CHAPTER TWO

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FRANKISH, TURKISH AND ARAB STATES IN THE PERIOD OF THE SYRIAN AUTONOMOUS RULERS (1098–1158)

Western scholars have chronologically divided the history of the first Latin kingdom of Jerusalem in different ways. Historians of the Crusades as a rule saw a turning-point in the years 1144–48, i.e. when the Turks captured Edessa and the Second Crusade took place. This applies for example to Runciman, Setton or Mayer.\(^1\) On the other hand, works concerned with the history of the Frankish states, generally designated as ‘the Crusader states’, modified this scheme by additional period boundaries. The concept of a history of Crusader states as a history of rulers in the older literature, particularly by Röhrich and Grousset, led to the stressing of the death-dates of strong rulers such as Baldwin I (1118), Amalric I and Nur al-Din (both 1174) as further breaks.\(^2\) Subsequent research has to a large extent taken over this periodization but also legitimated it differently. According to Runciman and Setton, the establishment of the Crusader states was concluded c. 1118; according to Sivan, the first attempts at Muslim resistance ended at this time and the entry of the sovereigns upon the scene emerged as something new.\(^3\)

A concern to establish ‘leading ideas’ unmistakably marked almost all chronologies. Grousset thought it was possible to arrange such ideas in a dialectic between monarchy and anarchy on the Muslim and Frankish sides. For Prawer, an awakening of the Muslim world followed the foundation of the Frankish states, from which finally resulted a balance of power.\(^4\) Sivan believed that the development of Muslim resistance to the Franks could be observed from the ‘first attempts’ to the ‘apogee’ with Saladin. The thesis of Ben-Ami is similarly directed. According to this, a reciprocal strengthening of the spirit of Holy War on the Muslim as on the Frankish side led to a reinforcement of monarchical centralism and also

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\(^1\) Runciman, History, esp. vol. 2; Setton, History; Mayer, Crusades.
\(^2\) Röhrich, Geschichte; Grousset, Histoire.
\(^3\) Sivan, L’Islam. The only exception is the periodisation in Richard, Royaume Latin.
\(^4\) Prawer, Histoire, I, 395.
to the rise of charismatic movements, e.g. the knightly Orders, displacing the conventional elite of Syria.\(^5\)

In this connection, a distinctive terminology with concepts such as ‘awakening’ or ‘rousing’ is often employed in order to describe the development of specific ideas. It seems that models of this kind have as their basis a teleological concept of Frankish and Muslim history in Syria, looking back from the end of the first Latin kingdom of Jerusalem after the battle of Hattin on 3/4 July 1187. Thus, conditions in the twelfth century became more or less clearly represented as the confrontation of blocs, Islam and Christendom, the course of which led to a union of the Muslim potential and thereby in the eyes of many authors necessarily to victory over the Christians.\(^6\) Here it may only be noted that it should be thoroughly considered whether events such as the battle of Hattin and the consequent Ayyubid conquests, or the Third Crusade, provided meaningful breaks in the history of the Frankish states in the Middle East. They only partially affected the Frankish lordships and in general they did not alter the structure of their relations with the neighbouring Muslim states. As far as the latter point is concerned, the breaks of 1174, 1183 or 1192–3 are of greater significance.

The Latin and the Arabic chronicles developed already to some extent a similar teleological concept of history. In connection with the enthronement of Baldwin IV in Jerusalem in 1174, William of Tyre reflected on the reasons why the Muslims had pushed the Franks on to the defensive. Was the blame due to the sinfulness of the present generation, the vanished military superiority over Muslims who had lost the capacity to fight by a long period of peace or above all to the end of the fragmentation of the Muslim rulers? The individual Muslim cities had previously had independent rival lords. To fight against them had offered comparatively little danger, for the individual city-lords had felt no less fear of their Muslim competitors than of the Franks. In these circumstances, alliances against the Christians had been prevented. Only when ‘Imad al-Din Zengi had taken Edessa and Nur al-Din Damascus, and united previously autonomous lordships in their hands, had a new situation arisen.\(^7\)

Muslim Arabic historians also thought in similar categories of blocs and unification. Among them was the Damascene biographer of Zengi,

\(^{5}\) Ben-Ami, *Social Change*, 121 and 158.
\(^{6}\) Cf. for instance Elisséeff, *Nūr ad-Dīn*, II, 290/1.
\(^{7}\) William of Tyre, XXI, VII, 1015/16.