

Military and diplomatic skirmishing

The people were reassured that the Sultan did not neglect an act, [but rather] carried it out, and he did not abandon his servants. The hearts of the castle defenders were calmed at this, and they said: "The Sultan moves quickly to our aid, and his armies reach the besieging enemy before news [of his approaching armies] comes."

Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir¹

The origin of the border war

Already in the first years after the battle of 'Ayn Jālūt, some of the major motifs of the Mamluk–Īlkhānid "cold war" can be discerned: first, and most important, were the raids and other forms of intervention over the border by both sides. Second was the role of the Armenians, active allies of the Mongols, and the subsequent retribution that Baybars exacted from them. Third was the arrival in Syria of Mongol refugees, or *wāfidiyya*, from Hülegü's army, the first group of which arrived in late 660/1261. These *wāfidiyya* included both Mongol and indigenous Muslim military elements from Īlkhānid territory, and all were integrated into the Mamluk army. Finally, mention should be made of the role of the Syrian Franks, already discussed in the previous chapter. Throughout his reign, Baybars embarked on a systematic campaign against the Franks whenever lulls in the more pressing war with the Mongols permitted him to do so.

In this chapter, the ongoing, but usually limited, hostilities during the period 1262–77 between the Mamluks on the one hand, and the Īlkhānids and their allies the Armenians on the other, will be presented in a straightforward, chronological narrative. The intention here is to give a sense of the relative continuity of the border war. The topics of *wāfidiyya* and the occasional diplomatic *démarches* are also integrated into this narrative. Baybars's relations with the Franks are dealt with in a most cursory manner, only in as much as they impinge on the topic of this chapter, and also to give a sense of the Sultan's activities when he was not busy fighting the Īlkhānids and their associates. The large amount of material on the "secret war" between Baybars

¹ *Rawḍ*, 227.

and the Īlkhānids warrants a separate chapter. It should be remembered that this on-going skirmishing between the Mamluks and Mongols took place in the context of Baybars strengthening his army, the consolidation of Mamluk power throughout Syria, and his relations with the Khans of the Golden Horde, subjects dealt with in the previous two chapters.

For several years, the Mongols did not launch another raid of the same magnitude as the one which they had sent into Syria under Baydar in AH 658–9. Evidently, Hülegü and Abagha were too preoccupied with their struggle against the Jochids to devote much attention or forces to adventures against Baybars; instead they were content to have the Armenians initiate several incursions into north Syria, along with several small-scale raids or probes of their own along the border.

Towards the end of 660/fall of 1262, Baybars received information that Hülegü had gathered a large army. The source of this information was Baybars's agents in the Mongol camp. These agents were not able, however, to inform the Sultan where this army was heading. In retrospect, this was most probably the army that Hülegü was preparing to send in order to stop the invasion of the Golden Horde into the Darband Pass.² Baybars, however, did not have the advantage of historical hindsight, and made frenzied preparations to meet what he thought was a new Mongol invasion of Syria. He ordered scouts from his personal retinue (*al-khawāṣṣ*) to ride with lightly armed Turks (*min al-turk al-khiṭāf*),³ and many remounts up to the borders of Iraq to obtain information. These scouts even managed to capture some Mongols, but no additional information was obtained.⁴ A unit of Syrian troops, to be accompanied by bedouin chieftains (*umarā' al-ʿurbān*), was ordered to follow the scouts. As the news worsened, Baybars ordered preparations to be made for the evacuation of the civilian population in Syria, along with measures to be taken against those known for their pro-Mongol sympathies. A large group of Syrian refugees made it safely to Egypt.

Baybars also sent orders to Aleppo that the grasslands (*al-aʿshāb*) on the expected path of Hülegü's troops be burnt. One group of "burners" reached as far as the environs of Amid in Diyār Bakr, while another made it to the area around Akhlāt. It was reported that the plains were burnt for an area equal to the distance covered in ten days riding. A second group of scouts was sent out with bedouins. As an added precaution, travel on the roads was prevented.⁵

² See ch. 4, p. 79.

³ Alternatively, this expression might mean that these "Turks" (alluding to either mamluks or Türkmen) were unencumbered by heavy baggage.

⁴ One wonders what kind of Mongols (*al-tatār*) these were exactly, since they were also Muslims. Perhaps they were Muslim troops who had been inducted into the Mongol army. Or perhaps we have an early example of the Islamization of Mongols. In any case, the Mamluk scouts let them go.

⁵ Abū Shāma, 219; *Rawḍ*, 135–6. The latter report is cited in Ibn Wāṣil, MS. 1702, fol. 405a–b (with additional details); Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 156a–b; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 6b; Maqrīzī, 1:473 (much shorter version).

Baybars had ordered the extensive burning of the grasslands because he knew that this would seriously hamper any Mongol offensive. The Mongols did not bring fodder with them for their horses, but rather lived off the land.⁶

In the end, it turned out that these measures were unnecessary, because this Mongol offensive did not take place. Rather, the Mongol armies went off in another direction, to the front with the Golden Horde. It was important, however, to examine Baybars's reaction to the news in some detail, because it demonstrates that he expected another invasion at any time. It also shows that he was willing and capable of taking decisive action to frustrate Mongol plans.

One group of Mamluk scouts did bring back news that some 200 Mongols and their families were seeking refuge with the Sultan. This was the first group of *wāfidiyya*, part of a Jochid contingent in Hülegü's army, which was mentioned in chapter 4. Their arrival had two important effects. First, the news they brought of the conflict between Berke and Hülegü compelled Baybars to increase his efforts to reach an understanding with Berke. Second, the news of the good reception which Baybars gave these first *wāfidiyya* reached the Mongols and propelled other groups to desert to the Sultanate.⁷

The next *wāfidi* group arrived at the end of the following year (661/1263). They numbered over 1300 horsemen, presumably accompanied by their families. Our main source for this information, Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, states that they were composed of Mongols and Bahāduri (*min al-mughul wa'l-bahāduriyya*). The use of *mughul* instead of the generally found *tatar* would seem to indicate that these were "true" Mongols, and not Turks or other soldiers who served the Mongols, all of whom seem to be lumped under the rubric of *tatar*.⁸ *Bahāduriyya* appears to be an Arabized plural of the Mongol word for brave, warrior, or hero (*ba'atur* < *baghatur*, pl. *ba'atud*).⁹ More specifically, it was used as a technical term for the elite shock troops of the Mongol imperial guard.¹⁰ Whether *bahāduriyya* refers here exactly to troops of this unit is unclear, but the combination of this term with *mughul* indicates that this was a fairly elite group of refugees. The importance of this group is seen by its leader, Geremün Agha, who – according to Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir – "had conquered all of

⁶ For the operatives who lit the fields, see ch. 9, pp. 205–6. For a discussion of Mongol logistical problems, see ch. 10, pp. 225–9.

⁷ *Rawd*, 137–8; Nuwayri, MS. 2m, fols. 156b–157a; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 6a–7b. For the reception of these and later *wāfidiyya*, see Ayalon, "Wafidiya," 90–4, 98–9.

⁸ "It has been suggested on philological grounds that in the context of the Mongol Empire, 'Tatar' carried the implication of 'people who have become (politically) Mongol.'" Morgan, *Mongols*, 57, citing O. Pritsak, "Two Migratory Movements in the Eurasian Steppe in the 9th–11th Centuries," in *Proceedings of the 26th International Congress of Orientalists, New Delhi 1964*, 2 (1968):159. This is perhaps speculative, but my impression is that this distinction is confirmed by much of the usage of the terms in some of the Arabic sources. A detailed discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of the present study, but mention is made whenever the term *al-mughul* appears instead of the more usual *al-tatar/tatār*.

⁹ Hsiao, "Military Establishment," 218 n. 59.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 36; Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 21–2 and n. 14.

the land of the Turks.” Shāfi‘ b. ‘Alī describes him as a *tümen* commander in Hülegü’s army; while al-Yūnīnī writes *sub anno* AH 659 that he had been Mongol commander of the Jazīra.¹¹ Unlike the *wāfidiyya* of the previous year, the original impetus for this group’s desertion is unclear.¹²

Not only groups of Mongols fled to the Sultanate. Indigenous Muslim military elements who had joined the Mongols, either voluntarily or under coercion, also left their new masters and sought refuge in the west. It would seem that Baybars’s successes convinced them that the unending conquests of the Mongols were not a foregone conclusion, and by fleeing they stood a chance of survival under a non-Mongol, and Muslim, regime. Several important individuals came with their entourages in 660/1261–2, including the lord of Irbil. All were well received and given ranks in the Mamluk army.¹³ Also this year (Rajab/June 1262), a group of mamluks of the late Caliph al-Musta‘sim arrived in the Sultanate. They were led by Sayf al-Dīn Salār, who was first given a commission in Syria and then was made an amir of 40 (the second highest rank in the Mamluk army) in Egypt. As a result of the good treatment he received, he wrote to his cohorts who had remained in Iraq and the Khafāja bedouin there to tell them of this.¹⁴ In Rajab 662/May 1264, a group of soldiers arrived from Shīrāz. They were accompanied by Khafāja bedouin from Iraq. All were well received; the Shīrāzis were integrated into the army and the Khafāja Arabs were sent back to their country.¹⁵ At the end of this year, the unnamed Mongol *shahna* in Takrīt arrived in the Sultanate.¹⁶

Perhaps the most prominent of the non-Mongol *wāfidīs* was Jalāl al-Dīn Yashkar, the son of the Mujāhid al-Dīn Aybeg, the Caliph al-Musta‘sim’s Lesser Dawādār, who had been killed by Hülegü in 656/1258.¹⁷ Jalāl al-Dīn, however, had survived his father, and had clearly earned the trust of the

¹¹ *Rawḍ*, 178–81; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fols. 165b–166a; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 34a–b (citing *Naẓm al-sulūk* of Shāfi‘ b. ‘Alī); Maqrīzī, 1:500–1; *Faḍl*, fol. 4a; Yūnīnī, 2:112. This wave of *wāfidiyya* came in three contingents, and it seems that the number of 1300 is the total for all three. Cf. Yūnīnī, 1:534; 2:195, who has this group come in two contingents in Rajab of this year (May–June 1263).

¹² Cf. *Zubda*, fol. 61a–b (whence, ‘Aynī, fol. 89a), who writes that a large group of 1000 *musta‘minūn* (= *wāfidiyya*) came under Geremün; these had been followers of Berke, and had fled from Hülegü. Baybars al-Manṣūrī has seemingly conflated this present group of refugees with the one of the previous year, which he does not mention.

¹³ Ibn Shaddād, *Ta’rikh*, 332–3; *Rawḍ*, 87–8. Ibn Shaddād also gives information of other non-Mongol military *wāfidiyya* from Kurdistan and the Jazīra, but no date of their arrival is known.

¹⁴ Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 2a (citing Shāfi‘’s *Naẓm*); Maqrīzī, 1:468; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 153a–b; see below, in ch. 6, p. 150. This Salār might be identical with Sharaf al-Dīn Salār al-Mustanṣirī, who had served the Mongols as *shahna* at al-Hilla, before coming to the Sultanate with 300 horsemen; Ibn Shaddād, *Ta’rikh*, 330. For mamluks from Mārdīn and Mayyāfāriqīn, whose date of arrival in the Sultanate is not known, see Ibn Shaddād, *Ta’rikh*, 338; also *Zubda*, fol. 34b; Nuwayrī, 27:383–4.

¹⁵ *Rawḍ*, 198; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fols. 168b–169a; *Zubda*, fol. 64a–b; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 44a–45a; Maqrīzī, 1:512. For Baybars’s relations with Shīrāz, see ch. 6, pp. 145–6.

¹⁶ *Rawḍ*, 219; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 55b; Maqrīzī, 1:520. It is unknown if this *shahna* was himself a Mongol. ¹⁷ For the Lesser Dawādār, see Boyle, “‘Il-Khāns,” 346–8.

Mongols. Around 662/1263–4, Hülegü ordered him to Baghdad, so that he could gather the many former soldiers of the Caliph who were scattered and hiding throughout Iraq. Rashīd al-Dīn, in a singular mention of the desertion of a Mongol supporter to the Mamluks, says that Jalāl al-Dīn had suggested this action to Hülegü, so that these troops could participate in the struggle with Berke. Since they were of Qipchaq origin, they would be of particular use in this war. On the other hand, Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir states that Hülegü’s aim was that Jalāl al-Dīn gather these troops, in the name of the war against Berke, so that they could be exterminated. According to the former source, Jalāl al-Dīn betrayed his trust by fleeing, while the latter writer states that he understood what Hülegü’s true intentions were, so he decided to desert with these soldiers. On his way, they were assisted by the Khafāja bedouin of Iraq.¹⁸

When news of Jalāl al-Dīn’s approach reached Baybars, then in Cairo, in Shawwāl 662/July–August 1264, he was wary because of their large numbers, diverse origins and unclear intentions. He thus ordered that an army be sent out to meet them as a precaution.¹⁹ The Sultan, having received assurances of Jalāl al-Dīn’s friendly intentions, had him brought to Cairo, which he reached at the beginning of 663/October–November 1264. His entourage of 150 mamluks (some of whom had belonged to his father) were put into the army, while Jalāl al-Dīn was made an amir of 40.²⁰ His warm reception, however, was short-lived. Evidently at the end of 664/1266, information reached Baybars that the Mongols had been sending secret envoys (*quṣṣād*) to Jalāl al-Dīn, who was then arrested. Horses and camels were found in his possession, which indicated (at least to Baybars) that he was preparing to flee. Suspicions had first been aroused when Jalāl al-Dīn had requested to maintain secret communications with his mother and sister, still in Mongol territory. His eventual fate is unknown, although chances are it was not a happy one.²¹ Why Jalāl al-Dīn went to such trouble to flee to the Mamluks, only to plan a return to the Mongols remains a mystery. It indicated, perhaps, a great disappointment with life in the Sultanate. He may possibly have expected a higher commission than an amirate of 40, the standard rank given to prominent *wāfids* at that time.

While Hülegü was preoccupied with his war with Berke, King Het‘um of Lesser Armenia embarked on a number of campaigns into north Syria. Armenian forces, at times accompanied by Mongolian troops or soldiers from Antioch, raided in 660/662, the beginning of Šafar 661/end of December 1262, and twice in 662/1263–4. In all of these attempts, Het‘um’s forces were

¹⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. ‘Alizādah, 3:92–3, who writes that he attacked the Khafāja; *Rawḍ*, 209–10 (whence Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 50a–b), 220; cf. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, 350–3, who tells a different story. ¹⁹ *Rawḍ*, 203; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. fol. 48a; Maqrīzī, 1:515–16.

²⁰ *Rawḍ*, 209–10, 220; *Zubda*, fol. 67a; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 37b (whence Maqrīzī, 1:503–4; this passage is not based on *Rawḍ*, and is placed at the beginning of AH 662), 50a–b; Ibn Shaddād, *Ta’rikh*, 331; cf. ‘Umarī, ed. Lech, 18–19, who reports that Jalāl al-Dīn died before he reached Egypt.

²¹ *Rawḍ*, 273, who here gives Jalāl al-Dīn’s private name as K-J-Q-N (?).

unsuccessful. They were either defeated by local Syrian troops, neutralized by harsh weather or withdrew upon the approach of large Mamluk forces.²²

The frequency of these forays, the size of the forces involved and the care which the Armenian King devoted to their organization indicate that their primary aim was more than just gaining booty. It appears, rather, that Het'um hoped to take advantage of both the perceived unsettled conditions in northern Syria and the support of the Mongols, in order to widen the area under his control. This, however, was a serious strategic mistake on his part. He evidently did not expect that he would encounter serious resistance from the Muslims. Nor did he calculate that Baybars would react so strongly, and later wreak such a furious revenge. Finally, any hope he entertained of substantial assistance from the Mongols remained unfulfilled, and he was essentially left alone to face the consequences of his adventures. Probably the main effect of the raids was to whet Baybars's desire to invade Lesser Armenia, in order to seek revenge for anti-Muslim activities, to dissuade its king from further behavior of this sort, and to weaken his capability of aiding the Mongols or acting independently.²³

First Mongol and Mamluk initiatives

The first serious Mongol probe along the border was an attack on the border fortress of al-Bīra, located on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River. As has been mentioned in chapter 3 (and will be discussed further in chapter 9), this fort, along with al-Raḥba further to the south (but on the west bank of the river), played an essential role in the emerging Mamluk strategy *vis-à-vis* the Mongols. There are two early indications of the important role that al-Bīra was to play. In Jumādā II 662/March–April 1264, Baybars sent an amir, Sayf al-Dīn Balaban al-Zaynī, to inspect the readiness of the armies and castles of Syria. The only fort which is mentioned by name is al-Bīra: orders were carried by this amir to Damascus that a large amount of money be sent to this fort, for the allocations (*nafaqāt*), presumably to the garrison.²⁴ Perhaps this distribution is connected to the second piece of information. In Ramaḍān/June–July of the same year, a report from al-Bīra reached the Sultan in Cairo that a force had raided up to Qal'at al-Rūm.²⁵ This was the first of many Mamluk raids into Mongol territory, and it is significant that it set out from al-Bīra.

In the winter of 663/1264–5, the Ilkhānid Mongols turned their attention to the west for the first time since the battle of Homs in 659/1261. Perhaps the timing was not coincidental, and this campaign could get under way because there was a lull in the war with the Golden Horde. Around the beginning of Rabi' I 663/late December 1264, Baybars, who was hunting in the Egyptian

²² These raids are discussed in detail in Amitai-Preiss, "Aftermath," 10–12; see also Canard, "Arménie," 224; Thorau, *Baybars*, 150–1. ²³ See Ibn Kathīr, 13:247; Aynī, fol. 95a.

²⁴ *Rawḍ*, 194; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 42b; Maqrīzī, 1:510.

²⁵ *Rawḍ*, 201; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 46a–b.

countryside, received news that the Mongols were heading for al-Bira. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir adds that (unspecified) Franks had informed the Mongols that the Mamluk army was split up throughout the country for the (annual) grazing of the horses. Baybars realized the gravity of the situation and immediately returned to Cairo, but not before sending an order with Bilig al-Khaznadār to Damascus, to dispatch a force of 4000 light cavalry (*min al-ʿaskar al-khafīf*; evidently the intention is to a force not weighed down by heavy baggage) to al-Bira from the Syrian armies. Arriving in Cairo, the Sultan at once sent a force under ʿIzz al-Dīn Ughan (or Ighan) Samm al-Mawt and three other senior amirs, who together with amirs (evidently of lower rank) and *ḥalqa* troops set out “in light order” (*bi’l-tawajjuh jarāʾid*) on 4 Rabīʿ I 663/25 December 1264.²⁶ The next day, another force of 4000 horsemen under Jamāl al-Dīn Aqqush al-Muḥammadī and Jamāl al-Dīn Aydoghdi al-Ḥājibī left for Syria. Orders were sent to al-Manṣūr of Hama and the governor of Aleppo to join this force, along with all the amirs of Syria (i.e. Damascus). ʿIsā b. Muḥannā, *amīr al-ʿurbān*, was ordered to cross the desert in order to raid Ḥarrān, seemingly as a diversion.

Throughout the next month, the Sultan busied himself with preparing the main part of the army; this included calling in the scattered horses and troops. Baybars set out on 7 Rabīʿ II 663/27 January 1265, reaching Gaza 13 days later. There he received an update that the Mongols had built seventeen mangonels (*manjāniqs*) at al-Bira, indicating that this was no mere raid, but a serious effort to take the fort. Baybars kept this disquieting news from all but two of his most trusted amirs (Sunqur al-Rūmī and Qalawun) and wrote to Ughan to encourage him to make haste. At this point, however, it does not seem that Baybars was in much of a hurry; he even took time off to hunt. Probably he wanted to keep an eye on the Franks on the coast and see how things would develop at al-Bira. At Yabnā (Yavneh, Ibelin), near Jaffa, he received news on 26 Rabīʿ II/15 February that the Mongol forces had fled upon seeing the Mamluk reinforcements. This information, which arrived by pigeon-post at Damascus and from there via the *barīd*, took four days to reach the Sultan.

The Mongol force, a *tümen* led by Durbai, had made a determined effort to take the fort. The defenders, including the female inhabitants, withstood the siege and bombardment, and fought back with determination. When the Mongols filled the moat with wood, the defenders dug a tunnel and set the wood on fire. The Mongols made attempts to scale the walls by shooting pegs, with ropes attached, but these were thrown off. The resolution of the defenders paid off when the Mamluk army appeared and the Mongols fled in disarray, leaving behind their siege equipment.²⁷ When news of the Mongol retreat

²⁶ Maqrīzī, I:523, adds that there was a total of 4000 riders, a sentence not found in either *Rawḍ* or Ibn al-Furāt.

²⁷ There are several groups of accounts. The first is based on *Rawḍ*, 221–5; whence Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 226a–b; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 62a–64a; Maqrīzī, I:523–5. The report in *Ḥusn*, 87, is independent: according to him, Baybars reached Baysān before he received the news of the Mongol withdrawal. A different, shorter account, but with some additional

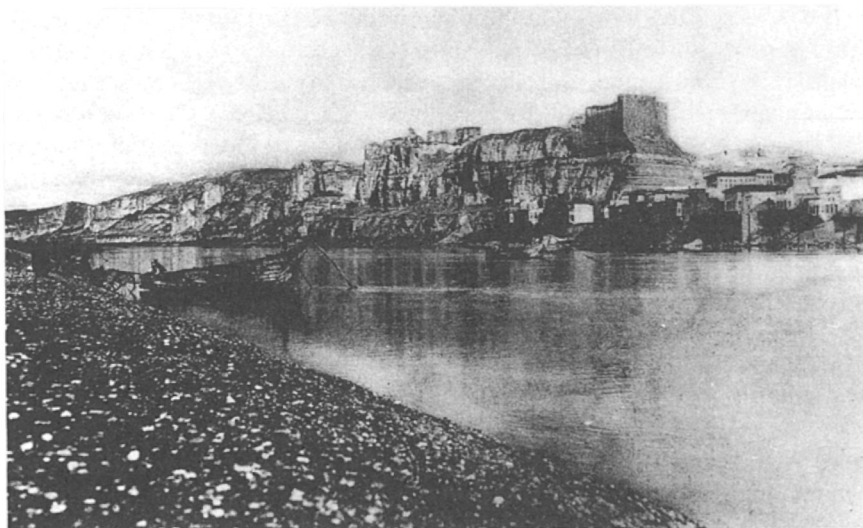


Plate 2. Al-Bīra (Birecik), ca. 1930 (from P. Deschamps, *Les Châteaux des croisés en Terre-Sainte*, vol. I: *Le Crac des Chevaliers, Album* [Paris, 1934], pl. VII [original photograph: Abbé G. Bretocq; reproduction: Zev Radovan])

reached King Hetūm, who was leading a force to al-Bīra as he had been ordered, he turned around and returned to his country.²⁸ Professor Cahen has suggested that an additional reason for the withdrawal was the arrival of news of Hülegü's death.²⁹ This could well be, although the sources are silent on this point.

Baybars, having received the news of the Mongol retreat, now ordered the expeditionary force to assist in the repair of al-Bīra. Supplies and armaments were sent from all over Syria, and it was ordered that the fort would have enough provisions for ten years. Mangonels were sent, and the garrison was put in order. The defenders and inhabitants were rewarded for their tenacity. During the repair work, a group of Mongols attacked, but were beaten back, sustaining many casualties.³⁰

information, is found in Yūnīnī, 2:318; Mufaḍḍal, 131–2; Kutubī, 20:318; Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-islām*, MS. Bodleian Laud Or. 279, fol. 3a; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:107; the lost part of Ibn Shaddād's biography may well be the original source for this last group of accounts. A fourth version, seemingly derived from *Rawḍ*, but containing interesting information about the attacking force, is in *Zubda*, fols. 68b–69a; whence 'Aynī, fol. 92a.

²⁸ Smpad, tr. Der Nersessian, 163, who also reports that the raid was led by Durba[ī]. This is the only mention of the raid in any of the pro-Mongol sources.

²⁹ Cahen, *Syrie*, 712. Hülegü died on 19 Rabī' II 663/8 February 1265 (Spuler, *Iran*, 59 and n. 121). If the news of the Mongol withdrawal took four days to reach Baybars on 26 Rabī' II (i.e., the news was sent on the 22nd of the month), then it is possible that the Mongols at al-Bīra would have heard of the death of their ruler.

³⁰ *Rawḍ*, 226–8; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fols. 226b–227a; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 64a–65a; Maqrīzī, 1:525. The Mongols who attacked during the repair work were a group of "Mongol Tatars" (*firqa min al-tatār al-mughul*), indicating perhaps that they were "authentic" Mongols and not allies or subject troops.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir wrote that the minds of the garrisons of the castles (*ahl al-qilāʿ*; possibly the reference is to the inhabitants as well) were put at ease as a result of Baybars's quick and effective response to the Mongol attack and his subsequent repair of al-Bīra's fortifications.³¹ This desire to show the officers, soldiers and even the civilians in the frontier forts and towns that they would not be abandoned may be another reason why Baybars had reacted with such forcefulness to the initial news of the Mongol attack.

While the repair work was under way, an additional force was sent to help the expeditionary army already at al-Bīra. Upon the completion of this work, this new force was to go to Tall Bāshir and from there to raid Lesser Armenia. There are no details of this raid, except that a letter arrived from its commanders saying that their mission had been completed. This might be the Mamluk force referred to by Smpad, which apparently reached the Qara Su River near Antioch around Easter 1265, before turning back in the face of a large Armenian force.³² The main force, under Ughan and Aqqush al-Muḥammadi, returned to Cairo in early Ramaḍān 663/June 1265.³³

Baybars was now in Palestine with a large part, perhaps most, of his army. The danger from the Mongols had been averted for the time being. The Sultan now turned his attention to the Franks.³⁴ In just over two months (late February to late April 1265), his armies conquered Caesarea, Haifa and Arsūf, and raided ʿAthlith (Chastel Pelerin) and Acre. The fortifications and harbors of all the conquered cities were destroyed, to prevent their re-use in the future by the Franks.³⁵ It was in this campaign that Baybars established the pattern for his future relations with the Franks. There was now no doubt that they were on the defensive, and Baybars enjoyed the initiative. In periods between dealing with the Mongols and their allies or when the danger from their quarter seemed minimal, Baybars turned his attention to the Franks, systematically reducing their power and territory.

Upon returning to Cairo, Baybars received envoys from Hetʿum. This was probably in early Shawwāl 663/mid-July 1265. According to al-Yūnīnī and other Syrian writers, these envoys informed the Sultan that Hülegü had died, Abagha had succeeded him to the throne and Berke had attacked and defeated the new Khan. The last part of the statement appears to be both an anachronism and incorrect: only in the summer of this year did fighting break out between Berke's and Abagha's armies, and Berke's army was eventually worsted in this round. In any event, so the story goes, Baybars wanted to exploit the opportunity to invade Iraq, but was unable to do so because the

³¹ *Rawd*, 227 (partially cited at opening of this chapter); discussed in Thorau, *Baybars*, 157.

³² *Rawd*, 228; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 65a; Smpad, tr. Der Nersessian, 163 (cited also in Canard, "Arménie," 225). ³³ Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 77a; Maqrīzī, 1:537.

³⁴ On Baybars's relations with the Franks before AH 663, see Runciman, *Crusades*, 3:315–18; Prawer, *Histoire*, 2:440–60; Thorau, *Baybars*, 142–50.

³⁵ See Thorau, *Baybars*, 160–2; Runciman, *Crusades*, 3:318–19; Prawer, *Histoire*, 2:460–70. On Baybars's policy of destroying coastal fortifications as he captured them, see ch. 3, p. 76.

army was split among the *iqṭāʿāt*.³⁶ It is difficult to imagine, however, that Baybars entertained real intentions of invading Iraq at this time. This would have overextended his forces and left his kingdom exposed, with a still strong Frankish presence in his rear. In addition, it would seem that had Baybars truly wanted to invade Iraq he would have done so. Just seven months before, he had been able to gather his army which was scattered throughout the country. Besides, during his entire reign Baybars showed himself capable of achieving difficult feats, if he thought the results were worth the trouble. So, assuming the sources are correct in conveying Baybars's true intentions, it would seem that this was just wishful thinking, which could be conveniently dismissed with the excuse of the army being split up in the countryside.

In Ramaḍān of this year (June–July 1265), a Mamluk force was able to retake Qarqīsiyā, a fort on the Khābūr River not far from al-Raḥba. At some point before, Baybars had sent an amir to the fort, who remained there for a while but left upon the approach of a Mongol force. This shows the uncertain and fluid nature of the situation in the border region in these early years. Then the local commanders of Qarqīsiyā, evidently not Mongols themselves, made contact with the governor in al-Raḥba and asked to submit. Some joint plan against the Mongol garrison was probably agreed upon. A force, composed of horsemen and “archers” (*uqjiyya*) set out from al-Raḥba, and entered the city at daybreak through the gate which had been opened for them. They killed both the Mongols and the Georgians in the city, and captured eighty renegades (*al-murtadda*), evidently Muslims who served the Mongols.³⁷ The following year, the Sultan ordered a bridge to be built at al-Raḥba, perhaps so that communications with Qarqīsiyā could be more easily maintained. In the long run, however, the fort remained beyond Mamluk reach: Ibn Shaddād reports that it was [again] in Mongol hands at the time of the writing of his *al-Aʿlāq al-khaṭīra*, in 679/1280–1.³⁸

The border with the Mongols remained quiet throughout the winter of 664/1265–6. The following spring, Baybars was making preparations for his next campaign, once more against the Franks. The Egyptian army set out in early Shaʿbān 664/May 1266, and together with Syrian units launched a series of devastating raids against the Frankish possessions throughout Syria. In Ramaḍān/June, Baybars arrived at Safad. The Templar fort fell after a siege that lasted over a month, and the garrison was massacred.³⁹ Baybars now turned his attention to Lesser Armenia, and sent the first of many large-scale Mamluk raids against that country.

³⁶ Yūnīnī, 2:322; Dhahabī, MS. Laud 279, fol. 3b; Kutubī, 20:320–1; Mufaḍḍal, 145; Ibn Kathīr, 13:245; Aynī, fol. 94a. Cf. Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:114, who writes that Baybars wished to attack but was afraid of a Frankish attack; see ch. 4, p. 86n.

³⁷ *Husn*, 101–2; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 77b (similar to *Husn*, but with additions); Maqrīzī, 1:537; *Tuhfa*, 55; Yūnīnī, 4:108; cf. Thorau, *Baybars*, 165. ³⁸ *Aʿlāq*, 3:153.

³⁹ For the siege and the events preceding it, see: Runciman, *Crusades*, 3:320–1; Prawer, *Histoire*, 2:470–5; Thorau, *Baybars*, 166–71.

After the failures of 662/1263–4, King Het'um justly feared Baybars's retribution and sought to placate him. In 663/1264–5, Armenian envoys arrived in Egypt and asked the Sultan for peace. These may be the same envoys mentioned above who had brought news of Hülegü's death. In spite of the valuable presents they brought with them, Baybars did not agree to their request.⁴⁰ The following year, after the conquest of Safad, Baybars received another Armenian mission there. According to the Mamluk sources, the Sultan did not accept either the gift or the letter they brought with them.⁴¹

Bar Hebraeus and the Armenian writers tell the story of these "negotiations" differently. According to the former, in 1266, it was Baybars himself who first wrote to Het'um, calling on him to submit and pay the *jizya*.⁴² In addition, Baybars demanded that Het'um permit the free trade of horses, mules, wheat, barley and iron from Cilicia. The Armenian King was unable to comply because of his fear of the Mongols.⁴³ Smpad writes that Het'um opened the negotiations. Baybars sent envoys, who made demands – including the cession of fortresses – with which the Armenian King could not comply, both out of fear of the Mongols and his refusal to come under the authority of the Sultan.⁴⁴ Vardan reports that Baybars demanded the fortresses in northern Syria which the Armenians had seized during the Mongol occupation of 658/1260. Het'um, however, refused to comply, because he feared the Mongols.⁴⁵

It is difficult to reconcile all of these various reports. It would seem that the Mamluk writers suppressed, perhaps deliberately, knowledge of Baybars's dispatch of envoys. This embassy might have been in 663/1264–5, after the first Armenian mission, although the pro-Mongol sources place this *sub anno* 1266 (i.e. AH 664). With the second Armenian mission of 664/1266, it would seem that Baybars had already set his mind on sending a raid into Cilicia and saw no point in receiving the embassy. It appears that from the beginning Baybars had laid down conditions that Het'um could not meet.

Baybars did not wait long to execute his plans. Having taken some measures to repair Safad, Baybars went to Damascus. There, he ordered an army, according to Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, under al-Manṣūr of Hama (who held the

⁴⁰ *Husn*, 102.

⁴¹ Yūnīnī, 2:343; Dhahabī, MS. Laud 279, fol. 14b; Ibn Taghri Birdī, 7:139. Cf. Thorau, *Baybars*, 163.

⁴² The poll-tax paid by non-Muslims to the Muslim state, symbolizing here the formal submission of the Armenians to the Sultan.

⁴³ Bar Hebraeus, 445; Ibn al-'Ibrī, 498 (the passages are not identical). Labib, *Handelsgeschichte*, 66–7, saw the latter passage as evidence of Mamluk–Cilician trade in these items, and of how the Mamluks were willing to wage war to protect this trade. All this passage shows, however, is that the Mamluks were interested in trading these commodities. Recent research by C. Otten-Froux ("L'Aïas dans le dernier tiers du XIII^e siècle d'après les notaires génois," *AAS* 22 [1988]:166–7) shows that wood, iron and tin were imported into Egypt, albeit in the next decade. For more on the Cilician–Mamluk trade, see ch. 9.

⁴⁴ Smpad, tr. Der Nersessian, 164; Canard, "Arménie," 228. ⁴⁵ Vardan, tr. Thomson, 223.

overall command), Qalawun and Ughan to proceed to Cilicia. Ibn Shaddād writes that the force was under the nominal command of al-Manşūr, but the real officer in charge was Aq Sunqur al-Fāriqānī. The army left Damascus on 5 Dhū 'l-qa'da 664/12 August 1266. Advancing by way of al-Darbassāk (Trapesac) and Nikopolis (Islahiye), they entered the Amanus Gate, a pass in the Amanus mountains called in the Arabic sources simply al-Darband (from the word "defile" in Persian).⁴⁶ Shāfi' b. 'Alī remarks that when al-Manşūr entered the country, Het'um sent to express his submission, but al-Manşūr paid no attention to this and imprisoned his envoys. In the pass they encountered an Armenian force which had taken up position in the fortifications in the hills above the road. Het'um himself was not with his army, which he had left under the command of his brother, who had with him two of the king's sons. The Muslims charged up the slopes, and after hard fighting, defeated the Armenians, who fled. Het'um's brother was killed, as was one of his sons. The other son, his heir Leon (Layfūn in the Arabic sources), was captured. Cilicia now lay unprotected before the raiders.⁴⁷

There is some disagreement about the whereabouts of Het'um. Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir writes that prior to the attack he had abdicated in favor of his son Leon, and had retired to a monastery. The Armenian sources make no mention of this, and say that he was off trying to get help from the Mongols.⁴⁸ The latter version is strengthened by Bar Hebraeus's account: Het'um had gone to the Mongol commander "Nafjī", stationed in Seljuq territory, to ask for help. This officer claimed he could not aid them of his own volition, but only upon Abagha's express orders. Eventually, some type of order must have arrived, because both Bar Hebraeus and Grigor mention the eventual dispatch of a Mongol force, although it was too late to make any difference.⁴⁹

The Mamluk army marched unopposed into the country, killing, burning and taking captives as it went. From al-Darband, they continued on to the region of Tall Ḥamdūn (Til Hamdoun, now Toprakkale), and from there to Ḥamūş, which was burnt. Then they crossed the Jayḥān (Pyramus) River, and took up position at al-'Amūdayn (Adamodana), a great fortress belonging to

⁴⁶ On this and other passes through the Amanus mountains, see Edwards, *Fortifications*, 39–40, 216–21, and the maps in C. Mutafian, *La Cilicie au carrefour des empires* (Paris, 1988), vol. 2, esp. map no. 14.

⁴⁷ *Rawḍ*, 263, 269–70; hence Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 105 a–b, 109b; Maqrīzī, 1:549, 551–2; *Ḥusn*, 115. Cf. Yūnīnī, 2:343–4, who writes that the Armenians abandoned the forts when the Mamluks appeared; similar accounts in Kutubī, 20:337; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:118; Ibn Taghri Birdī, 7:140. See also Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq*, ed. Eddé, 321; Abū 'l-Fida', 4:3; *Tuhfa*, 58, where the author gives an eye-witness account of the fighting (he seems to have conflated his version with that in *Rawḍ*). Two Armenian sources (Smpad, tr. Der Nersessian, 164–5; Grigor, 357) describe this encounter and how the Armenians fled, leaving behind the princes to their fate. Jean Dardel, "Chronique d'Arménie," *RHC, Ar*, 2:12 has the Armenians fleeing after fighting; Het'um, 177, only briefly mentions the whole incident. For a detailed discussion, see Canard, "Arménie," 229–31.

⁴⁸ See the relevant references in the previous note.

⁴⁹ Bar Hebraeus, 445–6 (= Ibn al-'Ibrī, 498); Grigor, 357; Thorau, *Baybars*, 174. According to Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rikh*, 156, one Nabjī was a Mongol commander in Rūm, ca. AH 675.

the Teutonic Knights. Although the garrison surrendered, they were massacred and the women and children were taken into slavery. Interestingly enough, a group of Mongols was in the fortress when it was taken. Sis, the capital of the kingdom, was the next target. The Mamluk army entered it on 22 Dhū 'l-qa'da/29 August, and commenced looting and destruction, but was unable to take the citadel. The Mamluk forces split up: Ughan went in the direction of the Seljuk border, while Qalawun raided al-Maṣṣīṣa (Mamistra or Mopsuestria), Adhana (Adana), Ayās (Lajasso) and Ṭarsūs (Tarse). A Templar fortress, al-Tīna (Canamella; on the coast east of Ayās), was also destroyed. Al-Manṣūr remained in Sis. Thereupon, the army was reunited and laden with a tremendous amount of booty, set back for Syria. It was met by the Sultan near Afāmiya around the middle of Dhū 'l-ḥijja/ca. 20 September.⁵⁰

Diplomatic maneuvers

The capture of Leon led to a series of interesting diplomatic exchanges between Baybars and Het'um. The Armenian king was evidently quite distraught by the capture of his son and heir, let alone the death and destruction in his kingdom. Sometime around the beginning of Rabī' I 665/ca. December 1266, an Armenian envoy arrived in Cairo to discuss Leon's return. In contrast to the cold reception which the Armenian envoys had received the previous year, Baybars was now willing to act magnanimously. Het'um was granted a respite from hostilities for a year.⁵¹

In Sha'bān/October 1267, a second Armenian mission met at least twice with Baybars in Syria.⁵² It was probably then that Het'um initially offered both money and several castles in return for Leon. Baybars, however, demanded more. He wanted both the forts taken during the Mongol occupation of 658/1260 and also the return of his *khushdāsh*, Sunqur al-Ashqar, who was in Mongol captivity. Sunqur had been taken prisoner by Hülegü after the conquest of Aleppo, along with several other Baḥrī mamluks, and taken back with him when he withdrew from Syria.⁵³ Baybars now thought he had an opportunity to get his friend back, and made the return of Leon conditional upon Het'um's obtaining Sunqur from the Mongols. Het'um promised he

⁵⁰ *Rawḍ*, 270–1; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fols. 235b–236a; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 109b–110a, who adds the information about al-Tīna (see also ed. Lyons, 1:126, and Riley-Smith's comments, 2:217); Maqrīzī, 1:552; Yūnīnī, 2:334; *Tuhfa*, 58; Thorau, *Baybars*, 174–5; Canard, "Arménie," 231–2. The Armenian sources recount the inhabitants' suffering: Grigor, 357–9; Vardan, tr. Thomson, 223; Smpad, tr. Dédéyan, 118; "Table chronologique de Hethoum," *RHC, Ar.*, 1:487. There are also accounts of the raid in Bar Hebraeus, 446 (= Ibn al-'Ibrī, 498–9); Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, 355 (with mistakes). For the locations in Cilicia, see the Gazetteer in Boase, *Cilician Kingdom*, 146–85.

⁵¹ *Rawḍ*, 272; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 114a; Maqrīzī, 1:555; cf. Thorau, *Baybars*, 176.

⁵² *Rawḍ*, 281–2; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 237b; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 118b, 119a (= ed. Lyons, 1:129–30); Maqrīzī, 1:558–9.

⁵³ Sunqur and the other Baḥrīs had been languishing in al-Nāṣir Yusuf's prison when the Mongols took Aleppo; *Zubda*, fols. 29b, 37a.

would try and asked for a year's grace to go to Abagha's *ordo* to arrange for this.

At some point, Baybars received word from Het'um that he had permission to exchange Sunqur for Leon, and Armenian envoys then came bringing a letter from Sunqur. But Het'um had now changed his mind about returning the fortresses, thinking that Baybars would be satisfied with Sunqur's return only. The Sultan, however, said he would call the deal off unless he received the fortresses as originally promised. This evidently all happened around the time of the conquest of Antioch (4 Ramaḍān 666/19 May 1268), as Baybars is said to have been at this city at the time, and the subsequent agreement was written up in Ramaḍān 666. Het'um saw he had no choice but to assent to Baybars's demands. Perhaps the proximity of Baybars to his kingdom made him fear another Mamluk raid. The final agreement was that six forts would be handed over to the Muslims: Bahasnā (Behesni), al-Darbassāk, Barzamān (written Marzamān), Ra'bān (Raban), al-Zarb (?) and Shīḥ al-Ḥadīd (Sheh).⁵⁴ The forts were to be returned with the monies and other supplies that were in them on their capture in 658/1260. Sunqur al-Ashqar would be exchanged for Leon, and other Armenian prisoners were to be returned. Mamluk envoys were sent to swear Het'um on this treaty. Armenian hostages arrived until Baybars could gain possession of the fortresses which were subsequently returned. Meanwhile, Leon was brought from Cairo to Syria. Throughout his captivity, he had been well treated and had even hunted with Baybars. Leon was also sworn on the treaty and then sent north (11 Shawwāl 666/24 June 1268). Sunqur and Leon were exchanged across a river near al-Darbassāk, and the Sultan's representatives took over the designated forts.⁵⁵

Baybars was overjoyed at having Sunqur al-Ashqar back, made him a senior amir and part of his inner circle. Al-Yūnīnī reports that Sunqur prevailed on Baybars not to take possession of Bahasnā. Before his return, Het'um had requested him to intercede with Baybars regarding this fortress. Dr. Thorau is probably correct in suggesting that this request was based on Het'um's fear that his lines of communication (let alone trade) with the Īlkhānid state would be cut, and Bahasnā was needed to keep these open.⁵⁶

Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir implies that Het'um had no trouble convincing Abagha to release Sunqur al-Ashqar. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, in his concise recountings of the episode, explicitly says the same.⁵⁷ Other sources, however, say that the

⁵⁴ On these locations, see the Gazetteer cited in n. 50; Thorau, *Baybars*, 212, n. 37. The location of al-Zarb (in Nuwayrī and Ibn al-Furāt [see next note]: *r-w-b*; Ibn Shaddād [*A'lāq*, ed. Eddé, 376]: al-Zūb) is unclear, but would seem to be near Marzabān; see Cahen, *Syrie*, 718 ("adh-Dhoub").

⁵⁵ *Rawḍ*, 327–9; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fols. 188b–189a; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 143a–144b; Maqrīzī, 1:568–70; Yūnīnī, 2:384–5; Thorau, *Baybars*, 193.

⁵⁶ *Rawḍ*, 330; Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq*, ed. Eddé, 375; Yūnīnī, 2:385–6; Abū 'l-Fidā', 4:5; Thorau, *Baybars*, 193.

⁵⁷ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, 355–6. The latter version contains many mistakes: the King, and not the son, is called Leon, and this exchange is placed *s.a.* AH 664.

Armenian King had some difficulty obtaining Sunqur. Smpad writes how initially Sunqur could not be found, and that it took some time for him to be located.⁵⁸

A particularly interesting story is told by al-Yūnīnī and other fourteenth-century Syrian writers. Upon receiving Baybars's demand to obtain Sunqur al-Ashqar's release, Het'um went to Abagha, secretly taking with him one of the Mamluk envoys, the Baḥrī amir 'Alam al-Dīn Sulṭān, who was disguised as an Armenian. At the *ordo*, 'Alam al-Dīn met with Sunqur, who feared a trick. Sunqur was eventually convinced that 'Alam al-Dīn was really a representative from Baybars, and he agreed to flee from the *ordo*; he was given Armenian clothes and left with Het'um. Upon reaching Cilicia, 'Alam al-Dīn went to Baybars and reported to him what had happened. This led to the exchange of Leon and Sunqur, as described above.⁵⁹ It is difficult, however, to accept this story, intriguing as it is. First, there is the problem of reconciling it with the Armenian sources. Secondly, it is hard to accept that Het'um, so dependent on Mongol goodwill, would have dared to abscond with a prisoner at the Mongol court, and expect that Abagha would blithely accept this *fait accompli* when he discovered Sunqur's absence.

Sunqur al-Ashqar, who left behind him a Mongol wife and several children,⁶⁰ was to play an important role in the events of the coming years, and we will meet him again. Leon, upon his return, went with his father to Abagha, and was recognized as Het'um's successor. After their return to Cilicia, Het'um abdicated and retired to a monastery, leaving Leon to become king. Het'um died in 669/1270, and Leon wrote to announce this to Baybars. Mamluk raids into Cilicia were to begin again in 1271.⁶¹

The successful conclusion of the negotiations led to a period of parleying between Baybars and Abagha. This, however, was not the first diplomatic contact between the two rulers. As early as 664/1265–6, Abagha had sent his first mission to Baybars, then in Syria. According to Ibn al-Furāt, the envoys brought with them a present and called for peace (*ṣulḥ*). If earlier and subsequent Mongol missions are any indication, this "peace" meant submission to Abagha. Baybars left the Mongol envoys in Damascus, and their fate is not clear.⁶²

Early in 667/1268, Het'um, still the King of Lesser Armenia, wrote to Baybars, offering to act as an intermediary, both to make peace (*ṣulḥ*) and to intercede on behalf of Sunqur al-Ashqar's children, who had remained with

⁵⁸ Grigor, 369–71; Smpad, tr. Dédéyan, 120. Bar Hebraeus, 447 (= Ibn al-'Ibrī, 499–500), who writes that Abagha promised that Sunqur would be brought from another place; in 1268, he came from Samarqand (!) and was sent to Het'um.

⁵⁹ Yūnīnī, 2:384–5; Kutubī, 20:361–2; Dhahabī, MS. Laud 279, fol. 6b; Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, 85–6. See also *Tuhfa*, 64. ⁶⁰ Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, 85; see also *Rawḍ*, 339.

⁶¹ Der Nersessian, "Kingdom," 654; Canard, "Arménie," 237.

⁶² Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 110b; Maqrīzī, I:553. A somewhat different version is found in Qirtay, fols. 87a–88a.

the Mongols. The Sultan wrote to him that he could deal with the matter of the children, but there was no mention of anything else. The motive of Het'um, whose position had become even weaker with the conquest of Antioch in 666/1268, is obvious enough: he hoped to forestall another Mamluk raid by bringing about an end to hostilities between them and his patrons, the Mongols. Het'um's desperation may have led him to overstep his instructions, in the hope that some kind of negotiations would lead to the end of the conflict. He must have misled Abagha about Baybars's message, because the Īlkhān's response was to call on the Sultan to submit to the Mongols.

Abagha sent, via Cilicia, an official envoy to the Sultan. An amir from Aleppo was ordered to go to Cilicia and bring the envoy to Damascus. The envoy was to be kept in isolation so he could not speak to anyone. Baybars was evidently apprehensive of the corrupting influence of this envoy or of his ability to gather intelligence. The Sultan himself set out with a small entourage from Cairo in Jumādā I 667/January-February 1269.⁶³ He met the Mongol envoy – or rather envoys as it turned out – in Damascus, who first delivered a truculent verbal message to Baybars:

When the King Abagha set out from the East, he conquered all the world. Whoever opposed him was killed. If you go up to the sky or down into the ground, you will not be saved from us. The best policy [*maṣlaḥa*] is that you will make peace [*ṣulḥ*] between us. You are a mamluk who was bought in Siwās. How do you rebel against the kings of the earth?⁶⁴

Thereupon a letter was handed over, which had been written in Baghdad on 20 Rabī' II 667/29 December 1268. This message left no doubts regarding Abagha's intentions *vis-à-vis* the Mamluks: Abagha understood that the Mamluks wanted to submit (*yaṣīrū il*) and to admit that it was only Qutuz who had killed the Mongol envoys (in 658/1260). He also knew that they wanted the return of the Qipchaqs (i.e. Baḥrīs) still with him. Previously, there had been a conflict between the Mongols, and this was the reason why he had been unable to ride against the Mamluks. But now, all are agreed that the command and regulation (*farmān wa-yāsāh*) of the Qa'an should not be changed.⁶⁵ Abagha thought highly of the Sultan's willingness to submit, and restated that Baybars was not responsible for Qutuz's crimes. If Baybars was true to what

⁶³ *Rawḍ*, 339; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 152b. These negotiations and the letters which were exchanged are discussed in detail in R. Amitai-Preiss, "An Exchange of Letters in Arabic between Abagha Īlkhān and Sultan Baybars (AH 667/AD 1268–9)," *CAJ*, 38 (1994): 11–33.

⁶⁴ Yūnīnī, 2:407; Dhahabī, MS. Laud 279, fol. 7a; Kutubī, 20:378; Ibn Kathīr, 13:254; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:139–40; Ibn Taghribirdī, 7:144–5; Maqrīzī, 1:573–4. It is possible to see this message (*risāla*) as a second version of the next letter, but in Amitai-Preiss, "Exchange of Letters," 32, this possibility is discussed and rejected. With the exception of Maqrīzī, these sources tell that the Mongols' envoys were called Majd al-Dīn Dawlat Khān ibn Jāqir and Sayf al-Dīn Sa'īd Turjūmān, names which are also given by sources for the Mongol envoys of 670/1272 (see below); different names are given in the text of the letter.

⁶⁵ It should be mentioned that Abagha's claim of newly founded Mongol unity was perhaps only wishful thinking on his part; see above, ch. 4, p. 89.

he said, suitable representatives (for example, from among his sons or senior amirs) should be sent so they would hear the order and regulations (*yarligh wa-yāsāt*) of the Qa'an; these envoys would then be sent back. Upon the acceptance of such an agreement, the Bahrīs would be released. On the other hand, if Baybars were not true to his word and refused to submit, then God would know of this (the warning is implicit). The letter concludes with the name of the two envoys with whom it was sent: Bik Tūt (= Bektüt) and Abū 'l-Gharīb. Here the source contradicts itself, because previously it stated that only one envoy arrived.⁶⁶

Baybars's reply, according to Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, begins with a disclaimer that the Armenian King had no right to deal with any other matter except that concerning Sunqur al-Ashqar's children. In any event, his intercession led to no discernible results. The question of the murder of the Mongol envoys by Qutuz is skirted by claiming that Abagha's envoys would be returned safely. Then comes a particularly important passage: "How can agreement be achieved [between us]? The *yasa* [here, it would seem, referring to a law code, evidently to the *Sharī'a*] that we have today is greater than the *yasa* of Chinggis Khan. Allah has given us rule over 40 kings."⁶⁷ As for Mongol claims of world domination, Abagha is reminded of Ketbugha's defeat (at 'Ayn Jālūt). If Abagha had done what he had told Sunqur al-Ashqar he would do and sent one of his brothers, sons or great amirs, then Baybars would have done the same, as Abagha had requested.⁶⁸

Another version of Baybars's response exists, in which he wrote to Abagha, calling on him to abandon the territories conquered by the Mongols in Iraq, the Jazīra and Rūm. Certain writers add that Baybars swore that he would continue fighting until he liberated all the lands of the Caliph. He then sent the envoys back.⁶⁹ Neither version had any further information on the envoys' fate.

It is clear from both Abagha's verbal and written message that for the Mongol the idea of "peace" still meant unconditional surrender, and Abagha is still talking in terms of world conquest. As is seen in the two versions of Baybars's reply, the Sultan found this unacceptable, and believed he had the power to resist. Thus, he sent a militant answer and did not bother to send his own envoys to Abagha. At this point, and for several decades to come, there was no possibility for compromise and real peace.⁷⁰

Mongol raids across the border

The year after the unsuccessful negotiations of 667/1269, the Mongols began increasing the tension on the border and in north Syria. Abagha was surely

⁶⁶ *Rawd*, 339; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 152b; 'Aynī, fol. 99a. Cf. the shorter version in *Husn*, 144–5. ⁶⁷ This passage is analyzed in Ayalon, "Yāsa," pt. C2, 129–30.

⁶⁸ *Rawd*, 341–2; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 153b–154a; 'Aynī, fol. 99a.

⁶⁹ See the sources cited in n. 64 above, except for Maqrīzī. ⁷⁰ Cf. Thorau, *Baybars*, 197.

influenced by his ongoing contacts with Western princes and there was also a lull (after 668/1270) in his conflicts with other Mongol rulers. These years also saw the increase, both in frequency and scale, of Mamluk raids across the border.

Not that the years 664–7/1265–9 were devoid of examples of Mongol–Mamluk enmity. In early spring 665/1267, Baybars, who was at Safad overseeing repairs to the fort, received word that the Mongols had attacked al-Raḥba. He rushed to Damascus and began making preparations for an expedition. Then word came that the Mongols had withdrawn and the forces there had chased after them, inflicting casualties and taking captives. It is unclear what prompted the Mongols to retreat; evidently, they had only a small force and it was beaten off by the local garrison. Baybars thereupon returned to Safad.⁷¹

About a year later, Baybars, then on a hunting trip in Egypt, received word that a Mongol force was heading for Aleppo. He returned to Cairo, and set out for Syria on 1 Jumādā II 666/17 February 1268. Nothing more is heard of the Mongols, and Dr. Thorau seems to be right in suggesting that this “news” of a Mongol attack was just an excuse to get out the troops and keep his real intentions *vis-à-vis* the Franks a secret.⁷² In the subsequent campaign, Baybars took Jaffa (and destroyed it), Shaqīf Arnūn (Beaufort) and raided Tripoli. From there, he moved to Antioch, which he conquered on 4 Ramaḍān/19 May; its population was subjected to a terrible bloodbath. As seen above, Prince Bohemond VI, then at Tripoli, had been a firm supporter of the Mongols both before and after their invasion of Syria in 658/1260. Yet this Prince, for all his allegiance to the Mongols, was to learn that they were in no position to assist him when he was in trouble. In the aftermath of the conquest of Antioch, a number of Frankish castles in northern Syria were abandoned by their garrisons; the most important of these was the Templar fortress of Baghrās (Gaston).⁷³

In 667/1268–9, raiders (*ghayyāra*) from al-Bīra and elsewhere struck in the region of Karkar (Gargar, in the northern Jazīra) and burned the town. The Mamluk troops overran Sharmūshāk, a castle between Karkar and Kakhtā, and killed its garrison. It is unclear if these were Mongols or local subject troops. Many peasants were brought back to Syria and settled in the regions of Homs, Shayzar and Antioch.⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Rawḍ*, 280; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 118a (= ed. Lyons, 1:128), who makes some changes; Maqrīzī, 1:558; *Ḥusn*, 120; Abū 'l-Fidā', 4:4. Cf. Yūnīnī, 2:361; Kutubī, 20:349, who write that the Mongols attacked al-Bīra at this time.

⁷² *Rawḍ*, 291–2; *Ḥusn*, 125; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 126b–127a (= ed. Lyons, 1:133); Maqrīzī, 1:564; Thorau, *Baybars*, 187.

⁷³ For these campaigns, see: Thorau, *Baybars*, pp. 187–92; Runciman, *Crusades*, 3:324–6; Prawer, *Histoire*, 2:476–85. On the Templar presence on the Cilician–Syrian border, and their fortress at Baghrās, see the articles by Lawrence and Riley-Smith in Boase, *Cilician Kingdom*, 34–83, 92–117.

⁷⁴ *Rawḍ*, 351; *Tuhfa*, 66; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 158b; Maqrīzī, 1:579; *Ḥusn*, 146, who calls this castle Shumaysāt.

At the end of this year, Baybars decided to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, although he kept his intentions secret. This covertness is not unusual, since concealment of plans and movements was standard practice for Baybars throughout his reign.⁷⁵ In order to hide his true intentions, Baybars, then in Syria, called the *amīr al-urbān* ʿĪsā b. Muḥannā, told him that he planned to attack Iraq, and ordered him to make the necessary preparations. ʿĪsā subsequently heard that the Sultan had gone to the Ḥijāz, having waited all this time in the expectation of taking part in an expedition and gaining booty.

While Baybars was on his way to Mecca, a group of Mongol raiders was riding to the Ḥijāz. "They intended thus to reconnoitre the roads and to loot those areas . . . With [these raiders] were a group of Mongols [*al-mughul*] who did not recognize Allāh and his sanctuary . . . Their aim was to spill the blood of the pilgrims in the sanctuary." When these raiders, however, heard of the Sultan's approach, they panicked and turned back. Supposedly, Baybars already knew of their plan even before he set out for the Ḥijāz, and was hoping for the opportunity to combine the commandments of holy war and pilgrimage.⁷⁶ This might well be, because – as will be seen in chapter 6 – the Sultan operated an effective intelligence network among the Mongols. In addition, it would seem to be more than coincidental that he set out in the same year the Mongols were planning a raid on Mecca during the pilgrimage season.

All of these raids were relatively modest affairs. The Mongol raid of 668/1269 was, however, a more serious matter. Shāfiʿ b. ʿAlī writes that due to his intelligence operatives Baybars knew in advance of an impending attack on the fringes of his kingdom around this time. In the fall of that year, Baybars, then near Alexandria, received word that the Mongols had coordinated plans with the Franks of the coast, and had raided Sājūr near Aleppo, looting livestock from the local bedouin. This was soon after the arrival of the remnants of the Aragonese crusade at Acre at the end of October 1269. The Mongols were led by Samaghar, the Mongol commander in Rūm. The Sultan returned to the capital, and sent out Aydegin al-Bunduqdār⁷⁷ with an advance force to wait at the border of Syria. He himself set out with a small force on 21 Rabiʿ I/18 November and arrived in Damascus on 7 Rabiʿ II/4 December, after a particularly difficult march due to poor weather. At Damascus, he heard that the Mongols had withdrawn when they heard of his approach.⁷⁸

The following year (669/1270–1), there are no recorded Mongol–Mamluk incidents. Learning that Louis IX of France had taken his crusade to Tunis

⁷⁵ See the comments in Khowaiter, *Baibars*, 38–9.

⁷⁶ *Rawḍ*, 354–8; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 160a, 175b; cf. Maqrīzī, 1:580–2, who does not mention Mongol raiders; *Husn*, 146, writes that these were Mongols and Tatars (*min al-mughul wa'l-tatār*) from Baghdad.

⁷⁷ This amir had the distinction of being Baybars's first patron (*ustādh*), before al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb gained possession of him; Thorau, *Baybars*, 28–9.

⁷⁸ *Husn*, 150; *Rawḍ*, 361–2; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 194b; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 179a–b (= ed. Lyons, 1:172); Maqrīzī, 1:584; Aynī, fol. 100a; Thorau, *Baybars*, 200–1. On the Aragonese crusade, see ch. 4, pp. 96–8.

and died there, Baybars felt free to apply himself to his ongoing project of conquering Frankish castles and cities. In short order, he took Ṣāfithā/Ṣāfītā (Chastel Blanc, of the Templars), Ḥiṣn al-Akrād (Crac des Chevaliers, of the Hospitallers), Ḥiṣn ʿAkkār (Gibelacar, also of the Hospitallers) and al-Qurayn (Montfort, headquarters of the Teutonic Knights), plus several minor fortified points, thus dealing a blow to all three military orders. The Sultan had planned to attack Tripoli, but he then received news of the arrival of Prince Edward of England at Acre in the spring of 669/1271, at the head of a body of troops. He thought it wise to conclude a truce with Bohemond VI, Count of Tripoli and now titular Prince of Antioch. He was also nonplussed by the arrival of Hugh of Lusignan, King of Cyprus, at Acre at the head of a large force. In order to divert him back to Cyprus, Baybars sent out a flotilla to attack Limassol. This attack, however, was a total failure and most of the ships ran aground off the coast of Cyprus and their crews were captured.⁷⁹

Samaghar, together with the Pervāne, Muʿīn al-Dīn Sulaymān (the strong-man in Seljuq Rūm), returned to north Syria in mid-Rabiʿ I 670/ca. 20 October 1271. This attack, initiated at Abagha's express order, was to some degree coordinated with the Franks of Acre. Soon after his arrival, Edward had sent envoys to Abagha, who wrote back promising to send Samaghar at the head of a "mighty force." In reality, this force seems to have been relatively modest in size. Initial reports spoke of how the Mongols had raided ʿAyn Tāb and were on their way to ʿAṣuq al-Ḥārim. Baybars, who was in Damascus, having just completed an inspection tour in north Syria, responded immediately. He seems to have had advance knowledge of some type of Mongol offensive, as well as Frankish preparations for war. He first wrote to Egypt and ordered Baysari to come to Syria with 3000 troops. Baybars waited until Baysari arrived on 4 Rabiʿ II/9 November, and set out from Damascus with the forces at his disposal. Meanwhile, the Mongols raided Ḥārim and al-Rūj (to the west of Aleppo), killing many people. Al-Yūnīnī and others write that the total Mongol force numbered 10,000 Mongols (*al-mughul*) and Rūmis. At Marʿash, Samaghar and the Pervāne halted with the majority of their army, and sent ahead a force of 1500 elite troops (*min aʿyānihim* or *min akābir al-mughul*) to reconnoiter and raid. After reaching ʿAyn Tāb, the advance force went to Qaṣṣūn, in the region of al-Rūj. Between Antioch and Ḥārim, they fell upon a group of Türkmens and devastated them.

At Hama, Baybars met up with al-Manṣūr and the Aleppan army which had fallen back upon the approach of the Mongols. Baybars had ordered the flight of the population of north and central Syria, including Damascus, in order to encourage the Mongols to penetrate further into the country, so he could better deal with them. From Hama, he dispatched forces in different directions to put pressure on the Mongols and act as diversions. One, led by Shams al-Dīn Aq Sunqur al-Fāriqānī and including a group of bedouin, went to

⁷⁹ Thorau, *Baybars*, 203–9; Runciman, *Crusades*, 3:333–5; Prawer, *Histoire*, 2:487–503.

Marʿash. They did not succeed in getting there in time to make contact with the main Mongol army. The second force, under Taybars al-Wazīrī and ʿĪsā b. Muḥannā, crossed the Euphrates and raided Ḥarrān and al-Ruhā (Edessa). Meanwhile, the Sultan continued north. He sent out scouts (*kashshāfa*) and “burners” (*munawwirūn*). The latter term probably refers to the operatives whose job it was to burn grasslands.⁸⁰ At some point, the Mongols, aware of the approach of a large Mamluk force, withdrew from Syria. Baybars continued on to Aleppo, reaching it on 18 Rabīʿ 670/23 November 1271.⁸¹ Thus ended the one real attempt to launch a concerted Mongol–Frankish campaign against the Mamluks.

Meanwhile, the force under Taybars and ʿĪsā had reached Ḥarrān. Because of its exposed position, and the depredations perpetrated on the city by bedouins loyal to Baybars, much of the population had already fled Ḥarrān in the preceding years, to both the Jazīra and Syria.⁸² The Mongol garrison there was quite modest, some sixty troops. They set out on hearing of the approach of the Mamluk force, and first encountered ʿĪsā’s bedouins. Thereupon Taybars’s troops appeared on the scene, and the Mongols surrendered. Taybars continued on to Ḥarrān. On 26 Rabīʿ II 670/1 December 1271, its notables came out to make their surrender. Taybars called on the Mongol *shahna* to submit, but he barricaded himself in one of the towers, saying that he would only surrender to the Sultan in person. Taybars left without entering the city and returned to Syria. He was followed by the notables of the city.⁸³ At the end of Ramaḍān (end of April 1272), a group of Mongols came to the city, destroyed the mosque, part of the walls, much of the market and many houses. Upon leaving, the Mongols forced the remaining population to go with them. Ḥarrān was left desolate and uninhabited. Ibn Shaddād writes that the Mongols had seen that they could not defend the city and thus decided that it was best left destroyed.⁸⁴

After returning from Aleppo, Baybars planned to raid Acre, so as to punish the Franks for their activities while he was preoccupied with the Mongols in north Syria. He set out for Acre, but unusually severe weather dissuaded him, and he returned to Egypt. It was there that Baybars heard in Rajab of this year

⁸⁰ See ch. 9.

⁸¹ For Edward’s arrival in Acre and his contact with Abagha, see ch. 4. The above account of the Mongol raid is based on a conflation of two groups of sources. The first: *Rawḍ*, 395–7; whence, *Zubda*, fol. 76a–b; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 202a–203a; Maqrīzī, 1:599–600. The second: Yūnīnī, 2:467–8; Mufaḍḍal, 203–4; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:164–5; Kutubī, 20:417–18; Dhahabī, MS. Laud 279, fol. 9b. For a Frankish account of this raid, see: “Eracles,” *RHC*, *Occ*, 2:461.

⁸² Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlāq*, 3:62. In 667/1268–9, much of the population, including the young Ibn Taymiyya, fled to Syria; Kutubī, 20:379; Ibn Kathīr, 13:255.

⁸³ Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlāq*, 3:62–3; Yūnīnī, 2:468–9; Mufaḍḍal, 205–7; Kutubī, 20:418–19; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:166.

⁸⁴ Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlāq*, 3:63; *idem*, *Taʾrikh*, 33; Yūnīnī, 2:471; Mufaḍḍal, 206–7; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:167–8.

(2 February–2 March 1272) of another Mongol advance towards Syria. Baybars, however, left Cairo only on 3 Shaʿbān/5 March. In Palestine, negotiations commenced between the Sultan and the Franks, which led to the signing on 21 Ramaḍān 670/21 April 1272 of a peace treaty with the Kingdom of Jerusalem, for a period of ten years and ten months.⁸⁵ The conclusion of this treaty did not prevent Baybars from trying to assassinate Edward of England less than two months later.⁸⁶

The Franks received relatively good terms from the Sultan, probably because he wanted to secure that front so as to be able to devote his full attention to the danger from the Mongols. For the time being, however, no more is heard of an expected Mongol raid. Instead, the Sultan received word that Mongol envoys had arrived in Damascus, and he himself reached there on 8 Shawwāl/8 May. These envoys represented Samaghar and the Pervāne, each having sent their own envoy, and their names were given as Majd al-Dīn Dawlat Khān and Saʿd al-Dīn Saʿīd al-Turjumān.⁸⁷ According to Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, Samaghar and the Pervāne sent these envoys in response to a letter which Baybars had sent them. Having delivered a verbal message, they delivered a letter, the upshot of which was their desire for peace (*ṣulḥ*) and the request that Baybars would send envoys. Ibn Shaddād relates a different message: after greeting him, Samaghar Noyan complains that since becoming his neighbor, Baybars has not sent to him on any matter. If he had done so, Samaghar would have obeyed (*muṭāwīʿan*). Samaghar then suggested that Baybars send a letter to Abagha, and he will help the Sultan reach his goal. According to both authors, Baybars responded by dispatching two amirs, Mubārīz al-Dīn al-Ṭūrī Amīr Ṭabar (“hatchet bearer”) and Fakhr al-Dīn Ayaz al-Muqrī al-Ḥājib (“chamberlain”), who set off in the middle of Shawwāl/15 May. It seems that these “Mongol” envoys had been sent on the private initiative of Samaghar and the Pervāne, and that Abagha was still in the dark regarding this *démarche*. Passing through Cilicia, the Mamluk envoys paid a visit to King Leon, and then continued on to Rūm, where they consecutively met with Samaghar and the Pervāne. Each received gifts from the Sultan. The envoys, together with the Pervāne, continued on to Abagha, to whom they gave a number of presents.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir writes that Mubārīz al-Dīn told the Īlkhān: “The Sultan greets you, and says that the envoys of Möngke Temür (Khan of the Golden Horde) have come to him several times so that the Sultan should attack [Abagha’s territory] from his side, and King Möngke Temür will attack from his side. Wherever the horses of the Sultan reach, that [land] is his, and wherever

⁸⁵ Thorau, *Baybars*, 209–10; *Rawḍ*, 397–9; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 203b–204a (= ed. Lyons, 1:199–200); Maqrīzī, 1:601.

⁸⁶ Thorau, *Baybars*, 221–2; Riley-Smith, in Ibn al-Furāt, ed. Lyons, 2:244; cf. Runciman, *Crusades*, 3:337–8.

⁸⁷ These were also the names that Yūnīnī and others gave for the Mongol envoys in AH 667; see above.

the horses of Möngke Temür reach, that is his.” Abagha – so it is reported – was greatly disturbed at what he heard, and promptly left the assembly. Again, Ibn Shaddād offers a different version: Abagha asked the envoys what they wanted. They replied that Samaghar had sent to the Sultan that Abagha would be pleased if an envoy were sent to him. The Sultan sent the envoys to tell Abagha that if “you want us to be obedient [*muṭāwīʿan*] to you, and to desist from [attacking] you, then give up what you have of the Muslim lands.” The Īlkhān responded to this by saying that this was not possible, and at least each ruler should keep what he had. The source adds that Abagha spoke rudely to the envoy and – not surprisingly – no agreement came about. In both versions, the envoys were allowed to return and they eventually made their way back to the Sultanate, arriving in Damascus on 15 Ṣafar 671/11 September 1272.⁸⁸

Dr. Thorau is probably correct in preferring Ibn Shaddād’s version to that of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, who evidently was trying to extol Baybars’s power by showing that Abagha was extremely disconcerted by the Sultan’s bellicose letter. Likewise, Dr. Thorau rightly judges that Baybars’s provocative message – in both its versions – shows he was not really interested in successful negotiations. It is misleading, however, to speak of “Baybars’s wish to strengthen his negotiating position out of fear” [it is not clear of what exactly] and to imply that now the Sultan, “having no longer anything to fear from the Christians,” was not interested in making peace and wanted to provoke Abagha.⁸⁹ There is no discernible change here from Baybars’s previous messages to the Īlkhānids, or his public thoughts on the subject. At this point, as before, no compromise would have been possible. Abagha had not given up the Mongol imperial ideal of manifest destiny, and the memory of the defeat of ‘Ayn Jālūt was still fresh. On the other hand, publicly at least, Baybars proclaimed his desire to liberate the Caliphal lands and to return the Caliph to his capital.

At the beginning of 671/early August 1272, Baybars was in Damascus. Reports had been coming in about a Mongol attack. Meanwhile, his envoys to Abagha had yet to return. After consulting with the amirs, Baybars decided to go back to Egypt to prepare the army there for an expedition to Syria. Keeping his exact whereabouts a secret, Baybars arrived in Cairo via the *barīd* on 13 Muḥarram/10 August. The Egyptian army set out on 27 Muḥarram/24 August, and the Sultan left for Syria two days later, arriving in Damascus on 2 Ṣafar/29 August. For the time being, no more was heard of the expected Mongol offensive, but during the month of Ṣafar (which ended 25 September), news of the approaching envoys from Abagha and Rūm reached the Sultan. He sent orders that they should perform three genuflections (*yaḍribū al-jūk*), a Mongol custom showing subservience, before the governor of Aleppo and al-Manṣūr of Hama. Thereupon, these envoys were brought to Damascus.

⁸⁸ *Rawḍ*, 399–400; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 203a; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 204a–b; Maqrīzī, 1:602. Second version: Ibn Shaddād, *Ta’rīkh*, 34–5; Yūnīnī, 2:471–2, Dhahabī, MS. Laud, 279, fol. 10a; Kutubī, 20:421. ⁸⁹ Thorau, *Baybars*, 220–1 and 243 n. 2.

Initially, they delivered a verbal message to the Mamluk amirs: "What injury comes from peace [*ṣulḥ*], and what advantage comes from hostility? [Abagha] says that the Sultan should send Sunqur al-Ashqar to act as an intermediary between us to [achieve] the peace [*ṣulḥ*]." At a subsequent meeting, however, the envoys became more demanding: "Abagha says that the Sultan or whoever follows him in rank should come to Abagha for the sake of the *ṣulḥ*." Baybars certainly had no illusions what was meant by *ṣulḥ* in Abagha's lexicon, i.e. acceptance of Mongol suzerainty. He answered, that if Abagha meant peace then he or one of his brothers should come. That was the end of negotiations. The Mongol envoys were sent back in the following month.⁹⁰

What was the point, then, of exchanging envoys, if there was no chance of real negotiations? The answer must be that this was part of the psychological warfare waged by both sides. Each ruler was trying to intimidate his opponent. The mutual bluster must have also been designed for home consumption, at least for the military elite of both kingdoms, demonstrating the rulers' resolution and disdain for the enemy. I cannot agree with Professor Cahen that Abagha initiated these negotiations in order to seek "a peace settlement that would allow the internal re-organization of the war-devastated territories he governed."⁹¹ It has been seen that the first initiative came from Samaghar and the Pervâne in Rûm. Secondly, Abagha's message is not at all conciliatory. Thirdly, had it been important to Abagha to devote himself to reorganization, he could have desisted from attacking Syria, thus significantly lessening tension, and perhaps achieving even a *de facto* peace. It can be admitted, however, that the possibility does exist that Abagha may have feared that an inactive policy on his part might have encouraged aggression by Baybars.

More sparring on the border

Soon after the return of the Mongol envoys, the Mongols attacked al-Bīra and put it under siege. We have three independent contemporary sources for this Mongol offensive and the Mamluk counter-attack: Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, Ibn Shaddād and Baybars al-Manṣūrī. The last mentioned author actually participated in the campaign. There are no major disagreements between the sources, although they differ on details. In addition, Waṣṣāf has left us with an account of the battle written from a Mongol perspective, which only very roughly agrees with the Mamluk sources.

On 5 Jumādā I 671/28 November 1272,⁹² Baybars received word in Damascus that the Mongols were heading for al-Bīra. Baybars set out for the north with the army, including large forces from Egypt, which had been

⁹⁰ *Rawd*, 403–4; *Zubda*, fols. 77b–78a; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 213a–b; Maqrīzī, 1:605 (shorter, confused version); cf. also Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 205a; Thorau, *Baybars*, 221. On the *jūk* (< Mongolian *chuk*), see Dozy, 1:235b; note in Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. Quatremère, pp. 322–3 n. 121; *TMEN*, 3:120 (no. 1141).

⁹¹ C. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, tr. J. Jones-Williams (London, 1968), 285.

⁹² On this date, see Thorau, *Baybars*, 244 n. 14.

ordered to Syria earlier in the year. One force, under Fakhr al-Dīn Altunba al-Ḥimṣī, was sent to Ḥārim, while another, commanded by Taybars al-Wazīrī and including bedouins, was dispatched in an unspecified direction; since the latter eventually rejoined the main army, he was probably sent as an advance guard towards al-Bīra. Baybars went via Hama, collecting boats there to facilitate his crossing of the Euphrates. Passing through the region of Aleppo, he sent ahead mamluks and bedouin to scout. At Manbij, they returned to him, and reported that some 3000 Mongols were on the east bank of the Euphrates. The Sultan continued on to the Euphrates, reaching it on 18 Jumādā I/11 December.

The total Mongol force was under the command of Durbai, who had commanded the earlier Mongol attack at al-Bīra in 663/1264. He himself conducted the siege of the castle. The Mongol force included a contingent from Seljuq Rūm (some 3000 troops).⁹³ To prosecute the siege, mangonels and other siege machines were erected. The force at the river was commanded by Chinqar, who reportedly had 5000 men. The Mongols had prepared themselves well for the arrival of Mamluk troops. First, they took up position at a difficult ford, hoping that the Mamluks would think that it was a shallow one and so attempt their crossing there. The exact position of this ford in relation to al-Bīra is not clear, although, as seen below, it was not within eyesight. In addition, the Mongols constructed a palisade (*sibe*) and positioned themselves behind it, planning to fight dismounted with bows and arrows.

The stratagem worked, and the Mamluks did cross at the more difficult ford. First, Baybars sent foot archers (*al-rajjāla al-uqjiyya*) in boats to scout out the terrain on the east bank. The Mamluk army then crossed the river. The depth of the water obliged the troops to swim, holding their horses' reins. There is some disagreement about which amirs (and their private units of mamluks) were the first into the river, and thus the first to encounter the enemy on the other side. All agree, however, that Qalawun was in the first wave.⁹⁴ The Sultan followed behind this vanguard. Once the Mamluk troops began to climb up onto the east bank, fierce hand-to-hand fighting ensued. Eventually the Mongols were defeated, in spite of their advantageous position. Chinqar himself was killed during the fighting – according to Baybars al-Manṣūrī – by Ketbugha al-Manṣūrī, the future sultan. Some 200 Mongols were captured. When the main Mongol force under Durbai at al-Bīra learned of how the Mamluks had defeated the corps at the river, it fled, abandoning the mangonels and other equipment. The Mongols had reportedly been on the verge of taking the fort. There is some disagreement in the sources about Baybars's subsequent actions, but it seems that for some reason he returned to the west bank of the Euphrates; only four days later did he recross the river and

⁹³ Ibn Shaddād gives a list of non-Mongol amirs, mostly Rūmīs, serving in the battle.

⁹⁴ Thorau, *Baybars*, 244 n. 15.

go to the fort. Meanwhile, Baysari had been pursuing the Mongols from the ford up to Sarūj (between al-Bīra and Ḥarrān). At the fort, its governor and defenders were rewarded by Baybars, who thereupon set back for Damascus, reaching it on 3 Jumādā II/26 December 1272.⁹⁵

It is interesting to compare the above account with Waṣṣāf's version of the battle: after al-Bīra was put under siege by a Mongol army, its inhabitants sent calls for help by pigeon to Hama and Homs and from there to Cairo. Baybars wrote to the defenders to be firm and promised that his army would be at al-Bīra within seven days. If not, they were allowed to surrender. Baybars rode ahead of his army accompanied by only seven *ghulāms*, which can presumably be understood to mean mamluks. Riding on postal horses (*marākib-i yām*), he reached al-Bīra in four days. There he was joined by 200 horsemen from Hama. He went up a small hill on the Syrian bank of the Euphrates, and set out his banners; the people of al-Bīra were overjoyed. About twelve days later, the Egyptian army came and threw themselves into the river. Thereupon, the Mongols fled, having seen the boldness of their enemy and their own distress, even though their army was twice the size of the Sultan's force. The Egyptians then took much booty.⁹⁶ Waṣṣāf skips several important details that he should have known, such as the fighting at the ford, while inserting information in other places which contradicts the evidence in the Mamluk sources. Again, Waṣṣāf shows himself to be a less than credible source for Mamluk-Īlkhānid relations. In passing, it should be observed that this appears to be the one mention by a Persian source of an occurrence in the border war during Baybars's reign.

Had the Mongol expedition to take al-Bīra been successful, Abagha would have secured a bridgehead in Mamluk territory, and been in a better position to launch an invasion of Syria when he chose. Needless to say, he was angry at the results. When Durbai appeared, the Īlkhān rebuked and reviled him, asking him how it was that he had fled unwounded while his comrade Chinqar had been killed. Durbai was exiled and his command given to Abtai.⁹⁷

Late in AH 671 (ca. early July 1273), Baybars ordered the governor of Aleppo, Ḥusām al-Dīn Lachīn al-ʿAynṭābī to attack Kaynūk. This Armenian fortress, also called Ḥadath al-Ḥamrā', was situated to the northeast of Mar'ash, on the bank of the Aq Su River. It has been suggested that this location is at the present-day Başıpınar, in the area of Gölbaşı in modern Turkey. The inhabi-

⁹⁵ *Rawḍ*, 405–8; Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rikh*, 55–7; *Zubda*, fols. 78b–79a; *Tuhfa*, 75–6; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fols. 214a–215b (quotes both *Rawḍ* and *Zubda*); Maqrīzī, 1:606–7; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fols. 251b–252a (a condensed version of *Rawḍ*); Qirtay, fol. 99a–b, gives information derived from Ibn Shaddād's account of the raid of AH 674, but places it under this year. The other Mamluk sources that I checked were based on Ibn Shaddād, e.g.: Yūnīnī, 3:2–3; Mufaḍḍal, 212–14; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, 7:158–9. Cf. Thorau, *Baybars*, 223–4; Spuler, *Iran*, 65.

⁹⁶ Waṣṣāf, 87–8; cf. Āyatī, 54–5. The latter corrects the mistaken date in Waṣṣāf, who writes that this was in AH 679.

⁹⁷ *Zubda*, fol. 79a; *Tuhfa*, 76; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 215a–b.

tants of Kaynūk were guilty of attacking both merchants and agents (*quṣṣād*) going to and from Syria. These Armenians would wear Mongol hats (*sarāqū-jāt*) in order to disguise themselves and attack caravans. Baybars had first sent to the Armenian King to force them to desist, but to no avail, so he dispatched an expedition. Lachin reached the fort on 3 Muḥarram 672/20 July 1273, and took both the town and the citadel. The men were massacred and the women and children taken into captivity. From there, Lachin continued on to “Ṭarsūs”. Canard has suggested that this is not Tarse, but rather Trush, near the confluence of the Euphrates and the Gök Su, an identification which certainly makes sense from a geographical point of view. This attack did not result in the permanent occupation of Kaynūk, but it is unclear if the town was eventually resettled by Armenians or others.⁹⁸

Bar Hebraeus may be referring to this raid, when he writes that in the summer of 1273, “robber bands from Syria,” setting out from al-Bīra and ‘Ayn Ṭāb, raided a town called “Ḳlāwdyā” (= Qalawdhiya, on the Euphrates, some 50 km to the southeast of Malatya). According to him, the raid was quick and many captives were taken. The raiders hurried back to their country out of fear of the Mongols.⁹⁹

Around this time, reports of another Mongol advance reached Baybars in Cairo. In response, the Sultan set out with several amirs on 26 Muḥarram 672/11 August 1273. While he was riding, additional news of a Mongol offensive reached him. The Sultan then sent an order that the entire Egyptian army was to set out, together – according to Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir – with the Egyptian bedouins (*urbān*). This appears to be the first and only time that Egyptian nomads were explicitly called to take part in an anti-Mongol campaign. Whether they actually participated in the campaign is a different matter. Baybars must have taken quite seriously the prospect of a Mongol offensive, because he also allegedly ordered that everyone in his kingdom owning a horse was to show up, and every village in Syria was to send out horsemen (*khayyāla*) according to its capability. It is questionable, however, whether Baybars really wanted the assistance of such a ragtag force, including the bedouin of Egypt. I would hazard the guess that Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir is guilty here of some hyperbole, and what he is essentially saying is that Baybars ordered a general call-up of all the soldiers of the kingdom. In any case, we hear no more of a Mongol danger at this point. The Egyptian army reached Jaffa, where it was met by the Sultan, who had ridden on to Damascus before turning back to meet his troops.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Rawḍ*, 417, 432; Ibn al-Furāt, 7:2; *Huṣn*, 152; *Zubda*, fol. 80b; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 252a; Canard, “Arménie,” 237–8 and n. 81, 243; Thorau, *Baybars*, 232–3. Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 219a (and whence Maqrīzī, 1:608) also mistakenly reports this incident s.a. 671. On the location of Kaynūk, see Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, 3:76–9; S. Ory, “al-Ḥadath,” *EJ*², 3:19–20.

⁹⁹ Bar Hebraeus, 450; not in Arabic version. On Qalawdhiya, see Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866–73), 4:167.

¹⁰⁰ *Rawḍ*, 420–1; Ibn al-Furāt, 7:3; Maqrīzī, 1:610; Ibn Shaddād, *Ta’rīkh*, 71–2; Yūnīnī, 3:31–2; Mufaḍḍal, 217–18; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 207b, who conflates Ibn Shaddād and Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir.

According to Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, later in the year there was still news of a Mongol advance of some kind. Baybars had in the meanwhile returned to Egypt. Probably to reconnoiter and act as a diversion, he ordered ʿĪsā b. Muḥannā to lead his tribesmen in a raid across the Euphrates. They reached al-Anbār, and encountered a group of Mongols there. The Mongols, however, withdrew without fighting, thinking – so we are told – that the Sultan himself was at the head of the raiders. ʿĪsā did, however, manage to engage a group of Khafāja bedouins, and fought them for half a day, on 18 Shaʿbān/10 March 1274. The fighting seems to have been inconclusive.¹⁰¹

In the memorandum to the second Council of Lyon in AD 1274, it was claimed that in 1273 Abagha had planned an offensive against the infidels of Egypt. Upon hearing of the impending meeting of Church leaders, he postponed this campaign in order to communicate his plans to the Council.¹⁰² This, then, might be the reason why no more was heard of the expected Mongol invasion at this time in Mamluk sources.

The year 672/1273–4 also saw the arrival of another important non-Mongol *wāfiḍī* to the Sultanate: Shams al-Dīn Bahādur b. al-Malik Faraj, the lord of Shumaysāt/Sumaysāt, whose father had been *amīr tasht* (“ewer holder”) of the Khwārazm-shāh Jalāl al-Dīn. The Mongols suspected (correctly) that Bahādur was in secret contact with Baybars and arrested him. Bahādur, however, succeeded in escaping from the *ordo*. Previously, more than a thousand – so it is reported – of his mamluks and soldiers had fled to the Sultan, who had received them well. Bahādur eventually made his way to Baybars, who rewarded him with *iqṭāʿāt* in Egypt and made him an amir of 20, and later of 40.¹⁰³

In 673/1274–5, Baybars again turned his attention to Lesser Armenia. Cilicia had enjoyed several years of respite from Mamluk depredations, probably due more to Baybars’s preoccupations with the Mongols than his treaty with the Armenian King, now Leon III. The port city of Ayās was rebuilt and became an active trading center, profiting from the conquest and subsequent decline of Antioch. It seems that trade from Ilkhānid territory and beyond no longer went to Europe via Antioch, now in Mamluk hands, but through Ayās. New privileges granted to the Genoese in 1271 only strengthened Ayās’s prosperity. This same prosperity, however, also appeared to have attracted the Mamluks.¹⁰⁴

According to Smpad, Baybars had set his sights on Cilicia in 1271 (= AH

¹⁰¹ *Rawḍ*, 426; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 252b; Ibn al-Furāt, 7:6 (in MS. Vienna, fol. 219a, he also mentions this raid, mistakenly s.a. 671); Maqrīzī, 1:611.

¹⁰² Roberg, “Tataren,” 282–3. See ch. 4.

¹⁰³ Ibn Shaddād, *Taʾriḥ*, 336; *Rawḍ*, 421–3; *Husn*, 153; *Zubda*, fol. 81a; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 208a–b; Ibn al-Furāt, 7:4–5; Maqrīzī, 1:611. See also ch. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Der Nersessian, “Kingdom,” 655; Runciman, *Crusades*, 3:326. On the prosperity and trade of Ayās, see: Marco Polo, tr. Latham, 46; E. Ashtor, *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages* (London, 1976), 264–5, 298–9; W. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au moyen âge* (Leipzig, 1936, rpt. of 1885–6 ed.), 1:365–72; 2:72–80, 88–9.

669–70), when he led an army towards it. Leon, however, sent envoys and Baybars returned to Egypt. The Armenian King then went to Abagha, who promised to send 20,000 men within a few months to protect his kingdom. A number of Mongol troops then returned with Leon.¹⁰⁵ The Mamluk sources make no mention of this aborted raid, a fact that casts doubt on the veracity of this report. It is clear that no significant Mongol force was in Lesser Armenia when Baybars did attack in 673/1275.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir and Ibn Shaddād offer different reasons for Baybars's campaign to Cilicia this year. The former writes that the Armenian King had stopped sending the tribute that had been agreed upon, had broken the conditions of the agreement by rebuilding and strengthening forts, and had not sent true information as he had sworn. (None of these conditions were mentioned in the accounts of the treaty.) In addition, there was the episode of Kaynūk, which has been mentioned above. The King knew what was in store for him, and he so attempted to gain the support of the Mongols and (unnamed) Franks by deprecating the Muslims in their eyes. This information is more or less seconded by Ibn Shaddād in *al-Aʿlāq al-khaṭīra*. In his biography of Baybars, on the other hand, Ibn Shaddād states that Baybars launched his campaign because the Pervāne, fearing the Mongols, had secretly written to the Sultan and urged him to attack Cilicia. In exchange, the Pervāne promised that in the following year he would make Baybars the ruler of Rūm.¹⁰⁶ It would seem that the intention here was to neutralize Cilicia before attempting an offensive to Rūm, although this is not explicitly stated. There is no real contradiction between these explanations, because the Sultan could have had several reasons for attacking Lesser Armenia. He may also have wished to inflict damage on the international trade that passed from Īlkhānid territory via Lesser Armenia to the West.

As a prelude to the major campaign, a raiding force was sent out from Aleppo under its governor, Lachin al-ʿAyntābī some time in 673/1274–5. This force went on to Marʿash, raiding the countryside along the way. At Marʿash, they knocked down the gates of the faubourg (*rabaḍ*).¹⁰⁷ Perhaps this is the first invasion of Cilicia mentioned by Bar Hebraeus for AD 1275. According to him, the Egyptian army was put to flight by the Armenians.¹⁰⁸ The Mamluk sources make no mention of such a setback, if there indeed was one. On 3 Shaʿbān 673/1 February 1275 Baybars left Cairo at the head of the army, after reviewing the troops. He reached Damascus at the end of Shaʿbān and departed for the north a week later (6 March), accompanied also by the army of Damascus. On the way he was joined by al-Manṣūr of Hama and local bedouins. Leaving the heavy baggage and part of his army in the environs of

¹⁰⁵ Smpad, tr. Der Nersessian, 166.

¹⁰⁶ *Rawḍ*, p. 432; Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlāq*, ed. Eddé, 321; *idem*, *Taʾriḫ*, 107; see also the comments in Canard, "Arménie," 238–9; Thorau, *Baybars*, 233. The Pervāne's relations with Baybars will be discussed in ch. 9.

¹⁰⁷ *Rawḍ*, 431; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 252b; Ibn al-Furāt, 7:25; Maqrīzī, 1:616; Thorau, *Baybars*, 233. ¹⁰⁸ Bar Hebraeus, 452.

Aleppo, Baybars and his army proceeded in the direction of al-Darbassāk. A force was sent ahead to al-Nahr al-Aswad (= Qara Su) to seize the ford, which was crossed with difficulty. The main army camped between al-Darbassāk and Baghrās.¹⁰⁹

While marching through north Syria, Baybars ordered Lachin al-ʿAyntābī and ʿĪsā b. Muḥannā to advance to al-Bīra. They were to give the impression that they were the vanguard of the whole army, in order to mislead the Mongols and Armenians alike as to the true whereabouts of the Sultan and the main Mamluk force. Having reached al-Bīra, this force continued on to Ra's al-ʿAyn in the Jazīra and looted that town. No actual fighting took place, because the Mongols stationed there withdrew. The Mamluk force then returned to Syria.¹¹⁰

Before entering the Syrian Gate (Bab Iskandarūn), just south of Alexandretta,¹¹¹ the Sultan ordered senior amirs up into the mountains, presumably to reconnoiter and drive out Armenians who were hiding there. Having traversed the pass (21 Ramaḍān/20 March), the Sultan advanced along the coast to al-Muthaqqab, and then inland to al-Maṣṣīṣa. According to Baybars al-Manṣūrī, who participated in the campaign, his patron Qalawun and Bilig al-Khaznadār were sent ahead with the vanguard. The author tells how this vanguard reached al-Maṣṣīṣa, catching its inhabitants by surprise in the morning and killing most of them. Probably around this time, a large group of both local Türkmen and bedouin came to the Sultan with their horses and livestock, to express their loyalty to him. They were sent on to Syria. Baybars entered the capital of Sis on 29 Ramaḍān/28 March, and from there rode as far as Darband al-Sis (Pylae Ciliciae), where he found some Mongol women and children, probably evidence of a rapidly abandoned Mongol camp. He then returned to the capital and spent the holiday of ʿĪd al-Fitr there. Baybars was unable to take the citadel, but he razed the city, and then returned to al-Maṣṣīṣa. Meanwhile, Mamluk columns had reached Ṭarsūs (Tarse), the sea coast, Qalʿat al-Barzīn (location not clear) and Adhana. Bar Hebraeus adds that they reached as far as Cyricus (Corycus). One column, under Baysari and *Etmish (or Aytamish < ʿ-ʾ-Y-T-M-SH) al-Saʿdī, reached Ayās (on 25 March according to Bar Hebraeus), killing and burning; some inhabitants and Franks managed to flee to sea in boats, although a number of them drowned. Having wrought havoc in all directions, the various forces rejoined the Sultan at al-Maṣṣīṣa, bringing with them much booty and more Mongol children and womenfolk. From there, the whole Mamluk force started home, going via Tall Ḥamdūn, which they attacked. Crossing the Amanus mountains, probably at

¹⁰⁹ For the references, see n. 112.

¹¹⁰ *Rawḍ*, 433, 436; Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fols. 253a, 254a; Ibn al-Furāt, 7:29, 31; Maqrīzī, 1:616, 618, wrongly transcribes ʿAyn Tāb (this was already in Mamluk hands) instead of Ra's al-ʿAyn (see Thorau, *Baybars*, 248 n. 63).

¹¹¹ On the Syrian Gate, also called the Pass of Beylan, see Boase, *Cilician Kingdom*, 157, 182; Edwards, *Fortifications*, 30. It is conceivable that what is referred to is a second pass on the coastal road north of Alexandretta.

the Syrian Gate (20 Shawwāl/18 April), the whole army camped near Hārim, where the booty was redistributed. On 5 Dhū 'l-hijja/1 June 1275, the Sultan was back in Damascus.¹¹²

An interesting story is told by Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm, the continuator of Ibn Wāṣil. He cites the amir Fakhr al-Dīn Ayaz al-Muqrī al-Ḥājib, who had been sent in 670/1272 as an envoy to Abagha (see above). Ayaz tells of how news had reached the Sultan from Mamluk spies (*jawāsis*) in the entourage of the Armenian King who reported that the King was with his army in the mountains near the country of the Qaraman Türkmen.¹¹³ This would explain why, during this whole raid, Leon was not to be seen, and there were virtually no signs of concerted Armenian resistance. Evidently, Leon's trauma from the Mamluk raid of 664/1266 was so great that he did not want to risk another confrontation with the Mamluks. The one example of resistance was a joint force of Armenians and unspecified Franks; Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm reports that there were 1500 of the former and 500 of the latter. According to this writer, Baybars himself fought them. Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir writes, evidently referring to the same incident, that they were defeated by the Syrian army.¹¹⁴ Bar Hebraeus states that after the Mamluks left the country, the Armenian King appeared and killed all the Türkmen who also had been ravaging the country at this time.¹¹⁵ We can perhaps doubt this report.

The following year, Abagha once again sent another army against al-Bīra. The command of this army was under Abtai, who had replaced Durbai after the latter's failure and ignominious retreat at the same fort in 671/1272. Abtai was joined by the Rūmi army under the Pervāne, the Mongol units in Rūm, and troops from Mārdīn, Mayyāfāriqīn, Mosul, Shahrāzūr (i.e. Kurds) and Iraq. The total army under Abtai was 30,000 strong, of which half was Mongols (*al-mughul*).¹¹⁶

Baybars was in Damascus when he heard of the Mongol advance to al-Bīra, and called for the mobilization of the army. Meanwhile, he waited for more certain news. On receiving confirmation that the Mongols had reached al-Bīra on 8 Jumādā II 674/29 November 1275 and had set up mangonels there, Baybars set out (17 Jumādā II/8 December). Ibn Shaddād reports that this

¹¹² The most detailed version is in *Rawḍ*, 432–6; *Tuhfa*, 80–1, summarizes this but adds a short personal reminiscence; Ibn al-Furāt, 7:28–31, who cites *Rawḍ* extensively, but also Ibn Duqmaq and, it would seem, Baybars al-Manṣūri; Maqrīzī, 1:617–18. A different, shorter version is in Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rikh*, 106–8; hence Yūnīnī, 3:88; Mufaḍḍal, 225–6 (with some additions); Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:177; Kutubī, MS. Köprülü, fol. 34a–b, but also cites poetry by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir. Also Ibn Shaddād, *A'lāq*, ed. Eddé, 320–1; Bar Hebraeus, 452–3. See Canard, "Arménie," 240–1; Thorau, *Baybars*, 233–4.

¹¹³ Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm, in Ibn Wāṣil, MS. 1703, fol. 185b.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*; *Rawḍ*, 435. ¹¹⁵ Bar Hebraeus, 453.

¹¹⁶ Ibn al-Furāt, 7:41; Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rikh*, 124–5, who has Abtai holding a joint command with Tabishi; Baybars, *Tuhfa*, 82, writes that Abtai received command over Durbai's *tümen*. According to Bar Hebraeus, 454, the Mongols had seven myriads (= *tümens*) at this siege, i.e. theoretically 70,000 men.

same day the Mongols withdrew from al-Bīra. Baybars received this news not far from Damascus, but as he was uncertain of the veracity of this information, he continued on to Homs. There, verified reports arrived, and he returned to Damascus.

One reason that the Mongols had ended their siege was the dearth of supplies. Bar Hebraeus reports that the weather was cold, there was snow, and many of the horses had died. An additional cause is offered by Ibn Shaddād: the Mongol commanders learnt that the Pervāne was in communication with Baybars, and planned to betray the Mongols upon the arrival of the Mamluk army. These commanders feared the divided loyalty of their Muslim troops, and thought to kill them, but were apprehensive that many of them would flee to al-Bīra. Certainly, strife within the army during a siege was inadvisable, with a rapidly approaching Mamluk army led by Baybars. The siege itself was not going well: the fort was well-defended and stocked, and the defenders scored some success against the Mongol mangonels and launched a night sortie. The Mongol commanders thus decided to withdraw, planning to justify this to Abagha by the lowness of supplies, disease and the poor state of their equipment, all valid reasons.¹¹⁷

The importance attributed to the border war

In chapter 9 I will attempt to summarize the nature of the Mamluk–Īlkhānid frontier region, based to a large degree on material found in this present chapter. At this point, I will limit myself to a comment on the disparity noticed in the sources. The Mamluk sources are replete with information on both the border war and diplomatic *démarches* with the Mongols. Virtually a year does not go by without the mention of some event of major or minor importance concerning the Mongol danger. These sources also provide us with important information about events occurring within the Īlkhānid state. On the other hand, the main pro-Mongol Persian sources, Rashīd al-Dīn and Waṣṣāf, are generally silent about the ongoing skirmishing, both over the frontier and in the diplomatic sphere, and have little to say about internal events within the Mamluk Sultanate. The situation is only partially rectified by the non-Persian pro-Mongol sources, such as the Armenian writers and Bar Hebraeus.

One explanation for this phenomenon might be the vast difference in the size of the corpus of Mamluk historiography compared to its pro-Mongol counterpart. Taken as a whole, the latter is much smaller than the former. However, Rashīd al-Dīn's and Waṣṣāf's chronicles, including the parts devoted to the years AH 658–75, are large and often quite detailed. The explanation for this dearth of information on the border war must be found elsewhere. I would suggest that it derived from the different degrees of

¹¹⁷ Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rikh*, 126–8; Ibn al-Furāt, 7:41–3 (based *inter alia* on Ibn Shaddād); Maqrīzī, 1:621 (very condensed); Nuwayrī, MS. 2m, fol. 212a; Yūnīnī, 3:114–16; Bar Hebraeus, 454; Thorau, *Baybars*, 238–9. See also ch. 7.

importance that the Mamluks and Mongols attached to this ongoing simmering conflict. For the Mamluks, it was a matter of life and death to hold the Mongols. One defeat, even in a minor campaign, might have had critical results. This concern is naturally reflected in the widespread attention that the border war received in the Mamluk sources. The general success that the Mamluks scored in the border war may also have played a role in the widespread coverage that it received. For the Mongols, occupied on several distant fronts, this border war was just one of many concerns. Setbacks on the Syrian front might be annoying and embarrassing, but the fate of the kingdom was not at stake, as it possibly was in the wars with the Golden Horde and the Chaghatayids. The secondary importance of the Syrian front along with a general lack of success in the border war were probably the reasons that we hear virtually nothing of the border war in the pro-Mongol Persian sources.¹¹⁸ Only with Baybars's invasion of Seljuq Rūm in 675/1277 do the Persian writers serving the Mongols turn their full attention to the enemy based across the Euphrates.

¹¹⁸ Spuler, *Iran*, 13, briefly makes this latter point.