

The Maronites and their Role in the First Crusader Campaign 1099

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Abstract:

The Maronites had played an important role in the Lebanese history, in general, and in the First Crusader Campaign, in particular. In spite of the abstention of the primary sources from bringing out this role, the scattered references in the books demand studying it, for they have formed over the periods of history their own religious and cultural identity keeping their self-independence. The religious discord between the Maronites and the other oriental Christians had played a great role in granting them a special identity by making use of the nature of the region that they had controlled in Mount Lebanon and the tolerant policy of the successive Islamic states toward them as well as toward the other Christian confessions. This study has meant to shed light on the Maronite role in the first Crusader campaign, in its shape, motives and consequences as based

on the general status of the Maronites and their relationship with the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic State.

Key Words: The First Crusader Campaign. Religious Discord. Maronite-Crusader Relations

الملخص

لعب الموارنة دورا هاما في تاريخ لبنان بشكل والحملة الصليبية الاولى بشكل خاص وعلى الرغم من احجام المصادر الاولى لابرار هذا الدور الان الاشارات المتناثرة في بطون الكتب تستوجب الدراسة، وشكلوا على مدى الفترات التاريخية لانفسهم هويتهم الدينية والثقافية الخاصة بهم محتفظين باستقلالهم الذاتي . ولعب الخلاف الديني بين الموارنة وغيرهم من المسيحيين الشرقيين دورا كبيرا في منحهم الصفة الخاصة مستفيدين من طبيعة المنطقة التي سيطروا عليها في جبال لبنان والسياسة المتسامحة للدول الاسلامية المتعاقبة معهم ومع غيرهم من الطوائف المسيحية. وسعت الدراسة الى لقاء الضوء على الدور الماروني في الحملة الصليبية الاولى من حيث شكله ودوافعه ونتائجه. استنادا الى الوضع العام للموارنة وعلاقتهم مع الامبراطورية البيزنطية والدولة الاسلامية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحملة الصليبية الاولى، الموارنة، الخلاف الديني، العلاقة

المارونية -الصليبية

Foreword:

It is a difficult task for the research worker to study the various Christian sects in Greater Syria in the middle ages. This is due to numerous reasons, one of which is negligence in studying the social history in general while emphasizing the political history. Add to this negligence in recording the history of these sects, especially the Maronites – our subject of study – which did not start except later, in the vicinity of the 17th century AD.

This study has the purpose of pursuing the Maronites' role in the first Crusader campaign in their capacity as a distinguished confession in its religious variety and differences with those around it, together with their isolation in towns and villages of their own. The problem of research work lies in the paucity of contemporary sources for the historical period that had dealt with the role of the Maronites. In fact, the Arab sources had been completely silent not only about the Maronites but also about the events of the first Crusader campaign in the whole of Lebanon.

The reader of the studies that had dealt with the position taken by the Maronites regarding the crusader campaign notices a disagreement between those who confirm the force and importance of the Maronite participation and those who belittle its importance

considering it like the other services given by the local inhabitants on the whole path of the crusaders' march towards Jerusalem. Here, one must ask about the reality of the Maronite participation in the crusader campaign. What was its size and what is more important to ask is what were its motives and repercussions whether on the crusaders or the Maronites? Had the Maronites really betrayed the Muslims and the oriental Christians, or were they like the others who had tried to protect themselves against the crusaders' savagery by offering services and assistance?

It was necessary that the frame of the research work should be this way: giving a general description of the Maronites, and then making a presentation of the Maronite-Islamic relationship and at last making a presentation of the Maronite-Crusader relationship at the time of the first Crusader campaign from the year 1099. All this, needless to say, should be preceded by an introduction, then an epilogue and consequences. This study has also made use of a number of basic sources, which are the sources for studying the Latin Crusader campaign, in addition to the late Maronite sources, the most important of which are the works of the historiographer Astaphan al-Duwayhi, *Tareekh al-Azminah wa al-Amkinah* [*History of Times and Places*], in addition to a valuable number of modern references, like the work of Butrus Dhaww, *Tareekh al-Mawarinah al-*

Deeni wa al-Siyasi [Religious and Political History of the Maronites].

General Description of the Maronites

The problem of studying and pursuing the conditions of the Maronites lies in the paucity of religious and historical publications about them. Modern research workers think that the real recording of the history of the Maronites started in the 17th century AD with Astaphan al-Duwayhi (d. 1704). However, we can say that the Maronites are ascribed to the monk Mar Marone the Syrian (d. in the 4th century AD). This confession was formed in north Syria and in the 10th century they moved to Mount Lebanon (particularly to Kasrawan Mountains). The Maronite Church is a mixture of the oriental Syrian Church and the western Catholic Church. The main difference between them and the oriental churches is about the nature of Jesus Christ. The Maronites believe that Jesus Christ has two natures but one will.¹

As a result of this difference in faith, an assembly in Constantinople was held in the year 680 AD refusing this faith and proscribing its followers and anathematizing them to the extent that the Byzantine Empire had wielded a military campaign against them. In spite of the fact that the Maronites were able to repel this campaign, this affair had

increased their seclusion in their mountains and strongholds.² Modern studies refer to the trials made by the Catholic Church in Rome making use of this situation by approaching the Maronites ever since the 11th century. This approach reached its climax in the year 1182 when it was officially declared that the Maronite Church became part of the Catholic Church and a follower of the Pope in Rome.³

The conditions of the Maronites when the first Crusade arrived

Lebanon in the 11th century, as the homeland of the Maronites – our study subject – was characterized by variety and welfare of its inhabitants regarding mode of life. People were divided into peasants, beduins and city dwellers. This is in addition to its religious variety. There were Muslims (Sunnis and a majority of Shiites), Christians (Asyrian, Armenian, Jacobins and a Maronite majority), in addition to a minority of Jews. These groups were not well merged, neither in place nor in politics; for every group had its own region and administration.⁴ The Maronites, almost alone, had inhabited Kasrawan Mountians, that form part of the western Lebanese series of mountains up till the borders of Akkar Plain, bordered from the south by the Mediterranean Sea and the Emirate of the Tanoukhis⁵ that had enjoyed self-

independence; in addition to Beirut, which had a majority of Sunni Muslims, to the north and Jubayl and Tripoli in the west. From the east, they overlooked Damascus that was under the Saljuki authority.

Some modern studies indicate that groups of Royal Christians were settling in the south between the Durzi Tanoukhis and the Maronites but they had melted away and did not appear among them because of the merger in the modes of living⁶ or because of their small number and dispersion. Regarding the number of population, accounts indicate that the Maronites had reached at the time of the study, i.e. the 11th century, over 60,000 souls.⁷ If we accept here the accounts that confirm that the nobles among them who had participated in the Crusade force had reached between 30,000 and 40,000, 60,000 men may be meant here having enjoyed self-independence for several reasons, namely:

1. The Islamic policy in the region that had kept away from interfering directly in the Christian population's affairs.
2. Inaccessibility of their location and fertility of their soil which grant them self-satisfaction that allows them to manage themselves in their fortresses and mountains.

3. The religious seclusion that had been forced upon them by their discord in faith with the oriental Orthodox Church.

The sources do not show any disturbances in the historical relationship between the successive Islamic states and the Maronites. In fact, the sources of the Crusade campaign confirm the existence of ideological enmity between the Byzantines and the other Christian confessions, like the Assyrians, with the Maronites.⁸ The historians confirm that the Maronites had an understanding with the Muslims, as proved by their usage of Arabic in addition to the translation activity of their books from Assyrian into Arabic. Some of them had reached high positions in the state, especially during the Fatimite Era.⁹

As for their civilizational participation in the Islamic state, it must be said that their mastering of Assyrian had prompted them to participate in the translation activity from Assyrian into Arabic, especially that the Arab sources refer to those translators as Assyrians without scrutinizing their religious confessions. What also confirms this is that Bishop Dawood in the 11th century had translated *The Maronite Book of Right Guidance* [كتاب الهدى الماروني] from Assyrian into Arabic, which he had given away to the people of

Jubayl. In his book *Tanbeeh Ila al-Ashraf* [Remark to the Nobles], al-Saudi refers to a book in general history that starts at the beginning of human existence and ends with the Abbasid Khalifa al-Mustakfi (d. 908 AD), which he attributes to the Maronite monk Qays.¹⁰

The Maronite-Crusade relationship during the first Crusade campaign:

The service granted by the Maronites to the Crusaders had exceeded what Muslims and other Christians used to offer. They did not confine themselves to offering food, gifts and road guides, they had rather offered fighting men on the crusaders' side.¹¹ This gives rise to the following question: why did the Maronites stand by the crusaders? Indeed, why had the Maronites taken the initiative of offering services to the crusaders? In other words, why had the Mssronites participated in the first Crusade campaign?

The contemporary sources to the events confirm that the Masronites, during the crusaders' siege of Araqah in February 1099, took the initiative of getting in touch with the crusaders. The sources, however, do not tell that the homeland of the Maronites, the inaccessible Mount Kasrawan, had been subject to an attack from the crusaders; for the Maronites had dispatched a delegation to the

crusaders offering some services, like showing them the roads leading to Jerusalem through the sea shore.¹²

It seems that the religious and ideological similarity between the Maronites and the Catholic crusaders was what had prompted them to welcome the crusaders. Some of the modern researchers claim that this initiative was against the Byzantines with whom they had a discord over the confession, especially after the news regarding the tense relationship between the Byzantines and the crusaders after the siege of Antioch (October 1097 – June 1098).¹³ The geographical location of the Maronites had given them a chance to control the relationship with the crusaders. As mentioned before, their homeland was quite inaccessible and they were self-satisfied in food supplies due to their fertile land. Here, we must mention the fact that the Maronites had been divided in their position regarding the crusaders: the Maronites of the seaside had taken the initiative of participating in the first crusade campaign, while the Maronites of the mountain had been satisfied with being reserved without objection.¹⁴

Before moving to the services that the Maronites had granted the crusaders, we must say that they did not do that alone. At this stage, i.e. since the time when Araqa was besieged until their arrival into Jerusalem, individuals from Ammar Clan, as prisoners of war taken as a guarantee for

ending the siege of Tripoli, had also participated with them. As for the Maronites, they had offered the crusaders an important series of services and supports represented by the following:

- Food supplies: this was not a service by them alone; for the countryside people were keen on giving away food supplies to the crusaders for the safety of their crops, which was a Muslim policy from the time the crusaders had passed through Sheezar.¹⁵
- Road guides: they have taken part together with guides from Bani Ammar in order to hasten the movement of the crusaders from the Lebanese shores to the inland. For after a period of about three months that the crusaders had spent in Lebanon, most of which was spent besieging Araqa and Tripoli, they were able within one week to cross the Lebanese shores and to arrive into Jerusalem.¹⁶
- 30,000 to 400,000 archers had shared as an active military force in the crusaders' army, which showed the effect of this Maroinite force in the siege of Jerusalem later.¹⁷

It seems that the Maronites were keen not to instigate the local population in Lebanon against them. Accounts

reveal that the crusader soldiers, while crossing Sayda, had been subject to being kidnapped by unknown groups and the crusaders had failed to find the kidnapped soldiers. Here, we may say that had the Maronites, being part of the local population, wanted to clash with the local people they would have guided the crusaders to the kidnappers' places and followed their traces.¹⁸

Without getting into the details of besieging Tripoli and Araqa, which may take our research away from its purpose, the crusaders had gathered in Latakia from where they decided, on the 1st of March 1099, to go directly to Jerusalem marching through the coastal line. Except for a short stop to besiege Jabala on the 1st march 1099, which the Fatimite state had paid about 60,000 golden pieces for the sake of lifting that siege.¹⁹

The crusaders marched easily towards Jerusalem with the help of road guides from the Masronites and Bani Ammar, who were taken prisoners as a guarantee for lifting the siege of Tripoli.²⁰ In that, they were helped by the escaping of the inhabitants of the villages crossed by the crusaders, being afraid of falling prey to the crusaders' savagery, the infamous stories of which had reached the sky.

It must be noticed that the Arab sources do not refer enough to the events on the Lebanese coast during the first

crusader campaign. In fact, Ibn al-Qalansi, the contemporary historiographer, does not cover by any means the events on the Lebanese coast during the first crusader campaign and the reader of Ibn al-Qalansi finds that Kufr Tab of January 1099 was the last stage before Jerusalem.²¹

In spite of the fact that the sources had not discussed a specific role for the Maronites in the crusader army that had stormed into Jerusalem in 1099 AD, their share of the loots and their being treated like the Europeans in ownership of lands, together with their role inside Jerusalem indicate that the Maronite force that was estimated to be 40,000 archers had completely merged into the crusader army to the extent that all of them looked like one unit in shape and organization. Their number in the crusader army that had broken into Jerusalem was not of small ratio. If we accept the information estimating the number of crusaders that had broken into Jerusalem to be 200,000 fighters, this means that 40,000 Maronites had formed one fifth of this army.

It seems that the Maronite-Crusader relationship continued to be calm and stable, but had been impaired by some cases of tension, as mentioned by Ibn al-Qalee's popular poetry (d. 1516) in the year 1137 when the crusaders tried to interfere in the Maronite faith.²² Modern studies confirm that the reason for the tension in the Crusader-Maronite relationship every now and then was due

to the crusaders' monopolization of power and their treating the entire region and its population as an occupied land.²³

Some modern historiographers confirm that the Maronites did not try to merge into the European society. They rather kept their essential peculiarities and independence even though they had been linked with the Latin kingdoms and principalities by official rather than actual links.²⁴ This is what is confirmed by their adherence to their special characteristics until today.

Epilogue and Consequences:

- The Maronites have been able through historical periods to keep their religious and cultural identity and their self-independence in administering their towns and villages in Kasrawn Mountains, not allowing anyone to interfere in their religious faith or imposing one's hegemony on them, be it the Orthodox or the Catholic Church.
- The geographic location of Kasrawan Mountains had a role in granting the Maronites a special character that had forced others, whether Muslims or crusaders, to approach them and to gain them to their side.

- The number of the Maronite archers of 40,000 in the crusader army that had entered Jerusalem had formed a good force in number and quality.
- The Maronites had made good use of the first crusader campaign in gaining economic benefits represented by owning shares in the Kingdom of Jerusalem like any crusader soldiers that had entered the city; in addition to development of the economic movement in their regions that was brought about by being recognized by the crusaders after Lebanon and its ports became main commercial centers for the crusaders in greater Syria.
- Accusing the Maronites of treason because of their support for the crusaders is exaggerated. Availing guides was a service that many Muslims and Christians had offered willingly or otherwise. The soldiers offered was only a support for a group of people who were religiously closer to them basically against the Byzantines.
- The Maronites, through their cooperation with the crusaders, were able to gain an official recognition for their confession that had taken them out of being anathematized and considered as infidels according to the assembly of Constantinople.

Endnotes:

¹ For more information about the Maronite faith, see:

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² مانع بن حماد الجهني ، موسوعة الاديان الميسرة ، 2ج ، دار الندوة العالمية للطباعة والنشر والتوزيع -السعودية، ط 4، 1420هـ / 1999م، ج 2 ص 637

³ سركيس ابوزيد، الموارنة سؤال في الهوية ، بيروت -دار ابعاد، ط 1، 2000 م، ص 74، 83.

⁴ الحاج بورشارد (ت ق 6 هـ / 12م)، وصف الأراضي المقدسة في فلسطين، ترجمة سعيد البيشاوي، عمان- دار الشروق ط 1، 1995م، ص 173، الدويهي، تاريخ الأزمنة، ص 87

‘william of Tyre, A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, Trans, by Babcock & kery, New York, 1943, p. 436.

⁵ To read about history of the TYanukihi Emirate and it role in the history of Lebanon, see:

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⁶ كمال الصليبي (1962)، تعريف تاريخي بلبنان، مجلة أبحاث، (ع 15)، ج 3، ص 379

⁷ William of Tyre, A History of Deeds , p. 525

بطرس ضو، تاريخ الموارنة الديني والسياسي، (د. ن)، ط 2، ج 3، 1977م، ص 469

⁸ William of Tyre, A History of Deeds , p. 525.

⁹ عبدالله عبيدالله، تاريخ الموارنة ومسيحيي الشرق، 8ج، لبنان - دار ملفات، ط 1، 1997م، ج 2،

ص 13

¹⁰ ابو الحسن علي المسعودي (ت 346هـ / 893م) ، التنبيه والاشراف، القاهرة- مكتبة الشرق

الاسلامية، تحقيق عبدالله الصاوي، ط 1، 1938م، ص 132

¹¹ سركيس ابو زيد، الموارنة، ص 74، 83. كمال الصليبي، تعريف تاريخي بلبنان، ص 376؛ رينيه

كروسيه، صراع الشرق والغرب، دار قتيبة- دمشق - 2002، ص 114، بطرس ضو، ج 3، تاريخ الموارنة

الدينوي، ص455؛ عبدالله عبيدالله، تاريخ الموارنة، ج2، ص72،، سمير عبده، المسيحيون السوريون، بيروت - مؤسسة الأبحاث العربية، ط1، 1981م، ص87.

¹² William of Tyre, A History of Deeds, p.525. sta Version, p165

الدويهي، تاريخ الأزمنة، ص 87.

¹³ عبدالله عبيدالله، تاريخ الموارنة ومسيحي الشرق، ج2، ص13

¹⁴ كمال الصليبي، منطلق تاريخ لبنان (634هـ/1516م)، نيويورك- منشورات كارافان، ط1،

1979م، ص89.

¹⁵ بطرس توديود (ت ق 6 هـ / 12م)، تاريخ الرحلة إلى بيت المقدس، ترجمة حسين محمد عطية، دار المعرفة

الجامعية -الاسكندرية، ط1، 1419هـ/1999م. ص 289.

William of Tyre, A History of Deeds, p. 385. John Hugh Hill, „Raymond IV, Count of Toulouse, New York –Green Wood Press ,1980, p. 185, Fulcher of Charter, A History of The Expedition to Jerrusalem,1095-1127, Translated By Frances Rita Rayan ,edited By Harold S. Fink,W. W. New York-Nrton & Company, 1973, p.68

الدويهي، تاريخ الأزمنة ص¹⁶87

William of Tyre, A History of Deeds, p. 397. Gesta Version, other source materials, University of Pennsylvania, p.165

¹⁷الدويهي، تاريخ الأزمنة ص87

William of Tyre, A History of Deeds, p.525. Gesta Version, p165

¹⁸ William of Tyre, A History of Deeds, p.525. Hill, Raymond IV, p224

الدويهي، تاريخ الأزمنة، ص 87.

¹⁹ William of Tyre, A History of Deeds, p. 390

²⁰ William of Tyre, A History of Deeds, p. 398

²¹ حمزة بن أسد بن علي بن القلانسي (ت 555هـ / 1160م)، ذيل تاريخ دمشق، تحقيق سهيل زكار،

دمشق، ط1، 1403هـ/1983م، ص222

²² Kamal. S. Salibi, "Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon", Beirut, 1959, pp. 23-86

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