evolution to include other than Jews.

### **3.2.1 Paulism in Heraclius era**

It is obvious that the initial shape of Jesus teachings were sidelined at the time of Heraclius and Paul's version became dominant in Byzantine Empire. In year 321 AD, Constantine made Sunday the official holiday in Roman Empire.<sup>25</sup> The Eastern Orthodox, the official sect of Christianity in Byzantine Empire during Heraclius was also performing prayer on sundays.

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Eisenman, James the Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls, London : Penguin Books (1997).. pg. 324

<sup>24</sup> James Dunn, The Parting of the Ways, Norwich : Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd;(1991), pg. 76

<sup>25</sup> Codex Justinianus lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; trans. in Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 3, p. 380, note 1

In my view, we also can determine whether Paulism was strong and actively practiced by looking at the policy towards the Jews. Because the separation between the two is the direct product of Paulism. In Heraclian era, the empire and The Jews are not in good term. This volatile relationship started at the Justinian era ( 528-565 AD ) where he allows Jew to conduct businesses and worship, but prohibit Jew to become a witness in an event where a christian Roman citizen where accused.<sup>26</sup> This made the Jew felt underestimated and began to isolate themselves in Palestine. Emperor Phocas ( 602-610 ) went further with orders to baptise all known Jews in the kingdom. This explain why Jews in Edessa decline to open the gate to Heraclius after the end of Sassanid's seige. Although Heraclius did not slaughter the Jews when he reconquer Jerusalem from Sassanid, it can be concluded that Christians and Jews did not get along very much in the Heraclian era.

### **3.3 Caesaropapism**

Caesaropapism is the idea of combining the power of secular government with religious power, or of making secular authority superior from the spiritual authority of the Church; especially concerning the connection of the Church with government. Justus Henning Böhmer may have originally coined the term caesaropapism (Cäseropapismus).<sup>27</sup> Max Weber wrote: "a secular, caesaropapist ruler... exercises supreme authority in ecclesiastic matters by virtue of his autonomous legitimacy"<sup>28</sup>. According to Weber's political sociology, caesaropapism entails "the complete subordination of priests to secular power."<sup>29</sup>

In its extreme form, caesaropapism is a political theory in which the head of state, notably the emperor ("Caesar", by extension a "superior" king), is also the supreme head of the church

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<sup>26</sup> Jems Shared, Byzantine Jewry in the Seventh Century, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press (1955) , pg. 105

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth Pennington, "Caesaropapism," The New Catholic Encyclopedia: Supplement 2010 (2 Vols. Detroit: Gale Publishers 2010) pg. 213

<sup>28</sup> Richard Swedberg,; Ola Agevall. The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Central Concepts. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.(2005) p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

(pope or analogous religious leader). In this form, caesaropapism inverts theocracy (or hierocracy in Weber) in which institutions of the church control the state. Both caesaropapism and theocracy are systems in which there is no separation of church and state and in which the two form parts of a single power-structure.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.3.1 Caesaropapism vs Gelasian doctrine vs Secularism

The Gelasian Doctrine is a concept of separation of power between the state and the church. It derives from an event in the days of Jesus where he proclaimed that taxes must be paid to the Roman authority, not to the disciples of Jesus, thus his popular remark : "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (*Ἀπόδοτε οὖν τὰ Καίσαρος Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ Θεῷ*) in Matthew 22:21.

The term 'Gelasian Doctrine' derived from a letter sent by Pope Gelasius I to Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I Dicorus in 494 AD, titled : *Famuli vestrae pietatis* or in Latin mnemonic 'duo sunt' ( there are two ), explaining Christian theology about division of power.

On determining which entity holds the upper side on another, Brent A. Strawn explains : "secular temporal authority is inferior to priestly spiritual authority since a priestly spiritual authority is responsible for the eternal condition of both a secular temporal authority and the subjects of that secular temporal authority but "implies that the priestly authority is inferior to the secular authority in the secular domain."<sup>31</sup>

Some scholars such as Kermit D. Hall opined that Gelasian doctrine is a variation of secularism.<sup>32</sup> In my opinion, that view was inaccurate because secularism, as defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is the "indifference to, or rejection or exclusion of, religion and

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<sup>30</sup> Deno J. Geanakoplos, Church and State in the Byzantine Empire: A Reconsideration of the Problem of Caesaropapism,, Church History Vol. 34, No. 4 (Dec., 1965), pp. 381-403

<sup>31</sup> Brent A. Strawn, ed. "Medieval Period". The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Law. Oxford University Press (2015).. PG. 437

<sup>32</sup> Kermit D. Hall, Ed. The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States, Oxford : Oxford University Press (1992), pp. 717–26



religious considerations." In different contexts the word can refer to anticlericalism, atheism, desire to exclude religion from social activities or civic affairs, banishment of religious symbols from the public sphere, state neutrality toward religion, the separation of religion from state, or disestablishment.<sup>33</sup>

On the contrary, religion was deeply rooted in the Gelasian state. As a man, the emperor needs the priest's sacraments, and therefore in the "order of religion" the prince is subject to the pontiff. With his reference to the *regalis potestas*, however, Gelasius was indicating the emperor's office, rather than his person, and he recognized that God had bestowed the office. Indeed, as ruler, the emperor holds the supreme "dignity" on earth. Hence Gelasius accepted the emperor's unqualified jurisdiction over bishops in the "sphere of public order", as well as in the bishops' obligation to obey imperial laws.<sup>34</sup>

It can be concluded that in Gelasian doctrine, the church deals with heavenly matters and the Caesar deals with worldly matters.

For those who categorised secularism as a type of separation of power, yes Gelasian doctrine have similarities. But if we look closely, secularism actually defined as excluding religion in public affairs whereas Gelasian did not. In short, both seems alike but actually falls in different category.

### **3.3.2 Caesaropapism in Heraclian era**

Heraclius, as a head of state, did use religion as main propaganda throughout his reign. The David Plates, a series of nine silver plates were produced in Constantinople during Heraclian era, depicts heroic gestures of David. The plates were found in Cyprus in 1902. There are five written papers between 1970 and 1978 analysing what is the purpose of the plates. Kurt Weitzmann, Mariette van

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<sup>33</sup> Nader Hashemi (2009). "Secularism". In John L. Esposito (ed.). *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pg 221

<sup>34</sup> Robert L. Benson, *The Gelasian Doctrine: Uses and Transformations*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press ( 1982 ) . pg 4

Grunsven-Eygenraam, Steven Wander, Suzanne Spain Alexander and James Trilling all agreed that Heraclius was the most likely patron of this set of plates, which are thought to evoke certain key victories in his reign.<sup>35</sup> This was referring to his achievements killing Phocas, defeating one-on-one combat with Sassanid warrior and defeating Khosrow II, thus ending Sassanian war against Byzantine.

Heraclius also heroically enters Jerusalem to return the True Cross on March 21, 629 or 630. For the Christians of Western Medieval Europe, Heraclius was the "first crusader". The iconography of the emperor appeared in the sanctuary at Mont Saint-Michel.



*Image 2 : One of nine of the David Plates : Fight between David and Goliath. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan*

This event cements Heraclius as the defender of Christian faith. He also married his niece, Martine in 633. this second marriage was considered incestuous and was very unpopular, but the church can do nothing about it.

The Byzantine Emperor typically protect the Eastern Church and manage its administration by presiding over Ecumenical Councils and appointing Patriarchs and setting territorial boundaries for their jurisdiction.<sup>36</sup> The Emperor exercised a strong control over the ecclesiastical hierarchy,

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<sup>35</sup> Ruth E. Leader, *The David Plates Revisited: Transforming the Secular in Early Byzantium*, *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 82, No. 3 (Sep., 2000), pp. 407-427

<sup>36</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, II, 1985, pp. 718–719

and the Patriarch of Constantinople could not hold office if he did not have the Emperor's approval.<sup>37</sup> Such Emperors as Basiliscus, Zeno, Justinian I, Heraclius, and Constans II published several strictly ecclesiastical edicts either on their own without the mediation of church councils, or they exercised their own political influence on the councils to issue the edicts. According to Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, the historical reality of caesaropapism stems from the confusion of the Byzantine Empire with the Kingdom of God and the zeal of the Byzantines "to establish here on earth a living icon of God's government in heaven"<sup>38</sup>

### **3.4 Hellenism / Greek astronomy**

The ancient Greeks kept the idea of Gods and omens, but began to theorise about the underlying structure of the universe, pondering why the Sun, planets, and stars moved. Ultimately, many of their ideas were based upon theology and heavenly perfection, that explains why almost all Greek astronomers were also philosophers.

Pythagoras is credited as the first Greek to think the earth spherical, but this idea was probably founded on mystic reasons rather than scientific. Aristotle's book "On the Heavens" summarises some astronomical notions before his time. He says, for example, that Xenophanes of Colophon claimed the earth below us is infinite, that it has "pushed its roots to infinity"; others believed the earth rested upon water, a claim whose original author seems to be Thales.<sup>39</sup>

Apart for a few exceptions, the general consensus among Greek astronomers was that the universe was earth-centred. During the 4th century BCE, Plato and Aristotle agreed on a geocentric model but both thinkers did so based on mystical arguments: The stars and planets were carried around the earth on spheres, arranged in a concentric fashion. Plato even described the universe as the Spindle of Necessity, attended by the Sirens and turned by the three Fates.

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<sup>37</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity to A.D. 1500*, I (revised ed.), San Francisco: Harper & Row (1975), pp. 283, 312

<sup>38</sup> Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (revised ed.), New York: Penguin Books (1980), p. 50

<sup>39</sup> Aristotle: *Book 2 On Heavens*, Chapter 14, p. 75

In a nutshell, Greek astronomy, that was known today as a discipline of science on its own, once was packed with theologian idea behind it. It can't be seen as a secular set of informations that detached with any form of religion or deities as it can be seen today.

#### **3.4.1 Heraclius assuming Greek identity : from individual to empire**

Heraclius himself, as stated earlier, was a Greek speaker from his childhood, and although he was raised in Armenia, where it was less Romanised, there is strong probability that he visited Constantine few times thus exposed him to Greek culture at early age.

During Heraclian era, Byzantine was transformed from Roman-identity empire into Greek-identity empire. According to Laila Abdul Jawad Ismail, the reason for this was the episodes of Sassanian invasion towards Byzantine land resulted in it's lost control much of it's land in the east such as Balkan, Mesopotamia and Asyria. This scenario fades the 'international status' of the empire thus made the greek-speaking citizens as the main contributor<sup>40</sup>. To reform the country, Heraclius changed the title of the emperor from 'Caesar' to 'Basileus, the Greek word for "sovereign", and that title was used by the Roman Emperors for the next 800 years. Heraclius also changed the official language of the Empire from Latin to Greek in 620. Two years before he started counter-attack against the Sassanid.

#### **3.4.2 Greek astronomy in Heraclian era.**

Heraclius, also recorded by Fredegarius, not just acquired knowledge in astronomy but 'practicing it' during his stay in Africa, specifically in Egyptian Alexandria. He resides there about 10 years from year 600 to 610, right before he launched a rebellion against Phocas from there.<sup>41</sup>

During his sojourn, he also befriended with Stephanos of Alexandria. Stephanos was a philosopher, astronomer and a teacher. Later after Heraclius became emperor, he was a public

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<sup>40</sup> دولة البيزنطية في عصر الامبراطور هرقل، د. ليلي عبد الجوال اسماعيل، دار النهضة العربية، ص ١٣٠-١٣٢

<sup>41</sup>. Walter Kaegi, Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium, Cmbridge : Cambridge University Press ( 1993 ) pg 31

lecturer in the court of Heraclius. In the manuscripts he is called the Universal Philosopher. A commentary to Ptolemy's Handy Tables was found and according to Jean Lempire, the most plausible author remains Stephanos, but Heraclius himself added in the text some notes : scholia, regnal years, and chronological chapters. This proves that research in astronomy and chronology seems to be an important activity in Byzantium.<sup>42</sup>

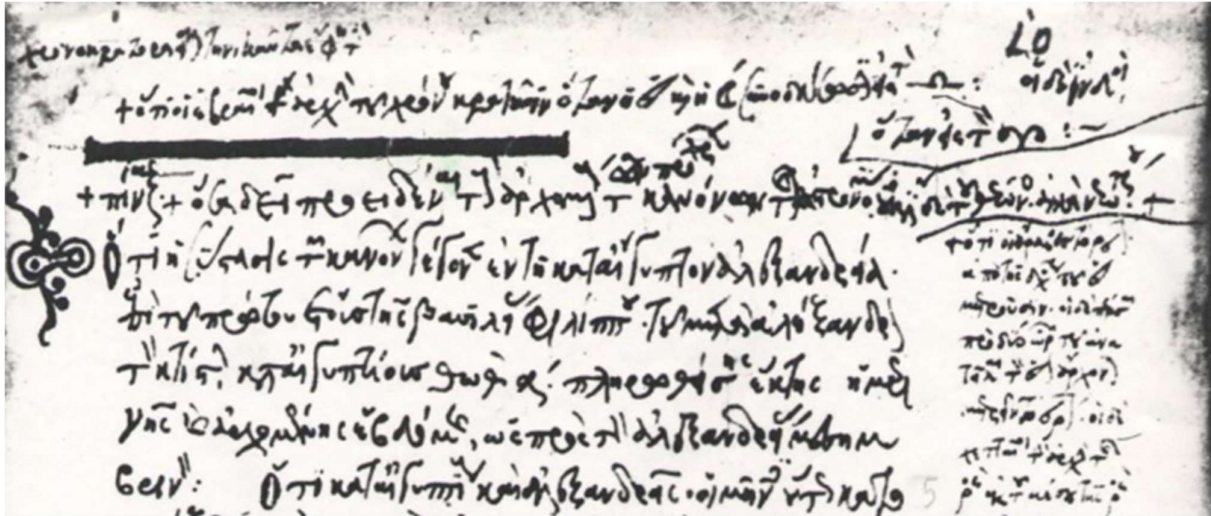


Image 3 : Commentary to Ptolemy's Handy Tables, underlined text was Heraclius addition

Although Heraclius seems active practicing Greek astronomy, there is no evidence to prove that Heraclius was influenced by polytheist religion that usually associated with it. In fact in my opinion, it is almost impossible to have a polytheist beliefs because of a few reasons.

One, on 313 AD, Edict of Milan come into effect. Promulgated by Constantine, it banned the use of state funds to promote the polytheistic faiths and made Christianity a preferred religion. Two, in 395 AD, the emperor Theodosius declared that Christianity according to the Council of Chalcedon was to be the only accepted faith in the Empire. While this also applied to nonstandard Christian sects, for the purpose of this answer the largest blow came in the closing of all Pagan

<sup>42</sup> Byzantine astronomy during the reign of Heraclius (610-641), Jean Lempire, [https://www.academia.edu/31117032/Byzantine\\_astronomy\\_during\\_the\\_reign\\_of\\_Heraclius\\_610-641](https://www.academia.edu/31117032/Byzantine_astronomy_during_the_reign_of_Heraclius_610-641). Retracted on 25/5/2019

temples and the outlaws of its practice. Third, in Heraclius era, Christianity has spread well, and polytheism at that time already was banned for 200 years and punishable by death. As stated by past topic about caesaropapism and incoming topic about how Heraclius wants to unify different sects of Christianity, it is almost impossible Heraclius was a polytheist himself.

### 3.5 : Monophysites Christianity

I purposely put Christianity at the very last so that we can imagine what kind of Christianity that Heraclius believes and preaches to his empire. Truly, it is a special breed that constitutes Paulism Christianity, Caesaropapism or should we say Basileusopapism, and a version of Greek astronomy that exclude polytheistic. And now add Monophysites Christianity.

The term derives from *μόνος* *monos*, "only, single" and *φύσις* *physis*, "nature", it is the Christological position that, after the union of the divine and the human in the historical incarnation, Jesus Christ, as the incarnation of the eternal Son or Word of God, had only a single "nature" which was either divine or a synthesis of divine and human. Monophysitism is contrasted to dyophysitism which maintains that Christ maintained two natures, one divine and one human, after the incarnation. Dyophysitism believes Jesus was born as a human and Virgin Mary was a mother of a human.<sup>43</sup>

Christian Sect	<b>Malakites</b> ( later known as Catholic church ) Dominates West Rome	<b>Jacobites</b> ( later known as Orthodox church ) Dominates East Rome	<b>Neftorian</b> ( later known as Oriental Orthodox ) Dominates Asyiria
View on Jesus	1 nature : God and Human. No separation and no merge	1 nature : God and Human. Merge of both nature	2 nature : Separation between God and Human nature
	Monophysites	Monophysites	Duophysites
View on Mary	Mother of God	Mother of God	Mother of Human

<sup>43</sup> Wayne A Grudem, Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith. Zondervan Academic, Michigan : Zondervan Academic ( 2014 ) pg. 74

*Table 2 : Christianity sects in 602 AD*

During Heraclian era, Neftorian sect already declared heresy by the Council of Chalcedon since 451 AD. After the Sassaniad was defeated, Heraclius tries to unite Jacobites and Neftorian as he understands, for an empire that rely heavily on religion, a split church means a split empire. Heraclius tried to promote a compromise doctrine called Monothelism but this philosophy was rejected as heretical by both sides of the dispute. Monothelism is the view that Jesus Christ has two natures but only one will. For this reason, Heraclius was viewed as a heretic and bad ruler by some later religious writers. After the Monophysite provinces were finally lost to the Muslims, Monothelism rather lost its *raison d'être* and was eventually abandoned.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> John Bagnell Bury,. A history of the later Roman empire from Arcadius to Irene (2005 ed.). Boston : Adamant Media Corporation. ( 2005 ) pg. 312

#### **CHAPTER 4 : CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS**

In chapter 2, we learned that Byzantine Empire during the time of Prophet Muhammad ( pbuh ) is a huge empire and in a middle of war with Persia. Heraclius, who just assumed power, did not inherit the throne through his family, but through a coup. He came from a humble background, an educated, and a military man himself. He was raised in the eastern boarder of Byzantine Empire, and lived his adult lives in Alexandria, Egypt, before he became the emperor. Heraclius is the only caesar that falls in the time period that this paper aims to study. So, I only focused my research and analyse the artefacts or any other materials that related to him.

In Quran, Allah gave prophecy that the Romans will defeat the Persians in up coming battle. It is obvious that he was the caesar that going to lead the Byzantine army and defeat the Persian as was mentioned in the Quran.

Muslims in the early days of islam have mixed opinion towards the Roman Empire. They have some sort of brotherly connection through the faiths as Islam and Christianity are interconnected. Muslim cherished when they knew that Romans going to win their war against the Persian. But after Muslims contained the internal war between Arabs through Hudaibiyah Treaty, they were ordered to spread Islam to other empire including the Romans. Although the ambassador to Heraclius received a welcoming gesture, the ambassador to Ghassanid king, a vassel kingdom to Byzantine was not. He was murdered and thus prompt the Battle of Mu'tah, where Heraclius act as the commender of Byzantine army. After that Muslims and Byzantine Empire was at war untill Constantine was liberated by Muhammad Al-Fateh in 1453 AD.



On Byzantine side, as Heraclius was quoted, acknowledged that Prophet Muhammad ( pbuh ) was the true prophet that was sent by God and was depicted in Christian's scripture. He even gone through a lot of trouble finding an Arab in Levant that was close to Prophet Muhammad ( pbuh ) to learn about him. He even sent letters to his friend to be confirm on the matter, but the empire was too huge, and he was afraid the whole empire will turn away from him.

In chapter 3, I included all belief systems that I could find that related to him. In summary, he adapts Pauline Christianity and Monophysites Christianity. Pauline Christianity breaks away from the Jewish community that the teachings of Jesus supposed to be. Monophysites Christianity believes that Jesus has one nature : the human nature and the divine nature imbedded in one person. It is a topic in Christianity that did not resolve until this day, and which became the main cause of the sects formation in that faith. The significant importance of Heraclius and Monophysites is that he tried to render some of the core teachings in order to unify with the other sects, which is Duophysites. This is another proof of him practicing Caesaropapism.

Caesaropapism is the idea of combining the power of secular government with the religious power, or of making secular authority superior to the spiritual authority of the Church; especially concerning the connection of the Church with government. It is not Secularism in nature like some scholars tried to claim.

And last but not least, he practiced Greek astronomy. Greek astronomy was part of Hellenism which is an ancient Greek philosophy that worship many gods or a polytheist. But judging by the level of attachment Heraclius is with Christian faith, it is unlikely that he is polytheist. It is safe so say that he only practice Greek astronomy basically because it is an important and popular subject back in his days.

From the above informations, I can conclude that It is clear now that any verse in the Quran that mentioned 'ahli kitab' or people of the book' always attached with criticism that they changed

what God revealed to them. For example in the verse 71 of Surah Ali Imran and verse 31 of Surah Taubah that says :

“Ye People of the Book! Why do ye clothe Truth with falsehood, and conceal the Truth, while ye have knowledge?”

and :

“They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah, and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One Allah. there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: (Far is He) from having the partners they associate (with Him).”

Understanding Pauline Christianity, we can see how Paul exercise the freedom to render Christianity to suits whatever circumstances that they are in on that moment. Also by deciphering what Caesaropapism is, we now know how the caesar can use and alter the religion to solve political problems that he faces, such as what practices by Heraclius. It is unimaginable how the teachings of Prophet Jesus have changed by looking at the authority that the church or state hold to render Jesus’s teachings.

In the last years of Prophet Muhammad’s (pbuh) life, he was very concerned about the incoming threat from the Byzantine Empire. Even in between important events in Islam such as the conquest of Mecca and the Farewell Pilgrimage, he still manage to find time, money and energy to raise an army against the Roman. Reading about Heraclius on how he assumed Greek identity for his empire, it is clear now why he was so eager to wage war against the Muslims, even though through his dialogue with Abu Sufyan, it seems like he has a soft spot for Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Even among all the head of states that Prophet Muhammad sent his letter, he is the one who was recorded to show the most acquiescent approach and he even believed that Muhammad ( pbuh ) was the true prophet.

By assuming Greek identity, and after defeating Sassanid Empire and practice Caesaropapism, it is obvious that Heraclius's ambition to strive his empire forward come first than his obligation in embracing true religion and submit the empire to Prophet Muhammad ( pbuh ). He could not let go of all the things that he built up so far, which was full of triumph, greatness, and glory. In addition, when he knew that his advisers did not approve such move, he turn down his intentions and went to blow full wage of war against the Muslim army.

It is understandable now in surah Rum verse 2-5 that mentioned Byzantine Empire victory over Sassanid as a blessing to Muslim because they shared the same origin in their faith. Some of that faith in Christianity at that time still hold true such as the recognition of Allah as the God, a version of Jesus that act as a apostle and vigin Mary that gave birth without marriage. Also the ancient biblical story such as David vs Goliath an other Massenger of Allah such as Adam and Abraham still in its, in a way, original form.

It is different from a secular state that disposed religion only in church walls like what was practised in all of modern European countries including United States of America. It is hard to imagine now if there is a war between those countries versus Communist country, let say North Korea of China, Muslims will cherish if the victory was on those European side. In contrary, Byzantine Empire at that time cherish their Christianity beliefs and proud with their faith and have made it one of the strongest reason to defend their garrison. I can't say the same thing for Europe nowadays.

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