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Taras Yu. Kobishchanov

Department of Middle and Near East History, Institute of Asian and African Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University. Moscow, Russian Federation.
E-mail: kobischanov@mail.ru

Christians of Syria During the French Expedition to the Middle East (1798–1801)

Abstract

This article is an attempt at a comprehensive analysis of the reaction of Syrian Christian communities to the invasion of French troops in 1799. The subject of Napoleon Bonaparte's Eastern Campaign is academically highly popular. However, there has not yet been a dedicated study analyzing how Christians in Greater Syria — both in the occupied territories and those remaining under Ottoman rule — perceived the French incursion. Consequently, the mindset of Syrian Christians during the first European invasion of the Holy Sites of Palestine since the Crusades remained largely unknown. Another objective of the research is to examine the stages of deformation of the system of ethno-confessional relations in the Middle East in the period preceding the full-scale crisis of the 19th century. It can be concluded that, although the French invasion increased inter-confessional tensions, there was no wave of anti-Christian violence (pogroms) in Syria. Religious peace, based on the principles of Sharia, was observed by the Ottoman authorities almost flawlessly. Nonetheless, Turkish officials exploited Christian communities and their wealthy leaders as one of the sources of funds nec-

essary for waging war. As for the Christians themselves, the church elites largely viewed the proponents of French Revolutionary ideas negatively, though they concealed their sentiments when confronted with Republican soldiers. In contrast, the Syro-Christian common people expressed genuine joy at the arrival of European troops and provided them with various forms of assistance. The French invasion altered the balance of power and deformed the Sharia-based system of dependence and patronage. A split emerged between church elites and their congregations. The struggle over control of the Holy Sites of Palestine intensified. In Mount Lebanon, the Maronite community claimed political authority for the first time. All of these factors continued to accumulate over subsequent decades, ultimately leading Syria to an inter-confessional explosion in the mid-19th century.

Keywords:
history of Syria, Syrian Christians, Eastern Campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte, French expedition to Syria, ethno-confessional relations in the Middle East, struggle for the Holy Places of Palestine

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The short-term French expedition to Syria (Napoleon departed from Cairo on February 10, 1799, and returned on June 14, 1799) is usually treated by researchers as an episode of the Eastern Campaign, overshadowed by the events in Egypt. Indeed, the French remained in Syria for slightly more than three months, rather than three years as in the Nile Valley, and occupied only the coastal strip

from Gaza to Tyre, as well as parts of Western Galilee up to the Jordan River. Yet the fundamentally different geographic landscape of Syria, its population composition, the features of its social and administrative-political structures, and its cultural, religious and psychological distinctions bear a closer examination of the encounter between these two civilizations in 1799.

This article addresses only one aspect of the Syrian campaign: the reaction of the local Christians, both those in the French-occupied territories and those beyond. While this topic has not been entirely ignored[1] — Napoleon's Eastern Campaign is a popular subject in Arab studies and Napoleonic scholarship, with contributions from Russian historians — there has still been no focused study on how the Napoleonic invasion was perceived by the Christians of Greater Syria[2], including both the inland and the coastal areas from Aleppo to Gaza and from Mount Lebanon to Jerusalem, in major cities and small villages alike.

In the modern period, Christians constituted at least 10% of Syria's 1.5 million population[3], but their distribution was uneven. In the late 18th century, Damascus and Aleppo, the two Syrian "megacities", each had 80–90,000 inhabitants, of whom 6–8% and roughly 20%[4] respectively, were Christian. Christian communities also existed in other administrative centers of inland Syria, including Hama and Homs, and were relatively numer-

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1 See: *Жантиев Д.Р., Кириллина С.А.* Французская политика в отношении христиан Египта и Сирии во время Восточной экспедиции Бонапарта // Французский ежегодник 2019. Т. 52: Эпоха Наполеона и память о ней. Москва, 2019. С. 128–147.

2 Historical Greater Syria extends beyond the borders of the modern Syrian Arab Republic and covers the territory between the Eastern Taurus Range in the north, the Mediterranean Sea in the west, the Sinai Peninsula in the south, and the Syrian Desert in the east.

3 *Barkan, Ömer Lütfi.* Research on Ottoman Fiscal Surveys // Studies in Economic History of the Middle East. London: Routledge, 1970. P. 171; *Masters B.* Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World. The Roots of Sectarianism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. P. 53. However, some authors estimate the share of the Christian population in Syria to have been two to three times higher: *Haddad R.* Syrian Christians in Muslim Society. An Interpretation. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970. P. 10.

4 Hereafter, see: *Кобищанов Т.Ю.* Христианские общины в арабо-османском мире. М.: Доброе слово, 2003. С. 60–67; *Панченко К.А.* Ближневосточное православие под османским владычеством. Первые три столетия, 1516–1831. М.: Индрик, 2012. С. 118–148.

ous in pilgrimage cities. In Jerusalem, Christians likely made up 15–20% of 12,000 residents, excluding the annually arriving pilgrims. In Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Ramla (and smaller towns) Christians comprised one-third to one-half of the population.

A special situation developed along the coast. Trade connections with Europe turned Syrian ports into magnets for Christian merchants from across the Eastern Mediterranean. Uniate Christians from Aleppo and Damascus, the Orthodox from Nazareth and the Aegean coast, Catholics from Malta — Christians of various confessions migrated en masse to Syrian port cities in the second and third quarters of the 18th century. The ruler of Galilee, Sheikh Dahir al-'Umar (c. 1690–1775), actively encouraged this migration. By the time of the Napoleonic invasion, populations were estimated as follows: Gaza, 3–4,000; Jaffa, 7–8,000; Haifa, 2–3,000[5]; Acre, 15–20,000[6]; Beirut, around 6,000[7]; Tripoli (Tarabulus), up to 10,000[8]. All these ports had sizable Christian communities, with Christians forming the majority in Acre and Haifa[9].

In rural areas, Christians lived interspersed with Muslims; exclusively Christian villages were rare. Certain Christian "reservations" included the Orthodox-inhabited Qalamun plateau north of Damascus and the Maronite-populated northern Mount Lebanon. Migration of Maronites southward during the 17th–18th centuries also turned central Lebanon into a predominantly Christian zone. Under the protection of Maronite feudal lords, Greek-Catholics (Melkites) from inland Syria and Armenian-Uniates from Cilicia relocated to Lebanon.

Administratively, the Ottoman authorities divided Syria into four *eyalets* (provinces). By mid-1798, two were governed by members of the pow-

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5 *Бонапарт, Наполеон.* Кампания в Египте и Сирии (1798–1799 гг.) // О военном искусстве. Избранные произведения. Москва: ЭКСМО, 2003. С. 590, 592, 600.

6 *Philipp T.* Acre. The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian City, 1730–1831. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. P. 194.

7 *Volney.* Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte. 3e édition, 1799 // Œuvres. Tome troisième. Paris: Fayard, 1998. P. 441.

8 *Pascual J.-P.* La Syrie à l'époque ottomane (le XIXe siècle) // La Syrie d'aujourd'hui (ed. A. Raymond). Aix-en-Provence: Institut de recherches et d'études sur les mondes arabes et musulmans, 1980. P. 32.

9 *Philipp T.* Acre. The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian City. P. 22–24.

erful Syrian al-'Azm clan: 'Abdallah Pasha ruled Damascus (1795–1798), and his brother Yusuf Pasha governed Tripoli (1798–1799). The Sidon eyalet (with Acre as its center) was under Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar for over 20 years (1776–1804). Aleppo had been without a governor (*wali*) appointed from Istanbul since 1795, with real authority resting in the hands of one of Syria's wealthiest men, the *muhassil*[10] *Ibrahim Agha Qattar-Aghasi. The French invasion prompted the Porte*[11] *to implement a series of inconsistent, even chaotic, administrative rearrangements. Moving pashas between provinces triggered armed uprisings in Damascus and Aleppo, exacerbating the political crisis. Stability only partially returned with the arrival of the army of Grand Vizier Yusuf Ziya Pasha (1798–1805; 1809–1811) in late summer of 1799.*

The 18th century was an era of local elite flourishing in the Ottoman Empire generally and in Syria in particular. Regional leaders, relying on feudal clientage networks and kinship ties, capitalized on the weakening of central authority. Three locations are directly relevant to this study: in Mount Lebanon, the emirate remained with the Shihab family, increasingly relying on Christian Maronites rather than Druze feudal lords. In the mountainous area north of Jerusalem centered on Nablus, power rested with rival tribal sheikhs, Ahmad Bey al-Tuqan and Yusuf Jarrar. Aleppo was torn by conflict between the Janissaries and the Sharifs claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad. In 1798, the city became a battlefield for two and a half months following a Janissary-led massacre of the Sharifs at al-Utrush Mosque.

Interreligious relations in Syria in the early months of war (July 1798 – February 1799)

News that France had attacked Egypt on July 1, 1798, arrived in Syria with significant delay and spread slowly and unevenly. Archimandrite Maxim

[10] *Muḥaṣṣil* — an official responsible for tax collection in a province. In Aleppo, the authority and income of the *muḥaṣṣil* were exceptionally great compared with other provinces — a fact that American scholar *Herbert Bodman* attributed to a combination of the province's wealth and its role as a center of transit trade (*Bodman H.* Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760–1826. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963. Pp. 36–38).

[11] Porta (Sublime Porte) — the European term for the central administrative authority of the Ottoman Empire.

Simsky (d. 1810), brother of the Holy Sepulcher[12], reported that Jerusalem residents learned of the attack on July 10 (June 28 Old Style)[13], whereas according to the Uniate merchant Yusuf ʻAbbud, Aleppo's inhabitants were informed in the beginning of Safar, i.e., after July 14, 1798[14]. However, French Consul in Aleppo Jean-Charles Choderlos reported that by July 15, the local European community had received a letter about the departure of the squadron from Toulon and its potential course toward the Nile. Only a month later, on August 14, did it become widely known in the city that the French landing had occurred near Alexandria[15]. In Beirut, Orthodox chronicler ʻAbdallah Trad reported that his fellow citizens learned of the invasion when a trading galleon, fleeing from Damietta, arrived at the port. Beirut residents were so alarmed that they delayed unloading the ship, which sailed on at night fully loaded to Istanbul. Local Christian merchants evidently suffered losses, prompting Trad to lament: "May the Lord compensate these people for their losses and send them prosperity!"[16] According to the chronicler[17], his townsmen learned of the invasion slightly earlier than Aleppo, in the last week of July to the first week of August 1798, as Damietta fell to the French on August 6. For comparison, Istanbul

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[12] The Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre — an association of the monastic members of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church. One of its main tasks is to defend the rights of the Orthodox Church concerning the Holy Places of Palestine.

[13] *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. Материалы для истории Иерусалимской патриархии XVI–XIX века // Православный палестинский сборник. Вып. 55. Часть 2. СПб. 1904. С. 86–87.

[14] *ʻAbbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Ḥawādith Ḥalab al-yawmiya 1771–1805. Al-Murtād fī tāʾrikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād [Daily Events of Aleppo, 1771–1805. A Study of the History of Aleppo and Baghdad] Ḥalab: Shaʻāʻ li-n-nashar wa-l-ʻulūm, 2006. Pp. 294–295.

[15] *Kuroki H*. Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt // Bulletin d'études orientales. T. 51 (1999). Pp. 263–264.

[16] *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов, восходивших на высокую архиерейскую кафедру города Бейрута (пер. И.Г. Константинопольского) // Арабы-христиане в истории и литературе Ближнего Востока. М.: Изд-во ПСТГУ, 2013. С. 179.

[17] This section of the chronicle was written from memory or subjected to later editing, since ʿAbdallah Trad dated the arrival of the galleon from Damietta to 30 June 1799, when French troops had already been in Egypt for a year and had even marched into Syria.

learned of the French attack on July 17–18[18], and by July 24, the Sublime Porte initiated negotiations with Russia to join the anti-French alliance[19].

In the coastal Syrian cities, which were vulnerable from the sea, news of the invasion of neighboring Egypt provoked widespread panic. "Fear took hold in the hearts of both Muslims and Christians", wrote 'Abdallah Trad[20]. The inhabitants of Beirut were not alone in their feelings. Yusuf 'Abbud reported that the residents of Askale (Arabic: Asakil, from the Italian *Scala*) feared that their cities would be the next targets of French aggression. Anxiety in the ports intensified when local "merchants and craftsmen" learned of the fall of Cairo[21]. Yet, apparently, the population of Beirut reacted to this news most nervously, at the level of mass psychosis and panic. The cause lay in the historical memory of the city's residents: a quarter century earlier, during the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774, Beirut had twice been stormed by Russian squadrons, endured a prolonged siege, and experienced subsequent occupation. The suffering and losses had not faded from memory, and the Muslims also recalled the ambivalent stance taken by some of their Christian compatriots at the time.

Remembering the events of 1772–1773, the authorities of Beirut this time ordered homes, shops, and warehouses in the port area to be vacated for soldier accommodation. 'Abdallah Trad noted that these structures belonged to Christians[22], which is credible given the active participation of ethno-confessional minorities in maritime trade. The first instinct of the residents was to organize self-defense. To quote the chronicler: "The Muslims called upon the Christians to arm themselves and go with them to the fortifications to defend the city together. Some reckless Christians procured weapons and, equipped, went with the Muslims to the fortifications.

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18 *Shaw S.J.* Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971. P. 256.

19 *Кобищанов Т.Ю.* Преодолевая старые обиды: османский путь к подписанию союзного договора с Россией в 1798 г. // Электронный научно-образовательный журнал (ЭНОЖ) «История». 2020. Т. 11. Вып. 12 (98). Ч. I. 45–50.

20 *Трад, Абдаллах.* Краткая история епископов. С. 179.

21 *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī.* Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 295. French troops entered Cairo on 25 July 1798.

22 *Трад, Абдаллах.* Краткая история епископов. С. 179.

The rest avoided this and wanted to flee"[23]. Subsequent events revealed a difference in position between local and provincial authorities. Beirut's administration decided to prevent the Christians from fleeing. Guards at the city gates were instructed to prevent the *dhimmis*[24] *both from leaving and from removing their property. A separate problem arose with the discovery of weapons: "The Muslims, seeing some Christians armed, imagined that, with the arrival of the enemy, the Christians would turn against them along with the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon"*[25]*. In turn, the dhimmis*, surrounded by suspicion and confined in the city, were extremely alarmed and frightened, "and they called upon the Lord to save them from this disaster!"[26].

A pogrom and a massacre was prevented by the Sidon governor, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar. Upon learning of the situation in this important port city, he ordered all Christians to leave, taking their families and belongings. "Not a single Christian was to spend the night within the limits of Beirut"[27]. The city authorities executed the order, but "sometimes they opened the gates and allowed Christians to leave freely; at other times they commanded them to take only essential items and provisions, and not to go beyond the suburban gardens"[28]. Any weapons discovered were confiscated. As a result, Beirut was cleared of its Christian population, most of whom evacuated to Mount Lebanon. Some of the vacated houses were occupied by soldiers, and the goods stored within them were plundered[29].

It should be noted that this deportation of Christians was a unique and unprecedented event. Emir Haydar al-Shihab recorded in his chronicle that upon learning of the French conquest of Egypt, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar had ordered all Christians to leave his territories[30]. However, as noted by the German scholar Thomas Philipp, it remains unclear whether the

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23 Ibid.

24 *Dhimmī* — from Arabic *dhimma* ("protection") — a collective term for the non-Muslim population in territories governed by Islamic law (*sharīʿa*).

25 *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 180.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid. Pp. 180–181.

29 Ibid. P. 180.

30 *Shihāb, Ḥaidar Aḥmad*. Tārīḫ Aḥmad bāshā al-Jazzār [The History of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar] // Tārīḫ Aḥmad bāshā al-Jazzār [The History of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar]. Bayrūt: Maktabat Anṭūn, 1955. Pp. 37–212. P. 123.

A Burial site in Beirut. Artist Francis B. Spilsbury. 1799.
From the book Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria,
Delineated during the Campaigns of 1799 and 1800.
London: Edward Orme, 1803. From open sources

wali even attempted to enforce his order[31]. We will see that in the spring of 1799, Christians remained in all the settlements of the Sidon Pashalik where they had lived previously, with Beirut as the sole exception. Unlike Beirut, no other Syrian city had been subjected to Russian attacks in the preceding quarter-century.

In inland Syria, chaotic alarmist measures were undertaken by the authorities in Jerusalem. After receiving news of the French landing near Alexandria, the immediate response of the local administration was to arrest the heads of the three main Christian communities and to station troops in monasteries. As Archimandrite Maxim Simsky reported, the Muslims feared "that we [the Orthodox], the Franciscans, and the Armenians might unite with the French and surrender Jerusalem to them"[32]. The next day, the heads of the communities were released and the soldiers withdrawn[33]; however, the trust in the clergy was not restored. "You too are *khiyanet* [from the Arabic *khiyana*, meaning 'treachery'], that is, rebels, because you are friends of the Franks", wrote Neophytos of Cyprus (d. after 1844), Sec-

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31 *Philipp T.* Social Structure and Political Power in Acre in the 18th Century // The Syrian land in the 18th and 19th Century. The Common and the Specific in the Historical Experience / ed. Thomas Philipp. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992. P. 98.

32 *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 87.

33 Ibid.

retary of the Holy Sepulcher Brotherhood, later describing the accusations leveled against the Orthodox monks[34]. Inspections continued: "Not a single cell was left unsearched... even chests and cupboards were examined", complained Maxim Simsky[35]. Weapons were particularly sought in buildings belonging to the Catholic Custody of the Holy Land[36].

The Jerusalem clergy decided to appeal for assistance to the governor of Damascus, 'Abdallah Pasha al-'Azm, whose authority extended over the Holy City. The correspondence between the Damascus and Jerusalem officials, preserved in the archives of the Jerusalem Sharia court, contrasts with the emotional chronicles of the Christian monks. On July 29, 1798 (15 Safar 1213 AH), the wali reviewed the appeal of the clerics, who complained that "as soon as the rumors of events in Alexandria reached the city [Jerusalem], they were persecuted by the crowd, their monasteries plundered, the inhabitants taken hostage"[37]. In response, 'Abdallah Pasha ordered an investigation to determine whether the monks harbored "overt or secret plans of treachery", and to report if such plans were confirmed. He also instructed that, pending orders from the Sublime Porte, the monks be placed under custody and supervision, emphasizing that they should be protected from oppression and treated properly[38].

The troubles of the Christian hierarchy and the search for potential traitors were not the main concerns of the provincial administration in

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[34] *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского о находящихся в Иерусалиме христианских вероисповеданиях и о ссорах их между собой по поводу мест поклонения. Материалы для истории Иерусалимской патриархии XVI–XIX века // Православный палестинский сборник, Вып. 55. Часть. 1. СПб. 1901. С. 29.

[35] *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 87.

[36] Custody of the Holy Land (lat. *Custodia Terrae Sanctae)* — the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, a subdivision of the Franciscan Order authorized by the Pope to guard the Roman Catholic shrines in Palestine. Beginning in the 1740s, the privilege of patronage over the Catholic presence in the Holy Land belonged to France, though the Custody's leadership retained an international character.

[37] Quoted from: *Mannā, Ādel*. The Sijill as Source for the Study of Palestine During the Ottoman Period, with Special Reference to the French Invasion // Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period. Political, Social and Economic Transformation / ed. Kushner. Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1986. P. 357.

[38] Ibid.

those days. The Governor's message was addressed to the entire Muslim elite of Jerusalem, as a response to requests to provide arms and troops and to permit occupation of the city citadel for defense against a possible French invasion. The Pasha confirmed that a detachment of soldiers, artillerymen (*topchuye*), and auxiliary forces (*arabachiye*), led by Ahmad Agha, would soon arrive to assist the Jerusalemites. As Arab-Israeli historian Adel Manna noted, the usual time for correspondence between Jerusalem and Damascus was one week[39]. 'Abdallah Pasha's response was recorded in the Jerusalem Sharia court registry on August 6, by which time extremely dramatic events had already unfolded for the local Christian population.

On August 1, 1798, Jerusalem probably received news that the army defending Cairo had been defeated in the famous "Battle of the Pyramids" (July 21, 1798). The reaction of Muslims, learning that thousands of their co-religionists had perished and one of Islam's largest cities had fallen to the French, was predictable. "From small to great, all these foolish animals rushed together", scolded Maxim Simsky his Muslim compatriots[40]. The subsequent events are described ambiguously in sources, but they can be reconstructed with a high degree of confidence. A crowd began to storm the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Savior. "The Franciscans ... firmly locked the gates; and the Turks [Muslims] with shouting and roaring brought axes and other tools and tried to break the gates and enter. But as the gates were iron, they did not succeed; they brought ladders, climbed the walls, and began jumping down"[41]. The monastery was plundered; however, the monks survived, sheltering in the hospital and in the Orthodox Monastery of Archangel Michael[42].

It should be noted that, according to European travelers of the 18th and early 19th centuries, the Jerusalemites were not particularly pious; the French traveler and scholar Constantin-François de Chassboeuf (Volney) described them as "deserving the reputation of the most impious inhabitants

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39 Ibid.

40 *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 88. Его единоверец Неофит Кипрский относил упомянутые события к весне 1799 г. (*Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 28–31). Однако Неофит писал свои заметки в 30–40 гг. XIX в., что дает нам больше оснований полагаться на датировки участника событий Максима Симского.

41 *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 28.

42 Ibid.

of Syria"[43]. The status of the third-holiest city in Islam (after Mecca and Medina) did not lead Jerusalem to lose its Christian heritage, which was carefully preserved by the Sultan's authorities. From the early 16th century, the Ottomans had established in Palestine a complex system of Muslim-Christian symbiosis, based on respecting the rights of church hierarchs, their local congregations, and visiting pilgrims, conditional upon the payment of substantial official and unofficial taxes[44]. By the late 18th century, the most important positions in Jerusalem were occupied by influential clans such as al-Husayni and al-Khalidi. For example, at the end of the century, 'Abdallah al-Husayni held the post of local *naqib al-ashraf*[45], *while his brother Hasan was mufti* and *shaykh al-Haram* (head of the third most significant Muslim shrine, al-Aqsa Mosque)[46]. These clans were thoroughly corrupted by the Christian hierarchs of Jerusalem, who paid them for protection in disputes over the Holy Sites. By the century's end, one-time bribes had become fixed regular exactions, some of which were hereditary[47]. The local *mutesellim*[48] *also received annual payments. Thus, the Arab-Ottoman elite of Jerusalem had a vested interest in maintaining this profitable religious status quo.*

The city authorities calmed the anger of the crowd. As noted by Neophytos of Cyprus, the mutesellim Ismail Pasha "quelled the assault with peaceful speeches", a task that took him three days[49]*. Subsequently, the Jerusalem administration acted in accordance with the orders received from Damascus, which coincided with its own interests. Ottoman soldiers meticulously "searched almost every nook and cranny" in the Catholic and Orthodox establishments and confirmed that no weapons were present. Afterward, upon a consultation ("quietly negotiating", in Neophytos of Cyprus' terminology)*

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[43] *Volney*. Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte. 3e édition, 1799 // Œuvres. Tome troisième. Paris: Fayard, 1998. P. 485.

[44] See also: *Peri O.* Christianity under Islam in Jerusalem. The Question of the Holy Sites in Early Ottoman Times. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

[45] *Накыб аль-ашраф* — head of the corporation of the descendants of the Prophet.

[46] *Asali, K.J.* "Jerusalem under the Ottomans, 1516–1831 AD." // *Jerusalem in History,* ed. *K.J. Asali.* New York: Olive Branch Press, 1990, P. 217.

[47] Ibid. P. 222.

[48] *Mutaṣallim* — an Ottoman official, head of the administration of a *sanjak* (district) within a *province* (*eyalet*).

[49] *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 28.

King David Street in Jerusalem. Artist Gustav Bauernfeind.
From open sources

with other officials, the Mufti of Jerusalem ordered the Catholic monks of the Custody and the Orthodox Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher, led by Metropolitan Arsenios, "all to be sent to the Holy Church of the Resurrection for confinement"[50]*. Maxim Simsky dramatically exclaimed that "they imprisoned all of us as if wolves had ambushed lambs"*[51]*, yet all evidence indicates that this was done to ensure their safety from attacks by agitated Muslims.*

In addition to 36 Orthodox primates[52] *and 18 members of the Custody, 20 Armenian and several Coptic and Abyssinian monks were sent to the Church of the Resurrection, "so that the total numbered up to one hundred souls"*[53]*. They remained in the church building until November 16 (November 5, Old Style) 1798, when, as Maxim Simsky recalled*[54]*, "by written order of Sultan Selim and due to the protection of Jazzar Pasha... we were released from confinement and from death"*[55]*.*

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50 Ibid. P. 29.

51 *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 87.

52 Ibid.

53 *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 29.

54 Maksim Simsky wrote that the imprisonment lasted 108 days — thus, it must have begun on 31 July or 1 August. It seems he added a few days for dramatic effect.

55 *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 87–88.

Soon after the release of the detained clergy, 'Abdallah Pasha himself arrived in Jerusalem from Damascus, leading a military corps of 5,000–6,000 soldiers. Yusuf 'Abbud, who bore animosity toward the wali, reported that the arriving troops "seized everything within reach and began to destroy the holy Bethlehem"[56]*, although local Christian chronicles do not confirm this.*

In Syria's largest cities — Damascus and Aleppo — no anti-Christian actions were recorded in the first months following the invasion, as consul Choderlos[57] *specifically noted. Local non-Muslims continued their lives largely as before, experiencing roughly the same hardships and joys as their Muslim neighbors. Moreover, for several weeks, no actions were taken by either the city authorities or the citizens against the French residents of Aleppo, as particularly emphasized by the Japanese researcher Hidemitsu Kuroki*[58]*. Only on September 8, 1798, in accordance with government orders from Istanbul, were the French subjects placed under house arrest*[59]*, and on September 16, all 36 individuals, including women and children, were "placed in one of the citadel's rooms"*[60]*: four small chambers, as Choderlos later wrote*[61]*. Property belonging to the French from houses and warehouses was removed, and the premises sealed. Servants and attendants were not allowed to remain with their employers*[62]*.*

The repressions also affected local Christians attached to the French consulate as dragomans and assistants. What kind of people were these? A brief digression is necessary.

By the end of the 18th century, European presence in Aleppo had significantly declined due to the downturn in the city's transit trade, including Iranian silk. The vacancies left by departing European merchants were filled by Middle Eastern Christian and Jewish traders. Ottoman non-Muslims were not concerned by the reduced profitability of caravan trade. The dhimmis enjoyed significant advantages over the Western merchants: Arabic was their

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[56] *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 297.

[57] *Kuroki H*. Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. P. 264.

[58] Ibid. P. 273.

[59] Ibid. P. 264.

[60] *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 295.

[61] *Kuroki H*. Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. P. 264.

[62] *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 295.

native or well-known language, they did not require intermediaries, and they had a deep understanding of the psychology of their counterparts — both the Muslims and the Europeans[63]. Thus, in some cases, they were willing to accept lower profits than foreign entrepreneurs, and in others, able to increase profitability through skill and local knowledge.

With the intensification of commercial activity, *dhimmi* merchants increasingly turned to European consuls to obtain special documents: *berats*[64] *and firmans*, issued to dragomans (Ottoman: *turjuman*) and their assistants (Ottoman: *khizmetgar*), respectively. The overwhelming majority of these document holders used them as protective charters, confirming special extraterritorial status under the Capitulations regime[65]: exemption from Sharia courts, relief from paying *jizya*[66], *reduced customs duties, and other privileges. For consuls, putting individuals on the berat* and *firman* lists became a highly profitable business. According to data available to the Istanbul authorities, Aleppo had six holders of "French" *berats* and twelve of *firmans*. In September 1798, the local judge (*qadi*) reported to the capital that in reality, only three dragomans and three assistants remained in the city; the rest had either died, moved to Istanbul, or could not be located[67].

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[63] See also: *Goffman D.* The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. P. 90–91; *Masters B.* The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600–1750. New York: New York University Press, 1988. P. 60–62.

[64] Under the Capitulations regime in the second half of the 18th century, the term *barā'a* (Arabic "skill", "knowledge") came to denote a patent that granted certain privileges to Ottoman non-Muslims employed in European consulates. *Berats* were issued to vice-consuls, dragomans (interpreters), guards, and, in some cases, even personal servants of consuls or consular employees. A *berat*-holder (*beratlī*) did not cease to be an Ottoman subject but enjoyed various commercial, fiscal, and legal privileges, including consular protection. The privileges extended to members of his family. Two *firmans* were attached to each *berat* for the *beratlī*'s assistants. Holders of these *firmans* — *nāfar firmanlī* or *khizmetgār* — also enjoyed privileges, though personal and lesser than those of the *beratlī*. European consuls widely practiced the sale of *berats* and *firmans* to prominent non-Muslim merchants and landowners.

[65] Capitulations — from *capitula* (Lat. "chapter") — treaties granting subjects of foreign states and their nationals special rights within the Ottoman Empire.

[66] Jizya — a poll tax levied on *dhimmīs* (non-Muslim subjects).

[67] *Kuroki H.* Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. P. 269.

Aleppo. Daguerreotype by Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey. 1843.
From open sources

The composition of this *berat* corps was multiethnic: the qadi's list included Arabic, Armenian, and Greek names[68]. Yet these Christians acted with remarkable synchrony. Upon learning of the attack on Egypt, the "translators" attempted to surrender their berats and firmans to local authorities and obtain receipts for jizya payment. As noted by Hidemitsu Kuroki, this was an important, not so much symbolic as formal, step: by accepting the poll tax, Ottoman officials, as representatives of the Sultan and executors of the Muslim *umma*'s will, became "patrons" of the non-Muslims who had paid the jizya[69]. The ruse failed: perceiving an opportunity for profit, local officials did not allow the tax to be paid; instead, they threatened the berat holders and extorted bribes. The "translators" petitioned Istanbul, and at the beginning of September 1798, the Aleppo qadi received a firman instructing lenient treatment of the French *turjumans* and *khizmetgars*, due to the uncertainty regarding their legal status[70].

On September 2, the Ottoman Empire officially entered a state of war with the French Republic, and by mid-month, a new government order arrived in Aleppo. The berats and firmans of the French consulate's trans-

68 Ibid. P. 277.
69 Ibid. P. 270.
70 Ibid.

lators were to be annulled, and their holders reduced to the status of ordinary non-Muslim subjects. The decision was a compromise. As Yusuf ʻAbbud noted, none of these Christians were arrested, but their homes were sealed[71]. Yusuf Kubbe, a member of a wealthy Maronite family in Aleppo, reported that three dragomans attached to the French consulate — Hanna Andria, Antun Gaukas, and Antun Ghazzal — had to hide from persecution, and their houses were sealed[72]. Later, Consul Choderlos reported that the berat holder Hanna Andria was arrested but managed to escape under Swedish protection[73], though this was an isolated case.

A special situation developed around the berat holder Yusuf son of Krikor Farra, a wealthy Armenian merchant. ʻAbbud reported that he had freed his house from restrictions "through personal connections and a large monetary gift"[74]. Yet the story did not end there. Yusuf Farra had to pay repeatedly; ultimately, after losing 200,000 piastres, he fled to Mount Lebanon, from where he requested a berat from Dubrovnik[75].

The fate of the Maronite Yusuf Karaali was tragic. Karaali himself was actively engaged in trade and served as a *mahzandji* (Arabic: "manager of goods") or *dallal* (Arabic: "broker") for the leading European merchant in the region, the Frenchman Thomas Velin, who, according to contemporaries, feared the influence and intrigues of his business partner[76]. In August 1797, Consul Choderlos provided an extremely unflattering assessment of Karaali: "There is not a single Turk [Muslim — T.K.], European, or *rayah* [non-Muslim — T.K.] in this city who would not consider Joseph Karaali the most dangerous schemer"[77]. In contrast, a Capuchin monk residing

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71 *ʻAbbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 295.

72 Quoted from: *Momdjian, Maran*. The Levantine Merchant Consuls of Aleppo; The Commercial Elites 1750–1850. A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in History. Los Angeles: University of California, 2017. P. 92.

73 *Kuroki H*. Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. P. 269.

74 *ʻAbbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 295.

75 *Kuroki H*. Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. P. 269.

76 *Heyberger B*. Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique. Rome: École Française de Rome, 1994. P. 129.

77 *Kuroki H*. Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. P. 272.

in Syria, while acknowledging that Karaali was universally regarded as an "schemer" and "the most audacious and reckless" person in Aleppo[78], nevertheless recognized his merits. "Several times", the monk wrote, "he used his influence and his purse to free indebted Christians from prison, or to save others from being strangled [the traditional method of execution — T.K.]; he protected widows and orphans from the tyranny of the Turks"[79]. One such case was recounted by 'Abdallah Trad. Karaali, whom the Beirut chronicler called "an eloquent and knowledgeable man"[80], did not hesitate to intercede with Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar on behalf of imprisoned Orthodox Beirut merchants, securing their release through ransom[81].

Yusuf Karaali was considered a man capable, thanks to his connections and wealth, of appointing and dismissing pashas and customs officials: "he succeeded in everything he undertook"[82]. However, misfortune befell the Maronite when in 1797 he actively intervened in the conflict between Thomas Velin and the muhassil Ibrahim Qattar-agasi[83]. The dispute arose over the size of customs payments, a matter resolvable only at the governmental level. Karaali spent several months in Istanbul, meeting influential figures and distributing bribes in unsuccessful attempts to secure the resignation of the muhassil[84]. In this struggle, the Qattar-agasi family emerged victorious, retaining enmity toward Karaali.

The opportunity for revenge came with the news of the French invasion. Qattar-agasi (by that time Pasha and governor of the Damascus province, and in September 1798, commander-in-chief of the Ottoman forces concentrated in Syria) and his son Muhammad, who had succeeded him as Aleppo's muhassil, secured the issuance of several government firmans ordering the

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78 *Heyberger B.* Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique. P. 128.

79 Ibid.

80 *Трад, Абдаллах.* Краткая история епископов. С. 180.

81 Ibid. С. 176.

82 *Heyberger B.* Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique. P. 128.

83 On the biography of the latter, see: *Bodman H.* Political Factions in Aleppo. P. 38–40.

84 *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī.* Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 298; *Heyberger B.* Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique. P. 129.

confiscation of Thomas Velin's money and property. In late November 1798 and January 1799, Velin, along with some other French merchants, was subjected to torture; Yusuf Karaali was interrogated as well[85]. The berat issued to the Maronite by the Spanish consulate was annulled, Karaali was arrested, his property confiscated, his house sealed, and his records sent to Istanbul[86]. The disgraced Christian became an easy target. After interrogations, he was transferred to the barracks of the *orta* (Ottoman: "company") of Sheikh Bubakr, who, promising to "petition the Porte for a firman for a pardon"[87], extorted the remaining hidden funds from Karaali. The Maronite awaited daily a directive from Istanbul "to release and pardon him"[88]. Indeed, on February 6, a new firman arrived in Aleppo, requiring a renewed investigation into the property of French subjects. Thomas Velin and another merchant were again tortured[89], while Karaali was ordered executed.

Yusuf Karaali became the only individual to lose his life during the anti-French repressions in Aleppo, and his death shocked his co-religionists. The drama of the execution was heightened by the date — the first day of the sacred Muslim month of Ramadan — and the manner in which it was carried out. Yusuf 'Abbud vividly described the event. On the day of the execution, Karaali was summoned from prison and "told: Go home, rest!" He was handed over to four cruel men of violent temper, and after being led from Sheikh Bubakr's house to al-'Arkub[90], he was informed that he would be killed. He offered them money; they refused. Without a moment's delay or giving him time to prepare for his imminent encounter with eternity, one of them shot him, and another beheaded him. They stripped him to his shirt and threw him to the dogs, which devoured his flesh. The following afternoon, permission was granted to recover the bones gnawed by the dogs"[91]. Thus ended the life of Yusuf Karaali, which, as the Capuchin monk

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85 *Kuroki H.* Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. Pp. 265–266.

86 *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī.* Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 298.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 *Kuroki H.* Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. P. 266.

90 A quarter in the northeastern part of Aleppo.

91 *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī.* Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. Pp. 298–299.

philosophically observed, "for approximately twenty years had good and evil, hope and fear mingled in it"[92].

Aleppo's Christians fared better if they were under the protection of the Netherlands or Venice — countries then under French control. In February 1799, the Porte ordered subjects of the Batavian Republic to leave Aleppo[93]; local Christians affiliated with the Dutch consulate were only required to surrender their berats and firmans and begin paying jizya[94]. In March 1799, a similar decision applied to six dragomans and ten assistants affiliated with the Venetian consulate[95], occupied by Napoleon's troops two years earlier. The former berat holders, relieved by the mild outcome, "after experiencing complete fear, received reassurance, and were given letters and certificates confirming that they were peaceful people and did not interfere in anything concerning the French", as the chronicler noted[96].

At the beginning of January 1799, the authorities began auctioning off the sealed property of the French and "translators". Ottoman officials, Muslim theologians, and "some other Muslims", including, as Yusuf 'Abbud emphasized, individuals from Palestine (Balistan)[97], took advantage of the opportunity to purchase houses and goods at bargain prices. The Christian chronicler emphasized that "no local Christian, Frenchman, or Jew participated in these auctions, nor anyone else, because they were prohibited by any law"[98]. One can only speculate whether this was done out of intercommunal solidarity or whether minority representatives feared that the illegitimately acquired property might someday have to be returned to its rightful owners, while the Muslim elite felt more secure.

Describing the repressions against the Eastern Christian merchants connected to France and its European satellites, it should be noted that

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92 *Heyberger B.* Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique. P. 129.

93 *Batavian Republic* — the official name of the Dutch Republic of the United Provinces during its occupation by France between 1795 and 1806.

94 *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī.* Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 299.

95 *Kuroki H.* Events in Aleppo During Napoleon's Expedition of Egypt. P. 270.

96 *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī.* Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. Pp. 299–300.

97 Ibid. P. 296.

98 Ibid.

other dhimmi merchants were unaffected by government sanctions and continued operations as before. The largest Christian traders in Aleppo from the Kubbe (Maronite) and Balit (Armenian) clans, under Ottoman protection, faced no obstacles, nor did the Christian merchants affiliated with the Austrian consulate[99]. The aforementioned Yusuf Kubbe, in a letter of September 29, 1798, noted the successful delivery of a shipment of grain to the Pasha of Belen[100].

However, Christian merchants living in Sidon Pashalik faced greater difficulties. Mount Lebanon and adjacent areas of Syria could not fully supply their alimentary needs and depended on external deliveries, primarily from the Nile Valley. Contemporaries noted Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar's "concern" over the state of maritime trade following the French invasion of Egypt[101]. The ruler, hastening to replenish warehouse stocks, began forcibly purchasing grain at below-market prices. 'Abdallah Trad complained that rice was recorded upon purchase at 70 piastres instead of 100, and that the remaining 30% of the value was later compensated only to Muslim merchants. "The Christians were plundered", lamented the chronicler[102]. The Lebanese Shwairite[103] monk Hananiah al-Munayyir, exaggerating for effect, reported no partial compensation to Christian merchants for confiscated rice and wheat, "resulting in their losing large sums of money"[104]. Moreover, showing unusual awareness for a clergyman, he noted that Beirut merchants had 35 *ratl*[105] *of silk confiscated, of which no less than 24 ratl* were sold[106].

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99 *Momdjian, Maran*. The Levantine Merchant Consuls of Aleppo. P. 147.

100 Ibid. P. 56.

101 *Al-Munayyir, Ḥanāniyā*. Kitāb al-ḫūrī Ḥanāniyā Al-Munayyir ḫuṭī [The Writing of the Sinful Priest Ḥanāniyā al-Munayyir] // Tārīḫ Aḥmad bāshā al-Jazzār [The History of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar]. Bayrūt: Maktabat Anṭūn, 1955. Pp. 351–516. P. 465.

102 *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 180.

103 The Shuweirite Brotherhood — a Greek Catholic (Melkite) Basilian order of St. John the Baptist (*Ordo Basilianus Sancti Johannis Baptistae Melkitarum*), founded in 1712 in the village of Shweir (Shweyr/Shuweir) in Mount Lebanon, recognized by the Vatican in 1757.

104 *Al-Munayyir, Ḥanāniyā*. Kitāb al-ḫūrī Ḥanāniyā Al-Munayyir. P. 465.

105 *Ratl* — an Islamic unit of weight and volume, varying between 406 and 449.28 grams depending on time and region.

106 *Al-Munayyir, Ḥanāniyā*. Kitāb al-ḫūrī Ḥanāniyā Al-Munayyir. P. 465.

Jazzar Pasha condemning a criminal. Artist Francis B. Spilsbury. 1799.
From the book Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria,
Delineated during the Campaigns of 1799 and 1800.
London: Edward Orme, 1803.
From open sources

Having conducted the requisitions, Ahmad Pasha, motivated by security concerns and possibly seeking to drive up prices for the grain stored in his warehouses, issued a ban on any communication with territories occupied by the French[107] "Because of this, prices rose for Egyptian goods such as rice, fabrics, sugar, and coffee", the chronicler noted[108]. The order was strictly enforced. Two Christian merchants from Acre — Antun Zaghib and Hanna 'Atiyya — who arrived at al-Jazzar's court at the end of August 1798 with the French commissioner Bovoisin, were arrested, and their goods confiscated[109]. Both were later executed[110].

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[107] *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 181.

[108] Ibid.

[109] *El-Turk N.* Histoire de l'expédition française en Égypte / Publiée et traduite par M. Desgranges aîné. P.: Impr. royale, 1839. P. 60; *al-Turk, Niqūlā ibn Yūsuf*. Dhikr tamalluk djumhūr al-Faransāwiyya al-aqṭār al-Miṣriyya wa-l-bilād al-Shāmiyya. P.: Impr. royale, 1839. Pp. 51–52.

[110] *Turk, Nicolas*. Chronique d'Égypte, 1798–1804 / éd. et tr. Par Gaston Wiet. Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1950; *al-Turk, Niqūlā ibn Yūsuf*. Mudhakkirāt Niqūlā al-Turk. Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1950. P. 34.

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Let's make a preliminary summary. News of the Western army's invasion of neighboring Egypt did not provoke a wave of anti-Christian pogroms in Syria. Significant unrest occurred only in Beirut and Jerusalem. In Beirut, the unrest was a consequence of a historical wound that had not healed: the bloody siege and subsequent occupation by Russian troops a quarter century earlier. Jerusalem, in turn, was not only the largest city closest to the Egyptian border but also a center for European monks, whom local Muslims perceived as a potential "fifth column". In both cases, the consequences were less tragic than they might have been. Beirut Christians were forced to leave the city, abandoning their homes and part of their property, yet the chronicles record no murders or physical violence. In Jerusalem, monks endured several stressful hours of inspections and fear of the Muslim crowd, followed by more than three months in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, again without bloodshed. In Aleppo, a small group of merchants attached to the French consulate lost part of their money and property, and Yusuf Karaali paid with his life for his relentless energy and fearless opportunism. In Acre, two Christian merchants accompanying Bonaparte's emissary to Jazzar Pasha were arrested. In the remaining cities and towns of Greater Syria, including Damascus, no significant unrest was reported. The religious peace, founded on the principles of Sharia, was observed by Ottoman authorities almost without exception.

Interconfessional relations during the French invasion of Syria, spring 1799

Fragmented Syria appeared to Bonaparte as easy prey. Within a few weeks, he expected to seize the entire territory, including the coastal cities, Aleppo, Damascus, and Jerusalem. The French commander had particular plans for the local ethno-confessional minorities: he intended, in particular, "to arm the Christians of Syria, kindle an uprising among the Druze and the Maronites, and then act according to circumstances"[111]. This, according to

[111] *Бонапарт, Наполеон*. Кампания в Египте и Сирии (1798–1799 гг.) // О военном искусстве. Избранные произведения. Москва: ЭКСМО, 2003. С. 579.

Napoleon's plans, would have supplemented his army with "18,000 Druze, Maronites, and other Syrians"[112]. However, as the commander-in-chief admitted, "the course of events contradicted his calculations"[113].

In mid-February 1799, French forces, numbering around 13,000 soldiers, crossed the Sinai Desert and captured the main outpost on the Egypt–Syria border: the fortress of El-Arish. On February 24, 1799, Napoleon's troops approached Gaza and occupied the city the following day. Upon learning that war had reached Syria, the Muslims of Jerusalem resorted to a previously tried method: on February 26, they placed the local Christians under custody in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher[114]. This time, monks and priests remained free, while about a thousand laypeople were arrested[115]: "young and old, excluding wives and children"[116]; as Neophytos of Cyprus later specified: 600 Orthodox, 300 Catholics, and 80 Armenians. Their large number was explained by the approach of Easter and the detention of Christian pilgrims, who aroused particular suspicion[117]. A document from the archives of Jerusalem's Sharia court records that on March 6, 1799 (29 Ramadan 1213 AH), 52 monks from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Ramla[118] were also placed in the same church, though the Christian sources do not mention this.

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was accustomed to the role of a metochion: pilgrims had been accommodated within its walls for centuries. Maxim Simsky, habitually dramatizing, wrote that the pilgrims "fell under the mad attack of wild beasts, they were being kept under custody with the intent of being killed in an inhuman and savage manner"[119]. However, reality proved less dramatic. The hostages remained in the church

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112 Ibid. C. 580.

113 Ibid.

114 *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 88.

115 Ibid.

116 *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 30.

117 By the end of the 18th century, against the background of spreading secularism and the wars against revolutionary France, the number of European pilgrims declined, but Eastern Christians continued to arrive in large numbers to the Holy City for Easter (*Asali K.J.* Jerusalem under the Ottomans. P. 221).

118 *Mannā, Ādel*. The Sijill as Source for the Study of Palestine. P. 359.

119 *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 88.

"for over 75 days"[120], during which food was provided by monks of all three congregations[121]. Assistance was distributed selectively: each monastery fed its co-religionists. The prolonged stay in the Church apparently weighed more heavily on the monks than on the pilgrims, who were accustomed to long, unhurried pilgrimages: the Eastern Christians often worshipped for months, while the average European pilgrim's stay in the Holy Land at the end of the 18th century used to be about six months[122]. In mid-May, on the eve of or during the French retreat from Acre, the hierarchs managed to negotiate with the authorities and, "having paid a large sum of money", released the detainees "from the sacred prison"[123].

For comparison, let us consider what happened during these months to the Jewish community of Jerusalem. The geographer Joseph Schwarz (1804–1865), who moved from Bavaria to Jerusalem in 1833, wrote that in the spring of 1799 a rumor spread among the local Jews that Muslims accused them of colluding with Bonaparte and intended to kill them[124]. The Jewish historian Isaac Rivkind collected complaints from Jerusalem's Jews, who feared for their lives, property, and the "chastity of the daughters of Israel". The city braced for the French invasion, the prices soared, and Muslim creditors demanded repayment of debts from Jews. To raise the necessary funds, the community imposed internal levies, taxed the previously exempt rabbis, sold silver-covered *me'ilim* (Torah scroll covers), and even their own clothing[125]. Demonstrating loyalty, the leading rabbis, Yom Tov Algazi and Mordechai Meyuchas, organized a prayer stand at the Western Wall, asking God to protect the city from the advancing French army. The rabbis did not stop at prayer; they volunteered to help the authorities prepare Jerusalem for defense. Hundreds of Jews took part in building fortifications around

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120 Ibid. C. 89.

121 *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 30.

122 *Asali K.J.* Jerusalem under the Ottomans. P. 221.

123 *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 89.

124 *Schwartz J.* Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine. Transl. by Isaak Leeser. Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1850. P. 374.

125 *Rivkind I.* Separate Pages (Documents on the History of the Jewish Settlement in Palestine in the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth Centuries) // Yerushalayim (Collection of Papers in Memory of Abraham Moses Lunz), Jerusalem, 1929. P. 111–178. Quoted from: *Lieber Sh.* Mistics and Missionaries. The Jews in Palestine, 1799–1840. Salt Lake City: University of Utah press, 1992. P. 12.

the city citadel with the grey-haired Rabbi Mordechai leading by example with a shovel in hand. According to Schwarz, the diligence of Jerusalem's Jews earned them the gratitude and respect of the local Muslims[126]. Nevertheless, the community's overall debt, which had been 50,000 piastres in 1797, had risen to 200,000 by the beginning of the 19th century[127].

Thus, Jerusalem's Jewish community adopted a more active stance compared to the Christians, demonstrating a high degree of adaptability and resourcefulness. Why did the Orthodox, Catholic, or Armenian hierarchs not attempt by word and deed to demonstrate loyalty to the Sultan? Why did the church shepherds not mobilize their flock for collective prayers and fortification work, preferring instead to negotiate directly with the Jerusalem authorities? Perhaps because they were not confident that the faithful would show the necessary zeal and diligence. However, we will see that the Jerusalem authorities found a way to use the local Christians even more effectively than for building fortifications.

On March 2, 1799, French detachments were within three miles of Jerusalem. Napoleon considered occupying the Holy City, hoping to "recruit a significant number of Christians and secure vital resources for the army" there[128]. His soldiers were also excited at the prospect of seeing the Holy Sites. "The entire army was seized with a festive mood in anticipation of entering this famous Jerusalem", Napoleon recalled, "a few veteran soldiers, educated in seminaries, sang hymns and the 'Lamentations of Jeremiah,' as heard during Holy Week in European churches... The army was burning with desire to see Golgotha, the Holy Sepulcher, the plateau of Solomon's Temple; it felt bitter when ordered to turn away"[129].

Napoleon was forced to abandon the capture of the Holy City for tactical reasons and continued north along the coast. The next day, French vanguard units reached Jaffa, and on March 7, the decisive assault began. The attackers breached the walls through the Christian quarter[130], later one of the most heavily affected areas of the city. The massacre perpetrated by

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126 *Schwartz J.* Descriptive Geography. P. 374.

127 *Lieber Sh.* Mistics and Missionaries. P. 12.

128 *Бонапарт, Наполеон.* Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 591.

129 Ibid. C. 591–592.

130 *al-Shihābī, 'amīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad.* Lubnān fī 'ahd al-'umarā' al-Shihābīyīn [Lebanon in the Era of the Shihabi Emirs]. Bayrūt, 1969. T. 2. P. 257.

Wailing Wall, Jerusalem. Artist Gustav Bauernfeind. 1887.
From open sources

the invaders was indescribable, shocking the more humane participants of the expedition. Doctor Étienne-Louis Malus recalled: "Soldiers tore to pieces men and women, young and old, Christians and Turks [Muslims — T.K.] alike. All living beings became victims of their cruelty"[131]. The shocking details of Malus's account are too graphic to reproduce here. A few days after the assault, the surviving townspeople were forced to gather the corpses lying in the streets and houses for burial. They were also required to pay an enormous indemnity of 175,000 livres[132]. The city emptied: from 7–8,000 inhabitants, only 1–1,500 remained by 1800[133]. Among the surviving prominent Christians and Muslims, Napoleon established a puppet self-governing body — a council (*divan*) of seven members[134].

Jaffa was only 33 miles from Jerusalem, and news from there reached the Holy City the same or the following day. On March 9, 1799, Bonapar-

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131 *Malus E-L.* L'Agenda de Malus. Souvenirs de l'expédition d'Égypte 1798-1801 Paris: H. Champion, 1892. P. 135f.

132 *Bernoyer F.* Avec Bonaparte en Egypte et en Syrie 1798–1800 / ed. C. Tortel. Abbeville, 1976. P. 143.

133 *Kark R.* Ottoman Jaffa: From Ruin to Central City in Palestine // The History and Archaeology of Jaffa 1 / ed. Martin Peilstöcker and Aaron A. Burke. Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2011. P. 132.

134 *Jonquière C. de la.* L'Expédition d'Égypte. Paris: Henri Charles-Lavauzelle, 1899. T. IV. P. 282.

Jerusalem, April 9, 1839. Artist Louis Haghe (1806–1885).
Illustration from The Holy Land, Vol. 1, fol. 16.
From open sources

te sent a message to the "sheikhs, ulama[135], and commandant of Jerusalem". In the letter, the commander-in-chief urged the citizens to submit to the French army, calling himself a "friend of the Muslims"[136]. The next day, March 10, a delegation of Jerusalem Christians arrived at Napoleon's headquarters, sent by mutesellim Ismail Pasha either in response to this letter or after receiving news of Jaffa's fall. The Christians "pleaded for their salvation" and described the threat posed by Jerusalem authorities to "kill them before allowing them to leave the city and cross the Jordan". On the other hand, if the French did not advance on Jerusalem, the mutesellim promised to "release and protect the Christians, not aid Jazzar, and after Acre's capture submit to the victor"[137]. Napoleon did not reject this tempting offer: "It was advantageous", he wrote. "It meant not abandoning a visit to Jerusalem, but postponing it for a week or two!"[138] The Jerusalem authorities kept their promise: no reprisals against Christians occurred until the end of the war.

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[135] *Ulamāʾ* (sing. *ʿālim*) — Muslim theologians and jurists, guardians of Islamic tradition and custodians of *sharīʿa*.

[136] *Napoléon*. Correspondance de Napoléon Ier. T. 5. Paris: Henri Plon, J. Dumain, 1860. P. 458.

[137] *Бонапарт, Наполеон*. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 598.

[138] Ibid. С. 598.

A situation similar to that in Jerusalem was observed in other parts of inner Syria, up to Transjordan. English officers Charles Leonard Irby and James Mangles, who visited Al-Karak in 1818, reported that during the French invasion of 1799, Muslims had intended to disarm and expel local Christians, but the ruling sheikh of Al-Karak had prevented this[139].

If Christians in Jerusalem escaped unscathed, in nearby Ramla, a town of about 1,000 inhabitants[140], the events were more dramatic. Maxim Simsky reported that on March 9, 1799, the Muslims from the surroundings of Jerusalem had stormed Ramla and looted the homes of Christians — both the Orthodox and the Uniates. Evidently, the main perpetrators were not only the militant fellahin from nearby villages but also residents of the neighboring mountainous districts centered in Nablus and Jenin. After the attack, Christian men, leaving their families, fled from Ramla, some reaching the French-occupied Jaffa. During a secondary attack on the town, around 200 Christian women and children were captured by Muslims; they were ransomed by the Holy Sepulcher monks and placed in the women's Monastery of Saints Theodores[141]. During the pogrom, the Church of Saint George the Victorious was burned, and a priest and an acolyte candle bearer were killed[142]. Christians only dared to return to Ramla several years later; the church was restored in 1817.

Archimandrite accounts leave out the circumstances suggesting that Muslim actions were motivated by more than a desire to rob the defenseless Christians. A week before the first attack, the French army had passed through Ramla. The commander of the engineering brigade, J.-F. Detrua (1771–1799), recorded in his diary that Christian women of the town "came

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[139] *Irby C.L., James M.* Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria, and the Holy Land, Including a Journey Round the Dead Sea, and through the Country East of the Jordan. London: John Murray, 1852. P. 112.

[140] *Cohen A.* Ottoman Rule and the Re-Emergence of the Coast of Palestine // Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée, No. 39, 1985. P. 166. Napoleon wrote of Ramla that its entire population was Christian (*Бонапарт, Наполеон*. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 592), however, both in the late 16th and early 19th centuries, Muslims constituted the majority of its inhabitants (*Панченко К.А.* Ближневосточное Православие под османским владычеством. С. 140–141).

[141] *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 88.

[142] Ibid.

out to greet the French... They and their children demonstrated immense joy at our arrival"[143]. Cartographer Pierre Jacotin (1765–1827) also noted the warm reception of the French by Ramla's residents[144]. Napoleon himself entered Ramla the next day, inspected local sites, and spent the night in the Franciscan monastery of St. Nicodemus and St. Joseph of Arimathea. The support shown by Ramla's Christians for the invaders was a sign of disloyalty for the Muslims and a pretext to punish the dhimmi, likely by imposing additional contributions. Consequently, Christian men considered it prudent to leave the city temporarily, safeguarding remaining money and valuables from further exactions. Finding the household heads absent, the armed fellahin and mountain dwellers captured their wives and sold them for ransom to the Holy Sepulcher monks.

The punishment of Ramla's Christians was evidently part of a jihad that united the Muslims of Nablus. The mutesellim of the Jenin sanjak, Sheikh Yusuf Jarrar, wrote a patriotic poem calling his co-religionists to unite in the face of the invasion, reports of which "brought tears to the eyes and fire to the heart"[145]. "The nation of infidels is attacking us, intending to destroy our mosques!" proclaimed Sheikh Yusuf, appealing to devout Muslims. His call was heeded. On March 15, combined forces of Nablus sheikhs, numbering 4,000 with 1,000 Mamluk support, confronted Napoleon's troops near Khan-Kakun. The French won the battle but could not pursue the retreating Nablus forces into the mountains. The region remained under the sheikhs' control until the end of the Syrian expedition.

Yusuf Jarrar was not the only Syrian attempting to ignite a flame of jihad in Muslim hearts. Sheikh Musa al-Khalidi (1767–1832) was an alim from an influential Jerusalem family, who by 1799 had risen to the position of *qadi asker* of Anatolia[146]; he issued a proclamation calling Palestine's Muslims to resist Bonaparte[147]. Later, the notable Jerusalemite Sufi Muhammad ibn Bu-

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[143] *Jonquière C. de la.* L'Expédition en Egypte. T. IV, P. 237.

[144] Ibid.

[145] *Doumani, Beshara.* Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900. Berkeley: University of California press, 1995. P. 17.

[146] *Qāḍī (kadi) ʿasker* — the supreme judge over military and religious matters. Since the late 15th century, judicial affairs in the European part of the Ottoman Empire were handled by the *Qāḍī ʿasker* of Rumelia, and in the Asian–African part by the *Qāḍī ʿasker* of Anatolia.

[147] *Asali K.J.* Jerusalem under the Ottomans. P. 222.

dayr (1747–1805) composed a poem glorifying al-Jazzar's struggle against Napoleon[148]. A communication from Palestine's sheikhs to the Porte, based on an intercepted "letter from Bonaparte", an obvious Ottoman forgery, survives. The provocation achieved its purpose. Arab sheikhs reported in horror that the French command's true goal was to slaughter Egypt's inhabitants, seize their property, and enslave their children. The context suggests that the sheikhs wrote to Istanbul during the siege of Acre, noting that while the city held, Bonaparte intended to lull the faithful with sweet but false words. After the fortress's capture, he allegedly planned to set Muslims against one another to exterminate them entirely. The ultimate objective of his invasion was the Hijaz, with the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, where the French allegedly planned to commit atrocities similar to those in Egypt and Palestine[149].

While inciting hatred toward the French invaders, the Ottoman authorities simultaneously sought to prevent interconfessional clashes and pogroms against their Christian subjects. Surviving records (*sijillat*) of Jerusalem's Sharia court contain a series of similar firmans and other government orders concerning Syrian non-Muslims. Both central and provincial authorities instructed officials to treat dhimmi properly, "for as long as they pay jizya and show no signs of treachery, they and their monasteries must be protected from popular oppression"[150]. The Beirut chronicler also noted the tolerant attitude toward Christians by Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, who in early 1799, in addition to the Sidon Eyalet, received governorships of Tripoli and Damascus. "Al-Jazzar", wrote 'Abdallah Trad, "... being the governor of Damascus, Jerusalem, and their lands, as well as ruler of Acre, Jaffa, Sidon, Beirut, and their territories, constantly sent orders far and wide, urging Muslims not to oppress Christians, subjects of our Sultan. He threatened vengeance on anyone who harmed a Christian"[151]. "For this good deed", the Orthodox chronicler added, "the Almighty rewarded him with victory over the Franks"[152].

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148 Ibid.

149 The document is preserved in the Saints Cyril and Methodius National Library in Sofia. Quoted from: *Ze'evi, Dror*. Ottoman Intelligence Gathering During Napoleon's Invasion of Egypt and Palestine // The Ottoman Middle East. Studies in Honor of Amnon Cohen / ed. Eyal Ginio and Elie Podeh. Leiden: Brill, 2014. P. 52.

150 *Mannā, Ādel*. The Sijill as Source for the Study of Palestine P. 358.

151 *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 181–182.

152 Ibid. С. 182.

Precautionary measures against a potential "fifth column" were taken by al-Jazzar only when the French army approached Acre, his residence, on March 20. At this time, Rabbi Nachman (1772–1810), founder of Bratslav Hasidism, was in the city, returning home after a pilgrimage disrupted by the war. The rabbi recalled that on March 17, the Pasha announced that "only two hours remained for those unable to bear arms to leave the city by sea, as the gates were closed, and the only exit was toward the sea; those who did not leave would be slaughtered by the Muslims, who had to prepare the city for defense and intended to kill all [noncombatants] remaining inside [the walls]"[153]. Rabbi Nachman noted that this order caused panic among non-Muslims and a terrible uproar[154]. Before the war, Acre had a predominantly Christian population, and the dhimmi were not permitted to bear arms under Sharia. They could not board ships simultaneously, and the vessels in the harbor could carry only a few hundred people at most, anyway. Syrian chronicles report no subsequent massacre of Acre's non-Muslims, so evidently al-Jazzar did not immediately carry out his threat. The executions, according to French sources, took place only on March 30, when the Pasha ordered the killing of around 100 Christians in the city suspected of sympathizing with the invaders[155]. Their bodies were stuffed into coffee and rice crates and thrown into the sea; some crates were washed back ashore[156]. One can only speculate how much this mass execution was intended to intimidate Acre's Christians as opposed to preventing an imminent real rebellion

During the siege of Acre, the Christians of Damascus also suffered. The hostility of the local Muslims had been growing ever since news of the French invasion of Egypt[157] reached the region and peaked in the spring of 1799. "Christians were subjected to severe trials", complained a Damascene chronicler, "their homes were looted, and they suffered great losses, yet by

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153 Quoted from: *Schur N.* Napoleon in the Holy Land. London: Greenhill books, 1999. Pp. 82–83.

154 Ibid.

155 B In his report to the Directory, Napoleon stated that 200 Christians in Acre had been executed by al-Jazzar (*Jonquière C. de la.* L'Expédition d'Égypte. T. IV. P. 440).

156 *Schur N.* Napoleon in the Holy Land. P. 89.

157 *Al-Dimashqī, Mīkhā'īl.* Tā'rikh ḥawādis jarat bi-l-Shām wā sawāḥil Barr al-Shām wā-l-Jabal min sana 1197 ilā sana 1257 hijriya (1782–1841 masīḥiya). Bayrūt: al-Maṭba'a al-kāthūlīkiya li-l-'ābā' al-yasū'iyīn, 1912. P. 9.

A Market in Acre. Artist Francis B. Spilsbury. 1799.
From the book Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria, Delineated during the Campaigns of 1799 and 1800. London: Edward Orme, 1803.
From open sources

God's providence, all was resolved"[158]. The main danger for the dhimmi came from local bandits, who sought to take advantage of the power vacuum: Jazzar Pasha was locked in besieged Acre, and the Damascene army marching to his aid was defeated on April 16 near Mount Tabor. Among the most lawless was a certain 'Abid al-'Adhami, who gathered a band of 40 to 50 brigands. The gang terrorized the people of Damascus indiscriminately, targeting both Muslims and Christians[159].

The arrival of the first Ottoman troops from Rumelia (the European part of the Ottoman Empire) in Damascus in the summer of 1799 did not improve the situation for Christians. The local chronicler[160] did not spare them epithets: according to him, these were "vicious, cruel men, libertines and drunkards"[161]. The low moral character of the Rumelian soldiers, in-

158 Ibid. P. 10.

159 Ibid.

160 The author of this chronicle, who signed himself as Mīkhā'īl al-Dimashqī ("Mikhail the Damascene"), was, as demonstrated by the Israeli scholar Fruma Zachs, the Ottoman Christian historian, music theorist, and physician Mikhail Mishāqa (1800–1888) (*Zachs F.* Miha'il Mishaqa: The First Historian of Modern Syria // British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies. №28/1, 2001. P. 67–87; *Zachs F.* The Making of a Syrian Identity — Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut. Leiden, 2005. P. 178–179).

161 *Al-Dimashqī, Mīkhā'īl.* Tā'rikh ḥawādis jarat bi-l-Shām. P. 11.

compatible with the ethics of devout Muslims, did not prevent them from showing aggression toward Syrian Christians, "insulting and humiliating them"[162]. The excuse for harassment was the appearance of the dhimmi. In Damascus, "there existed an ancient custom of wearing *kavuk*[163]*: Muslims wore white muslin*[164]*, Christians black or dark blue, Jews red; all knew the rule, and no one violated it*"[165]*. However, the arriving Rumelian soldiers also wore tall conical hats (kulbak)* with attached bells[166]. Apparently, the soldiers considered the kavuk of Damascus Christians too similar to their own headgear. Under the pressure of insults and extortion, the Christians of Damascus "deemed it necessary to abandon wearing the kavuk and began to wear shawls of gray, black, and dark blue, while the Jews wore red"[167].

In Aleppo, Christians also suffered material losses related to violations of the modest style of dress prescribed by Sharia. As early as February 3, 1799, a decree was issued concerning the wearing of red headgear (*klobuks*) by Christians — tall hats of conical, rounded, or cylindrical shape[168]. This tradition was long-standing and was not only a privilege but also a reason to levy an additional tax on the dhimmi, amounting annually to 4,000 piastres[169]. However, the new governor of Aleppo, Sharif Pasha, ordered them to pay 9,000 kurush[170] at once, because, as Yusuf 'Abbud wrote bitterly, "all of the vizier's [Sharif Pasha's] entourage was insatiable"[171]. In the spring of 1799, as the French army approached his territories, the wali feverishly prepared troops to repel the invasion. Considerable funds were required, and they were collected by all means, fair and foul. The chronicler noted that

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[162] Ibid.

[163] *Kavuk* — a tall, cylindrical or conical headgear, around which a turban was wrapped.

[164] *Muslin* (from the city of Mosul) — a fine plain-weave fabric made of cotton, and less frequently of wool, silk, or linen.

[165] *Al-Dimashqī, Mīkhā'īl*. Tā'rikh ḥawādis jarat bi-l-Shām. P. 11.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid.

[168] *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 297.

[169] *Bodman H*. Political Factions in Aleppo. P. 45.

[170] *Kirsh*, pl. *kurush*) — a silver Ottoman coin; Europeans usually referred to it as the "piastre".

[171] *'Abbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 297.

in April 1799 Sharif Pasha "taxed everything arriving from Istanbul to Syria that he needed for equipping the army"[172]. Christian merchants had to pay as well; they were forced to hand over 100,000 kurush on the pretext that their business partners in Istanbul were traitors[173].

A great stir was caused by a Bedouin raid on the famed Orthodox monastery: the Lavra of Saint Saba[174]. Maxim Simsky dated the sacking of the Lavra to the end of March 1800[175], but it is more likely that it had occurred a year earlier, as indicated by the German naturalist Ulrich Seetzen, who visited Palestine in 1806. The pretext for the raid, the traveler wrote, was that men from Bedouin tribes west of the Jordan had joined the Damascene army in the campaign against Napoleon. Taking advantage of this, the Hadjaya tribe and other nomads from Transjordan invaded the West Bank and plundered the Lavra; some groups reached Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The Khtem tribe, with which the Sabaite monks had a protection agreement, could not allow a raid on "their" territory to go unpunished. The Khtem crossed the Jordan and struck the Hadjaya; several encampments were destroyed, and women and children were killed. The Hadjaya declared blood vengeance on the Khtem[176].

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The French invasion of Syria led to increased interconfessional tensions across the country. In the largest cities — Damascus and Aleppo — the dhimmi were forced to observe certain dress restrictions. In Jerusalem, around 1,000 pilgrims were preemptively detained in the Church of the Holy Sepul-

[172] Ibid. P. 302.

[173] Ibid. P. 301.

[174] The Lavra of St. Sabbas — a Greek Orthodox monastery on the western bank of the Jordan River, midway between Bethlehem and the Dead Sea.

[175] *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 90–91.

[176] *Seetzen J.U.* Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Aegypten. 4 vols. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1854. Vol. III. P. 49. Quoted from: *Schick R.* Jordan at the Turn of the 18th–19th Centuries: Napoleon and the Wahhabis // Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan XIV. Culture in Crisis: Flows of Peoples, Artifacts, and Ideas. Amman: Department of Antiquities, 2022. P. 716.

cher. The general treatment of non-Muslims worsened, fueled by circulating reports of the Napoleonic army's atrocities in Jaffa, the hardships caused by wartime conditions, and the prevailing atmosphere of anxiety. Christians of Ramla, who had warmly welcomed French soldiers, suffered greatly at the hands of their Muslim neighbors. However, the Ottoman administration maintained a balanced religious policy, preventing pogroms. French sources mention the execution of hundreds of Christians in besieged Acre on al-Jazzar's orders, but the exact number of victims, the true reasons, or even the historical reality of the executions remain uncertain. Conversely, we see that while inciting a jihad against European invaders, Ottoman authorities and Islamic religious leaders protected Eastern Christians from harm. This did not prevent officials from using Christian communities and their wealthy leaders as a source of funds needed for the war effort.

Syrian Christians and the French army

Different ethno-confessional groups in Syria perceived the invaders differently. For most Muslims, the French were "Franks" who, after a hiatus of several centuries, sought to seize Islamic lands once again. Yet the republican army bore little resemblance to the medieval Crusaders. The Ottoman propaganda, attempting to explain the unprecedented alliance between the Sultan and Christian monarchies Russia and England, emphasized the "godlessness" of their common enemies — the French revolutionaries, who had rejected God and become the "army of Shaitan"[177]. However, these ideas apparently reached the minds of the Arab populace with difficulty. Even in Damascus — the empire's third-largest city — the Janissary officer Hasan-aga al-'Abd (d. 1826), a man of considerable local influence, wrote that Egypt had been attacked by "French Christians"[178]. Subsequently, he

[177] *Кириллина С.А.* Бунабарди-паша и «воинство шайтана»: ислам в политике Восточной экспедиции Бонапарта (1798–1801 гг.) // Французский ежегодник 2017: Франция и Средиземноморье в Новое и Новейшее время. Москва: ИВИ РАН, 2017. С. 219–238.

[178] *al-'Abd, Ḥasan-aǧa.* Tārikh Ḥasan-agha al-'Abd: ḳiṭ'a minhu. Ḥawādith sanat 1186 ilā sanat 1241 H (История Хасан-аги аль-'Абда. Отрывок. События 1186–1241 гг. Х) / ed. Na'īsa, Yūsuf Jamīl. Dimashḳ, 1979. Pp. 36–37.

persistently continued to call Bonaparte's republican army "Christians"[179], while clearly distinguishing between the European allies of Istanbul and the hostile forces.

Eastern Christians, for their part, had a mixed attitude toward the invading French army. Abdallah Trad reported that the French were "feared in all Syrian provinces up to Aleppo, and their power was dreaded, for all knew them as godless heretics"[180]. Indeed, Syrian Christian chroniclers referred to the ideology established in the French Republic as "heresy" (Arabic *ghartaka*), "proud faith", "devilish delusion"[181], "unbelief, godless faith" (Arabic *kufr*), and "abominable godlessness"[182]. Syrian Christians learned about the French Revolution and the ensuing wars primarily from Catholic monks and other supporters of the Old Regime[183], who, as noted by the Russian consul in Beirut, K. M. Bazili (1809–1884), "had already depicted Bonaparte's army in the most repulsive colors"[184]. As a result, much of the church clergy sincerely wished for the destruction of Napoleon's army and discouraged their flock from supporting it. "May God deliver our country from the invasion of these godless creeping vermin and help the Egyptian people", wrote the Maronite cleric Girgis Ghanem to his patriarch Joseph VII Tyan (1796–1809)[185]. Local Orthodox clergy felt no sympathy for the invaders either. The abbot of the Lavra of Saint Saba, Neophytos of Cyprus,

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[179] Ibid. Pp. 49–52, 54, 62.

[180] *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 181. The insertions in the manuscript version preserved in the Oriental Library of Saint Joseph University in Beirut — where the word "all" is expanded to "that is, Muslims", and after "heretics" is added "according to their claim" — are later corrections in which the copyist attempted to shift emphasis. See: *Константинопольский И.Г.* Бейрутская летопись Абдаллаха ибн Михаила Трада // Арабы-христиане в истории и литературе Ближнего Востока. М.: Изд-во ПСТГУ, 2013. С. 154–158.

[181] *ʻAbbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī*. Al-Murtād fī tāʼrikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 272.

[182] *Al-Munayyir, Ḥanāniyā*. Kitāb al-ḫūrī Ḥanāniyā Al-Munayyir. P. 448.

[183] See also: *Кобищанов Т.Ю.* Бедный, бедный Людовик... Французская революция в сиро-ливанских хрониках // Французский ежегодник 2025. [In print].

[184] *Базили К.М.* Сирия и Палестина под турецким правительством в историческом и политическом отношениях. М.: Изд-во Восточной литературы, 1962. С. 69.

[185] La Révolution française et l'Orient. 1789–1989. Paris: Cariscript. 1989. P. 267.

recalled with undisguised satisfaction how the plague epidemic "divinely mowed down those [French invaders in Syria] like wheat"[186].

Of course, priests and monks present in the occupied territories outwardly displayed full Christian humility and benevolence. At the approach of the French, monasteries opened their gates[187], provided shelter, wine, and food for soldiers, and cared for the wounded and sick, in Napoleon's words, "as the French themselves might have cared". For example, after the storming of Jaffa, wounded soldiers were housed in a nearby Greek Orthodox monastery, the sick in Armenian and Catholic monasteries. "The number of the sick reached 700", Napoleon recalled; "the corridors, cells, dormitories, and courtyard [of the Franciscan monastery] were full of them[188]". However, the Minorite friars proved less selfless than one might expect from people devoted to God. When symptoms of plague appeared among the French, "the monks of the Holy Land order locked themselves in and refused further contact with the sick"[189]. "The hospital was so abandoned", Napoleon recalled, "that food supplies were lacking"[190]. Neither threats nor appeals to Christian and humanitarian values helped. Desperate, the commander-in-chief sent the Minorites to Jerusalem and Nazareth.

On April 17, after the battle near Mount Tabor, the Franciscan monastery in Nazareth opened its gates to quarter French officers, and its cells were turned into a hospital for wounded and sick republican soldiers. The residents engaged in efforts to save the lives and souls of their new charges; some dying men gratefully took the opportunity to confess. At the request of the holy fathers, Bonaparte agreed to be the godfather of a newborn child. The Franciscans did not limit themselves to humanitarian work. On the occasion of the Muslim army's defeat, the monks held thanksgiving services with organ music and the singing of the liturgical hymn *Te Deum* ("We Praise You, O God"), performed in the Catholic tradition on major

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186 *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрскаго. С. 30.

187 It should be noted that Syrian monasteries also warmly welcomed opponents of the French. Commodore Sidney Smith (1764–1840) recalled a ceremonial dinner in Acre attended by British and Ottoman officers as well as civilians; the reception took place in a Christian monastery. (*Howard E.* Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. L.: R. Bentley, 1839. T. 1. Pp. 158–159).

188 *Бонапарт, Наполеон*. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 596.

189 Ibid. С. 597.

190 Ibid.

Bonaparte visiting plague victims of Jaffa on March 11, 1799.
Artist Antoine-Jean Gros. 1804.
From open sources

feast days[191]. It is noteworthy that the Franciscans, who had previously demonized "the godless heretics", now praised the French republicans.

Later, the Franciscans openly shared their true feelings. In 1800, the Custodian of the Holy Land told the British surgeon Francis Spilsbury: "When General Dumas[192] with a detachment of the French army was a few leagues from Jerusalem, he sent [a messenger to Bonaparte], asking permission to attack. Bonaparte replied that when he captured Acre, he would personally come and plant the Tree of Liberty on the very spot where Christ suffered; and that the first French soldier to die in the capture of Jerusalem would be buried in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher"[193]. One can imagine the horror and disgust of the Franciscan monks at the thought of such sacrilege.

While the clergy exhibited hypocritical hospitality upon meeting republican soldiers, the Christian common people apparently genuinely

[191] *Jonquière C. de la.* L'Expédition d'Égypte. T. IV. P. 425.

[192] In fact, this was the French General François-Étienne Damas (1764–1828). Spilsbury confused him with another general, Alexandre-Thomas Dumas (1762–1806), father of the famous novelist Alexandre Dumas. A.-T. Dumas left Egypt on 7 March 1799.

[193] *Spilsbury F.B.* Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria Delineated During the Campaigns of 1799 and 1800. London: G.S. Tregear, 1823. P. 69.

welcomed the French. This is unanimously recorded by a chorus of chroniclers, including the Greek-Catholic priest from Deir al-Qamar, Rufʿail Karam al-Himsi (1730–1800)[194], cousin of the ruling emir of Mount Lebanon, Haydar al-Shihabi (1761–1835)[195], and the Orthodox Beirutite Abdallah Trad (who cautiously noted that "the Muslims thought so")[196]. None of these chroniclers had been in the zone of French occupation, but there is no doubt about the reliability of their information.

Ulrich Jasper Seetzen heard in Palestine and Transjordan many poems and songs describing the French invasion. In one poetic work, a certain "Arab bard" Shammas, living in Es-Salt[197], urged the local Christians to immediately enter the service of Bonaparte. The language of these verses, Seetzen noted, "was so ornate that Muslims or al-Muwahidin [Arabic: *al-muwahhidin*, 'monotheists'] could not understand their meaning"[198]. The German historian and archaeologist Robert Schick reasonably concluded that by deliberately complicating the style of the poem and refusing to commit it to paper, the Christians were concealing their disloyalty to the Ottoman authorities[199]. However, another circumstance must be considered. At the end of the eighteenth century, about 100 Christians from Nazareth had moved to Es-Salt to escape Ahmed Pasha's levies[200]. It is quite likely that Shammas was one of these settlers, with personal reasons to hate al-Jazzar and to wish for Napoleon's victory.

It was mentioned above about how the Christians of Ramla welcomed the French. A similar enthusiasm was shown by the inhabitants of Nazareth,

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194 *Karāma, Rufāʿīl al-Ḥimṣī*. Maṣādir tārīḫiya. Ḥawādith Lubnān wa Sūriya min sanat 1745 ilā sanat 1800 [Historical Sources: Events in Lebanon and Syria from 1745 to 1800]. Beirut, 1969. P. 157.

195 *al-Shihābī, ʾamīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad*. Lubnān fī ʿahd al-ʾumarāʾ al-Shihābīyīn. T. 1. P. 192.

196 *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 181–182.

197 As-Salt is a city in northwestern Jordan, 30 km from the capital, Amman.

198 *Seetzen J.U.* Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Aegypten. 4 vols. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1854. Vol. III. P. 49. Quoted from: *Schick R.* Jordan at the Turn of the 18th–19th Centuries. P. 716.

199 *Schick R.* Jordan at the Turn of the 18th–19th Centuries. P. 716.

200 *Steen E. van der.* Near Eastern Tribal Societies during the Nineteenth Century: Economy, Society and Politics between Tent and Town. London: Equinox, 2013. P. 189.

a town of about 1,250 people, 60% Christian and 40% Muslim. On March 23, 1799, Bonaparte ordered General Berthier to ensure the safety of Nazareth's residents from "Arabs [Bedouins] or other thieves"[201]. On March 31, a detachment under General Jean-Antoine Junot (1771–1813) occupied the town. Junot himself stationed in the Franciscan monastery at the Church of the Annunciation. The local Christians showed open excitement at the arrival of the French[202] and sent a delegation — including elderly sheikhs — to the commander-in-chief's headquarters. Bonaparte recalled in his memoirs being struck by an appearance of three elders each over 90 years old: "One of them was 101 years old and presented to him [Napoleon liked to write of himself in the third person — T.K.] his descendants down to the fourth generation. The commander-in-chief invited him to dine with him. This elder could not speak three words without quoting from the Holy Scriptures"[203]. As was his custom, Napoleon gifted the sheikhs revolutionary tricolor cloaks.

Exaggerating somewhat, Bonaparte recalled that several thousand Christians from Nazareth, Shafa-Amr, and Safad had come to his headquarters — they "appeared in masses". "The joy of these Christians is impossible to express", he wrote proudly, "after so many centuries of oppression, they saw co-religionists!"[204] It should be noted that Shafa-Amr was then predominantly a Muslim town. Later, in Egypt, the sheikh of Shafa-Amr, Ya'qub Hubaybi, commanded one of the companies of "Syrian mounted Janissaries" formed by order of the commander-in-chief[205]. Regarding Safad (Tzfat), in 1812 the Swiss traveler Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (1784–1817) counted 600 houses, with Jews living in 150 and Christians in 80–100[206]. Thus, speaking of "masses" of Christians is an exaggeration: the numbers were in the hundreds, not thousands.

Syrian Christians were drawn not only by the desire to see Europeans and "talk about the Bible, which they knew better than the French sol-

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[201] *Jonquière C. de la.* L'Expédition d'Égypte. T. IV. P. 328.

[202] *Shur N.* Napoleon in the Holy Land. P. 95.

[203] *Бонапарт, Наполеон.* Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 604–605.

[204] Ibid. C. 604.

[205] *Brégeon J.-J.* L'Égypte française au jour le jour, 1798–1801. Paris: Perrin, 1991. P. 353.

[206] *Burckhardt J.L.* Travels in Syria and the Holy Land. London: John Murray, 1822. P. 317.

diers"[207]. They also saw the arrival of the Western army as an opportunity to earn money. In the French camp under besieged Acre, Syrian Christians set up a bazaar, which "was distinguished by crowds and abundance; they supplied flour of various sorts, rice, vegetables, milk, cheese, livestock, fruits, figs, raisins, wine"[208]. Arab sources noted that local Christians provided the French with "wine and goods, for which they received much money"[209]. The Jews, including those from Safad, also sold provisions and alcohol[210]. Only one case of gratuitous supply is known: when Maronite Patriarch Joseph Tyan, awaiting the outcome of the struggle for Acre, sent several people to the French with a cargo of wine and other gifts[211]. In the accompanying letter to Bonaparte, the Patriarch emphasized that he did this "out of love for our French brothers, not for you, who persecuted the Catholic Church"[212]. This, however, was an exception. Hanania al-Munayyir, either outraged by the greed of his co-religionists or admiring their commercial acumen, recalled that wine was sold to the French at 130 kurush per *qantar*[213]*, and arak*[214] *at 6 kurush per ratl*. After the French withdrew, prices fell to 20 kurush for wine and 1¼ for arak, i.e., five to six times lower[215].

The sale of alcohol was so profitable that Christians transported it at personal risk through areas controlled by Ottoman authorities. The court chronicler of Sadrazam Yusuf Ziya Pasha, 'Izzet Hasan Efendi ad-Darendeli, recorded that Damascene soldiers prevented Christians from traveling "from afar into the land of Canaan"[216] from joining the

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[207] *Бонапарт, Наполеон*. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 604.

[208] Ibid. C. 605.

[209] *al-Shihābī, 'amīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad*. Lubnān fī 'ahd al-'umarā' al-Shihābīyīn. T. 2. P. 263.

[210] *Shur N*. Napoleon in the Holy Land. P. 95.

[211] *Harik, Iliya F*. Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711–1845. Princeton, 1968. P. 203.

[212] Ibid.

[213] Qanṭar — an Islamic unit of weight, consisting of 100 *ratls* of 406–449.28 grams each.

[214] Arak — an anise-flavored alcoholic beverage with a strength of 40°–60°.

[215] *Al-Munayyir, Ḥanāniyā*. Kitāb al-ḫūrī Ḥanāniyā Al-Munayyir. P. 470.

[216] Ad-Darendeli used, alongside the rarely employed Ottoman administrative term *muhāfaẓa* ("region to be defended"), the already archaic toponym *Canaan,* which in the Old Testament referred to the coastal region of Syria. It is possible he was citing contemporary Christian slogans.

French at Acre[217]. Ad-Darendeli noted that they intended "to assist in the siege"[218], but since they were simply turned back, it was more likely they sought to profit from selling food and alcohol. Emir Haydar Shihab told the story of a Maronite wine trader from Mount Lebanon[219], seized by Muslims on the Beirut coast. In Beirut, he was placed on a large cargo boat (*shahtur*) bound for Acre, where he was to be handed over to Jazzar Pasha. At sea, a British ship was spotted. Commodore Smith, commanding the vessel, ordered inquiry into the man on board who desperately cried for help. The Christian seized the opportunity and convinced the commodore he could serve as a mediator in correspondence with Emir Bashir Shihab[220]. The rescued Maronite fulfilled his promise, delivering the message to the emir[221].

Besides supplying food and alcohol, Syrian Christians actively entered the service of French generals as "interpreters, quartermasters, or secretaries"[222]. Napoleon noted that they were local Catholics "who spoke a little 'lingua franca' — Italian jargon; they explained to the soldiers all the traditions of their legends, full of superstitions"[223]. That the Christians who joined the French army did not know Italian and had only a rudimentary grasp of *lingua franca* indicates they were not priests or international merchants, but people of a more modest status. Napoleon also mentioned secret agents — Christians, Jews, and Muslims: some were sent by him "to Damascus, Aleppo, and even Armenia", others delivered "extremely important messages" from Asia Minor[224].

Syrian Christians acted both as paid assistants and voluntary informants. It was they who sent messengers to Bonaparte to warn that a large

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[217] *Ад-Дарендели, 'Иззет Хасан-эфенди*. Зийа-наме. Каир: Аль-Хай'а аль-Мысрийя аль-'амма ли-ль-китаб, 1999. С. 202.

[218] Ibid.

[219] Commodore Sidney Smith clarified that the Christian was transporting a shipment of arak (*Howard E.* Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. T. 1. P. 159).

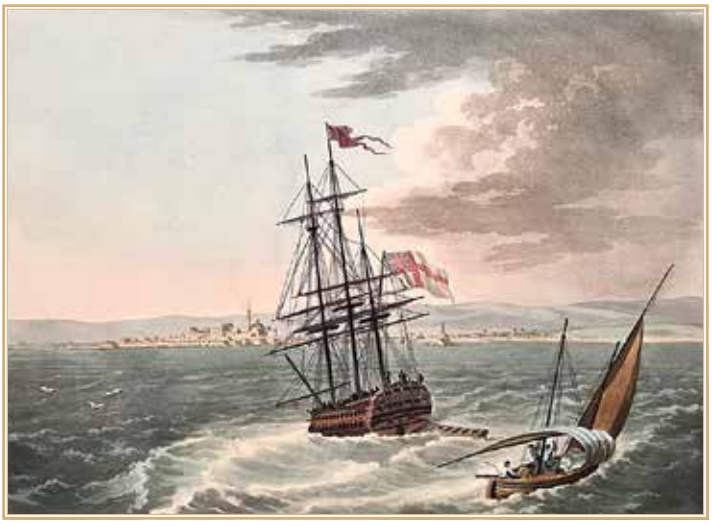
[220] *al-Shihābī, 'amīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad*. Lubnān fī 'ahd al-'umarā' al-Shihābīyīn. T. 1. P. 193–194.

[221] *Howard E.* Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. T. 1. P. 159.

[222] *Бонапарт, Наполеон*. Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 589.

[223] Ibid.

[224] Ibid. С 605.



View of Acre and H.M. Ship Le Tigre. Artist Francis B. Spilsbury. 1799. From the book Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria, Delineated during the Campaigns of 1799 and 1800. London: Edward Orme, 1803. From open sources

Ottoman army had left Damascus and met General Kléber's corps at Mount Tabor. According to Niqula al-Turk, these were residents of Nazareth[225]; according to Berthier, they were Damascenes[226]. General Berthier noted that Christian informants had reported the presence of supplies in the citadel of Tiberias, occupied by a detachment of Maghrebis[227]. This information proved critical. Tiberias was captured, and Bonaparte recalled that since the battle of Mount Tabor, the army had lived off the provisions from these warehouses[228].

It should be noted that in Syria, the French were supported not only by local Christians but also by some Muslims. One of the first to join Napoleon was Sheikh 'Abbas al-Daher, son of the former ruler of Galilee, Daher al-'Umar. He brought with him 400–500 horsemen. Sheikh Mustafa

[225] *El-Turk N.* Histoire de l'expédition française en Égypte. P. 111; *al-Turk, Niqūlā ibn Yūsuf.* Dhikr tamalluk djumhūr al-Faransāwiyya. P. 94.

[226] *Berthier L.-A.* The French Expedition into Syria, Comprising General Bounaparte's Letters with Gen. Berthier's Narrative and Sir Wm. Sidney Smith's Letters from the London Gazette. London: J. Ridgway, 1799. P. 49.

[227] *Berthier L.-A.* The French Expedition into Syria. P. 71. Mentioned in *Jonquière C. de la.* L'Expédition d'Égypte. T. IV. P. 355.

[228] *Бонапарт, Наполеон.* Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 603.

Bashir, having been dismissed by al-Jazzar from the governorship of Safad, also defected to Bonaparte. The Shia Mutawali of southern Lebanon were severely oppressed by al-Jazzar; their leader Sheikh Maneh expressed willingness to come under French rule and was appointed governor of Tyre, occupied by General Vial's column. In all these cases, though, these were elite figures, removed from power by Ahmad al-Jazzar, personally hating him and acting on the principle: "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". For the local Christians, the situation was different. Christian religious leaders regarded the "godless" republicans largely with hostility, whereas ordinary members of the communities welcomed the occupiers.

The ruling emir of Mount Lebanon, Bashir II Shihab (a Sunni secretly practicing Christianity), took a wait-and-see approach. He maintained correspondence with Napoleon[229] and received valuable gifts[230], but offered no real support. Impressed by the battle at Mount Tabor, the emir's emissaries secretly promised Bonaparte 12,000 mountaineers[231] — 6,000 Druze and 6,000 Maronites — to support the French in the campaign on Damascus[232]. Meanwhile, the Druze sheikhs openly took a pro-Ottoman stance. Patriarch Joseph Tyan, whom Napoleon zealously reassured of his loyalty to the Catholic faith[233], urged the Maronite sheikhs to gather troops and keep them ready[234].

The British also intervened in the struggle for the sympathies of Emir Bashir II and other Maronite leaders. Commodore Sidney Smith wrote to the emir that before the Arabs, Bonaparte wished to appear as a Muslim, boasting that he had destroyed churches, broken crosses, and deposed the Supreme Pontiff. It was no wonder (continued Smith) Bonaparte said otherwise to the mountaineers. He made promises but did not keep them and discarded all pity when he achieved his goal. The English naval officer continued saying that they (the British) were of noble origin and Christian

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229 *Jonquière C. de la.* L'Expédition d'Égypte. T. IV. P. 313.

230 *Perrier F.* La Syrie sous le gouvernement de Mehemet-Ali, jusqu'en 1840. Paris: A. Bertrand, 1842. P. 331.

231 *Bertrand H.G.* Campagnes d'Égypte et de Syrie, 1798–1799. Mémoires pour server à l'histoire de Napoléon, dictés par lui-même à Sainte-Hélène et publiés par le general Bertrand. T. 1-2. Paris: Au Comptoir des Imprimeurs-Unis, 1847. T. 2. Pp. 90–92.

232 *Бонапарт, Наполеон.* Кампания в Египте и Сирии. С. 621–622.

233 *Harik, Ilya F.* Politics and Change in a Traditional Society. P. 203.

234 Ibid.

faith and their policy was to fight oppressors and support the oppressed[235]. As proof, Smith attached to the letter a copy of Napoleon's proclamation to the Muslim scholars of Cairo, containing the relevant statements.

The failure of Bonaparte's mobilization plans was one reason for the inglorious end of the Syrian campaign[236]. By the third decade of May, it became clear to Napoleon that Acre could not be taken with his available forces. The commander-in-chief began preparing to retreat to Egypt. The question arose of what to do with the residents who had shown loyalty to the French. When leaving Ramla and Lydda, it was planned to distribute weapons to local Christians. Adjutant Pierre Grésier (1755–1799) was ordered to provide them with everything necessary for self-defense and protection of property[237]. On May 18, Berthier passed to General Junot the commander-in-chief's order "to gather all residents of Nazareth who wish to leave with us"[238]. It was also planned to do the same with the population of Shafa-Amr.

We do not know how many Syrians left with the French to Egypt; clearly, it was a small number: at most a few hundred. When forming in Cairo two companies of "Syrian mounted Janissaries", each with 95 soldiers and 6 non-commissioned officers, Bonaparte included those who had long settled in Egypt; command of one company was given to Yusuf Hamawi, a Damascene merchant trading in Cairo[239]. Obviously, these were some Christians among the Syrian refugees, but they played no prominent role in subsequent events, and references to them are extremely rare.

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The conclusion that Syrian Christians had an ambivalent attitude toward the French army is valid when speaking about communities as a whole,

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[235] *Howard E.* Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. T. 1. P. 159

[236] See: *Кобищанов Т.Ю.* Христианские общины в арабо-османском мире. С. 197–201; *Жантиев Д.Р., Кириллина С.А.* Французская политика в отношении христиан Египта и Сирии во время Восточной экспедиции Бонапарта. С. 136–143.

[237] *Jonquière C. de la.* L'Expédition d'Égypte. T. IV. P. 292–293.

[238] Ibid. T. IV. P. 537.

[239] *Brégeon J.-J.* L'Égypte française au jour le jour. P. 353.

but inaccurate at a deeper social level. Local church elites perceived the bearers of the ideas of the French Revolution extremely negatively, though when encountering republican soldiers, they displayed the humility and meekness appropriate to the servants of God. As for the less ideologically sophisticated Syrian Christian common people, they generally expressed joy at the arrival of European troops. This was recorded by both the Arab chroniclers and the French generals and officers. Christians apparently made up the majority of merchants supplying the invaders with alcohol and food. Some Christians also joined Napoleon's forces as translators and quartermasters, delivered reports, and relayed information. However, there is no known case of Syrian Christians integrating into the fighting units of the French army or otherwise taking up arms. The only significant local force capable of effectively supporting the French was the Maronite militia led by their sheikhs. Yet both Emir Bashir II Shihab and the dependent Maronite Patriarch Joseph Tyan were hesitant to aid Bonaparte, waiting to see how events would unfold. These events ended with the French retreating ingloriously to Egypt.

Christian communities in Syria after the departure of the French army, June 1799 — August 1801

"And there was rejoicing in all Syrian regions"[240], — thus a Beirut chronicler described the reaction of locals to the news of the French retreat from Acre. Not only Muslims but also Christians rejoiced; many hoped that the normal course of life, disrupted by the foreign invasion, would be restored. Yet the war continued, and until its end, Christians attempting to return to their homes were "driven out of the city by the Muslims of Beirut, fearing the arrival of the Franks"[241].

The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the defense had seriously drained the material resources of the Sidon governorship. Al-Jazzar needed substantial funds to recruit and maintain new mercenaries; the army of Sadrazam Yusuf Ziya Pasha was approaching his territory, with

[240] *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 182.
[241] Ibid. С. 184.

Procession in Jaffa. Artist Gustav Bauernfeind. 1890.
From open sources

whom the wali had hostile relations. Ahmad Pasha hastened to replenish the treasury with the help of a new administrator — Sheikh Taha al-Kurdi. The chronicler described the sheikh and his Kurdish associates as "cruel, corrupt, and godless people" who "oppressed both Muslims and Christians, mercilessly subjecting the arrested debtors to hellish torture"[242]. Informers became active. One of them, "the Beirut Christian Yusuf al-Tuayni, went to al-Jazzar, submitted a list of certain Christians, and brought upon them the levies they were forced to pay"[243].

Christians in Beirut reacted differently to these pressures. Those who could, went to relatives in Istanbul or the Aegean coast. Others tried to leverage connections with officials "so that they would help reduce the amounts demanded from them"[244]. "The poor and destitute", the chronicler wrote, "came to the gardens of Beirut, and some of them entered the city with fear, humiliation, and with insults yelled at them. They sought refuge and mercy from the influential *tufenkji-bashi* of the city, al-Hajj Ya-

[242] Ibid. C. 185–186.
[243] Ibid. C. 185.
[244] Ibid. C. 184.

hya al-Majzub[245]. He was a kind man and promised them safety. Thanks to his authority, most Christians returned to Beirut and lived in peace under him"[246]. This protection was short-lived. In 1800, al-Jazzar demanded that al-Hajj Yahya pay 100,000 piastres, after which he ordered the arrest of the odabashi and the confiscation of his property. Al-Majzub managed to flee to Jubayl, where he soon died[247]. The absence of Christian merchants undermined Beirut's economy, and sometime later, al-Jazzar "sent a merciful order to those who had fled to Mount Lebanon, so they could return and reclaim their homes. After this, the remaining Christians also returned"[248], including those who had gone to other provinces of the empire.

A comparatively tolerant attitude of Ahmad Pasha may have been influenced by the words and actions of his ally in the defense of Acre, Commodore Sidney Smith. In the summer of 1812, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt recorded that the Christians of Nazareth were convinced that al-Jazzar had ordered their massacre, along with their co-religionists in Jerusalem, for assisting the French. The Nazarenes were allegedly saved by Commodore Smith, who threatened al-Jazzar with the bombardment of Acre if "even one Christian head were cut off"[249].

How real were the threats of the Sidon governor? On one hand, al-Jazzar's biography did contain a precedent: in 1776 he struck at the Christians of Beirut accused of collaborating with Russian occupying forces (October–December 1773). The chronicler noted that those found guilty of collaboration were hanged, impaled, or suspended on hooks through the ribs, while the wealthy community members faced financial contributions[250]. On the other hand, we have no documentary evidence that in 1799 Ahmad

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[245] Al-Hajj Yahya al-Majzub ("the possessed") — *odabashi* of Beirut. Odabashi was a junior military rank meaning "commander of the barracks" or "assistant to the commander" of a janissary *orta*. Since Jazzar Pasha's forces did not include janissaries, various titles and ranks could be used to designate their commanders. The chronicler calls Al-Hajj Yahya al-Majzub *tüfenkci-başı* (Ott. "chief of the musketeers/artillerymen"), as he directly commanded the artillery crews in the towers of the city citadel

[246] *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 184.

[247] *al-Shihābī, 'amīr Ḥaydar Aḥmad*. Lubnān fī 'ahd al-'umarā' al-Shihābīyīn. T. 1. P. 205

[248] *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 185.

[249] *Burckhardt J.L.* Travels in Syria and the Holy Land. P. 340.

[250] *Трад, Абдаллах*. Краткая история епископов. С. 104.

Pasha planned a pogrom of the Christians of Nazareth. Acre is less than 40 km from Nazareth, which was an eight-hour journey. Most likely, if the Sidon wali had actually planned such a punitive operation, Sidney Smith would have learned about it only after the fact.

Regarding Jerusalem, which was farther from Acre, it had remained only formally under al-Jazzar's control until summer 1799, after which it was taken from him along with the Damascus Pashalik. Ahmad Pasha would hardly have risked acting arbitrarily in a neighboring province while the army of the Sadrazam approached Syria. Nevertheless, Maxim Simsky wrote with visible relief that on June 3, 1799, an Ottoman detachment of 1,200 men entered Jerusalem "to protect the city, mainly from the local Saracens [Muslims]; for news of our great and unbearable disasters had reached ... the Sultan"[251].

It is most likely that the story of the prevented pogrom was distorted through repeated oral transmission, later growing into a legend about Commodore Smith's visit to the Holy Land. In early November 1799, Smith, with the permission of the Sadrazam and accompanied by an escort of 400 Ottoman soldiers, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem[252]. The English entered the city armed and in military uniform — a phenomenon unseen since the Crusades. By raising the British flag over the Franciscan monastery, the commodore symbolically asserted the protection of King George III (1760–1820) over the Custody of the Holy Land. In addition to gifts from local Ottoman authorities (pashas, muftis, and the aga of the Janissaries), Smith received gifts from the Greek and Armenian archbishops[253]. Archimandrite Maxim Simsky left a memoir of Smith's visit, calling him "Izmit-Egleg[254], Knight of the Grand Cross"[255]. He noted both the courteous reception by Jerusalem's mutesellim and the commodore's refusal to intervene in disputes among the Franciscans and the Holy Sepulchre monks: "He said ... we should not quarrel among ourselves and fill the pockets of the Saracens [Muslims — T.K.]"[256].

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[251] *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 89.

[252] *Howard E.* Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith. T.1. P. 301.

[253] АВПРИ (Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire). Ф. 89, оп. 8, ед. хр. 906, л. 14–15 об.

[254] Egleg — probably a corruption of *ingiliz*, Arab./Ott. "Englishman".

[255] *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 90.

[256] Ibid.

Indeed, the Ottoman-French war in the Middle East shifted the balance of power in the competition among Christian denominations over control of the Holy Sites. Shortly before Smith's visit to the Holy City, in late October 1799, Kirkor, head of the Armenian *sarraf's* (money-changers') guild accompanying the Sadrazam, had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem from Jaffa, the site of the Ottoman headquarters[257]. He was accompanied by 400 co-religionists. The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem aimed to leverage the visit to secure important privileges for the community. Under the pretext of honoring a high-ranking co-religionist, the Armenians requested permission from the Orthodox to: first, celebrate Mass on Golgotha; then in the Holy Cave of Bethlehem; and finally, hang a silver lamp on Golgotha[258]. The Holy Sepulchre monks refused all requests, "fearing that what was permitted once would later become law"[259]. The Armenian Patriarch then petitioned the Grand Vizier. Orthodox chroniclers noted that by the end of 1799, the Armenians "spent a large sum of money"[260] but achieved no tangible result, as Ziya Pasha had departed for Egypt with his army. A secondary petition occurred after the defeated Sadrazam returned to Syria, nearly penniless and with most of his army lost. In early June 1800, Armenian Jerusalem Patriarch Bedros Yevtogeeyatzee (1793–1800) arrived at the Sadrazam's headquarters in Jaffa. "He was helped by circumstances, the people around the *sarraf*, and partly by the vizier himself, and also gold"[261], wrote Maxim Simsky; "a lot of gold", clarified the deputy of the Orthodox Jerusalem Patriarch, Procopius of Nazianzus (1776–1822)[262]. The bribery ensured results: Yusuf Ziya Pasha granted the Armenian community permission "to freely and unhindered perform their usual worship in all common places of devotion ... both within Jerusalem, in the church, and

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257 *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 89.

258 Golgotha, which forms part of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, is divided into two chapels (naves): Orthodox and Catholic. The Armenian Church possesses no liturgical objects there.

259 *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 31.

260 Ibid.

261 *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 92.

262 *Прокопий Назианзин Арабоглу*. Попираемый Иерусалим. Материалы для истории Иерусалимской патриархии XVI–XIX века // Православный палестинский сборник. Вып. 55. Часть 2. СПб. 1904. С 183.

outside Jerusalem, in Bethlehem and Gethsemane"[263]. The document was issued secretly. The cautious Yusuf Pasha feared a scandal that allied Russian diplomats in Istanbul might provoke.

Neophytos of Cyprus, appealing for sympathy, wrote: "An endless sorrow fell upon us, for we had no money to resist, and we had previously been robbed and could not appease the Agarians [Muslims], angered by Napoleon"[264]. Thanks to the assistance of Enrico Franchini, a Russian agent at the Sadrazam's headquarters, the Orthodox managed to defend their positions at the holy sites: Yusuf Ziya Pasha revoked his previous decision and destroyed the firman[265]. After this, the Armenian Patriarch Bedros, wrote Procopius of Nazianzus gleefully, "being unable to endure shame and disgrace, fell ill from grief and gave up his impious soul"[266].

A few months later, the Porte, needing funds to raise a new army, again focused on the monastic communities of Jerusalem. Presumably, those around the Sadrazam concluded there was nothing left to take from the impoverished Custody; thus, in mid-October 1800, only the Greek and Armenian deputies with their dragomans were summoned to Yusuf Pasha's headquarters in Jaffa. From Simsky's somewhat confusing account, it appears that both communities were initially asked for 500,000 piastres; "due to tears and pleas"[267], the sum was reduced by half, but shortly thereafter the Sadrazam and the new Jerusalem mutesellim Mehmed-Haji demanded the full original amount. "Since our monastery did not have such a sum", complained Simsky, "it had to borrow money at high interest; lamps and other silver and gold vessels of the Holy Sepulchre were sold, barely raising the required amount"[268].

There was also no calm in the major Syrian cities. Yusuf 'Abbud's chronicle meticulously recorded the complaints of Aleppo Christians about levies imposed during the war. In late September 1799, Ahmad-aga Khomsa, lead-

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[263] *Прокопий Назианзин Арабоглу*. Попираемый Иерусалим. С. 182.

[264] *Неофит Кипрский*. Рассказ Неофита Кипрского. С. 32.

[265] See: *Кобищанов Т.Ю.* Война Энрико Франкини: российский агент в османском походе на Египет (1799–1800) // Исторический вестник. № 48. Паладины Российской империи. М., 2023. С. 111–112.

[266] *Прокопий Назианзин Арабоглу*. Попираемый Иерусалим. С. 183.

[267] *Максим Симский*. Продолжение истории патриархов. С. 92.

[268] Ibid.

The Janissaries. Unknown artist. Illustration from Codex Vindobonensis 8626, fol. 13. Austrian National Library, Vienna.
From open sources

ing a detachment of local Janissaries[269] to campaign in Egypt, demanded that Christians collect 3,530 *ratl* of wax from churches[270]. Unsatisfied, he forced the residents of Christian quarters to supply grain to the Janissaries; when the grain was lost en route, he ordered it supplied again. Grain was taken from *khans* (wholesale storage centers), wealthy community members, and ordinary artisans[271]. There was no consensus among Aleppo's Christian communities on how to pay the authorities: collectively or individually. The Greek Catholics considered it fair for each community to pay for itself, while the Maronites insisted that the funds be collected from all Christians

[269] *Al-Gazzī, Kāmil ibn Hussain*. Kitāb nahr al-thahab fī tarikh Ḥalab. Ḥalab: al-Matbaʿa al-Marūniyya. T. III, 1926. P. 315. According to information received by Spencer Smith from the *rais efendi*, the Porte mobilized 5,000 Aleppine janissaries for the 1799 campaign. Yūsuf ʿAbbūd mentioned a 7,000-man detachment (*ʿAbbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 306.), while the French consul in Aleppo, Charles Chauderlo, reported that 8,000–10,000 janissaries marched out, leaving 3,600 in the city (*Bodman H.* Political Factions in Aleppo. P. 62).

[270] *ʿAbbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 306.

[271] Ibid.

together[272]. This allowed the Maronites to contribute less, counting on their more numerous and wealthier co-religionists to cover the shortfall.

In addition to official payments, there were cases of individual extortion and fines imposed on residents of Christian quarters, e.g., for possessing arak[273]. Yusuf ʻAbbud vividly described one episode he witnessed. Janissaries broke into the home of Christian Antun Tajir and did not leave until 2 a.m., demanding that he hand over his co-religionists Yusuf al-Khumsi and Girgis Mitra. The attack was led by the nephew of Ibn Nassar, one of the Janissary leaders. His uncle forbade him from acting arbitrarily, so the young Muslim, with a group of supporters, brought the captives to "settle matters" — the sons of al-Khumsi and Yusuf ʻAbbud himself, the chronicler. The dialogue reads like a Francis Ford Coppola or Martin Scorsese film: "They brought us to the al-Bahhi coffeehouse, where Hajj Ibrahim [al-Kharbali, another respected Janissary leader — T.K.] arrived. He asked me, 'Where is Girgis Mitra?' about whom it was known he had gone to Kilis. I told him, 'I don't know.' He said, 'I want to ask him a question'... I said to him, 'If I go and find him at home, maybe he will answer me.' He [Hajj Ibrahim] swore he would say nothing to upset him. We returned, and these people went with us. I entered Girgis's house and brought him along"[274]. The next day, Yusuf al-Khumsi and Girgis Mitra paid the extortionists 140 kurush, with assistance from their community.

Reading Christian chronicles, one might think that only non-Muslims suffered from levies and extortion, bearing the entire burden of paying for, supplying, and equipping troops. This was not the case; however, Christians rarely concerned themselves with the hardships of their Muslim neighbors. Indicative is Yusuf ʻAbbud's reaction when, in April 1800, the wali Ibrahim Pasha Qattar-Aghasi demanded 400 purses[275] from the city, 80 of which (20%, roughly proportional to the Christian population in Aleppo) fell to Christians. They managed to barely collect the sum in a month. "As for the Muslims, God knows how much was taken from them"[276], noted the chronicler, demonstrating not only ignorance but indifference.

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[272] Ibid. P. 307.

[273] Ibid.

[274] Ibid.

[275] *Purse* (*kese*) — a monetary accounting unit equal to 500 *kurush*.

[276] *ʻAbbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 307.

Yusuf 'Abbud described the joy that spread through Aleppo in the spring of 1800 upon hearing that peace with the French had been achieved and life would return to normal[277]. He also recorded the sorrow of the townspeople when they learned of renewed hostilities, with new restrictions, levies, and deprivations. But the true cry of grief burst forth from Yusuf 'Abbud when, in August 1800, the order was issued that a 4,000-strong detachment of Aleppo's Sharifs was to march out[278].

The influence of the local corporation of the Prophet's descendants surpassed that of any other major city in the empire. Based on an analysis of various sources, Herbert Bodman estimated that about 12,000 Sharifs lived in Aleppo, of whom around four thousand were adult men, heads of households[279]. Most of them were at least somewhat educated, which distinguished this group favorably against the almost entirely illiterate Janissaries. Almost all of Aleppo's 'ulama belonged to the sharifs, though many were also from the urban poor: small artisans, day laborers, porters, etc.[280] The impoverished and lumpenized portion of the Sharif corps experienced internal dissonance due to the meagerness of their existence on one hand and pride in the blood of the Prophet running through their veins on the other. This often led to extreme religious intolerance[281]. Poor Sharifs harbored particular resentment toward wealthy Christians. Sources from the 18th century, Bodman noted, are full of cases in which Sharifs accused dhimmi of showing them disrespect, presenting these incidents as an affront to "the House of the Messenger of Allah" and to Islam as a whole[282].

Despite their characteristic bellicosity, Aleppo's Sharifs were evidently less ready for campaign than the Janissaries. They planned to procure equipment, uniforms, and provisions at the expense of the townspeople, including the "infidels" they so despised. The *naqib al-ashraf* Muhammad Qudsi Effendi distributed the city quarters among members of the corpora-

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277 Ibid. P. 310.

278 *Al-Gazzī, Kāmil*. Kitāb nahr al-thahab. P. 315. Drawing on other sources, Herbert Bodman indicated that the detachment consisted of 5–6 thousand Sharifs (*Bodman H*. Political Factions in Aleppo. P. 120).

279 *Bodman H*. Political Factions in Aleppo. P. 97.

280 Ibid.

281 Ibid. P. 98.

282 Ibid.

tion; the Christian quarter was assigned to a certain Ibn Hallas. "From this moment", wrote Yusuf ʻAbbud, "extortion and violence began. And they [the Sharifs — T.K.] started troubling the church and our quarter, and the Jewish quarter, and [other] places where there had previously been no oppression, where no one had taken anything, and where no warnings had been heard. And this bandit dust wrought whatever it pleased in the quarters, including threats and beatings, levies and extortion"[283]. Ibn Hallas's subordinates "moved everywhere, seizing by force and threats", giving Christians no peace — even at night. Shots were fired into the homes of two residents, and the door of another home was struck "with iron so that it seemed he was going to be killed"[284]. Frightened Christians collected 1,200 kurush.

The disturbances experienced by Christians seem minor compared to the pogrom in Aleppo half a century later, and even more so compared to the Damascus Massacre of 1860. Yet such an emotional reaction demonstrates how shocked Syrian non-Muslims were by violations of the rights of a "protected" community. The attacks, threats, shootings at homes, and attempts to break down doors far exceeded the normal limits of coexistence among ethno-confessional groups in an Ottoman city. The seeming triviality of these incidents should not obscure the fact that these were the first sparks of the fire that would later engulf the Middle East.

Of all the regions of Greater Syria, the most serious political crisis after the French departure erupted in Mount Lebanon. Angry at Emir Bashir's disloyal stance, al-Jazzar dispatched a military expedition of 10,000 soldiers against him. This force was supposed to hand the emirate over to the sons of the previous ruler, Yusuf Shihab (1770–1790), who was also secretly Christian. In reality, it was the Maronite Girgis Baz who acted on behalf of Emir Yusuf's sons. Baz was a member of the feudal al-Huri family, married to a woman from the influential co-religionist al-Hazin family. Baz's uncle and cousin — Saʻad and Gandur al-Huri, respectively, — served as administrators for Emir Yusuf, while Baz himself held the same position under his sons. Baz's entourage consisted almost exclusively of Christians, and the core of his army was made up of Maronite sheikh forces. Support for Baz was also declared by Patriarch Joseph Tyan. Thus, the civil war in Lebanon

[283] *ʻAbbūd, Yūsuf Dimitrī al-Ḥalabī*. Al-Murtād fī tā'rikh Ḥalab wā Baghdād. P. 315.
[284] Ibid. P. 315–316.

entered a new phase, in which the Maronite community for the first time asserted claims to a dominant position[285].

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Napoleon's departure brought joy to most Syrians but did not bring relief. The war continued, and Syria remained an important base for mobilizing Ottoman troops and resources, draining the country. Moreover, the French invasion altered the balance of power and deformed relations of dependence and patronage. Contrary to the fears (or expectations) of many, Muslim victory did not become a moment of retribution for the local dhimmi. Christian chronicles are full of laments over the suffering of co-religionists, but levies and extortion by authorities and soldiers affected members of all communities. After the war, Beirut Christians were allowed to return to their homes; religious pogroms did not occur in Nazareth or Jerusalem, and even the misadventures of Yusuf 'Abbud and his circle appear minor compared to real tragedies. Yet the European invasion left a lasting mark on Syrians, even if life outwardly seemed to return to its former course. The breakdown of the Sharia-based system of ethno-confessional relations — adapted by Ottoman sultans in the 15th–16th centuries — accelerated. The Muslims began to view Christians as collaborators with the invaders, while the Christians felt their first real chance to throw off Muslim rule. A split appeared between church elites, who viewed French revolutionaries with hostility, and their flock, who welcomed the invaders with joy. The struggle for control of the Holy Sites in Palestine intensified. In Mount Lebanon, the Maronite community for the first time claimed political power. All these factors would continue to grow over the following decades, ultimately driving Syria toward a sectarian explosion in the mid-19th century.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.

[285] See: *Harik, Iliya F.* Politics and Change in a Traditional Society. P. 180–199; *Кобищанов Т.Ю.* Христианские общины в арабо-османском мире. С. 137–139.

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Taras Y. Kobishchanov

C.Sc. (History), Associate Professor at the Department of Middle and Near East History, Institute of Asian and African Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University.
SPIN-код: 5280-3310
AuthorID: 1001917
ORCID: 0000-0001-8165-0897
ResearcherID: AAV-6437-2021
Scopus AuthorID: 57220932499

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