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THE MAMLUK RECONQUEST AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE TERRITORIES TAKEN FROM THE CRUSADERS

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According to Edward Gibbon, in the aftermath of the fall of the Crusader city of Acre to the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Khalil in 1291 'a mournful and solitary silence prevailed along the coast which had for so long resounded with the WORLD'S DEBATE'. In his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon presented his readers with the spectacle of the crusade and counter-crusade as prolonged warfare between mighty armies, featuring massed cavalry charges, lengthy sieges and sanguinary assaults. However, I want here to suggest that, in the last half century or so of the embattled existence of the Crusader states in Palestine and Syria, the struggle between Muslims and Christians was not like that. The way in which the war was conducted was less glamorous, less heroic, more sensible. The closing decades of this regional struggle between two of the world's great religions can be regarded as, for the most part, a quiet war - a matter of rustling, crop burning and banditry conducted by lightly armed local forces. There were no great pitched battles and few sieges, but there were many truces.

Occasionally, it is true, the great leaders, based in Cairo, Damascus, Acre, Margat or Tripoli might plan and direct campaigns, which might be motivated by ideology and which might envisage grand strategic goals. But, year in year out, the more normal pattern of conflict between Christian and Muslim in Greater Syria was determined by the weather, the topography and economies of the lands they fought over. The Mamluks and Crusaders (Franks) engaged in economic warfare. One of the most obvious instances of this was the practice of crop-burning, so as to make the tenure of a castle or town unviable in the long term, by denying that place the possibility of feeding itself from local produce. Thus, for example, the Teutonic castle of Montfort was so badly affected by Mamluk raids on its agricultural estates that in 1270 the Teutonic Knights had to borrow land from the Hospitallers in order to sow crops. But the Hospitallers themselves were often no better off, for, further north, Mamluk forces burnt the crops around Crac des

Chevaliers in 1266, 1267, 1268 and 1270, thereby preparing the ground for the final assault and capture of the castle itself in 1271. The agricultural hinterland of the great city of Acre, with its vineyards and mills, was similarly subjected to repeatedly destructive attacks by Muslim forces - often Turkomans and Arabs acting Mamluk instructions. [1267 destruction of the Hospitaller mill at Recordane on which q.v. Thorau. q.v. R-S on mills of Doc and Recordane]

However, settled agriculture was, perhaps, of diminishing importance in this period and much of fighting in the region was conducted by or against nomadic pastoralists and the economic target of the campaigning was livestock rather crops. It is clear that from the 1240s onwards there was an intensification of pastoralism in the region. This was in large part because of an influx from the 1240s onwards of nomadic Turkomans [Etoire d'Eracles], Arabs and Kurds - but especially Turkomans, and especially Yuruk Turkomans. These tribal pastoralists moved down into Syria from Iraq and Anatolia, fleeing in advance of the Mongol invasion of the Near East. Later these nomadic immigrants would be joined by renegade groups of Mongols, including most notably the Oirats. El-İsfidariyye Treasurer, Joseph de Cancy wrote to the West in 1252 of 10.000 Turkomans devastating the Antioch region. The new problem posed by the influx of Turkomans was a general theme of letters despatched in the 1250s from the Principality of Antioch and the Country of Tripoli to Christian Europe. And according to the chronicler Ibn Shaddad, 40.000 Turkoman households entered Syria during the Sultanate of Baybars and submitted themselves to him. We need not take such a large figure seriously, but his statement that these Turkomans were settled on the coastal strip between Gaza and Antioch is confirmed by other sources.

It may also be the case that settled agriculture broke down and villages were abandoned around the 1240s and 50s because of weak government, or effectively no government, in Syria during the reign of the Ayyubid al-Nasir Yusuf in Damascus and of other rival, faineant Ayyubid princelings elsewhere in Syria. Al-Nasir Yusuf was unable to offer settled agriculture protection from unruly nomads. Indeed, his own army was pillaged by '*urban* (bedouin) in 1256. Thereafter the policing and taxation of nomads became a major preoccupation of both Muslim and Christian authorities in Syria. It is noteworthy, for example, that one of the main preoccupations - perhaps the main preoccupation - of the 1267 truce between the

Hospitallers of Margat and the Sultan Baybars is the control and taxation of nomadic Arabs and Turkomans in the region. The truce document's clauses deal with such matters as the partition of the herd-tax (or '*idad*') in the region west of Hims, the taxation of herds entering the condominium, the administration of that tax, the unrestricted passage of herds between the territories of the Sultan and the Hospitallers, and the obligation of the Sultan of Hamah to prevent tribes of more than thirty tents pasturing in the regions of Rafaniyya and Barin. [NOTE: P.M. Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, pp. 32-41. Vermeulen 'Le Traite'. By the time of the 1271 treaty with the Hospitallers however, the control and taxation of nomads no longer seems to have been a matter of primary concern, Holt, pp.48-57 c.f. Vermeulen]

When the Mamluks took over in Syria from 1260 onwards they experienced repeated problems with the nomads. Arab tribesmen tended to be more of a problem to the Mamluks than were the Turkomans or Kurds. Mamluk officials and armies had to deal with two types of Arab tribal groupings. First, there were the '*urban*', nomadic Arabs, who mostly reared horses and camels and they did this mostly in areas to the north and east of Damascus. The Banu Fadl, a branch of the Tayy confederacy, who led transhumant existence between the Euphrates and the pastures of the Damascus plain, was grandest and most powerful of this sort of tribe. According to Khalil al-Zahiri, writing in the fifteenth century, the Banu Fadl could then field 24,000 warriors. Such a large figure was probably an exaggeration for the fifteenth century and certainly an exaggeration for the thirteenth century, but it is clear that this tribe numbered some thousands in the period under discussion. The numbers of bedouin in the service of the Mamluk Sultanate was swollen by other Arab tribes, particularly by the Banu Khafaja confederacy, who had crossed over from Mongol-held Iraq. At times the '*urban*' fought as paid auxiliaries side by side with the Mamluks against the Crusaders and the Mongols. From the late 1260s onwards they furnished an important part of the Mamluk battle line-ups. They participated so regularly on major campaigns that they can almost be considered as regular troops. Mamluk officers arranged for Arab losses of horses in battle to be compensated for with Palestinian cattle. At times however, there were tensions between the Banu Fadl and other '*urban*' on the hand and the Mamluk authorities on the other. Taybars al-Waziri, who was briefly governor of Damascus at the beginning of 1260s, got into trouble

with the Sultan because he had prevented Arabs from entering the city to sell foodstuffs there. [CK Ibn al-Dawadari, file, p.5, IAZ f.42a] The Zubayd Arabs, who pastured flocks in the Damascus Ghawta (valley) and in the Hawaran to the south collaborated with the Franks and supplied them with intelligence about the movement of Muslim armies, until in 1260 or 1261 Baybars sent a punitive force to kill and loot these treacherous tribesmen. The Banu Fadl and the Zubayd were Muslims, but some nomadic Arabs, such as those in the Kerak of Moab region were Christians.

Contemporary sources distinguished between the *'urban* and the *'ushran*. The *'ushran* have been variously identified by an older generation of scholars as Druze, or Nusayris or Maronites. Though many *'ushran* do seem in fact to have belonged to heterodox or minority communities, they are more correctly described as settled or semi-nomadic Arab tribesmen. They dwelt mostly in the highlands of Judea, Galilee and Lebanon. Although the *'ushran* grew crops, they were also heavily involved in stock rearing - cattle, sheep and goats. Like the *'urban*, the *'ushran* clashed with the Mamluks over pasturage. The passage of a large Mamluk army through Palestine at the wrong time of the year could ruin the local pastoral economy of the *'ushran*. The Mamluk livestock tax also occasioned resentment and sometimes resistance among these turbulent folk. The Mamluks offered the native population protection from the crusaders, but the trouble was that many of these native populations did not want to be so protected. Some of the villages of the *'ushran* had been trading with the neighbouring Franks for over a century. They continued to trade surreptitiously with the Franks during the last half-century of the existence of the Crusader States. They sold not just foodstuffs, but also such contraband items as weapons, slaves and intelligence. In the 1260s, Baybars punished the *'ushran* of the Nablus highlands for acting as spies for Franks. In the same period, Christian *'ushran* at Qara (to the north of Damascus) were collaborating with the Hospitallers of Hisn ibn Akkar and this led to the destruction of the Arab village in 1266 and the subsequent despatch of Turkomans to police the area. In 1281 the *'ushran* tribesmen in the Gaza and Nablus regions rebelled against the Mamluk authorities attacked on the garrison at Gaza. They had rebelled because Qalawun's officers had been trying to clear them off their traditional pasture grounds in preparation for the passage of a large Mamluk army heading up through Palestine to encounter the Mongols in northern Syria.

Many of the *'ushran* of the Lebanese and Syrian highlands - Druze, Maronites and Ismailis, as well as Sunni Muslims - actively resisted the Mamluks attempts to impose their authority on those areas. Some of these communities actually paid tribute to the Hospitallers of Crac and Margat. For example, the Ismailis in the 1260s payed tribute to the Hospitallers of Margat, collaborating with them and sheltering their livestock. Although Baybars bullied them into breaking their ties with the Franks, subsequently in 1271 Bohemond of Antioch was to make use of an Ismaili assassin in an attempt to kill Baybars. A year later an Ismaili was imprisoned in Egypt for collaborating with the Franks and in 1277 the Mamluk governor of Crac des Chevaliers/Hisn al-Akrad was assassinated by an Ismaili. The Buhtorids, Druze emirs of the Gharb region south-east of Beirut, seem to have held fiefs under the Franks. The Maronite neighbours of the Druze generally enjoyed good relations with the Franks and in 1265-6[CK] Maronites in the region of Jubayl actually took the field on their own account against a Mamluk army. Baybars sent retaliatory force against them in 1268. Subsequently Sultan Qalawun sent troops against the Maronite region of Kisrawan in 1282 and planned another such expedition in 1287.

Crusader castles in this period were garrisoned by relatively small numbers of Frankish knights. Safed, for example, had a garrison of one hundred and fifty Templar knights. [Kennedy Castles, p.128] However, one must bear in mind that at Safed and elsewhere the Frankish forces were supplemented and indeed outnumbered by native troops - sometimes characterised as *'ushran*. During the last days of Frankish Safed in 1266 Nusayris, Christian Arabs and *jabaliyyun* (hillsmen) stood shoulder to shoulder with the Templars. This despite the fact that prior to siege, Baybars had sent emirs furnished with money, robes and diploma in order to win the hillsmen of the region over. (The Safed area was above all a Druze region.) Shia tribesmen at nearby Jabal 'Amila were simultaneously engaged in harassing the Mamluks. Similarly Crac in 1271 was garrisoned not just by Frankish knights, but by *jabaliyyun* and *fallahin*.

Although various Arab groups seem to have supported the crusaders, as far as I can tell, this was never true of the Kurds and Turkomans in Syria. Certain Kurdish officers and tribes were received into the Mamluk officer caste. The Qaymari Kurds in particular played a leading role in the defence of Muslim Palestine. In 1263 the Sultan Baybars appointed the Kurdish Emir Nasir al-Din al-Qaymari Emir over the territories newly reconquered from

the Franks in Palestine. For the next three years until his death Nasir al-Din was in charge of the defence of the Mamluk conquests and also directed the relatively small-scale raids against remaining Frankish possessions which took place more or less every year. (He was also one of two *muqta*'s or 'fief' holders who held the Red Tower - Burj al-Ahmar.) Other Qaymaris are mentioned as taking part in minor operations against the Franks in Palestine. Elsewhere and more generally the Kurds were of less significance. Hayton of Armenia estimated that there were some 5.000 Kurdish tents, or households, in northern Syria, but compared with the Turkomans they played a relatively minor part in the counter-crusade. [Similarly the hundreds of Qaymari Kurds settled in the Kerak region.]

Turkoman tribesmen, many of them immigrants from Anatolia, played as large a part as the elite officer caste of the Kipchak Turkish Mamluks in the closing stages of the counter-crusade. The Mamluks made systematic use of the Turkomans to garrison and patrol the border regions and to act as the first line of defence against the Franks. The Turkomans were given *iqtas* and/or pasturage rights in Palestine and in newly reconquered parts of the County of Tripoli and the Principality of Antioch. In 1263 Baybars had a meeting with Turkoman leaders, gave them diplomas of investiture and made them responsible for the passage of the *barid*, or courier service, through Palestine. In 1266 the governor of the Palestinian frontier province, Nasir al-Din al-Qaymari, sent Turkoman horsemen to attack the Athlit region. Similarly they were used in the north to launch an attack on Qusayr, a dependency of the County of Antioch, in 1275. Turkomans also participated in raids against Margat in 1281 and 1282. After the capture of Jaffa in 1268 Turkomans were given the responsibility of patrolling the coastal area. 800 Turkoman cavalry served the Mamluk garrison of Hisn al-Akrad from the 1270s onwards. In 1289, after the capture of Tripoli from the Franks, 600 Turkomans were employed to patrol that region. Two years later more Turkomans were hired to patrol the newly conquered lordship of Beirut. In general Turkoman horsemen constituted the first trip-wire which any Frankish offensive would encounter.

The last great battle in the field between Franks and Muslims was fought near Gaza in 1244 [2-3.000 cavalry+c.10.000 infantry]. Thereafter encounters were more in the nature of *chevauchées* or rustling expeditions. The herds of the Turkomans were the most frequent target of the Franks. On some of these expeditions the rustlers were intercepted and fighting on

a small scale ensued. In 1249 John of Arsuf attacked Turkoman herdsmen in the Baysan region and allegedly came away with 16,000 head of cattle. [Annales + estoire d'Eracles] A similar raid mounted by John of Beirut in February 1261 in the Golan, in north-east Palestine, came off less well and was severely mauled by the Turkoman tribesmen they had been proposing to plunder. The Turkomans captured several of the expedition's leaders and, having hastily ransomed them, they then decamped to Anatolia, as they feared that otherwise the Sultan would demand his share of the ransom. [Amitai-Preiss, p.53] There was more such raiding in 1264, including the successful rustling by Olivier des Termes of livestock in the Baysan region. [1264 Baybars enforces return of cattle taken by Franks] There were more raids in 1266 and 1269. In 1271, during Prince Edward of England's sojourn in Palestine, there was a crop-burning raid in the region of Shaghur and Lydda and later in November a raiding force led by Prince Edward killed over a thousand Turkomans and captured 5,000 head of cattle in the region of Qaqun - but at a cost, for they lost 500 horses and mules when they were pursued by a Mamluk force based at 'Ayn Jalut. However, the Mamluk detachment closest to the Turkoman herds was actually garrisoned at Qaqun, and they had done nothing to assist the Turkomans, their officers were arrested and imprisoned. After 1271 the Franks in the south do not seem to have had the resources, or the nerve, to sustain even this level of petty warfare or reiving. (The Hospitallers of Margat did, however, launch a big attack against Turkomans in 1279.)

The Franks' use of money to bribe their opponents may be regarded as another aspect of economic warfare. In 1262 a senior Mamluk emir, Taybars al-Waziri, was bribed to call off an attack on the great city of Antioch - occasioning much scandal in Cairo. [see Thorau appendix] The wealthy and powerful Emir Baktash al-Fakhri sold information to the Bohemond VII Count of Tripoli. (We know about this from a western source. The Muslim chroniclers and obituarists remained unaware of the man's treachery, so that he died in peace and honour in 1306. It is pure speculation, but it is possible that Baktash first became acquainted with Bohemond in 1285. In that year, Baktash was one of the emirs deputed to destroy Maraclea, but finding that they lacked the demolition skills, the Mamluks were obliged to bully Bohemond into providing demolition engineers to do job for them.) In the 1290s the Mamluk general Baysari al-Shamsi was rumoured to have been bribed by the Maronites into calling off an attack on Kasrawan. In

687/1288 Sanjar al-Shujai, Qalawun's wazir, was indicted before the Sultan Qalawun for selling arms from the Sultan's arsenal to the Franks. Sanjar that pleaded that he was selling clapped-out weapons at a profit to the Muslim treasury and, for a while, it seemed that he might get away with this excuse, but then one of his enemies pointed out that this was still a bad thing, as it might lead the Franks to believe that the Sultan was hard-up. So Sanjar went to prison for a while. The Mamluks for their part may not have been above using money to oil the success of their campaigns. According to several Arabic chronicles, in 1268 the Franks who had retreated into the citadel of Jaffa were paid 40.000 dirhams before being allowed to set sail for Acre. (Baybars got the citadel pretty cheap, for 40.000 dirhams was not such a vast sum.)

The earliest Mamluk campaigns against the Frankish presence in Palestine were (I think) not really driven by Jihadist zeal, but were rather directed by the need to secure the Via Maris, a route which ran close to the coast before turning to run diagonally across Palestine towards Damascus. (So the route which was used by Mamluk armies heading north as well as by the *barid*, the Sultan's courier service ran from Gaza, through al-Awja, Qaqun, al-Ruha, Jinin, Ayn Jalut and then over the Jordan at the Jisr al-Majami' and on up to Damascus. The need to make this route secure determined the priorities of the earliest campaigns directed by Baybars against such places as Tiberias, Nazareth, Arsuf and Jaffa. For the same reason, Qaqun was refortified and garrisoned in the 1260s.

Despite their superiority in numbers, Mamluk armies in Palestine at first operated at a serious disadvantage. Until Safed was captured in 1266 they had no large fortified base in Palestine which could house a substantial garrison and provide a secure armoury. Jerusalem, Hebron and Nablus were all defenceless. Additional large armies of Mamluk cavalry moving along the Via Maris could not feed themselves and were dependent on food from Egypt and this in turn meant that at first they were dependent on the goodwill of Frankish ports such as Jaffa. [See IAZ on 1261 agreement between Baybars and John of Jaffa] In the north the Muslims were in some respects even more vulnerable. Up to at least 1265 (the year of Bohemond of Antioch's attack on Homs) the Franks in the north of the country held the upper hand and were usually on the offensive. The Hospitallers in the north were levying tribute on Muslim territories including Hama, Abu Qubays, Apamea, Shayzar and the Ismaili castles.

The Mamluks only slowly occupied the Frankish territories. This was because it was at first difficult for them to mount large attacks on the Franks. Some historians have suggested that the Mamluks may also have been reluctant to attack places like Acre and Tyre because of their commercial importance. However, I do not think that there is any real evidence for this sort of business thinking in Mamluk councils of war. One must remember that because of the Mongol establishment of the Ilkhanate in the lands to the east, the frontier between Syria and Iraq was closed to commerce in this period. Therefore, any trade that was passing from the Muslim hinterland through the Frankish ports was more likely to have consisted of such commodities as leather, potash and grain, rather than silks and exotic spices. Although various truce documents between the Mamluks and the Franks have survived which show the concern of the negotiators for the security of merchants passing backwards and forwards between the Christian and Muslim lands, on the whole the truce documents seem more concerned to control and restrict the traffic rather than to encourage it. In particular, the Mamluks wished to prevent contraband items, such as weapons reaching the Franks. And, for example, the main job of the Mamluk garrison post at al-Ruha was to watch the roads leading to Acre, Haifa and Athlit and to stop banned items, like horses, mules and weapons, reaching the Franks. [Maq + Ibn Furat + 685 *tadhkira*] Again, as part of a truce agreement between Qalawun and Bohemond VII in 1281, a Mamluk customs post was set up on the bridge over the river Artusia. Its job was to prevent forbidden articles reaching the Franks and to tax imports of cereals (not silks or spices).

The rural lands the Mamluks reoccupied were seriously depopulated - doubtless because of the banditry and nomadism which had been endemic in the region from the 1240s onwards. In 1266, after the capture of Safed, Baybars ordered that estates in the region should be returned to the descendants of those Muslims who had fled before the armies of the First Crusade over a century and half ago. Although Baybars was advised by Hanafi jurists that he did not need to do this, he judged the depopulation in the region was so serious that it was actually expedient for him to do this. [Sivan Refugies, p.146] He also ordered the construction of markets, caravanserais and baths at Safed - doubtless for the same reason. [Ibn Shaddad] Concerns about depopulation in the Muslim interior may also be behind Baybars's large-scale programme of endowments and construction in Hebron (which had been previously sacked by the Mongols). The place

revived as a centre for Muslim pilgrims, while at the same time Christians and Jews were banned from entering the place. Ramla also benefited from the Sultan's concern and money.

Despite the Franks' employment of Arab and other local forces and their attempts to use money to defeat or suborn the Mamluks, in the long run the Crusader states were of course doomed. The great castles and towns - Arsuf, Crac, Antioch, Safed, Margat, Tripoli and the rest of the coastal territories were captured by large armies officered by Mamluk elite troops fighting under the direction of the Sultans Baybars, Qalawun and al-Ashraf Khalil. However, I have concentrated today on the less well-known Quiet War which took place in the years between the great sieges, which was conducted by smaller bodies of local troops and which played an important, perhaps even the vital part in preparing the way for the downfall of the Crusader strongholds.