CHAPTER 9

The Mamluk–Īlkhānid frontier

The entire population of some provinces, because they were frontier [regions] and were traversed by armies, was either killed or fled, such as . . . parts of Abulustayn and Diyār Bakr: thus Ḥarrān, Ruḥā, Sarūj and Raqqa, as well as most of the cities on this and that side of the Euphrates, were completely uncultivated and abandoned.

Rashīd al-Dīn[1]

The frontier region

In this section, a number of generalizations will be drawn about the nature of the Mamluk–Īlkhānid frontier. Much of the discussion will be based on the findings in chapter 5, in which the course of the border war was examined in some detail.[2] Each kingdom's frontier, its defence and the strategy adopted towards the other side will be examined separately.

The Mamluk border defence was based first on the two great fortresses on the bank of the Euphrates, al-Bīra and al-Raḥba.[3] During Baybars's reign, the former was more prominent, as it suffered most of the Mongol attacks. It withstood every attack and siege attempt, in no small degree thanks to the Sultan's prompt dispatch of relief. These forts were well supplied and garrisoned, and were connected to the center of the Sultanate by several means of rapid communication (*barīd*, pigeon-post and bonfires). Al-Bīra and al-Raḥba served several important functions: they guarded the fords, served as forward-warning stations and would withstand the first shock of a Mongol offensive. In addition, they acted as centers for the gathering of intelligence on the Mongols,[4] and as bases for raids into Mongol-controlled territory.[5] With justice, Shāfiʿ b. ʿAlī referred to al-Bīra as "the lock of Syria" (*wa-hiya qufl al-*

[1] Ed. ʿAlīzādah, 3:557–8; cited in I.P. Petrushevsky, "The Socio-Economic Condition of Iran under the Īl-Khāns," *CHIr*, 5:491. Ruḥā, called al-Ruhā in the Arabic sources, is Edessa; see Krawulsky, *Īrān*, 452.

[2] I will thus dispense with most of the documentation of material covered in ch. 5.

[3] On these two forts, see: E. Honigman, "al-Raḥba," *EI*[1], 3:1100–3; M. Streck-[V.J. Parry], "Bīredjik," *EI*[2], 1:1233–4; Krawulsky, *Īrān*, 585, 595–6, 614.

[4] *Ḥusn*, 87: information about the Mongols was gathered at al-Bīra.

[5] Yūnīnī, 3:132–3: raids launched from al-Raḥba by its governor.

shām).[6] The Mongols must also have understood the importance of these two forts to the Mamluks, because in the sixty years of the war they subjected both of them to numerous raids and attacks.

Important as they were, however, these forts would have had little value without the rapid reaction of Baybars. At the first word of an expected Mongol offensive or raid, he would begin organizing an expeditionary force, which he himself often commanded personally. In some cases, the knowledge that a Mamluk force was approaching was enough to cause the withdrawal of the Mongols; the Mongol commanders were evidently not looking for a major confrontation. Besides the obvious need of repulsing the Mongol attackers, Baybars's resolute response served another purpose. By showing that he was a capable and decisive ruler, who protected soldiers and common people alike, the morale of the officers and soldiers in the Syrian army, not least in the border fortresses, was strengthened.

The Āl Faḍl bedouin, who were found in the Syrian side of the Euphrates, patrolled the area and served as an additional source of intelligence on Mongol intrusions into Syria. Given the far-flung frontier and the lack of a large concentration of Mamluk troops permanently stationed in the area, these bedouin were an important component in the defense of the Euphrates frontier. They also raided, perhaps not always at the request of the Mamluk authorities, over into the Mongol side of the border.

To the east and northeast, the cities of Syria were protected to some extent by the expanse of the Syrian desert. Defending the northern frontier from the Mongols and Armenians was more of a problem. Because of the smaller distance, there was less advanced warning of an attack, unless the Mamluks received intelligence information. The situation was especially critical before Baybars regained a number of fortresses in 666/1268 on the border with Lesser Armenia (al-Darbassāk, Baghrās, etc.). The conquest of Antioch that year also helped improve security in the region.

The approaches to Aleppo were protected by the fortified towns of ʿAyn Tāb and ʿAzāz. On the former, Ibn Shaddād writes that it was "a watch-post (*raṣad*) for fresh developments coming from the land of the Armenians and Rūm."[7] Baybars maintained governors and some type of forces at Tall Bāshir, Burj al-Raṣāṣ and Ḥārim, but their fortifications had not been repaired since the Mongols had destroyed them.[8] It is clear that Mamluk forces in this area were spread very thin. To help alleviate this situation, every year a corps of the Syrian army was sent north to patrol the frontier region, a practice seemingly continued at least to the end of the century.[9]

There was little that the Sultan could do about Mongol raids coming from Seljuq territory into north Syria, except to respond quickly. Lesser Armenia was a different matter. The numerous attacks and raids from that direction early in Baybars's reign, albeit not overly successful, prodded the Sultan into

[6] *Ḥusn*, 87. [7] Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlaq*, ed. Eddé, 376, 382, 385. [8] *Ibid.*, 378, 380, 386–7.
[9] Ibn Shaddād, *Taʾrīkh*, 155; Mufaḍḍal, 554–5 (s.a. 700/1300–1).

action. His motives are clear: to punish the Armenians and their king, and to neutralize the danger from that direction. Possibly, Baybars sought to damage the transit trade from the Īlkhānid realm to the West, but this is only speculation. In a series of devastating campaigns, Baybars achieved his goals.

It is difficult to assess the harm caused to the population and economic life of northern Syria by the Mongol raids, which compounded the damage sustained during the Mongol occupation of 658/1260. Ibn Shaddād, in his *al-Aʿlāq al-khaṭīra* (written ca. 679/1280–1),[10] provides important information on the devastation wrought on the Mamluk side of the border running along the Euphrates River. Both Bālis and Manbij were destroyed during the Mongol occupation and abandoned by their inhabitants. The latter was occupied by a few Türkmen. Al-Ruṣāfa, about 50 km to the southwest of al-Raqqa, had originally been granted a pardon by Hülegü, but subsequently all its inhabitants left and settled in Salamiyya, Hama and elsewhere.[11] The situation was not unequivocally bad: Ṣiffīn on the river, and al-Bāb and Buzāgha further west were inhabited and seem to have enjoyed some prosperity.[12] The countryside around al-Bīra was cultivated, at least until the Mongol attack of 663/1265, when it was severely damaged.[13] It is unclear if the land was subsequently cultivated. If so, this story probably repeated itself in subsequent attacks.

Conditions were similar in the regions of northern Syria bordering Armenian and Seljuq territory. Some towns – Tall Bāshir, Ḥārim and Burj al-Raṣāṣ – were virtually uninhabited except for Mamluk garrisons and some Türkmen. On the other hand, the fortifications of ʿAyn Tāb and ʿAzāz had been rebuilt and these towns were populated and thriving.[14] Further to the south, in the environs of Aleppo, the situation was somewhat better. Ibn Shaddād tells that Sarmīn, Ḥāḍir Qinnasrīn and Khunāṣira, all south of Aleppo, were populated by peasants, although none of the towns any longer had fortifications (perhaps a legacy of the Mongol occupation).[15] Aleppo itself was slow in recovering from the effects of 658–9/1260–1. The fortifications of the city, as well as the great mosque and the citadel were damaged during the first Mongol occupation. The last mentioned was further demolished by the Mongol raiders in 659/1261, while the mosque suffered during the Mongol raid of 679/1280, when it was burnt again. The great mosque and the citadel, the symbols of authority in a major provincial capital, were rebuilt only years later: the mosque in 684/1285–6 and the citadel in the reign of al-Ashraf Khalīl b. Qalawun (689–93/1290–3).[16] Ibn Shaddād reports that when he left Aleppo in 657/1259, there were hundreds of baths. In the 670s, only ten were still in use.[17] The process of

[10] See, e.g., *Aʿlāq*, 3:510. [11] Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlaq*, ed. Eddé, 294, 394, 397.
[12] *Ibid.*, 373–5, 396. [13] Abū Shāma, 233. [14] See above, nn. 6 and 7.
[15] Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlaq*, ed. Eddé, 391–4.
[16] Ibn al-Shiḥna, 36, 54–8, 64, 68–9; Maqrīzī, 1:774–5; see also J.Sauvaget, "Ḥalab," *EI*², 3:88. The fortifications of Aleppo were repaired only at the end of the fourteenth century.
[17] Cited in Ibn al-Shiḥna, 134.

rehabilitation was certainly not helped by the news of Mongol raids, real and imagined, and the resulting panic and damage.

Each wave of rumors about another impending Mongol advance into northern Syria usually occasioned a flurry of refugees to the south. There is no indication, however, that the majority of these refugees did not return to their homes when the danger had past. From the little explicit evidence that we have, it appears that there was not the massive depopulation in the province of Aleppo that we find on both sides of the Euphrates, albeit evidently to a lesser degree on the Mamluk side.[18]

It is worth noting in this connection the behavior of the Aleppan army whenever the Mongols raided north Syria. Invariably, these forces would withdraw to the south, joining up with the armies of Homs and Hama, and together they would meet up with reinforcements from the south. Never did the Aleppan army attempt to stop the Mongols alone. Perhaps this was the drill dictated by the Sultan, who realized that the Aleppan army alone would not be able to deal with even a relatively modest body of Mongol raiders, and that it was wiser to combine forces.

Baybars also brought the war into the enemy camp. Besides carrying out raids against the Armenians, Mamluk forces, usually from northern Syria and often accompanied by Syrian bedouins (who also raided by themselves), struck across the Euphrates River. The purpose of these raids was to act as diversions, to keep the enemy off balance, to reconnoiter and to strengthen morale in the army and the civilian population. Besides these raids, there are records of specific reconnaissance parties setting out.[19] Some of these operations must have been at the Sultan's direct order. Others may have been the initiatives of local commanders, although it is clear that they were acting under the guidelines of the Sultan.

Al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349), writes that the Mamluks employed operatives who laid waste to the border regions, particularly on the Mongol side of the border, including the area around Mosul and Sinjār. The Mongols did not bring fodder with them, but grazed their horses as they advanced, so if the fields and grasslands were burned, then their progress in Syria would have been made difficult if not impossible. The "bravest men" (*ajlad al-rijāl*) who carried out this work either stayed with local contacts (*nuṣṣāḥ*)[20] in Mongol territory or hid out in mountains or valleys. When the conditions were ripe, i.e. windy days, the "burners" would release wild foxes, with burning rags tied to their tails. To spread the fire, hungry dogs were released that chased after the foxes.[21] Perhaps the last part of this account is a little tongue in cheek. It is

[18] Cf. the comments in Irwin, *Middle East*, 46.

[19] Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 77a, under Badr al-Dīn Bilig al-Fāyizī (s.a. 663/1264–5); Yūnīnī, 3:132–3, dispatched by governor of al-Raḥba; *ibid.*, 3:229, Shams al-Dīn Aq Sunqur al-Fāriqānī, some time early in his career.

[20] For this term, see ch. 6, p. 143. It is possible that the intention here is to refer not to local informers, but just contacts willing to help Mamluk operatives.

[21] ʿUmarī, *Taʿrīf*, 201–3; whence Qalqashandī, 1:127–8; also 14:401–2.

difficult to conceive of operatives moving around the Jazīra with foxes and hungry dogs in tow, and remaining under cover for long.[22] A man on a horse with a torch would have been no less effective in setting fields on fire. Still, even if this passage might contain some exaggeration or untruths, we can accept the information about the existence of these "burners." Such activities were described in 660/1262, and in 670/1272 we read of "burners" (*al-munawwirūn*) being sent out with scouts by Baybars.[23] Yet a number of questions remain unanswered. Were these operatives permanently stationed over the border or did they only go there in response to news of a Mongol advance? If the former, did they execute "preventative" incitements or only when the Mongols were advancing towards Syria? What would the "burners" do in the winter, when the grasslands were wet? (Both known cases were in the autumn.) Unfortunately, the chronicles do not provide more details on this subject.

The Mongol frontier defence was arranged differently than that of the Mamluks. There were no major fortresses on their side of the frontier similar in size and function to al-Bīra and al-Raḥba. The Mongol garrisons which the Mamluk raiders encountered in Ḥarrān and Qarqīsiyā seem to have been quite small. The only times that large Mongol forces were present in the western Jazīra were during offensives against the Mamluks. The sources do not make clear where the closest large concentration of Mongols was found. The relative impunity with which Mamluk raiders and scouts traversed the Jazīra leads to the conclusion that the region was not brimming with Mongol troops.

In Lesser Armenia, the Mongol presence was also minimal, although there seem to have been some Mongols at al-ʿAmūdāyn. During Baybars's raid on Cilicia in 673/1275, Mongol women and children were found, indicating that Mongol men could not have been too far away. As for the Armenians, their king, secure at first in his belief of Mongol superiority and support, raided Mamluk northern Syria. When the Mamluks responded by launching their first large-scale raid to Cilicia in 664/1266, he made an attempt to resist, by fielding his army and fortifying the pass that the Mamluk army was to traverse. This attempt ended in disaster, and in the following years the Armenians made no substantial attempt to hold the frontier, and the Mamluks had no trouble breaching it.

The Mongol side of the Euphrates was full of abandoned and ruined cities. Some of these may have been devastated during Hülegü's conquest, others by the border war, still others by Mongol misrule. Ibn Shaddād provides important information on the sorry state of several of the cities and towns of Diyār Muḍar and its environs: al-Raqqa was destroyed when the Mongols took it over and nobody lived there.[24] The Mongols destroyed the citadel of al-Ruhā (Edessa) after ʿAyn Jālūt, and its inhabitants fled; only a few Türkmen

[22] This method is reminiscent of that employed by Samson against the Philistines, as told in Judges 15, 4–5. Perhaps this story is merely a topos, which ʿUmarī inserted to liven up the narrative. [23] *Rawḍ*, 396. [24] Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlaq*, 3:82.

remained.[25] Qalʿat Jaʿbar was handed over to the Mongols by its *wālī* (governor) without a siege. They destroyed it and its surrounding countryside. Only a few wretched souls remained and they eventually left.[26] The Mongols also destroyed Qalʿat Najm at some point, probably soon after they had gained control of the city in 658/1259–60; its population subsequently left.[27] Sarūj was abandoned by the Mongols in 663/1264–5; its population had been massacred in 658/1260.[28] The decline and final ruin of Ḥarrān by the Mongols has been mentioned above.[29] It comes as no surprise, as Rashīd al-Dīn informs us, that the destruction of the towns was accompanied by the steep decline of agriculture in the area.[30]

Some of the population must have fled to the Sultanate, although there is little explicit evidence to confirm a mass movement of civilian refugees. We know that in Ḥarrān there were successive waves of emigration to Syria until the city was finally razed by the Mongols, and the remainder of its population was evacuated to other places in the Jazīra. After the Mamluk raid on Sharmūshāk in 667/1268–9, peasants were brought back and resettled in north Syria.

The Mongol excursions into Syria proper during Baybars's reign were raids and probes. The attacks, on the other hand, against al-Bīra were usually serious attempts to capture the fort, but because of the determined resistance of the defenders, the approach of a relieving force and lack of supplies, these sieges failed. Only with the invasion of 680/1281, did the Mongols attempt something more than a raid into Syria or an attack along the border.

Open borders and trade in a time of war

It is reasonable to assume that the state of war and the fighting along the border would have adversely affected commercial and other civilian traffic between Syria and the lands now under Īlkhānid control.[31] The occasional evidence at our disposal tends to strengthen this supposition, although there are fairly clear indications that as early as Baybars's reign there was some trade and other contact over the border. Evidently, these commercial endeavors did

[25] *Ibid.*, 98–9; see also Krawulsky, *Īrān*, 452.

[26] *Ibid.*, 119. This place was rebuilt and resettled by the governor of Syria, Tankiz al-Nāṣirī, in 735/1334–5; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 9, ed. H.R. Roemer (Freiburg-Cairo, 1960), 400; Ibn Kathīr, 14:173; Maqrīzī, 2:385–6.

[27] Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlaq*, ed. Eddé, 292 and 3:119; see also Krawulsky, *Īrān*, 614.

[28] Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlāq*, 3:103; Krawulsky, *Īrān*, 454.

[29] See also Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlāq*, 3:40, 60–3. In 662/1263–4, the governor of Damascus appointed governors for Ḥarrān and al-Raqqa. These must have been merely paper appointments. *Rawḍ*, 186–7; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 39a; Maqrīzī, 1:505–6.

[30] See the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter.

[31] Spuler, *Iran*, 358, makes such an assumption, and does not discuss the matter further; see also J.Ḥ. Khiṣbāk, *al-ʿIrāq fī ʿahd al-mughūl al-īlkhāniyya* (Baghdad, 1968), 136; Irwin, "Supply of Money," 76; Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, 263. On the relatively prosperous Syrian–Iraqi trade before Hülegü's invasion, see the general comments in *ibid.*, 239–41. The economic relations between these countries during the Ayyūbid period has yet to be investigated in detail.

not enjoy official Īlkhānid approval, although perhaps they turned a blind eye to some activities; otherwise it is difficult to see how even limited commercial relations could have existed. Baybars seems to have had a more favorable attitude, the extent of which, however, is hard to gauge. Whatever evidence we have relates to the import of strategic items (mamluks and horses) from Īlkhānid-controlled territory, particularly from Anatolia, to the Sultanate, and it is clear that he had an interest in such a trade. There is no evidence, however, that he evinced any desire to export to Īlkhānid territory, and there is no report of such activity.

Two pieces of information lead to the conclusion that there was a lack of regular Īlkhānid–Mamluk commercial traffic in Baybars's reign. The first is an anecdote found in al-Yūnīnī's obituary of this sultan (676/1277). At an unspecified date, merchants from Iran (*bilād al-ᶜajam*) headed for Baybars's court via Ayās in Lesser Armenia. The Armenian king, however, detained them and sent to Abagha to notify him of this matter. Abagha wrote to keep them under guard and send them to him. However, a mamluk, evidently in the process of being imported to the Sultanate, escaped to Aleppo and word was sent to Baybars of the incident. Baybars then dispatched a threatening message to the Armenian King, who thereupon had the merchants released. The Armenian King then placated (*ṣānaᶜa*) Abagha by sending him much money.[32] Two conclusions can be tentatively drawn from this passage. First, the route over the Euphrates was blocked or too dangerous to be considered by merchants, although it could be argued that from certain sections of Iran it was easier to go to Ayās and from there by boat to Egypt than via Iraq or the Jazīra. Secondly, the detention of the merchants and Abagha's reaction show that from the Mongol point of view trade with the Mamluks was not acceptable and seemingly was officially forbidden. Professor Ashtor understood this evidence as an indication of the occasional swerving of trade from the trans-Euphrates route via Lesser Armenia, whenever Īlkhānid disapproval of such activities became too strong.[33] Such a conclusion, however, is unwarranted by this passage.

Secondly, we have the evidence of the Īlkhān Aḥmad Tegüder (680–3/1282–4) on the subject of trade. In a letter sent to Qalawun in 681/1282–3, in which he attempted to effect a rapprochement with the Mamluks, Aḥmad states that he unilaterally ordered his officials to permit the free movement of merchants going back and forth.[34] This indicates that previous to this time commercial traffic was restricted. From this specific passage it is impossible to decide the extent of this restricted trade, although the use of the expression *al-tujjār al-mutaraddidūn* ("the merchants who go back and forth") hints at the existence of some type of trade via the Euphrates, the Red Sea or Lesser Armenia (or a

[32] Yūnīnī, 3:254. The author's intention was to illustrate the fear and awe that Baybars generated, both in his own kingdom and among his neighbors.
[33] Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, 263.
[34] *Zubda*, fol. 132b; edited in appendix to Maqrīzī, 1:979. Cf. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, 425.

combination of these), even when their activities were discouraged and the tension on the border was unpropitious for regular trade.

There exist additional indications of some type of possible commercial activity. In 670/1271–2, the head Ḥanbalī qadi of Cairo, Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿImād, was arrested and removed from office, when it became clear that he had mishandled deposits of money (*waḍāʾiʿ*) given over to his care by merchants from Damascus, Ḥarrān and Baghdad.[35] While it is tempting to see this as clear proof of the existence of trade with Mongol Iraq and the Jazīra,[36] it is possible that these deposits were left before the Mongol conquest of Baghdad or previous to the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt.

Another example, albeit from a different direction, is s.a. 671/1273. "Türkmen merchants," bringing horses and mules to Baybars, were intercepted by Armenians from the fortress of Kaynūk (Ḥadath al-Ḥamrāʾ).[37] Ibn Shaddād, evidently referring to the same episode, writes of the waylaying (*taʿarruḍ*) of caravans coming from Rūm.[38] The exact identity of these Türkmen merchants is unclear. However, the mention of this information about such merchants in such an incidental manner leads to the conclusion that this was not the only occurrence of such trade. The existence of such trade can be explained by the fact that the Türkmen were only nominally, if at all, under Īlkhānid domination, and that Mongol forces in this area were relatively few in number and spread rather thin, thus permitting clandestine livestock trading.

For all the problems that the Armenians were making for the transient trade passing through their country on the way to the Sultanate, there was plenty of trade emanating from their own port of Ayās. Recent research by C. Otten-Froux, based on the records of the Genoese notaries in Ayās from 1274, 1277 and 1279, indicates the extent of this trade. Commerce took place directly between Ayās and Egypt, or followed the Ayās–Syria–Egypt (or Egypt–Syria) triangular route. Goods exported from Cilicia were wood, iron and tin, but the sources are silent as to what products were brought back.[39] It is also unclear if the exported goods from Ayās originated from the territory of Lesser Armenia or were brought from further inland. Naturally, the Genoese notaries would only have recorded the activities of Genoese citizens, who may have represented only a fraction of those engaged in what must have been a quite lucrative trade.

Another possible indication of commercial activity in this period may be the biographies of travelling merchants (singular: *tājir saffār*), especially those from Iraq or other Mongol-controlled territories. The problem is, however, that among those who travelled between the Mamluk Sultanate and Īlkhānid

[35] Yūnīnī, 2:470–1; Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 209a–b; Maqrīzī, 1:602–3. For an analysis of this affair, see J.H. Escovitz, *The Office of Qāḍī al-Quḍāt in Cairo under the Baḥrī Mamluks* (Berlin, 1984), 229–1.

[36] Labib, *Handelsgeschichte*, 72, adduces this as proof of Īlkhānid–Mamluk trade at this time.

[37] *Rawḍ*, 417; Ibn al-Furāt, 7:2. See above, ch. 5, p. 132.

[38] Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlaq*, ed. Eddé, 321.

[39] Otten-Froux, "L'Aïas," 160–7.

territory, either by land or by sea, the dates of their trips are usually not specified, so these trips could have been either before ʿAyn Jālūt, or somewhat after Baybars's reign. Also, it is sometimes not clear whether these merchants came to the Sultanate to trade, or had fled and had opened up shop in their new homeland.[40]

One example, however, is more certain and quite interesting, and deserves mention here. In 681/1282–3, an envoy arrived at Qalawun's court from the Rūmī lord of Amāsiyya, Sayf al-Dīn Turantay. This envoy was sent with Abagha's approval; his mission was to arrange the release of Turantay's son, who was a prisoner of the Sultan. What is relevant to our purposes here is that this envoy was a merchant, and had often come to the Mamluk court before (i.e., during at least part of the period covered here), importing mamluks and other goods.[41] This information is reported in passing, and was evidently not regarded as anything unusual. It suggests that, in spite of the war, perhaps some type of traffic in mamluks was going on via Mongol-controlled Anatolia and/or Lesser Armenia, even before Qalawun's treaty of 684/1285 with the Armenian king secured this trade.[42] One wonders if this trade in mamluks was clandestine. On the one hand, it is difficult to understand how such a trade could have received the permission of the Īlkhāns and their local agents. Yet, on the other hand, it is hard to see how it could have been conducted without the tacit approval of these same Mongols. This paradox will have to be resolved by further research.

J.Ḥ. Khiṣbāk has suggested that the use of Baghdādī paper in Egypt for official documents (he adduces only one example, from 661/1262–3) is proof of an ongoing trade between the two kingdoms.[43] This, however, is far from being conclusive for trade in this particular commodity, let alone for regular commercial activity. S.Y. Labib has written that the Mongol–Mamluk war had little serious effect on trade between their two kingdoms, but adduces virtually no evidence to prove this assertion.[44] Professor Rogers asserts that trade via land between Iraq and Syria continued unabated throughout the period of the Mongol–Mamluk wars, but cites no examples for the years of Baybars's reign.[45] Instead of such blanket statements, I would suggest the following: in spite of the enmity between the two kingdoms and the fighting on the border, some trading continued. The curtailment of trade probably had its origin in several reasons. First, the ongoing warfare on both sides of the border must have made travelling in the area risky, both to life and merchandise.

[40] Since these are far from unequivocal examples, I have not listed them here.
[41] *Zubda*, fol. 128b. See ch. 8 for Turantay and his son.
[42] See Ayalon, "Mamlūk," *EI*², 6:315a–b; Irwin, "Supply of Money," 3–4. See also the comments in Ehrenkreutz, "Slave Trade," 336.
[43] Khiṣbāk, *al-ʿIrāq*, 143, citing Maqrīzī, 1:497; cf. Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, 262.
[44] Labib, *Handelsgeschichte*, 70, 72.
[45] J.M. Rogers, "Evidence for Mamluk–Mongol Relations," *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire, 1969* (Cairo, [1974]), 399.

Secondly, it seems that to a certain degree the Īlkhānids discouraged commercial activity. Thirdly, while Baybars was happy to receive certain commodities of strategic importance, it would appear that he did not encourage exports out of his kingdom to Mongol-controlled territory. Fourthly, both sides had a fear, not unjustified (see chapter 6), of spies being sent in the guise of merchants. Khiṣbāk may have been correct when he suggested that internal Mongol factors, such as the lack of a unified currency throughout the Īlkhānid realm and the expropriation of money from the rich, may have also adversely affected trade with Mamluk territory or merchants arriving from there.[46] That commerce continued under these conditions testifies to the profits that were probably to be made, and the intrepidity of the merchants who set out to make them.

In the subsequent decades after Baybars's death, trade between Mamluk Syria and Mongol Iraq becomes increasingly more discernible in the sources. Early in Qalawun's Sultanate there is a clear indication of what seems to be some type of bilaterally sanctioned commercial activity.[47] This was perhaps the only tangible result of Aḥmad Tegüder's ill-fated attempt to end the state of war. It is interesting, and possibly more than a coincidence, that the contemporary Baybars al-Manṣūrī writes that in 682/1283–4 there were embassies from both the King of Ceylon and the Īlkhān Aḥmad which arrived in Syria from Iraq, via the "frequented road" (*al-jadda al-maslūka* and *al-tarīq al-maslūka*).[48] Through the next decade, the situation is less clear, but evidence of some trading activity exists.[49] The increasing evidence of trade from the last decade of the seventh/thirteenth century would appear to indicate the growth and establishment of this activity.[50]

A telling indication of the continued existence of trade over the Mamluk–Īlkhānid border in the first decade of the eighth/fourteenth century is the Armenian historian Hetʿum's complaint to the Pope in his memoir: the Pope must send messages to the Īlkhān Khudābanda (Öljeitü) to have him forbid the export of merchandise to his enemies, the Mamluks.[51] Given what we have seen of the extent of Mamluk trading through the Armenian port of Ayās, Hetʿum's lament is not without a note of gratuitous self-righteousness.

[46] Khiṣbāk, *al-ʿIrāq*, 144. On the other hand, it can be remembered that Mongol leaders traditionally were sympathetic to trade and merchants; Petrushevsky, "Socio-Economic Condition," 506–10.

[47] Bar Hebraeus, 467 (not in the Arabic version); Kutubī, MS. Köprülü, fol. 159a (s.a. 682).

[48] *Zubda*, fols. 142a–b, 147a–b. For translation of *maslūk*, see Dozy, 1:677a.

[49] See Jazarī, cited by M. Jawād, "Tijārat al-ʿirāq fī ʿuṣūr al-ḥukm al-mughūlī," pt. 3, *Majallat ghurfat tijārat baghdād* 7 (1944):64; *Zubda*, fol. 176a (s.a. 691).

[50] See the chapter on trade in Amitai, "Holy War," 70–5. Since completing that study, I have found numerous additional pieces of evidence relating to commercial relations during the second half of the Mamluk–Īlkhānid war. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into these examples. Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, 262, speaks of the improvement of trade only at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

[51] Hetʿum, 2:242; cited also in Howorth, *Mongols*, 578.

Non-commercial civilian traffic over the border

Non-commercial movement over the Mongol–Mamluk frontier was probably greatly reduced during the initial period of the war. The border, however, was not impermeable. Occasionally we find a reference in the sources indicating that during a certain year news arrived about an occurrence on the other side of the frontier, which hints at the arrival of some individuals from across the border.[52] Mention has already been made of the mainly one-way traffic of military refugees, Mongol and otherwise, to the Mamluk Sultanate. Finally, there were religious figures and other civilian refugees who made their way across the border.[53]

The most important manifestation of non-commercial traffic was the Iraqi pilgrimage caravan, although this did not generally affect the Syrian heartland directly. The Iraqi *ḥajj* caravan was renewed in 666/1267–8.[54] By that time, things must have settled down enough in Mongol-controlled Iraq to permit the sending out of the caravan. As overlord of Mecca and Medina, Baybars had a direct interest in permitting Iraqi Muslims to perform the *ḥajj*, thereby increasing his prestige. It certainly would not have looked good had he forbidden their participation in the *ḥajj*. Possibly, Baybars's agents used the opportunity to make contacts among Iraqi Muslims which might be useful to Mamluk espionage work. From the Mongol point of view, or at least that of the senior Muslim officials who served them, the equipping of the *ḥajj* caravan might lend them more legitimacy in the eyes of their Muslim subjects. The role of ʿAlā' al-Dīn Juwaynī in dispatching the caravans of AH 666 is mentioned by Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, and hints at such a motive. Additional *ḥajj* caravans set out from Baghdad in 667/1269, 669/1271 and 678/1280.[55] This occasional record of *ḥajj* caravans may have been a result of a selective mentioning by our main source, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, or due to these caravans only having set out in certain years. There is, at least as far as I can tell, no obvious cause why the Iraqi caravan did not set out every year, or what was the reason that it set out when it did. In any event, in 686/1287–8 the Iraqi caravan is mentioned again, and it was continued regularly until 689/1290–91, when it was mysteriously discontinued.[56] The on-again, off-again nature of the Iraqi *ḥajj* in the subsequent decades is beyond the scope of this study.

[52] See, e.g.: Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 36a (s.a. 661, not in Maqrīzī); Qirtay, fol. 100a (s.a. 671); Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:272 (AH 684). Of course, Mamluk intelligence agents may also have been the source of such reports.

[53] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, 360 (s.a. 666): Shaykh ʿAfīf al-Dīn Yusūf b. al-Baqqāl from Syria to Iraq. Bar Hebraeus, 452 (s.a. 673–4/1275): *faqīrs* from Syria to Cilicia (and suspected as spies). Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rīkh*, 333; Bar Hebraeus, 455, 464; Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 277 (unknown date): Shaykh ʿĪsā ibn ʿĀdī and sons from eastern Anatolia to Syria. Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rīkh*, 221 (AH 676): the chief qadi of Diyār Bakr. Other civilian refugees are mentioned in *ibid.*, 331.

[54] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, 358; al-Fāsī, in F. Wüstenfeld, *Akhbār makka al-musharrafa* (rpt., Beirut, 1964), 2:271.

[55] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, 361, 368, 411; al-Fāsī, in Wüstenfeld, 2:272.

[56] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, 453, 456, 461, 462.

We have only a single, but important, piece of evidence on the traversing of Syria by Rūmī pilgrims on their way to the *ḥajj*. In the summer of 669/1270–1, these pilgrims, possibly joined by those from Iran and Iraq, were camped in the square (*maydān*) of Damascus, when they were caught by a flash flood; most of them were killed.[57] Again, the incidental nature of the mention of Rūmī pilgrims, and possibly others, in the Syrian capital leads to the tentative conclusion that in other years additional groups of Rūmīs and others from the Īlkhānid domain may have made their way to the Hijaz via Syria. Baybars probably had no choice but to permit these pilgrims to pass, in his capacity as ruler of Mecca, but this permission left Syria open to Mongol spies, although he himself could avail himself of the opportunity to make contacts among Rūmī Muslims for his own purposes.

The above discussion refers to the overland route from the north or east over the frontier to Syria. The sea route, via the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, or from Lesser Armenia to Acre and from there to Mamluk territory, or even directly from Lesser Armenia to Alexandria, was also a possibility. We know of Georgian pilgrims in Syria[58] and Armenian merchants in the Sultanate (see above). This is in addition to unspecified "Christian pilgrims" from the east who came to Jerusalem. They may have come by either the land or the sea route.[59] It may be assumed that non-commercial traffic, like its mercantile counterpart, increased towards the end of the thirteenth century.

[57] Yūnīnī, 2:451; Kutubī, 20:402; Ibn Kathīr, 13:259. Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 194a mentions also people from Iran. Mufaḍḍal, 196, and Ibn al-Dawādārī, 13:160, note only pilgrims from Iran and Iraq, and do not mention the Rūmīs.

[58] See ch. 6, pp. 150–1, 154.

[59] See ch. 6, p. 154.