

= Usama ibn Munqidh =

Majd ad @-@ D?n Us?ma ibn Murshid ibn ?Al? ibn Munqidh al @-@ Kin?ni al @-@ Kalbi ( also Usamah , Ousama , etc . ; Arabic : ????? ?? ) ( July 4 , 1095 ? November 17 , 1188 ) was a medieval Muslim poet , author , faris ( knight ) , and diplomat from the Banu Munqidh dynasty of Shaizar in northern Syria . His life coincided with the rise of several medieval Muslim dynasties , the arrival of the First Crusade , and the establishment of the crusader states .

He was the nephew and potential successor of the emir of Shaizar , but was exiled in 1131 and spent the rest of his life serving other leaders . He was a courtier to the Burids , Zengids , and Ayyubids in Damascus , serving the Zengi , Nur ad @-@ Din , and Saladin over a period of almost fifty years . He also served the Fatimid court in Cairo , as well as the Artuqids in Hisn Kayfa . He travelled extensively in Arab lands , visiting Egypt , Syria , Palestine and along the Tigris River , and went on pilgrimage to Mecca . He often meddled in the politics of the courts in which he served , and he was exiled from both Damascus and Cairo .

During and immediately after his life , he was most famous as a poet and adib ( a " man of letters " ) . He wrote many poetry anthologies , such as the Kitab al- ' Asa ( " Book of the Staff " ) , Lubab al @-@ Adab ( " Kernels of Refinement " ) , and al @-@ Manazil wa 'l @-@ Diyar ( " Dwellings and Abodes " ) , and collections of his own original poetry . In modern times , he is remembered more for his Kitab al @-@ I 'tibar ( " Book of Learning by Example " or " Book of Contemplation " ) , which contains lengthy descriptions of the crusaders , whom he interacted with on many occasions , and some of whom he considered friends .

Most of his family was killed in an earthquake at Shaizar in 1157 . He died in Damascus in 1188 , at the age of 93 .

= = Early life = =

Usama was the son of Murshid , and the nephew of Nasr , emir of Shaizar .

Shaizar was seen as a strategically important site and the gateway to enter and control inner Syria . The Arabs initially conquered Shaizar during the Muslim conquest of the Levant in 637 . Due to its importance it exchanged hands numerous times between the Arabs and Byzantines , who regained it in 999 . In 1025 the Banu Munqid tribe were given an allocation of land beside Shaizar by the ruler of Hama , Saleh al @-@ Murdase . Over time they expanded their lands building fortifications and castles until Usamas grandfather Iz Al @-@ Dawlah Al @-@ Murhif Nasr retook it in 1180 .

When Nasr died in 1098 , Usama 's father , Majd Al @-@ Deen Abi Salamah Murshed ( 1068- 1137 ) became the emir of Shaizar and the surrounding cities . However he soon gave up his position to Usama 's Uncle ( Iz Al @-@ Deen Abi Al @-@ Asaker Sultan Mrdad ) , Sultan , since Murshid was more interested in studying religion , writing the Quraan and hunting than matters of politics .

During Usamas life and when his uncle ruled Shaizr was attacked numerous times by Bani Klab in Aleppo , the Assassins sect , the Byzantines and the crusaders . It was struck with siege engines for 10 days in 1137 by the Byzantines and the crusaders attempted on many occasions to storm it . However , due to its natural fortifications along with castles and walls it never fell .

As a child , Usama was the second of four boys and raised by his nurse , Lu 'lu 'a , who had also raised his father and would later raise Usama 's own children . He was encouraged by his father to memorize the Qur 'an , and was also tutored by scholars such as Ibn Munira of Kafartab and Abu Abdullah al @-@ Tulaytuli of Toledo . He spent much of his youth hunting with his family , partly as recreation and certainly as warrior ( faris ) training for battle as part of furusiyya . He also had much direct experience of battle , against the neighbouring crusader County of Tripoli and Principality of Antioch , hostile Muslim neighbours in Hama , Homs , and elsewhere , and Hashshashin who had established a base near Shaizar .

Sultan did not initially have any male heirs and it is possible that Usama expected to succeed him . He certainly singled him out among his brothers by teaching him , tutoring him in the ways of war and hunting . He even favoured him for personal missions and as a representative . However , after Sultan had his own son , he no longer appreciated the presence of Usama and Murshid 's other

sons . According to Usama , Sultan was jealous after a particularly successful lion @-@ hunt in 1131 when he entered the town with a large lion head in his arms as a hunting trophy . When his grandmother saw this she warned him about the effect this could have on his uncle . However , despite this he still spoke well of his uncle on a few occasions in his autobiography and highlighted his noble actions . Usama ultimately left Shaizar temporarily in 1129 and after his father died in 1137 his exile became permanent .

His uncle died in 1154 and his son , Taj Al @-@ Dawlah Naser Al @-@ Deen Mohammad , inherited the castle . However he was the last of the line when an earthquake in 1157 struck the area killing scores .

= = Damascus and Egypt = =

Usama went to Homs , where he was taken captive in a battle against Zengi , the atabeg of Mosul and Aleppo , who had just captured nearby Hama . After his capture he entered Zengi 's service , and travelled throughout northern Syria , Iraq , and Armenia fighting against Zengi 's enemies , including the Abbasid caliph outside Baghdad in 1132 . In 1135 he returned to the south , to Hama , where one of Zengi 's generals , al @-@ Yaghisiyani , was appointed governor . He returned to Shaizar when his father died in May 1137 , and again in April 1138 when Byzantine emperor John II Comnenus besieged the city .

The emperor 's siege of Shaizar was unsuccessful , but Shaizar was heavily damaged . After the siege , Usama left Zengi 's service and went to Damascus , which was ruled by Mu 'in ad @-@ Din Unur , the atabeg of the Burid dynasty . Zengi was determined to conquer Damascus , so Usama and Unur turned to the crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem for help . Usama was sent on a preliminary visit to Jerusalem in 1138 , and in 1139 Zengi captured Baalbek in Damascene territory . In 1140 Unur sent Usama back to Jerusalem to conclude a treaty with the crusaders , and both he and Unur visited their new allies numerous times between 1140 and 1143 . Afterwards , Usama was suspected of being involved in a plot against Unur , and he fled Damascus for Fatimid Cairo in November , 1144 .

In Cairo he became a wealthy courtier , but he was involved in plots and conspiracies there as well . The young az @-@ Zafir became caliph in 1149 , and Ibn as @-@ Sallar became vizier , with Usama as one of his advisors . As @-@ Sallar sent Usama to negotiate an alliance against the crusaders with Zengi 's son Nur ad @-@ Din , but the negotiations failed . Usama took part in battles with the crusaders outside of Ascalon on his way back to Egypt , and after he left , his brother ' Ali was killed at Gaza .

Back in Egypt , as @-@ Sallar was assassinated in 1153 by his son Abbas , Abbas 's son Nasr , and caliph az @-@ Zafir , who , according to Usama , was Nasr 's lover . Thirteenth @-@ century historian Ibn al @-@ Athir says that Usama was the instigator of this plot . Usama may also have been behind the assassination of az @-@ Zafir by Abbas , in 1154 . Az @-@ Zafir 's relatives called upon a supporter , Ibn Ruzzik , who chased Abbas out of Cairo , and Usama followed him . He lost his possessions in Cairo , and on the way to Damascus his retinue was attacked by the crusaders and Bedouin nomads , but in June 1154 he safely reached Damascus , which had recently been captured by Nur ad @-@ Din . Ibn Ruzzik tried to persuade him to come back , as the rest of his family was still in Cairo , but Usama was able to bring them to Damascus , through crusader territory , in 1156 . The crusaders promised to transport them safely , but they were attacked and pillaged , and Usama lost his entire library .

= = Later years = =

In 1157 , Shaizar was destroyed by an earthquake , killing almost all of Usama 's relatives . They were there for the circumcision of the son of his cousin Muhammad , who had recently succeeded Sultan as emir . The only survivor was Muhammad 's wife . Usama had remained in Damascus , and after the destruction of his homeland he remained there in semi @-@ retirement . He went on pilgrimage to Mecca in 1160 , then went on campaign against the crusaders with Nur ad @-@ Din in

1162 , and was at the Battle of Harim in 1164 . That year , Usama left Nur ad @-@ Din 's service and went north to the court of Kara Arslan , the Artuqid emir of Hisn Kayfa .

Usama 's life in Hisn Kayfa is very obscure , but he travelled throughout the region , and probably wrote many of his works there . In 1174 Usama was invited to Damascus to serve Saladin , who had succeeded Nur ad @-@ Din earlier that year and was a friend of Usama 's son Murhaf . Usama lived in semi @-@ retirement , as he did in Hisn Kayfa , and often met with Saladin to discuss literature and warfare . He may have also taught poetry and hadith in Damascus , and held poetry salons for Saladin and his chief men , including al @-@ Qadi al @-@ Fadl and Imad ad @-@ Din al @-@ Isfahani . He died on November 17 , 1188 . He was buried in Damascus on Mount Qasiyun , although the tomb is now lost .

= = Family = =

Usama had three brothers , Muhammad , ' Ali , and Munqidh ; his cousin , also named Muhammad , succeeded Usama 's uncle Sultan as emir of Shaizar . He had a son , Murhaf , in 1126 , and another son , Abu Bakr , who died as a child . He had a daughter , Umm Farwa , in Hisn Kayfa in 1166 . He mentions other children , but their names , and the name of his wife or wives , are unknown .

The picture he painted of his father was of a pious religious man who was not interested in the affairs of this world . He would spend most of his time reading the Quraan , fasting and hunting during the day and at night would copy the Quraan . He also recounted a few battles his father joined against the crusaders in his autobiography Kitab al Itibar .

= = Religion = =

It is sometimes assumed that Usama was Shi 'ite , because he often writes about ' Ali , his family cooperated with the Fatimids and other Shi 'ite dynasties , and he himself served the Fatimids in Egypt . Philip K. Hitti thought he had a " secret sympathy " with the Shi 'ites . Paul M. Cobb does not think there is enough evidence one way or the other , but believes he was probably Sunni with " acceptable Shi 'ite tendencies . " Robert Irwin thinks the Banu Munqidh were Twelver Shi 'ites ( unlike the Fatimids who were Seveners ) , and that another clue to Usama 's Shi 'ism is his dislike of jihad , which was not a Shi 'ite doctrine . Usama also admired Christian monks and holy men , and was disturbed that Muslims were not as pious as Christians . He was very fond of Sufis when he first learned about them late in his life in Damascus .

= = Works = =

Around 1171 in Hisn Kayfa , Usama wrote the Kitab al- ' Asa ( " Book of the Staff " ) , a poetry anthology about famous walking sticks and other staffs , and al @-@ Manazil wa 'l @-@ Diyar ( " Dwellings and Abodes " ) . In Damascus in the early 1180s he wrote another anthology , the Lubab al @-@ Adab ( " Kernels of Refinement " ) , instructions on living a properly cultured life . He is most famous for the Kitab al @-@ I 'tibar ( translated various ways , most recently as the Book of Contemplation ) , which was written as a gift to Saladin around 1183 . It is not exactly a " memoir " , as Philip Hitti translated the title , although it does include many autobiographical details that are incidental to the main point . It was meant to be " a book of examples ( ' ibar ) from which to draw lessons . "

In 1880 , Hartwig Derenbourg was the first to discover the Kitab al @-@ I 'tibar , which survived in only one manuscript , in the possession of the Escorial Monastery near Madrid . Derenbourg was also the first to produce an Arabic edition ( 1886 ) , a biography of Usama ( 1889 ) , and a French translation ( 1895 ) . In 1930 , Hitti produced an improved Arabic edition , and an English translation . Qasim as @-@ Samarrai produced another Arabic edition in 1987 .

Usama wrote in " Middle Arabic " , a less formal style of classical Arabic .

= = Reputation = =

Usama was known for meddling in the business of others , rather than commanding any power of his own . As the Encyclopaedia of Islam says , " his career was a troubled one , and for this his own actions were surely responsible in large part . "

To contemporary and later medieval Muslims , however , he was best remembered for his poetry and his poetry anthologies . Ibn Khallikan , author of a fourteenth @-@ century biographical dictionary , calls him " one of the most powerful , learned , and intrepid members of the [ Munqidh ] family " and speaks at great length about his poetry .

He was also known for his military and hunting exploits . Ibn al @-@ Athir described him as " the ultimate of bravery " , regarding his presence at the Battle of Harim .

For modern readers he is most famous for the Kitab al @-@ I 'tibar and his descriptions of life in Syria during the early crusades . The disjointed nature of the work has given him a reputation as a senile rambler , although it is actually written with an anthological structure , with humorous or moralistic tales that are not meant to proceed chronologically , as a true autobiography would . Since this style of literature , adab in Arabic , does not necessarily have to be factual , historians are quick to point out that Usama 's historical material cannot always be trusted . Usama 's anecdotes about the crusades are sometimes obvious jokes , exaggerating their " otherness " to entertain his Muslim audience . As Carole Hillenbrand wrote , it would be " dangerously misleading to take the evidence of his book at its face value . "

= = = Editions and translations of Usama 's works = = =

Ousama ibn Mounkidh , un emir Syrien au premier siècle des croisades ( 1095 ? 1188 ) , ed . Hartwig Derenbourg . Paris , 1889 .

An Arab @-@ Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades ; Memoirs of Usamah ibn @-@ Munqidh ( Kitab al i 'tibar ) , trans Philip K. Hitti . New York , 1929 .

Memoirs Entitled Kitab al @-@ I 'tibar , ed . Philip K. Hitti ( Arabic text ) . Princeton : Princeton University Press , 1930 .

Lubab al @-@ Adab , ed . A. M. Shakir . Cairo : Maktabat Luwis Sarkis , 1935 .

Diwan Usama ibn Munqidh , ed . A. Badawi and H. Abd al @-@ Majid . Cairo : Wizarat al @-@ Ma'arif al @-@ Umumiyya , 1953 .

Kitab al @-@ Manazil wa 'l @-@ Diyar , ed . M. Hijazi . Cairo : Al @-@ Majlis al @-@ A 'la li @-@ I @-@ Shu 'un al @-@ Islamiyya , 1968 .

Kitab al- ' Asa , ed . Hassan Abbas . Alexandria : Al @-@ Hay 'at al @-@ Misriyya al- ' Amma li @-@ I @-@ Kitab , 1978 .

Al @-@ Badi ' fi @-@ I @-@ Badi ' , ed . A. Muhanna . Beirut : Dar al @-@ Kutub al- ' Ilmiyya , 1987 .

Kitab al i 'tibar , ed . Qasim as @-@ Samarra 'i . Riyadh , 1987 .

" Usama ibn Munqidh 's Book of the Staff ( Kitab al 'Asa ) : autobiographical and historical excerpts , " trans . Paul M. Cobb . Al @-@ Masaq : Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean 17 ( 2005 ) .

" Usama ibn Munqidh 's Kernels of Refinement ( Lubab al @-@ Adab ) : autobiographical and historical excerpts , " trans . Paul M. Cobb . Al @-@ Masaq : Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean 18 ( 2006 )

The Book of Contemplation : Islam and the Crusades , trans . Paul M. Cobb . Penguin Classics , 2008 .

= = = Secondary works = = =

Ibn Khallikan 's Biographical Dictionary , trans . William MacGuckin , Baron de Slane , vol . 1 . Paris , 1842 .

Hassan Abbas , Usama ibn Munqidh : Hayatuhu wa @-@ Atharuhu . Cairo : al @-@ Hay 'a al @-@ Misriya al- ' Ama li 'l @-@ Kitab , 1981 .

Niall Christie , " Just a bunch of dirty stories ? Women in the memoirs of Usamah ibn Munqidh . " Eastward Bound : Travel and Travellers , 1050 ? 1550 , ed . Rosamund Allen . Manchester : Manchester University Press , 2004 , pp. 71 ? 87 .

Paul M. Cobb , Usama ibn Munqidh : Warrior @-@ Poet in the Age of Crusades Oxford : Oneworld , 2005 .

Paul M. Cobb , " Infidel dogs : hunting crusaders with Usamah ibn Munqidh . " Crusades 6 ( 2007 ) .

Lawrence I. Conrad , " Usama ibn Munqidh and other witnesses to Frankish and Islamic medicine in the era of the crusades . " Medicine in Jerusalem throughout the Ages , ed . Zohar Amar et al . Tel Aviv : C. G. Foundation , 1999 .

Carole Hillenbrand , The Crusades : Islamic Perspectives . Routledge , 2000 .

R. S. Humphreys , Munkidh , Banu . Encyclopaedia of Islam , 2nd. ed . , vol . VII ( Leiden : Brill , 1960 ? 2002 ) .

Robert Irwin , " Usama ibn Munqidh : an Arab @-@ Syrian gentleman at the time of the Crusades reconsidered . " The Crusades and their sources : essays presented to Bernard Hamilton ed . John France , William G. Zajac ( Aldershot : Ashgate , 1998 ) pp. 71 ? 87 .

Adnan Husain , " Wondrous Crusade Encounters : Usamah ibn Munqidh 's Book of Learning by Example , " in Jason Glenn ( ed ) , The Middle Ages in Texts and Texture : Reflections on Medieval Sources ( Toronto , University of Toronto , 2012 ) ,

D. W. Morray , " The genius of Usamah ibn Munqidh : aspects of Kitab al @-@ I 'tibar by Usamah ibn Munqidh . " Working Paper . University of Durham , Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies , Durham , 1987 .

I. Schen , " Usama ibn Munqidh 's Memoirs : some further light on Muslim Middle Arabic . " Journal of Semitic Studies 17 ( 1972 ) , and Journal of Semitic Studies 18 ( 1973 ) .

G. R. Smith , " A new translation of certain passages of the hunting section of Usama ibn Munqidh 's I 'tibar . " Journal of Semitic Studies 26 ( 1981 ) .

Stefan Wild , " Open questions , new light : Usama ibn Munqidh 's account of his battles against Muslims and Franks . " The Frankish Wars and their Influence on Palestine , edd . Khalil Athamina and Roger Heacock ( Birzeit , 1994 ) , pp. 9 ? 29 .

The Chronicle of Ibn al @-@ Athir for the Crusading Period from al @-@ Kamil i 'l @-@ Ta 'rikh , Part 2 : The Years 541 ? 589 / 1146 ? 1193 : The Age of Nur al @-@ Din and Saladin , trans . D.S. Richards . Crusade Texts in Translation 15 . Aldershot : Ashgate , 2007 .