

= Umar al @-@ Aqta =

?Umar ibn ?Abdall?h ibn Marw?n or ?Amr ibn ?Ubaydall?h ibn Marw?n , surnamed al @-@ Aqta? , " the one @-@ handed " (??????????? , monocherares , in Greek) , and found as Amer or Ambros (Greek : ???? or ?????) in Byzantine sources , was the semi @-@ independent Arab emir of Malatya (Melitene) from the 830s until his death in the Battle of Lalakaon on September 3 , 863 . During this time , he was one of the greatest enemies of the Byzantine Empire on its eastern frontier , and became a prominent figure in later Arabic and Turkish epic literature .

= = Biography = =

?Umar belonged to the Banu Sulaym tribe , which was established in the western Jazira at the time of the Muslim conquests and played an important role in the affairs of Malatya and the Jaziran frontier zone (thughur) with the Byzantine Empire as well as the Caucasian frontier with the Khazars . His father , ?Abdallah or ?Ubaydallah , is little known , except that he was also emir of Malatya , and that ca . 810 he surrendered to the Byzantines the fortress of Kamacha to obtain the release of his son , who was held captive .

?Umar himself probably became emir of Malatya in the 830s , and first appears in 838 , in the Amorium campaign of the Caliph al @-@ Mu 'tasim (r . 833 ? 842) . The campaign was waged in retaliation for a large @-@ scale raid in the previous year by the Byzantine emperor Theophilos (r . 829 ? 842) against the Arab border emirates , including Malatya , whose territory was laid waste and depopulated . During the Amorium campaign , ?Umar took part with his men in the great Arab victory over Theophilos himself at the Battle of Dazimon in July 838 . In the 840s , he provided refuge to the surviving members of the Paulicians , who were fleeing persecution in Byzantium , and allocated them the area around the fortresses of Tephrike , Amara and Argoun . The Paulician leader Karbeas turned this into a separate Paulician principality , allied with ? Umar and launching frequent expeditions against Byzantium , either in conjunction with ?Umar or independently . In 844 , ?Umar 's forces participated in a major raid that inflicted a heavy defeat upon an army led by the Byzantine chief minister , Theoktistos , at the Battle of Mauropotamos . In the late 840s , he was also engaged in warfare against a neighbouring Armenian lord named Skleros , whom he finally vanquished after a protracted and bloody conflict .

In the 850s , ?Umar is recorded as having defeated an expedition led by the Byzantine emperor Michael III (r . 842 ? 867) against Samosata , and to have carried out a number of successful raids into Byzantium . One of them swept through the themes of Thrakesion and Opsikion and reached up to the great Byzantine army base of Malagina in Bithynia . He was unable , however , to stop a retaliatory expedition launched in 856 by Petronas against Melitene and Tephrike , which raided all the way to Amida , taking many prisoners before returning home .

In 860 , along with Karbeas , ?Umar launched a major raid into Anatolia which reached the Black Sea port of Sinope , returning with over 12 @,@ 000 head of captured livestock . Three years later , he was part of a major Abbasid force that invaded Anatolia through the Cilician Gates . After splitting off from the main force and repulsing a Byzantine army under Emperor Michael III at Mardj al @-@ Usqf (" Bishop 's Meadow ") in Cappadocia , ?Umar with his men headed north to sack the port city of Amisos . On his return , however , he was encircled by the Byzantines and killed at the Battle of Lalakaon on September 3 , 863 . Only a splinter of his army escaped under his son , but was then defeated and captured by the commander of the Charsianon district . According to al @-@ Tabari , when the news of ?Umar 's death , along with that of another celebrated leader , Ali ibn Yahya al @-@ Armani , arrived in Iraq , they provoked riots among the populace of Baghdad , Samarra , and other cities , angry at the Abbasid government 's perceived incompetence .

Indeed , ?Umar 's death marked the end of Malatya as a military threat to Byzantium , although the city itself would remain in Muslim hands for 70 more years . ?Umar himself was succeeded by his son , Abu Abdallah , and grandson , Abu Hafs , who was forced to surrender the city to the Byzantine general John Kourkouas in 934 .

= = Cultural legacy = =

Like many other protagonists of the Arab ? Byzantine Wars , ?Umar figures in both Arab and Byzantine legend . In the Arab epic romance " Tale of Delhemma and al @-@ Battal " (S?rat ??t al @-@ Himma wa @-@ l @-@ Ba???l) , he is a major figure , although his role has been diminished and he is often cast as almost a villain , due to the tale 's bias in favour of the Banu Sulaym 's rivals , the Banu Kilab , who furnish most of the heroic characters . Traditions about ?Umar seem also to have influenced the story cycle around ? Umar ibn al @-@ Numan and his sons which became included in the One Thousand and One Nights , while ?Umar himself features in later Turkish epic literature centred around the heroic figure of Battal Ghazi (inspired by the real @-@ life Umayyad general Abdallah al @-@ Battal) , who is also one of the main heroes of the Delhemma .

In Byzantine literature , ?Umar is regarded as the probable prototype for the emir Ambron , the grandfather of the eponymous hero in the epic poem Digenes Akritas , while the Greek scholar G. Veloudis suggested him as the origin of the eponymous hero of the Song of Armouris . The German scholar Hans @-@ Georg Beck finds this identification unlikely , but points out to the reference to a " short @-@ armed " Arab leader in the same tale , which may reflect a folk tradition based on ?Umar . Finally , the 10th @-@ century scholar al @-@ Mas 'udi reports (The Meadows of Gold , VIII , 74 ? 75) that ?Umar was among the " illustrious Muslims " whose portraits were displayed in Byzantine churches in recognition of their valour .