

Munaqashat:
Gorgias Studies in the Modern Middle East 2

Revolt in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century

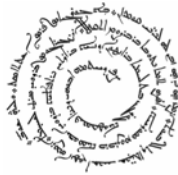
The Era of Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar

Ahmad Hasan Joudah



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2

Munaqashat: Gorgias Studies in the Modern Middle East takes an interdisciplinary approach towards understanding the formation of the Arab world, Turkey, and Iran from the late Ottoman period to the present day. *Munaqashat*, the Arabic word for “conversations,” assesses these social, political, and historical factors, as well as the region’s dynamic global interactions, through a critical lens. This series aims to appeal to specialists as well as general audiences seeking to diversify their understanding of the modern Middle East.

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The Era of Shaykh Zahir al-Umar

Ahmad Hasan Joudah



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Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar

*To my parents and brothers in memoriam
and to my wife and children.*

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The theme of this study originally emanated from a term paper during my senior year at the University of Cairo (1954). I realized then how little is written not only about Palestine, but also about the Arab provinces during the Ottoman period. My graduate study at the University of Michigan deepened my interest in the subject due to the lack of serious studies on the Arab provinces under Ottoman rule. Regardless of the anticipated difficulties in research, I chose the movement of Shaykh Zahir al-Umar as the subject of my Ph.D. dissertation because of both the challenge and potential wealth of resources to be uncovered.

My main concern was to provide a monograph, hopefully to fill in some portion of the existing gap in modern Arab history. I also hoped that it would encourage others in the field to do the same. The more monographs written, the easier it becomes to produce a good general study, whether on Palestine or the Arab provinces during the Ottoman rule. The concept of the specialized study aiding in the development of general ones is a vision that not only institutions should be encouraged to assist and sponsor, but a vision that young scholars should feel empowered to take on. Such ambitious projects are what facilitate the connection between the past and present, a main function of historians looking to better record and tell the story of humanity.

The delayed publication of the first edition provided an opportunity for later studies to be published ahead of it. Nonetheless, it was warmly welcomed in academic circles, as well as the general public, with the exception of some criticism that it lacked comprehensiveness. However, any attempt to cover all aspects of history in one study is not only difficult, but at this stage most likely counterproductive, and often lends itself to historians overreaching. While the focus of this study is primarily political, special endeavor is made to weave discussion of major social and

economic activities, in particular infrastructure development, into the narrative, hoping to present a more complete picture to the reader.

The first edition was mainly based on doctorate research, which ended in the late 1960s. The study was widely consulted after its completion in 1970 in its unpublished dissertation form because it was the first treatise written on the topic in any European language.¹ The narrow specialty of the study made finding a publisher more challenging until in the 1980s, a colleague of mine, Carl Max Kortepeter, helped facilitate its publication. The handful of related serious studies, published during the 1970s and 1990s, have been consulted for this second edition.²

Most recently, in March 2012, I had the opportunity to participate in a symposium organized by Palestinian academics on the history of Shaykh Zahir il-‘Umar. This effort is a genuine sign of growing interest, awareness, and reawakening of the history of Palestine in the 18th century, and perhaps more importantly, attention from Palestinians living in historic Palestine. This trip allowed me to visit historic sites in the Galilee related to Zahir al-‘Umar’s rule, adding a new dimension to understanding the nature of his movement and to include the pictures in the second edition. In addition, some colleagues, graduate students and friends drew my attention to the need for a new revised edition for my book on Zahir al-‘Umar, especially as the first edition was out of print. All of the above factors prompted me to seriously consider a revised second edition of the study. A major revision was needed to update the material, clarify certain points, and to reflect upon new interpretations, ideas, and insight. I would like to thank Dr. Adel Manna, in particular, for his invitation to participate in the symposium and encouragement to pursue a second edition.

My daughter Nour, then a graduate student at Georgetown University, fervently embraced the idea. She was instrumental in

¹ In fact, the only extant study on the subject was a brief MA thesis by Uriel Heyd, published in Hebrew.

² A. Cohen’s *Palestine in the 18th Century*, B. Doumani’s *Rediscovering Palestine*, D. Crecelius’ *The Roots of Modern Egypt*, T. Mu‘ammar’s *Zahir al-Umar*, and ‘Adel Manna’, *Tarikh Filastin*. See Bibliography for details.

transforming the idea into reality, and successfully maneuvered through and overcame all related obstacles before publication. I am much obliged to Nour for her fervor and relentless, heartening support.

With deepest gratitude, I would like to acknowledge my heartfelt indebtedness to Hoda Mitwally who edited this edition with devotion, skill, and perseverance. Mere words cannot convey the exceptional manner in which she saw this project through.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to the staff at Gorgias Press in New Jersey, and in particular Dr. George Kiraz.

Last, but not least, I would like to wholeheartedly thank my wife Zarifah for her ceaseless encouragement of my work and for putting up with its encroachment on her daily life to which she had prior claim.

FOREWORD

After the period of the Crusades, the Levant ceased to serve as the principal ideological and military focus in the relations between Islam and Latin Christendom. No longer did it lure European knights or simulate the analytical and romantic creativity of Christian writers. Following its absorption in the early sixteenth century into the Ottoman Empire, Syria and Palestine lapsed into historical oblivion from which they emerged only in the waning years of the eighteenth century in connection with the Napoleonic invasion.

Notwithstanding the silence with which Westerners have treated the intervening period of Levantine history, Syria and Palestine did not lack in dramatic episodes and attendant documentary coverage deserving scholarly historical exposure. Such is the case of the spectacular career of Zahir al-'Umar, a Syrian Arab, who started as a tax farmer in 1706, struggled to assert himself in the intricate web of tribal politics and intrigues and, shrewdly defied the Ottoman power. He reached the zenith of his career after gaining control of 'Akka in 1744, and ruled over a semi-independent state in the Galilee for about a quarter of a century until his death in 1775 at the hands of his treacherous Maghribi mercenaries.

The book of Professor Ahmad Joudah is based on meticulous investigations of Arabic sources such as unpublished archival documentation and copious unpublished manuscripts and Western sources such as the consular correspondence preserved in British and French archival collections. He has also re-studied the published Arabic and Western literature. Hence this book offers an exhaustive history of an important era in Syro-Palestinian history. Apart from analyzing the political and military details and repercussions of Zahir's successes and failures, Joudah's book discusses the social and economic ramifications of his policies. It

also shows that Zahir's long range international maneuvers, such as his fruitless diplomatic relations with Russia and with another anti-Ottoman rebel, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir of Egypt, constituted a prologue to the chain of momentous developments in the Levant which were unleashed by the expedition of Napoleon.

This is a most welcome book because of its revealing historical contents and because of the scholarly manner in which they are presented by its author. The study adds substantially to our understanding of the political, religious, economic, and social forces which then and now have generated historical processes in the sensitive region of the Arab world.

Professor Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz

PREFACE

Zahir al-‘Umar al-Zaydani was born in Palestine circa 1690 into a small Bedouin clan. He began his career as a tax-farmer in 1706 in the Galilee and extended his territories from Sayda in the north to Gaza in the south, and from the Mediterranean in the west to the Jordan River in the east. In the heyday of his power, Shaykh Zahir concluded an alliance with ‘Ali Bey of Egypt in defiance of the sultan. Together they defeated Ottoman troops, occupied the strongest provincial capital, Damascus, in June 1771, and forced its governor to flee the city. Both Zahir and ‘Ali Bey took advantage of the presence of the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean, whose interest was to foment troubles inside the Ottoman provinces. Thus, for the first time, Ottoman Syria became internationally involved in what is often known as “the Eastern Question.” But once the Treaty of Küchük Kaynarca in July 1774 ended the Russo-Turkish war, the Porte successfully destroyed Zahir and his movement in August 1775.

Several movements besides Zahir’s challenged the sultan’s authority, but his was different. He was a local Arab who worked outside, rather than within, the channels of the establishment. Zahir was the first Arab ruler in the modern history of the Middle East to bring a new dimension into the political arena of the Fertile Crescent—foreign intervention. In 1772, the Russian fleet first bombarded Yaffa, Sayda, and Beirut on behalf of their allies, Zahir and ‘Ali Bey. Upon Zahir’s request, they occupied Beirut for five months in 1773. From thereon, Syria became the field of European intervention in the local affairs of the Ottoman Empire, an intervention that has continued in the Middle East until the present time.

The study is based on original work undertaken toward the Ph.D. degree from the University of Michigan in 1971. The research was carried on during the period of 1966–1969 in Egypt,

Lebanon, Syria, England, France, Germany, Austria, and the United States. The sources used may be divided into three main categories: (1) French, English, and Arabic archival material, consisting of ambassadorial and consular reports dispatched from Istanbul and the echelles of the Levant, and the Melkites' archives in Lebanon; (2) contemporary Arabic accounts, both manuscript and published works; and (3) contemporary European travel accounts. These sources were supplemented by relevant secondary studies both in Arabic and in Western languages.

The initial work was made possible through grants from the following institutions: The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, the Center for Arabic Studies at the American University in Cairo, and the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, the Department of History, and the Center for Near Eastern and North African Studies of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. To all of these institutions, I would like to express my deep gratitude for their generous support.

It is not possible to thank individually all archivists and librarians and their staffs who rendered valuable assistance to me. However, I would like to record here special appreciation and sincere thanks for the help received from: the Public Record Office, the British Museum, Guildhall Library, and the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London; the Archives Nationales and Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris; the Universitätsbibliothek in Tübingen, Germany, and Staatsbibliothek in Munich; the Staatsbibliothek in Vienna; the Egyptian National Library in Cairo; the American University Library in Beirut; Al-Zahiriyyah Library in Damascus; the library of Dayr al-Mukhallis in Sidon, Lebanon; Princeton University Library; the University of Michigan Library; and the University of Texas Library.

It is a genuine pleasure to acknowledge the help I have received along the way. My deepest gratitude goes to the late Professor Richard P. Mitchell, not only for his scholarship and guidance during my graduate studies at the University of Michigan, but also for his sincere friendship. He always showed a genuine interest in my academic life and concern for personal crises. Special thanks are extended to Professor Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz, from whose scholarship and valuable advice I immensely benefited.

Many friends and colleagues have also helped to solve several problems in my research. I am especially grateful to Professor

Albert Hourani, Father Gabriel Haddad, Jean-Paul Desaiwe of the Sorbonne, and George Cogswell at the University of Texas Library.

As to Dr. Abdullah N. al-Wohaibi, whose friendship I have always cherished and whose sincere concern and help have never ceased throughout my endeavors, my deep gratitude cannot be adequately expressed in words. While my pen falters in search of appropriate words, I would like to extend my special, heartfelt thanks to him.

I acknowledge with gratitude the support of King Saud University for the opportunity to revise the dissertation for this present publication. I also wish to express my sincere thanks to Professor Carl Max Kortepeter of New York University, and to the Kingston Press staff.

Last, and above all, I wish to record my gratitude to my wife, the most driving force behind this book, and to my children for putting up with the work's encroachment on time and attention to which they had prior claim.

Ahmad H. Joudah
Riyadh
January 1987.

INTRODUCTION: OTTOMAN ORGANIZATION IN SYRIA (AL-SHAM)

Within a period of eight months (August 1516–April 1517), the Ottoman sultan, Salim I (1512–20) brought the Mamluk sultanate to an end by winning two decisive battles against the Mamluks. First, on Sunday, 24 August 1516, as a result of the battle of Marj Dabiq, north of Aleppo, in which the Mamluk sultan Quansuh al-Ghuri was killed, the Ottomans won the Syrian provinces. Second, at the battle of al-Raydaniyyah, fought on Thursday, 23 January 1517, they took Egypt, the seat of the Mamluk sultanate. Subsequently, on 14 April, Sultan Tuman Bay was hanged at Bab Zuwaylah in Cairo. As a consequence of the fall of the Mamluk sultanate, the Hijaz also became a part of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, all of the Arab East, except for Iraq and Yemen, which were to be conquered later by Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent (1520–66), fell under Ottoman hegemony in less than a year.¹

The Ottomans made some changes in the administrative organization of the region.² The Mamluks had divided Syria (al-Sham) into six major *niyababs* (provinces). Each was governed by a *na'ib* (deputy) who was recruited from among the military ranks.³ The six chief provinces were Aleppo, Hamah, Tripoli, Damascus (al-Sham), Safad, and al-Karak.⁴ Furthermore, each one of these *niyababs* was divided into smaller units also called *niyabah* or '*amal* or *wilayah*, each of which comprised several towns and villages. These were left unchanged.⁵ The *na'ib* of the major *niyababs* were Mamluk amirs, and their subordinates were, army officers. However, *Na'ib al-Sharn* (the Governor of Damascus) was more important and powerful than his peers; he was known as *Malik al-Umara'* (King of the Commanders) and was second in line only to *Na'ib al-Sultan* (regent) who resided in Cairo, the seat of the sultanate. Thus, the governorship of Damascus was an important step on the ladder towards the throne of the Mamluk sultanate.⁶ It is worthwhile noting that a Turkish-speaking ruling elite and a local Arabic-

speaking bureaucracy constituted the backbone which kept the Mamluk sultanate in existence until 1517.⁷

After conquering Syria and Egypt, Sultan Salim's primary concern was to preserve the Ottoman supremacy over the newly conquered lands. He and his successor, Sultan Sulayman (1520–66), did not change the administrative organization of the Arab provinces for the most part. However, a basic rule was drawn to the effect that "each province should, as far as possible, pay for the upkeep of its administration and contribute an equitable proportion to the Imperial Treasury." Thus, from the very beginning the Ottoman sultans realized that they should neither burden their subjects with heavy taxes nor place them under unjust indirect administration. The sultan realized that it was of mutual interest for the government and the people to impose light taxes and simple forms of direct administration.⁸

Eventually, Sultan Salim decided to divide the newly-conquered lands of the Mamluk sultanate into three major provinces. Egypt was made one province, and Syria was broken up into two. For strategic reasons, the northern region of Syria was incorporated into one province with Aleppo as its seat. This new province was placed under an Ottoman governor. The rest of Syria, from Ma'arrat al-Nu'man in the north to al-'Arish in the south, with its center at Damascus, was made the province of al-Sham. Egypt was kept as one administrative unit and placed under Khayir Bey as the sultan's viceroy. The province of Aleppo remained undivided, but with the addition mentioned above. The province of Damascus eventually was assigned to Janbardi al-Ghazali, the ex-Mamluk governor of Hamah and Damascus. The appointments of both Khayir Bey and Janbardi al-Ghazali were viewed as a reward in return for their collusion with the Ottoman army against the Mamluks. The former maintained his Mamluk title as "King of the Commanders" and remained loyal to the Ottomans. He kept his office until his death in 1522. al-Ghazali revolted against Sultan Sulayman, who exterminated him in 1521.⁹

As a consequence of the revolt of the *wali* (governor) of Damascus against Sultan Sulayman, Syria was reorganized and a third province was created, namely, Tripoli. Little change was made in the province of Aleppo. Most of Tripoli was carved out of the province of Damascus, but there is disagreement about the date of the creation of Tripoli. Holt and other historians believe that it

must have happened during the life of Sultan Salim. Ibn Tulun and Ibn Iyas think that it took place after al-Ghazali's revolt was crushed, and there is ample evidence to support the latter opinion. Sultan Salim, upon his conquest of Syria, appointed Ottoman governors to Aleppo, Hamah, Tripoli, and Damascus. Later, when al-Ghazali was assigned as the governor of the province of Damascus, Tripoli and Hamah were included within these borders. Moreover, during his revolt, al-Ghazali himself had appointed governors of Tripoli and Hamah who remained in their posts until their master's revolt was suppressed.¹⁰ Thus, Tripoli and Hamah remained within al-Ghazali's jurisdiction until February 1521.

The new province of Tripoli was comprised of Tripoli, Hims, Hamah, Jabalah, and Salamiyah, all of which earlier had been included in the province of Damascus. Most probably, the new province was created to act as a check on the powerful governor of Damascus who could threaten the Ottoman presence in Syria. Thus, there were three provinces in Syria during the remainder of the sixteenth century and a good part of the seventeenth century before a fourth province, Sayda (Sidon), was created.

In the latter half of the seventeenth century and throughout the entire eighteenth century, there were four provinces in Syria: Aleppo, Tripoli, Damascus, and Sayda. This study deals with the southern districts of Damascus and the new province of Sayda, composed of Sayda, Beirut, and Safad. Sidon was created, primarily, to check the expansionist policy of the ambitious Fakhr al-Din II, the Druze amir, who was defeated in 1613 by the sultan's army and forced to flee to Tuscany.

In March 1614 a *firman* (decree of sultan) was issued to establish the province of Sayda. The sultan informed Ahmad Pasha, the governor-general of Damascus, that a certain Hasan Pasha had been appointed as *beglerbeg* (governor) of that province. From contemporary documents it appears that the new province had been actually established in early 1615, but they do not indicate how long it lasted.¹¹

The new reorganization of the Syrian provinces, however, did not last long, which can be attributed to the fact that the successors of the Druze amir were docile. They did not constitute a real threat to the central authorities in Damascus and Tripoli. Another factor could have been that the pashas of Damascus viewed the new

province of Sayda as depriving them of their prestige and material wealth.

From 1615 until 1660, when the province of Sayda was recreated, very little, if any, information about the course of that province is known to us. However, we know that the Druze amir, Fakhr al-Din II, had returned from Tuscany after five years of exile and reestablished his paramouncy in Mount Lebanon. As al-Shidyaq has written, he reached his zenith in the early 1630s only to be killed by the sultan's troops in 1635.¹²

The death of the ambitious Amir Fakhr al-Din prompted the revival of factionalism in Mount Lebanon, but his successors failed to fill the power vacuum that his death had caused. Paradoxically, the situation in Mount Lebanon urged the Ottoman government to re-establish the province of Sayda. Two attempts on the part of the Druze amirs within a period of two decades to defy the central authority must have been enough to convince the sultan to keep a close eye over rebellious Mount Lebanon. There was another factor as well. In 1656–57, the pasha of Aleppo revolted against the Grand Vizir, Muhammad Pasha Köprülü (1656–61). The *wali* (governor) of Damascus, Muhammad Pasha ibn al-Tayyar, supported the Aleppo revolt.¹³ Thus, the revolt of Aleppo and the support given to it by the pasha of Damascus most probably prompted the Sublime Porte to reestablish the province of Sayda at the expense of Damascus. By so doing, the Porte would restrain the potent and ambitious pashas of Damascus, and meanwhile would encourage the latter to concentrate on their internal problems. Perhaps a third (although minor) factor was to compensate 'Ali Agha al-Daftardar for suppressing the rebellious janissaries of Damascus. In any case, in 1660, Grand Vizir Muhammad Pasha Köprülü decreed the recreation of the province of Sayda and appointed 'Ali Agha al-Daftardar as its first *wali*.¹⁴ This measure was in line with the vigorous administrative policy of the Grand Vizir Köprülü. The Ottoman sultan had a vital interest in maintaining security in the Syrian provinces, particularly those surrounding the pilgrimage route from Damascus to the Hijaz and the main route connecting Syria and Egypt. Whenever threatened by strong ambitious rulers such as Fakhr al-Din II and Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar, the Porte resorted to force to crush their movements, especially when they began courting European powers.

In 1615, the province of Sayda, as noted above, comprised three *sanjaqs* (districts) which were detached from the province of Damascus: Sayda, Safad, and Beirut. By and large it included the northern parts of Palestine (al-Jalil, the Galilee) and the southern regions of the Lebanon (Jabal ‘Amil). The population was composed of Druzes, Maronites, and Muslims, both Sunnis and Shi’is, among others. The *sanjaqs* of Sidon and Safad contained very fertile lands and thus were a vital source of revenues for the pasha of Damascus, whose major responsibility was to conduct and protect the pilgrimage caravans on behalf of the sultan. In addition, the province of Sayda contained three major ports: ‘Akka, Sayda, and Beirut, which served Damascus and the hinterland. Accordingly, Damascus could not afford or tolerate the rise of an unfriendly power in these *sanjaqs*.

The above-mentioned factors help us to understand two major points: the position of the pasha of Damascus, and the vital importance of the newly created province of Sayda where the movement of Shaykh Zahir al-‘Umar developed. The *wali* (governor) of al-Sham was always the sultan’s senior agent vis-à-vis the *walis* of Tripoli and Sayda. There were times of danger and necessity when the latter two were either the sons or close relatives of the pasha of Damascus. Under such conditions, the *walis* of Tripoli and Sayda were, in practice, subordinate to the *wali* of Damascus.¹⁵

After its reestablishment in 1660, the province of Sayda gained unexpected significance within the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century. First, it was the *pashalik* (province) where Shaykh Zahir al-‘Umar al-Zaydani (1706–1775) founded his movement which defied the sultan’s authority. Second, its easy access to the Mediterranean allowed for virtually free commercial relations with Europe. Third, the province of Sayda, especially the city of ‘Akka, had developed stronger commercial, political, and military relations with Egypt than had the rest of the Syrian provinces. Fourth, at the end of the eighteenth century, ‘Akka, the seat of the province, was the main target of Napoleon’s campaign in Syria. Due to these factors, Sayda, where Shaykh Zahir al-‘Umar’s movement originated and developed, held a significant importance within the Arab provinces during the eighteenth century.

Shaykh Zahir's movement significantly influenced the unique development of the province of Sayda. Although the demand for local rule in Ottoman Syria was introduced by the Ma'nis in the seventeenth century, Zahir's movement added a new dimension to the local tradition of defying the sultan's authority, and notably involved powers such as Egypt and Russia in military action against the sultan.

Prior to Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar's arrival on the political scene in Syria, the trend toward local insubordination was limited. Several local families had successfully established their control and ruled over certain parts of the Arab provinces for a considerable period of time, namely the Ma'nis and the Shihabis in Mount Lebanon, the 'Azms in Damascus, the Jalilis in Mosul, and the Mamluks in Baghdad.¹⁶ Each of these families rose to power either from within the Ottoman establishment or through inheritance.

Shaykh Zahir, on the other hand, came from a modest background. He did not hesitate to defy the sultan's authority and conclude an alliance with 'Ali Bey al-Kabir of Egypt, who also revolted against their common enemy, the Ottoman state. For the first time in the modern history of the Near East, a local leader sought military alliance and assistance from a European power—namely Russia—against his Muslim sovereign. The local notables and tribal chieftains of Mount Lebanon had merely maintained their pre-Ottoman conditions; furthermore, it was not incompatible with the sultan's interests to leave these mountainous communities as semi-autonomous. Similarly, the 'Azms of Damascus did not aspire for autonomy and were content remaining within the establishment. Hence, they were not defying the central Ottoman authority. On the contrary, they represented the status quo through their unsuccessful attempts to suppress Zahir.

Shaykh Zahir, on the other hand, battled to establish himself. He achieved quite a high degree of autonomy, managing to defy the sultan's authority and maintain a semi-independent state in the Galilee for more than a quarter of a century.

Several studies have been entirely devoted to contemporary historical movements, but Zahir's legacy has been virtually overlooked.¹⁷ Recently, several studies have dealt with Shaykh Zahir in one way or another; they were written in Arabic, Hebrew, and English.¹⁸ For students of modern history of the Arab East, this study will hopefully contribute to an understanding of an

important and vibrant period of Ottoman Syria and the Arab provinces in the eighteenth century.

NOTES

1. The primary sources for the late period of the Mamlūk Empire and the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and Syria are the contemporary chronicles of Muḥammad ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zubūr fi Waqā'i' al-Duhūr*, ed. by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Cairo: Dar Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah, 1960–61), vols. 3–5; Muḥammad ibn Ṭulun, *Mufākabat al-khillān fi Ḥawādiṭh al-Zamān*, ed. by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyyah li-al-Ta'lif al-Tarjamah, 1962–64); and Ibn Ṭulun, *I'lām al-Warā bi-man Wullī Na'ibān min al-Atrāk bi-Dimashq al-Shām al-Kubrā*, ed. by Muḥammad A. Dahman (Damascus, 1964). For secondary sources, consult Maurice Godefroy-Demombynes, *La Syrie a L'époque des Mamelouks d'après les auteurs Arabes* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste, 1923); P. M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 1516–1922* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), pp. 33–45; G. W. F. Stripling, *The Ottoman Turks and the Arabs 1511–1574* (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1942); and Henri Lammens, *La Syrie: Précis Historique* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1921), pp. 43–66.

2. Holt, *Egypt*, pp. 43–45; P. K. Hitti, *History of Syria: including Lebanon and Palestine* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951), pp. 637, 664.

3. Hitti, *Syria*, p. 637; Lammens, *La Syrie*, 2:4–5. For an excellent study of the Mamlūk administration in Syria, see M. Godefroy-Demonbynes, *La Syrie*, pp. 135–238.

4. Lammens, *La Syrie*, 2:3–5; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zubūr*, 5:93; Aḥmad I. 'Abd al-Karīm, “al-Taqsīm al-idārī li-Sūrīyah fi al-'Ahd al-'Uthmānī,” *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts*, 'Ayn Shams University, Cairo, I (May 1951): 129–130; Muhammad Kurd-'Alī, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām* (Damascus: al-Ḥadīthah Press, 1925–28), 2:211–13; Godefroy-Demombynes, *La Syrie*, p. 135.

5. 'Abd al-Karīm, “al-Taqsīm al-idārī,” pp. 129–30.

6. Ibn Ṭulun, *I'lām al-Warā*, pp. 134, 205–6; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zubūr*, 5:406; “Abd al-Karīm, “al-Taqsīm al-idārī,” p. 129; he was also known as “Kāfil al-Mamālik al-Shāmīyyah” (Pro-Consul of the Syrian Provinces). Godefroy-Demombynes, *La Syrie*, pp. 141–42.

7. Holt, *Egypt*, pp. 17–18.

8. H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 1:160, 200–201; Holt, *Egypt*, pp. 41–44.

9. Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, I, p. 222; Holt, *Egypt*, pp. 41–43; Kurd-‘Ali, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām*, 2:227–28; Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i‘ al-Zubūr*, 5:157–79; Hitti, *Syria*, p. 664; Lammens, *La Syrie*, I, 2:55.

10. P. M. Holt claims that Tripoli had been raised to provincial status in 1519 (*Egypt*, pp. 46–47). He depended upon B. Lewis’ article, “Studies in the Ottoman Archives—I.” *BVOAS*, 16 (1954). A. Rafeq, a student of P. M. Holt, in his book, *The Province of Damascus, 1723–1783*, followed suit. Meanwhile, we find that both contemporary historians, Ibn Ṭulun and Ibn Iyās, mention nothing to that effect. On the contrary, they stated that Sultan Sulayman had reorganized al-Sham as a result of al-Ghazali’s revolt of 1520–21. See Ibn Ṭulun, *I‘lām al-Warā*, p. 219, and Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i‘ al-Zubūr*, 5:384, 391–93. H. Lammens, P. Hitti, G. Stripling, and M. Kurd-‘Ali adhere to the latter thesis.

11. Uriel Heyd, *Ottoman Documents on Palestine 1522–1615* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 47–48, p. 132; Tannūs al-Shidyāq, *Akbbār al-A‘yān fī Jabal Lubnān* (Beirut: al-‘Irfān, 1954), 1:309–10.

12. For a good detailed account of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ma’nī’s movement, consult his court chronicler Aḥmad al-Khālīdī al-Ṣafadī, *‘Abd al-Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ma’nī*, ed. by A. Rustum and F. al-Bustānī (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1939); ‘Isā I. al-Ma’lūf, *Tārīkh al-Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn al-thānī*, ed. by Riyad al-Ma’lūf (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1966); and al-Shidyāq, *Akbbār al-A‘yān*, 1:297–372.

13. Abdul-Karim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus 1723–1783* (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), pp. 31–32.

14. al-Shidyāq, *Akbbār al-A‘yān*, 1:375–76; Ḥaydar Ahmad Shihab, *Tārīkh al-Amīr Ḥaydar*, ed. by Na‘ūm Mughabghab (3 vols! in 1; Cairo, 1900–1901), pp. 732–33; Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, 1:222.

15. Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, 1:222; Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus*, pp. 5, 85.

16. For an interesting view, consult Albert Hourani’s article “The Changing Face of the Fertile Crescent in the XVIIIth Century,” *Studia Islamica*, 8 (1957), pp. 89–122.

17. Two Ph.D. theses were written about the ‘Azm family: one was written by A. Rafeq at the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) and published in 1966; the second thesis was written by Shimon Shamir at Princeton University in 1960. ‘Ali Bey al-Kabir also received adequate attention: in 1950 M. R. Ramadan, wrote an M.A. thesis about ‘Ali Bey at the University of Cairo, and in 1968 John W. Livingston submitted a Ph.D. thesis to Princeton University about ‘Ali Bey’s revolt. In 1941, the late Uriel Heyd wrote his M.A. thesis at the

Hebrew University in Jerusalem about Zāhir al-ʿUmar, which was published in Hebrew in 1942 as a short monograph.

18. A. Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973); D. Crecelius, *The Roots of Modern Egypt* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1981); “Egypt’s Reawakening Interest in Palestine,” in D. Kushner (ed.), *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem and Leiden: Brill, 1986); B. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); A. Mannaʿ, *Tarikh Filastin fi Awakhir al-ʿAbd al-ʿUthmani* (Beirut, 1999); T. Muʿammar, *Zahir al-ʿUmar* (al-Nasirah, 1979). See details in Bibliography.

CHAPTER I: THE RISE OF THE ZAYDANIS

The Zaydani family, which established quasi-independent rule over northern Palestine under Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar¹, were of obscure Arab origin. They claimed that they were *ashraf* descended from Zayd ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the grandson of Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter. 'Abbud al-Sabbagh and al-Ma'luf believe the clan was actually named after an ancestor, Zaydan. The Zaydanis were a small clan (*'A'ilah*) consisting of close relatives who numbered probably not more than fifty persons. According to tribal law and because of the inhospitable conditions of the desert, a small clan needed the protection of a large tribe, and the Zaydanis apparently enjoyed the protection of a tribe called Banu Asad.²

It is well established that the Zaydanis were a partially nomadic people when they first settled in the Galilee during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Many historians believe that the Zaydanis came originally from the Hijaz. Historically, several waves of peoples migrated from the Arabian Peninsula northward under difficult conditions, primarily economic. As the following chapter demonstrates, the Zaydanis' mercantile power in Greater Syria, particularly Palestine, points to economic and political motivations as likely causes of migration.

Recorded evidence shows that some of the Zaydanis engaged in trade with Damascenes prior to their arrival in Palestine; as a result, they settled somewhere in the vicinity of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man on the major caravan route between the two principal centers of trade in Syria, Damascus and Aleppo. This location gave the Zaydanis the opportunity to become acquainted with urban life and establish good relations with key people in the city who helped them accumulate wealth and acquire prestige. In addition, their occupation in trade must have acquainted them with the importance, advantages, and different areas of Greater Syria. They

later chose to settle in the Galilee, one of the most fertile regions in Palestine. Their mercantile status allowed them to accumulate wealth, which was necessary to establish themselves as farmers and later tax-farmers.³

It is reported that the elder of the Zaydanis was envied and harassed by some members of the Banu Asad tribe as a result of his wealth. Consequently, the Zaydanis decided to move south of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man; during the latter half of the seventeenth century, they finally settled in northern Palestine. They first resided in Tiberias for a short period, during which their head was recognized as the tax-farmer of Tiberias by the pasha of Sayda through the Druze amir of Mount Lebanon. For unknown reasons, the Zaydanis were forced to leave Tiberias. According to al-Sabbagh, the Saqr tribe, who dominated the whole area west of Tiberias between Safad and Nablus, extended an invitation to the Zaydanis to settle anywhere within their domain. Thereafter they took up their new residence near a small village called 'Arrabat al-Battuf, to the west of Lake Tiberias within the region of Safad.⁴

The people of 'Arrabat al-Battuf welcomed their new neighbors and were captured by the courage and generosity of the Zaydanis' elder, who left his doors wide open to receive all people, both from that village and its environs. He also delivered the village from the control of the Druze shaykh of the nearby village of Sallamah, and devised a plan to kill the Druzes and their shaykh. The Zaydanis, along with the villagers of 'Arrabat al-Battuf, then proceeded to Sallamah and destroyed it.

The destruction of Sallamah and the elimination of the Druze control over 'Arrabat al-Battuf gave impetus to the Zaydanis's ascendancy. Their shaykh became the leading shaykh in the district of 'Arrabah, whereupon he extended the Zaydanis's control over the surrounding districts. A more important result was that the people of 'Arrabah and the Shaghur district appealed to the pasha of Sayda, Qublan Pasha al-Matarji, to grant the Zaydani shaykh the tax-farm of their district. The pasha consented.⁵

There is quite a disagreement among most contemporary chronicles about the name of the first shaykh of the Zaydanis who led his clan to settle and establish themselves in the region of Tiberias; some sources called him Abu Zaydan. However, there is consensus among most sources that Shaykh Salih al-Zaydani was the father of Shaykh 'Umar, who was the first Zaydani shaykh well-

documented by local historians and European consular reports. He acquired the *iltizam* (tax-farming) of Safad and its district in the late 17th century. At any rate, it is also certain that by the turn of the century, he and his two brothers, ‘Ali and Hamzah, were well-established in northern Palestine. Shaykh ‘Ali had the *iltizam* of al-Damoun southeast of ‘Akka, while Hamzah’s *iltizam* was in the surroundings of Nazareth (al-Nasirah).⁶

In 1697, the Shihab dynasty succeeded the Ma‘nids as the rulers of Mount Lebanon. Amir Bashir Shihab, the first member of the Shihabs to assume power after the death of the last Ma‘nid amir, appointed his nephew, Amir Mansur as governor of *sanjaq* Safad. He also appointed ‘Umar al-Zaydani as Mansur’s subordinate with the rank of *Shaykh*. Some sources suggest this assignment was because Shaykh ‘Umar was of the Qays faction, as were the Shihabs.⁷ However, his appointment was not due only to this simple fact. His ancestors and other members of the Zaydani clan had successfully established themselves as *multazim* (tax farmers) in several parts of the Galilee under Ma‘nid rule. Shaykh ‘Umar’s father had achieved great respect and a leading position among the people of the Shaghur district. The *iltizam* of Shaghur was granted to him during the late 17th century. His brother, ‘Ali, was also the shaykh of al-Damun and surrounding territory in southeastern Galilee, while his second brother, Hamzah, was well-established in Nazareth and its environs. Thus, one is inclined to believe that the pre-existing position of the Zaydani clan had most likely encouraged the Shihab prince to opt for placing Shaykh ‘Umar in his position, serving his far-reaching interests by securing the Shihabs’ rule through Zaydani influence.⁸ His ancestors successfully established themselves as tax-farmers in the region of Safad under the rule of the Ma‘nids, which encouraged Amir Bashir to offer Shaykh ‘Umar the same position.⁹

In 1701 or 1702, Amir Mansur died and Shaykh ‘Umar al-Zaydani was promoted to governor of Safad and its dependencies, a position which he held until his death in 1706. In the same year, Amir Bashir died in Safad of unknown causes while collecting the *miri* tax (*al-mal al-miri*) from the adjacent regions. He was succeeded by Amir Haydar Shihab. Meanwhile, Sayda changed hands and the new governor, Bashir Pasha al-Matarji, removed Safad and Jabal ‘Amil from the jurisdiction of the Shihabis and placed them under his direct supervision. The new *wali* of Sayda appointed Zahir, the

son of Shaykh ‘Umar, as shaykh of Safad, ‘Akka and their dependencies, part of which was held by his father Shaykh ‘Umar. Zahir, it seems, was confirmed to assume his father’s position rather than being appointed over a new district.¹⁰

According to some chronicles, within two decades after the death of Shaykh ‘Umar, most of the Galilee was under the control of the Zaydanis. Their influence extended from Tiberias in the east to ‘Akka in the west, and from Safad in the north to Nazareth in the south. Furthermore, some sources claim that Shaykh Zahir became the governor of Safad and ‘Akka and their dependencies after his father’s death. A. Sabbagh, though, gives us a clue that helps explain the contradiction and vagueness in the other chronicles. He stated that all the members of the Zaydani clan who held certain areas as their *iltizam* had transferred their legal title under the name of the youngest descendant, Shaykh Zahir. This was done so they could avert the harsh punishment of the Ottoman authorities in case they failed to remit the *miri* tax. Thus, Shaykh Zahir eventually became the *de facto* head of the Zaydanis.¹³

Zahir represented the Zaydanis in their relations with both the government and farmers. The family strengthened their relations with the central Ottoman authorities (e.g., the pasha of Sayda) but not at the expense of the inhabitants of the area. Such a policy and conduct helped them to obtain the tax-farms of many villages, upon the request of the people to the *wali*.

As has been mentioned, the Saqr tribe was the dominant power in northern Palestine between Safad and Nablus. They indiscriminately pillaged all the traders on the roads in their areas. Consequently, trade was discouraged; the farmers suffered as well. On the orders of the pasha of Sayda, Ibn Madi, the *Shaykh Mashayikh* (chief shaykh) of Jabal Nablus, attacked and defeated the Saqr.¹¹

Rashid al-Jabr, the chief shaykh of the Saqr, convened his tribal council to discuss their position vis-à-vis the Ottoman government and its representatives in their region. The Saqr council decided to select a strong local shaykh to whom they could give their support and allegiance and who would in return defend them against the government. Their first choice was Shaykh Zahir al-‘Umar al-Zaydani, still in his early thirties at the time. Their decision was influenced by the Zaydanis’ highly reputable record both with the government and among the people. One might add

that the Saqr, who welcomed the Zaydanis into their region when they left Tiberias, hoped to manipulate their junior ally. The Saqr also aspired to extend and enhance their control over a larger area through the Zaydanis. Zahir's brother Sa'd was shocked by the Saqr's decision, probably out of jealousy as well as concern; eventually, he acquiesced, and Zahir became the head of the Zaydanis-Saqr alliance.¹²

One of the first benefits of the alliance was Zahir's control of Tiberias. Zahir benefited also in that it was not only against the pasha's personal interest to keep the tax-farm with a certain individual for a long time, but also the pasha himself was confirmed only for a short term. Thus, the Zaydanis found an excellent opportunity in their alliance with the Saqr to reestablish and consolidate their control over the Galilee.

In the late 1720s, the Zaydanis and Saqr planned to occupy Tiberias, provoke the *mutasallim* (governor appointed by the wali), and drive him out. They successfully captured the *mutasallim*, who was sent to the pasha of Sayda, along with a statement claiming that the *mutasallim* had oppressed, maltreated, and infringed upon the rights of the Tiberians. In addition, Zahir informed the pasha that the *mutasallim*'s subordinates imposed extra taxes on top of the *miri* tax, and by so doing they invited the indignation of the subjects against the pasha. Moreover, Shaykh Zahir informed the pasha that the country could only be ruled by justice and refraining from repression. Shaykh Zahir promised the pasha that if he would officially grant him Tiberias and 'Arrabah, he would pay the *miri* in full and on time. The pasha of Sayda agreed to Zahir's request and sent his consent in the form of an order and a Robe of Honor (*kebil'ah*), which pleased Zahir very much.

Zahir began to fortify Tiberias in anticipation of future threats, and by the early 1730s it became his principal headquarters. Zahir's tolerance, just government, and efficient administration prompted the people of the surrounding villages to aspire coming under his administration and protection. Zahir requested the *iltizam* of additional villages from the pasha of Sayda, to which the *wali* responded favorably. As soon as Zahir was granted the tax-farm of a certain area, he established justice and security for the farmers and protected them against both the government representatives and the Bedouins.¹⁴ By the end of the 1730s, Zahir had encompassed most of the region of Safad.

Jiddin, a nearby strong fort under the control of Ahmad al-Husayn, dominated all the adjacent mountainous area such as al-Wabar, Tarshiha and Abu Sinan. The farmers of the Jiddin district suffered much from the heavy-handed shaykh, Ahmad al-Husayn, and the burden of extra exactions imposed by the Bedouins. When they learned of Zahir's just government in Tiberias, their leaders appealed to Shaykh Zahir to deliver them from their miseries. Zahir informed the pasha of Sayda about the conditions of the people under Ahmad al-Husayn's rule and asked the pasha's permission to fight al-Husayn. Meanwhile, the latter informed the pasha of his desire to attack Shaykh Zahir. The governor of Sayda welcomed the opportunity to get rid of both, and accordingly he approved the plans of both adversaries. By 1738, Zahir had prepared his campaign with forces composed primarily of his clan, the country people, and the Saqr tribe that numbered about 1,500 men. Ahmad al-Husayn of Jiddin met him with as many soldiers. Zahir won the battle and subsequently occupied Jiddin and its dependencies. He then requested the pasha of Sayda to grant him the *tax-farm* of that district, to which he consented.¹⁵

Zahir's next move was against Safad, the seat of the region, and the surrounding area. Because Safad is strategically situated on a hill and commands the neighboring countryside, whoever controls it is able to dominate all of the Galilee. It should be remembered that the Zaydaniss were not strangers to Safad and its people. They had, at one time or another since the late 1690s, farmed part or most of the Galilee. Zaydan's son 'Umar not only farmed Safad through the Shihabi amirs, but was also appointed the governor of Safad and its dependencies from 1702 to 1706. After his death in 1706, his son Zahir was confirmed, at least as a tax-farmer, in his position. Therefore Shaykh Zahir, in his efforts to control the Galilee on his own, did not face real opposition.

In addition to the regional seat of Safad there were a few important forts and small villages throughout the Galilee such as al-Ba'nah, Sihmatah, and Dayr al-Qasi. In 1740, Zahir annexed Safad and the first two forts by diplomacy. He convinced their shaykh, Muhammad Nafi', to abdicate in his favor and he agreed; however, Zahir failed to convince Shaykh 'Abd al-Khaliq Salih of Dayr al-Qasi to do so as well. Shaykh Zahir finally was able to gain control of Dayr al-Qasi when he married Shaykh Salih's daughter.¹⁶

As a result of Zahir's occupation of Safad, Nazareth also came under his rule. The Nazarenes were familiar with the Zaydanis because they had settled in 'Arrabah and Tiberias in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Zahir's Damascene wife resided in Nazareth when the Zaydanis were at 'Arrabah, and through her he was able to establish strong, friendly relations with the people of Nazareth. The majority of Nazarenes were Christians engaged in commerce, and their city served as the trade center for Mount Nablus. They welcomed Zahir's rule because he delivered them from the oppression of the rulers of Nablus and the extortion of their merchants. The Nazarenes also preferred Zahir's tolerant policy within his domain, especially toward non-Muslims. Thus, by 1740, Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar successfully controlled the eastern Galilee with its major three centers: Safad, Tiberias, and Nazareth.¹⁷

After Shaykh Zahir had consolidated his power over eastern Galilee, he looked towards western Galilee. His expansion toward the Mediterranean was inevitable because he had established himself in a rich fertile hinterland without an outlet to the sea. The growing European demand for the high-quality cotton of the Galilee-Safad district intensified Zahir's determination to expand westward. Therefore, he resolved to annex 'Akka, where local and foreign merchants resided. Given that the French and the English had vice-consuls in 'Akka to carry out commercial transactions with the interior, and Shaykh Zahir had business dealings with them, the potential profits must have motivated him to annex 'Akka.¹⁸

Zahir decided to seize 'Akka by force. However, Zahir's agents at Damascus informed him that Sulayman Pasha al-'Azm, the governor of Damascus, was preparing to travel through the country to collect taxes during his annual round (*danrab*). Immediately, Zahir changed his plans and left Safad for Tiberias. Fearing that the pasha's real intention was to destroy him and recapture Tiberias, Zahir started to reinforce the city's defenses.¹⁹ Indeed, the pasha launched campaigns in 1742 and 1743, but all attempts to conquer Tiberias failed.

In August 1743, Sulayman Pasha died and Zahir promptly dispatched the bulk of his army to capture 'Akka. Zahir's army met no resistance from either the people or the *mutasallim*, the pasha's representative, who was captured and sent to Shaykh Zahir, who, in turn, treated him kindly. Despite the fact that Zahir had captured

‘Akka by force and had met no opposition, he requested the official blessings of the Porte.²⁰ Zahir went personally to ‘Akka and convened all the notables, the *qadi* and the *‘ulama* and asked them to send a petition requesting the-sultan to grant him the *iltizam* of their town. Zahir also pledged to the pasha that he was still the obedient servant and the sincere subject of the sultan and that he would remit the *miri* tax in full and regularly. Also, he would prevent the Bedouins from devastating the countryside. In view of the promises, and since the main concern of the sultan was to secure the receipt of the *miri* tax regardless of who collected it, the sultan granted Zahir his approval.²¹

There is confusion concerning the year in which Zahir annexed ‘Akka. According to Mikha’il Sabbagh, Shaykh Zahir had control of the city by 1744. This is corroborated by French and English consular reports from ‘Akka and Sayda. Volney, the French traveler who visited Egypt and the Levant in the early 1780s, gave the year as 1749, and most later writers copied this date. Other sources mistook the date to be 1750 when the walls around ‘Akka were completed. Some recent students of history either approved of Volney’s date or considered the date of the sultan’s approval of Zahir’s *iltizam* in 1746 as the year in which Zahir took hold of ‘Akka. Shortly after Shaykh Zahir annexed ‘Akka in 1744, he turned it into his capital and started working on improving its fortifications and defenses, which were completed in 1750.²²

By 1745, Shaykh Zahir al-‘Umar had quite successfully extended his control over the entire Galilee from the Jordan River in the east to the Mediterranean in the west. He employed a variety of methods: diplomacy, mediation, negotiation, marriage, intimidation, and force. But regardless of the course he followed, he always tried to give his conquest legal legitimacy. In some instances, he induced the people of the annexed areas to request the government to grant him the *iltizam*; in other cases, he submitted his request either directly to the sultan or indirectly through the pasha of Sayda. He seldom failed to get his request approved.

While Zahir’s expansion to the east brought him into direct confrontation with the ‘Azm walis of Damascus as representatives of the central government, his control of upper Galilee in the north and Nazareth in the south brought him face to face with powerful

local forces. His annexation of Nazareth aroused Ibn Jarrar and Ibn Madi, the potent feudal chiefs of Mount Nablus. Additionally, his ambitions to occupy some villages of Jabal 'Amil forced him to fight the Matwalis.

Zahir's occupation of Safad and its dependencies in 1738–40 brought him to the borders of the Matwalis who inhabited Bilad Bisharah, or what is now called Jabal 'Amil. This region lies between Mount Lebanon in the north and the Safad region in the south. Nasif al-Nassar was the chief shaykh of the Matwalis; two villages in his territory, al-Bassah and Yarun, bordered the region of Safad. Shaykh Zahir wrote to Shaykh Nasif informing him of his desire to annex these two villages. The latter rejected Zahir's request and warned him that there would be drastic consequences if he tried to annex them by force. Moreover, Nasif made it quite clear to Zahir that, although his attacks against their neighbors were condoned, they were being closely observed.

Zahir was extremely disturbed by Nasif's reply and consulted with his brother Sa'd who undertook to settle the matter. Sa'd unsuccessfully discussed the issue with Shaykh Nasif. Shaykh Zahir then acquired the *iltizam* of al-Bassah and Yarun from the pasha of Sayda. Zahir then drove out Nasif from the two villages.²³

The seizure of al-Bassah and Yarun precipitated a crisis between the Matwalis and the Zaydanis. Shaykh Nasif al-Nassar attacked Shaykh Zahir. The two armies met near the village of Tarbikhah in a battle that lasted several days, during which each side won minor skirmishes. Thanks to Ahmad al-Dinkizli (with his Maghribi troops), the Zaydanis army finally defeated the Matwalis and captured Nasif's sons. Furthermore, Zahir's cavalry followed that of Nasif's up to his home town of Tibnin. Shaykh Nasif immediately surrendered and pleaded with Zahir for peace. Through the good offices of Sa'd, Zahir's brother, Zahir and the Matwalis signed a peace treaty. According to the agreement, al-Bassah and Yarun were added to Zahir's domain, and all the Matwalis's dealings with the pasha of Sayda were to be handled through Shaykh Zahir. The principal importance of this treaty, according to al-Sabbagh, was that the Matwalis with their considerable forces were to fight on Zahir's side against his enemies. In return, Shaykh Zahir promised to release Nasif's sons and to defend the Matwalis against any assault, including from the *wali* of Sayda. In fact, the Matwalis did not view the treaty

unfavorably. As Shi'a, they had suffered many injustices and much discrimination at the hands of the Sunni pasha in Sayda while under his jurisdiction. They found Shaykh Zahir to be their best ally and protector. In addition, as a token of good will, Zahir exempted Nasif and his people from one-fourth of the usual tax required of their area.²⁴

Zahir's alliance with the Matwalis secured his northern borders, freeing him to deal with the dangers menacing his southern territories. First, his occupation of Nazareth had antagonized the feudal chiefs of Mount Nablus; and second, his conquest of 'Akka had increased the chiefs' determination to check Zahir's ambitions. It was of strategic and financial importance for Zahir to control al-Tirah and al-Tanturah, two villages south of 'Akka, as well as Bilad Harithah and Marj ibn 'Amir, the most fertile plain not only in Palestine but also in Greater Syria, renowned for its production of wheat, tobacco, and cotton, as well as for its strategic location. Marj ibn 'Amir connects the seacoast with the mountainous hinterland; one of the main trade routes between Egypt and Damascus also ran through this plain. Therefore, it was inevitable that it became a bone of contention between Shaykh Zahir, the ruler of the Galilee, and the feudal chiefs of Jabal Nablus. Both were competing to control the cotton production and trade in southern Syria. Zahir's economic policy was to impose a kind of monopoly over the cotton trade with the European merchants, while the Nablus merchants were more interested in controlling the cotton trade with Damascus and Egypt, placing both parties' interest in conflict with each other.

After Zahir successfully occupied the above two villages, the coastal plain, and Marj ibn 'Amir, he turned his attention to Haifa. It was a small, neglected village on the southern coast of the bay of 'Akka, and enjoyed a better location and natural harbor than that of 'Akka itself. Haifa was used by many foreign and local merchants to avoid paying the customs to the proper authorities in 'Akka. In addition, it was used by the Maltese pirates as a refuge. Haifa was within the domain of Ibn Madi and Ibn Jarrar, and thus a part of the Damascus province. Zahir decided to annex Haifa for its strategic importance and as a potential port for the hinterland, which he controlled. Zahir also wanted to deprive the pashas of Damascus and their local allies of an important strategic position from which they could attack him and threaten his control over the

Galilee. Therefore, he destroyed Haifa on the pretext that it was being used as a refuge by the “infidel pirates,” and established, not far from its location but within his borders, another village called al-‘Imarah al-Jadidah, which later became known as Haifa al-Jadidah (New Haifa).²⁵

Zahir’s occupation of al-Tirah and al-Tanturah and his destruction of old Haifa prompted Shaykh Ibrahim al-Jarrar and Ibn Madi to prepare an assault against him. They found a valuable potential ally in the Saqr tribe. Their approach to the Saqr was well received because the strength and power of Shaykh Zahir had limited their capacity to plunder. Zahir was able to maintain security on the roads in his *iltizam* and protect the farmers and villagers from Bedouin attacks within and outside his area. Under such conditions, the Saqr tribe could not function as successfully as they had before. What irritated them more was the fact that they had helped Shaykh Zahir al-‘Umar and the Zaydanis in their rise to power and prominence. Therefore, the Saqr tribe, led by their Shaykh Rashid al-Jabr, welcomed Ibn Madi’s call for an alliance against the Zaydanis.

On receiving the news of the Saqr-Nablus alliance, Shaykh Zahir was disturbed, for he had counted on the 3,000 Saqr cavalymen to help him in his anticipated struggle with the chiefs of Mount Nablus. Therefore, he had to change his plans. Since he did not have time to recruit more soldiers, he decided to ambush the enemy, while the main force of 2,000 men, led by Zahir himself, would retreat as if in defeat. The two armies met on the plains of Marj Ibn ‘Amir near a place called al-Rawdah. The Zaydanis’s plan was very successful. The Saqr-Nablus alliance suffered a crushing defeat.²⁶

Soon after the victory at Marj Ibn ‘Amir, Zahir asked for more men so that he could complete his victory and totally destroy his enemy. Because he had offered the people more security than they had enjoyed before he came to power, about 4,000 men joined his army, among whom were many Nazarenes.²⁷ With this force, he marched toward Mount Nablus until he reached Sanur, the most formidable fort in that region where the head chiefs had taken refuge. Zahir laid siege around Sanur, but realizing how well fortified it was, he decided to withdraw, satisfied with controlling their coastal lands along the Mediterranean.

Immediately after Zahir's withdrawal, the notables of Nablus informed As'ad Pasha, the governor of Damascus, about Zahir's invasion and appealed for his help. The pasha advised them to make peace with Zahir. Ibn Jarrar therefore wrote to Shaykh Zahir, declaring their desire for a peace treaty. Zahir welcomed the proposal, and shortly afterwards they signed an agreement by which the rulers of Nablus conceded to Zahir the areas that he had annexed before the eruption of the war, in return for the coastal plain which Zahir had occupied after his victory. Thus, Zahir obtained their approval for his conquest of Nazareth, Haifa, al-Tirah, al-Tanturah, and Marj ibn 'Amir. According to M. al-Sabbagh, they also agreed to pay Zahir 500 purses to cover the expenses of his campaign.²⁸

Thus, before the end of the first half of the eighteenth century, Zahir dominated the Galilee, Marj ibn 'Amir, and a coastal strip extending from al-Bassah north of Safad district to about ten miles south of Haifa. This achievement gave Zahir a respite to pay more attention to his internal affairs, particularly economic and administrative matters.

As soon as Shaykh Zahir occupied 'Akka, he embarked on a very ambitious plan. He decided to transform 'Akka from a small, neglected village with a modest harbor into an important city with an advanced port commensurate with the economy of his domain. He also planned to make it the seat of his government. Therefore, he began developing the port to keep pace with the growing economy and increasing volume of foreign trade, especially with France. In order to achieve his goal, Zahir lowered the trade taxes and customs tariff, and adopted a moderate and tolerant policy toward the merchants, both local and foreign, aiming to enhance trade and commercial activities in his new capital. Within one decade, 'Akka surely became a principal trading post on the Levantine coast, rivaling Sayda.

This economic and commercial development spurred a construction boom to keep abreast of the growing need. These circumstances prompted Zahir to erect a number of buildings: a khan for the French merchants and a local market with over one hundred small shops for domestic trade and local merchants. He also established two mosques, a public bath, and a soap factory. Above all, he fortified the city, strengthening the old walls and

building new ones with towers and formidable gates to reinforce its defenses.

All of this progress and growth attracted a great influx of immigrants from different parts of the Ottoman provinces and foreign countries. They rushed to Zahir's territories in general and to the city of 'Akka in particular. Its population multiplied many times over, eventually surpassing the population of Sayda.²⁹ In short, these prosperous economic conditions contributed immensely to Zahir's rising political power, making him a major player in the political arena of Palestine.

NOTES

1. For a full discussion of the name Zāhir, see E. Rossi, "Due lettere di Dāhir, Signore di S. Giovanni d' Akka, al Gran Maestro di Malta (1752)," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, Rome, XIV (1933), 67; R. Nakhlah, *Gharā'ib al-Lahjah al-Lubnāniyah al-Suriyah*. (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1962), p. 17; also, a linguistic opinion from my colleague Dr. Peter Abboud, Department of Linguistics, University of Texas at Austin. Accordingly, the name is neither zāhir (with emphatic z) nor Ḍahir (with ض), but should be Zāhir ظاهر. Also see M. al-Murādī, *Silk al-Durar fi A'yān al-Qarn al-Thāni 'Ashr* (Cairo: Bulaq Press, 3:184). He states in a Turkish sentence that the name should be ظاهر and not ضاهر. The noted Ottoman historian Jawdat Pasha confirms this argument. He states that the name was Zāhir but it was pronounced Ḍahir according to the local dialect. See *Tārikh Jawdat*, trans. by A. al-Danā, (Beirut, 1890), p. 373; N. Nawfal, *Kashf al-Lithām 'an Muḥayyā al-Hukūmah wa-al-Aḥkām fi Iqlima Miṣr wa-Barr al-Shām* (Beirut: The American University), pp. 46–47. His date of birth is controversial. See al-Murādī, *Silk al-Durar*, Vol. 3, p. 184; Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. 2, p. 221 and M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh al-Shaykh Zāhir*. Al-Murādī claims 1694; Volney, 1686; and al-Ṣabbāgh, 1689–90. The author believes al-Ṣabbāgh is most reliable and plausible.

2. The work of Mikhā'il Al-Ṣabbāgh is full of popular type stories, while 'Abbūd's work is more solid. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, f. la, claims that the Zaydanis were protected by the Banū Asad. The author was not able to trace down Banū Asad in any source that deals with the tribes of Syria.

3. There are two major manuscripts completely devoted to the history of Shaykh Zāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī: Mikhā'il al-Ṣabbāgh's *Tārikh al-Shaykh Zāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī*; and another by his uncle, 'Abbūd al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fi tārikh Zāhir*. See M. al-Ṣabbāgh f. la; Jūrjī

Yannī, “Zāhir al-‘Umār,” *al-Muqataṭaf* XXVIII (4 April 1903), 317; N. Qasātīlī, “Mulakkkhaṣ Tārīkh al-Zayādinah,” *al-Jinān*, III, 24 (December, 1877), 848; Isā I. al-Ma‘lūf, “Tārīkh al-shaykh Zāhir al-‘Umar al-Zaydāni,” *al-Mashriq*, XXXIV, 8 (August 1926), 539; Kurd-‘Alī, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām*, 2:300–301; H. Samārah, *Nabdhah Tārīkhīyah Mukhtaṣarah fi Tārīkh al-Nāṣirah*, p. 7; Mansur, *Tārīkh al-Nāṣirah*, p. 48. The above mentioned works by members of al-Ṣabbāgh’s family were written, primarily, to defend Ibrāhim al-Ṣabbāgh, who served as Zāhir’s wazīr (counselor) for over fifteen years.

4. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārīkh Zabir*, ff. 2a–2b; al-Ma‘lūf, “Mulakkkhaṣ Tārīkh al-Shaykh Zahir,” 539; N. Qasātīlī, “Mulakkkhaṣ Tārīkh al-Zayādinah,” p. 848. For more information about the Saqr tribe, see: T. Canaan, “The Saqr Bedouin of Bisān,” *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, Vol. 16 (1936), pp. 21-31.

5. N. Qasātīlī, “Mulakkkhaṣ Tārīkh al-Zayādinah,” p. 848; Mansur, *Tārīkh al-Nāṣirah*, pp. 48- 49.

6. al-Shidyāq, *Akhhbar al-a‘yan*. Vol. II, pp. 16–17; Shihābi, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 6–8; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zabir*, ff. 2a-2b; T. Mu‘mmar, *Zabir al-‘Umar*, pp. 25-28; al-Murādī, *Silk al-Durar*, V. 3, p. 184; A. Manna’, *Tārīkh Filastīn*, pp. 49-50, n. 24 in p. 295; A. Cohen, *Palestine*, pp. 7-9.

7. *Qays and Yemen* is an old Arab tribal loyalty that developed into factionalism. It surfaced on the political arena during the Umayyad Caliphate. This phenomenon lingered to predominate political life in Lebanon and Palestine during the 18th and 19th centuries. For more information, see: E.N. Haddad, “Political Parties in Syria and Palestine (Qaysi and Yemeni)”, *Journal of Palestine Oriental Society*, V. 1 (October 1920), pp. 209-214; M. Hoexter, “The Role of Qays and Yaman Factions in Local Political Divisions,” *Asian and African Studies*, V. 9, no. 3 (1973), pp. 249-311; T. Mu‘mmar, *Zabir al-‘Umar*, pp. 35-40; A. Cohen, *Palestine*, pp. 8-10.

8. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zabir*, ff. 21–2b; al-Shidyāq, 1:16–18; A. al-Shihāb, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 6–8; J. Yannī, “Zāhir al-‘Umar.” *al-Muqataṭaf*, p. 317. Cf. A. Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus*, pp. 126–27, who considers Manṣūr a cousin of Amīr Bashīr; Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society* 1:222, who confused Zāhir with his father ‘Umar, as the appointed Shaykh by Amīr Bashīr; H. al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣuf fi Tārīkh al-Shuf al-Mashriq*, ed. by I. Sarkīs, Vol. XLVIII (1954), p. 680. Al-Murādī, in *Silk al-Durar*, 3:184, states that “Zāhir’s father, grandfather, and uncles were governors of Safad and ‘Akka, and known as Banī Zaydān”; A. Cohen, *Palestine*, pp. 8-10.

9. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 7–8, 78; M. al-Sabbagh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, f. 1b; al-Shidyāq, *Akbbār, al-a‘yān*, 2:17–18; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 7–8; al-Shidyāq, *Akbbār, al-a‘yān*, II, pp. 18; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. 1: pp. 7–8. It is unlikely that Zāhir, being less than twenty years old, had been appointed the governor of Safad and ‘Akka and their dependencies. What may have happened is that the new pasha of Sayda had confirmed the transference of the different *iltizāms* held by the Zayādinah into Zāhir’s name. See A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 2b–3a.

10. H. al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣuf fī Tārikh al-Shuf al-Mashriq*, ed. by I. Sarkīs, Vol. 48 (1954), p. 674; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 2b–3a; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, ff. 3a–9a; Mu‘mmar, *Zāhir*, pp. 43–46.

11. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, ff. 3a–3b; 6a–6b.

12. *Ibid.*, ff. 4a–6a.

13. *Ibid.*, f. 6b; R. Pococke, *A Description of the East* (London, 1743–45), V. 2, pp. 68–69; F. Hasselquist, *Voyages and Travels in the Levant* (London, 1766), p. 158; J. Egmont, *Travels Through Syria, Palestine, and Egypt* (London, 1759) V. 1, pp. 34–35.

14. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, f. 3a–9a; Jūrjī Yannī, “Zāhir al-‘Umar,” *al-Muqataṭaf*, 28 (4 April 1903): 317; R. Pococke, *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries* (London, 1743–45), 2:68–69.

15. M. Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, ff. 7a–7b.

16. *Ibid.*, ff. 7b–8a.

17. *Ibid.*, ff. 9b–10a; Mansur, *al-Naṣirah*, pp. 46–47; Samarah, *Nabdhah Tarikhijyah*, p. 14. For a good study on the trade activities of Nablus, see B. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

18. C.F. Volney, *Voyage*, 2:220–21, 349–50; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 8a–8b; Yannī, “Zāhir al-‘Umar,” pp. 319–320; Charles-Reux, *Les Schelles de Syrie*, pp. 81–84; Masson, *Histoire de Commerce*, pp. 512–522.

19. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. a7b–8b; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, ff. 14b–16b; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, ff. 14b–16b; al-Bustanī, “Shaykh Zāhir,” *Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif* (Cairo: al-Hilal Press, 1876–1900), 11:403.

20. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, ff. 9a–9b; al-Bustanī, *Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif* 11:403; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 9a–9b; M. Burayk, *Tārikh al-Sham 1720–1782* (Harīṣa: St. Paul Press, 1930), p. 11.

21. al-Bustanī, *Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif* 11:403; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 9b, 16b; Volney, *Voyage*, 2:220–21; Yannī, “Zāhir al-‘Umar,” p. 320.

22. K. Şalībī, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 15; F. R. C. Bagley, ed., *The Muslim World: The Last Great Muslim Empires* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), III, 74; G. Ḥaddād, “Chronicle of ‘Abbūd al-Şabbāgh and the Fall of Ḍāhir al-‘Umar of ‘Akka,” *al-Abḥath*, XX, 2 (1967). All of the above sources considered 1750 the year in which Ḍāhir occupied ‘Akka. John W. Livingston, *‘Alī Bey al-Kabīr and the Mamlūk Resurgence in Ottoman Egypt 1760–1772* (unpublished dissertation, Princeton University, 1968), p. 301. A. Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus, 1723–1783* (a book based on a doctoral thesis at SO AS, 1963), pp. 128, 195. The former source gave the year 1749, while the latter gave the year 1746, which is, in our opinion, closer to the real date. P. M. Holt in *Egypt*, p. 125, relying upon the study of his student, Rafeq, considered 1746 as the date in which Ḍāhir took hold of ‘Akka (Holt, n.l, p. 106).

23. Volney, *Voyage*, V, 2, pp. 220–22, 349–50; A. al-Şabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Ḍāhir*, ff. 7b–8b; Yannī, “Ḍāhir al-‘Umar,” *al-Muqatataf*, pp. 319–20; M. al-Şabbāgh, *Tāriḵh Ḍāhir*, ff. 14b–16b; al-Bustānī, “al-Shaykh Ḍāhir al-‘Umar,” *Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif*, XI, p. 405.

24. Volney, in *Voyage* (2:226), estimated the Matāwilah’s force as many as 10,000 men, most of whom were cavalry; see also Yannī, “Ḍāhir al-‘Umar,” p. 321. The only source mentioning the defense treaty between Ḍāhir and the Matāwilah is M. al-Şabbāgh, *Tāriḵh Ḍāhir*, ff. 8a–8b.

25. J. A. Egmont and J. Heyman, *Travels Through Parts of Europe, Syria, Palestine, Egypt* (London: 1759), 1:4–6; M. al-Şabbāgh, *Tāriḵh Ḍāhir*, ff. 9b, 11b–12a; Volney, *Voyage*, 2:229–30.

26. M. al-Şabbāgh, *Tāriḵh Ḍāhir*, ff. 10a–11a; Samārah, *Nabdhah Tāriḵhbīyyah*, ff. 17–20. Samārah states that Ḍāhir’s victory was overwhelming. He put the number of enemy killed in that battle at about 8,000; due to the heaps of bones, it was claimed that the field of the battle was unable to be cultivated for nearly twenty years. For more details about this battle, see Tawfiq Mu‘mmar, *Ḍāhir al-‘Umar* (al-Nasirah: 1979), pp. 63–66. The author named the battle al-Mansi after the nearby village.

27. Samārah, *Nabdhah Tāriḵhbīyyah*, ff. 18–19; M. al-Şabbāgh, *Tāriḵh Ḍāhir*, ff. 10a–11a. The former claims that even the Christian women of Nazareth participated in the battle by providing food and water and encouraging the soldiers of Shaykh Ḍāhir because of their past suffering under the feudal chiefs of Nāblus. M. al-Şabbāgh, *Tāriḵh Ḍāhir*, ff. 11a–12a; Mu‘mmar, *Ḍāhir*, pp. 64–65.

28. M. al-Şabbāgh, *Tāriḵh Ḍāhir*, ff. 11a–12a, 11b–12a; al-Muhami, *Ḍāhir*, pp. 64–65.

29. Mariti, *Travels*, pp. 92-95, 102-103; Luzignan, *A History*, pp. 179-181; Volney, *Voyage*, pp. 249-252; Cohen, *Palestine*, pp. 130-135; M. Sabbagh, *Tarikh Zabir*, pp. 43-44; Mu'mmar, *Zabir*, pp. 288-296.

CHAPTER II: THE CONSOLIDATION OF POWER

Since Shaykh Zahir came to power, he never experienced a long period of real peace; he either had to defend himself against his neighbors or expand his territory. If he was not subduing unruly tribes, he was preparing to counter an invasion or the threat of an attack by either the pasha of Damascus or the pasha of Sayda. Even when he was not faced with outside danger, often he had to quell the ambitious members of his own family who frequently revolted against his authority.

From the very beginning, the Ottoman sultans formed their policies for the Syrian provinces according to certain guidelines. The sultans placed great emphasis on internal order. For one, they were concerned to maintain the safety of the Syrian pilgrimage caravan, as Holt has pointed out.¹ This caravan assembled annually at Damascus and from there proceeded to Mecca and Madinah, but it was frequently attacked by the Bedouin tribes of the desert. The maintenance of internal order also required the protection of the major routes between the principal centers in the provinces. In addition, the Ottomans recognized the status quo of the local tribes and communities, particularly those in Mount Lebanon and northern Palestine, on the condition that they accept the suzerainty of the sultan. The Ottoman government never tolerated deviations from four main principles: a) regular payment of the sultan's tax (*mal-miri*); b) upholding the sovereignty of the sultan by mentioning his name in the Friday sermon (*kebutba*); c) prohibiting the establishment of close relations with foreign powers; d) sending contingents to fight the sultan's enemies.

These principles influence Ottoman policies in Syria concerning the local powers. As early as 1517, Sultan Salim, on his return to Istanbul from Egypt, led a punitive expedition against Ibn al-Hanash, the Arab chief of al-Biqa', because he violated the rules.

In Mount Lebanon, during the first half of the seventeenth century, Fakhr al-Din al-Ma'ni II had successfully established a strong semi-independent rule over a large area comprising most of Lebanon and northern Palestine. Once he broke with the traditional guidelines, he was destroyed by the sultan's army. The Ma'ni established relations with Tuscany, and the Porte, who never tolerated local potentates who courted European powers, overthrew him.

In view of the guidelines imposed by the pashas, we can better appreciate Shaykh Zahir's position with the central Ottoman authorities. Through the patronage of the Shihabi *amirs*, Shaykh 'Umar, Zahir's father, started his career as a *multazim* (tax-farmer) and then became a governor of Safad and the surrounding region. After Shaykh 'Umar's death in 1706, Zahir first conformed to the guidelines, but as he became stronger he broke with the Shihabi amirs. He began to ask for an *iltizam* directly from the pasha of Sayda.

Zahir expanded his territory which he inherited from his father through different means (See Chapter I). He allied himself with the principal heads of local families and the powerful tribes in the region. In addition, he sought the support of his strong neighbor, the Matwalis. As Shi'a, they were sympathetic to him because of his tolerant and inclusive attitude toward minority religious communities. When he annexed new territories, Zahir was very careful not to antagonize the central authorities. Additionally, he always acquired the *iltizam* of newly-conquered areas from the pasha of Sayda rather than through the Shihabis, the Zaydanis's old patron. His departure from that traditional practice implies his growing power and prestige not only within his region, but also on the provincial level.

In the early stages of building his domain, Zahir had the support of the Saqr tribe that controlled the region between Safad and Nablus; they thought Zahir could help protect them against the feudal chiefs of Nablus, who had the backing of the pashas in Sayda and Damascus. Given that he acquired his *iltizam* directly from the *wali* of Sidon, it was his responsibility to ensure security within his domain and protect the farmers from being ravaged by the Bedouins. It was in his interest to protect these farmers so he could build a strong army. Accordingly, a confrontation between him and the Saqr tribe was inevitable. At their first opportunity,

they allied themselves with Zahir's enemies, the chiefs of Nablus and the pasha of Damascus.

The governors of Sayda and Damascus, however, and particularly those of Damascus, constituted the most serious threat to Shaykh Zahir's ambitions. Zahir, who began his career as a tax-farmer answerable to the Shihabi amirs, broke away from his family's old practice of tax-farming through the Shihabis. This undoubtedly affected his friendly relations with them and brought him face to face with the central Ottoman authorities in Sayda and Damascus, who for many years were members of the 'Azm family or that of 'Uthman Pasha al-Kurji and his sons.

By 1730, the Zaydanis clan was well established in Tiberias and the surrounding lands. At this time the governor of Damascus was Isma'il Pasha al-'Azm (1725–1730); his brother, Sulayman Pasha (1728–1730), was governor of Sayda. Northern Palestine, which was the primary source of *miri* tax for the pasha of Sayda, was flourishing economically. The major commodities of the region, cotton and silk, were in great demand by the French and English merchants. This situation was more favorable to the pasha and the tax-farmers than it was to the peasants towards whom Sulayman Pasha's policy was oppressive and harsh.² He seized every opportunity to fleece the peasants and extort money from the merchants for his own interests, according to another historian.³ Besides, the district of Safad was an important source for contributions to help defray the expenses of the pilgrimage caravan. In 1730 (1142–43 A.H.) Isma'il Pasha of Damascus was the Commander of the Pilgrimage (Amir al-Hajj) and his brother Sulayman Pasha of Sayda was the pasha of the *jardab*. Traditionally, the Amir al-Hajj made the round (*al-dawrah*) in his province in order to levy the *miri* and demonstrate his authority.⁴

In April 1730, Sulayman Pasha and Isma'il Pasha launched a campaign against Zahir in Tiberias. This move marked the beginning of a long and bitter struggle between the Zaydanis and the 'Azm governors. The janissaries' revolt in Istanbul between September and October 1730 had serious effects on the 'Azm family in Syria,⁵ as reported by Charles Perry and M. Burayk at the time.⁶ After the revolt, several Ottoman officials were dispatched to Syria with orders not only to depose the 'Azm pashas, but also to imprison them and confiscate their properties and immense wealth. For a time, the 'Azm family was eclipsed. The new

governor of Damascus became ‘Abd Allah Pasha al-Aydinli, with Ahmad Pasha Abu Tawq as the governor of Sayda.

The discrediting of the ‘Azm governors by the Porte, the deposition and the confiscation of their wealth, and the appointment of new governors not interested in subduing Zahir gave the latter a respite. However, in 1734 Sulayman Pasha al-‘Azm was given the governorship of Damascus. Although he was bent on subduing Shaykh Zahir, he could not begin to fulfill his intent because of poor economic conditions and a power struggle between the *Kapikulus* (sultan’s troops) and the *Yerliyyah* (local troops) in Damascus.⁷ Finally, enmity had developed between Zahir and his old and strong ally, the Saqr tribe, because the tribe had allied itself with his most staunch adversaries, Ibn Madi and Ibn Jarrar, when Zahir had encroached on their region. In short, for the sake of the peasants, Zahir had limited Bedouin raiding, which forced the tribes to turn against him.

At this juncture, Sulayman Pasha saw his chance to exploit the situation—by attacking Zahir. He promptly launched an expedition against Zahir in his stronghold of Tiberias. Anxious to settle their old accounts with Zahir, the Saqr tribe joined the Pasha. Aware of the threat, Zahir wasted no time in reinforcing the defenses of Tiberias.⁸ This foiled the enemy’s plans, but during some sporadic fighting on the outskirts of Tiberias, the Saqr captured Zahir’s brother Salih, who was handed over to Sulayman Pasha and hanged in Damascus. This action intensified the animosity between them and Zahir. Failing to reduce Shaykh Zahir in his stronghold, Sulayman Pasha retired to Damascus. Shortly afterwards, the pasha was deposed in July 1738 and Zahir was relieved of further threats for a few years.⁹ He then was able to expand and secure his territory. With very little cost he gained control of Safad. After such a stunning victory in a short period of time, Zahir became more daring in achieving his ambitions, one of which was the occupation of ‘Akka (as described in Chapter I).

Sulayman Pasha reassumed the governorship of Damascus in 1741. At this time, the economic conditions were very bad indeed. The people suffered from exorbitant food prices, and there was a minor uprising of the poor. In order to reduce pressure in Damascus, Sulayman Pasha decided to deflect the attention of the people toward an external enemy by undertaking military campaigns against the Bedouins, the Druzes, and Zahir al-‘Umar.¹⁰

It is also possible that the *wali* was alarmed by the success that Zahir had achieved during the former's absence from Damascus and by Zahir's present plans to conquer 'Akka and its surroundings.

In addition to family ties and the seniority of the *wali* of Damascus, the financial responsibility for the pilgrimage caravan also prompted Sulayman Pasha to take the initiative. After all, Shaykh Zahir had become the strongest and most aggressive chief in northern Palestine, which was the major source for the *miri* tax in the province of Sayda. Furthermore, Zahir had allied himself with the Bedouin tribes which threatened the safe passage of the pilgrimage caravan, an act which no sultan or pasha could tolerate.

Shortly after he returned with the pilgrimage, the pasha started his preparations for his campaign against Shaykh Zahir, but ostensibly left to go on the *damrab*. Zahir suspected the true intentions of the pasha and left Safad for Tiberias to reinforce its defense. On 3 September 1741, Sulayman Pasha left Damascus with a large local army supported by the Druzes, the people of Nablus, the deputy-governor of Jerusalem, the Saqr, and the Sakhr Bedouin tribes.¹¹ All these parties supported the pasha against Zahir because their very existence and prestige were menaced by the growing power of Shaykh Zahir. Sulayman Pasha arrived at Tiberias only to find that Zahir had made his preparations to thwart the pasha's campaign. He nevertheless laid siege to the city, which lasted about 90 days but to no avail.¹² Zahir managed to smuggle arms and provisions into Tiberias, while his besieged forces made continuous sorties against the enemy. Failing to conquer Tiberias, Sulayman Pasha had to withdraw.¹³

The withdrawal of Sulayman Pasha's army and his absence while leading the pilgrimage caravan in December 1742 (Shawwal A.H. 1155 to April 1743 (Safar A.H. 1156) gave Zahir a short respite during which he strengthened his defenses. In addition to Tiberias, Zahir reinforced his minor fortresses in the Galilee, particularly that of Shafa 'Amr. He also sought the support of the neighboring chiefs but had very little success,¹⁴ even though their subjects were on his side because the pasha's army had devastated the countryside.¹⁵ Zahir's other recourse was to the French merchants and the French influence in Istanbul. He approached the French consul in Sayda, who wrote to his ambassador. Because the Porte considered him a rebel, the ambassador refused to intercede on his

behalf. The ambassador, however, advised Zahir to keep an agent at the Porte, and he promised that he would help him secretly.¹⁶ Although Zahir had cultivated some personal friendships and good relations with French merchants throughout the years, and although French trade had suffered as a result of these hostilities between Zahir and Sulayman Pasha, the French could not afford to throw their weight behind Zahir. Sulayman Pasha represented the sultan and would protect them more than Zahir could. The French also had a stake in Damascus because of their religious orders and commercial activities there. Additionally, they had an interest in Zahir's territory, particularly a commercial one,¹⁷ since his lands were a major source of good quality cotton. Accordingly, they desired his friendship but not at the expense of alienating Sulayman Pasha and, most importantly, the Porte.

After Sulayman Pasha returned from the pilgrimage early in April 1743 (Safar A.H. 1156), he spent four months in Damascus to resolve internal matters. Then, in July 1743 he left Damascus on another expedition against Zahir al-'Umar. In addition to his own soldiers, a sizable force provided and led by the governors of Sayda and of Tripoli and the deputy governors of Jerusalem, Gaza, Ramlah, and Irbid joined his troops. It was also reported that the Druzes had joined the pasha's campaign against the Matwalis, their traditional enemy, but they were defeated when they attempted to pass through Matwalis territory.¹⁸

In this expedition, Sulayman Pasha followed a different tactic than that of his previous campaign. He chose to attack Dayr Hanna, where Zahir had placed his brother Sa'd in command. It was an important fortress from which food and weapons were smuggled to Tiberias during the pasha's siege in 1742.¹⁹ Since he failed to take the city earlier, the pasha probably planned to cut off Tiberias from the rest of the country and win a psychological battle against Shaykh Zahir. At any rate, the pasha did not live long enough to realize his dream. He died suddenly in Lubyah, a village near Tiberias, in August 1743 (Rajab 1156). Once Zahir learned of the pasha's death, he ordered an attack against the Damascene army, which was thrown off balance by the sudden death of their pasha. Zahir's army then captured Sulayman Pasha's camp with its provisions, arms, and money.²⁰

Zahir's defeat of Sulayman Pasha gave him the opportunity to occupy 'Akka and other territories he had long desired. Moreover,

As'ad Pasha al-'Azm, the new governor of Damascus, adopted an expedient and peaceful policy towards Zahir. Most likely, As'ad Pasha learned from his predecessor's failure to destroy Zahir and no doubt was apprehensive about his own career if faced with the same fate. Thus, Zahir enjoyed a relatively quiet period of 14 years during As'ad's governorship. Additionally, he managed to induce the French and the English into changing their attitude and reconciling their differences with him. This was facilitated by the fact that cotton was a primary product of his domain, one that was greatly in demand by both the French and English.²¹

Shaykh Zahir had to establish two important conditions, security and justice, to bring about the prosperity of his region and the survival of his regime. Prior to his gaining control of northern Palestine, the villages were constantly sacked and robbed by the Bedouin tribes. The farmers, failing to pay the *miri*, abandoned their villages and relocated in the towns or in the desert. Thus, agriculture suffered badly; the tax-farmers, in turn, could not levy their imposts. Similarly, trade could not be carried out because the main roads were dominated by highwaymen and Bedouins who constantly attacked travelers.

By 1746, Zahir had successfully established order and provided security in his domain. According to al-Sabbagh, "An old woman with gold in her hand could travel from one place to another without fear or danger."²² Zahir required the *shaykh* of every village or town to guarantee the security and safe passage on the roads within his area. He held each responsible for every attack in his region, and each was required to compensate the victim from their own property.

Zahir ordered all his subordinate officers to lend the poor peasants the needed money in order to help them cultivate their lands. In some cases, Zahir gave the peasants free seeds. He alleviated the *miri* tax on the peasants in drought years. Furthermore, he informed the merchants that he would be responsible for any transaction involving credit that was not redeemed provided that they furnished him with proof that a debt was not paid. Zahir also provided interest-free loans for the native merchants of 'Akka and Nazareth so that trade could be expanded and promoted. After Zahir conquered 'Akka, he repaired the port, making convenient both docking and the transfer of cargo.²³

People from all over Syria and even other parts of the Ottoman Empire began to move to Zahir's domain. Muslims, Christians, and Jews flocked from Cyprus, Aleppo, Damascus, and Smyrna to northern Palestine, particularly 'Akka, Safad, Tiberias, and Nazareth. A colony of Greeks arrived from Cyprus and settled in the vicinity of 'Akka; a rabbi and his followers from Smyrna settled in Tiberias. Moreover, Jews from Poland and Russia came to Palestine and settled in Safad and Tiberias.²⁴ The most active and influential elements among the new immigrants were primarily the Melkites (Greek Catholic), a Christian sect whose followers had been persecuted in Aleppo and Damascus and had emigrated to southern Syria and Egypt.²⁵ All these people had great hopes for a prosperous future under Zahir's rule. They also knew they would be treated justly.

The increase in the population also entailed more trade in foodstuffs, clothes, and other commodities. This caused higher demands on agriculture and trade. All these increased needs helped to create a healthy prosperous economy.

Another aspect of the government that received Zahir's attention was the local administration of his domain. He appointed his sons as his deputies in different key towns.

Zahir also enhanced his position through marriages. He married his sons to daughters of influential notables of conquered areas, and adjacent friendly tribes. He himself married several wives for the same purpose to establish his control over the newly annexed districts.

Prior to Zahir's occupation of 'Akka and while he was in Tiberias, he frequently visited 'Akka to sell his country's products, particularly cotton and grains, to the French merchants. During these visits he successfully developed very fine and strong friendships with both French merchants and the natives. One of these Palestinian merchants was Yusuf Qissis, a Christian Melkite, who provided Shaykh Zahir with most of his commodities on credit. In 1749, shortly after Zahir had occupied and fortified 'Akka, he appointed Yusuf Qissis as his chief scribe and counselor (Mudabbir and Wazir) and entrusted him with his affairs until the early 1760s.²⁶

In 1757, Shaykh Zahir became gravely ill. His special physician, a Greek Orthodox named Sulayman Suwwan, feared that the Zaydanis would kill him in reprisal if Zahir did not survive. On

this occasion, Qissis introduced Ibrahim al-Sabbagh to Zahir for the first time. To his good fortune, al-Sabbagh cured Zahir with success. Thus, Qissis was presented with an opportunity to dismiss Suwwan and to replace him with al-Sabbagh, a member of his Melkite church. A few years later, in the early 1760s, al-Sabbagh replaced Qissis as the chief scribe and counselor for Shaykh Zahir al-Umar. During his career as merchant and counselor, Qissis accumulated considerable wealth. Becoming greatly concerned about his wealth, he decided to smuggle his capital to Malta but was caught. Soon Zahir appointed Ibrahim al-Sabbagh in his place, a position which he held until the death of Shaykh Zahir and the collapse of his state in 1775.²⁷

Zahir was determined to maintain law and order and provide security throughout his entire domain. He protected the farmers and the local merchants against the foreigners' exploitation and their manipulation of the prices of the cash crops, particularly the cotton. He himself fixed the prices, an action which hurt and irritated the French and English merchants. They failed to impose any settlement on Zahir through the influence of their ambassadors in Istanbul, and in 1753 they concluded an agreement to regulate their trade transactions.²⁸

In 1757, an attack by the Bedouins on the *jardab* (caravan guard regiment) and the Pilgrimage caravan was of great importance to Zahir's relations with the Porte. This incident developed as follows: In April 1757, (Sha'ban 1, A.H. 1170), Husayn Pasha ibn Makki, the *wali* of Damascus, went on the *dawrah*, and in July 1757 (Shawwal 19, A.H. 1170), he left Damascus for Mecca as the commander of the pilgrimage caravan which arrived at al-Hijaz safely. In September 1757 (Dhu al-Hijjah 20, A.H. 1170), the Sakhr tribe attacked the *jardab*, which was commanded by Musa Pasha, the governor of Sayda, near al-Qatranah in the vicinity of Ma'an. The Bedouins led by Shaykh Qa'dan al-Fa'iz pillaged the *jardab* and humiliated Musa Pasha, who barely escaped "nude and bare footed" to a nearby village in Hawran called Dir'a where he died of serious injuries. Later, his body was taken to Damascus. Most of the forces of the *jardab* fled to Gaza, Jerusalem, Ma'an, and Hawran, while a few arrived at Damascus. To secure the safe return of the pilgrimage, a second *jardab* from Damascus was dispatched to meet the caravan before it could be attacked by the same tribes.²⁹ The second *jardab* failed to proceed further south than al-Balqa'.

they feared an attack by the Bedouins, whose formidable forces lay in wait for the pilgrimage caravan if it proceeded further. Learning of the impending attack, Husayn Pasha ordered the caravan to encamp at al-‘Ula where it waited expectantly for the arrival of the second *jardab*. When the *jardab* failed to arrive and the provisions of the pilgrims decreased, Husayn Pasha failed to buy off the Sakhr’s chief, Qadan al-Fa’iz, who commanded the raiding tribes. Finally, the pasha decided to proceed north and on the third day of his march, during the first half of Safar, A.H. 1171 (October 1757), the Bedouins attacked the caravan between Tabuk and Dhat Hajj. A large number of pilgrims were killed immediately and many others died later from serious injuries. Istanbul and Damascus were appalled by the tragic news of the calamity that befell the Pilgrimage caravan. The Porte was indignant particularly because a sister of the sultan was among the dead pilgrims. The causes precipitating such an overwhelming attack on the pilgrimage caravan of 1757 (A.H. 1170–71) are manifold.³⁰

Although the Sakhr tribe was the major participant and the main architect of the assault, they were joined by smaller tribes such as the Sardiya, the Banu Kulayb, and the Banu-‘Aqil. All of these tribes could be categorized as semi-settled Bedouins who earned their living from some farming and herding. Due to the changeable climate and the rugged terrain, neither occupation provided a stable or completely dependable source of their livelihood. In times of great economic hardship, the pilgrimage caravans became prime targets. The safe conduct of the pilgrims from Damascus to Mecca and back to Damascus was a major concern of the Ottoman government. Since the Bedouins were the predominant population along the pilgrimage route, it had been very early decided to use the Bedouins as auxiliary guards of the Pilgrimage. They provided the pilgrims with camels, guided them through the desert, and protected them against possible attacks. In return for their services, they usually received a *sarr* (a regular payment) from the pasha of Damascus, who was the commander of the pilgrimage caravan during the eighteenth century. They also received wages for renting their camels to individual pilgrims.

In the early eighteenth century, the large and powerful ‘Anazah tribe moved north from Arabia to Syria, consequently pushing several smaller tribes from their usual encampments. This movement obviously caused dislocation in the economy of the

affected areas in the Syrian Desert. In addition, the natural disasters of 1756–57—a severe frost and a bad harvest—had an unfavorable impact on the tribes of these areas. The advent of the ‘Anazah tribe induced the Ottoman authorities to entrust them with some functions that had been rendered to the Pilgrimage by other minor tribes. Thus, the Sakhr tribe and their allies were deprived of a major income and an important prestigious position. Finally, the immediate reason for the attack was, as in many previous and subsequent attacks, the reluctance of Husayn Pasha of Damascus to pay the *sarr* to the Sakhr tribe and their partners.³¹

Neither Zahir nor his sons had participated in the assault, but his territory bordered on the eastern limits of the semi-settled tribes and the Pilgrimage route. Shaykh Zahir maintained good relations with some of the attacking tribes such as the Banu Sakhr and Sardiya; one of his wives as well as his mother was from the latter tribe. Following As‘ad Pasha al-‘Azm deposition in 1757, a period of hostilities between Zahir and the government of Damascus ended. The new pasha, Husayn ibn Makki, pledged that, after his return from the Hijaz, he would recapture the regions whose *iltizam* had been granted to Zahir even though they were not part of the province of Damascus. The pasha threatened to kill Zahir if the latter failed to restore the regions to the province of Damascus.³¹ Old grudges between Zahir and Husayn Pasha were exacerbated when Zahir allowed the Bedouins to sell their booty in his country. Husayn Pasha seized upon this as an excellent opportunity to accuse Shaykh Zahir of complicity in the Bedouin attack on the Pilgrimage, and he wrote to the Porte accusing Zahir of inciting the tribes to attack the pilgrimage caravan. Zahir denied that he had had any connection with the assault and asked for an investigation. One was held, and the pasha’s accusation of Zahir’s complicity was not sustained. Zahir had gained favor in Istanbul by purchasing the caravan loot and sending the *‘iqab* (the sacred banner of the Prophet) and the *mahmal* (the richly decorated camel litter) to the sultan, symbolizing the sultan’s sovereign presence.³²

The importance of this incident is further clarified when seen in the context of the primary objective of the Ottoman administration in the Syrian provinces, particularly that of Damascus. One of the major responsibilities of the pasha of Damascus was to lead the Syrian pilgrimage every year from Damascus to Mecca (*al-Rakb al-Shami*) and back safely. Thus, the

Pasha was charged with providing the security necessary for the safe conduct of that caravan. It was expected that the sultan would secure safe passage for the Muslims who visited the holy cities in the Hijaz once every year. Besides, he was also responsible for maintaining order in the Hijaz and supplying its people with adequate provisions. The major concern of the *wali* of Damascus was to ward off any threat to the security of the pilgrimage route, and so the Ottomans' basic policy was not to tolerate any "rebel" or strong local potentate whose authority might threaten the safety of the Syrian pilgrimage caravan. Zahir's expansion to the east brought him closer to the pilgrimage route, which in turn created more problems. The raid on the pilgrimage caravan in 1757 thus became one of the first events that brought the potential menace of Shaykh Zahir to the attention of Ottoman authorities.

On October 30 1757, Sultan Mustafa III ascended the throne after the death of his brother 'Uthman III. Aboukouf (Abu Quf), the *Kizlar Aghasi* (Chief Black Eunuch) was the first one to fall from his high office as head of the harem and chamberlain to the sultan. He was banished to the Island of Rhodes, but shortly afterwards was killed and his head displayed in front of the sultan's palace. A large sign was placed with the head stating that the *Kizlar Aghasi* was the principal cause of the calamity which befell the pilgrimage because he had deposed As'ad Pasha—who led the pilgrimage fourteen times without any incident—and replaced him with his protégé, Husayn ibn Makki, during whose governorship the attack occurred.

Husayn Pasha, governor of Damascus and commander of the pilgrimage, was deposed but did not suffer much from the Porte. In 1762, he was appointed governor of Mar'ash, where he remained for nearly a year, after which he was reappointed as governor of his hometown Gaza. Husayn Pasha remained in Gaza until he was killed in 1765 (A.H. 1179) during a fight against the Bedouins of Banu Sakhr and al-Wuhaydat. After his death, the Porte confiscated his property and wealth.³³

At this juncture, Zahir seized the opportunity to renew his aspirations of extending his rule over southern Palestine up to Gaza. Therefore, he sent a letter to al-Sayed 'Abd al-Latif, the *Naqib al-Asbrat* (head of the descendants of the Prophet) in Jerusalem, requesting him to use his good offices with the provincial Ottoman authorities in his favor. After explaining in his

letter the death of Husayn Pasha ibn Makki in his fight against Shaykh Salit, head of the Wuhaydat tribe, he alluded to the insecurity prevailing there due to the Bedouins' continuous aggression against the people of the region. Hence, he appealed to Sayed 'Abd al-Latif to use his good offices with the Pasha of Damascus to confer Gaza *sanjaq* on his son 'Uthman. He also pledged to maintain security and stability, and put an end to the Bedouins' aggression in that area. Zahir's appeal was not heeded, most likely because the notables of Jerusalem were apprehensive of his ambitious plans; they were not congruent with their interests.³⁴

The second figure on the provincial level who was affected by the Pilgrimage disaster was As'ad Pasha al-'Azam. In January 1757, he was deposed from Damascus and appointed to Aleppo. A month later he was removed from Aleppo and appointed as governor of Egypt. As'ad Pasha was accused of complicity with the Bedouins in their attack against the pilgrimage and exiled to Crete in March 1758, but was executed en route. Later, his head was sent to the Porte. Shortly after his death, Istanbul sent a special emissary to confiscate his property and that of other important figures in Syria. The confiscated wealth of As'ad Pasha was immense: the cash alone was estimated between 70,000 and 100,000 purses. The nominal value of the Ottoman currency was raised by almost seven percent, which was due, *inter alia*, to the enormous wealth confiscated from As'ad Pasha's estate. Thus, by disposing of a few wealthy officials, the new sultan used the Pilgrimage disaster as an occasion both to increase the Imperial Treasury and to appease the furious populace which had swarmed into Istanbul.³⁵

NOTES

1. P. M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent*, p. 42; and C. M. Kortepeter, "The Rebellion of Sharif Sa'd ibn Zayd...", in A. R. Al-Ansari, ed., *Sources for the History of the Arabian Peninsula*, Vol. I (Riyadh, 1979).

2. Abdul-Karim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus*, pp. 123, 148-49.

3. Ahmad al-Budayri, *Hawadith Dimashq al-Yawmiya, 1154-1175 A.H.*, (1741-1768), ed. by A. I. Abd al-Karim (Cairo: The Egyptian Historical Society, 1959), pp. 25, 35-376.

4. M. al-Shabbagh, *Tarikh al-Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar*. . . (Munich), pp. 164-65. Muhammad ibn Jum'ah al-Maqqar, *al-Bashat wa-al-Qudat*, ed. by

Ṣalāh al-Munajjid (Damascus, 1949) pp. 62–64; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 3a–7b; A.E.B¹, 978 ‘Akka, 15 April 1730 and 3 May 1730.

5. Mikhā’il Burayk, *Tarikh al-Sham 1720–1782*, edited by al-Khūrī Quastantīn Bāshā (Hariṣa: St. Paul Press, 1930), p. 9.

6. For more details, consult Charles Perry, *A View of the Levant: Particularly of Constantinople, Syria, Egypt and Greece* (London, 1743), pp. 64–112; M. Burayk, *Tarikh al-Shām*, pp. 123–26; PRO, S. P. 97, v. 26, Istanbul, September 27 and 30, 1730.

7. Rafeq, *Damascus*, pp. 119–23.

8. Richard Pococke, *A Description of the East and some other Countries* (London, 1743–45) Vol. II, pp. 68–69; Constantine Volney, *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie, pendant les années 1783, 1784 et 1785* (Paris: Parmentier et Froment, 1823) Vol. II, p. 218; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, f. 6b; M. Kurd-‘Alī, *Kiṭāṭ al-Shām* (Damascus: Hadīthah Press, 1925–28) Vol. II, p. 293.

9. Burayk, *Tarikh al-Sham*, p. 9; Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. II, p. 77; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 7a–7b.

10. al-Budayrī, *Hawādīth Dimashq*, pp. 8–9, 21–23; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, f. 14b. The latter source incorrectly gives the date as 1753.

11. Budayrī, pp. 21–22; A.E.B¹, 1026, Sidon, 19 September 1742.

12. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, f. 8a; Ibn Jum‘ah al-Maqqār, “*al-Bāshāt wa-al-Qudāt*,” ed. by Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Munajjid in *Wulāt Dimashq fi al-‘abd al-‘Uthmānī* (Damascus: 1949), p. 69

13. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, f. 8a; Hasselquist, *Voyages and Travels in the Levant, in the Years 1749*, 50, 51, 52, (London: 1766), p. 158.

14. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, f. 8a.

15. A.E.B¹, 1026, Sidon, 19 September 1742.

16. Ibid.; A.E.B¹, 420, Istanbul, 1 May 1743.

17. A.E.B¹, 1026, Sidon, 19 September 1742; 29 September 1742; and 26 May 1743; A.E.B¹, 420, Istanbul, 1 May 1743.

18. al-Budayrī, *Hawādīth Dimashq*, pp. 37–42; al-Shihāb, *Lubnān*, I, 34.

19. al-Budayrī, *Hawādīth Dimashq*, pp. 22–23, 43–44.

20. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 9a; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zābir*, ff. 16a–16b.

21. Volney, *Voyage*, II, p. 219; al-Budayrī, *Hawādīth Dimashq*, p. 49; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 10a; A.E.B¹, 1026, Sidon, 14 November 1742 and 1 June 1743.

22. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zābir*, ff. 11a–11b.

23. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zābir*, ff. 13a–13b.; Lammens, *La syrie*, Vol. II, p. 105; Charlesroux, *Les Echelles du syrie*, p. 70.

24. J. Parkes, *A History of Palestine from 135 A.D. to Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 159; Volney, II, pp. 224–25; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 14a; A. S. Rappoport, *History of Palestine* (London, 1931), pp. 314–316.

25. For further details on the Melkites see: B. Qārālī, *al-Sūrīyūn fī Miṣr: ‘Abd al-Mamālik* (Cairo: 1928, 1933); Y. al-Shammās, *Khulāsat tārikh al-Rūm al-Kathūlik* (Sidon: Dayr al-Mukhalliṣ, 1952); Q. al-Bāshā, *Muḥadārah fī tārikh ṭa’ifat al-Rūm al-Kathūlik fī Miṣr* (Harisa: Lebanon, 1930); and the annex to Burayk’s *Tārikh al-Shām*, ed. by Q. al-Bāshā, pp. 114–152.

26. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 8b and 18b; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zābir*, f. 12a; A.E.B¹, 1032, Sidon, 24 May 1761; A.E.B¹, 1028, Sidon, 5 February 1751. A.E.B¹, 1028, Sidon, 4 January 1751 and attached to it a copy of a letter from the French ambassador at Istanbul dated 15 July 1750; *ibid.*, Sidon, 28 January 1751; A.E.B¹, 1029, Sidon, 12 July 1753.

27. al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādīth Dimashq*, pp. 199, 201.

28. For the following information on the attack and for further details see: al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādīth Dimashq*, pp. 201–11; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zābir*, ff. 19b–20b; Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, pp. 79–81; PRO, S.P. 97, v. 39, Istanbul, 3 and 23 December 1757; al-Murādī, *Silk al-Durar*, II, pp. 60–62, 63–64; Sir James Porter, *Observations on the Religion, Law, Government and Manners of the Turks* (London, 1768), I, 233–35, II, 21–29; J. al-Barazanji, *al-Naḥl al-Farajī fī al-Faṭḥ al-Jatahji*, Ms. Damascus, Zāhirīyah, ‘Amm. 8724, ff. 5a–8a.

29. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 10a–10b. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zābir*, f. 20b; al-Budayrī, p. 209, claims that both the *Maḥmal* and the *Ṣanjaq* were ransomed by Shaykh ‘Umar al-Maḥāmid of Ḥawrān.

30. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zābir*, f. 20b; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 12a–13b. For a full account of information on the attack, consult: al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādīth Dimashq*, pp. 201–211; Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, pp. 44–47; al-Murādī, *Silk al-Durar*, Vol. II, pp. 60–64; PRO, S.P. 97, v. 39, Istanbul, December 3 and 23, 1757.

31. Porter, *Observations*, I, 233–34; Bagley, *The Muslim World*, III, 72. For further details on the Bedouins in Syria and North Arabia see, Max Oppenheim, *Die Beduinen* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, (1939–68), 4 vols, especially vol. II, pp. 234–35; U. Kaḥḥalah, *Mu’jam qabā’il al-‘Arab al-qadimah wa-al-ḥadīthab* (Damascus: Hāshimīyah Press, 1949) 2 vols.; M. Seetzen, “Memoire pour arriver a la connaissance des tribus Arabes en

Syrie,” *Annales des Voyages de la géographie et de l’histoire*, VIII (1809); al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādīth Dimashq*, pp. 197–98. ‘Umar al-Wakīl, *Tarwīḥ al-qalb al-shajī fī ma’āthir ‘Abd Allāh Pasha al-Jatahī*, Ms. Staatbibliothek, Vienna, COD. Mixt. 195. ff. 14a, 43b–44b; al-Barazanji, *al-Nafḥ al-farajī*, ff. 5a–6a; PRO, S.P. 97, v. 39, 23 December 1757.

32. Porter, *Observations*, II, 30–31; PRO, S. P. 97, v. 39, 3 December 1757; A.E.B¹, 435, Istanbul, 26 November 1757; A.E.B¹, 88, Aleppo, 3 September 1762; al-Mūrādī, *Silk al-Durar*, II, pp. 61–62; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 10b.

33. al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādīth Dimashq*, p. 219. A purse was equal to 500 piasters. For different estimates see Burayk, *Tarikh al-Shām*, p. 60; M. al-Dimashqī, *Tarikh ḥawādīth al-Shām wa-Lubnān 1782–1842*, ed. by L. Ma’luf (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1912), p. 60; PRO, S.P. 97, v. 40, Istanbul, 16 August 1758; Adil Manna‘, *Tarikh Filastin fī Awakhir al-‘Abd al-‘Uthmani, 1700-1918*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Institute of Palestine Studies, 2003), pp. 58-59.

34. A. Manna‘, *Tarikh Filastin*, pp. 58-59, 61.

35. See Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus*.

CHAPTER III: ZAHIR AT HIS ZENITH

Following the attack on the pilgrimage in 1757 (See Chapter II), ‘Abd Allah Pasha al-Shataji was appointed governor of Damascus in early January 1758.¹ He faced two major problems: one was to restore order, particularly in Damascus following demonstrations due to the poor economic conditions, and the other, to ensure the safe conduct of the pilgrimage caravan from Damascus to Mecca and back. The pasha restored order in Damascus by having the *Yerliyyah* subdued, and he ensured the safety of the pilgrimage by suppressing the strongest two tribes on the Pilgrimage route: the Banu Sakhr in the north, and the Banu Harb in the Hijaz. He then repaired the pilgrimage route and constructed several fortresses in which he placed permanent garrisons.² But the defeat of the tribes was not won without a heavy price paid by the Damascenes and the pasha himself. This also was due, in part, to the fact that ‘Abd Allah Pasha had been required to depose the Sharif of Mecca, Musa‘id ibn Sa‘id, and to replace him with his brother Ja‘far. Sharif Musa‘id appealed to Istanbul and was reinstated, while ‘Abd Allah Pasha was deposed in early 1760 and appointed as governor of Diyar Bakr, where he remained until his death in late 1760.³

The new governor of Damascus, Muhammad Pasha al-Shalik (al-Jaliq), assumed his position under unfavorable circumstances. All of Greater Syria was rocked by severe earthquakes, followed by a fearful plague that spread from Antioch to Gaza for six months. On top of all these miseries, food was scarce and expensive, largely due to a severe frost which destroyed the crops. Al-Shalik could not solve these problems, and was deposed.

After such a turbulent period in Damascus, a strong governor was desperately needed. ‘Uthman Pasha al-Kurji (1760–1771) was appointed in that capacity. He was of Georgian origin and a *mamluk* (slave) of As‘ad Pasha al-‘Azm, who had governed the province of

Damascus for about fourteen years.⁴ Due to his relationship with As'ad Pasha, he was erroneously referred to as 'Uthman ibn al-'Azm. 'Uthman Pasha assumed the governorship of Damascus at a critical time. The natural disasters, earthquakes, and the plague had disrupted much of the country's economic life. His primary concern was similar to that of his predecessors—to establish order within the province of Damascus and to secure the safety of the pilgrimage. He was more successful in realizing the second goal than the first. He was a heavy-handed governor and managed to have both Sayda and Tripoli governed by his sons, yet he failed to subdue his principal antagonist, Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar. The length of his tenure in Damascus (1760–1771) ranks second only to that of As'ad Pasha al-'Azm (1743–1757) in the history of Ottoman Syria, indicating that he had established stability. During the same period, Aleppo, for example, had ten governors.⁵

The appointment of 'Uthman Pasha al-Kurji as the *wali* of Damascus in 1760 ended a long period of peace which existed between the pashas of Damascus and Sayda on one side and Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar on the other. Since Sulayman Pasha al-'Azm's death in 1743 during a campaign against Tiberias, the stronghold of Zahir, not a single governor had made a genuine effort to subdue Zahir. As'ad Pasha al-'Azm maintained an expedient policy of peaceful relations with Shaykh Zahir. This policy was about to be changed by the new *wali* of Damascus, Husayn Pasha ibn Makki, who in 1757 threatened to kill Zahir if he did not abandon the areas which constituted part of the province of Damascus. Fortunately for Zahir, the pilgrimage caravan commanded by Husayn Pasha was attacked, and he never returned to Damascus.

Husayn Pasha was succeeded by 'Abd Allah Pasha al-Shataji (1758–1760), who concentrated on the old problems of restoring order in Damascus and along the pilgrimage route between Damascus and the Hijaz. 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus and Sa'd al-Din Pasha al-'Azm of Sayda unsuccessfully planned to attack Shaykh Zahir in 'Akka. This influenced 'Abd Allah Pasha to try to befriend Zahir, according to al-Sabbagh. The next governor, Muhammad Pasha al-Shalik (1760), ruled for about nine months, but did not have much of an opportunity to form a definite policy. He was preoccupied with internal matters and the safety of the

pilgrimage as his predecessors had been. On the whole, his relations with Shaykh Zahir were friendly.⁶

The appointment of ‘Uthman Pasha al-Kurji (also known as al-Sadiq) as the wali of al-Sham changed the political alignment of Syria. ‘Uthman Pasha challenged Shaykh Zahir’s authority and sought to destroy him, but he failed to do so. However, ‘Uthman Pasha’s attempt helped to involve not only other powers of the region but also some European states. An alliance was concluded between ‘Ali Bey of Egypt and Shaykh Zahir. They secured military support from the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean Sea, an event which in itself had great significance: it marked the first European intervention in the Arab East in modern times.

Zahir’s career during the 1760s can be divided into three stages. First, in 1761–62, Zahir assumed a defensive strategy, protecting his domain against possible attacks from ‘Uthman Pasha al-Kurji. Second, he had to deal with several uprisings between 1763 and 1767 led by some of his sons and supported by outside adversaries of their father. Third, after these problems were resolved, he allied himself (1768–71) with ‘Ali Bey of Egypt, occupied Damascus, and eventually brought an end to ‘Uthman Pasha’s lengthy governorship in Syria.

It was clear that ‘Uthman Pasha had the support of the Porte to subdue Shaykh Zahir. The customs houses of ‘Akka and Haifa had been under the dominion of the pashas of Sayda and Damascus respectively. About 1720, at the request of ‘Uthman Pasha Abu Tawq of Sayda, the Porte ordered both customs houses united under one administration in ‘Akka. This arrangement prevailed after Zahir occupied ‘Akka and Haifa. However, within a few months of his appointment to the governorship of Damascus, ‘Uthman Pasha al-Kurji obtained a *firman* from the Porte to separate the two customs houses and establish his own customs official at Haifa. The French merchants in both ‘Akka and Sayda did not welcome the pasha’s move. Needless to say, Zahir also received the news unfavorably. This *firman* alerted Shaykh Zahir to the serious threat he had to face from ‘Uthman Pasha of Damascus.⁷

Zahir decided to attack the pasha, hoping probably to dissuade him from a war against all of his territories. Zahir sent his sons to raid several villages in Damascus province, and in response ‘Uthman Pasha seized the fortress of Tanturah on the coast from

Shaykh Zahir.⁸ This was a futile effort on the pasha's part, for it was extremely difficult for him to maintain control over Tanturah. Soon after the pasha returned to Damascus on his way to lead the pilgrimage to Mecca, Zahir recaptured Tanturah.⁹

The second target of 'Uthman Pasha was Haifa. He obtained the *firman* accordingly to separate it from 'Akka. On May 20, 1761, a small force of Maghrebis (North Africans) was dispatched from Beirut to capture Haifa on a French boat en route to Yaffa. Zahir was aware of this move because the pasha of Sayda sent a copy of the *firman* concerning Haifa to Shaykh Zahir. Therefore, it was not surprising that the pasha's force dispatched from Beirut was defeated. Five soldiers were killed as soon as they landed in Haifa, and Zahir imprisoned the three French sailors of the boat carrying the attacking force.¹⁰

The French sought the help of Yusuf Qissis, Zahir's Greek Catholic advisor, to secure the release of the sailors. Aware of how much the French needed him, Zahir decided to exploit the situation to his benefit. He responded by writing to the French consul in Sayda asking him to request his ambassador in Istanbul to use his influence at the Porte in favor of Zahir. The English vice-consul at 'Akka had already written to his consul in Aleppo and to the British ambassador in Istanbul to that effect. Of course, Zahir wanted to secure the abrogation of the *firman*, which authorized the separation of Haifa from 'Akka after the cities had been unified for about 40 years.¹¹

After 'Uthman Pasha returned from Mecca in August 1761, he continued to assemble provisions and arms to attack Zahir. Also, the pasha tried to incite Zahir's sons to rise up against their father. This was not difficult since the sons had shown their interest and personal ambitions in seizing more power from their father. Two of Zahir's sons, 'Ali and Sa'id, tried to force their father to abdicate in March 1762. 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus countenanced the revolt and encouraged Shaykh Nasif of the Matwalis to support 'Ali. This prompted Shaykh Qublan, Nasif's rival, to support Zahir. Eventually, Zahir made some concessions to his sons and a peaceful agreement was concluded.¹²

Negotiations began between 'Uthman Pasha and Shaykh Zahir in order to reconcile their differences. Meanwhile, 'Uthman Pasha continued his attempts to exploit the dispute between Zahir and his sons. He ordered his forces to march against Zahir's

territories; they then occupied Haifa and placed it under control of Zahir's enemy, the shaykh of Nablus. Failing to recapture Haifa, Zahir resorted to a war of attrition. He laid siege to the city, and the besieged garrison subsequently surrendered. Zahir thus reestablished his authority over Haifa and secured his seat of power, 'Akka.

Shaykh Zahir foiled several attempts by 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus to seize some strategic and vital posts on the Mediterranean. The field of battle was always far from the pasha's center of power in Damascus and closer to Zahir's. Marching from Damascus to the coast, the pasha's forces had to pass through either the shaykh's domain or his allies' territories. The pasha was prevented from sending a strong force by sea. He would have had to use French ships, but trade was largely transacted with Zahir and accordingly they were supportive of him rather than the pasha of Sayda. Nu'man Pasha of Sayda also was unwilling to alienate Zahir, for he was the principal source of the *miri* paid to him. Besides, Nu'man Pasha had his own grievances with the pasha of Damascus, who was urging the Porte to appoint his son Darwish Pasha as governor of Sayda. This apprehension and disharmony made cooperation between the two pashas impossible.¹³

THE INTRA-FAMILY STRUGGLE

The second task that Shaykh Zahir had to deal with was to overcome local adversaries, whether they were members of his family or tribes settled within his domain. The Saqr tribe, which helped Zahir establish authority in his early days, became a principal source of disturbances since the early 1730s. They had sided with Sulayman Pasha al-'Azm, governor of Damascus, in his campaigns against Zahir in 1730, 1737, and 1742–1743. Furthermore, they did not lose any opportunity to incite and support Zahir's sons or his brother Sa'd in their power struggle. The Saqr's primary objective was to destroy Zahir's power in order to regain a free hand in northern Palestine, because the law and order which Zahir successfully established in these areas deprived them of their ability to inflict aggression on the inhabitants.

The death of Sulayman Pasha al-'Azm, as already noted, gave Zahir a respite that lasted until the appointment of 'Uthman Pasha al-Kurji in 1760. For nearly two decades, Zahir was more or less secure from any outside aggression, a situation which allowed him

to give more attention to his internal problems. For example, his cousin, Muhammad al-‘Ali, posed a threat to his power, so he eliminated him.¹⁴

Muhammad al-‘Ali succeeded his father, Zahir’s uncle, in his *iltizam* at al-Damoun southeast of ‘Akka, close to the sea coast. A few years later, he annexed Shafa ‘Amr and made it his seat of government. Being Zahir’s cousin and brother-in-law, he never hesitated to support him during his strife to expand his territories. After Zahir had successfully secured his northern, southern, and eastern borders, he aspired to have an outlet on the Mediterranean – namely ‘Akka. The strategic location of Muhammad al-‘Ali’s territory and his personal ambitions stood as an obstacle in the face of Zahir’s aspiration. In addition, Zahir sensed some sign of rapprochement between his cousin and the provincial Ottoman authorities. Thus, he saw his cousin as an imminent threat to his vital plans. All these factors prompted Zahir to completely eliminate his cousin and brother-in-law in 1743, paving the way to annex ‘Akka.

In 1752–53, Zahir’s son ‘Uthman attacked him, but was quickly suppressed. The most serious threats came in the 1760s and 1770s,¹⁵ when his sons began to demand more authority. As Shaykh Zahir became older (he was then in his seventies), the different contenders were more encouraged to strike. They, of course, received support from ‘Uthman Pasha of Damascus, the principal antagonist of Zahir, and from a faction of the Matwalis, Zahir’s major ally.

Although ‘Uthman ibn Zahir was neither the eldest nor the most competent of Shaykh Zahir’s sons, he was the most troublesome. He challenged his father’s authority from 1752–53 until Shaykh Zahir died. In the early 1760s during the course of hostilities between ‘Uthman Pasha of Damascus and Zahir, ‘Uthman had asked his uncle, Shaykh Sa’d, to help him against Zahir.¹⁶

A strong and ambitious person, Shaykh Sa’d was not only the older brother of Zahir but had also served as his principal counselor since the beginning of his political life, and was largely responsible for most of Zahir’s successes. It was reported that Sa’d envied Zahir; therefore, he welcomed ‘Uthman Pasha’s support. Furthermore, being aware of the Saqr Tribe’s hostile attitude toward Zahir, and the ambitions of his nephew ‘Uthman, Sa’d won

them over to his side. They planned to kill Shaykh Zahir and replace him with Sa'd. Zahir discovered the plot and had his son 'Uthman assassinate his uncle Sa'd in return for the region of Shafa 'Amr. Thus, by 1762, Zahir had done away with the most dangerous adversaries within his family: his cousin Muhammad al-'Ali in 1743 and his brother Sa'd in 1761.¹⁷

Zahir, however, failed to honor his promise to his son 'Uthman when the people of Shafa 'Amr appealed to Zahir not to appoint 'Uthman as governor of their town. Because Zahir was sympathetic to their welfare, he heeded their request and bought off 'Uthman. Zahir then turned to settling his old accounts with the Saqr tribe, which had agreed to help Sa'd in his bid for power. Zahir assembled his forces and marched against the Saqr, defeating them on the plain of Marj ibn 'Amir.

In 1765, 'Uthman demanded Shafa 'Amr, which Zahir denied him a few years earlier as a reward for his role in eliminating his uncle Sa'd. But again, Zahir rejected 'Uthman's request. Additionally, 'Uthman was jealous of his half-brother 'Ali, who had received more favorable treatment in 1762. 'Uthman then incited his brothers Ahmad and Sa'd al-Din to request more territories from their father. When Zahir rejected their request, they joined arms with 'Uthman and laid siege to Shafa 'Amr. Zahir ordered the inhabitants of that area to expel his sons, which they did. The three brothers then left for Tiberias, where their eldest brother Salibi—the most loyal of Zahir's sons—ruled. They pleaded with him to intercede with their father to grant their requests, but to no avail. Zahir's refusal prompted Salibi to back 'Uthman and his brothers. They approached the Saqr tribe, which was anxious for revenge against Zahir but not strong enough to retaliate. When Zahir became aware of the potential alliance between his sons and the Saqr, he decided to buy off the Saqr, offering to exempt them of the *miri* for that year in return for withholding their support from his sons. They agreed to his offer. By so doing, Zahir neutralized 'Uthman and his brothers. Later, when 'Uthman least expected any hostile action from his father, Zahir arrested him and imprisoned him in the fortress of Haifa for more than six months. When assured of 'Uthman's complete submission, Zahir released him. However, he deprived him of all means of causing disturbances by leaving him neither arms, nor goods, nor horses, nor any of his

men. Finally, he exiled him to a village near Safad with a modest pension for his subsistence.¹⁸

In May 1766, 'Uthman resumed hostilities against his father, but this time with the backing of the Druzes of the Galilee and their co-religionists of Lebanon who were very anxious to see Zahir's power destroyed. There was also a strong anti-Zahir faction among the Matwalis, led by Shaykh Nasif, that started a full-scale war against Zahir.¹⁹

Zahir succeeded in winning to his side his most competent son, 'Ali, and another son, Ahmad. Along with the assembly of a major striking force, he marched against his son 'Uthman and his allies. Both armies met in the upper Galilee. 'Uthman had already occupied a few villages in the region of Safad whose people declared themselves on his side. But Zahir's force was formidable, and he defeated them. The Matwalis were forced to negotiate peace, while 'Uthman fled and took refuge at the court of Amir Mansur of Mount Lebanon.²⁰

The intricacy of the power struggle that developed in the Syrian provinces created a favorable situation for Zahir. Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm of Sayda aspired to the governorship of Damascus, which was in the hands of 'Uthman Pasha al-Kurji and who, in turn, strove to have his son Darwish appointed as pasha of Sayda. Meanwhile, a struggle ensued between Yusuf and Mansur al-Shihabi over the emirate of the Druzes. The former was supported by the pasha of Damascus, while the latter was backed by the pasha of Sayda. Furthermore, the Matwalis were split into two factions, one led by Nasif and the other by Qublan, each of whom aspired to become the chief shaykh of their people.

Zahir received the support of Shaykh Qublan of the Matwalis and Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm, governor of Sayda, in his struggle against both 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus and his rebellious sons. He also received moral support from Amir Mansur, the prince of the Druzes, who, in concerted effort with Amir Isma'il of Hasbaya, mediated to reconcile the differences between Shaykh Zahir, his son 'Uthman, and his ally Shaykh Nasif. It was not in the Druzes' interest, however, to see the Matwalis defeat Shaykh Zahir, who was the strongest challenger against the pasha of Damascus. One reason is that the Druzes might have seen in Zahir an essential ally in assuring stability in the regions bordering their territories, particularly in regard to those of the Matwalis. By the end of 1767,

Zahir concluded a treaty of alliance with the Matwalis, and thus succeeded in usurping the territory of Jabal ‘Amil within his sphere of influence.²¹

In September 1767, a peace conference was held at Ras al-‘Ayn near Sur (Tyre). It was attended by Shaykh Zahir, Shaykh Nasif, and the delegation of Amir Mansur headed by ‘Ali Junblat. Zahir was successful, and peace was concluded between him and his son, ‘Uthman. He returned with his father to ‘Akka and from there proceeded to Nazareth, which Zahir had granted him according to the agreement. But it should be noted here that this agreement was not accepted by Shaykh Nasif al-Nassar, who continued to pit Zahir’s sons against their father. His differences with Zahir were finally reconciled in December 1767.²²

As soon as Zahir reconciled with his son ‘Uthman, he had to face a new revolt led by his sons ‘Ali and Sa‘id. ‘Ali al-Zahir, who ruled Safad, had been the most dependable son in Zahir’s struggle to quell internal disturbances and repel external attacks. This important role encouraged ‘Ali to aspire to expand his control over a larger region. In September 1767, he requested his father to grant him Dayr Hanna, which had been held by his late uncle Sa‘d. Zahir turned down ‘Ali’s request because Dayr Hanna was so strategic that the shaykh was determined to keep it under his own control. ‘Ali then asked for Dayr al-Qasi, also to no avail. Frustrated, he decided to take both places by force. Once the news reached Zahir, he prepared an expedition composed of Maghrebis, a faction of the Matwalis, and some of his own people and marched towards Safad. Aware of his weakness vis-à-vis his father’s forces, ‘Ali decided to come to terms with him. As a result, Zahir pardoned ‘Ali and granted him Dayr al-Qasi, besides confirming him in his position at Safad.²³

Sa‘id, a full brother of ‘Ali, was encouraged by the latter’s success and appealed to his father to extend his control over Hittin and Tar‘an, two small villages between Nazareth and Tiberias. He claimed that his possessions were not adequate to meet his needs. Zahir rejected his request. Then, Sa‘id pleaded with his older brother ‘Ali, who was highly respected by his father, to intercede on his behalf. Zahir declined ‘Ali’s mediation on the basis that, since most of the country was divided among his sons, there was very little left under his direct control. Furthermore, Zahir suggested to ‘Ali that he could give Sa‘id some parts of his region if

he was indeed sympathetic toward his brother. 'Ali, irritated by his father's answer, promptly took up arms against him.²⁴

This time, the power struggle was not confined to Zahir's family; it involved outside elements as well. 'Uthman Pasha, Shaykh Nasif al-Nassar, and Amir Yusuf all supported 'Ali and his brother Sa'id. Shaykh Zahir received the backing of his son 'Uthman, Shaykh Qublan of the Matwalis, and Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm of Sayda. Believing that the balance of power was not in his favor, Zahir asked the governor of Sayda for support against his rebellious sons and the Matwalis. The pasha desired to join the struggle against the Matwalis, who were within his province, but there was no real possibility he could do so as he had few troops. However, he dispatched some soldiers to fight on Zahir's side. Zahir himself probably did not anticipate considerable material support from the pasha of Sayda. His request was motivated mostly by political ends, for he gave the impression that he was the legitimate ruler in his country. Meanwhile, Zahir aimed at exploiting the existing animosity between his principal antagonist 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus and Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm of Sayda. The latter considered the governorship of Damascus almost as a family prerogative and disliked 'Uthman Pasha.²⁵

Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, Zahir's counselor, made an effort to settle the dispute through negotiations. He persuaded Shaykh Zahir to pardon his sons and grant Sa'id both Hittin and Tar'an. But it was not a durable arrangement; 'Ali was discontented because he was not granted Dayr Hanna. Accordingly, he continued to prepare for a military expedition, and succeeded in winning his brother Salibi of Tiberias to his side. Then, 'Ali resolved to use force, particularly as the balance of power seemed to be in his favor. Meanwhile, Zahir demobilized his forces and depended mainly upon the people of 'Akka, who were mostly Christian merchants and poor fighters. 'Ali won the battle, and Zahir retired to 'Akka to prepare a new expedition capable of defeating 'Ali's forces. Zahir's new troops consisted of the main body of the Maghrebis, his trained cavalry, and some artillery.²⁶

During the second battle, which began October 1767, Shaykh Zahir laid siege to 'Ali's castle, whereupon the son surrendered. He fled from Dayr Hanna, leaving behind his children and household, in the hopes that they would draw Zahir's sympathy. Zahir par-

doned 'Ali but made him buy back his castle for twenty-five purses (12,500 piasters) and twenty-five of his best mares.

We should consider the factors underlying the revolts of Zahir's sons. Zahir's move for power appeared to have been based upon the Zaydanis's strength which also was based on familial ties rather than on religious connections, as was the case with the Matwalis and the Druzes. Zahir appointed different members of the family, including his sons, as his subordinates over different regions of the territories under his control.²⁷ Gradually, as we have seen, he eliminated those in whom he saw a serious menace to his authority, such as his cousin Muhammad al-'Ali in 1743 and his older brother Sa'd in 1761. This cruel measure, not uncommon at that time, probably served as a warning to his sons of their own fates. But why did they wait until the 1760s to revolt? There were primarily two reasons: first, while they were young their father was also young and strong; second, they were busy helping Zahir consolidate his power and repel outside dangers. Once Zahir's sons grew older, their aspirations and ambitions grew with them, and each sought to expand his holdings. The situation was aggravated because the sons were supported by their respective mothers' tribes. Each of the senior sons, 'Uthman, 'Ali, and Salibi, hoped to succeed Zahir as the shaykh of 'Akka and the Galilee. This rivalry prompted them to strengthen their positions in their bid for power. In addition, Zahir preferred one over the other according to the Roman doctrine *divide et impera*, hoping probably to have better control. Conversely, this accentuated the rivalry both among the brothers and against their father. Meanwhile, Zahir lived longer than they expected without abdicating in favor of any of them. In the 1760s and again in the 1770s, they received encouragement if not incitement from outside powers such as 'Uthman Pasha al-Kurji, the Matwalis, the Druzes, and Muhammad Abu al-Dhahab. Zahir's sons finally decided to force their father to surrender his authority. Although none of these revolts bore fruit, they undoubtedly weakened Zahir and eventually contributed to the conclusion of his reign.

Immediately after putting down his son's revolts, Zahir directed his attention towards Tanturah. This particular locale was so important and strategic that it remained a point of contention between 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus and Zahir in the early 1760s. Ultimately, Zahir prevailed. It seems that during the years of

Zahir's struggle against his sons, Zahir's appointed shaykh of Tanturah became quite independent. Zahir could not tolerate this, particularly at a time when the troops of 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus were attacking al-Ramlah. The campaign against Tanturah was undertaken to secure the town before the pasha of Damascus could resume his attacks.

Thus, by the end of 1767, Zahir had settled his disputes with his sons and regained full control over his domain. He also concluded an agreement of friendship with Shaykh Nasif al-Nassar of the Matwalis, which eventually developed into a strong alliance thanks to the mediation of Zahir's son 'Uthman.²⁸ Furthermore, 'Uthman al-Zahir played a significant role along with Nasif in reconciling the differences between Amir Mansur and Yusuf, on the one hand, and between Yusuf and Haydar, governor of Ba'labak, on the other. 'Uthman also enjoyed high respect and a close friendship with the French in Sayda and 'Akka, who called upon him several times to intercede with his father.²⁹ Thus, the tense relations that had existed among the different power groups, primarily within the province of Sayda since the early 1760s, were relaxed by December 1767.

Although Shaykh Zahir had resolved his intra-family power struggle and cultivated amicable relations with his neighbors, he was faced with a more serious threat posed by his staunch enemy 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus. The next round of hostilities between Zahir and 'Uthman Pasha al-Kurji, which started in 1768, escalated in 1770 and reached their climax in June 1771 when Zahir's forces and Egyptian troops conquered Damascus.

NOTES

1. Two contemporary accounts were wholly devoted to commemorate 'Abd Allah Pasha's governorship: J. al-Barazanji, *al-Nafḥ al-Farajī fī al-Faṭḥ al-Jatahī* (Zahiriya Library); and U. al-Wakīl, *Tarwīḥ al-qalb al-shajī fī ma'athir 'Abd Allah Pasha al-Jatahī*, (Vienna: Staatsbibliothek), Cod. Mist. 195. See also his biography in al-Murādi's *Silk al-Durar fī A'yān al-Qarn al-Thāni 'Ashr* (Cairo: Bulaq Press, 1883), Vol. III, p. 81–82.

2. al-Barazanji, *al-Nafḥ al-Farajī fī al-Faṭḥ al-Jatahī*, ff. 14a–15a, 21a–23a; al-Wakīl, *Tarwīḥ al-qalb*, ff. 43b–44a, 45b–49a.

3. al-Wakīl, *Tarwīḥ al-qalb*, f. 45a; M. al-Murādi, *Silk al-Durar*, Vol. III, p. 81; PRO, S.P. 97, 40, February 16, 1958; *ibid.*, 41, 17 January 1760.

4. al-Murādī, *Silk al-Durar*, Vol. III, p. 161; Kurd-‘Alī, *Khīṭaṭ al-Shām*, (al-Ḥadīthah Press, 1925–28), Vol. II, p. 299; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir fī tarīkh Zābir* (Paris), f. 106; M. Burayk, *Tarīkh al-Shām 1720–1784*, ed. by al-Khūrī Qusṭanṭīn Bāshā (Harīṣā’: St. Paul Press, 1930), p. 71.

5. A.E.B¹, 1032, Sidon, 22 December 1759; 27 March 1760; PRO S.P. 97, 41, 27 March 1760; G. Mariti, *Travels through Cyprus, Syria, and Palestine* (Dublin, 1791–92), Vol. II, p. 172.

6. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 10a–10b; A.E.B¹, 1032, Sidon, 8 April 1758 and 30 May 1761.

7. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 10a–11a; Egmont, *Travels*, V. II, p. 4; Charles Roux, *Les Eschelles*, p. 6; A.E.B¹, 1032, Sidon, 6 June 1761.

8. Cf. ‘Abdul-Karīm Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus*, p. 242. He erroneously called it Ṭartūrah, probably, because he referred to al-Budayrī who also called it Ṭartūrah. See al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādīth Dimashq*, p. 232.

9. A.E.B¹, 1032, Sidon, 6 June 1761; al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādīth Dimashq*, p. 232.

10. al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādīth Dimashq*, p. 232; A.E.B¹, 1032, Sidon, 24, 25, 26 May 1761 and 6 June 1761; al-Bahri, *Tarīkh Ḥayfa*, pp. 6–7.

11. A.E.B¹, 1032, Sidon, 24, 25, 30 May 1761. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarīkh Zābir al-‘Umar*, ff. 22b–24b.

12. A.E.B¹, 1032, Sidon, 22 September 1761, 25 March 1762; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 12b–14b.

13. A.E.B¹, 1032, Sidon, 25 May 1762. For a detailed account of the arbitration between Shaykh Zahir and ‘Uthman Pasha under the auspices of the Sultan’s special emissary consult al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 12b–14b.

14. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, (f. 8b); cf. Constantine Volney, *Voyage en Égypte*, Vol. I. p. 219, where he erroneously considered Muḥammad al-‘Alī as Zāhir’s uncle rather than his cousin; Mu‘mmar, *Zābir al-‘Umar*, pp. 56–57, 64, 69, 83.; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 8b.

15. A. al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādīth Dimashq*, p. 167; A.E.B¹, 1029, Sidon, 2 March 1753; al-Munāyir, *al-Durr al-Marsūf*, in *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XLVIII (1954), pp. 680–81.

16. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, (f. 11a).

17. For further details see M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarīkh Zābir*, ff. 17a–18b, 20b–21b, who claimed that ‘Uthman had strangled his uncle Sa’d while he was asleep. Meanwhile A. al-Ṣabbāgh maintained that Sa’d died of fear (f. 11a).

18. A.E.B¹, 1033, Sidon, 10 May 1766 (Bulletin).

19. The Druzes were split into two factions, one led by Amīr Yūsūf in favor of ‘Uthman Pasha of Damascus, while the other was headed by Amīr Mansūr supporting Shaykh Zāhir. There was a power struggle between Shaykh Nāṣif al-Naṣṣar and Shaykh Qublān over the leadership of the Matāwilah. The former was backed by ‘Uthman Pasha of Damascus while the latter received Zahir’s support. For further details see M. J. Al Ṣāfā, *Tārīkh Jabal ‘Amīl* (Beirut: 1963), pp. 117–20.

20. A.E.B¹, 1033, Sidon, 10 May 1766 (Bulletin); M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārīkh Zāhir*, ff. 22b–23a; H. al-Shihabī, *Lubnān* Vol, I, p. 68.

21. Ibid.; A.E.B¹ 1033, Sidon, 20 September 1767 (Bulletin).

22. A.E.B¹, 1033, Sidon, 22 December 1767.

23. Ibid., 28 September 1767 (Bulletin); M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārīkh Zāhir*, ff. 23a- 23b.

24. Ibid., f. 24a.

25. A.E.B¹, 1033, Sidon, 28 September 1767 (Bulletin); 12 October 1767 and 28 September 1767 (Bulletin).

26. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārīkh Zāhir*, ff. 25a–25b.

27. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 10a; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārīkh Zāhir*, ff. 7a, 7b, 8a, 11b; Qaṣatī, “Mulakhaṣ Tārīkh al-Zayādīnah,” *al-Jinān*, Vol. XXIV, p. 850–51; Volney, *Voyage*, II, pp. 226–27.

28. A.E.B¹, 1033, Sidon, 22 December 1767.

29. Ibid., 27 October 1767.

CHAPTER IV: THE ALLIANCE OF ZAHIR AND 'ALI BEY

BACKGROUND

Between 1762 and 1767, Zahir, as we have seen, was engaged in an intrafamily struggle. However, others outside the family, particularly the Matwalis and the Druzes, were involved as well. By the end of 1767, Zahir had reconciled his differences with his sons and their allies. Furthermore, he concluded an alliance with Nasif al-Nassar, the strong shaykh of the Matwalis, and cultivated amicable relations with Amir Mansur of the Druzes. However, 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus remained opposed to him, and by 1768 he politically and militarily prepared for an assault against Zahir. 'Uthman Pasha required the sultan's endorsement to attack Zahir; his request was denied because the Porte did not wish to antagonize Zahir, particularly on the eve of the Russo-Turkish war of 1768–1774. It was in the Porte's interest to avoid further disturbances in the Arab provinces. Furthermore, Zahir's agents in Istanbul played a significant role in supporting his case against that of 'Uthman Pasha.¹

After his appointment to Damascus, the pasha attempted to have each of his sons appointed as governors of Tripoli and Sayda. While he succeeded in appointing his son Muhammad Pasha as governor of Tripoli in 1761, Sayda was not given to his other son, Darwish Pasha, until September 1770.² Furthermore, due to his heavy-handed policy in the rural areas, a series of uprisings broke out in Yaffa, Ramlah, and Gaza between 1766 and 1767. 'Uthman Pasha's injustices, heavy taxes, and several exactions by his representatives were the primary cause of these revolts. It is worth noting that Shaykh Zahir played a significant role in these revolts as well by dispatching a considerable amount of gunpowder to the

insurrectionists of Ramlah. As a result, the leaders of the uprising in Ramlah—the mufti, the qadi, and others—sought asylum in Zahir’s capital.³ The revolts, which ‘Uthman Pasha successfully suppressed, had grave consequences during his struggles with Shaykh Zahir and his ally ‘Ali Bey of Egypt in 1770–71.

At this time there had been a power struggle among the Mamluks in Egypt, a struggle in which ‘Ali Bey al-Kabir emerged on top.⁴ During the return of the pilgrimage caravan from the Hijaz in August 1760, ‘Ali Bey launched his *coup d’etat* and assumed the position of *Shaykh al-Balad* (governor of Cairo or premier bey). He soon obtained the recognition of the Ottoman Pasha, thus assuming the supreme position among his fellows, the Mamluks. The Ottoman Pasha of Egypt ratified the office. To augment his power, ‘Ali Bey raised one of his followers, Isma‘il, to the rank of *bey* and married him to the daughter of his master, Ibrahim Kakhya. He also raised his treasurer, Muhammad (Abu al-Dhahab), to the rank of *bey*. In 1764, ‘Ali Bey led the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan (*al-Rakb al-Misri*) to Mecca as *Amir al-Hajj* (commander of the pilgrimage), during which he was embroiled in a dispute with ‘Uthman Pasha al-Kurji, the governor of Damascus and the commander of the Syrian pilgrimage caravan (*al-Rakb al-Shami*). The inter-Mamluk power struggle continued and ‘Ali Bey became involved in eliminating his rivals either by assassination or exile. But in 1766 he was overpowered and sent into exile to Gaza. A year later, he managed to return to Upper Egypt and conclude an alliance with the Hawwarah, the most influential tribe in that area, as well as other exiled Mamluk comrades. He eventually defeated his rivals and entered Cairo in October 1767 to assume the position of *Shaykh al-Balad* and obtain the recognition of the Ottoman Pasha.

‘Ali Bey spent the remainder of 1767 and the first half of 1768 subduing the rest of his adversaries among the Mamluks and the Arab tribes in the Delta and Upper Egypt. Consequently, he received a *firman*, a sword, and a robe of honor from Istanbul. This gesture from the Porte forced the pasha in Cairo to visit ‘Ali Bey. However, in November 1768 the pasha tried to incite an uprising in Cairo against ‘Ali Bey, who reacted swiftly and deposed the pasha. Subsequently, ‘Ali Bey assumed the position of the Ottoman Viceroy in Egypt (Qa’im-maqam) while retaining the position of *Shaykh al-Balad*. ‘Ali Bey, nevertheless, endeavored to retain the

sultan's support. He dispatched one of his Mamluks to Istanbul with gifts for the sultan and other high officials. He also complained to the Porte that 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus granted asylum and assistance to Egyptian refugees opposed to him. Accordingly, 'Ali Bey requested the removal of the pasha of Damascus, but was refused.

By the end of 1769, 'Ali Bey struck coinage in his name, but he retained the sultan's name on the other side of the coin. Then in December 1769, the *Imam* (leader of prayer) mentioned in the *Khutbah* (the sermon of Friday congregational prayer) the name of 'Ali Bey after that of the sultan. 'Ali Bey rebuked the Imam and ordered that he be beaten, but the next day he sent him gifts of money and clothes and asked for his pardon. These actions indicate the ambiguous attitude of 'Ali Bey towards the sultan. He claimed two traditional prerogatives of a Muslim sovereign, *Khutbah* and *Sikka* (coinage in his name), yet he did not wish to dissociate himself completely from the sultan. He also did not hesitate to dispatch a considerable force in November 1768, after the sultan requested that 'Ali Bey participate in his military operations.⁵

Later, 'Ali Bey seized the opportunity to enhance his ambitions when the sultan asked for his help. The situation was as follows: In the early 1770s, two Hashimites had been contending for the position of sharif of Mecca. One, named Sharif 'Abd Allah, lost and left for Istanbul to appeal to the sultan for support. The sultan sent him to Egypt with a request that 'Ali Bey dispatch an expedition to the Hijaz to enforce the installation of 'Abd Allah as the sharif of Mecca. Undoubtedly, 'Ali Bey happily welcomed the invitation, especially since he had subdued all his opponents in Egypt. He accordingly recruited soldiers from several parts of the Islamic world: Turks, Maghrebis, Syrians, Druzes, Matwalis, Yemenis, Haḍramis, Sudanese, and Abyssinians. In June 1770 (Safar, A.H. 1184), the expedition departed to the Hijaz by the Red Sea under the command of Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab. After winning some minor battles, Abu al-Dhahab marched on to Mecca, defeated its ruler (the sharif), and installed the sultan's new choice, 'Abd Allah, as sharif of Mecca. He also deposed the pasha of Jiddah and appointed Hasan Bey al-Jiddawi in his place.

At this time, developments threatening Zahir took place in the Syrian provinces. 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus at last had his son Darwish appointed as the pasha of Sayda in September 1770, a step

which enhanced 'Uthman's plans to destroy Shaykh Zahir. Prior to this appointment, Zahir exploited the enmity between Muhammad Pasha al-'Azam of Sayda and 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus. Now, 'Uthman Pasha not only would protect his son's interests, but they would join arms together against Zahir.⁶ In October 1770, 'Uthman Pasha went on the *dawrah* (annual tour to collect taxes) and took advantage of the occasion to subdue a shaykh in the region of Nablus. Meanwhile, he sent a letter to Zahir in which he informed him of Darwish's appointment to Sayda and his intention to pass by 'Akka and encamp at Tell al-Fakhkhar ("Hill of Pottery") at the gate of 'Akka. Certainly it was a threatening letter. The pasha implied that he intended to conquer 'Akka and destroy Zahir, as A. Sabbagh has written.⁷ Aware of the grave situation, Zahir immediately started his military preparations against 'Uthman Pasha. He also started reinforcing the defense of 'Akka and mobilizing its inhabitants, ordering every person, except the French community, to be armed with two pistols, a gun, and a saber.⁸

'Uthman's campaign against Nablus failed, and he returned to Damascus without even confronting Zahir. However, Zahir continued to raise more troops and reinforce his fortifications. Furthermore, in order to strengthen his front he reconciled himself with his sons, whose support he needed, and informed his allies among the Matwalis of the pending threat.⁹

At this time, Darwish Pasha remained in Damascus with his father. He finally assumed his office in Sayda in January 1771 after hearing rumors that Egyptian troops were advancing towards Gaza. Actually, as early as November 1770, 'Ali Bey sent two expeditions to Palestine to pave the way for a major campaign (April 1771) under the command of his able leader Muhammad Abu al-Dhahab. On 4 November 1770, he dispatched a force under the command of a Mamluk named 'Abd al-Rahman towards Gaza to eliminate Shaykh Salit, head of al-Wuhaydat tribe, and the chief shaykh of the Bedouins in the sanjaq of Gaza. Salit posed a serious threat to the Mamluk forces marching toward Damascus. The expedition was successful: Salit, his brothers, and sons were killed. Thus, the campaign achieved an essential prerequisite for the success of the next ones: By exterminating Salit, it provided indispensable security to the lines of communication between Egypt and Syria. In the same month, 'Ali Bey ordered the second preliminary expedition

commanded by Isma'īl Bey to support Shaykh Zahir in his struggle against 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus.

CAUSES

The causes of the Mamluk intervention in Syria had arisen over the course of a number of years.¹⁰ Zahir's relations with 'Ali Bey go back as early as 1766 when the latter was sent into exile at Gaza. He established contacts with Zahir, who indicated he would support him, as G. Wiet claims, by helping 'Ali Bey to return from exile to Cairo.¹¹ Of course, 'Ali Bey was harassed and ill-treated by the representatives of 'Uthman Pasha in Gaza.¹² In October 1767, when 'Ali Bey assumed the position of *Shaykh al-Balad* once again, he discharged and exiled his chief scribe Mikha'il al-Jamal because he refused to support him financially when he was in Upper Egypt preparing to conquer Cairo. Al-Jamal sought asylum in 'Akka through the help of his co-religionist, Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, the chief counselor to Shaykh Zahir. A few months later, Shaykh Zahir interceded with 'Ali Bey to pardon al-Jamal and reinstate him to his old position. This was done after some persuasion from al-Sabbagh, but not without Zahir's interests in mind, either. 'Ali Bey agreed to do so, for at this time he was searching for arms with which to consolidate his power. Zahir agreed to send some arms to 'Ali Bey for reinstating al-Jamal. 'Ali Bey in turn offered Shaykh Zahir his support against the Porte who was urging 'Uthman Pasha to attack Zahir.

International affairs also had an influence on the movements of 'Ali Bey and Shaykh Zahir, particularly their military operations against the sultan's representatives in Syria. In October 1768, Sultan Mustafa (1757—73) declared war against Russia; the latter had broken the peace between the two empires when it occupied Poland and interfered with elections there.¹³ In addition, the Porte sent the Russian minister at Constantinople to the prison of the Seven Towers. This impolitic and unnecessary act enabled Russia to present itself to the world as the underdog, although all previous acts of aggression had been deliberately planned by the Empress and her cabinet. Although England offered to mediate between Russia and Turkey, it was in favor of Russia. Its policy was to form a "Northern Alliance" composed of Russia, Prussia, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, and England in opposition to the alliance of France and Spain under the House of Bourbon.

The sultan declared war prematurely; his force was not yet ready to make good on his threats. Thus, the opening campaign of the Ottomans on the Dniester and Danube was delayed until the spring of 1769, an action which enabled Russia to strike successfully against the Ottoman Empire in both Europe and Asia. Empress Catherine II also resolved to revive the designs of Peter the Great and Marshal Münnich by arousing the Greeks against the Ottoman sultan. The aged Marshal Münnich was called back from his exile in Siberia and given a place of honor at court. The Empress and her favorites, the Orlovs, then decided to send a Russian fleet to attack the very heart of the sultan's power while he was hard pressed on the European and Asian fronts, aiming at the Dardanelles and Istanbul itself. The Russians also took into consideration the political situation in Egypt and Syria. By the summer of 1769, a considerable number of Russian ships of the line and transports carrying troops headed through the Baltic towards the Mediterranean Sea. They were under the command of Admiral Grigory Piridov, while Count Alexis Orlov was the commander-in-chief of the expedition; additionally, they were accompanied by some English ships, under the command of Admiral Elphinstone. This English involvement in personnel and ships "must have been with the cognizance and approval of the British government, which at the time favored the aggrandizement of Russia."¹⁴ Although rumors were rife at Istanbul about the approach of the Russian fleet, the Ottoman statesman did not believe them, since there could not be any connection between the Baltic and the Mediterranean.

By February 1770, the Russian fleet was off the coast of Morea. They disembarked a small force, which was augmented by local Greeks, but it was not sufficient to overpower the Ottomans on all fronts. In the large cities where there were strong Ottoman garrisons, Orlov's assaults were repelled. Meanwhile, the Russian operations at sea were more successful, in part because the leadership of their fleet was actually in the hands of English officers who were better trained in sea warfare. On 7 July 1770, the Russian and Ottoman fleets met near the Island of Chios; the Turks were defeated in the battle and the survivors took refuge in the port of Tchesme, which was situated in a narrow bay. The next night, the remaining Ottoman fleet was destroyed when an English officer set fire to a captured Turkish ship and sent it into the

harbor. The fire spread quickly to other Turkish ships in the closely packed bay, and thus the whole Turkish fleet, except one frigate, was burned and destroyed.

Three months later, Admiral Hasan al-Jaza'iri recaptured Lemnos from Orlov with a small force, and shortly afterwards he defeated Orlov. However, the destruction of the Ottoman fleet in July 1770 gave the Russians absolute command in the Mediterranean till the close of the war in 1774. Yet the Russian fleet was not used offensively afterwards; it was restricted to blockading the mouth of the Straits. The Russian fleet captured Ottoman and French merchant vessels, interfered with the communications between Istanbul and the maritime provinces, and rendered limited support to 'Ali Bey and Shaykh Zahir in their struggle against the Porte.

The Mamluk intervention in the affairs of the Ottoman Syrian provinces may have been encouraged by the war with Russia and its allies. They were willing to move against the provinces for other long-standing reasons as well. For one thing, the Ottomans had successfully destroyed the Mamluk sultanate in 1516–17, but the Mamluks remained the ruling class in Egypt.¹⁵ Their influence extended both to the Ottoman garrisons stationed mostly in Cairo and the administrative offices of the provinces. The Mamluks during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had gradually regained their old prestige and power. By the eighteenth century they held the most influential positions next to the pasha, *Shaykh al-Balad*, and *Amir al-Hajj*. Their success in reestablishing their old prestige inspired them to revive the Mamluk sultanate not only in Egypt but also in Syria. 'Ali Bey was the first Mamluk to attempt to achieve that goal.¹⁶ He was aware of the fact that the kings of Egypt had been Mamluks before the Ottomans had taken Egypt. He also might have realized that it had been the practice of Egyptian governments throughout history to expand, whenever the opportunity lent itself, northeast into the Fertile Crescent as well as south and southeast into the Sudan, the Hijaz, and the Yemen. In the past, most attacks against Egypt had been mounted from the northeast; therefore, he realized that it was very important to secure the northeast (i.e. Palestine) in order to protect himself against any attempt by the sultan to destroy his regime. The Mamluk Bey concluded an alliance with Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar, who also defied the sultan's authority and established himself in

northern Palestine. Both “rebels” saw a real menace to their movements in ‘Uthman Pasha. They decided, therefore, to attack Damascus and crush his power and that of his sons, the pashas of Sayda and Tripoli.

Doubtless it was in the interest of ‘Ali Bey not merely to crush the Ottoman power in Syria but also to help establish a buffer state such as Zahir’s that would protect his rule in Egypt against any Ottoman attack by land.

Some sources suggest that Russia had incited ‘Ali Bey to revolt against the sultan.¹⁷ Others suggest that ‘Ali Bey had informed Empress Catherine II of his intentions and requested military support in return for allowing the Russians to occupy the cities of ‘Arabistan (the Arab provinces).¹⁸ Russia did not instigate ‘Ali Bey’s revolt; however, the Russo-Turkish war (1768–74) encouraged ‘Ali Bey to wage war against Istanbul in order to further his ambitions to gain independence for Egypt and to expand into the Hijaz and Syria, as Bruce has suggested.¹⁹ Likewise, Catherine II was supportive of ‘Ali Bey and Shaykh Zahir because of their potential threat to her enemy, the sultan. Between 1772 and 1774, the Russian fleet operated in the Levant on their behalf.

Economics also played a major role in promoting the Mamluk intervention in Syria. ‘Ali Bey had become interested in a British plan to revive the Red Sea route between India and England. He saw this as a favorable opportunity to increase his income and to further his expansionist policies.

In order to implement this scheme it was necessary to control the land routes to India. He found his alliance with Shaykh Zahir to be the means to realize this end.²⁰

The Melkite Christian officials within the two administrations in Palestine and Egypt also favored an alliance between ‘Ali Bey and Zahir because they wanted to promote the trade controlled by them and their co-religionists. Ibrahim al-Sabbagh and Mikha’il al-Jamal, both Melkites and the principal scribes of Zahir and ‘Ali Bey, respectively, played a decisive role in concluding the alliance between the two.²¹

Furthermore, there were some personal elements involved in the struggle between ‘Ali Bey and ‘Uthman Pasha while they commanded the Egyptian and Syrian pilgrimages, respectively, in 1766. ²² As one outcome, ‘Ali Bey claimed he must deliver Syria from the tyranny of ‘Uthman Pasha. In his proclamation to the

Damascenes, 'Ali Bey addressed himself to the problems and the injustices they were suffering under the governorship of 'Uthman Pasha (see Appendix II). He enumerated²³ several examples of 'Uthman's misdeeds with the pilgrims, the merchants, and the 'ulama'. He singled out one case where 'Uthman Pasha ordered that the 'ulama' of Gaza be buried alive. In addition, he presented himself as primarily motivated by zeal in defense of the best interest of Islam and Muslims, and vowed to purge Syria of 'Uthman Pasha who "transcended the religious bounds." It should be emphasized that 'Ali Bey played up the religious factor in order to protect himself against any accusation of being opposed to the sultan, to whom the Muslim people paid allegiance. Of course, the major reason 'Ali Bey resolved to intervene was Zahir's support.

When 'Ali Bey accepted Zahir's gift of weapons in 1769, he offered his help in return. Thus, when he expected an assault by 'Uthman Pasha, Zahir requested 'Ali Bey to recruit Maghrebis for his forces. 'Ali Bey then agreed to help him against 'Uthman Pasha.²⁴

ISMA'IL BEY'S EXPEDITION

On 4 November 1770, 'Ali Bey sent a small expedition to subdue the insubordinate Bedouins of Gaza and thus secure his lines of communication with his ally Shaykh Zahir; the mission was successful.²⁵ Before the end of that month, Isma'il Bey led another campaign to link up with Shaykh Zahir by land while another force left Damietta by sea to disembark at Yaffa and to join Isma'il's force. The whole expedition, by land and by sea, was better manned, equipped, and prepared than the previous one; it was estimated to number around 20,000 troops, according to Ibn al-Siddiq who witnessed the events.²⁶

It seems that 'Ali Bey had long planned the campaign of Isma'il. In March 1770, he demanded the French merchants in Cairo pay Shaykh Zahir 10,000 piasters to recruit soldiers for him. Zahir finally agreed to settle for 4,000 piasters.

Thus, the stage was set for Isma'il Bey to act. The people were in revolt against 'Uthman in Gaza, Ramlah, and Yaffa. Shaykh Zahir seized the opportunity to consolidate his power. He reconciled himself with his sons and the Matwalis, and he gained the support of the people in 'Uthman Pasha's province who had been granted asylum in 'Akka when their revolts were crushed. In

sum, Zahir was in full readiness to join arms with the forces of 'Ali Bey against the pasha of Damascus.

The first confrontation for Isma'il Bey was over Gaza, the extreme southern territory held by 'Uthman. Long oppressed by 'Uthman's tyranny, the people of Gaza welcomed and even cooperated with the Mamluk forces. Thus by late November 1770, Isma'il Bey had taken control of Gaza without resistance and had appointed a Mamluk governor there. The expedition then advanced north toward Yaffa and Ramlah. He encountered no resistance in occupying Ramlah in November 1770, where he had appointed a Mamluk governor.²⁷

Meanwhile, Isma'il Bey sent a letter to the *mutasallim* of Jerusalem informing him that he had appointed a Mamluk governor for their city, but the people of Jerusalem refused to comply and started reinforcing their city and preparing for a siege. On 27 November 1770, Isma'il Bey left Ramlah to besiege Jerusalem, but this never materialized.²⁸

Isma'il Bey then announced the abolition of the *miri* tax introduced by the pasha four years earlier, probably in order to gain the full support of the populace whose towns had not yet been occupied by the Mamluks.²⁹ As one result, when 'Uthman Pasha left Damascus to meet the Egyptian forces, he received no support from the inhabitants. Moreover, Ibn Jarrar failed to honor his promise to provide the pasha with 10,000 soldiers because the people refused to cooperate. Ibn Jarrar claimed that the people sympathized with the Egyptians.³⁰

Immediately upon receipt of the news in Damascus of the Mamluk's occupation of Gaza and Ramlah, 'Uthman Pasha managed to assemble a considerable force and marched towards Yaffa, which had not yet been occupied by the Egyptians. He failed to take the city due to the inhabitants' preference for 'Ali Bey over 'Uthman Pasha, although about 150 of his troops plundered Yaffa before they were forced to flee.

At this time, Isma'il Bey was in Ramlah still waiting for the arrival of Zahir, who had been pursuing 'Uthman. He arrived at Nazareth on 24 November 1770, as soon as 'Uthman Pasha left. By 1 December, the pasha arrived at the al-'Awja River, north of Yaffa, and dispatched a contingent to prevent 'Ali Bey from entering Yaffa. The inhabitants, however, refused to let his troops enter their town.³¹ Nevertheless, he was able to defeat a Mamluk

reconnaissance force of 200 men whose mission was to discover the cause of Zahir's delay. Although Zahir dispatched his son 'Uthman with a force to link up with Isma'il Bey, he failed to advance because the Saqr Tribe, in collaboration with the pasha of Damascus, controlled the main road passing through Marj ibn 'Amir. As a result, they successfully prevented Zahir's forces from joining up with those of Isma'il Bey. Upon the return of Zahir's son, the father took command himself and eventually joined with the Mamluk forces in Ramlah because the Saqr tribe had abandoned their posts on the route to support the pasha in his skirmishes with Isma'il Bey in Ramlah.³²

Soon after Zahir's arrival, Isma'il Bey informed him of the fighting that had erupted the previous day with the pasha, who the following day sent an emissary inquiring about Isma'il's motives. Zahir told the pasha's emissary that they were acting according to 'Ali Bey's orders and not the sultan's.³³ Zahir told the emissary, according to al-Sabbagh,

You informed Zahir of your intention to come to 'Akka and encamp on Tell al-Fakhkhar, but Zahir wished not to trouble you and came to meet you at Ramlah. Tomorrow morning the war is inevitable. If you did not come to Ramlah, Zahir would meet you at Yaffa.³⁴

Upon receiving Zahir's bellicose message, 'Uthman Pasha left for Damascus on 9 December 1770. Once they learned of the pasha's withdrawal, Zahir and Isma'il Bey chased him. Although the pasha was marching through parts of his province, he did not feel safe with some good reason, for the peasants, alienated by his political oppression, had deserted their villages and joined the army of Ibn Tuqan, Shaykh of Nablus, who recruited about 2,000 of them in preparation for an attack against 'Uthman Pasha's army.³⁵

There was only one route for the pasha to follow on his return to Damascus, namely through Mount Nablus and Marj ibn 'Amir, because the coastal route was controlled by 'Akka. While Qaqun commanded the only entrance to Mount Nablus from the coastal plain, Jenin dominated the outlet between Mount Nablus and Marj ibn 'Amir.³⁶ Thus, the Pasha hurried to pass through Qaqun before Zahir's force could take control of it. The pasha contemplated holding that strategic post, but the failure of Ibn Jarrar's forces to arrive in time, and the approach of the Mamluk

expedition forced him to retreat towards Damascus. Before he reached the al-Majami' bridge on the Jordan River, a force of 1,500 men arrived to help him, but it was late. Finally, after a journey of nine days he entered Damascus on 18 December 1770 (29 Sha'ban 1184).

After the retreat of 'Uthman Pasha from near Yaffa, the joint forces of Zahir and Isma'il Bey occupied that town without much resistance. A few days earlier, the inhabitants of Yaffa had refused to let 'Uthman's forces into their town. Its *mutasallim*, like those of Gaza and Ramlah before him, had fled the town on hearing that the Mamluk army was advancing along the Mediterranean coast. Its occupation was strategically essential to the Egyptian expedition to enable them to secure the arrival of reinforcements sent by sea from Damietta.

After their occupation of Yaffa, the joint forces of Zahir and Isma'il Bey, reinforced with fresh troops from Egypt, resumed the pursuit of 'Uthman Pasha.³⁸ Once they arrived at Qaqun, the southwestern gateway of Mount Nablus, Zahir fell ill, a circumstance that caused great apprehension to all, particularly Isma'il Bey, who was afraid that if Zahir died the country would rise up in arms against him. Close to death, Zahir was moved to Nazareth for seven days, after which he was transferred to 'Akka; there, he recovered 40 days later.³⁹ Meanwhile, due to the sudden illness of Zahir, it was decided that Isma'il Bey and Zahir's sons should stay in Marj ibn 'Amir until Zahir recovered. In this interval there was a lull in the hostilities between the pasha and Isma'il Bey. At this time, 'Ali Bey dispatched a new force of 4,000 troops to strengthen Isma'il's expedition with clear instructions to attack the pilgrimage caravan and prevent 'Uthman Pasha from leading it to Mecca.⁴⁰ Then, on 22 December 1770 (4 Ramadan, A.H. 1184), 'Ali Bey sent a letter to the people of Damascus and to the mufti, 'Ali al-Muradi, who discussed its contents with 'Uthman Pasha, the 'ulama', and the notables of the city. In this letter 'Ali Bey urged the Damascenes not to send the pilgrimage under the command of 'Uthman Pasha; otherwise, he warned them, it would be attacked. He informed them that he had already appointed Isma'il Bey as the commander of the Syrian pilgrimage caravan and assured them of complete safety. He also asked the Damascenes to assist his advancing troops in overthrowing 'Uthman Pasha.

By late January 1771, Zahir had completely recovered and the war activities were resumed. The joint forces of Zahir and his allies advanced to al-Muzayrib. Zahir thought that they should march on Damascus, but Isma'il Bey disagreed and they decided instead merely to wait for 'Uthman Pasha and the pilgrimage caravan to pass by. In Damascus there were rumors to the effect that the troops of Zahir and Isma'il Bey were planning an attack against the caravan. The pasha tried, but failed, to muster enough troops to protect the pilgrims on their way to the Hijaz. Should Isma'il Bey have agreed with Zahir to attack the caravan, the pasha would have been in trouble. The Mamluk bey refused to attack the pilgrims who were going to perform one of the main pillars of Islam at the holy places in Mecca and Medinah because he saw his mission as one of fighting the pasha, not the caravan. He felt that the people would believe his claim that his aim was to depose the tyrant pasha, but it would have been quite impossible for him to justify his attack against the faithful pilgrims. Thus, 'Uthman Pasha, despite the advice of the *Divan* for him to stay and defend the city, left Damascus with the pilgrimage on 25 January 1771 (8 Shawwal, A.H. 1184)) without being attacked.⁴¹

Zahir complained to 'Ali Bey about Isma'il Bey's opposition. Immediately, 'Ali Bey dispatched a new force composed of 4,000 troops to strengthen Zahir's position and instructed them to occupy al-Muzayrib, a town on the main route of the pilgrimage caravan, and to attack pilgrims on their way back to Damascus.⁴²

Meanwhile, Zahir did not remain idle. His son 'Ali led several incursions against the Nu'aym tribe in Hawran. He also sent his son Ahmad, the governor of Irbid, to levy taxes from villages that were part of the province of Damascus. Moreover, Zahir dispatched a force of 70 horsemen to extort the *miri* from al-Qunaytrah in al-Julan. These activities created great anxiety among the Damascenes, especially in regard to the safety of the pilgrimage; they thought that there was an impending attack by Zahir and Isma'il Bey either on the *jardab* or on the pilgrimage, or both.

Muhammad Pasha, son of 'Uthman Pasha and governor of Tripoli, was the commander of the *jardab*.⁴³ He failed to recruit adequate troops to join him from Tripoli, and the Yerliyyah and the Kapikulus of Damascus refused his orders to accompany him in his mission to meet the pilgrimage caravan. However, he managed to

circumvent Zahir's forces at al-Muzayrib with the help of the Sardiyyah tribe.⁴⁴

At this juncture, the Porte resolved to check both 'Ali Bey and Zahir al-'Umar. In February 1771, the sultan accordingly appointed Nu'man Pasha, the governor of Urfa, as *wali* of Egypt. Additionally, he became commander-in-chief of about 40,000 troops composed of the forces of several governors, such as Aleppo and Killis, to destroy 'Ali Bey in Egypt.⁴⁵ In April 1771, 'Abd al-Rahman Pasha of Aleppo and Khalil Pasha of Killis arrived at Damascus each with a force of about 5,000 troops, where they hoped to stop the progress of the Mamluk armies. The arrival of this force caused some comfort to the Damascenes; Zahir and Isma'il Bey became concerned and they evacuated al-Muzayrib. Zahir and his sons retired to Safad; Isma'il Bey went towards Nablus where he laid siege to Sanur, the stronghold of Ibn Jarrar, who supported 'Uthman Pasha, and pillaged the surrounding villages.⁴⁶ His siege of Sanur cost him about 50 soldiers, but his army killed about 600 of Ibn Jarrar's men. Consequently, eight shaykhs of Nablus submitted to Isma'il Bey, fearing similar treatment.⁴⁷ The Matwalis then returned to Jabal 'Amil, their own country.

Although Isma'il Bey and his allies withdrew from al-Muzayrib, the strategic post on the pilgrimage route, Damascenes thought that the Mamluks and Zahir were marching south intending to attack the pasha and the pilgrims near Ma'an. On the contrary, Isma'il Bey resolved not to attack the pilgrimage caravan; this could have been the result of being deterred by the arrival of relief forces at Damascus, or disapproving of Zahir's plans.⁴⁸ His decision, however, was not unexpected. A few months earlier, as we have seen, Isma'il Bey rejected Zahir's plan to attack 'Uthman Pasha and the pilgrims on their way to the Hijaz. Therefore, it was not unlikely that he would stick to this principle. Thus, Shaykh Zahir not only lost his opportunity to deal a heavy blow to 'Uthman Pasha, but his prestige must have suffered because he appeared to adhere to the decisions of Isma'il Bey. At any rate, 'Uthman Pasha returned safely with the pilgrimage caravan to Damascus on 23 May 1771 (8 Safar 1185), after following an alternate route to the main roads. His son, Muhammad Pasha of Tripoli, who commanded *the jardab*, also returned without incident.⁴⁹

Upon learning that 'Uthman Pasha had led pilgrimage safely back to Damascus, the sultan confirmed him as governor of the province of Damascus for life.⁵⁰

NOTES

1. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 11a–11b, 12a–14a.

2. A.E.B¹, 1120, Tripoli, 12 January 1761; A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 4 September 1770, 15 November 1770.

3. A.E.B¹, 1033, Sidon, 6 June, 30 June, 26 October 1767; P. Masson, *Histoire du Commerce Française dans le Levant au XVIII^e Siècle* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1911), p. 290.

4. For further information on 'Alī Bey's movement see M. R. Ramaḍān, *'Alī Bey al-Kabīr* (Cairo: Dar al-fikr al-'Arabī, 1950); John Livingston, *'Alī Bey al-Kabīr and the Mamlūk Resurgence in Ottoman Egypt, 1760–1772* (unpublished dissertation, Princeton University, 1968); al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-aṭhār*, Vol. I, pp. 211–62, 307–87, 418–25; S. Lusignan, *A History of the Revolt of 'Alī Bey against the Ottoman Porte* (London: 1783); P. M. Holt, "The 'Cloud Catcher': 'Alī Bey the Great of Egypt," *History Today*, Vol. IX (1959), pp. 48–58. Most of the forthcoming information is drawn from these sources unless otherwise indicated.

5. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-aṭhār*, Vol. I, p. 262, 308–311. It is interesting to note that al-Jabartī erroneously mentioned the name of the Pasha of Damascus as 'Uthman Pasha ibn al-'Azm (p. 311). In fact he was a Mamlūk of As'ad Pasha al-'Azm, but not of the same family.

6. A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 4 September, 15 November 1770.

7. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 14b; A.E.B¹, 1121, Tripoli, 29 October 1770.

8. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 14b; A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 4 September 1770.

9. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, f. 27a; A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 15 November 1770.

10. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-aṭhār*, Vol. I, p. 354; D. Creelius, "Egypt's Reawakening Interest in Palestine," in Kushner, *Palestine in Late Ottoman Period*, 250–54.

11. Ramaḍān, *'Alī Bey al-Kabīr*, p. 154; N. A. Koenig, "'Alī Bey," *E. I.* (1913), Vol. I, pp. 291–92. The latter claims that 'Alī Bey travelled through Palestine. He went to Jerusalem and 'Akka, where he became acquainted with Shaykh Zāhir whom he erroneously called 'Umar al-Zāhir. This point of view was also maintained by G. Wiet in the new edition of *E. I.* (1960),

Vol. I, pp. 391–92, who even claimed that ‘Alī Bey returned to Cairo from his exile through the good offices of Shaykh Zāhir.

12. al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-athār*, Vol. I, p. 254.

13. The discussion on the Russo-Turkish War 1768–1774 was primarily drawn from the following sources unless otherwise indicated: R. C. Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Levant, 1559–1853* (Liverpool: 1952), pp. 22–307; M. S. Anderson, “Great Britain and the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774,” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. VIII (1948), pp. 39–58; E. S. Creasy, *History of the Ottoman Turks* (New York: Henry Holt, 1877), pp. 380–414; Lord Eversly, *The Turkish Empire: Its Growth and Decay* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1918), pp. 212–221.

14. Eversly, *The Turkish Empire*, p. 214; on Captain Brown, see PRO, S. P. 97/48, Istanbul, 17 December 1772.

15. P. M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 1516–1522* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 45.

16. James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Sources of the Nile in the Years 1768–1773* (Edinburgh: Ruthven, 1790), Vol. I, p. 36; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 82; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 15b.

17. It is very important to note that most of the campaigns launched against Egypt attacked it from the north-east passage. Napoleon’s campaign was one of the few exceptions. Ahmad Jawdat, *Tārīkh Jawdat Basha* (Beirut: 1890), p. 391; Yūsef al-Dibs, *Tārīkh Sūriyah* (Beirut: The Catholic Press, 1893–1905), Vol. II, p. 223.

18. al-Munayyir, *al Mashriq*, Vol. XLIX (1955), p. 259; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 79.

19. Livingston, *Alī Bey al-Kabir* p. 176; L. Auriant, “Catherine II et l’Orient 1770–1774,” *UAcropole*, V (1930), p. 209; Bruce, *Travels*, I, 28–30. Livingston mentions that the first contact between Alī Bey and Russia was in November 1771, while Auriant gave 2 December 1771 as the date of the first contact.

20. Livingston, *Alī Bey al-Kabir*, pp. 96–107.

21. On the activities of the Melkites in Syria and Egypt, see B. Qarālī, *al-Sūriyūn fī Miṣr*; *‘abd al-Mamālīk* (Cairo: 1928), pp. 83–89, 105–110; Q. al-Bāshā, *Muḥadārah fī tārīkh ta’ifāt al-Rūm al-Kathūlik fī Miṣr* (Harisa: Lebanon, 1930), pp. 14–20; al-Shammās, *Khulāṣat Tārīkh al-Rūm al-Kathūlik*, (Dayr al-Mukhalliṣ, Lebanon: al-Mukhalliṣiyah Press, 1952), pp. 59–62; A. Houranī, *A Vision of History* (Beirut: 1961), pp. 50–53. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārīkh Zāhir*, ff. 24b–26a.

22. Holt, "The 'Cloud Catcher,'" in *History Today*, Vols. IX, X (Jan. 1959), p. 52; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 15b.
23. For the complete text, see appendix II. A.E.B¹, 91, Aleppo, 6 July 1771.
24. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 16a–16b.
25. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-athār*, I, p. 354.
26. Ibid.; Ramaḍān, *'Alī Bey*, p. 158; A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 20 December 1770; H. ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib al-Badā'i wa 'Ajā'ib al-Waqā'i* (Ms. Berlin Cat. 9832), f. 8b. This chronicle is quite important for the study of the Mamlūk campaigns in Syria, particularly that of Abū al-Dhahab. The author witnessed the events, but one should be aware of his bias and prejudice against the Mamlūks and Zāhir al-'Umar; otherwise, his information is quite valuable. Since it is used extensively in the present chapter, it will be referred to as Ibn al-Ṣiddiq.
27. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 8b–9a; A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 28 November 1770. Cf. U. Heyd, *Dahir al-'Umar: the Governor of the Galilee in the 18th Century* (Jerusalem: 1942), p. 49. He gave March 1770 as the date for the Mamlūk's occupation of Gaza.
28. A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 28 November 1770 and A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 4 January 1771.
29. A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 4 December 1770; PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 4 March 1771.
30. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 10b, 11a–11b.
31. A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 20 December 1770; PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 4 March 1771. Rafeq, p. 253, claimed that 'Uthmān Pasha had entered Yaffa by force. After examining his sources, I was unable to find clear-cut supporting evidence for his claim.
32. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 16b, 17a–17b.
33. Ibid., f. 17b; Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 14b.
34. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 17b.
35. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 11a, 16b.
36. G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (London: 1896), pp. 155, 350.
37. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 16a–18a.
38. A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 20 December 1770; Ibid., 1035, Sidon, 4 January 1771.
39. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 18a–18b.

40. Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 18a-18b; al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār*, V. I, p. 354; al-Muradi, *Silk al-Durar*, V. I, p. 54.
41. Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 21a-21b; A.E.B¹, 1121, Tripoli, 12 June 1771; al-Munayyir, *al-Mashriq*, V. XLIX (1955), 259.
42. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 80; al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 354; Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 35a-35b.
43. Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 26b, 27a, 30b-31a; A.E.B¹, 1121, Tripoli, 12 June 1771.
44. Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 28a-28b, 29a-29b, 36a; A.E.B¹, 1121, Tripoli, 12 June 1771.
45. PRO, S. P. 110/39 pt. 1, Aleppo, 23 February 1771; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 31 May 1771; Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 31b, 33b; cf. Shamir, *The 'Az̄m Wālīs of Damascus (1724-1785)* (unpublished thesis, Princeton, 1960), p. 174.
46. PRO, S. P. 110/39 pt. 1, Aleppo, 13 April 1771; Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 36a-36b, 37a-37b, 38.
47. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 3 May 1771.
48. Ibid., 1121, Tripoli, 12 June 1771; Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 38a.
49. A.E.B¹, 91, Aleppo, 1 June 1771; ibid., 1035, Sidon, 31 May 1771; Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 40a.
50. A.E.B¹, 1121, Tripoli, 12 June 1771. Ibid., 1035, Sidon, 31 May 1771; Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 40a-40b.

CHAPTER V: THE OCCUPATION OF DAMASCUS

The success of Isma‘il Bey’s expedition of 1770–71 in Palestine and Syria encouraged ‘Ali Bey to pursue his conquests in these countries. His ally Shaykh Zahir advised him of the favorable conditions in Syria, which Isma‘il Bey had failed to exploit when he refrained from attacking ‘Uthman Pasha and the Pilgrimage in January 1771.¹ ‘Ali Bey resolved to launch a new campaign under the command of Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab, who had just returned victorious from his campaign in al-Hijaz.

‘Ali Bey made extensive preparations for the Syrian expedition. He recruited a huge army composed of Maghrebis, Turks, Yemenis, Indians, and Matwalis. Besides conventional arms and ammunition, he provided his army with big guns carried on camels. He also augmented this force by another one that was to sail from Damietta for Yaffa.

Early in April 1771 an Egyptian force led by Abu al-Dhahab left Cairo for Syria.² No opposition was anticipated in Palestine since Isma‘il Bey and Zahir had already expelled ‘Uthman Pasha’s troops from Gaza, Yaffa, and Ramlah. After overrunning Gaza, the Egyptian Mamluks arrived at Ramlah on 17 May 1771, with an army of approximately 40,000 men, 120 cannon, some mortars, and huge amounts of provisions. A few days later the Mamluk Bey left Ramlah and joined Isma‘il Bey’s army, which was stationed in Zahir’s territory—about three days journey from Damascus.³ At the same time, Zahir dispatched 3,000 of his cavalry under the command of his son ‘Ali to meet Abu al-Dhahab and to march together against ‘Uthman Pasha. Contemporary sources suggest that Zahir did not meet the Egyptian general because he was preoccupied with strengthening the defenses around ‘Akka. It is possible that such a decision contributed to the future misunderstanding between Zahir and Abu al-Dhahab.

In addition to Zahir's forces, Shaykh Nasif al-Nassar, the strongest chief of the Matwalis, sent some of his forces, although he was fighting Shaykh Qublan over the supreme leadership of the Matwalis. Thus reinforced with the troops of Zahir, the Matwalis, and Isma'il Bey, Abu al-Dhahab marched on Damascus with an army of around 50,000 men.⁴ There were four pashas, including 'Uthman Pasha himself, who had assembled about 35,000 men to face Abu al-Dhahab. The organization of these forces made it difficult to have a unified command, for there were several corps, each of which had its own reasons for fighting. Thus, the Yerliyyah, the *Zu'ama'* (beys) and the *Timar* holders (fiefholders) were more concerned with protecting their local interests than with defending the city. As for the mercenary troops, their principal motive was profit through wages and booty. Therefore, the Kapikulus (sultan's troops) were left to defend the citadel of Damascus on their own.

Of course, the presence of such a large number of troops—estimated to be between 18,000 and 25,000—posed a serious problem for the Damascenes for their upkeep. The merchants were taxed 300 purses and the Christians were forced to pay 30,000 piasters.⁵

These measures were indeed unpopular; it is likely that they prompted the people to resent the defending forces, or even to favor the attacking forces. Furthermore, the fact that the enemy was Muslim lessened the will of the defending troops to resist 'Ali Bey and placate the Damascenes and the peasants. Additionally, 'Ali Bey proclaimed his intention to deliver the people from 'Uthman's tyranny, but never rejected the suzerainty of the sultan. Along with the weakened political and military situation in Damascus, Abu al-Dhahab led an army that was superior to the sultan's. His troops were better equipped, trained, and more loyal to their command than was the Ottoman army to its commanders in Damascus. In addition, Abu al-Dhahab and most of the forces under his command proved their fighting ability and gained experience during the Hijaz campaign. Meanwhile, the troops of his allies Shaykh Zahir and Nasif, primarily cavalry, were well trained and devoted to their masters' cause.

On 30 May 1771, 'Uthman Pasha learned that the Egyptian army and its allies had camped near the Bridge of Jacob's Daughters on the Jordan River, but he did not believe that Abu al-

Dhahab could conquer Damascus while the four pashas were defending it.⁶ Two days later, 'Ali Bey conveyed his instructions to 'Uthman Pasha that Abu al-Dhahab is the new governor of Damascus. Accordingly, Abu al-Dhahab demanded that 'Uthman Pasha abandon the city immediately in order to spare the Damascenes any harm.⁷ If we are to believe the contents of Abu al-Dhahab's letter, this was the first instance in which 'Ali Bey's expansionist policy in Syria was made explicit; in his earlier statements, 'Ali Bey had claimed that his principal goals only were to expel 'Uthman Pasha from the governorship of Damascus and to deliver the people from his tyranny and injustices.

Meanwhile, 'Uthman Pasha started reinforcing his defenses and sent small units to reconnoiter the forces of Abu al-Dhahab and Zahir al-'Umar. It turned out that the Egyptian army was within a day's march from Damascus. Accordingly, the pasha mobilized the forces in the city and ordered the governors of Aleppo and Killis to lead their troops out of the city and to camp in the plain of Darayya.⁸ The next day, 3 June 1771, the two governors explored the Egyptian positions. Finding conditions favorable, Khalil Pasha of Killis wanted to attack Abu al-Dhahab, but was dissuaded by 'Abd al-Rahman Pasha of Aleppo.⁹

The major battle took place on 4 June 1771. According to French and English consular reports, and the chronicles of Burayk, al-Qari, and al-Muradi, Abu al-Dhahab ordered Zahir's son 'Ali to lead a vanguard force composed of the Safadians and the Matwalis cavalry, engage in a preliminary encounter with the sultan's army, and then retreat suddenly as if he was defeated; Abu al-Dhahab would then strike with his full power. As soon as Khalil Pasha saw 'Ali al-Zahir advancing with the cavalry, he advanced toward Damascus in order to bring the rest of the troops; meanwhile, he asked 'Abd al-Rahman Pasha to engage the attacking forces for an hour until he could return. 'Uthman Pasha, who was still in Damascus, ordered all the troops to march out to fight the enemy.

When 'Ali al-Zahir drew closer to the Ottoman army at Darayya, the defenders charged and 'Ali retreated according to the plan. The sultan's forces, believing that 'Ali was defeated, followed his cavalry. Then Abu al-Dhahab ordered a gun barrage, which was followed by an all-out assault. The Ottoman army retreated, and Abu al-Dhahab chased the fleeing troops to the gates of Damascus, which were shut to prevent the retreating soldiers from pillaging

the city. These troops were either killed or dispersed.¹⁰ ‘Abd al-Rahman Pasha fled towards his capital, Aleppo, where he arrived on 10 June 1771.¹¹ According to the Damascene chronicler Ibn al-Siddiq, he was the main cause of the defeat.

‘Uthman Pasha and his son Muhammad Pasha, governor of Tripoli, who were supposed to defend Damascus itself, with the help of some villagers, entered the city, probably for the purpose of plundering and ravaging, but they were driven out by the inhabitants who took the initiative in defending Damascus. ‘Uthman Pasha and his son fled from Damascus to Hims on 6 June 1771. For the next two days, street and house-to-house fighting occurred in several quarters of Damascus between some units of the Abu al-Dhahab forces and the Damascenes; some parts of the city were burnt and destroyed during the fighting.

After the flight of their pasha, the Damascenes anticipated that Abu al-Dhahab would attack the city on a larger scale. But the Mamluk leader probably saw no need to risk antagonizing the inhabitants whom he promised to deliver from ‘Uthman’s tyranny. Such a policy would gain him more support and sympathy among different segments of the people. According to the chronicles, the notables of Damascus decided to send him a message asking for clarification of his intentions concerning the city. Abu al-Dhahab replied that his principal purpose was to eliminate ‘Uthman Pasha.

¹²

Abu al-Dhahab’s reply put the notables in a difficult position. They were concerned that sending a delegation might alienate the sultan and ‘Uthman Pasha; if they did not, Damascus might be pillaged and destroyed. Finally, they decided to send a three-man delegation including ‘Ali al-Taghistani, As‘ad al-Bakri, and Muhammad al-‘Ani. The Mamluk general told them that he did not come to plunder Damascus, adding, “I am obedient to Allah [God] and to the Sultan.” He then issued his pledge of protection and safety to all the inhabitants of Damascus.

After their return to Damascus, the delegation decided to resist Abu al-Dhahab. Faced with such a desperate situation, the ‘ulama’ and some of the notables agreed with Ibn Jabri (*agha* of the Yerliyyah) to leave secretly to join ‘Uthman Pasha, and they fled the night of 7 June. The city was in chaos the following morning. The people were left without any leadership at a critical time, and the conditions worsened when more people poured into Damascus

and the mills and bakeries closed. Meanwhile, Mustafa Agha and all his troops (*Kapi Kulus*) retired to the citadel. Under such conditions, the few remaining notables decided to surrender to Abu al-Dhahab. A delegation met with the Mamluk leader and informed him of their decision, which excluded the citadel whose garrison refused to surrender except by the sultan's orders. Accordingly, Abu al-Dhahab issued an order of protection and safety. The delegation was consulted on official appointments, and the Egyptian Mamluk agreed to its recommendations. He wanted to be careful not to violate the Shari'ah or alienate the notables of Damascus. Life gradually returned to normal; in fact, the presence of foreign troops in Damascus led to a boom in its commercial life.

Another appeasing measure that Abu al-Dhahab took was distributing money to all senior officials of the Pilgrimage. In addition, he assured them of safe conduct and his full protection against any mishap. He also reiterated his obedience to Allah (God), the Prophet, and the sultan. He explained to them that the reason for his coming to Damascus was the old enmity between his master, 'Ali Bey, and 'Uthman Pasha. Since he expelled the pasha, he offered the sultan 3,000 purses with the request to confer on him governorship of Damascus. Abu al-Dhahab hoped that if the sultan refused his request, he would depose 'Uthman Pasha and appoint whom he saw fit.¹³ This tone of the Egyptian leader again helps to illuminate his changing attitude towards his master 'Ali Bey and his intention to further his own ambitions.

Abu al-Dhahab had defeated the sultan's army on 4 June, and Damascus surrendered to him four days later. Meanwhile, Mustafa Agha, commander of the citadel to which he had retreated with his force, refused to follow suit unless he received orders to that effect directly from the sultan.¹⁴ This situation constituted a real defiance to Abu al-Dhahab's authority in Damascus. The Egyptian Bey demanded that Mustafa Agha start negotiations. In addition, he informed him of his intention to depart from Damascus should the sultan not appoint him as its governor. Mustafa Agha reiterated his unyielding attitude and wrote to Abu al-Dhahab the following statement:

We are the *Kapi Kulus* of the Sultan; we are under his orders; the citadel is his. We shall not open its gates except by his orders. We shall stay in the citadel and shall not fight you. If

you wish to come and stay with us, do not worry. If you fight us we shall fight you in defense of the women and the Sultan's citadel. We have enough provisions for three years, if you continue your siege until we receive orders from the Sultan.¹⁵

Irritated by this reply, Abu al-Dhahab ordered the gunners to bombard the citadel. The barrage was not effective because very few balls hit the target, though some hit the Umayyad Mosque and several houses. Subsequently Abu al-Dhahab ordered a halt to the bombardment because he did not wish to alienate the 'ulama' and the inhabitants of Damascus. Besides, the gunners refused to continue bombarding the citadel because its garrison had hoisted the *Sanjaq* (Sultan's Standard), and they argued that since they were Muslims they could not bombard the *Sanjaq* or the Mosque. Thus, Abu al-Dhahab failed to subdue the citadel either by force or by negotiation. He subsequently withdrew from Damascus on 18 June 1771, two weeks after he had defeated the sultan's army at Darayya.¹⁶

Abu al-Dhahab's occupation of Damascus had different repercussions in different parts of the Ottoman Empire. Needless to say, the victory of the Egyptian forces and their ally Shaykh Zahir over 'Uthman Pasha and the sultan's troops brought exultation to the people of Cairo and 'Akka, and expressions of consternation from Aleppo, Tripoli, and Sayda. In Istanbul, there was great concern and confusion because of the governor's defeat.

'Ali Bey instructed Abu al-Dhahab to appoint Mamluk amirs as governors and administrators over the districts and towns that he had conquered. Furthermore, he ordered him to proceed in his conquests as far as he wanted while promising him more troops and the provisions for further operations.¹⁷

As for the capitals of the Syrian provinces—Aleppo, Tripoli, and Sayda—general fear prevailed. In Aleppo there was anarchy and uneasiness.¹⁸ The Aleppines believed that their city was the next target after the fall of Damascus since it was included in 'Ali Bey's expansionist plans. In anticipation of Abu al-Dhahab's advance to capture Aleppo, which had been a part of the Mamluk Sultanate, the inhabitants appointed a delegation to solicit 'Ali Bey's rule.¹⁹ But the timely return of their governor, 'Abd al-Rahman Pasha, helped to alleviate their fears and to prevent further disorders. Nevertheless, the people continued to believe that the

Egyptian army would arrive soon at the gates of Aleppo.²⁰ On 15 and 16 June, the governor held several councils with the notables of the city to discuss defense measures against the impending attack of Abu al-Dhahab, but news of the Mamluk withdrawal from Damascus eased their fears. The English consul-general in Aleppo, in a dispatch to his ambassador in Istanbul, wrote that the people were free from any alarm from 'Ali Bey's troops. It was believed that the Mamluk leader returned to Cairo after leading further conquests around Damascus.²¹

In Tripoli, the people were in an uproar, and a revolt seemed imminent. The janissaries took up arms on hearing of the defeat of the sultan's army in Darayya. The notables managed to keep order in the city, and the potential uprising was thwarted. On 12 June 1771, Muhammad Pasha arrived from Damascus and managed to restore order.

The situation in Sayda differed from that of Tripoli and Aleppo because of its proximity to Damascus, 'Akka— Zahir's capital— and Jabal 'Amil, the country of his Matwalis allies. Its governor, Darwish Pasha, unlike the governor of Tripoli, did not leave Sayda for Damascus to defend his father's province. He merely placed cannons on an old fortification that dominated the countryside. However, Darwish Pasha guaranteed the support of the Druzes to defend the city against the Matwalis and Zahir. Then, learning of Damascus's surrender to Abu al-Dhahab, Darwish Pasha left Sayda on 11 June. He marched to Damascus accompanied by 1,000 Druzes, arriving five days after the withdrawal of Abu al-Dhahab.²²

On 13 June 1771, Sayda surrendered to the forces of the Matwalis. But this occupation was short lived. On 20 June, Shaykh 'Ali Junblat reoccupied the city and expelled Zahir's representative. Zahir could not defend Sayda, primarily because most of his army was still with Abu al-Dhahab, who had withdrawn from Damascus on 18 June.²³

Two weeks after his victory over the sultan's army in the battle of Darayya, and only ten days after his actual occupation of Damascus, Abu al-Dhahab abruptly returned to Cairo.²⁴ On the day he left, he sent a letter to the notables of the city in which he said, "We are obedient to our master the Sultan, may Allah (God) protect him. The reason of our coming is 'Uthman Pasha, and now we should return to our country. We ask your blessings."²⁵ The

notables sent the letter to 'Uthman Pasha, who was at Hamah and left for Damascus the next day.

In his letter to the Damascene notables, the Mamluk leader said merely that since he had achieved the only purpose of his campaign, namely, the expulsion of 'Uthman Pasha, he decided to return to Egypt. Other contemporary sources of later dates have, however, elaborated more on the causes and have given various explanations. Most agreed that there was a change of heart on Abu al-Dhahab's part towards his master. This attitude came about primarily through the influence of Isma'il Bey, the leader of the previous Mamluk expedition, and the representatives of the sultan. Al-Jabarti, in his chronicle, offered a third explanation for the retreat. He thought that the Mamluk soldiers, as well as those of the Bey, had become weary of fighting and the long absence from their country.

There are, perhaps, three reasons that led Abu al-Dhahab to withdraw from Damascus: personal ambitions and rivalries, external pressures and influences, and strategic considerations. First, Abu al-Dhahab was the major ally of 'Ali Bey in establishing his supremacy in Egypt and carrying out his expansionist policy in the Hijaz and Syria. Undoubtedly, Abu al-Dhahab's victories in three consecutive campaigns in Upper Egypt, the Hijaz, and Syria during the past three years endowed him with a military reputation and a personal prestige that equaled, if not surpassed, that of 'Ali Bey. These achievements probably tempted Abu al-Dhahab to aspire to his master's position. The nature of the Mamluk system could have encouraged his ambitions, for the Mamluks considered each other as equals. They all came from the same slave origin and looked upon their leader as *primus inter pares*; therefore, each one could aspire to that position. In fact, it was this very principle that led to the Ottomans' destruction of the Mamluk kingdom.

Abu al-Dhahab had also appealed to the sultan to appoint him governor of Damascus in return for 3,000 purses. He promised, however, to withdraw from Damascus if the sultan turned down his appeal. This attitude induced Abu al-Dhahab to challenge his master's authority.

As to the external pressures and influences, Abu al-Dhahab felt that he could realize his ambitions after the sultan had promised him the position of 'Ali Bey in Egypt, according to M. Sabbagh. Another slightly different report stated that 'Uthman

Pasha himself took the initiative by sending his own agent to Abu al-Dhahab and alienating him from 'Ali Bey. It is a well-established fact that Abu al-Dhahab, during his stay in Damascus, had met the *Surra Emīni* (official in charge of monies for the poor of Mecca), the *Saqqa Bashi* (official responsible for water supplies for pilgrims), and other Ottoman officials.²⁶

Isma'il Bey contributed greatly to alienating Abu al-Dhahab from 'Ali Bey and Shaykh Zahir. He incited Abu al-Dhahab against Zahir's sons, particularly 'Ali, who, according to Isma'il Bey, did not show his respect for the Mamluk general. He accused 'Ali al-Zahir of bad manners and rudeness in the presence of the Egyptian leader. Isma'il Bey pointed out to Abu al-Dhahab that he and his master 'Ali Bey had breached the very principles of Islam by cooperating with an "infidel" power—namely Russia—against the sultan. This appears to be an anachronism because 'Ali Bey does not appear to have written to the Russian fleet commander until December 1771. Meanwhile, he was pitting Abu al-Dhahab against 'Ali Bey by arousing his religious sentiments.

Isma'il Bey played a significant role, probably because of his allegiance to the sultan or his envy of 'Ali Bey and Abu al-Dhahab. Isma'il Bey's earlier refusal to support Zahir's plan to attack 'Uthman Pasha while he was leading the Pilgrimage to Mecca in January 1771, for fear of hurting the pilgrims, indicates another reason why he advised Abu al-Dhahab in the following June to give up his conquest and retire to Cairo.

Strategic considerations also influenced Abu al-Dhahab's decision to withdraw. It is true that the Mamluk leader failed to conquer the citadel, but it is also true that he did not use all of his forces to achieve that end. Perhaps he did not do so because he preferred not to antagonize or alienate the Damascenes, particularly the 'ulama' and the notables who had appealed to him to stop bombarding the citadel. Al-Muradi was probably closer to the truth when he stated that Abu al-Dhahab gave up his attempt to capture the citadel because it belonged to the sultan; he came only to fight 'Uthman Pasha.²⁷

Strategically, Abu al-Dhahab feared the coming of fresh Ottoman relief troops to Damascus. 'Uthman Pasha had asked Amir Yusuf, prince of the Druzes, to lead his forces against Abu al-Dhahab; the Porte also had ordered new soldiers to march out to Syria.²⁸ Abu al-Dhahab therefore must have justified his decision in

order to defend himself before 'Ali Bey on his arrival at Cairo, even though 'Ali Bey had promised to dispatch reinforcements in order to pursue his conquests.

Both biographies of Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar by two members of the al-Sabbagh family maintained that the main reason for Abu al-Dhahab's sudden withdrawal was treachery. Isma'il Bey, in collusion with Abu al-Dhahab and other beys, agreed to have 'Ali Bey assassinated and to appoint Abu al-Dhahab in his place, thus forcing him to return as soon as possible.²⁹ While a Lebanese chronicler, Shihab, supported this theory, others claimed that 'Uthman Pasha had bribed Abu al-Dhahab to leave.³⁰

THE AFTERMATH

In any event, the sudden withdrawal of Abu al-Dhahab from Damascus on 18 June 1771 caused his allies, Shaykh Zahir and the Matwalis, who were neither consulted nor informed of the decision, to return to their own districts. They were forced to face alone the Ottoman forces and their local enemy the Druzes. In effect, the balance of power in southern Syria had been tipped against them. Their strong ally 'Ali Bey was expelled from Egypt by his rival Abu al-Dhahab, and he now took refuge at 'Akka. He needed Zahir's help to regain his position in Cairo, at a time when Zahir himself was facing a great menace by the return of 'Uthman Pasha to Damascus and the arrival of fresh Ottoman troops with orders to destroy Zahir and 'Ali Bey. Thus, the forces of Zahir and the Matwalis had occupied Sayda on 13 June 1771, but they were unable to defend it against the Druzes, who recaptured it on the twentieth of the same month. Their failure to defend Sayda was more likely due to the sudden withdrawal of Abu al-Dhahab.

Abu al-Dhahab retreated so abruptly that it seemed that he was fleeing from a defeat rather than conducting an orderly withdrawal. Along the road to Egypt, provisions, equipment, and even soldiers were scattered everywhere behind the retreating army. On 22 June, only four days after his departure from Damascus, Abu al-Dhahab camped on the plain of Marj ibn 'Amir near Nazareth; on 29 June, he arrived at Ramlah and Yaffa and dispatched the artillery and heavy equipment that he had just received from 'Ali Bey to Damietta. Finally, he left Yaffa and Ramlah for Gaza, the last important post on his way to Egypt; after a short rest, he left Gaza on 3 July 1771, bound for Cairo. Soon

after his withdrawal, 'Uthman Pasha restored his authority over Ramlah and Gaza, while Zahir kept Yaffa under his control. This extension of 'Uthman's control to Gaza weakened Zahir's military position.³¹

'Uthman Pasha returned to Damascus on 26 June 1771. Shortly afterwards he killed Yusuf ibn Jabri, the *agha* of the Yerliyyah, because it was reported that Yusuf was in collusion with Abu al-Dhahab and Zahir against 'Uthman Pasha. This measure was received favorably by the Damascenes. In addition, the pasha confiscated Ibn Jabri's wealth—probably because he needed more financial resources to face his new responsibilities. In order to reestablish his authority, he had to rebuild his military strength in Damascus and the countryside.

Although Zahir's military strength was diminished by Abu al-Dhahab's withdrawal, he continued to challenge 'Uthman's authority. He not only defended his country, but also attacked 'Uthman's province. Ibn Jarrar, shaykh of Mount Nablus, was the only ally left to 'Uthman Pasha in southern Syria. In order to secure his southern borders and deprive the pasha of his only power base in Palestine, Zahir decided to destroy Ibn Jarrar. In August 1771, Ibn Jarrar appealed to the pasha for help, stating that he had been besieged by the forces of Zahir and the Matwalis for about a year. The pasha urged Ibn Jarrar to hold firm until his arrival during the *dawrah* (annual round), according to Ibn al-Siddiq.³²

After his return to Damascus, 'Uthman Pasha determined to destroy Zahir. At first, he rushed to the aid of his ally Ibn Jarrar. The pasha reestablished his authority in Gaza and Ramlah but failed to recapture Yaffa, which remained under Zahir's control. Another reason why 'Uthman launched his assault against Zahir was the fact that in July 1771 he received the sultan's confirmation of his governorship in Damascus. Next, 'Uthman Pasha, with the support of his sons, the governors of Tripoli and Sayda, and Amir Yusuf, Prince of the Druzes, planned to march from Damascus to attack Zahir from the east while the Druzes and his son Darwish Pasha encircled Zahir from the north and the west. Leading about 10,000 Ottoman troops, 'Uthman Pasha advanced towards Zahir's territories under the pretext of his *dawrah* to levy the taxes in preparation for the pilgrimage. But it was obvious to Zahir that an attack was imminent, so he left 'Akka on 30 August 1771 with his sons and a large body of soldiers, in order to join his ally Shaykh

Nasif, chief of the Matwalis. They encountered 'Uthman Pasha on 2 September 1771, near Lake Hulah.

The battle of Lake Hulah³³ began at dawn and ended three hours after sunrise. Zahir, despite his advanced age, assumed the supreme command of his troops and assigned his sons and Shaykh Nasif to lead four different regiments. Because 'Uthman failed to show up, the odds were tilted early against the pasha. The pasha's troops were caught between the Jordan River, Lake Hulah, Lake Tiberias, and Zahir's forces. Zahir's son, 'Ali, attacked the pasha's camp, leaving them with no retreat except across the Jordan River. The majority of the pasha's army was drowned in the river and Lake Hulah. 'Uthman himself was nearly drowned but was saved by one of his soldiers. The army of the pasha was totally defeated and only about 300–500 of his men escaped. 'Uthman Pasha returned to Damascus with only three soldiers.

On Thursday, 5 September 1771, Zahir made his public entry into 'Akka in triumph with the huge spoils he gained from 'Uthman's camp. His victory over the pasha was celebrated joyfully in 'Akka and the rest of the country. The people of 'Akka went out of the gates to meet him, and he was saluted by all his forts on his way from Tiberias to 'Akka. Furthermore, the French ships that were in the harbor participated in the rejoicings of 'Akka. Meanwhile, Zahir dispatched a special envoy in a boat to Damietta to proclaim his victory to his ally 'Ali Bey, in order to encourage 'Ali Bey to send him fresh troops to protect their conquests in Palestine; 'Ali Bey eventually did send Zahir additional troops.

Immediately after his victorious return to 'Akka, Zahir turned his full attention to Sayda and Amir Yusuf of the Druzes, who had supported 'Uthman Pasha. On 13 October, Shaykh Zahir ordered Darwish Pasha, the son of 'Uthman and governor of Sayda, to leave the city, which he did on the following day. Meanwhile, as Darwish Pasha was on his way to Damascus, he received a message from Amir Yusuf urging him to return to Sayda so that they could march together against Shaykh Zahir and the Matwalis. Amir Yusuf decided to do this in order to appease 'Uthman Pasha after failing to arrive in time to help him at Lake Hulah. He also feared the growing power of Zahir and the Matwalis who supported his adversary, his uncle Amir Mansur, for the principedom of the Druzes. Finally, he wanted to stop the Matwalis, probably due to their effective role in Zahir's army at the battle of Lake Hulah,

from encroaching on some parts of his own territory. Against his better judgment, Darwish Pasha returned on 15 October to Sayda, accompanied by an army of Druzes. Yusuf himself arrived there for deliberations with the pasha, leading a sizeable force. Yusuf marched to the Matwalis's country, burning and pillaging their villages, while Shaykh 'Ali Junblat remained with about 3,000 Druzes to defend Sayda.

Amir Yusuf then received a letter from Shaykh Zahir, offering his good offices to mediate between him and the Matwalis. Yusuf, however, rejected Zahir's overture, and Shaykh Zahir sided with the Matwalis, as he did in the past. He also had the support of Amir Mansur and his followers among the Druzes who wanted Yusuf's defeat.

On 20 October 1771, the two armies met near the village of Nabatiyah. Zahir relied on the same tactic that his son 'Ali had employed in the battle of Darayyah against 'Uthman Pasha in June 1771. The Matwalis cavalry pretended to be defeated by Yusuf's army and retreated. At that point, the forces of Zahir and Nasif encircled those of Yusuf and defeated them. This swift and unexpected humiliation forced Amir Yusuf to flee to his capital Dayr al-Qamar. The spectacular victory left Sayda wide open for Zahir and the Matwalis.³⁴

As soon as the news of the defeat reached Shaykh 'Ali Junblat in Sayda, he fled with his men to the mountains; Darwish Pasha followed. Thus, Sayda was abandoned, and on 23 October Zahir and the Matwalis entered the city. Later that day, the Egyptian flotilla dropped anchor in the port of Sayda. Meanwhile, the occupying forces started fortifying the city. 'Ali Bey dispatched more troops by land and occupied Gaza, Yaffa, and Ramlah. Thus, by the end of 1771, Shaykh Zahir and his allies were in complete control of the entire Mediterranean coast, including nearly all of historic Palestine.³⁵ Needless to say, fear, consternation, and chaos again ran through Damascus.

At the time of the fall of Sayda, a *firman* was sent from Istanbul to Damascus on 22 October 1771, deposing 'Uthman Pasha and his sons from their governorships of Damascus, Sayda, and Tripoli. The sultan now appointed Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm as governor of Damascus. 'Uthman Pasha was transferred to Qunyah and his son Muhammad Pasha, governor of Tripoli, changed places with the pasha of Mosul. Meanwhile, Darwish

Pasha of Sayda was appointed governor of Caramania.³⁶ No one was named as Sayda's governor until 21 February 1772 due to Zahir's occupation of the city.³⁷

It is unclear as to why the sultan decided to depose 'Uthman Pasha and his sons. 'Uthman Pasha had had a successful career as governor of Damascus for about ten years. He provided full security for the pilgrimage and the people of his province. He was also the only governor since the death of Sulayman Pasha al-'Azm in 1743 to challenge Zahir's authority. Nevertheless, he failed to ward off the Mamluk threat in June 1771. He was not dismissed then, probably because the sultan's prestige was involved. In his proclamation to the Damascenes, 'Ali Bey announced that his intention was to remove 'Uthman Pasha and deliver the people from his tyranny. Moreover, both allies, Zahir and 'Ali Bey, appealed to the sultan to depose 'Uthman Pasha. Had the sultan openly heeded their appeals, this would have weakened his position and strengthened that of 'Ali Bey and Zahir.³⁸

The deposition became more imminent following the withdrawal of Abu al-Dhahab from Syria in June 1771 and the defeat of 'Uthman Pasha by Zahir in the battle of Lake Hulah in September 1771. 'Uthman Pasha was badly humiliated at Lake Hulah since there were no Egyptian troops involved. His appeal to the sultan for troops and money was embarrassing because the Porte was still engaged in the Russo-Turkish war. It is also possible that the high-ranking Ottoman officials of the pilgrimage caravan who had met with Abu al-Dhahab in Damascus had alienated the sultan from 'Uthman Pasha, or that the sultan thought that 'Uthman Pasha's dismissal might dissuade 'Ali Bey from another attack or appease Abu al-Dhahab, who also asked for 'Uthman's deposition. One might add that the sultan's move might have been intended to induce Zahir to accept the Porte's peace initiative.³⁹

Although the appointment of Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm was barely accepted by the people of Damascus, his authority in the countryside was still challenged.⁴⁰ Since the pilgrimage caravan was the major responsibility of the governor of Damascus, he began preparing for its departure. He had to go on the *dawrah* to levy the *miri* taxes for financing the Pilgrimage, but he claimed to be unable to undertake this mission because he did not have sufficient time.⁴¹ This, of course, was not the real reason—many previous governors had gone on the *dawrah* during Sha'ban or Ramadan (usually about

three months before the pilgrimage).⁴² Instead, he authorized Mustafa Bey Tuqan, whom he appointed *mustasallim* (administrator) of Nablus, to collect the *miri* taxes from the people of his region. This appointment infuriated the other notables, namely the Jarrar family who were always more loyal to the governors of Damascus than the Tuqan family. The pasha tried to placate the Jarrar shaykhs by appointing them as governors of the countryside. While most of them refused the offer, two prominent ones threw in their lot with Zahir's side, an action which made it more difficult for Muhammad Pasha to leave Damascus.⁴³

A brief glance at the conditions which prevailed in the province of Damascus then sheds more light on the pasha's decision not to go on the *dawrah*. Many areas in the province of Damascus were not under the pasha's control. Several cities, such as Gaza, Yaffa, and Ramlah had been reoccupied by the Egyptian forces of 'Ali Bey.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Zahir's son 'Ali dominated many regions of the province, including some of the approaches to Damascus itself. 'Ali Zahir also penetrated deep into the south of Palestine and occupied the fortress of Bayt Jibrin in the foothills between Gaza and al-Khalil (Hebron). He also carried out a successful expedition against the al-Wuhaydat tribe near Gaza, who pledged to avenge the killing of their shaykh Salit by 'Ali Bey's troops in November 1770. The people of Hawran had appealed to the authorities in Damascus to protect them against 'Ali Zahir's attacks, but to no avail.⁴⁵ The pasha actually felt that the *dawrah* would be hazardous because a clash between him and Zahir's son was very likely.

Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm sought Zahir's advice whether to make the round (*dawrah*). A Damascene chronicler reported that initially, Zahir prevented him from going on the round. Meanwhile, French sources recorded that Zahir permitted the Pasha to proceed with the Pilgrimage caravan. Zahir also promised to send him the *miri* tax due from his territories. The above accounts unequivocally illustrate the unlimited influence of Zahir not only in the province of Sayda, but also in that of Damascus. Undoubtedly the circumstances during the time shortly after Muhammad Pasha's arrival in Damascus were not favorable, and his failure to assert his authority throughout the province strengthened his adversaries and "contributed to the decline of the hegemony of Damascus."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, between January and May 1772, the pasha managed

to conduct the Pilgrimage safely from Damascus to Mecca and back.

Further important developments took place in Damascus. Shortly before the departure of Muhammad Pasha with the pilgrimage caravan to the Hijaz, Nu‘man Pasha, the commander-in-chief, was replaced by ‘Uthman Pasha al-Wakil (al-Misri), according to both Ibn al-Siddiq and Burayk.⁴⁸ He earned both names, *al-Wakil* (deputy) and *al-Misri* (Egyptian), from his previous service in Egypt as deputy to the *Kizlar Agha* (Chief Black Eunuch and Sultan’s Chamberlain in Istanbul), who was responsible for the *awqaf* (pious foundations) of the Holy Cities. Besides the position of commander-in-chief, he was also appointed as governor of Egypt. He was never appointed as governor of Damascus as was erroneously claimed by contemporary chroniclers and by more recent historians such as Gibb and Bowen.⁴⁹

‘Uthman Pasha al-Wakil had his headquarters in Damascus and his position as *Sar‘askar* (Serasker) was far more important than that of the *wali* of Damascus, Muhammad Pasha, who had failed to assert his authority. Neither was very strong militarily. They lacked troops, munitions, and above all the money needed to recruit more troops. Their weakness became quite clear when they failed to respond to the appeals of the inhabitants of Hawran for their help against the encroachments of ‘Ali Zahir.⁵⁰

Under such circumstances both ‘Uthman Pasha al-Wakil and Muhammad Pasha preferred to settle their accounts with Zahir through negotiations. Shaykh Zahir himself favored this means primarily to gain time. His troubles with his sons began to come to the surface again and the power struggle in Egypt between his ally, ‘Ali Bey, and Abu al-Dhahab was not yet over. However, Zahir’s counselor, Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, advised him against negotiations because he thought that ‘Ali Bey’s support was forthcoming and therefore they should not hasten negotiations with Damascus. Al-Sabbagh hoped that ‘Ali Bey would defeat his adversary Abu al-Dhahab, re-conquer Syria, and relinquish some of its regions to Zahir. Since he had a great stake in the commercial activities in Palestine and Egypt, al-Sabbagh was motivated by his personal interests rather than Zahir’s.⁵¹

On 8 June 1771, when the alliance army of Zahir and the Mamluks occupied Damascus, ‘Ali Bey’s hopes to revive the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt and Syria were at a peak, but with the

sudden withdrawal of Abu al-Dhahab, all high hopes were shattered. The countdown began for the downfall of both leaders.⁵² Before long, 'Ali Bey was ousted from Egypt on 28 April 1772 (25 Muharram, 1185) and took refuge with Shaykh Zahir. This new development marked not only the end of 'Ali Bey's authority in Egypt, but also the beginning of Zahir's end as a major local power in Syria.

NOTES

1. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 354; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 80; al-Munayyir, *al-Mashriq*, XLIX (1955), pp. 259–60.

2. Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 38b; al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 367; cf. Heyd, *Dābir al-Umar*, p. 50, who gave the date as March 1771. PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 3 June 1771; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 31 May 1771; Ibid., 1121, Tripoli, 12 June 1771; Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 38b; al-Murādī, *Silk al-Durar*, I, 54; A. al-Şabbāgh, f. 18b; M. al-Şabbāgh, f. 29b. The last two sources estimate the size of the army between 10–20,000 men, while most of the sources give the figure as 40–50,000 soldiers. The Şabbāghs' estimate could be understood in view of the fact that each Mamlūk soldier had two other male retainers. A.E.B¹, 91, Aleppo, 1 June 1771, mentioned 40,000 men and 80 cannons; Ibn al-Şiddiq (f. 42b) gave the number of cannons as 90 while al-Maḥāsini (f. 3b) said they were 80.

3. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 13 May 1771.

4. al-Munayyir, *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XLIX (1955), p. 261.; al-Qari, *al-Wuzarā'*, ed. by al-Munajjid, in *Wulāt Dimashq fi al-'abd al-Uthmani* (Damascus: 1949), p. 83. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 31 May 1771; Ibid., 1121, Tripoli, 12 June 1771. The latter source gave the number as 25,000 men, while Ibn al-Şiddiq estimated the force defending Damascus at about 18,000 men (*Gharā'ib*, ff. 36a, 37a, 41a–41b). See also A.E.B¹, 91, Aleppo, 23 May 1771.

5. Burayk, *Tarikh al-Shām*, p. 95; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 31 May 1771.

6. Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 41b; A.E.B¹, 91, Aleppo, 11 June 1771. The latter source gave the date as May 31, 1771.

7. al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 41b.

8. A.E.B¹, 91, Aleppo, 11 June 1771; Ibid., 1035, Sidon, 11 June 1771; Burayk, *Tarikh al-Shām*, p. 95.

9. Ibn al-Şiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 42b. Our primary sources for the occupation of Damascus are Ibn al-Şiddiq's chronicle and S. al-Maḥāsini's *Ḥulūl al-Ta'ab wal-Ālam bi-nusūl Abi al-Dhabab ilā Dimashq al-Shām*, Ms. at

Princeton University, Yahuda Collection, 3760. It was edited by S. al-Munajjid (Beirut, 1962) but for various reasons we preferred to use the manuscript itself. These two accounts are supplemented by other Arabic contemporary sources as Burayk, al-Qārī and al-Murādī, and the French and English consular reports dispatched from the Levant and Egypt.

10. A.E.B¹, Tripoli, 12 June 1771.

11. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 44a.

12. S. al-Maḥāsini's *Ḥulūl al-Ta'ab wāl-Ālam*, ff. 45a–48b. The chronicle gives the most interesting detailed account of the fighting inside Damascus itself and the significant role played by the inhabitants themselves in defending their city against the attackers as well as the fugitives; Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 49a–50a; al-Murādī, *Silk al-Durar*, I, p. 55; al-Maḥāsini, ff. 3b–4a.

13. The delegation from Damascus was composed of several eminent 'ulama' including S. al-Maḥāsini the Khatīb (orator) of the Umayyad mosque. He also wrote a short treatise on the occupation of Damascus by Abū al-Dhahab. See S. al-Maḥāsini's *Ḥulūl al-Ta'ab wāl-Ālam*, f. 4b; Ibn al-Siddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 52a–56a.

14. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 57a–57b.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., f. 59a; al-Murādī, *Silk al-Durar*, Vol. I, 56; Burayk, *Tarikh al-Sham*, p. 95; al-Maḥāsini, ff. 5a–5b; cf. F. Charles-Roux, *Les Échelles de Syrie et de Palestine au XVIII^e Siècle* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geunther, 1928), p. 93. Charles-Roux maintained that the citadel had held out for three days and Abū al-Dhahab withdrew his army on the day it surrendered. This information could not be corroborated from any contemporary source.

17. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 367; PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 17 September 1771; A. E, B, 334, Cairo, 24 June 1771 (Bulletin), ch 5, file 30.

18. A.E.B¹, 91, Aleppo, 16 July 1771.

19. Livingston, *'Alī Bey al-Kabir*, p. 164.

20. PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 3 July 1771.

21. PRO, S. P. 110/39, pt. 1, Aleppo, 24 August 1771.

22. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 60a, 61a, 61b.

23. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 28 June 1771; PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 17 August 1771.

24. PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 17 August 1771; Charles-Roux, *Les Écheltes*, p. 95. Almost all sources consulted agreed that Abu al-Dhahab's decision to withdraw from Damascus was abrupt. Sulayman al-Maḥāsini, who pleaded with Abū al-Dhahab to give his orders to stop bombarding Damascus, states that the Mamlūk leader had informed him along with other notables of his decision one day earlier. Militarily speaking, this would have upset his plans and more likely cost him dearly. Abū al-Dhahab was, in our opinion, so experienced that he would not have committed such a blunder, particularly because he was in hostile territory.

25. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 59a,b; ff. 60a, 61a; al-Maḥāsini's *Hulul al-Ta'ab wal-Alam*, f. 6b. The latter source gives the date of 'Uthman's return to Damascus as Thursday 16 Rabī I, 1185 (29 June, 1771).

26. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zābir*, (ff. 29b–30a). Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, f. 56a. The Ṣurra Emīnī, also called Amīr al-Ṣurrah (prince or commander of the endowment), accompanied the Sultan's annual contribution designated for Mecca and Medinah. Usually he joined the Syrian pilgrimage leaving Damascus for the Ḥijāz. The Saqqā Bāshī was originally the chief of the water carriers at the Dīvan in Istanbul. In the context of this study, he was in charge of providing the pilgrimage caravan with drinking water. Gibb and Bowen, *The Islamic Society*, I, 354, II, 58, n. 1; Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus*, pp. 72–73; al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādith Dimashq*, pp. 51, 148, 170.

27. al-Murādī, *Silk al-Durar*, Vol. I, p. 56.

28. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 87, 88, 89; Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 61a–61b.

29. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zābir*, f. 30a; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 19a.

30. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 89–90; N. Farrāj, "Qissat Zāhir al-'Umar," *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XXIV (1926), p. 557.

31. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 28 June, 10 July, 20 August 177–1.

32. *Ibid.*, f. 66a; Charles-Roux, *Les Écheltes*, p. 95–97; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 19b–20a; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 21 September 1771.

33. For further details on this battle, see M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zābir*, ff. 27a–27b; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 19b–20b; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 89; Burayk, *Tarikh al-Shām*, p. 97; Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā'ib*, ff. 69a–74a; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 21 September 1771; A.E.B¹, Aleppo, 27 September 1771.

34. For a detailed account of Zāhir's occupation of Sidon and the battle of Nabaṭīyah between the Druzes and the Matāwilah, see Aḥmad

Ridā, “Ḥamlat al-Amīr Yusuf al-Shihābī ‘alā al-Nabaṭīyah wa-jabal ‘Āmil,” *al-Kulliyah*, XVI (AUB, Beirut, 1930), 359–68; Ridā, “Istīlā Zāhir al-‘Umar ‘alā Ṣaydā,” XV (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1929), 194–201; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 20b–21a; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, ff. 27b–29b; al-Munayyir, *al-Mashriq* (1955) 264–65; Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, p. 97; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, 90–92; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 9 November 1771; *Ibid.*, 30 April 1772 (Bulletin), PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 17 December 1771; Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā’ib*, ff. 81a–82b.

35. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 11 November 1771. Additionally, there were unconfirmed news about the occupation of Jerusalem by ‘Alī Bey’s forces. See PRO, S. P. 97/48, Istanbul, 3 January 1772.

36. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā’ib*, ff. 83a–83b; PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 17 October 1771; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 9 November 1771. A.E.B¹ 1035, Sidon, 18 March 1772.

37. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 18 March 1772.

38. Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus*, pp. 283–84.

39. Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. I, p. 239.

40. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā’ib*, ff. 83b, 94a, 100a–101a.

41. The *dawrah* was usually undertaken during Jumādā II and also Sha’bān, about three months prior to the actual performance of the pilgrimage on 10 Dhū al-Hijjah. But in some years *dawrah* took place in Ramaḍān.

42. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā’ib*, ff. 98a–99b.

43. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 23 December 1771; *Ibid.*, 10 February 1772.

44. *Ibid.*; Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā’ib*, ff. 100a–100b; al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 354.

45. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 23 November 1771.

46. *Ibid.*; Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, p. 98.

47. Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus*, p. 289.

48. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā’ib*, ff. 106a, 112a–112b; Burayk, *Tārikh al-Shām*, p. 99; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 10 February 1772. Cf. H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West...* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), Vol. I, p. 221, erroneously states that al-Miṣrī replaced al-Kurjī in Damascus.

49. Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, Vol. I, p. 221; al-Shidyāq, *Akhhār al-Aḡyan*, Vol. II, p. 44; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir, f. 23a; al-Munayyir, *al-Mashriq*, (1955), 271, 273.

50. Ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā’ib*, ff. 100a–100b; 119a–120a, 124a–125a.

51. PRO, S. P. 97/48, Istanbul, 3 June 1772; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 30 April 1772 (Bulletin); al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, pp. 368–74; Volney, *Voyage*, II, pp. 239–240.

52. For a good detailed discussion of the Mamluk revival policy toward their sultanate, see D. Crecelious, “Egypt’s Reawakening Interest in Palestine During the Regimes of ‘Ali Bey al-Kabir and Muhammad Abu al-Dahab, 1760-1775,” in D. Kushner, ed. *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem: Brill, 1986), pp. 247-262.

53. al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 374.

CHAPTER VI: THE DOWNFALL OF 'ALI BEY

It is very likely that the sudden withdrawal of Abu al-Dhahab, initially from Damascus in June 1771 and eventually from all Syria, precipitated the fall of 'Ali Bey in Egypt and Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar in Palestine.

Abu al-Dhahab and his army had reached Cairo in August, 1771.¹ He had an audience with his leader, 'Ali Bey, during which he tried to defend his decision to withdraw, but he failed to sway him. 'Ali Bey seemed to believe the other side of the story provided by his ally, Shaykh Zahir, which was that Abu al-Dhahab had abandoned his conquests in Syria contrary to the advice of Zahir's son 'Ali. Abu al-Dhahab claimed that the bad conduct of 'Ali was one of the factors prompting him to withdraw from Damascus, as Shihab has written.² Shaykh Zahir told 'Ali Bey that he was instructed by Abu al-Dhahab to have all the equipment dispatched from 'Akka to Damietta. This order aroused Zahir's suspicions, and he stopped the vessels sailing to Damietta and ordered everything to be unloaded. Consequently, 'Ali Bey approved entirely of Zahir's action and his request for a new expedition under Ridwan Bey's command to pursue their conquests in Syria.³ Subsequent developments in Egypt prevented 'Ali Bey from dispatching as strong an expedition as he had pledged to Zahir. Nevertheless, he sent a small force by land that occupied Gaza, Ramlah, and Yaffa, and another one by sea that helped Zahir and the Matwalis to recapture Sayda on 23 October 1771.⁴

The arrival of Abu al-Dhahab at Cairo in early August precipitated a series of events. 'Ali Bey insisted that Abu al-Dhahab should return to Syria, but he absolutely refused. This convinced 'Ali Bey of the treachery of his general. Thus, a period of "concealed hostility" developed between them, according to al-

Jabarti, during which 'Ali Bey spared no effort to eliminate Abu al-Dhahab.⁵

Undoubtedly, 'Ali Bey was very much concerned about his conquests in Syria, which had to be abandoned following the sudden retreat of his forces. His immediate and major interest became that of protecting his rule in Egypt itself, which was menaced and challenged by his own general Abu al-Dhahab. He therefore decided to seek the military support of the Russian fleet, which was stronger than the Ottoman navy in the eastern Mediterranean. Accordingly, on 2 December 1771, he sent a certain Ya'qub al-Armani (Jacob the Armenian) to Count Alexis Orlov, who had his headquarters on the island of Paros, with a message expressing his desire to conclude an alliance with Empress Catherine II against their common enemy, the Ottomans. In return, 'Ali Bey offered to supply the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean with provisions, troops, and money. As soon as Count Orlov received 'Ali's letter, he went to Russia and discussed it with the Empress herself, who doubtless welcomed the Egyptian overture. Unfortunately for 'Ali Bey, the news of the favorable Russian response reached him in May 1772, after he had already been expelled from Egypt by his adversary, Abu al-Dhahab.⁶

In January 1772, Abu al-Dhahab, discovering that 'Ali Bey had plotted to kill him, fled from Cairo to Upper Egypt, where he managed to rally around him all the exiled malcontented Mamluks. He also managed to win to his side the Hawwarah tribe, who were the strongest one in Upper Egypt and whose chief Humam had been badly defeated and wounded by 'Ali Bey at the beginning of the latter's rise to power. In February of the same year, 'Ali Bey dispatched an expedition under the command of Isma'il Bey who had been instrumental in Abu al-Dhahab's withdrawal from Syria to subdue the latter and his followers. It was poor judgement and an unfortunate choice, for Isma'il Bey joined arms with Abu al-Dhahab against their *ustadh*, 'Ali Bey. In desperation, 'Ali Bey appointed seven new *beys*, thus hoping to augment his position; but to his disappointment the new beys did not enjoy the respect of the people of Cairo, who nicknamed them *al-sab' banat* (the seven girls).⁷

Finally, 'Ali Bey resolved to settle his accounts with Abu al-Dhahab. In April 1772 he left Cairo for al-Gizah and dispatched an unsuccessful expedition under the command of 'Ali Bey al-Tantawi

against Abu al-Dhahab. Frustrated by his inability to stop Abu al-Dhahab's advance towards Cairo, 'Ali Bey returned at nightfall to Cairo, where he loaded up his belongings and treasures and, on 28 April 1772 (25 Muharram, A.H. 1186), fled to Syria where his only ally, Shaykh Zahir, maintained his supremacy in Palestine.⁸ It was reported by al-Sabbagh and al-Jabarti that his flight to 'Akka was suggested by Zahir's son, 'Uthman, who was at that time in exile at 'Ali Bey's court in Cairo. He hoped that he would regain his position in Egypt through joint efforts with Zahir.⁹

On 29 April 1772, Abu al-Dhahab entered Cairo and assumed the position of his master 'Ali Bey, killed 'Abd Allah, the pasha's deputy, and abrogated the coinage struck by 'Ali Bey. He also conveyed the news of his victory and the expulsion of 'Ali Bey to Istanbul and announced his obedience and loyalty to the sultan.¹⁰ Furthermore, the next year he received Khalil Pasha, the new governor appointed by the sultan, and resumed dispatching the fixed annual payment that had been discontinued by 'Ali Bey. It is important to note here that Abu al-Dhahab had admitted in his dispatch to the Porte that he was in collusion with 'Uthman Pasha of Damascus and the commander-in-chief against 'Ali Bey.¹¹

With a company of about 800–1,500 soldiers, 'Ali Bey started from Cairo for Syria.¹² In less than a week, 'Ali Bey crossed the Sinai desert and reached the vicinity of Gaza, where local Bedouins harassed his retinue and pillaged some of his personal effects. He arrived at Gaza on 7 May 1772, but apprehensive of attacks from Ottoman troops, he continued to 'Akka. On 12 May, the news of 'Ali Bey's arrival at Gaza reached Shaykh Zahir, who immediately hurried to his aid; they met on 15 May. Although 'Ali Bey's flight to 'Akka increased Shaykh Zahir's burden, the latter received him warmly and pledged support to restore his rule in Egypt.¹³ Shortly after his arrival, 'Ali Bey became ill, but recovered after three weeks.¹⁴

Around this time, Shaykh Zahir lost Gaza and Yaffa. Abu Maraq, a former governor of Gaza, captured the city and was confirmed by the pasha of Damascus as its governor. He met no resistance because he drew on the support of the al-Wuhaydat tribe. This tribe held old grudges against 'Ali Bey, who had killed their chief Salit in November 1770.¹⁵ Likewise, Mustafa Bey Tuqan, who was recently appointed by Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm as

governor of Nablus, seized Yaffa, which had been under Zahir's control since the withdrawal of Abu al-Dhahab in June 1771.¹⁶

Meanwhile, a large number of Ottoman troops moved into Damascus where the new commander-in-chief, 'Uthman Pasha al-Wakil, made his headquarters. Deli Khalil Pasha, governor of Urfa, had arrived in Damascus with fresh troops, and the sultan promised the commander-in-chief more troops by sea. Then the Druzes under the command of Amir Yusuf allied themselves with the sultan and marched along with Khalil Pasha to attack Zahir's forces in Sayda, which he occupied in October 1771.¹⁷

Fortunately for Zahir, a Russian flotilla of about 15 vessels under the command of General-Adjutant Rizo arrived at Haifa in response to 'Ali Bey's request in December 1771 for support against Abu al-Dhahab and the sultan. The Russian vessels sailed to Damietta but found that 'Ali Bey had been defeated, and so they followed him to 'Akka. 'Ali Bey and Zahir were fortunate that the Russian arrival was timely, because the joint Ottoman forces and the Druzes had begun marching towards Sayda.¹⁸

However, even with the support of the Russian ships, the odds were against Zahir; his forces numbered about 6,000 men, while his enemies commanded about 30,000 soldiers and a number of Ottoman vessels on the coast of Beirut.

The presence of the Ottoman forces in Damascus and the arrival of the new commander-in-chief encouraged Amir Yusuf Shihab to recapture Sayda from the Matwalis and Zahir. He accordingly persuaded the Sar'askar in Damascus to move against Sayda, which he did in 1772. The Ottoman and the Druze forces placed Sayda under siege, and the besieged forces of Zahir under the command of Ahmad Agha al-Dinkizli contemplated surrender.¹⁹

At this juncture, the Russian ships arrived at Haifa. Zahir and 'Ali Bey requested the Russians to sail towards Beirut and bombard the town. Zahir's tactic of bombarding Beirut was to divert the Druzes from fighting him in Sayda. Meanwhile, Zahir himself led an army of 7,000 men consisting of his own troops, those of 'Ali Bey, and the Matwalis to relieve his besieged forces in Sayda. On 10 June 1772, when the news of Zahir's advance reached the Ottoman army and their Druze allies, they raised their siege of Sayda and retreated north of the town to the plain of al-Ghaziyah to await Zahir's forces. The decisive battle took place on 11 June,

when the Ottoman troops were badly defeated and those of the Druzes routed.²⁰ Some sources blamed the defeat on the Druzes for not holding to their positions to protect the rear of the Turkish troops; others attributed the defeat to the disorganization of the Ottoman cavalry vis-à-vis the highly trained and organized forces of Zahir and his allies.²¹

The role played by the Russian ships in this battle is uncertain. The two al-Sabbagh chroniclers mentioned nothing of the Russian participation, while the Lebanese chroniclers, Shidyah and Shihab, claimed that Russian guns forced the besieging forces to raise the siege and leave the town.²² Volney subscribes to the idea of the Russian involvement.²³ The fact that the Russian ships arrived at Haifa in the beginning of June and reached Beirut on 18 June suggests that they left for Beirut only after the victory of Zahir and his allies over the Ottoman forces.

Zahir immediately asked General-Adjutant Rizo to bombard Beirut in order to punish the Druzes for their participation in the Ottoman assault on Sayda, and to deter them from another attempt to conquer the town. He wished to drive away the Ottoman vessels from Beirut and to deprive the land forces of their support. Beirut was the only port left for the Druzes, and Zahir might have wanted to deprive them of it and force them to seek his friendship rather than support his enemy—the Ottomans.

On 18 June 1772, the Russian squadron began to bombard the town. On the morning of 23 June, the Russian marines landed, burning 300 homes, destroying a few towers, and sacking the town. Faced with a desperate situation, Amir Yusuf asked his uncle, Amir Mansur, who was on good terms with Zahir, to appeal to the latter to request the Russians to withdraw from Beirut. He also offered to pay the Russian squadron approximately 25,000 piasters as the expenses of their expedition.²⁴ Zahir accepted Amir Mansur's appeal and conveyed it to Commodore Rizo, who in turn complied with Zahir's request. After receiving the full payment, he sailed to 'Akka on 28 June, and from there to Cyprus.²⁵

Meanwhile, fearing that Zahir might pursue his victory by occupying Beirut, Amir Yusuf appealed to the Ottoman commander in Damascus to help him reinforce the defenses of Beirut. Immediately 'Uthman Pasha al-Wakil appointed Ahmad Bey al-Jazzar as *muhafiz* (a garrison commander) of Beirut and dispatched him with a force of Maghrebis.²⁶

It was believed by contemporary observers that both the commander-in-chief and the pasha of Damascus did not make an effective effort against Zahir and his ally 'Ali Bey because they lacked adequate forces and money. Therefore, Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm tried once more to negotiate with Zahir and by so doing to break up his alliance with 'Ali Bey. He failed. Shaykh Zahir still hoped that 'Ali Bey would re-conquer Egypt and thus help him regain dominance in Greater Syria.²⁷

A four-month truce between the Ottoman and Russian empires had been arranged on 20 May 1772, but the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean continued to interfere with the French, English, and Ottoman commercial ships.²⁸ The Porte had arranged for the truce with Russia and dispatched a naval force to the Syrian coast in preparation for a showdown with Zahir and 'Ali Bey. But the presence of some elements of the Russian fleet in the port of 'Akka helped to foil the Ottoman plan.²⁹ In addition, the truce was of too short a duration to permit the Porte to crush Zahir.

In June 1772, the French consul in Sayda called for French government intervention to establish peace after nearly two years of warfare along the Syrian coast—which made communications inland insecure—and to provide protection from pirates operating in the area in order to protect the profitable trade in the Levant. This was to be done for the declared purpose of reestablishing peace, tranquility, and political stability. The consul, de Taules, wrote to the Secretary of State for the Navy:

If the King wishes to help the Sultan to establish peace in Syria he has only to send two frigates, under some pretext, with support of a Turkish army on land. This small squadron could win Sidon and 'Akka, after which the rest of the country will submit.³⁰

The consul then suggested that the French nationals be evacuated from 'Akka and all debts due to them paid. Moreover, he suggested that reparations for insults and injury should be demanded from the concerned shaykhs. The consul added:

Since Zahir will refuse this, we will put into execution the plan agreed with the Porte, while seeming only to be punishing Zahir for his snub to the French King The plan would

show our usefulness to the Porte and restore our prestige in the Levant.

De Taules felt, however, that his plans would not work while 'Ali Bey, Zahir's ally, was in power in Egypt, because 'Ali Bey would certainly seek revenge against the French merchants there. But when 'Ali Bey took refuge with Zahir, the French believed both could be crushed together, with no threat to any French merchants.

The French Minister of the Navy rejected the plan, although he agreed that the French subjects could leave 'Akka and Sayda if they were endangered. He also approved sending a frigate in case they needed protection or help in an evacuation. The consul's plan was not adopted—primarily because the French government knew that “the Porte preferred to have dissident subjects rather than submit to intervention by a strong, Christian, foreign power” and that Istanbul realized that it would not be difficult to crush local rebels after the settlement of the Russo-Ottoman war. It is worthwhile noting that Consul de Taules' plan was the first time in modern history that a French military intervention in Syria and the Arab East was ever seriously discussed.

Although the sultan's plans to destroy Zahir and 'Ali Bey had not been successful in the past, more ambitious goals were in the planning. Thus, the Porte replaced Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm in Damascus with a former military commander, Mustafa Pasha, an appointment that indicated the sultan's determination to liquidate Zahir. The new governor entered Damascus with about 6,000 troops. This demonstration of force probably was intended to impress the people and frighten Zahir and 'Ali Bey.³¹ Much to the disappointment of the sultan, Mustafa Pasha did nothing to subdue Shaykh Zahir and 'Ali Bey during his year in office. Furthermore, he failed to collect the *miri* required for the pilgrimage from the province of Sayda, whose *de facto* governor was Zahir. Instead, he relied on the French consul in Sayda. This incident suggests that Mustafa Pasha was not strong enough to assert his authority over his territories.³²

During this interregnum, Zahir returned to 'Akka, leaving Ahmad Agha al-Dinkizli in charge of Sayda. In 'Akka, he found 'Ali Bey's patience at an end. 'Ali Bey ordered Hasan Bey, the Mamluk co-governor of Sayda, to leave the city and march against Abu al-

Dhahab in Egypt. He asked for Zahir's support and wrote to Count Orlov requesting military help, to which Shaykh Zahir showed every sign of cooperation.³³

To carry out his campaign successfully, 'Ali Bey had to resolve some strategic problems. The land route to Egypt was not secure because Mustafa Bey Tuqan of Nablus had seized Yaffa from Zahir. Also, Gaza had been recaptured from the Mamluk forces by its former governor, Abu Maraq.³⁴ In July 1772, Zahir and 'Ali Bey nevertheless dispatched two ships loaded with provisions and munitions to Yaffa, in addition to sending troops from 'Akka by land. As soon as the supplies and soldiers arrived, 'Ali Bey demanded that the garrison of Yaffa surrender, but they refused. Consequently, his troops laid an unsuccessful siege to the town and suffered heavy losses.³⁵

Although 'Ali Bey's forces surrounded Yaffa, the garrison had opened a sea route by which it received assistance from Egypt. 'Ali Bey then decided to direct his efforts towards more hostile threats on his line of communications to Egypt. He dispatched a strong force composed of Mamluks and Zahir's troops to attack Gaza, which they conquered in about a fortnight. He also asserted his authority in Ramlah and Lydda.³⁶

The Mamluk-Zahir forces continued their siege of Yaffa, but without any success. 'Ali Bey attempted another assault against Yaffa, but his troops were again repulsed. In September, a Russian boat arrived near Yaffa to take 'Ali Bey's messenger to Count Orlov. The Russian leader's "many promises of speedy assistance," as 'Ali Bey's companion Lusignan reported, "were never fulfilled."³⁷ But Orlov's hands were tied by the four-month truce that had been concluded between Russia and Turkey, and he explicitly informed 'Ali Bey that he could not send any immediate assistance. After examining his positions, two Russian officers had an audience with 'Ali Bey and Shaykh Zahir. They also took part in bombarding the town, during which one of them was killed. Extremely aggravated, 'Ali Bey asked Captain Brown, a British officer with the Russian fleet, to lend him three guns, which he did.

In October, the Russian boat then sailed from Yaffa with a messenger carrying a letter from 'Ali Bey to Count Orlov, asking for Russian assistance. In December, a Russian squadron appeared in the waters off 'Akka, which raised the hopes of Shaykh Zahir and 'Ali Bey. Shaykh Zahir, who was then at 'Akka, requested the

Russians to proceed to Yaffa. The Russian squadron then delivered munitions to the besieging army, along with Count Orlov's reply to 'Ali Bey's letter of the previous October, in which the Russian Admiral replied with "compliments and assurances of friendship and assistance against the common enemy."³⁸ A French report from Sayda stated that the Russians landed 150 men at Yaffa, of which only fifty escaped death. The others were cut to pieces by the besieged garrison, who defended themselves with great courage. Disheartened by this failure, the Russians returned to 'Akka for more supplies and then left for Paros, but discontinued operations because there were no clear-cut orders to take part in the battle.³⁹

Finally, in January 1773, Shaykh Zahir decided to complete the siege of Yaffa by blocking the arrival of any supplies by sea to the besieged garrison. He was successful and the besieged troops were forced to surrender on 16 February 1773 due to a shortage of food and munitions. Shaykh Karim al-Ayyub was appointed governor of Yaffa in the name of Shaykh Zahir.⁴⁰

With the capitulation of Yaffa and the recapture of Gaza, the line of communication with Egypt was safe for 'Ali Bey's forces. He informed Zahir of his intention to do so, and Shaykh Zahir promised him his assistance, but urged him to wait for the Russian sea forces requested from Count Orlov. In March 1773, Count Orlov did dispatch another ship with fresh promises of assistance to 'Ali Bey. Although he was desperate for more substantial help from the Russians, 'Ali Bey decided not to wait for them and proceeded with his plan to re-conquer Egypt by himself. 'Ali Bey was encouraged by letters he received from certain Mamluks of Abu al-Dhahab who pledged full support to his cause, urging him to return to Cairo. Zahir was of the opinion that the letters were spurious and advised 'Ali Bey against the expedition. Nevertheless, 'Ali Bey started for Egypt in the first week of March 1773. His expedition of about 6,000 men was composed of his Mamluks and a sizable force of Zahir's troops. The campaign began in Yaffa, passing through al-Lid, Ramlah, Isdud, Gaza, and Khan-Yunus; Shaykh Zahir himself accompanied the forces until it arrived in Gaza. The inhabitants of all these districts were ordered to contribute to the expedition along the way. In addition, provisions and munitions were transported by sea from Yaffa to Khan-Yunus, which the troops reached by the first week in April.⁴¹

After a short halt at the edge of Sinai, 'Ali Bey advanced towards Cairo. In late April, 1773, he arrived at al-Salihyah, the first post in the delta on the main route from Gaza to Cairo.⁴² To his dismay, he found that this small town had a garrison of more than 11,000 Mamluks. It seems that Abu al-Dhahab indeed had forged the letters to lure 'Ali Bey back to Egypt, and he was accordingly in full readiness to meet 'Ali Bey with an overwhelming force. The battle of al-Salihyah lasted four hours, at the conclusion of which 'Ali Bey put Abu al-Dhahab's forces to flight.

After his defeat, Abu al-Dhahab decided to play politics. He assembled the grandees and the influential people of Cairo and urged them to defend their religion, property, and themselves against 'Ali Bey and his allies, the Russian "infidels." In a dramatic speech⁴³ to his audience, he appealed to their religious sentiments, and pledged to fight valiantly if accepted as their commander. They consented, and in less than a week he recruited about 24,000 men. He then left Cairo to meet 'Ali Bey at al-Salihyah on 28 April 1773. Although 'Ali Bey's forces were vastly outnumbered by those of Abu al-Dhahab, they were organized and disciplined, and so were quite successful at first. After 'Ali Bey's infantry deserted to Abu al-Dhahab, the course of the battle was reversed. 'Ali Bey's troops suffered heavy losses, and he himself was severely wounded and captured. His Mamluk, Tantawi Bey, and Zahir's oldest son Salibi, were killed. Being distressed with such crushing defeat, he ordered that all those who could save their lives should do so. Karim, al-Ayyub, Zahir's son-in-law and 'Ali Bey's chronicler, Lusignan, survived, and communicated the saddening news to Shaykh Zahir. 'Ali Bey was then taken to Cairo for treatment. A week after his arrival, on 8 May 1773 (15 Safar, 1187), he died of his wounds and was buried in Cairo.⁴⁴

Zahir immediately realized the seriousness of the loss of his ally 'Ali Bey. Now apprehensive of attacks by the Porte from the north and Abu al-Dhahab from the south, Zahir reorganized his troops, stationed a garrison in Gaza, and left for Yaffa. He also reinforced all the towns he and 'Ali Bey had previously occupied. Zahir reinstated Karim al-Ayyub as governor of Yaffa and appointed his minister's son Yusuf al-Sabbagh as his deputy. He then departed for his capital, 'Akka. He reinforced its walls, defenses, and consolidated its garrison and other towns within its vicinity.⁴⁵

NOTES

1. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 20 August 1771; Constantine Volney, *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie*, Vol. I, p. 126. Volney says, "ils merchèrent avec tant de précipitation, que le bruit de leur arrivée ne les précéda au Kaire que de six heures." Cf. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 368, who dates their arrival in Cairo in November 1771, and P. M. Holt, "The 'Cloud-Catcher': 'Ali Bey the Great of Egypt," *History Today*, Vol. IX (1959), p. 57, who gives October or November as the date of their return to Cairo.

2. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān fi 'Abd al-'Umara' al-Shihābīyin*, Vol. I, pp. 88–89; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Ḍāhir al-'Umar*, f. 30a; PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 17 September 1771.

3. PRO, S. P. 97/47, Istanbul, 17 September 1771; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 13 July 1771,

4. *Supra*. (see Chapter V).

5. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 368.

6. W. Persen, "The Russian. Occupations of Beirut, 1772–74," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. LXII (1955), p. 279; Auriant, "Catherine II et l'Orient, 1770–1774," *L'Acropole*, Vol. V (1930), pp. 209–210; S. Lusignan, *A History of the Revolt of Ali Bey against the Ottoman Porte* (London: James Phillips and George-Yard, 1783), pp. 105–107.

7. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, pp. 368–69; Holt, "The Cloud Catcher," *History Today*, Vol. IX (1959), p. 58; Lusignan, *The Revolt of Ali Bey*, p. 117.

8. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 374; PRO, S. P., 97/48, Istanbul, 3 July 1772; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Ḍāhir*, ff. 31a–31b; Lusignan, *The Revolt of Ali Bey*, p. 117.

9. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Ḍāhir*, f. 31a; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 30 April 1772 (Bulletin); PRO, S. P. 97/48, Istanbul, 3 June, 3 July 1772.

10. al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, pp. 374, 423; PRO, S. P. 97/48, Istanbul, 3 July 1772.

11. PRO, S. P. 97/48, Istanbul, 3 June 1772.

12. Lusignan, *The Revolt of Ali Bey*, pp. 118–119; C. Savary, *Letters on Egypt*, 3rd ed. (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1799), Vol. II, p. 149; Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. I, p. 129; PRO, S. P. 97/48, Istanbul, 3 July 1772.

13. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Ḍāhir*, f. 31b; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Ḍāhir fi tārikh Ḍāhir*, ff. 21b–22a.

14. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Ḍāhir*, f. 31b.

15. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 21 May 1772 (a bulletin from Ramlah, May 13, 1772). For the earlier operations; see al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 354.
16. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 2 June 1772 (Ramlah 22 May 1772, a bulletin); B. al-Bustānī, “al-Shaykh Zāhir al-‘Umar al-Zaydanī,” *Dā’irat al-Ma’arif*, Vol. XI, p. 406; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 23b.
17. ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā’ib al-Badā’i*, f. 99b; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, I, p. 90; PRO, S. P. 97/48, Istanbul, 3 July 1772; Mariti, *Travels*, V. I, pp. 201–302.
18. Persen, “The Russian Occupations of Beirut,” *JRCAS*, Vol. XLII (1955), p. 279; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff 22a–22b. A. al-Ṣabbāgh states that there were only four Russian ships. Lusignan, *The Revolt of Alī Bey*, pp. 121–23, gives the same information but with different dates.
19. A.E.B¹, 92, Aleppo, 10 July 1772 (Tripoli, 27 June 1772); A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 22b; Mariti, *Travels*, V. I, p. 302.
20. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 93.; al-Shidyāq, *Akhhār al-A’yān fī Jabal Lubnan*, Vol. II, pp. 44–45; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, (f. 22b); F. Charles-Roux, *Les Échelles de Syrie et de Palestine du XVIII^e Siècle*, p. 100; A.E.B¹, 92, Aleppo, 17 July 1772; PRO, S. P. 97/48, Istanbul, 3 August 1772.
21. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 93; al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf* in *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XLIX (1955), p. 266; Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. II, pp. 242–43.
22. al-Shidyāq, *Akhhār al-A’yān*, Vol. II, pp. 44–45; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 93.
23. Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. I, p. 243.
24. al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf*, in *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XLIX (1955), pp. 266–67; Persen, “The Russian Occupations of Beirut,” *JRCAS*, XLII (1955), p. 280.
25. al-Bustānī, “al-Shaykh Zāhir al-‘Umar,” *Dā’irat al-Ma’arif*, Vol. XI, p. 406; R. C. Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Levant*, p. 298.
26. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, (f. 23a); al-Munayyir, *al-Mashriq*, XLIX (1955), pp. 266–67; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 96–97.
27. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 16 August 1772.
28. Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Levant*, p. 298; PRO, S. P. 97/48, Istanbul, 3 August, 3, 17 September, 3 October and 17 November 1772.
29. Auriant, “Catherine II,” *L’Acropole*, V (1930), p. 218; Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Levant*, p. 298; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 3 December 1772.
30. Charles-Roux, *Les Échelles*, pp. 101–103; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 28 June 1772.

31. A.E.B¹, 92, Aleppo, 23 October 1772; A.E.B¹ 1036, Sidon, 24 April 1773 (Bulletin).

32. A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 3 December 1772 (Bulletin).

33. Ibid., 30 July 1772; Lusignan, *The Revolt of 'Ali Bey*, pp. 122, 124–125; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārīkh Zāhir*, f. 32a; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 23a.

34. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 23b.

35. Lusignan, *The Revolt of 'Ali Bey*, pp. 126–28; A.E.B¹, 92, Aleppo, 3 September 1772. It is important to note here that S. Lusignan had accompanied 'Alī Bey in his flight from Egypt and was at his camp near Yaffa.

36. Ibid., pp. 126–28.

37. Ibid., pp. 130–31; Persen, “The Russian Occupations of Beirut,” *JRCAS*, Vol. XLII (1955), p. 281.

38. Lusignan, *The Revolt of 'Ali Bey*, p. 135; Auriant, “Catherine II,” *L'Acropole*, V (1930), 218; Charles-Roux, *Les Échelles*, p. 104; A.E.B¹, Aleppo, 24 December 1772; Savary, *Letters on Egypt*, Vol. II, 152–53.

39. Lusignan, *The Revolt of 'Ali Bey*, p. 135; A.E.B¹, 92, Aleppo, 24 December 1772 (Tripoli, 16 December 1772). See also Iḥsān al-Nimr, *Tārīkh Jabal Nablus wa-al-Balqa'* (Damascus, 1938), pp. 145–46. The last source claims that the garrison and seamen of Yaffa killed, drowned, and captured a few of the Russian marines, who in turn were transferred to Nablus. This action aggravated Zāhir and prompted him to attack Nablus and take control of all its territories.

40. Charles-Roux, *Les Échelles*, p. 104; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 23b; A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 19 March 1773 (Bulletin); Auriant, “Catherine II,” *L'Acropole*, n.d., V (1930), p. 219; Holt, “The Cloud Catcher,” *History Today*, IX (1959), p. 58; al-Bustānī, “al-Shaykh Zāhir al-'Umar,” *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif*, XI, p. 406; Savary, *Letters on Egypt*, II, pp. 154–155.

41. Lusignan, *The Revolt of 'Ali Bey*, p. 142–44; Savary, *Letters on Egypt*, II, pp. 156–57. Ramaḍan, *'Ali Bey al-Kabir*, pp. 191–93; cf. Charles-Roux, *Les Échelles*, p. 105, where he claims that 'Alī Bey left Yaffa in April 1773.

42. al-Ṣālihiyāh is about 14 miles southwest of Damietta. Lusignan (p. 145) claims that 'Alī Bey's expedition arrived at al-Ṣālihiyāh three days after their departure from Gaza. Hence, he dates the battle on 11 April, which neither al-Jabartī nor the French consular reports corroborate. It is not possible that he had crossed the Sinai desert (150 miles) in three days. For details on the battle, see: al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-athār*, I, pp. 379–80; Savary, *Letters on Egypt*, pp. 157–59; Lusignan, *The Revolt of 'Ali Bey*,

pp. 145–52; PRO, S.P. 97/49, Istanbul, 3, 17 June 1773; A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 22 April 1773 (Gaza, 20 April 1773, Bulletin), 14 June 1773, Ramadan, *‘Ali Bey al-Kabir*, pp. 194–97.

43. Lusignan, *The Revolt of ‘Ali Bey*, pp. 146–147.

44. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 24b–25a; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārīkh Zābir*, ff. 34a–34b; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 108–9; al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf*, Vol. XLIX (.1955), pp. 267–68; Lusignan, *The Revolt*, pp. 152–54; al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-athār*, I, pp. 380, 387; Charles-Roux, *Les Écheltes*, p. 105.

45. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 25a; Lusignan, *The Revolt of ‘Ali Bey*, p. 151.

CHAPTER VII: THE END OF ZAHIR

Notwithstanding the potential effects of 'Ali Bey's death on Shaykh Zahir, his position in Syria was precarious; undoubtedly it had heightened his anxiety and put him on alert. There was no indication of any pending threat from Damascus, because neither its governor Mustafa Pasha, nor the military commander, 'Uthman Pasha al-Wakil, showed any interest in attacking Zahir, nor were they strong enough to exploit the situation occasioned by the death of 'Ali Bey.

The major change in the balance of power was in Mount Lebanon. As a consequence of Zahir's occupation of Sayda and the Russian bombardment and brief landing at Beirut, both in June 1772, Amir Yusuf appealed to Damascus to help him protect the city against Zahir and the Russians. The commander-in-chief in Damascus immediately dispatched a force led by al-Jazzar to counteract the attacking forces. He began fortifying Beirut and started acting independently of Amir Yusuf, defying his orders to vacate the city.

Yusuf again appealed to the commander-in-chief in Damascus to help him against al-Jazzar. His appeals went unheeded because it was in the interest of Damascus to have control of Beirut. First, it was important as a major port, since Sayda and 'Akka were under Zahir's control; second, it was useful for future military operations against Zahir. These developments prompted Amir Yusuf to reconcile his differences with his uncle Amir Mansur to pave the way for concluding peace with Shaykh Zahir.¹

Due to the death of 'Ali Bey and the loss of Egypt to Abu al-Dhahab, Zahir was left surrounded by enemies, and thus welcomed the Druzes' overture for peace. He eventually met with Amir Yusuf near Sayda, where they agreed to form an alliance. This precipitated a punitive campaign by Damascus against the Druzes. Zahir

immediately dispatched a sizable force commanded by his confident son 'Ali and Shaykh Nasif. As soon as 'Uthman Pasha learned of the approaching troops, he retreated to Damascus on 30 September 1773 (13 Rajab 1187).

Zahir's success in repelling 'Uthman's attack helped to alleviate Yusuf's fear and encouraged him to seek Zahir's support in his struggle against al-Jazzar, who had already controlled Beirut and defied Yusuf's authority. In June 1773, the long-awaited Russian assistance to support 'Ali Bey's re-conquest of Egypt finally arrived at 'Akka, only to find him already dead.²

The Russian force under the command of Kozhuchov was made up of sixteen different vessels with 222 cannon and 1,200 Albanian mercenaries equipped with artillery. Kozhuchov decided to return to his base in the Aegean Sea upon learning of 'Ali Bey's death, but Shaykh Zahir persuaded him to change his plans. Zahir argued that his alliance with 'Ali Bey entitled him to receive the Russians' support. He requested that the Russian commander sail for Beirut to help the alliance's land forces deliver Beirut from al-Jazzar, who had proclaimed his allegiance to the sultan. Zahir promised the Russian squadron that Amir Yusuf would pay them in return the sum of 600 purses (300,000 piasters).

Accordingly, the Russian ships sailed for Beirut and began shelling on 2 August, while the Druzes besieged Beirut from the land. Arab and French sources state that the bombardment was so heavy that it could be heard from as far as Damascus and Sayda. In addition, the shelling of Beirut, not only by a Christian power but also by the archenemy of the sultan, incited the Damascenes to protest the irresponsible attitude of the governor and commander-in-chief, who were idle in their city.³ The protest culminated in an uprising in the middle of August, when the sultan deposed Mustafa Pasha and replaced him with the previous governor, Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm, who arrived in Damascus two months later.⁴

In spite of the heavy barrage by the Russian artillery, al-Jazzar refused to surrender. Consequently, the Russian commander landed some batteries on the eastern side of Beirut and resumed his continuous shelling from land and sea. Thus, Beirut was completely cut off and faced starvation. This situation continued for four months, which forced al-Jazzar to surrender to Shaykh Zahir because he feared that otherwise he would be killed by Amir Yusuf. He offered his services to Zahir in 'Akka if he and his garrison

would be spared. Zahir agreed to receive al-Jazzar and protect him from the Druzes and the Russians. Al-Jazzar obtained an *aman* (guarantee of safety) for himself and his troops, and marched with Shaykh Zahir's envoy to 'Akka.⁵

A few days after al-Jazzar arrived in 'Akka, Shaykh Zahir dispatched him to Karim al-Ayyub, governor of Yaffa, along with mules, horses and munitions, charging him with collecting the *miri* from the regions between Yaffa and Jerusalem. Instead, al-Jazzar went to try to meet Ibrahim Pasha, governor of Jerusalem, who denied him entry into the city because he suspected ill intentions from Zahir. Al-Jazzar then left for Damascus, where he was halfheartedly welcomed by 'Uthman Pasha, the Sar'askar, who had previously promised to recommend him for the rank of pasha if he would not join Zahir's forces. Shortly afterwards, al-Jazzar proceeded to Istanbul.⁶ Failing to destroy Zahir or to contain his growing power, 'Uthman Pasha began negotiations with Zahir, by urging him to confirm his obedience to the sultan. 'Uthman Pasha al-Wakil told Zahir that since 'Uthman Pasha al-Kurji, who was the principal cause for his defiance of the sultan, had been deposed, he should not have any objection to the proposal. The military commander also promised Zahir that he would comply with all his requests, provided that Zahir would pay in full all the arrears in the *miri* from the previous years.⁷ Zahir assured the pasha that he wished to renew his allegiance to the sultan and to obtain the sultan's pardon. He also agreed that 'Uthman Pasha al-Kurji was the major cause that had led him to revolt against the sultan. Finally, Zahir agreed to remit the arrears in full.⁸

It is very important to note here Shaykh Zahir's attitude, which differed from that in 1772. At that time 'Uthman Pasha al-Wakil was appointed as Sar'askar; upon his arrival at Damascus, he informed Zahir of his new position, asking to send provisions needed for his troops. Zahir, with regrets, could not agree, because the country had been plundered by 'Uthman Pasha al-Kurji and Abu al-Dhahab. Zahir added that, due to the fighting in the previous year, the countryside was devastated and many farmers had deserted their villages, thus forcing him to import his provisions from Cyprus.

Although Zahir's reply might have been true, his refusal also suggests that he was sufficiently strong, and therefore had no need to improve his relations with the sultan's representative in

Damascus. In sum, while Zahir could afford to snub the military commander in 1772, he welcomed his overture for peace in 1773.

Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab, who had ousted 'Ali Bey from Egypt and eventually defeated him in 1773, dispatched an envoy to Zahir in August 1773, requesting to return 'Ali Bey's effects which he had left at 'Akka. Furthermore, Abu al-Dhahab demanded that Zahir quit Gaza, Ramlah, Yaffa, and Nablus—towns the sultan had granted him. In the meantime, four sons of Zahir (Ahmad, Sa'id, 'Ali, and 'Uthman) revived their demands for more authority and expressed their dissatisfaction with Ibrahim al-Sabbagh's economic and administrative policies.⁹ These developments prompted Zahir to change his attitude towards the Porte. It also was in the interests of the Porte and 'Uthman Pasha to come to terms, at least temporarily, with Shaykh Zahir, because they had failed to subdue him by force.

The initiative, taken by Sar'askar 'Uthman al-Kurji toward Zahir, was most likely with the consent of the Porte. Istanbul and Damascus both realized that it was quite difficult to subdue Zahir by force. Hence, they preferred to pursue a policy of appeasement with him. The Sultan entrusted the Sar'askar with the mission. He played the main role in conducting the negotiations with Zahir, who also was anxious to achieve his ambitions through a peaceful settlement with Istanbul. After a long, bumpy road of negotiations, they reached common ground. Yet to Zahir's misfortune, certain political developments prevented the implementation of the agreement.¹⁰

Upon receiving Zahir's favorable reply, 'Uthman Pasha al-Wakil submitted the positive results of his negotiations with Zahir to the sultan. Shortly afterwards, on 24 December 1773, Sultan Mustafa III died, and was succeeded by Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid I. Since such occasions usually entailed administrative changes, Zahir feared that his agreement with 'Uthman Pasha might be affected, for the latter risked removal. Zahir, therefore, began preparing for war. But none of his apprehensions materialized.¹¹

In February 1774, 'Uthman Pasha al-Wakil, in an official letter, promised Zahir to ask the Porte to grant him the province of Sayda as a *malikanah* (lifetime appointment) on condition that Zahir would pay 1,000 purses, the balance due from the *miri* of that province, and thereafter 450 purses, annually. Besides, Zahir was

supposed to provide the usual services of the *jardab* because it was the responsibility of the *wali* of Sayda.¹²

In accordance with the official letter, the sultan granted Zahir amnesty and pardon if he demonstrated his obedience and tried to collect the *miri* due in the past and the future. Zahir, however, was guaranteed his territories only as long as he maintained his obedience and allegiance to the sultan (see Appendix IV).

Thus, the Porte recognized Zahir's hegemony over all the territories he acquired: 'Akka, Sayda, Haifa, Yaffa, Ramlah, Nablus, Safad, and 'Ajloun. Zahir also had a certain degree of control over the Matwalis's country.¹³ But it was a short-lived agreement; the Ottoman government never kept its promises to Zahir or to any other "rebel." They always intended to gain time until the proper opportunity arose to eliminate such "rebels."

In March 1773, 'Uthman Pasha al-Wakil was appointed governor of Aleppo but remained in Damascus and sent a *mutasallim* to that city. Finally, in July 1774, he was relieved of his position as commander-in-chief in Syria and left Damascus. Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm was named governor of Damascus but not military commander; he only assumed the latter position in 1775.¹⁴ These changes heightened Zahir's anxiety and put him on alert against any potential menace. But Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm proved to be a lesser threat than Zahir anticipated.

The new governor of Damascus, hoping to evade unnecessary clashes with Zahir, made quite good gestures to him. He complied with his demands of returning the livestock and equipment which al-Jazzar had ravished from Zahir and left behind in Damascus before departing for Istanbul. The pasha also confirmed Zahir's son 'Ahmad as ruler of Jabal 'Ajlun which he had occupied.¹⁵

Another important development took place in July 1774, namely, the conclusion of the treaty of *Küchük Kaynarca*, which ended the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–74. The engagement of the sultan in this war had bolstered the positions of both Zahir and 'Ali Bey in their revolts against the Ottoman authorities—central and provincial. Their alliance with 'Ali Bey and Zahir was one of expedience. Once the war with the Ottomans ended, the Russians were no longer interested in supporting Zahir against the Sultan because such a strategy would have endangered their relations with the Ottomans. The Russians breached that alliance unilaterally and

remained indifferent while watching the annihilation of their former allies.

Although Istanbul came out of the war weaker than before, the sultan was able to eliminate the “rebels” one after the other. After the liquidation of ‘Ali Bey in May 1773, the Porte turned its attention to the two autonomous rulers, Zahir al-‘Umar in Palestine and Abu al-Dhahab in Egypt. Eventually, the sultan eliminated both leaders by pitting one against the other.

Realizing that the sultan’s *firman* did not grant him his territories as *malikanah*, as he was promised by ‘Uthman Pasha al-Wakil, Zahir in November 1774 requested the sultan to confer on him Sayda, Yaffa, Ramlah, and Gaza as *malikanahs*.¹⁶ It is important to note here that a *malikanah* was granted for life, and thus Zahir would avoid being deposed or transferred to other provinces after a certain period. But in fact he never obtained the sultan’s approval. Instead, the Porte incited Abu al-Dhahab to invade Palestine in order to destroy Zahir, warning him that if he did not succeed, Zahir would eliminate him.¹⁷

Also, Zahir’s sons were dissatisfied with their father’s peace with the sultan, because it deprived them of their long-held ambitions to succeed him in his territories. Moreover, Zahir’s full support and complete confidence in his minister Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, whose relations with Zahir’s sons were always strained, aggravated their indignation. Consequently, they revolted against their father.¹⁸

‘Ali al-Zahir had always distinguished himself in the service of his father. He had won several battles on different fronts. His distinctive record undoubtedly must have inspired him to attempt to succeed his father as the chief shaykh of the Zaydanis, the governor of ‘Akka, the Galilee, and other territories. Zahir’s eldest son, Salibi, was killed in 1773 when he joined ‘Ali Bey’s campaign against Abu al-Dhahab. ‘Uthman al-Zahir was discredited by his father and the people, and therefore had little chance to succeed Zahir. Thus, ‘Ali’s only other potential rival claimant was his brother Ahmad.

‘Uthman allied himself with Shaykh Zahir’s old enemy—the Saqr tribe; ‘Ali reinforced his fortifications in Safad; and Ahmad and Sa‘id took control of the Nablus region and expanded their authority to include Irbid and other parts of Jabal ‘Ajlun east of the Jordan River. Although the last region was within the province of

Damascus, Muhammad Pasha al-‘Azm recognized Ahmad’s occupation; his attitude was probably motivated by a desire to deepen the differences in Zahir’s family.¹⁹

In the summer of 1774, ‘Ali pressed his demands on his father, who in turn rejected them. Accordingly, ‘Ali took up arms against his father, who, joined by his son Ahmad, attacked ‘Ali near the village of al-Ramah in the region of Safad on 11 July 1774. ‘Ali shot his brother Ahmad in the thigh with a pistol, forcing him to relinquish the command of the army to his father. Shaykh Zahir failed to defeat his son ‘Ali and was forced to flee with Ahmad to Dayr Hanna.²⁰

Abu al-Dhahab saw the internal strife in Zahir’s family as an excellent opportunity to exploit the power struggle. Abu al-Dhahab promised to appoint ‘Ali al-Zahir in his father’s place as the chief shaykh. ‘Ali accepted the offer.²¹ In March 1775 (Muharram, 1189), Abu al-Dhahab led an expedition of about 60,000 soldiers from Cairo towards Palestine. His first target was Gaza. Shaykh Zahir responded by ordering his son Sa‘id to march toward Gaza to assist Shaykh Karim al-Ayyub, governor of Yaffa, but ‘Ali dissuaded him and instead Sa‘id joined his brother ‘Ali. Consequently, Shaykh Karim decided to evacuate Gaza and fortify his defense lines near Yaffa.²²

After capturing Gaza, Abu al-Dhahab advanced along the coast, taking all its villages and towns, including al-Ramlah. The garrison of Yaffa under the command of Shaykh Karim resolved to defend the city. He reinforced the defenses and put up a strong resistance. Abu al-Dhahab laid siege to Yaffa for 48 days by land and sea. Being cut off from the rest of Zahir’s country, the garrison was faced with starvation and the depletion of their munitions. Besides, they despaired of receiving any relief forces from ‘Akka. Accordingly, some aghas of the Maghrebis decided to surrender to Abu al-Dhahab, and on the forty-ninth day of the siege the city capitulated.²³ The Mamluk army massacred the inhabitants and plundered the city.

The disaster of Yaffa was so dreadful that the prominent Egyptian historian, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, wrote the following in his biography of Abu al-Dhahab: “If it were not for his recent brutal slaughter of the inhabitants of Yaffa following his minister’s advice, his good deeds would have exceeded his bad deeds.”²⁴ If

Abu al-Dhahab's intention was to frighten his enemy in 'Akka in order to gain an easy victory, his tactics succeeded.

On 20 May 1775, the news of the fall of Yaffa reached 'Akka and caused general alarm throughout the town.²⁵ Shaykh Zahir tried ineffectually to reassure the people and rigorously forbade them to leave the town, but in vain. The notables, Muslims as well as Christians, went to Zahir's house and told him he must leave, since they themselves intended to do so. Zahir therefore yielded, and on 23 May the inhabitants fled to the countryside, followed by Shaykh Zahir, who went to Sayda.²⁶ Soon after, 'Ali al-Zahir entered 'Akka and proclaimed himself its governor. 'Ali then hastened to inform Abu al-Dhahab that he had ousted his father from 'Akka and had established himself there, where he was "awaiting submissively for orders" from the Mamluk Bey. The next day, the French of 'Akka wrote to Abu al-Dhahab asking for his protection.²⁷

The Mamluk Bey denied 'Ali's request to be governor of 'Akka, and ordered him to vacate the city immediately. 'Ali then took all the cannons, provisions, and other munitions and dispatched them to Dayr Hanna and Safad. He hastily abandoned 'Akka at ten o'clock on the following morning before the arrival of the Mamluk army. That same morning, a small Mamluk force of 60 men arrived by ship from Haifa and landed at 'Akka, followed by Abu al-Dhahab with his entire army. Murad Bey was then appointed as the Mamluk governor of 'Akka.

After his occupation of 'Akka, Abu al-Dhahab demanded that 'Ali al-Zahir meet him at his headquarters. Fearing that he might be killed, 'Ali refused the orders and left Safad. Subsequently, Abu al-Dhahab captured Safad, plundered the city, and destroyed some parts of the citadel. Likewise, he dispatched a small force by sea to conquer Sayda; they met no resistance, as Sayda's governor, Ahmad Agha al-Dinkizli, abandoned the town. Shaykh Zahir, who had taken refuge there, fled to the country of his allies, the Matwalis.

After Abu al-Dhahab arrived at 'Akka, several chiefs from the Matwalis and the adjacent regions went to his camp to pay homage and show their obedience to the Mamluk Bey. He also received presents and letters from Amir Yusuf, the prince of the Druzes, informing him of their homage and obedience. Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab then ordered that all the fortresses and castles around 'Akka be demolished.

Five days later, on 10 June 1775, Abu al-Dhahab died from a fever. His sudden death caused disorder among the Mamluk troops. However, their beys were joyful because they found in his death a possible respite from war and an opportunity to return to Egypt. By 11 June the entire Mamluk army had withdrawn from 'Akka, carrying with them their leader's corpse to be buried in Cairo lest his grave be desecrated by the inhabitants of 'Akka. On 24 June 1775 (24 Rabi', A.H. 1189), they arrived at Cairo and gave Abu al-Dhahab a great funeral procession and an honorable burial at a mosque that he had erected near al-Azhar.

Although the Porte had approved of Abu al-Dhahab's expedition against Zahir, his death was welcomed by Istanbul, Damascus, and the Syrian provinces because everyone feared his ruthlessness. Encouraged by his stunning victories against Zahir, the Mamluk Bey's ambitions had already surfaced. He had dispatched Isma'il Agha to Istanbul to request the governorship of Egypt and Syria, which the sultan granted him. However, the news of the sultan's *firman* appointing him governor of Egypt and Syria reached him shortly before his death, and he never enjoyed his new post.

On the other hand, the far-reaching plans of Abu al-Dhahab must have alarmed the sultan and reminded him of his predecessor 'Ali Bey. The sultan exploited Abu al-Dhahab's campaign against Shaykh Zahir as a Machiavellian stroke designed to exhaust the Mamluk Bey's resources and troops. By doing so, the sultan would face no serious resistance in liquidating both rebels; indeed, that is what happened.

On 11 June, the very day of the Mamluk withdrawal, all the *shaykhs* detained at Abu al-Dhahab's camp were set free. Among them was al-Dinkizli, the former governor of Sayda, who led some of his Maghrebis into 'Akka but was forced to leave after small skirmishes with other Maghrebi factions led by 'Abd Allah al-Wawi, who favored Zahir's son 'Ali.²⁸ The following day al-Dinkizli reentered 'Akka and was able to win over the different factions and become their commander. In the meantime, he wrote to Zahir in his refuge informing him of Abu al-Dhahab's death and the retreat of his army and requested Zahir's return to 'Akka before 'Ali took over the town. If 'Ali won control of 'Akka, al-Dinkizli would be killed,²⁹ and he needed Zahir's protection.

Zahir returned to 'Akka on 12 June 1775, but his entry was not an honorable one. The unruly Maghrebis did not show him due respect. They robbed him of all his belongings, even the ring that he used as a seal. However, with the help of al-Dinkizli, Zahir appeased the mutineers by giving them money derived from a loan that the French had made to him. Shortly afterwards, most of the Maghrebis were evicted from the town, and replaced by Zahir's cavalry, which re-established law and order.³⁰

Zahir, however, faced serious difficulties in re-establishing order, not to mention paramountcy, in 'Akka and the rest of his territories. For one thing, his son 'Ali resumed his power struggle with his father, a struggle that lasted until the sultan's fleet arrived in August 1775. The Mamluk governor of Sayda then informed Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm, governor of Damascus, and Yusuf Pasha al-'Azm, governor of Tripoli, that he had decided to leave Sayda and asked them to dispatch their troops to replace him. Muhammad Pasha immediately sent fifty troops, who entered Sayda on 22 June. At the same time, another force of 250 men sent by the pasha of Tripoli arrived in Sayda.

On 23 April 1775, an Ottoman naval force sailed from Istanbul for the Syrian coast to seize 'Akka and the rest of Zahir's territory from Abu al-Dhahab. As soon as the Porte learned of Abu al-Dhahab's death and the return of Zahir to 'Akka, he ordered the fleet to destroy Zahir and, if that failed, at least to collect from him the arrears of the *miri*. Meanwhile, the Porte committed land forces to march on 'Akka.

In early August 1775, the Ottoman fleet appeared in the waters off Palestine's coast. Since Sayda was already restored to the sultan, the admiral, Hasan Pasha, sent two small ships to Haifa and sailed with the rest of the force to Yaffa. After capturing Yaffa, he sailed back to Haifa and 'Akka on 7 August, where he began negotiations with Zahir.

Zahir decided to come to terms with the admiral in the hopes that he would avoid confrontation with the Ottoman government. He probably realized that the balance of power was not in his favor, and that he was left alone to face the Ottoman forces without any outside military support. The central theme of the talks was the *miri* tax arrears, which Zahir had failed to pay to the sultan since 1768. Shaykh Zahir told the admiral that he was willing to pay 1,000 purses of the tax owed to the sultan immediately and 100

purses to the admiral himself to cover the expenses of the campaign “in order to spare the blood of the people.” At first Hasan Pasha agreed and the negotiations seemed successful; but then they fell through.³¹

The reason behind the failure of the negotiations remains controversial. Both chroniclers, ‘Abbud al-Sabbagh and his nephew Mikha’il al-Sabbagh, in defense of Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, Zahir’s counselor, claim that Ahmad al-Dinkizli sabotaged the negotiations because he was in collusion with the admiral.³² This point of view is contradicted by almost all other contemporary sources consulted.³³ They unanimously state that at first Shaykh Zahir agreed to pay the admiral the balance of the *miri* but later he was dissuaded by his counselor Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, who argued for war. This attitude provoked al-Dinkizli to betray Shaykh Zahir and to side with Admiral Hasan Pasha. Al-Dinkizli argued that since the Ottoman government was satisfied with money, there was no need for bloodshed. But Ibrahim al-Sabbagh claimed that the admiral had only three ships and could not defeat Zahir. He argued against paying the amount demanded by the admiral, believing that the admiral does not have enough force to make good on his threat. It appears that al-Sabbagh referred to only those ships anchored in Haifa; he apparently had no knowledge of the rest of the fleet. Besides, he declared that there was not sufficient money in Zahir’s treasury to meet the sultan’s demands. In addition, al-Sabbagh alleged that Zahir himself was indebted to him for 700 purses,³⁴ an allegation which was refuted by all those present except Shaykh Zahir, who had full confidence in his counselor.

One anonymous source³⁵ states that Zahir himself rejected the mediation of a French captain, whose ship was anchored in the port of ‘Akka to transport French nationals in the event war broke out between Zahir and the sultan’s fleet. The French captain promised to obtain the admiral’s approval if Zahir agreed to pay the admiral 500 purses to be deducted from the arrears of the *miri*. But Zahir declined the offer on the basis that he had no money. At this stage, al-Dinkizli intervened to convince Zahir that he could make Ibrahim al-Sabbagh pay the requested amount if Zahir authorized him to do so. Zahir refused, which prompted the disgruntled al-Dinkizli to betray his master.

The interesting point in this account is that the admiral, Hasan Pasha, himself, reneged on his previous conditions after he realized

that they were acceptable to Zahir. It seems, according to this same source, that the admiral was not interested in successful negotiations. As has been mentioned, he at first demanded that Zahir pay the *miri* tax of the last seven years to which Zahir agreed. Later, he demanded of Zahir to surrender 'Akka and return to his old country of Tiberias and Safad. The admiral also promised to pardon Zahir and reinstate him as the ruler of 'Akka. However, he warned him that if he refused these conditions, he would be killed.³⁶

It appears that Zahir was convinced by al-Sabbagh's argument. Therefore, he decided to resist the Ottoman naval force. He ordered the admiral to depart from the port of 'Akka, lest his forces be in danger. The sultan's fleet then began shelling the city.

The war was of short duration. It was a desperate effort on Zahir's part. During the first day of shelling, Zahir's guns fired back against the Ottoman fleet and caused some damage to two ships. The Ottomans launched a heavy barrage on the second day of battle that lasted for several hours, during which about 7,000 shells hit 'Akka without any response from Zahir's guns. It was reported that al-Dinkizli had ordered the Maghrebis not to fire back. He told the Maghrebi artillerymen that, as Muslims, they were not supposed to fight the soldiers of the sultan. Accordingly, they turned a deaf ear to Zahir's instructions and never hit the sultan's fleet.³⁷

Shaykh Zahir finally recognized that it would be an unwise decision to stand up against the Porte under such circumstances and fled the town on 21 or 22 August. He was barely outside the gates when a volley of shots was fired at him. One hit him in the neck, causing him to fall off his horse. A Maghrebi immediately cut off his head and carried it to Hasan Pasha who, after having it salted, carried it along with him to Istanbul.³⁸

Zahir's counselor, Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, fled the town and took refuge with Shaykh Qublan of the Matwalis, who, upon a guarantee of safety issued by Muhammad Pasha al-'Azm, took him to 'Akka. However, he was handed over to Hasan Pasha, who disregarded al-'Azm's promise. Hasan Pasha forced al-Sabbagh to lead them to Zahir's treasures, which amounted to about ten million piasters and other valuables. He was then taken to Istanbul, where he was eventually executed. Al-Sabbagh's demise greatly reduced the

influence of the Melkite Christian community for some time afterward.

With the death of Shaykh Zahir, the treachery of al-Dinkizli, and the dispersion of Zahir's sons in the countryside, the resistance in 'Akka crumbled. On the same day of Zahir's death, Hasan Pasha entered 'Akka, which was looted by his troops and the Maghrebis.

Hasan Pasha then appointed al-Dinkizli as governor of Gaza, probably as a reward for his treachery to Zahir; however, al-Dinkizli died on his way there. He happened to know the exact sum of the treasures that the admiral had seized in 'Akka, of which the pasha had been careful to keep from the Porte. From this, it can be reasonably concluded that al-Dinkizli was killed by Hasan Pasha himself.³⁹

Prior to the admiral's departure for Istanbul, he handed 'Akka to Ahmad al-Jazzar, who was appointed by the sultan as garrison commander. A few months later, in March 1776, the Porte conferred upon him the governorship of Sayda with the rank of *wazir*. Al-Jazzar reinforced the fortifications of 'Akka and made it the seat of Sayda province.⁴⁰

On 26 August 1775, five days after 'Akka capitulated, Muhammad Pasha al-'Azam, who had recently been appointed by the sultan as commander-in-chief for the Ottoman forces in Syria, arrived with 8,000 troops outside 'Akka. It seems that he was to attack 'Akka by land while the fleet bombarded it from the sea. But he did not arrive in time to participate in the fighting. He therefore did not share either the honor of victory or the spoils of war, or the deliberations on the political issues that ensued from the campaign.⁴¹

The death of Zahir brought to an end the autonomous state of the Zaydanis and their supremacy over almost all of Palestine and southern Lebanon up to Sayda. However, their resistance was not completely eliminated. After the departure of Hasan Pasha, al-Jazzar's authority was confined to 'Akka itself, while Zahir's sons remained the rulers of different fortresses in the region of Safad, Nazareth, and Tiberias. The most prominent of Zahir's sons was 'Ali, who took to the hinterland and mustered enough troops to continue his struggle against the Ottoman authorities for another year.⁴²

In the summer of 1776, Hasan Pasha returned to 'Akka. His presence helped al-Jazzar to capture the fortress of Dayr Hanna on

22 July, forcing 'Ali al-Zahir to look for another refuge. During this campaign, the rest of Zahir's territory was reduced, and his sons were either killed or arrested. In the meantime, Shaykh Nasif al-Nassar, Zahir's strongest ally, declared his allegiance to al-Jazzar, who temporarily accepted that arrangement; nevertheless, in September 1781, al-Jazzar killed al-Nassar.⁴³

Although deprived of the support of his brothers and friends, 'Ali al-Zahir never surrendered. Instead, he took to the desert and continued his defiance of the Ottoman authorities. In the fall of 1776, the governor of Damascus plotted with a Maghrebi agha to pretend that he defected from Damascus and offer his services to 'Ali al-Zahir. The latter, in dire need of support, accepted the agha with his 500 men, who immediately joined 'Ali in his camp near the Bridge of Jacob's Daughters on the Jordan River. Shortly afterwards, when they gained 'Ali's confidence, they treacherously assassinated him while he was asleep in his tent.⁴⁴ Thus ended the last phase of the Zaydanis' defiance of the Ottoman authorities.

Notwithstanding the destruction of their power, the Zaydanis continued to enjoy social respect and prestige throughout their former territories. Those who were taken to Istanbul were treated kindly by the Porte and some of them even came to hold high offices in the provinces.

'Uthman was assigned as Shaykh al-Balad in 'Akka for almost one year, then was transferred as governor of Jiddah in al-Hijaz. 'Ali's son Fadil was appointed as governor of Rhodes, while Ahmed's son Yusuf became one of the most important staff of the translation office in Istanbul. Fadil was well-respected among men of letters circles in Istanbul. ⁴⁵ This kind of treatment by the sultan was probably a calculated gesture. The Porte wanted to take away the Zaydani leaders from their people in order to eliminate any potential revival to Zaydani rule in northern Palestine. A similar move was exploited by Napoleon during his invasion of Syria in 1799, but to no avail.

At the time of Napoleon's attack on 'Akka in 1799, Zahir's son, 'Abbas, had an audience with Napoleon. He sought the Zaydanis' help, and in return, appointed 'Abbas as the chief shaykh of Safad. However, when the French army withdrew from Palestine, General Junot took 'Abbas and Zahir's other son, Salih, with him. It seemed that 'Abbas was not happy in Paris, so he

returned to Palestine and died in Nazareth in 1811. His son, Husayn, became the *mutasallim* of Nazareth in 1850.⁴⁶

The Zaydanis continue to live in Greater Syria, particularly in northern Palestine, to the present day. As a consequence of Zahir's renowned career, their name was changed to al-Zawahir. They primarily inhabit the districts of Nazareth and Safad.⁴⁷ Many prominent people in Syria and Palestine take pride in being descendants of Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the inhabitants of northern Palestine, particularly those living in towns and villages where Zahir or his sons had erected some historical buildings (e.g., mosques, fortresses, towers, walls), admire Zahir's achievements.

In 1966, a multi-volume work on the historical geography of Palestine was published in Beirut, which considered Zahir as "the greatest Palestinian who appeared in the eighteenth century."⁴⁹ Another study was written by Tawfiq Mu'mmar, a Palestinian lawyer from Nazareth, published in 1979. Mu'mmar considers Zahir al-'Umar a precursor of the modern Arab nationalist movement against Turkish rule, and he emphasizes that Zahir's death in 1775 was a "grave setback" to that movement.⁵⁰

Certainly, these re-readings of Zahir's history are inspired by nationalist agendas. The exaggeration of his legacy is not to be measured with objectivity; rather, it can be best understood as an attempt to re-interpret Zahir as a national hero within the context of recent Palestinian history, particularly the dispossession that began during the 1948 *Nakba*.

Nevertheless, some contemporary travelers (e.g. Volney and Colonel Churchill) lamented and deplored the tragic end of Zahir as a dignified man in many respects, and worthy of a better life. They discuss in great detail his skill in military affairs, courage, forthrightness, and foresight, which did him infinite credit. Volney, who traveled extensively throughout Egypt and Syria following Zahir's rule, defended him strongly and held him in high esteem. He considered his tragic death a great loss for Syria, which had seldom seen leaders with such a grand character.⁵¹ Finally, notwithstanding all the adversaries he confronted, he successfully achieved significant accomplishments in economics, politics, administration, and governance. Above all, he was successful in expanding his domain from a small village to most of historic

Palestine. He surpassed all his contemporaries, predecessors, and successors in southern Ottoman Syria.

NOTES

1. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 25a; H. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 97, 98; A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 22 April 1773 (Bulletin); al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf* in *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XLIX (1955), p. 271.

2. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 26a–26b; Cerssem, *The Russian Occupation*, pp. 80–81; Shidyāq, *Akhhbar al-A‘yan*, V. II, pp. 48–50; Shihāb, *Tarikh al-Jazẓar*, pp. 52–53.

3. al-Shihābī, *Tarikh Ahmad Basha al-Jazẓar*, ed. by Antūnyus Shibli and Aghnatīyūs Abduh Khalifah (Beirut: Antwan Press, 1955), p. 53; al-Shidyāq, *Akhhbar al-A‘yan*, Vol. II, p. 49; al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf* in *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XLIX (1955), p. 271; Charles-Roux, *Les Écheltes*, p. 212; A.E.B¹, 1036, 16, 31 August 1773; Burayk, *Tarikh al-Shām*, pp. 100–101; A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 31 August 1773.

4. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 99; Ibid., *Tarikh Ahmad Basha al-Jazẓar*, p. 53; al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf* in *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XLIX, p. 272; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 27a).

5. al-Shihābī, *Tarikh al-Jazẓar*, p. 54; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 27b, 28a–28b; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zāhir*, f. 32a.

6. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 29a–29b; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 99–100; Ibid., *Tarikh al-Jazẓar*, pp. 57–58; al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf* in *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XLIX (1955), p. 272; A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 31 January 1774.

7. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 29a–29b; al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf* in *al-Mashriq*, XLIX (1955), p. 272.

8. H. ibn al-Ṣiddiq, *Gharā’ib al-Badā’i*, ff. 112a–112b, 113a–113b.

9. On al-Ṣabbāgh’s policies, see *infra.*, pp. 269–70, 287–92. A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 28, 31 August, 2 September 1773; A. Rabbath, *Documents inédits pour servir à l’histoire du Christianisme en Orient* (Paris: 1905–1911), Vol. I, p. 622; Volney, *Voyage*, II, pp. 249–51.

10. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 101; al-Bustānī, “al-Shaykh Zāhir al-‘Umar al-Zaydanī,” in *Dā’irat al-Ma‘arif* XI, p. 406; A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 31 January 1774.

11. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 29b–30a; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 107–108; PRO, S. P. 97/50, Istanbul, 17 January 1774.

12. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 99–100; Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. II, pp. 250–251; Shihab, *Tarikh al-Jazīr*, p. 58.
13. al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 108.
14. A.E.B¹, 92, Aleppo, 31 March 1773; *Ibid.*, 8 August 1774; A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 5 August 1774; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 33a, 39a. Most contemporary Arabic sources mistakenly considered ‘Uthmān Pasha al-Wakīl as the governor of Damascus. See al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf* in *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XLIX (1955), p. 273; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 99, 103, 106; Shihabi, *Tarikh al-Jazīr*, pp. 54, 57, 60; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 29b.
15. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 29b.
16. A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 14 November 1774.
17. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, f. 30a; al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 413; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, I, p. 110; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zābir*, f. 35a.
18. Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. II, pp. 250–251; Farrāj, “Qīṣṣat al-Shaykh Zāhir,” in *al-Mashriq*, Vol. XXIV (1926), p. 559.
19. Volney, *Voyage*, II, p. 251; A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 31 January 1774 (Bulletin).
20. A.E.B¹, 1036, Sidon, 31 January 1774 (Bulletin from ‘Akka with the same date); A.E.B¹, 92, Aleppo, 17 August 1774 (‘Akka, 13 July 1774).
21. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 30a–30b.
22. *Ibid.*, ff. 30b–31a; al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 418; al-Shihābī, *Lubnān*, Vol. I, p. 110; al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf* in *al-Mashriq*, n.d., XLIUX (1955), p. 274; al-Shihābī, *Tarikh al-Jazīr*, p. 64; Nawfal, *Kashf al-Lāthām* ff. 53–54.
23. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 30b, 31b; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zābir*, f. 35b; al-Shihābī, *Tarikh al-Jazīr*, p. 64. The second source states that the siege of Yaffa lasted for seven months, while the latter reports that it took sixty days. The first is the most accurate one. On the massacre of Yaffa, see A.E.B¹, 93, Aleppo, 8 August (*Précis des Révolutions d’Acre 20 May–15 Juin 1775*); al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār*, Vol. I, p. 418; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, ff. 31a–31b.
24. al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār*, p. 425.
25. The information on the occupation of ‘Akka is primarily drawn from A.E.B¹, 93, Aleppo, 8 August 1775 (*Précis des Révolutions d’Acre*); A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir*, ff. 32a–35a; al-Shihābī, *Tarikh al-Jazīr*, pp. 64–66.

26. NC 5/92, 22 June 1775 (a letter from J. Dabbās to A. Dabbās).

27. Several sources agree that Zāhir's son 'Alī was in collusion with Abū al-Dhahab. But M. al-Ṣabbāgh claims that 'Uthman was the traitor (ff. 34b, 36a).

28. A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 33b–34a. The French report on 'Akka during this period states that there was another faction of the Maghrebis who wanted to keep the town for the Sultan.

29. Ibid., f. 34b.

30. Ibid., f. 35a; A.E.B¹, 93, Aleppo, 8 August 1775 (*Précis des Révolutions d'Akka*).

31. Anonymous, "Qiṣṣat Zāhir al-'Umar," *al-Mashriq*, XXIV (1926), p. 544–54; al-Shihābī, *Tarikh al-Jazẓār*, Vol. I, pp. 1.12–13; Ibid., pp. 67–68. The quotation is from A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 35a–35b.

32. Zāhir's counselor, Ibrāhīm al-Ṣabbāgh, was the father of 'Abbud and the grandfather of Mikhā'il. This relationship explains their defense of Ibrāhīm.

33. For further discussion on these views see: Nawfal, *Kashf al-Lithām*, ff. 56–57; al-Shihābī, *Tarikh al-Jazẓār*, pp. 67–68; Ibid., *Lubnān*, Vol. I, pp. 112–13; al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf in al-Mashriq*, I (1956), pp. 193–194; Burayk, *Tarikh al-Shām*, p. 104; a al-Bustānī, "al-Shaykh Zāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydanī," in *Dā'irat al-Ma'arif* XI, 407; Mikhā'il Mashaqah, *al-Jawāb 'alā iqtirāḥ al-ahbāb*, ff. 25–26; Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. II, pp. 253–54.

34. Anonymous, "Qiṣṣat Zāhir," p. 546.

35. Anonymous, "Qiṣṣat Zāhir," pp. 545–47.

36. A.E.B¹, 93, Aleppo, 6 October 1775 (Nouvelles No. 15, 'Akka, 13 September 1775).

37. Nawfal, *Kashf al-Lithām*, f. 57; Mashaqah, *al-Jawāb*, f. 26; al-Shihābī, *Tarikh al-Jazẓār*, pp. 68–69; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zāhir* (f. 40a) claims that Zāhir's son 'Uthmān was the one who ordered al-Dinkizlī and the Maghrebis not to fire against the Sultan's fleet.

38. Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. II, p. 261; al-Bustānī, "al-Shaykh Zāhir" *Dā'irat al-Ma'arif* Vol. XI, p. 407; al-Shihābī, *Tarikh al-Jazẓār*, p. 72. Anonymous, "Qiṣṣat Zāhir," p. 551. The last source states that Ḥasan Pasha took al-Dinkizlī with him and killed him because he had betrayed Zāhir. For the ambiguity and controversy surrounding Zahir's death, see a very interesting research study of nine historical accounts that dealt with this incident: Miriam Rosen, "The Life After Death of Zāhir al-'Umar," *Arab Studies Quarterly* V. 2, No. 4 (Fall 1980), pp. 332–349. The theme of

this study is to analyze how these texts have recorded the event and what they tell us in the context of history and historiography.

39. A.E.B¹, 1037, Sidon, 2 September 1775; A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 39b; Nawfal, *Kashf al-Litham*, p. 60; Mashaqah, *al-Jawāb*, f. 29.

40. A.E.B¹, 1037, Sidon, 2 September, 3 October 1775; al-Shihābī, *Tarikh al-Jazẓār*, pp. 70-72; Shihābī, *Lubnān*, V. 1, p. 116; Anonymous, "Qiṣṣat Zāhir," p. 551.

41. Anonymous, "Qiṣṣat Zāhir," pp. 551; PRO, S.P. 97/52, Istanbul, 17 August, 3 September 1776.

42. Anonymous, "Qiṣṣat Zāhir," pp. 551-2; al-Shihābī, *Tarikh al-Jazẓār*, pp. 70-72.

43. Burayk, *Tarikh al-Shām*, pp. 112-13; al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf* in *al-Mashriq*, V. L (1956), p. 207; PRO, S.P. 97/52, Istanbul, 3 October 1776.

44. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zāhir*, ff. 43a-44a; al-Munayyir, *al-Durr al-Marṣūf* in *al-Mashriq*, p. 200; Nawfal, *Kashf al-Litham*, f. 60; Anonymous, "Qiṣṣat Zāhir," pp. 544-45.

45. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tarikh Zāhir*, pp. 158-163; Mu'mmar, *Zāhir al-'Umar*, pp. 259-261; Kana'nah, *Tarikh al-Nāsirah*, pp. 50-51; Yannī, "Zāhir al-'Umar," *al-Muqataṭaf*, p. 466; Y. al-Dibs, *Tarikh Suriyah*, V. 4, p. 7, pp. 398-99. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, mentioned that 'Uthman was appointed governor of Bursa in Northwest Turkey. For more information, see: A. Cohen, *Palestine in the 18th Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973), p. 96, states that Ottoman documents included Salih among those sent to Istanbul.

46. al-Munayyir, *al-Mashriq*, V. 50, p. 201; Nawfal, *Kashf al-Litham*, p. 59; Yannī, "Zāhir al-'Umar," *al-Muqataṭaf* Vol. XXVIII (1903), p. 466; A. Manna', *Tarikh Filastin*, p. 97; Qasatili, *Mulakhas, al-Jinan*, V. 3, no. 4 (1877), pp. 853. The French promised Salih to help him restore the Zaydanis' power if he collaborated with them. Mu'ammār also mentions that Salih returned from Istanbul to Palestine. This statement might corroborate the version that Salih had met Napoleon in 'Akka. See also Nicola al-Turk, *Chronique d'Egypte, 1798-1804*, tr. and ed. by G. Wiet (Cairo: 1950).

47. al-Dabbāgh, *Bilādunā Filastin*, V. I, p. 617.

48. Fakhri al-Barudi, *Mudhakirat al-Barudi* (Beirut: 1951), pp. 7-10.

49. al-Dabbāgh, *Bilādunā Filastin*, V. 1, pp. 427, 617, 637.

50. Tawfiq Mu'ammār, *Zāhir al-'Umar* (Nazareth: 1979), pp. 147, 149, 155, 251-252.

51. Volney, *Voyage*, V. 2, pp. 110-115, 256 ; *Churchill, Mount Lebanon : A Ten Years' Residence 1842-53* (London : 1853), Vol. 3, pp. 123, 126, 143-144.

CHAPTER VIII: EPILOGUE

The Ottoman admiral Hasan Pasha's final blow against 'Akka in August 1775 ended the autonomous state established by Shaykh Zahir. However, this was only the last in a series of events which contributed to the collapse of Zahir's regime.

GENERAL REMARKS

The Ottoman authorities in Istanbul and Sayda were familiar with Zahir's modest start as a tax-farmer after his father's death in 1706. His rise from a petty tax farmer involved a series of struggles with local powers and the pashas of Sayda and Damascus. His father had tax-farmed the region of Safad through the Shihabi amirs of the Druzes, who in turn held the *iltizam* from the pasha of Sayda. In the late 1720s and early 1730s, Zahir consolidated his powers and expanded his tax-farming through alliances with influential local chiefs and tribes. Consequently, he cast off Shihabi control and acquired the *iltizam* directly from the pasha of Sayda who was not on good terms with the Shihabis. This daring act provoked the hostility of the Druzes, who until then had enjoyed paramount power on Mount Lebanon. This hostility, in turn, precipitated a strong alliance between Zahir and the Matwalis, the traditional enemy of the Druzes.

Zahir was not content with just the region of Safad. He aspired to control 'Akka on the Mediterranean, hoping to boost his economy by enhancing his trading interests. From Tiberias and Safad, he had established trade relations with the French and English merchants in 'Akka and Sayda. But as a prerequisite for a viable economy both in trade and agriculture, Zahir had to maintain law and order in his territories. He therefore subdued the Bedouins who had previously helped him establish his power in these regions. Thus, Zahir had to reckon with a new enemy, the Saqr tribe, for several years.

A more dangerous threat that Zahir faced was the 'Azm family, the representative of the Ottomans' authority. The Syrian provinces, particularly Damascus, had been governed by several competent members of that family. By and large, they successfully rejuvenated the Ottoman provincial system in Syria, which had deteriorated after the Köprülü era. Thus, a clash between Zahir and several pashas of the 'Azm family was inevitable. However, none of them succeeded in subduing Zahir.

In 1744, Zahir gained control of 'Akka, and moved his government there the following year. The presence of As'ad Pasha al-'Azm in Damascus (1743–1757), a governor less aggressive toward Zahir than his predecessor, encouraged Zahir to expand into the littoral districts north and south of 'Akka. Zahir occupied Haifa and several minor villages in that vicinity, an act which resulted in confrontations with Al Madi, Al Jarrar, and Al Tuqan, the chief shaykhs of Jabal Nablus. However, the extension of his power to the north alarmed the Matwalis, whose country bordered Zahir's. Subsequently, they became embroiled in a long struggle, though eventually, they became strong allies. Being Shi'is, the Matwalis decided that it was to their ultimate advantage to side with Zahir against the Druzes and a Sunni government—the Ottomans.

Thus, Zahir alienated his friends and his early allies who had helped him establish power, and in the meantime he made new enemies by encroaching on territories of his neighbors. Zahir's ambitions fomented an expansionist policy which made it inevitable for him to have local adversaries. However, the people within the regions that came under his control welcomed his rule, and those outside his territory hoped that he would take control of their villages also. He helped the peasants in drought years and protected them against Bedouin raids. Because he controlled the local Bedouin tribes, the roads were secure, thus providing favorable conditions for trade and agriculture. Moreover, he followed a tolerant religious policy, an attitude which encouraged Christians as well as Jews to flock to Zahir's territory from different parts of the Ottoman Empire. Some immigrants brought with them capital and skill. He also erected walls around major cities like 'Akka and Tiberias, and built towers, fortresses, and mosques.

In addition, Zahir protected the economic interest of the farmers and local merchants vis-à-vis foreign trading communities. By fixing the prices of the cash crops, he prevented the French and English merchants from manipulating prices of the farmers' produce. This measure made it possible for a group of local wholesale merchants to act as middle men between small merchants who purchased the produce from the farmers and the foreign merchants. When these native wholesale merchants came to control the market, their interests collided with those of the French and the English, who were unable to apply the capitulation treaties favoring Europeans in Zahir's territories. Consequently, the foreign consuls in 'Akka and Sayda appealed several times to their ambassadors in Istanbul to intercede with the Porte to pressure Zahir to comply with the capitulation terms, but to no avail.

In the meantime, the rise of a strong local group with a vested interest in commerce led to the development of a monopoly-like system. Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, Zahir's counselor, controlled the principal produce of Zahir's territories. He bought the produce from the farmers and marketed it through the foreign trading houses in the Levant or through his agents and co-religionists in Damietta, Egypt. Accordingly, he amassed an immense fortune. Although monopoly enabled Zahir to maintain a considerable army, it eventually cost him his autonomy. Ibrahim al-Sabbagh became very powerful and influential in the government of Zahir, especially as the latter grew older. Al-Sabbagh's strong position in the government annoyed and alienated Zahir's sons; they felt that his influence barred them from assuming more power. Consequently, they revolted against their father and the establishment around him.

The intra-family strife between Zahir and his sons served to weaken the basic foundation of the economic prosperity of Zahir's domain. The discontent of Zahir's sons, their personal ambitions and jealousy of each other, instigated the power struggle which created general disorder and disrupted the social and socio-economic life of the people. This family feud could be attributed to two factors: One, the great number of brothers— eight— from different mothers fomented envy. Second, the absence of solid guidelines for smooth power transfer after Zahir's death or relinquishment due to his advanced age. To promote their own interests, some of the sons collaborated with their father's

adversaries, including the Druzes, the Saqr tribe, the *wali* of Damascus, and Abu al-Dhahab of Egypt. Nevertheless, on most occasions Shakyh Zahir was able to subdue his rebellious sons by compromise, appeasement, or force. On the other hand, the sons themselves had never hesitated to fight united along with their father against any imminent danger threatening their country. At any rate, this internal unrest generated socio-economic instability which undoubtedly weakened Zahir's rule, eventually hastening the collapse of his regime.

Another threat to Zahir's rule was the absence of cohesiveness among the inhabitants of his country. They included Druzes, Shi'is, Sunnis, Christians, and Jews. In addition, the mercenary Maghrebis, who constituted the core of his army, were more concerned with money than Zahir's interest. They betrayed him twice: first in May 1775, when they surrendered Yaffa and 'Akka to Abu al-Dhahab; second in August 1775 when they, according to al-Dinkizli's advice, relinquished 'Akka to Admiral Hasan Pasha; and finally, on 22 August 1775, when they crowned their treachery by assassinating their master. Furthermore, his country lacked the natural protection against external aggression. The country of the Druzes of Mount Lebanon, for instance, was more defensible than Zahir's.

One of the most serious drawbacks to Zahir was his alliance with the enemies of the Ottoman Empire. In the early years of his career, he faced no problems from the governors of the province of Sayda, while he had to defend himself against the more aggressive governors of Damascus who could not tolerate his expansion at their expense. However, the sultan's principal concern was the continuous flow of the *miri* tax from Zahir's *iliz̄am*. Once Zahir terminated the annual fixed sums of the *mal miri* from his tax-farm, the Porte resolved to subdue him. In response, Zahir sought an alliance with 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, who had already established himself in Egypt and had conquered the Hijaz. He defied the sultan more openly than Zahir did. He deprived Istanbul of the *bulwan* (the fixed annual tribute of Egypt), struck his own coinage, and refused to receive the pasha sent from Istanbul. Together they attacked and occupied Damascus, the provincial seat, and forced the sultan's representative, 'Uthman Pasha al-Kurji, to quit the city. Accordingly, they gained direct control of all of southern Syria. The

sultan found this alliance to be intolerable, and it led to open hostility between both sides.

‘Ali Bey was bent on an expansionist policy in order to reestablish the Mamluk Sultanate, which had consisted of Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz. This alliance entangled Zahir in the power struggle among the Mamluk beys of Egypt. He had to support his ally ‘Ali Bey against Abu al-Dhahab, who later led a campaign against Zahir in 1775; this paved the way for the final Ottoman blow to Zahir. The deadliest blow to Zahir, however, was his alliance with Russia against the Ottoman state. Because such an alliance with a non-Muslim power and an enemy of the state was intolerable, the sultan exploited the situation as a pretext to attack both adversaries. Signing the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in July 1774 forced Russia to cease any support to Shaykh Zahir; instead, they remained idle while witnessing his destruction at the hands of Abu al-Dhahab and the sultan.

It seems that the alliance between Russia, ‘Ali Bey, and Zahir was an expediency necessitated by the Russo-Turkish War (1768–1774). Empress Catherine II had intended to create more troubles for the sultan in his Asiatic provinces; she found in both allies the best opportunity to exploit the situation for her goals. Russia signed a peace treaty with the sultan without considering the interests of Shaykh Zahir, who was left alone to face the Ottomans and Abu al-Dhahab’s armies. Within a year, Shaykh Zahir was assassinated and his regime destroyed.

THE LEGACY

Zahir’s rule extended all over the Galilee, southern Lebanon, and the coastal plain down to Yaffa, and for several years he had expanded his control as far south as Gaza. In 1768 the Porte conferred on him the official title, which he hitherto enjoyed informally: “Shaykh of ‘Akka, Prince of Princes, Governor of Nazareth, Tiberias, Safad, and Shaykh of all Galilee.”¹ In alliance with ‘Ali Bey of Egypt, Zahir also conquered Damascus in June 1771 and extended his control to Sayda in 1771 and again in 1772. Shaykh Zahir owed his achievements to sound economic and administrative policies. He had an efficient administration and enjoyed a viable economy that provided him with the necessary basis from which he could realize his aims.

Conservatism and maintenance of the status quo were the cornerstone of Ottoman administration in the Arab provinces. Besides asserting the sovereignty of the sultan, the Ottomans were primarily concerned with the collection of taxes for the imperial treasury in Istanbul. The Ottomans paid little, if any, attention to the welfare of the people whose major function was to supply the needs of the rulers. The Porte considered a wali "efficient" if he remitted the fixed proportion of the *miri* tax of his province on time and in full to Istanbul.

The *wali* usually farmed out his province among several tax farmers, who in turn contracted it out to others. The smallest *multazim* (tax farmer) levied the taxes owed by the peasants. This system had greatly overburdened the actual farmers with heavy and arbitrary taxes imposed by the hierarchy of the Ottoman administration. Although the tenure of the *iltizam* (tax farming) or tax district was originally for one year, by the eighteenth century it was conferred for life, and in certain areas (i.e., Mount Lebanon, northern Palestine) the tax farmers constituted a hereditary class. Gradually, they became the virtual owners of the lands within their *iltizam*. The burden of additional taxes, excessive interest, and coercive treatment forced some small landowners to sell their land and either become peasants or desert their villages.

In addition, the peasants and the small landowners enjoyed inadequate protection from the endless devastating raids of the Bedouins. Thus, villagers and townspeople were forced to pay *himayah* (tribute) to a strong neighboring tribe to protect them, their crops, and livestock from outside aggression.²

Despite their tense relationship with villagers, one should not view the Bedouins in an entirely negative light. Some of their tribes participated in commercial activities by providing alkali (ashes), an essential ingredient for manufacturing soap, glass, and crystal. Alkali was particularly in high demand by domestic markets in Nablus, Yaffa, Gaza, and 'Akka, as well as the French and English merchants; several thousands of camel loads were delivered to these markets annually. In turn, the Bedouins were able to purchase their necessities (e.g. food, clothing, etc.), thus making alkali sales a mutually beneficial relationship for all involved. This positive contribution to the local and European industries continued until the 1860s, when alkali was replaced by caustic soda, which was both cleaner and cheaper.³

On top of the excesses of the wali and the depredations of the Bedouins, villagers suffered from the annual *dawrah* (round) of the governor to collect the *miri*. It was a terrifying experience for the population, as well as devastating to the countryside. The penalty for non-payment was often the destruction of potential resources: trees were cut down, villages destroyed, and livestock confiscated. Thus, whole areas passed out of cultivation and numerous peasants and landowners deserted their villages.⁴

During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, there was little security on most of the roads. They were preyed upon mostly by Bedouins who robbed travelers of their belongings, devastated the villages, and plundered the merchants. In addition, they imposed a *ghafar* (safe-passage duty), supposedly to keep the roads in repair and clear of danger.⁵

Shaykh Zahir at first relied heavily upon the Bedouins to establish his control and spread his authority in the Galilee. However, he eventually realized that the village was the cornerstone of the agricultural economy. Thus, he resolved to protect it against the encroachment of the Bedouins and relieve the peasants of the heavy taxes.

As soon as Zahir had extended his authority over the districts of Tiberias, Safad, and Nazareth, he stopped the Bedouins from imposing the road toll and attacking the villages. By the middle of the 1740s, and especially after his occupation of 'Akka, security was at its best through the whole of his territories. He frequently tested his security system by sending a woman to travel alone from one village to another, and punished those who even attempted to ask about her destination.⁶

Between 1743 and 1760 Zahir enjoyed a period of peace and tranquility during which he strengthened his position and consolidated his power. During this period he established a viable economy by promoting agriculture and trade. He also laid down the basis of his administration. He ruled from his capital 'Akka and divided the rest of the country, except for Haifa, among his sons, brothers, and local shaykhs. He appointed his brothers Sa'd in Dayr Hanna and Yusuf in 'Ibillin. His cousin and brother-in-law Muhammad al-'Ali (Abu Dani) succeeded his father in al-Damoun, and later added the village of Shafa' 'Amr. Additionally, Zahir assigned his sons to different districts: Salibi in Tiberias, 'Ali in Safad, 'Uthman in Kafr Kannah and later Shafa' 'Amr after the

death of his cousin, Sa'ïd in Nazareth, Ahmad in Dayr Hanna after the death of his uncle Sa'd, and later he added 'Ajlun, while the younger sons stayed with him in 'Akka. In the 1760s and 1770s he appointed his cousin and son-in-law Karim al-Ayyub as governor of Yaffa, and later Gaza.

Like the rulers of his time, Zahir assumed complete power over the regional governors. He occasionally sought the advice of his older brother Sa'd and his cousin Abu Dani. He also was assisted by a scribe (often called *wazir*) whose function was, primarily, to look after the shaykh's correspondence and his financial affairs. Those who served Zahir in this capacity were Yusuf al-Arqash, Yusuf Qissis, and Ibrahim al-Sabbagh. All of them were Christians of the Melkite rite (Greek Catholics).

Generally speaking, the eighteenth century witnessed an increase in the prosperity and strength of several Christian communities (e.g., Greeks, Armenians, and Arabic-speaking Christians). These communities, thanks to good schooling, achieved better education than the Muslims, which in turn resulted in greater political and economic influence. They entered the service of local governors, princes as scribes, men of business, physicians, and counselors. Whole families, particularly of the Melkite rite, attached themselves to certain rulers and shared in their power and wealth.⁷

The Melkites were Catholics who were converts from Greek Orthodoxy and hence not officially recognized by the sultan; thus, they constituted the mainstream of emigrants to Egypt and southern Syria, where they found a more favorable atmosphere of tolerance than in Damascus or Aleppo. In Egypt, 'Ali Bey replaced Jews with Christians as his major bankers and customs officials. In contrast, Shaykh Zahir showed tolerance toward all religions in 'Akka; he respected competence and integrity in the management of his affairs regardless of religion. Some sources even claim that he showed some partiality for Christians. These minority communities served in Zahir's administration and brought prosperity through their commercial dealings.

Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, himself a Melkite, served as Zahir's *wazir*, the principal minister to the shaykh. He naturally held great influence in the administration, although his functions were never clearly defined. He acted as a scribe, financial controller, political advisor, and senior administrator in Zahir's government. On many

occasions he argued Zahir's case and defended his position with the French and English authorities in the Levant. At times, he even represented Zahir's case with the sultan's representatives, even though he was a Christian. What probably helped al-Sabbagh to generate more power was the lack of bureaucracy to maintain checks and balances; thus, he was able to maximize his authority.

Besides the position of *wazir*, there were the offices of *mufti*, *qadi* for religious affairs, and an *agha* of the customs-house, all of whom resided in 'Akka. Unfortunately, our knowledge about these three positions is sparse and their duties and limitations are ambiguous. The *mufti*, according to Zahir's desire, was chosen and appointed by the Porte. But unlike the rest of the Syrian provinces, Zahir refused to have him changed every year. Nevertheless, he held no power over Zahir's decisions even in regard to religious matters.

The *qadi* was appointed by Zahir from among the local 'ulama'. Consequently his judgments had to be confirmed by the *qadi* of Sayda. The *agha* of the customs-house presided over the duties paid in the ports of 'Akka and Haifa. He was an executive officer carrying out the regulations authorized by Zahir and his *wazir*, Ibrahim al-Sabbagh. He had some power to adjudge minor crimes.⁸

The only other major branch of Zahir's government was the army. Shaykh Zahir served at first as the supreme leader of his armed forces. Sometimes he delegated this authority to his brother Sa'd or his cousin Muhammad al-'Ali. However, after he had consolidated his power and extended his control over 'Akka and the whole of Galilee, Ahmad Agha al-Dinkizli, who was of Maghrebi origin, became his major lieutenant for military affairs.⁹

The nucleus of Zahir's army was made up of his relatives and the people who lived within his *iltizam*, and the tribesmen who initially helped him to establish his power. By the early 1720s, this force was about 200 men, but it was increased to 1,500 men by the late 1730s. As he proceeded to repress the Bedouins, Zahir drew more support from the local inhabitants of his ever-increasing territories, and they provided him with about 4,000 men.¹⁰ However, he continued to rely upon a mercenary force, which was mostly Maghrebi and constituted the core of his forces. Ironically, these Maghrebis proved to be a nuisance, and later a major cause of his downfall. They betrayed him, and were bought off by his

adversaries. Even one Maghrebi assassinated him and delivered his head to the Ottoman admiral.

Zahir also could rely upon the support of the Matwalis, who could muster over 10,000 horsemen, although they did not always support him, as when he faced Abu al-Dhahab or Hasan Pasha in May and August 1775 respectively.

Zahir's army was equipped with cannons, muskets, pistols, and lances. In addition, the walled cities and towns were defended by artillery emplacements. He originally acquired many of his weapons from Europeans, especially the Venetians and French, but by the 1770s he received most of his arms supply from the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean. Interestingly, some of the weapons were manufactured in 'Akka itself, and his name was inscribed on cannons.

The farmers and peasants were the chief beneficiaries of Zahir's rule. Unlike their situation under the previous rule or that of the farmers in other provinces, they enjoyed full security and safety. Zahir protected them against Bedouin raids and the depredations of the sultan's representatives. Also, he prohibited his lieutenants from extorting the farmers or exacting more than the fixed taxes or accepting bribes or gifts from them. In addition, he instructed district officers to offer interest-free loans to small farmers to enable them to cultivate their lands. The tradition had been that in a good harvest year, the farmer gave one-fourth of his produce to the *multaxim*, and in a bad year, one-fifth. Zahir levied one-fifth of a farmer's crop in a good year.¹² He did not collect taxes from them in drought years; instead he paid the *mal-miri* to the pasha of Sayda from his own treasury, or through a loan from his wealthy scribe Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, or even from French merchants.¹³

Efficient administration, adequate security, and sound agricultural policies attracted many emigrants from different parts of Syria to Zahir's domain. Since the early 1740s, members of several Jewish and Christian communities flocked to Zahir's territories from as far away as Smyrna, Cyprus, and Aleppo. In the 1760s, the farmers of middle and southern Palestine who suffered under their provincial governor's heavy taxes and injustices deserted their villages and settled in the Galilee under Zahir's rule.¹⁴

Cotton was the chief cash crop produced in the lands Zahir controlled. The farmers also raised wheat, barley, and other grains.

Yaffa was surrounded with groves of citrus fruit. Olive trees were cultivated around al-Lydd, al-Ramlah, and Jabal Nablus, serving as the basis of the soap industry in Yaffa, Nablus, and 'Akka.

Zahir also wished to promote domestic, as well as foreign, trade within his country. For example, he encouraged trade with European and local merchants at Sayda and 'Akka, especially in cotton, which was in heavy demand by Europeans.¹⁵ As noted above, to promote trade he annexed 'Akka in 1744 and developed it into the main port of his country. In 'Akka he built stores, shops, and a *khan* as a depot and residence for the French merchants to facilitate their commercial transactions within his territories. This quarter came to be known as Zahir's Market. He similarly erected a warehouse in Sur (Tyre) for the storage of cotton and homes to accommodate the merchants during their visits to the town. Also, trade flourished when order and security on the roads was restored after the suppression of the unruly Bedouins.¹⁶

As we mentioned above, the elite of Zahir's government were local people, primarily his own family, and the Christian Melkites. In the early years of his rule, Zahir employed several Christian scribes: al-Ma'luf in Nazareth, Yusuf al-Arqash in Tiberias, and Yusuf al-Qissis in 'Akka. Very little is known to us about al-Ma'luf. A certain priest of the Ma'luf family in Nazareth served as Zahir's counselor and advised against insubordination and defiance of the sultan. The Ma'luf family enjoyed a favorable position in Zahir's government so that Zahir had endowed them with a large area of Marj ibn 'Amir.¹⁷

The second scribe, Yusuf al-Arqash, abused his position; consequently, Zahir fired him and confiscated his property in 'Akka, including his wealth that he deposited with French merchants in 'Akka. The scribe pleaded with the French consul in Sayda to intercede on his behalf, but Zahir refused to discuss his complaint and advised the French to disregard it, lest they worsen their relations with Zahir. Thus, al-Arqash lost his case.¹⁸

Through exploiting his position as Zahir's scribe, Yusuf al-Qissis amassed considerable wealth through trade with the French merchants at 'Akka. Later, he became apprehensive of the inevitable Ottoman defeat of Zahir, and decided to smuggle his wealth to Malta. But his plan was foiled by Zahir, who confiscated his fortune and dismissed him from his position.

By the time Ibrahim al-Sabbagh gained ascendancy at Zahir's court, he had four grown sons who also either held administrative positions in Zahir's government or helped their father in running the family trade. Yusuf became the deputy of Karim al-Ayyub, governor of Yaffa; 'Abbud was in charge of the soap firm in 'Akka; Habib was responsible for their trading house in 'Akka; and Niqula followed his father's steps in medicine. Thus, Ibrahim al-Sabbagh not only solidified his influence through placing his sons in strategic positions, but also by encouraging several trading houses of his Melkite community to reside in 'Akka (e.g., al-Kuhayl and al-Bahrî). In addition, he managed to strengthen the position of the Melkites in 'Akka and Damietta through his influence with Shaykh Zahir.

Prior to Zahir's annexation of 'Akka in 1744, the European merchants, particularly the French, purchased cotton grown in the Galilee directly from the farmers and the local merchants. In most cases, they did not pay cash but bartered cotton (raw and spun) for European commodities, especially indigo, rice, coffee, and cloth. Establishing himself in 'Akka, Zahir improved its port and thus attracted more European merchants to the city. Subsequently, French, English, and Venetian consuls were established there to protect the interests of their countrymen. By the late 1750s, 'Akka surpassed Sayda in trade; the French merchants in the city came to dominate the trade of cotton from Zahir's territories. This irritated the French consul and merchants of Sayda who complained against their countrymen, but to no avail.¹⁸

The developed competition between the merchants of 'Akka and Sayda encouraged Zahir to raise cotton prices. Consequently, the French consul at Sayda suggested that the French merchants of 'Akka only purchase cotton at a fixed price, or refrain from purchasing at all. However, the merchants rejected the plan. Zahir's reaction was strong. He prohibited the French merchants of Sayda from purchasing cotton from 'Akka. However, the French consul was finally forced to rescind his decision.

In the meantime, the French consul at Sayda continued his efforts through different means to pressure Zahir to accept his terms. In concerted effort with the English vice-consul at 'Akka, they appealed to their ambassadors in Istanbul to plead with the Porte to order Zahir to respect the privileges of the French merchants according to the provisions of the capitulations, but

Zahir declined to recognize these rights.²⁰ Accordingly, the English merchants decided to transfer their trade to Haifa, which was officially part of the province of Damascus, but upon the opposition of the French merchants the idea was not carried out. The French had to reconcile their differences with Zahir, who continued to control the cotton market in 'Akka and Sayda until the late 1760s.

In 1761, Ibrahim al-Sabbagh became Zahir's minister and eventually acquired his full confidence. He persuaded Zahir that it was in the interest of the country to curb French trade in his domain. Zahir raised the customs duty to three percent on anything exported from 'Akka. Thus, the French had to pay 4 ½ piasters on every bale of cotton instead of the one piaster previously paid. The French had no alternative but to deal with Zahir since he controlled the areas producing cotton in southern Lebanon and Palestine south to Yaffa and Ramleh.

Ibrahim al-Sabbagh, as a result, succeeded in conducting trade that was most profitable for him. He traded in various goods and almost monopolized the sale of wheat, cotton, and tobacco. He also had the sole privilege of importing commodities such as cloth, rice, and coffee from Europe and Egypt. Likewise, he ordered the sale of goods to the merchants with whom he chose to deal. On certain occasions, al-Sabbagh controlled some commodities in the market of 'Akka. For example, in a certain year he noticed the scarcity of cloth in the city and advised his partners in Damietta to purchase all available cloth in Egypt and send it to 'Akka. Upon its arrival there he fixed the price, after deducting the expenses, at a 50 percent profit.²¹

Ibrahim al-Sabbagh drew large profits from the semi-monopoly system he developed which became, indeed, the keystone of his economic policy. He was almost the sole exporter in the country but did not have the same control over the imports. He abused Zahir's confidence and spared no effort in amassing a huge fortune. Nevertheless, we are told that he lived on cheese and olives and wore shabby and dirty clothes, so that "one would think he was a beggar and not a state minister." Volney estimated his fortune at about twenty million francs, which was all confiscated by Admiral Hasan Pasha in August 1775. In addition, he also lost his life and his family was dispersed throughout Lebanon, Egypt, and Palestine.²²

From the late 1760s to 1775, commerce declined in 'Akka due to the incessant fighting between Zahir and his sons, on the one hand, and between him and the Ottoman authorities on the other hand. The roads became insecure and the country devastated; the people were unable to cultivate the land in a time of conflict. This situation caused the revival of Aleppo as the main trading center in Syria. Zahir made strong efforts to placate the European merchants in Sayda, 'Akka, Ramlah, and Yaffa, but failed to revive the flourishing trade which previously existed in his country.²³

At a time when concern for the common man by most rulers was negligible, Zahir earned the esteem and affection of his people. He showed considerable concern for the poor and strove in a variety of ways to alleviate their miseries. Zahir wished to cure the causes which forced poor people into the demeaning life of the streets. He began by instructing al-Sabbagh to assign a monthly stipend for the poor. Rather than accumulating great personal wealth, as was commonly practiced, Zahir dispersed his fortune among his needy people.²⁴

Zahir was hard on crime, strict on morals, and intolerant of idle talk and heresies. He banned prostitution and expelled all suspect and notorious persons from his capital. In applying his strict and high moral standards, Zahir excused no one, not even his son 'Uthman, for his indulgence in drinking and adultery. In general, Shaykh Zahir was lauded for his moral integrity, compassion, valor, and tolerance towards different religions.²⁵

In spite of the flaws and weaknesses that intensified during the last years of Zahir's rule, he left a deep mark on Levantine political life. He maintained a high degree of order and security within his territories that no other Syrian province had witnessed for a long time. He also promoted agriculture and trade. In fact, 'Akka became the principal port in the whole Levant. It replaced Sayda as the port of Damascus and the interior of Syria. Besides, 'Akka and Yaffa served as ports for the Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. 'Akka became the seat of the province of Sayda, breaking with a long tradition that the seat bear the name of its province. In 1799, Napoleon, foiled under the walls of 'Akka, made the famous remark: "The fate of the East depends upon yonder petty town."²⁶ Several accounts primarily attribute Napoleon's failure to conquer 'Akka to the strong defenses that Zahir built in the city. Likewise, Zahir's economic and

administrative legacy survived his rule. His successor, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, adopted Zahir's economic policies with certain modifications: he continued the semi-monopoly economic system, encouraged foreign trade, built a strong professional army, and made 'Akka the stronghold that successfully repelled Napoleon's army.

Above all, Zahir was an Arab of tribal origin, yet he excelled over those governors who either inherited their fame or acquired it through the sultan's favor. His career demonstrates that an ambitious, competent, and dynamic man could achieve a great deal administratively, politically, economically, and militarily in Ottoman Syria through exploiting the weaknesses of the deteriorating provincial system in the Ottoman Empire.

Zahir's reign was most important for providing northern Palestine with an awareness of its great economic potential, particularly through maintaining a prosperous agriculture and developing 'Akka from a negligible town to a great trading post and administrative center.

Zahir's remarkable achievements proved that he was a shrewd statesman, and an audacious and resourceful leader. He always made sure to cultivate his relationships and use his wealth effectively to further his ambitions. He sought the support of influential people in Istanbul, Damascus, and Sayda. He was very careful to legally secure his *iltizam* over every new conquered area; he always requested the sanction of the Ottoman authorities in order to legitimize his *iltizam* over the new territories. He wanted to appear as the obedient *multazim* and be seen as loyal to the sultan. Shaykh Zahir used his resources discreetly to secure the support of influential people in Istanbul, such as the Armenian financier Yaqub Aghe, to intercede and otherwise strive on his behalf in the high Ottoman circles. In some cases, Zahir asked the French merchants in 'Akka and Sayda to appeal to their ambassador in Istanbul. His anticipation was that the ambassador could use his good offices to intervene on his behalf at the Porte. In other situations, he approached his Jewish subjects in Tiberias and 'Akka to use their contacts in Istanbul and Damascus to gather support for his cause. Thanks to Zahir's tolerant policy toward his people of different faiths, they always responded favorably. Furthermore, Zahir also utilized these sources to stay informed of the anticipated secret plans of Istanbul and Damascus's central authorities.²⁷ Thus, one

might venture to say that Shaykh Zahir intelligently used lobbying and spying systems to his advantage; he was ahead of his time in many aspects of governance.

The economic conditions which prevailed during Zahir's reign deserve further studying. When Zahir prevented European merchants from having direct contact with both the farmers and the local merchants, this policy resulted in the rise of local wholesale merchants, brokers, and employees. These people were, primarily Melkite Christians who eventually became the core of the local bourgeoisie. It is very likely that this class, with al-Sabbagh at its helm, gradually encouraged Zahir to embrace a semi-monopoly system. This economic policy eventually prevailed because it enhanced the profits of the new bourgeoisie. Consequently, the rising new class headed by al-Sabbagh forged an alliance with the ruling elite. This alliance is a significant sign of a modern state, but the politics of the region and the period did not allow Shaykh Zahir to develop these institutions further. However, one might point out that this economic system mirrored the mercantile system that prevailed in Europe up to the industrial revolution. One might also speculate that Zahir's semi-monopoly economic system gave rise to the state-economy which was introduced more elaborately by Muhammad 'Ali in Egypt in the early nineteenth century.

However historians may look at Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar and his movement, he is highly respected by the Arabs of the East, primarily the Palestinians, who consider him a national hero that struggled against Ottoman authority for the welfare of his people. Many history textbooks in the Arab East interpret his era in this manner. Shaykh Zahir had successfully established an autonomous state, or a "little Kingdom," as Professor Hourani called it, in most of Palestine for over a quarter of a century.²⁸

NOTES

1. Abbé Mariti, *Travels through Cyprus, Syria and Palestine with a General History of the Levant* (Paris: Libraire Hachette, 1911), Vol. I, p. 302; Charles-Roux, *Les Échelles*, p. 87; Masson, *Commerce Française*, p. 290.

2. H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society*, Vol. I, pp. 200, 207, 266. C. Volney, *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie*, Vol. III, p. 22.

3. Alkali (ashes) is extracted from a wild plant called *barilla* or *shiman* that grows mainly in the desert. The plant is typically harvested in June

and burned in large pits. It is then loaded in sacks on camelback and sold in urban markets from July to September. For more details, consult J. L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, pp. 353–356 (London: 1822); B. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, pp. 201–205; L. al-Šabbāgh, *al-Jaliyāt al-Urubīyah fī Bilad al-Shām*, pp. 473–476.

4. Mariti, *Travels*, II, 70; Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. III, pp. 124–132.

5. For example, see al-Nābulī, *al-Haqīqah wa-al-Majāz fī Riḥlat Bilād al-Shām wa-Miṣr wa-al-Hijāz* (The Egyptian National Library); al-Šiddīqī, *al-Khamrah al-Hasīyah fī al-Riḥlah al-Qudsīyah* (Berlin); al-Kurdī, *Tabdhīb al-Aṭwār fī ‘Aja’ib al-Amṣār* (Berlin); H. Maundrell, *A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem at Easter 1697* (Beirut: Khayats, 1963); Charles Perry, *A View of the Levant: Particularly of Constantinople, Syria, Egypt and Greece* (London: 1743); Richard Pococke, *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries* (London: 1743–1745); al-Šiddīqī, *al-Khamrah al-Hasīyah*, ff. 7b–8a, 28b–29a; Mariti, *Travels*, Vol I, p. 435; *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 74–76.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 294–96, 342, 435–46; M. al-Šabbāgh, *Tarikh Zāhir*, ff. 10a–11b, 13a, 20b–21a.

7. For further information, see A. Hourani, *A Vision of History*, pp. 50–53. Qarālī, *al-Sūrīyūn fī Miṣr*, Vol. I, pp. 82–5, 105–106; Livingston, *‘Alī Bey al-Kabir*, pp. 287–95; Q. al-Bāshā, *Muḥadārah fī tarikh ta’ifāt al-Rūm al-Kathūlik fī Miṣr* (Harisa: Lebanon, 1930), pp. 14–20; al-Shammās, *Khulaṣat ta’ifāt al-Rūm al-Kathūlik*, pp. 59–62; Mariti, *Travels*, I, 303–306.

8. Mariti, *Travels*, I, 201, 306; A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon, 15 September 1769.

9. M. al-Šabbāgh, *Tarikh Zāhir*, ff. 5b, 7a–8b, 14b–16b; A. al-Šabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 6b–8b, 17a.

10. M. al-Šabbāgh, *Tarikh Zāhir*, ff. 6b–7a, 11a; A. al-Šabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 6b–7b.

11. Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. II, p. 225; Mariti, *Travels*, Vol. I, p. 302; Yannī, “Zāhir al-‘Umar,” *al-Muqtaṭaf* Vol. XXVIII (1903), p. 321.

12. M. al-Šabbāgh, *Tarikh Zāhir*, ff. 3a, 5a, 13a–13b, 27b.

13. A. al-Šabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, f. 14a.

14. See Chapter II; M. al-Šabbāgh, *Tarikh Zāhir*, f. 27b. For further details on the situation of the Jews under Zāhir, see Uriel Heyd, *Daber al-Umar: The Governor of the Galilee in the 18th Century* (Jerusalem: 1942), pp. 78–80.

15. Volney, *Voyage*, Vol. I, p. 141, Vol. III, pp. 52–55.

16. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 222–23; A. al-Šabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 8a–8b; M. al-Šabbāgh, *Tarikh Zāhir*, f. 12a; A.E.B¹, 978, ‘Akka, 15 April, 3

May 1730; Hasselquist, *Voyages and Travels*, p. 163; Rustum, *Notes on Akka and its Defences*, pp. 48–49.

17. al-Ma'lūf, *Dawāni al-Qutūf fī Tārikh Bani al-Ma'lūf*, p. 130.

18. A.E.B¹, 1026, Sidon, 26 February 1745. These documents include two letters in Arabic and their translation in French: one is an appeal from al-Arqash to the French Minister of the Marine to order the French merchants not to deliver his money to Zāhir which he deposited with them. The other is a letter from Zāhir to his physician Sulaymān Ṣuwwān instructing him to sell the Arqash house in 'Akka. See also A.E.B¹, 1026, Sidon, 28 January, 2 February 1745.

19. For further details about the role of Ibrāhīm al-Ṣabbāgh and his family in Zāhir's movement, see his nephew's account: M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Ibrāhīm*, Ms. Munich, State Library, cod. Arab. 901, ff 6a–7a, 18a–22a. A.E.B¹, 1027, Sidon, 1 June 1743, 12 November 1746; A.E.B¹, 1038, Sidon, 25, 30 September 1750; A.E.B¹, 1029, 12 July 1753. A.E.B¹, 1034, Sidon (a letter from 'Akka, 21 October 1769).

20. A.E.B¹, 428, Istanbul, 10 October 1749; A.E.B¹, 428, Istanbul, 10 October 1749; A.E.B¹, 1028, Sidon (a copy of a letter dated 15 July 1750 sent by the French ambassador to the French consul in Sidon); 1027, Sidon, 12 November 1746, 4 November 1748, 15 July, 7 August 1749.

21. F. Charles-Roux, *Les Échelles*, pp. 68–70, 98, 101, 108–109; A.E.B¹, 1035, Sidon, 23 December 1771; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Ibrāhīm*, ff. 18a–19a, 32a.

22. Volney, *Voyage*, II, 249–60.

23. For more details on the buildings constructed by Zahir and his sons, see Qasatli, *al-Jinan*, V. 24, pp. 850–51; Mansur, *Tārikh al-Nāsira*, pp. 50–53, 61–63; Mu'ammār, *Zāhir al-'Umar*, pp. 288–296, 300–302; Hayd, *Zāhir al-'Umar*, pp. 89–96; A. Cohen, *Palestine*, pp. 128–137.

24. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, ff. 47a–47b; Mariti, *Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 304–305.

25. M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, ff. 13b–14a, 17a–17b, 46a–48a; Mariti, *Travels*, I, 304; Volney, *Voyage*, II, 256–58.

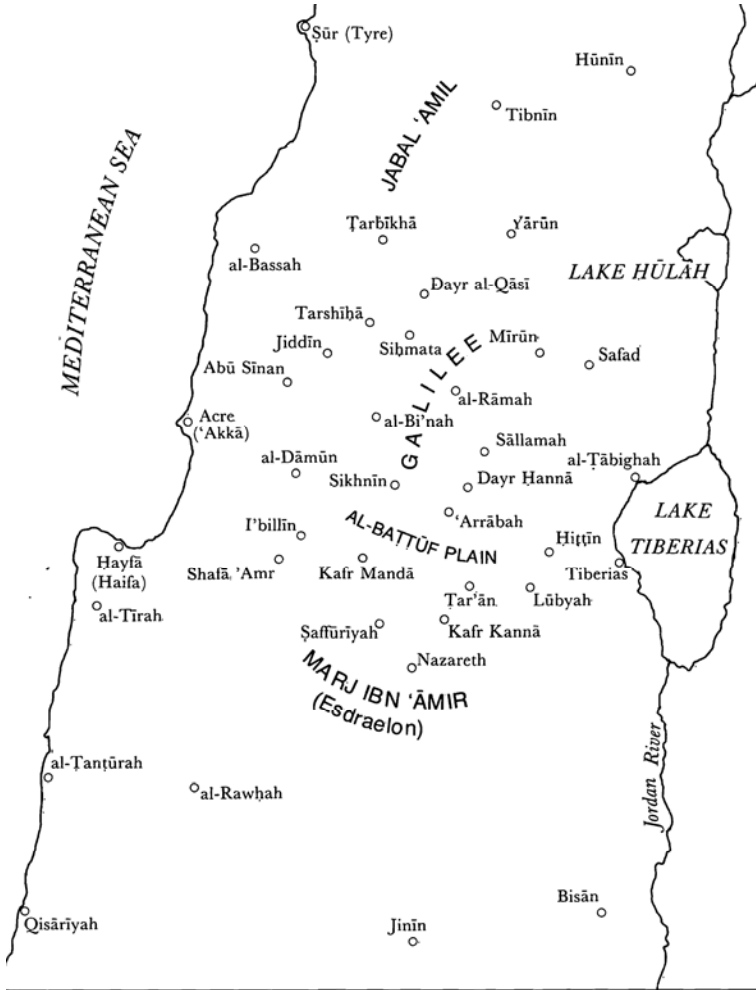
26. John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), p. 451.

27. For more information, see: A. al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, ff. 10a–12b; Cohen, *Palestine*, pp. 41–44, 51–53; M. al-Ṣabbāgh, *Tārikh Zāhir*, pp. 80, 99, 145; Mu'ammār, *Zāhir al-'Umar*, pp. 71–73, 82, 96.

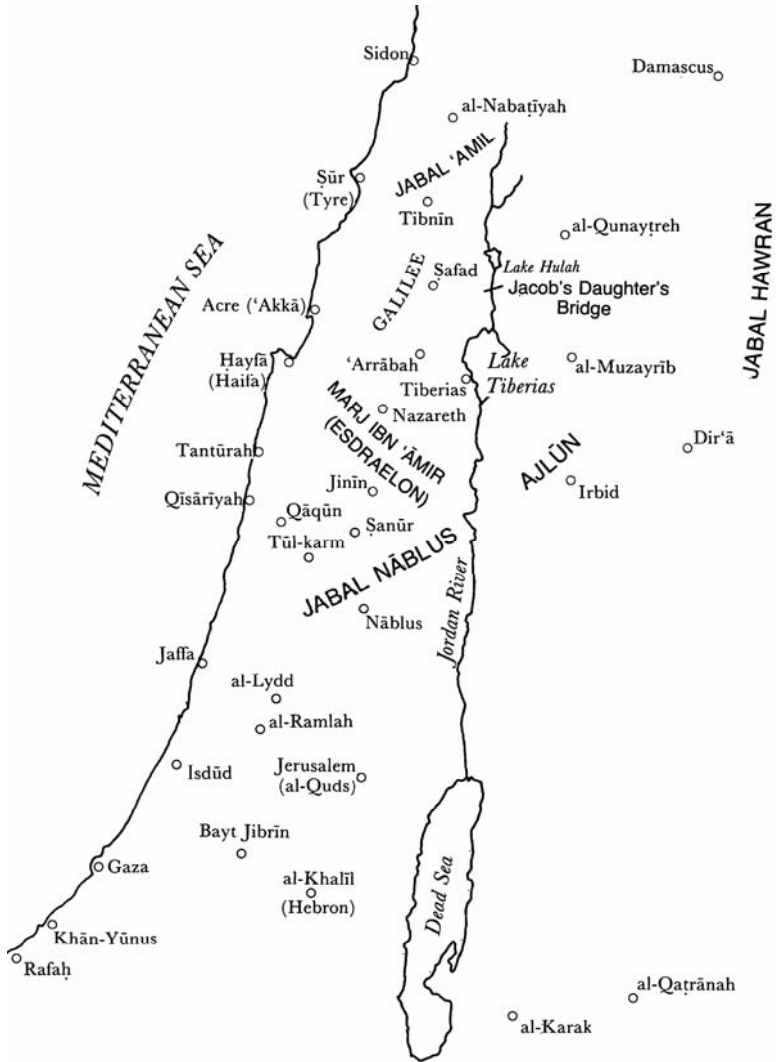
28. Albert Hourani, *A Vision of History*, p. 42.

MAPS

MAP I: NORTHERN PALESTINE (THE SEAT OF ZAHIR)

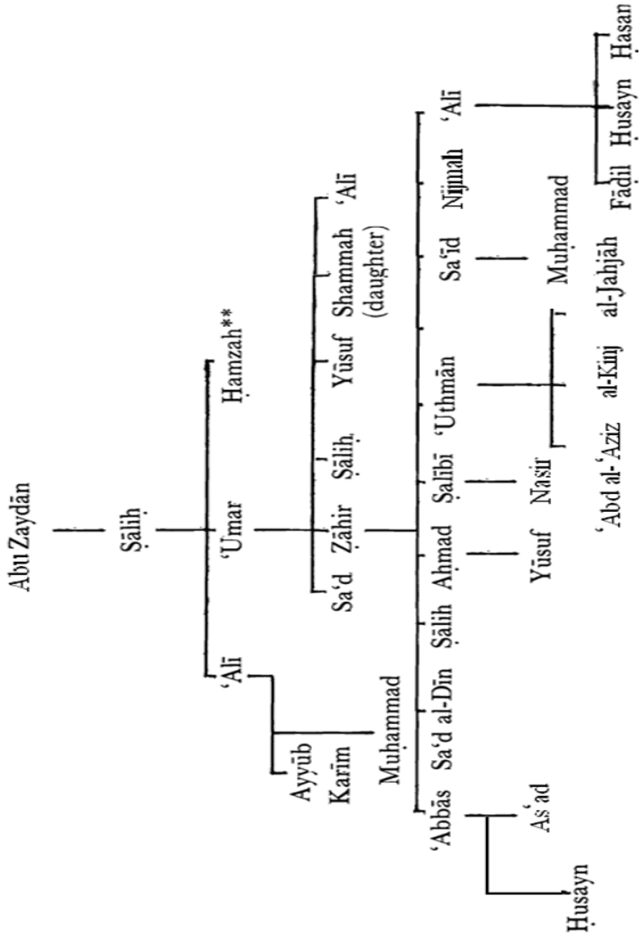


MAP II: THE EXTENT OF ZAHIR'S ACTIVITIES



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: THE ZAYĀDINAH FAMILY TREE*

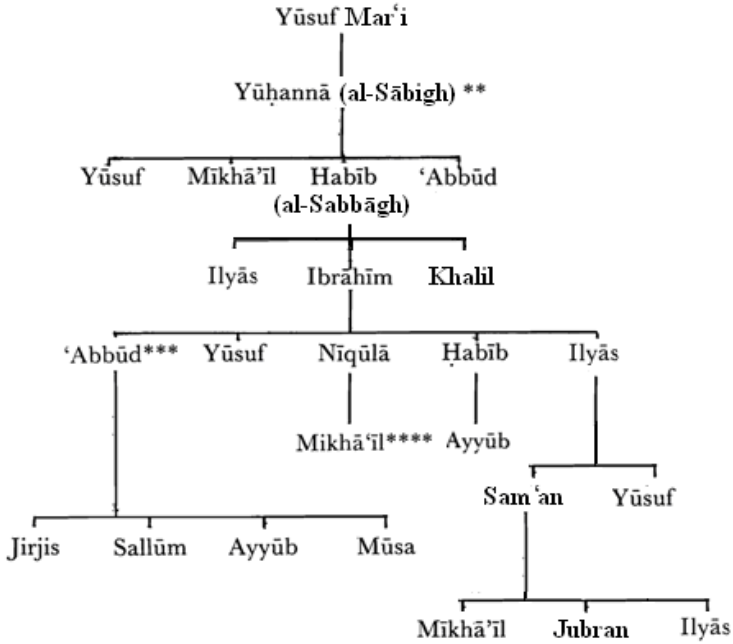


* This tree was assembled from numerous sources consulted for this study.

** M. al-Šabbāgh mentions three brothers: 'Ali, 'Umar, and Šiḥṭah, whereas more reliable contemporary documents mention 'Ali, 'Umar, and Ḥamzah.

*** Muḥammad al-'Ali married Šammah, and Karim al-Ayyub married Nijmah.

APPENDIX II: THE ŞABBĀGH FAMILY TREE*



* This tree was assembled from numerous sources consulted for this study, primarily M. al-Şabbāḡh, *Tārīkh Ibrāhīm al-Şabbāḡh* (Munich: Staatsbibliothek).

** The family's original name was al-Şābiḡh, but it was later changed to al-Şabbāḡh by Habīb, son of Yuhanna.

*** He is the author of *al-Rawḍ al-Zābir fī Tārīkh Zābir*.

**** He is the author of *Tārīkh al-Shaykh Zābir al-'Umar*.

APPENDIX IV:
THE SULTAN'S FIRMAN TO ZĀHIR, A.H. 1188 (1774-5)*

قدوة الاماجد والايامن الشيخ ظاهر العمر زيد قدومه نعرفك بعد وصول امر همايوننا هذا يكون مطومك بانك من قديم الزمان من المتنعين بنعم الدولة العلية . وعحق صدق ميوديتك ببهان الخدمات الصادقة . وكنت صاحب الشهرة والشان بصدق النية وخلوص الطوية . يشار اليك بالبنان . وكنت تادى الاموال الميرة قبل كل انسان . وقطاً ما عرجت عن صدق الخدمة . وطرق الاستقامة . الا منذ ازمة قريية لحدوث بعض اسباب . وبجسب البثرة لاجل حفظ النفس اظهرت خس سنوات التردد والوحشة . ولكن في هذا الوقت وصل الى سدتنا الملوكيه عرض حالك بواسطة دستور مكرم . مشيد مفخم . بنظام العالم . نائلم منظم الامم . المدير الجمهور بالفكر الشاقب . وشمم مهبات الانام بالراى الصايب . ممد بنيان الدولة والاقبال . مشيد اركان السعادة والاجلال . مراتب مراتب الكرام . مكمل ناموس السلطنة العظام . المتعوف بمواطف الملك الملام . الصدر الاعظم قوى المهيم . دام الله اجلاله . وضاف بالتاييد اقتداره . واقتباله . وكان مفهم عرض حالك لسدتنا الملوكيه . بانك اذا حصلت على العفو عما جرى منك من الحركات الغير مستحسنه صرت منظور بنظر الرحمة . وملعوظ بين الشفقة . بتضع قلادة الطاعة في رقبته المردية . فيناه على شوايع اطاعتك وثبوت ميوديتك [وتبإعاً] لقرله تامل فن عفا واصلح بأجره على الله . واقتداء للحدث النبوي فن اتال نادماً اقاله الله يوم القيامه . وحبذا هذا كونه من الشم السلطانيه . والسجاي الملوكيه . بشرط ان تسلك من بعد الان سلوك الطاعة والمردية . ولا تعرف عن منهج الاستقامة المرضية . ولو باقل الامور واصرفها . ولا تصرف وجهك عن تنظيم قطر الرعيه وتحصيل الاموال الميرة سابقاً ولاحقاً . ومن كل الوجهه اصرف سبيك في تحصيل رضانا . الكائن من النور والسعادة . فلي هذه الشروط المذكوره اجرينا قلم مضى ما مضى عن صفايح ذنوبك الى يومنا هذا كل شئ صدر منك ومن ارفاقتك ومن توابك ولواحتك وعشايرك . فصاروا مشمولين بالعفو السلطاني . فاشكروا نعمة الله ان كنتم اليه تبتدون . واعدوا هذه الرحمة السلطانية من التعم التظيمة . وقدموا شكراً الى يوم القيامه . وان [٥٢٠] حمت على طاعة الاحكام الجليلة السلطانية . قايماً بالخدمة المرضية . مظهرها حسن الصداقة والطوية . فلا تشاهد من طرفنا السلطاني الا اللطف والعناية . وكُن امين البال . مطمان الاحوال . وهمايوننا هذا اربطه على عضدك الايمن . والاظهار بانطافنا تحرك ارسلنا هذا الخط الممايرنى صعبة اقتضار الاماجد الكرام قيوجيلار كنخواسينا احمد هاشم دام مجده . وليكن مطوماً عند الجميع ان سلطنتنا المخلدة البنيان . المشيدة الاركان . قايمة على اساس الرحمة . فان صدر بجسب البشرية اجرا الذنوب من البيوت المتى واتبعوه بالتوبة والاتبه . وتلقوا باذيال المغفرة . فالعفو منهم من خطايص جدادات الكرام . ونحن اقتداء بهم قد عفونا عن ذنوبك لكبر سنك وشيخرتك . وشفقة منا على الرعايا والبرايا . فطليك راي الله وامانه وراى الرسول وراينسا السيد . فاحفظ همايوننا هذا تحوط جوهر في عتقك . واحسد على هلامتنا السلطانية . والحذر ثم الحذر من الخلاف . حرر في ذى القعدة سنة ١١٨٨ .

* Shihāb, *Lubnān fī 'Abd al-Umārā' al Shihābiyyin* (Beirut: The Catholic Press, 1933), Vol. I, pp. 107-108.

**APPENDIX V:
THE WALIS OF THE PROVINCE OF DAMASCUS
(CONTEMPORARIES WITH ZĀHIR)***

Arsilān Pasha al-Maṭarjī	1701–1702
Muḥammad Pasha Kurd-Bayram	1702–1703
‘Uthmān Pasha	1703–1703
Arsilān Pasha al-Maṭarjī	1703–1703
Muṣṭafā Pasha	1703–1704
Ḥusayn Pasha al-Farārī	1704–1705
Muḥammad Pasha Kurd-Bayram	1705–1706
Sulaymān Pasha	1706–1707
Yūsuf Pasha Qapūdān	1707–1708
Naṣūh (Nāṣīf) Pasha	1708–1712
Jarkas Muḥammad Pasha	1713–1715
Tūbāl Yūsuf Pasha	1715–1716
Ibrāhīm Pasha Qapūdān	1716–1716
‘Abd Allāh Pasha Köprülü	1716–1717
Rajab Pasha	1717–1718
‘Uthmān Pasha Abu Ṭawq	1719–1721
‘Alī Pasha Maqtūl	1721–1722
‘Uthmān Pasha Abū Ṭawq	1723–1725
Ismā‘īl Pasha al-j‘Azm	1725–1730
‘Abd Allāh Pasha al-Ayḍinlī	1731–1734
Sulaymān Pasha al-‘Azm	1734–1738
Ḥusayn Pasha al-Bustanjī	1738–1739
‘Uthmān Pasha al-Muḥaṣṣil	1739–1740
‘Alī Pasha Abū Qilī (Rīshah)	1740–1741
Sulaymān Pasha al-‘Azm	1741–1743
As‘ad Pasha al-‘Azm	1743–1757
Ḥusayn Pasha ibn Makkī	1757–1757
‘Abd Allāh Pasha al-Jatahjī	1758–1760
Muḥammad Pasha al-Shālik	1760–1760
‘Uthmān Pasha al-Kurjī	1760–1771
Muḥammad Pasha al-‘Azm	1771–1772
Muṣṭafā Pasha al-Sabāyikjī	1772–1773
Muḥammad Pasha al-‘Azm	1773–1783

* This is a cumulative table compiled during research from sources used for this study.

**APPENDIX VI: THE WĀLIS OF THE PROVINCE OF ŞAYDĀ
(CONTEMPORARIES WITH ZĀHIR)***

Qublān Pasha al-Maṭarjī	1700–1703
Arsilān Pasha al-Maṭarjī	1703–1706
Bashīr Pasha al-Maṭarjī	1706–1712
‘Uthmān Pasha Abū Ṭawq	1712–1715
Bashīr Pasha al-Maṭarjī	1715–1717
‘Uthmān Pasha Abū Ṭawq	1717–1718
?	1718–1723
Aḥmad Pasha Abū Ṭawq	1723–1725
‘Uthmān Pasha Abū Ṭawq	1725–1726
‘Abd Allāh Pasha Köprülü	1727–1728
Sulaymān Pasha al-‘Azm	1728–1730
Aḥmad Pasha Abū Ṭawq	1730–1734
Sa’d al-Dīn Pasha al-‘Azm	1734–1737
Ibrāhīm Pasha al-‘Azm	1737–1741
As’ad Pasha al-‘Azm	1741–1742
Ya’qūb Pasha	1742–1742
Ibrāhīm Pasha al-‘Azm	1742–1744
Sa’d al-Dīn Pasha al-‘Azm.	1744–1748
‘Uthmān Pasha al-Muḥaṣṣil	1748–1750
Muṣṭafā Pasha (al-Qawwās)	1750–1752
Sa’d al-Dīn Pasha al-‘Azm	1752–1753
Muṣṭafā Pasha (al-Qawwās)	1754–1755
Muṣṭafā Pasha al-‘Azm	1755–1756
Sa’d al-Dīn Pasha al-‘Azm	1756–1759
Nu‘mān Pasha	1760–1763
Muḥammad Pasha al-‘Azm	1763–1770
Darwīsh Pasha al-Kurjī	1770–1771
Zāhir al-‘Umar (de facto)	1771–1775
Rajab Pasha	1772–1772
Malak Muḥammad Pasha	1775–1775
Aḥmad Pasha al-Jazzār	1775–1804

* This is a cumulative table compiled during research from sources used for this study.

IMAGES



Zahir's addition to the wall of the Old City of 'Akka



Zahir's addition to the wall of the Old City of 'Akka



Zahir's addition to the wall of the Old City of 'Akka



Zahir's khan (caravanserai) in the Old City of 'Akka



Zahir's *khan* (caravanserai) in the Old City of 'Akka



Zahir's khan (caravanserai) in the Old City of 'Akka



Outside of the *khan* (caravanserai) in the Old City of 'Akka



Zahir's mosque, 'Akka



Zahir's mosque, 'Akka



Zahir's mosque, 'Akka



Zahir's mosque, 'Akka



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of 'Ali's ibn Zahir's fortress, Deir Hanna



Remains of citadel, Safad



Remains of citadel, Safad



Remains of citadel, Safad



Remains of citadel, Safad



Remains of citadel, Safad



Remains of 'Uthman ibn Zahir's fortress, Shafa 'Amr



Remains of 'Uthman ibn Zahir's fortress, Shafa 'Amr



Mosque built by the Zaydanis, Tiberias



Mosque built by the Zaydanis, Tiberias



Mosque built by the Zaydanis, Tiberias



Mosque built by the Zaydanis, Tiberias



Mosque built by the Zaydanis, Tiberias



Mosque built by the Zaydanis, Tiberias

ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLITERATION

A.E.	Affaires Etrangères—Archive Nationale, Paris.
BM	British Museum.
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale.
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.
E.I.	Encyclopaedia of Islam.
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society.
JPOS	Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society.
JRCAS	Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society.
NC	New Collection, Dayr al-Mukhallis.
PRO	Public Record Office, London.
S.P.	State Papers.

Except for the Anglicized words, the Library of Congress transliteration system is followed throughout. However, this book seeks to reach the broad public as well as specialists. This aim encouraged me to omit as much as possible of the diacritical and vowel marks. Thus, the text has been made easier for the general reader and the omitted technicalities will be evident to the specialist.

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GLOSSARY OF ARABIC & TURKISH TERMS

Agha: eunuch, master or town governor, or occasionally, garrison commander.

‘Amal: region or province (Mamluk period).

‘Āmil: governor of province (Mamluk period).

Amīn al-Şurrah: the purse commissioner; see Amir al-Şurrah

Amīr: prince, army brigade commander

Amīr al-Ĥajj: commander of the pilgrimage caravan

Amīr al-Şurrah: the purse commissioner; also known as Amin al-Surrah (Surre Emini): a person who usually attends the Syrian pilgrimage caravan carrying the annual endowment from the Sultan to be distributed to the Ashrāf, ‘Ulama and the poor of Mecca and Madinah.

Ankishāriyah: see Janissary; a regular Ottoman infantry.

Beglerbeg: governor.

Buyuruldi: order by an official, i.e. governor.

Chiftlik: jiftlik; government (state) land.

Ḍābiṭ: governor, also army officer.

Dawrah: annual tour taken by the wali of Damascus.

Ḍhimmi: non-Muslim who belongs to a monotheistic religion, such as Christians and Jews.

Eyālet: see vilāyet; province.

Firmān: edict, decree of the Ottoman Sultan.

Ghafar: safe-passage dues (road tax) paid by travelers to Bedouin tribes for protection.

Grand Vizier: prime minister (see Şadr ’A‘ẓam).

Ḥāj: a pilgrim (pl. Ḥujjā).

Ḥajj: Pilgrimage.

Ḥawāleh: a promissory note (literally: “transfer”) or bill of exchange.

Ḥimāyah: protection money

Humayūn: Imperial or Sultani

Iltizam: a district or village leased to an individual for a certain amount paid annually to the central Ottoman authorities; (tax farming).

Imām: prayer leader.

al-‘Iqāb: the sacred banner of the prophet (also called Sanjaq).

Janissary: also, yeni-çeri (new army) or regular Ottoman infantry.

Jardah: a regiment guarding the pilgrimage caravan.

Kapı Kullus: slaves of the Gate (Sultan).

Kapū Kūl: also qapū qūl; the janissaries: military or civil service of the Sultan; the Ottoman elite.

Khat Humayūn: Imperial edict, Sultan decree.

Khutbah: the sermon delivered by the Imam or Khatib at Friday congregational prayer.

Khil‘a: a cloak or robe of honor.

Khil‘at iltizām: a cloak or robe conferred on granting the lease.

Kizlar agha: agha of the black eunuchs.

Maghribi: a North African.

Maḥmal: a richly decorated camel litter sent by the Sultan indicating his support for the Pilgrimage caravan.

Mal-Miri: state or government tax.

Malikānah: a form of iltizam granted for life (virtually private property).

Mamlūk: a slave brought in the Muslim territory for military service especially during the Mamlūk Sultanate.

Mashāyekh: (pl. of Shaykh). See Shaykh

Mudabbir: controller, counselor, manager.

Muftī: a learned person in Islamic law who officially issues a fatwā (a legal opinion).

Muhāfīz: city governor or garrison commander appointed by the wālī.

Multazim: holder of iltizām (tax-farmer).

Mutasallim: a town or city governor appointed by the wālī.

Mutaṣarrif: governor of a district smaller than a province, called Mutaṣarrifyeh (i.e. Jerusalem) appointed by the Sultan.

- Nā'ib: deputy, governor of niyābeh (Mamluk period).
- Nā'ib al-Sultan: regent.
- Naqīb al-Ashrāf: head of the descendents of the Prophet in a city or country.
- Orṭa: regiment.
- Pashālik: province (ottoman period).
- Porte: originally the building housing the office of the Grand Vizier, thus the Sublime Porte is used as an alternative for the Ottoman government.
- Qabjī bashi: the Sultan's emissary.
- Qābūdān: fleet admiral
- Qabūqūl: janissary (see Kapu Kul).
- Qadā': a sub district ruled by qā'im maqām.
- Qā'im maqām: an administrative officer at the head of qadā'; it is also an army rank (colonel).
- Qaysī: a tribal political faction (Qaysī vs. Yemenī).
- Al-Rakb al-Misrī: the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan.
- Al-Rakb al-Shāmī: the Syrian pilgrimage caravan.
- Şadr'A'zam: Grand vizier (prime minister).
- Sanjaq: district or administrative unit of a province; also a flag.
- Sanjaq bey: governor of a sanjaq.
- Saqqā bashi: chief of water carriers to provide drinking water to the pilgrims.
- Sār-askar: (Ser-asker) commander-in-chief of an army.
- Sarr: a regular payment.
- Al-Shām: Bilād al-Shām or barr al-Shām, a geographical term used to mean all the region between Egypt and Iraq which is generally called Greater Syria; it may also refer to the city of Damascus (thus Wilāyet al-Sham is Province of Damascus).
- Shaykh: chief of a tribe or village elderly.
- Shaykh al-balad: the Premier Bey (governor of Cairo) the most influential and strongest mamluk in Egypt.
- Shaykh al-mashāyekh: the head chief.
- Şurra-emini: see Amīn al-Şurrah; purse commissioner.

Ustādh: master, mentor (a Mamluk rank in Egypt).

Vālī (wālī): governor of a province.

Vilayet (wilāyah): a province (see eyālet).

Wilāyet al-Shām: the province of Damascus.

Vizier (wazīr): a minister.

Yemenī: a tribal political faction (Qaysī vs. Yemenī).

Yerliyyeh: locally recruited Muslim soldiers.

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