

= Amir al @-@ ?arab =

The amir al @-@ ?arab ( also known as amir al @-@ ?urban ; translation : " commander of the Bedouin " ) was a title denoting the commander or leader of the Bedouin tribes in Syria in successive Muslim states during the Middle Ages . The title was used as early as the 11th century , but was formally turned into a state institution by the Ayyubid Sultanate and strengthened by the latter 's Mamluk successors . The office was preserved under the early Ottomans ( 16th ? 17th centuries ) , at least ceremonially , but its importance had faded by then . The jurisdiction of the amir al @-@ ?arab was generally limited to central and northern Syria , and he often held iqta?at ( fiefs ) in the Syrian steppe , which formed the imarat al @-@ ?arab ( emirate of the Bedouin ) . The imarat al @-@ ?arab was created both to co @-@ opt the often rebellious Bedouin tribes of Syria and to enlist their support as auxiliary troops . Under the Mamluks , some of the principal duties of the amir al @-@ ?arab were guarding the desert frontier against the Mongol Ilkhanate in Iraq and Anatolia , ensuring Bedouin loyalty to the state , gathering intelligence on enemy forces , protecting infrastructure , villages and travelers from raids and providing horses and camels to the sultan . In return , the amir al @-@ ?arab was given iqta 'at , an annual salary , official titles and honorary robes .

Under the Ayyubids , numerous Arab emirs held the post at any given time and were endowed with iqta?at . However , with the onset of Mamluk rule in Syria in 1260 , it became a hereditary office consolidated by members of the Al Fadl dynasty , direct descendants of the Tayyid clan of Banu Jarrah . The office remained in the household of the Al Fadl emir , Isa ibn Muhanna , with occasional interruption , well into the early Ottoman era , during which Isa 's descendants took over leadership of the Mawali tribe . Under the Ottomans , the role of the amir al @-@ ?arab appeared centered on providing camels to the state and guarding the Hajj pilgrim caravan in return for annual payments .

= = Administration = =

The Ayyubids founded the imarat al @-@ ?arab ( emirate of the Bedouins ) as a formal state institution . However , due to the fractious nature of the Ayyubid political system , the appointed amir al @-@ ?arab ( pl. umara al @-@ ?arab ) was often unable to maintain authority over all of the Bedouin chieftains , who generally viewed the amir al @-@ ?arab as their equal rather than their superior . Under the Mamluks , the amir al @-@ ?arab was appointed by the sultan in Egypt and was considered a state official . His iqta? ( fief ; pl. iqta?at ) grants were given to him in a diploma delivered by the sultan 's chancery or picked up by the amir al @-@ ?arab himself if he was visiting the sultan 's court in Cairo . In the Mamluk provinces of Damascus , Aleppo and the capital , Cairo , a department called the mihmand?riyya dealt with managing Bedouin affairs and receiving the amir al @-@ ?arab . The amir al @-@ ?arab and the other Bedouin emirs were classified as arb?b al @-@ suy?f ( men of the sword ) , i.e. part of the military hierarchy . The rank of an amir al @-@ ?arab was equal to an amir mi?a muqaddam alf ( emir of one hundred [ mounted troops ] , commander of one thousand ) and n??ir al @-@ jaysh ( head of the army ) of the province of Damascus and the na 'ib ( governor ) of Homs .

The early Ottomans preserved the imarat al @-@ arab at least during the 16th century , during which the title was referred to as amir ?arab @-@ i Sh?m . However , the rights and role of the amir al @-@ arab and his status in the Ottoman administration in Ottoman Syria are not well @-@ defined in the contemporary sources , according to historian Muhammad Adnan Bakhit . The provincial records of Damascus Eyalet ( Province of Damascus ) , whose jurisdiction extended throughout Syria until the mid @-@ 16th century , do not mention the emirate 's function . Moreover , Bakhit asserts that it is unclear if the sultan 's ratification was required for the Bedouin tribes or the provincial government to recognize the amir al @-@ arab .

= = = Incorporation into iqta? system = = =

Most chieftains under the Ayyubids were incorporated into the iqta? system and received customary

payments from the Ayyubids . The Ayyubids ' Mamluk successors paid closer attention to the Bedouin tribes of Syria as they considered the region to be an important frontier in the wars with the Crusaders in the coastal areas and the Mongol Ilkhanate in Anatolia and Iraq . The Mamluks relied on the Bedouin as auxiliary troops and were wary of their unstable , but much @-@ needed , loyalty to the state , and referred to the iqtaʿat of the amir al @-@ ʿarab as an " iqtaʿ iʿtidʿd ( fief of reliance ) . This status officially precluded the Bedouin from the military service required of iqtaʿ @-@ holders , indicating " a special relationship " between the state and the Bedouin , according to historian Tsugato Sato . In practice , however , the Bedouin of Syria were often called on to participate as auxiliary troops in military expeditions or in emergency situations .

The Bedouin iqtaʿat were small compared to those of the mamluk ( manumitted slave soldier ) emirs , though a number of sultans granted particularly generous iqtaʿat to the amir al @-@ ʿarab . The distribution of iqtaʿat to the tribes was done , at least in part , to persuade them not plunder the unfortified towns and villages of the countryside as they were normally wont to do , and to induce them to cooperate with the state . The frequent rebellion of the tribes also motivated the Mamluks to incorporate them into the iqtaʿ system . The iqtaʿ of the amir al @-@ ʿarab would often be confiscated in cases of rebellion against the sultan . In general , Salamiyah and Palmyra consistently served as iqtaʿat of the amir al @-@ ʿarab , continuing into the early Ottoman era , when the iqtaʿ was supplanted by the timar . Besides Salamiyah and Palmyra , the Ottomans granted the amir al @-@ ʿarab timar grants in the Hawran plain south of Damascus .

#### = = = Duties = = =

In return for iqtaʿat , annual customary payments , and honorary titles and robes , the amir al @-@ ʿarab was expected to command his horsemen as auxiliaries in the wars against the Mongols , the Crusaders , their allies and rebellious Mamluk emirs . Another expectation of the amir al @-@ ʿarab and the lower @-@ ranking tribal chieftains was intelligence gathering regarding enemy movements near the frontier . Among the official duties of the amir al @-@ ʿarab and the Syrian Bedouin tribes was the defense of the sultanate 's boundaries , and maintenance and oversight of the roads , bridges and mountain passes of the desert and within their iqtaʿat . This also entailed the protection of merchant travelers and the annual Hajj pilgrim caravan , which traversed Bedouin territory to reach the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina in the Hejaz . Tribesmen also served as desert guides for the army and state officials . The amir al @-@ ʿarab was further responsible for collecting zakat ( dues ) on the livestock of the Bedouin tribes .

During Sultan Baybar 's reign ( 1260 ? 1277 ) , a barid ( postal route ) was created between Egypt and Syria , which enabled the sultan to remain constantly notified of developments in the provinces . It served as a major centralizing factor in the Mamluk state , and each postal station required transport horses , which the tribes provided . According to Sato , the tribes ' supply of horses and camels was " indispensable for the maintenance " of the barid . Noble horses and young camels were also provided by the amir al @-@ ʿarab to the royal stables of the Mamluk sultans on an annual basis . Under the early Ottomans , the amir al @-@ ʿarab was required to provision the sultan 's stables with 1 @,@ 050 young camels and 30 young horses , the collective annual value of which was 240 @,@ 000 akçe . This formed part of the sultan 's revenue from the Damascus Eyalet .

#### = = History = =

#### = = = Origins = = =

The Syrian Desert , which extended from Balis to Ayla , had been inhabited by Arab Bedouin tribes in pre @-@ Islamic times ( before mid @-@ 7th century ) . In the 250 years after the Muslim conquest of Syria in the 630s , the Bedouin were brought under the authority of the Rashidun ( 632 ? 661 ) , Umayyad ( 661 ? 750 ) and early Abbasid ( 750 ? 861 ) caliphates . Throughout this period

, various Bedouin tribes participated in Umayyad dynastic struggles , the Abbasid Revolution , the rebellious Kharijite and Alid movements and isolated revolts . Following the Abbasid decline in 861 , state authority in the Syrian Desert receded significantly , leaving the local Bedouin tribes to fill the void . The Hamdanid dynasty ( 890 ? 1004 ) , from the Banu Taghlib tribe , represented the new found strength of the Bedouin , and according to 14th century historian Ibn Khaldun , they commanded the subservience of all Bedouin tribes in the Syrian Desert and Upper Mesopotamia . Other tribal dynasties that emerged in this region before or after the heyday of the Hamdanids included the Uqaylids ( 990 ? 1096 ) , Numayrids , the Banu Assad and Banu Khafaja . By the late 10th century , the Jarrahids ( 970s ? mid 11th century ) of Banu Tayy and the Mirdasids ( 1024 ? 1080 ) of Banu Kilab dominated southern and northern Syria , respectively , first in association with the Qarmatians , and then as nominal partners of the Fatimids , who ruled Syria between 977 and 1071 . As a result of the Seljuk invasion in the latter half of the 11th century , only the Banu Rabi 'ah , a branch of the Jarrahids , remained as an influential force in the Syrian Desert by the end of the century .

There is scant information about the authorities ' management of the Syrian Desert Bedouin between the early 11th and mid 13th centuries . Likewise , the origins of the title of amir al Arab are unclear . A number of medieval Muslim chroniclers referred to Salih ibn Mirdas ( d . 1029 ) , the founder of the Mirdasid emirate in Aleppo , as amir al Arab al Sham , which translates from Arabic as " commander of the Bedouin of Syria " . Hassan ibn Mufarrij , the Jarrahid chieftain and ally of Salih , was also referred to as amir al Arab by medieval sources . According to historian Suhayl Zakkar , the " value " of the title " is not known but at least indicates the high position of its holder " . Moreover , Zakkar asserts :

It is not known whether Salih was the first holder of this title or whether , indeed , it had existed previously . The origin of it is obscure for whether it was created by the tribes of Syria after Islam or whether it existed in Arabia before the rise of Islam and was then carried to Syria after the Islamic conquest in the 7th century is not known .

Zakkar speculates that the amir al Arab could have been a " revival or continuation " of a pre Islamic ( mid 6th century ) political tradition among the Bedouin of Syria whereby the chieftain of the Ghassanids , vassals of the Byzantine Empire , served as the supreme Arab phylarch ( tribal chieftain ) , giving him formal authority over the Bedouin tribes of Syria . In early Muslim chronicles , there is often references to sayyid ahl al badiya ( master of the desert dwellers ) or sayyid Qays ( master of the tribes of Qays ) , which Zakkar believes are possible " starting points which , in the course of time , developed to the title of Amir Arab al Sham " . During the Zengid period in Syria ( 1128 ? 1182 ) , some Bedouin chieftains were accorded iqta'at , paid taxes called *ʿid* on their livestock , and performed military duties .

== Ayyubid era ==

The groundwork for regulating Bedouin affairs in Syria was laid by the Ayyubid Sultanate 's founder , Saladin ( r . 1171 ? 1193 ) ; in 1182 , the latter entrusted the governor of Damascus , Ibn al Muqaddam , as the mu'akkim ( arbitrator ) and overseer of " all the Arabs " and who was " responsible for ... making the customary payments to them and collecting the customary dues from them " . According to historian Mustafa A. Hiyari , Saladin 's brother and successor , Sultan al Adil ( r . 1200 ? 1218 ) , founded the formal institution of the imarat al Arab ( emirate of the Bedouin ) and appointed Haditha ibn Ghudayya as the first amir al Arab . Haditha was a grandson of the Jarrahid emir Fadl ibn Rabi 'ah , the progenitor of the Al Fadl clan of Banu Rabi 'ah . Members of the clan were direct descendants of the Fatimid era Jarrahid governor of Palestine , Mufarrij ibn Daghfal ibn al Jarrah ( d . 1013 ) . By the late 12th century , the Banu Rabi 'ah and its sub clans , Al Fadl , Al Mira and Al Faraj , together with the sub clans of its ancestral tribe , the Tayy , dominated the desert and steppe regions between Homs in the west to the eastern banks of the Euphrates River and southward to central Najd and Hejaz . However , despite their influence , the Mamluk historian al Hamdani ( d . 1300 ) maintains that " no member of this clan [ Banu Rabi 'ah ] was appointed as amir al Arab by diploma from the

sultan " until Haditha 's appointment by al @-@ Adil .

Meanwhile , leaders of the Kilab continued to hold the title of amir al @-@ ?arab after the Ayyubid conquest of Aleppo in 1182 . As a result , Haditha 's jurisdiction initially did not extend to the Aleppo region ( northern Syria ) . However , during the latter half of az @-@ Zahir Ghazi ( r . 1193 ? 1216 ) of Aleppo 's reign , the Kilab were brought under Haditha 's authority and were stripped of the amir al @-@ ?arab title . According to medieval Arab historian Ibn al @-@ Adim ( d . 1262 ) , the Kilab 's status was downgraded because of the growing power of the Tayy clans , while al @-@ Hamdani asserts that the numerically @-@ superior Kilab were weakened by a divided leadership . Following the extension of Haditha 's jurisdiction to their traditional territory , some of the Kilab migrated north to Anatolia , while those who remained became allies of Haditha 's Al Fadl clan .

Following al @-@ Adil 's death in 1218 and the death of Haditha a few years later , the imarat al @-@ ?arab was divided by Sultan al @-@ Kamil ( r . 1218 ? 1238 ) between Haditha 's sons Mani and Ali , who founded the independent Al Ali branch of Al Fadl , and their kinsman , Ghannam ibn Abi Tahir of the Al Faraj clan . As Mani 's position was bolstered by his cooperation with the Ayyubids in their military campaigns and keeping the Bedouin in check , al @-@ Kamil dismissed Ghannam and Ali , leaving Mani as the sole amir al @-@ ?arab . When Mani died in 1232 / 33 , he was succeeded by his son Muhanna I after an agreement between the Ayyubid emirs of Homs and Damascus , al @-@ Mujahid Shirkuh II and al @-@ Ashraf Musa , respectively , without input from the sultan of Egypt . From this period until 1260 , only scant information is available about the imarat al @-@ ?arab . However , it is known that in 1240 , Muhanna I was replaced by Tahir ibn Ghannam by the Ayyubid regent of Aleppo , Dayfa Khatun , for Tahir 's support against her dynastic opponents . Some years later , the title was bestowed on Ali or his son Abu Bakr .

= = = Mamluk era = = =

The Mamluk Sultanate annexed Syria in 1260 , and maintained the imarat al @-@ ?arab in Syria . In 1260 ? 1261 , sultans Qutuz or Baybars replaced Ali or Abu Bakr with Isa ibn Muhanna , who was granted Sarmin and half of Salamiyah as his iqta? . Ahmad ibn Tahir and Zamil ibn Ali contested Isa 's appointment , with the former demanding part of the emirate and the latter seeking to replace Isa . Baybars did not accord Ahmad ibn Tahir a share but gave him iqta 'at elsewhere in Syria , whereas Zamil opened a rebellion against Isa . The latter called for Mamluk support and Zamil was consequently apprehended by Mamluk troops from Aleppo . He was imprisoned in Cairo but soon after released after Baybars mediated between him , Isa and other Banu Rabi 'ah emirs . A further challenge to Isa came from his powerful kinsman , Ahmad ibn Hajji of Al Mira , who eventually desisted from confronting Isa when Baybars gave him virtual independence in the southern Syrian Desert . Ahmad ibn Hajji was referred to malik al @-@ ?arab ( king of the Bedouin ) in Mamluk sources and numerous tribes came under his authority .

Relations between Isa and the state were generally cooperative with few exceptions , and he participated in nearly all Mamluk military campaigns against the Mongol Ilkhanate . Toward the end of his reign , in 1281 , Isa received the oasis town of Palmyra as additional iqta? from Sultan Qalawun . His son Muhanna ibn Isa succeeded him following his death in 1284 . Muhanna and his brother Fadl ibn Isa , who served as amir al @-@ ?arab in between Muhanna 's dismissals , vacillated between the Mamluks under Sultan an @-@ Nasir Muhammad and the Ilkhanate between 1311 and 1330 . Afterward , the Al Fadl became firmly part of the Mamluk camp . An @-@ Nasir Muhammad particularly lavished the Al Fadl emirs with iqta 'at , gifts and honors to the extent that Muhanna criticized the policy as over @-@ indulging the Bedouin , and in the process , weakening the Muslim army . The imarat al @-@ ?arab remained in the hands of Isa 's household , particularly the direct descendants of Muhanna ( Al Muhanna ) , through the remainder of Mamluk rule ( 1260 ? 1516 ) with brief interruptions during which emirs from Al Ali held the post . By 1352 , Al Muhanna numbered 110 , all of whom held their own emirate and iqta 'at . According to Mustafa A. Hiyari :

The manipulation of the emirate [ sic ] by Al Muhanna for such a long time was the result of their ability to serve the interests of the Mamluk state more than any other clan . Their prestige was such that they were able to maintain peace and order among the tribes and ? what was much more

important ? to secure the safety of the hajj and trade routes . That is why the sultans of Egypt and their provincial governors ( sing. na 'ib ) in Damascus and Aleppo tried always to keep them under control and use every possible way to bring them back under the authority of the sultanate when they revolted , because their remaining outside Mamluk authority would lead to continuous threats to the state 's interests , the outcome of which would be the attacking and looting of the trade caravans , the disruption of the hajj , and considerable damage to the countryside .

Muhanna was succeeded by his son Muzaffar ad @-@ Din Musa , who had remained loyal to an @-@ Nasir Muhammad during his father 's defection to the Ilkhanate . An @-@ Nasir Muhammad granted him substantial iqta?at in return for his loyalty and the supply of noble Arabian horses , which an @-@ Nasir Muhammad was particularly fond of . An @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's lavish treatment of Musa and his family significantly empowered the Al Fadl and created " ties of obligation " that " could not be ignored by his [ an @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's ] successors without provoking a Bedouin mutiny " , according to historian Amalia Levanoni . This was especially so as central government control over Syria increasingly diminished during the power vacuum following an @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's death . Rivalry over the imarat al @-@ ?arab between the descendants of Muhanna and Fadl also intensified during this period . When Isa ibn Fadl was made amir al @-@ ?arab in 1342 and was transferred the Al Muhanna 's iqta?at , the Al Muhanna responded by assaulting Fadl 's offspring and plundering caravans traveling the roads of northern Syria . This included a raid on a Rahba @-@ bound caravan from Baghdad in which Al Muhanna tribesmen looted all of its merchandise . Isa was replaced by his brother Sayf in 1343 , after which Muhanna 's son Fayyad defeated Sayf in battle and seized 20 @,@ 000 of his camels . Ahmad ibn Muhanna , who had been imprisoned in 1342 , was reappointed amir al @-@ ?arab in 1345 , and was succeeded two years later by Fayyad .

Fayyad died shortly after his appointment and replaced by his brother Hayar . For the next thirty years , Hayar rebelled and reconciled with the Mamluks and during times of rebellion he was often replaced by his brother Zamil and cousin Mu 'ayqil ibn Fadl ; sometimes the latter two ruled jointly . In 1380 , Hayar 's son Nu 'ayr was appointed amir al @-@ ?arab . He was dismissed several times for revolting against the sultan 's authority by supporting rebel governors in Syria . His last reign ended with his execution in 1406 . Nu 'ayr 's son Ijl had sided against his father and backed Sultan an @-@ Nasir Faraj , who appointed him in place of Nu 'ayr . After Ijl was killed by a Mamluk rebel in 1412 , the power of the Al Fadl largely diminished . Nonetheless , members of the clan from Hayar 's line continued to fill the post of amir al @-@ ?arab , with Husayn ibn Nu 'ayr succeeding Fadl . However , from then on , mentions of the imarat al @-@ ?arab " in the histories are scanty and confused " , according to historian Tritton . In 1427 , Nu 'ayr 's grandson , Adhra ibn Ali was killed by his cousin Qirqmas and succeeded by his brother Mudlij ibn Ali , who was killed by Qirqmas in 1429 . Qirqmas died in 1436 , though it is not clear if he had been appointed amir al @-@ ?arab . A grandson of Nu 'ayr , Sayf ibn Ali , killed the amir al @-@ ?arab and his cousin , Sulayman ibn Assaf , in 1480 , but was himself killed by Amir ibn Ijl the following year in revenge . Sayf 's son was recorded as the amir al @-@ ?arab in 1496 .

= = = Ottoman era = = =

The Mamluks were driven out of Syria by the Ottoman Turks after the Battle of Marj Dabiq in 1516 . The Mamluk @-@ appointed amir al @-@ ?arab , Mudlij ibn Zahir , a direct descendant of Hayar , was kept in his position by Ottoman sultan , Selim I , after the two met in the aftermath of Marj Dabiq . Mudlij acted as a law unto himself and fought against the Ottoman governor of Damascus , Isa Pasha al @-@ Fanari , in 1530 . Mudlij remained amir al @-@ ?arab until his death in 1538 . He was succeeded by his son Zahir , who was killed sometime later by his kinsman Ahmad al @-@ Uradi . The latter was challenged by Zahir uncles , Dandan and Fayyad , but they were unsuccessful as Ahmad commanded the loyalty of most of the Bedouin tribes .

Ahmad died in 1615 and was succeeded by his son Shadid until he was killed by Zahir 's son , Mudlij II . The latter did not gain the imarat al @-@ ?arab , however , and Shadid was replaced by Fayyad , who held the post until his death in 1618 . Afterward , Fayyad 's son Husayn was

appointed but then Mudlij II was recognized as amir al @-@ ?arab after he challenged Husayn . Husayn and Mudlij both sought the support of Emir Fakhr ad @-@ Din II , a Druze chieftain of the Banu Ma 'an who became a powerful semi @-@ autonomous force in Syria . Husayn was ultimately strangled by the Ottoman governor of Aleppo in 1623 , after Mudlij II bribed him . Mudlij II continued serving as amir al @-@ ?arab for an undetermined length of time .

= = List of umara al @-@ ?arab = =

= = = Ayyubid emirs = = =

= = = Mamluk emirs = = =

= = = Ottoman emirs = = =