

## Mount Lebanon and Greece: Mediterranean Crosscurrents, 1821-1841<sup>1</sup>

In November 1821, when the Greek rebellion was some months old, Percy Bysshe Shelley, in Pisa, dedicated his verse drama *Hellas* to the Greek leader Alexandros Mavrokordatos. The poem presents Sultan Mahmud II sitting in Istanbul as the Ottoman empire crumbles around him. Emissaries have already brought news of rebellion in the Danubian provinces, the destruction of the Ottoman fleet, and the rising in the Morea and the islands, when a third messenger appears:

MAHMUD.  
What more?  
THIRD MESSENGER.  
The Christian tribes  
Of Lebanon and the Syrian wilderness  
Are in revolt; – Damascus, Hems, Aleppo,  
Tremble; – the Arab menaces Medina;  
The Ethiop has intrench'd himself in Sennaar,  
And keeps the Egyptian rebel well employ'd,  
Who denies homage, demands investiture  
As price of tardy aid. Persia demands  
The cities on the Tigris, and the Georgians  
Refuse their living tribute. Crete and Cyprus,  
Like mountain-twins that from each other's veins  
Catch the volcano-fire and earthquake-spasm,  
Shake in the general fever.<sup>2</sup>

Shelley's vision was expansive, but it was also quite well-researched: the Ottoman Empire had indeed recently faced troubles in all these places, except perhaps Georgia – and the powerful governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali, was heavily engaged in Sudan (Sennar).<sup>3</sup> This article will focus, though, on the instance Shelley begins with: 'The Christian tribes / Of Lebanon'. As it happened, some of them were 'in revolt' in 1821, though Shelley may not have known of it.

---

<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Antonis Leontiou for his invaluable assistance in locating and translating Greek sources; to Joanna Innes and Aggelis Zarakostas for their comments on drafts of this article; and to Yanni Kotsonis, Maurizio Isabella, Andrew Arsan, and other participants in the Greek Revolution workshop of 2018 at NYU London, for their helpful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Hellas: A Lyrical Drama* (London: Charles and James Ollier, 1822), 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> Khaled Fahmy, 'The era of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, 1805-1848', in M. W. Daly, ed, *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2: 144 (Medina), 153-4. The Ottomans were at war with the Qajars (Persia) from 1821-1823; the Russians had suppressed a Georgian rebellion near the Ottoman border in 1820, and Shelley may possibly have had this in mind: Nikolas K. Gvosdev, *Imperial Policies and Perspectives towards Georgia, 1760–1819* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 140. The Greek rebellion had of course triggered risings in Crete and Cyprus: Thomas W. Gallant, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks: 1768 to 1913, the Long Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 264 (ebook). A more recent (still better-researched) account of the events around 1821 from the perspective of Mahmud II and Istanbul is that of H. Şükrü İlicak, 'A Radical Rethinking of Empire: Ottoman State and Society during the Greek War of Independence (1821-1826)', PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2012.

The crosscurrents between Mount Lebanon and Greece in and around 1821 have been studied largely from the Greek point of view, in the pioneering work of Greek historian Emmanouil Protosaltis in the 1950s, followed up by Spyros Loukatos in the 1970s; historians of Lebanon have noted them only in passing.<sup>4</sup> They included reprisals in the wake of the Greek revolt, corsairing along the coast, and even an attempt at spreading the dynamic of the Greek revolt to this other partially Christian province. While the ‘general fever’ failed to transmit itself to Mount Lebanon in the 1820s, some of its symptoms are discernible there from 1840 onwards, as a more sectarian politics asserted itself in a changed Mediterranean context.

### The Mountain and the sea

The mountains of Lebanon climb steeply from the Mediterranean, behind the coastal strip which contains, from north to south, the cities of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon and Acre. At the start of 1821 the territory known as Mount Lebanon was under the domination of Bashir al-Shihabi, who had ruled it as Emir for most of the period since 1788, and would continue to do so for most of the period until 1840. Emir Bashir was formally a tax-farmer under the Ottoman governor of Sidon, but like many provincial notables enjoyed considerable autonomy in a period of Ottoman ‘decentralisation’.<sup>5</sup> He was aided by the fact that the government of the Mountain was considered hereditary in his family, the Shihabis. But any adult male of the family could theoretically become Emir, and his position depended on balancing the demands for tax revenue of both Ottoman governors and the rest of Mount Lebanon’s elite. They too held hereditary family tax-farms, under the Emir; factional intrigue was rife, often resulting in murder and armed conflict.<sup>6</sup>

The south of Mount Lebanon was dominated by the Druze community, adherents of an offshoot of Shia Islam who formed the old elite of the area, and the north by Maronite Christians, whose importance was on the increase. One sign of this was the quasi-secret conversion of Emir Bashir – whose family were traditionally Sunni Muslims – to Catholicism.<sup>7</sup> The Maronite Church cultivated its links with the Church of Rome and the French monarchy, which it traced back to the Crusades, and made much of its status as a ‘rose among thorns’, surrounded by enemies and heretics.<sup>8</sup> The Mountain, despite its distinctiveness, had a close relationship with the cities of the Syrian coast, as well as Damascus inland – they were crucial for the export of its produce, especially silk, and the import of food. These cities were

---

<sup>4</sup> Emmanouil Protosaltis, ‘Αυθαίρετος Επιδρομή Ελλήνων κατά του Λιβάνου (1826)’, *Αθηνά* 58 (1954), 243-277 (hereafter: Protosaltis), including many documents from the Greek National Archives. Spyros Loukatos, ‘Προσπάθειαι Ελληνο-Συρολιβανικής Συμμαχίας κατά των Τούρκων κατά την Ελληνικήν Επανάστασιν (1822-1828)’, *Μνημοσύνη* 3 (1970-1971), 328-394 (hereafter: Loukatos), including additional documents.

<sup>5</sup> See Suraiya Faroqhi, ed, *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Vol. 3, The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Part 3: The Centre and the Provinces, 133-206.

<sup>6</sup> Mīkhā’īl Mishāqa, *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage, and Plunder: The History of the Lebanon in the 18th and 19th Centuries by Mikhayil Mishaqa (1800-1873)*, trans. Wheeler N. Thackston Jr. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 1-104.

<sup>7</sup> Iliya Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711-1845* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 155–56, 211–12.

<sup>8</sup> Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (London: I.B. Tauris 1988), ch. 4.

under the direct control of Ottoman governors, of whom the most powerful was the governor of Sidon, who actually resided in the fortress of Acre. As well as Sunni and Shia Muslims, the coastal cities contained wealthy communities of Christians, especially Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic – as well as some European merchants. Ships plied between the coastal ports, Egypt, and Cyprus, as well as Anatolia, the Greek islands, and further west.<sup>9</sup>

The sea had played an important part in Mount Lebanon's politics. Its ruler in the 1610s, the Druze chieftain Fakhr al-Din ibn Ma'n, had sailed to Tuscany to take refuge with his allies, the Medici Grand Dukes.<sup>10</sup> In the 1770s, Count Orlov's Russian fleet cruised the eastern Mediterranean trying to draw Greeks into rebellion against the Ottomans, and briefly seized Beirut; Mount Lebanon's Emir, Yusuf al-Shihabi, fleetingly pledged allegiance to the Russian Empire.<sup>11</sup> In 1799-1800, Emir Bashir himself had sailed on the British ships of Sir Sidney Smith, then opposing Napoleon's forces in Egypt.<sup>12</sup> In 1840, he would leave on another British warship, for exile in Malta. And in 1821, as we shall see, he was in touch with events brewing across the Black Sea in Odessa.

### Risings in the Mountain

The Lebanese 'revolt' of that year, though, had other roots. In March 1821, Maronite Christian commoners in northern Mount Lebanon gathered in arms and swore to resist the excessive tax demands made of them by Emir Bashir – who was himself responding to demands from Abdallah Pasha, the new young governor of Sidon. The commoners resented especially having to pay more than the Druze of the southern Mountain.<sup>13</sup> They threw their support behind Emir Bashir's rivals for the emirate, and forced him into a brief exile in the Hawran in inner Syria. In the summer he returned to broker a compromise with leaders of the league and other members of the Mountain's multi-religious elite. But he encountered further resistance from commoners in the northern part of his domain, who formed a second league based at the village of Lihfid in September. This Emir Bashir soon crushed, with help from his Druze ally Bashir Jumblat.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Dominique Chevallier, *La société du Mont Liban à l'époque de la révolution industrielle en Europe* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1971), 42-44, 81, 119; William R. Polk, *The Opening of South Lebanon, 1788-1840: A Study of the Impact of the West on the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), chs. 3, 5; Daniel Panzac, 'Commerce et commerçants des ports du Liban Sud et de Palestine (1756-1787)', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 55, no. 1 (1990): 75-93; Journal du mouvement du Port de Seyde, 10 November to 21 December 1814, Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (AE) 306CCC/26; Tableau des vaisseaux de toutes grandeurs qui sont restés ou qui ont relachés à Seyde pendant l'année 1816, AE 306CCC/27.

<sup>10</sup> Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Khālīdī al-Ṣafadī, *Lubnān fī 'ahd al-Amīr Fakhr al-Dīn Ma'nī al-thānī* (Beirut: al-Jāmi'a al-Lubnāniyya, 1969), 208-41.

<sup>11</sup> Paul du Quenoy, 'The Russian Occupation of Beirut, 1773-1774', *Russian History* 41, no. 2 (2014): 128-41.

<sup>12</sup> Shaykh Sallūm al-Daḥdāh, 'Riḥlat al-Amīr Bashīr al-ūlā ilā Miṣr', *al-Mashriq* 18 (1920): 686-899.

<sup>13</sup>, 4-5, 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Hill, 'How Global Was the Age of Revolutions? The Case of Mount Lebanon, 1821', *Journal of Global History* (ahead of print, 2020), 4-5, 9-10; Aubin to Martin, 12 September and 1 October 1821, Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN) 633PO/1/86.

As I have argued elsewhere, this rising of Christian commoners – partly led by members of their Maronite Catholic clergy – originated in similar dynamics to those which lay behind other outbreaks of the ‘age of revolutions’ of about 1750-1850, including the Greek rebellion.<sup>15</sup> The dynamic of competing military-fiscal regimes – including not only empires like the Ottoman and Russian but also, in the southeast Mediterranean and the Balkans, sub-imperial potentates like Abdallah Pasha of Acre and Ali Pasha of Yannina – led to greater demands on populations for revenue and fighting men, while undermining state legitimacy. Commoners like those of Lebanon – as well as excluded elites – were increasingly driven to define their identity and interests in opposition to the top-down politics of military-fiscal extraction.

What the Mount Lebanon risings did not involve, though, was any conscious link or affinity with the revolutionary and liberal ideas that circulated through much of the Mediterranean and Atlantic world, and played a part – though perhaps an overemphasized one – in other revolutions and rebellions. If anything, the leagues’ leaders, as good Catholics, were firmly opposed to such revolutionary echoes – one included a strongly Royalist account of the French Revolution in his history of Mount Lebanon.<sup>16</sup> Nor did the commoner leagues, despite their clerical leadership and anti-Druze edge, provoke a sharp polarisation between Christian and Muslim (or Druze) in Mount Lebanon politics. Instead, they were absorbed into a pattern of cross-confessional alliances among the multireligious elite, in which Emir Bashir (guardedly Maronite) depended on Druze allies like Bashir Jumblat, and in which the Christian commoners were happy to strike a deal with his rival cousins, who had just ostentatiously converted to Islam at the behest of the Ottoman governor.<sup>17</sup> The leagues did, though, leave a legacy of popular Maronite politics which would take on other forms later in the century.

### **Repercussions of the Greek rebellion in Syria**

The rebellion in the Morea and the Danubian provinces, meanwhile, had provoked a stern reaction throughout the Ottoman Empire.<sup>18</sup> The execution of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in March 1821 and massacres of Greek Orthodox Christians in Istanbul were accompanied by orders to provincial governors to execute dissident Orthodox leaders and to humble Christians generally. Exactly how these orders were applied, though, depended on the local authorities. The recently-appointed governor of Damascus merely disarmed Christians and enforced the old sumptuary laws.<sup>19</sup> On the Syrian coast, Abdallah Pasha proceeded to rather harsher measures. Many Orthodox Christians were imprisoned, and made to pay huge fines – as the French consul reported, ‘in punishment for the revolt of those of Moldavia and Wallachia’.<sup>20</sup> Those arrested included prominent men such as the Greek Orthodox Bishop of

---

<sup>15</sup> Hill, ‘How Global Was the Age of Revolutions?’, 11-16.

<sup>16</sup> Hill, ‘How Global Was the Age of Revolutions?’, 5-7.

<sup>17</sup> Hill, ‘How Global Was the Age of Revolutions?’, 9-11.

<sup>18</sup> See Ilicak, ‘A Radical Rethinking of Empire’, 130-195.

<sup>19</sup> Mishāqa, *Murder, Mayhem*, 121; Mīkhā’īl al-Dimashqī, *Tārīkh Ḥawādith al-Shām*, ed Luwīs Ma’lūf (Beirut: al-Maṭba’a al-Kāthūlīkiyya, 1912), 43. For a similar story at Aleppo, see Strangford to Castlereagh, 18 August and 25 September 1821 (UK National Archives, FO 78/100 and 101), cited in Theophilus C. Prousis, ‘Rebellion, Unrest, Calamity: British Reports on Ottoman Syria in 1821-1823’, *Chronos* 29 (2014): 188-90.

<sup>20</sup> Martin to de Viella, 15 June 1821, CADN 633PO/1/85.

Beirut and two wealthy government secretaries in Tripoli.<sup>21</sup> This city had probably the largest Orthodox community on the coast: the French consul estimated it at something under a quarter of the town's population. Some of its members, as well as paying their fines, sent their money and valuables to monasteries, but the Ottoman authorities went and seized them. They auctioned the goods in the town bazaar, 'despite the lamentable cries of a crowd of women, who had been naïve enough to think that they [their possessions] would be given back to them'. Some women, as well as men, had been imprisoned and had to be ransomed. In general, the French consul wrote, this had led to 'the ruin of a multitude of merchants and artisans.'<sup>22</sup>

These measures did not always discriminate between Greek Orthodox and other Christians: the French consuls frequently complained of their extension to Maronites and Catholics.<sup>23</sup> Many Christians fled to the Mountain, seeking the protection of Emir Bashir. He did not always accord it: he reportedly treated the fleeing Orthodox of Tripoli harshly, in order to please Abdallah Pasha.<sup>24</sup> The possibility that the Christian commoners' rebellion might become bound up with reactions to the Greek war arose in July 1821, when Abdallah tried to apply the Sultan's orders to disarm Orthodox Christians to the Maronites of the Mountain. 'When he wanted to take their arms, as an extension of the firman for the disarming of the Greeks,' the French consul Regnault reported, 'they told him that they would rather give up their women; for without arms, they, their women and their children would be devoured by wild beasts, if they were not despoiled, massacred or driven out by bands of Arabs [i.e. Bedouin] and Métoualis [Shia Muslims], their neighbours.'<sup>25</sup> Regnault feared that Abdallah was representing the Maronite commoners as rebels like the Greeks, so as to get help from other Ottoman governors in suppressing them. But events did not take this turn: the pattern of multiconfessional elite politics held. Even Abdallah's measures, besides, were lenient by contrast to other parts of the empire: there were no wholesale massacres or enslavements of Christians. Though Regnault saw Abdallah as a 'fanatique Musulman', he also suggested that he was mainly interested in taking advantage of the imperial displeasure at the Greek Orthodox to extract money from them.<sup>26</sup> In these same months, Abdallah was in fact imposing fines and forced loans on Jews and Muslims as well as Christians.<sup>27</sup> Nor were harsh measures against the Orthodox necessarily unwelcome to other Christian communities. Regnault initially saw the ruin of Tripoli's Orthodox merchants as a golden opportunity for the French to replace them in commerce, while the humbling of the Orthodox Patriarch in Damascus allowed the Greek Catholics to escape from his clerical authority.<sup>28</sup>

### Corsairs on the coast

---

<sup>21</sup> Aubin to Martin, 27 May 1821, 633PO/1/86; Regnault to de Rayneval, 29 December 1821, AE 346CCC/17.

<sup>22</sup> Regnault to Latour-Maubourg, 9 February 1822, CADN 92PO/A/6.

<sup>23</sup> Aubin to Martin, 27 and 31 May, 29 June 1821, CADN 633PO/1/86; Regnault to Pasquier, 2 and 15 July, 27 August 1821, AE 346CCC/17; Regnault to Latour-Maubourg, 9 February 1822, CADN 92PO/A/6. Cf. Mishāqa, *Murder, Mayhem*, 122.

<sup>24</sup> Regnault to Latour-Maubourg, 9 February 1822, CADN 92PO/A/6.

<sup>25</sup> Regnault to Pasquier, 27 July 1821, AE 346CCC/17.

<sup>26</sup> Regnault to Latour-Maubourg, 9 February 1822, CADN 92PO/A/6.

<sup>27</sup> Martin to de Viella, 29 January 1822, CADN 633PO/1/85.

<sup>28</sup> Regnault to Pasquier, 2 July 1821, AE 346CCC/17; Dimashqī, *Tārīkh Ḥawādith al-Shām*, 46.

By the winter of 1821, the Greek rebellion was making its presence felt along the Syrian coast in another form: corsairing. The French consul at Beirut had noted reports of corsairs off Damietta in Egypt – a lynchpin of trade in the southeast Mediterranean – already in May 1821.<sup>29</sup> Corsairs were also operating further north, intercepting pilgrim ships coming from Jaffa in the Holy Land. The American missionary Levi Parsons encountered the Greek vessels around Castello Rosso and Rhodes in May, bearing ‘a flag perfectly black, with the exception of a white cross in the middle and a red crescent beneath it’.<sup>30</sup> In July, headless corpses were washed up on the Syrian coast near Tripoli: the French consul suspected they belonged to the crew of Ottoman ships that Greek corsairs had captured off Damietta.<sup>31</sup> He began to report corsairs’ presence along the Syrian coast itself from November 1821.<sup>32</sup> They were soon regularly intercepting Ottoman shipping, and ‘visiting’ European vessels to seize Ottoman-owned goods. Consuls and ships’ captains sometimes tried to bargain with them for the return of goods of persons under European protection, but seem rarely to have succeeded.<sup>33</sup> Commerce was suspended at times, as even European ships were afraid to put out to sea.<sup>34</sup>

The corsairs’ attempts were not uniformly successful: some were driven off by Ottoman port defences, or dissuaded by the presence of well-armed European ships.<sup>35</sup> Yet they took ships not only on the open seas, but often in the coastal anchorages and inside the ports themselves, as well as making occasional forays onto land.<sup>36</sup> Some of their exploits were audacious. In January 1823, a vessel entered the port of Beirut flying a Turkish flag. The ‘captain of the port’, nothing suspecting, boarded it with seven of his men: it of course turned out to be a Greek corsair and promptly carried off the eight officials, taking with it another ship from the port loaded with wheat. Corsair and prize calmly anchored in the usual place at the mouth of the Beirut river. There was uproar in the town: Orthodox Christians and some Europeans were thrown into the gaols, and one young Orthodox man was garrotted as he sought refuge in the French consulate. The Muslim populace threatened to put all the Christians to death unless the European consuls went to ransom the Beirut Muslim captives. This they did: after some haggling with the corsair captain, they

---

<sup>29</sup> Aubin to Martin, 24 May 1821, CADN 633PO/1/86 (microfilm 2MI 3056).

<sup>30</sup> Levi Parsons, *Memoir of Rev. Levi Parsons: First Missionary to Palestine from the United States* (Burlington: Chauncey Goodrich, 1830), 339-41.

<sup>31</sup> Regnault to Pasquier, 27 July 1821, AE 346CCC/17.

<sup>32</sup> Regnault to de Rayneval, 10 November 1821, AE 346CCC/17.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. Dupont to Montmorency, 15 December 1825, AE 42CCC/1 (microfilm P/10798); Desrivaux to Montmorency, 25 March 1823, AE 346CCC/17. The Anglo-Irish physician Madden did rather better when he was captured off Tyre in 1827. Largely by getting drunk with the corsair captain, he secured the release of a few captives and the partial payment of the English ship captain’s freight charges. Richard Robert Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine, in 1824, 1825, 1826, and 1827* (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), 2: 385-396.

<sup>34</sup> Dupont to Montmorency, 9 December 1822, AE 42CCC/1; Desrivaux to Montmorency, 1 and 15 February 1823, AE 346CCC/17. The interruption to local shipping was doubtless greater: see, for the start of 1823, Ḥaydar Aḥmad al-Shihābī, *Lubnān fī ‘ahd al-umarā’ al-Shihābiyyīn: wa-huwa al-juz’ al-thānī wa-l-thālith min Kitāb al-Ghurar al-ḥisān fī akhbār abnā’ al-zamān*, ed. Asad Rustum and Fu’ād Afrām Bustānī (Beirut: al-Jāmi’a al-Lubnāniyya, 1969), 736.

<sup>35</sup> Dupont to Montmorency, 31 December 1822, 12 January 1826, AE 42CCC/1.

<sup>36</sup> Desrivaux to Montmorency, 15 and 28 February 1823; Desrivaux to Chateaubriand, 20 August and 8 November 1823; Guys to Chateaubriand, 1 April 1824, AE 346CCC/17.

returned to Beirut with the eight port officials and were greeted by a joyful crowd, which bore them in triumph to the palace.<sup>37</sup> As this example shows, corsairs' assaults, especially when they came onto land, had the potential to provoke reprisals against Orthodox and other Christians.<sup>38</sup>

It was about this time that corsairs took a hand in local politics. 1821 had also seen a confrontation between Abdallah Pasha of Acre – supported by Emir Bashir – and Mehmed Dervish Pasha of Damascus. This led to Abdallah being declared a rebel by the Porte: Dervish Pasha, supported by the governors of Aleppo and Adana, besieged him in his fortress of Acre from late August 1822. Emir Bashir, meanwhile, sought refuge with Mehmed Ali Pasha, the powerful governor of Egypt.<sup>39</sup> The siege lasted nearly a year: in February 1823 the French consul at Tripoli reported that Greek corsairs were 'daily' resupplying Acre with food and even some 'partisans', helping to prolong the fort's resistance.<sup>40</sup> They may have been aiming to divert Ottoman forces from the Greek war: the siege of Acre was tying up some thousands of Ottoman troops.<sup>41</sup> But their motives are perhaps just as likely to have been pecuniary: as the French consul noted, the food and tobacco that they took from their prizes would be in demand in the besieged citadel.<sup>42</sup> Not long after this, Mehmed Ali Pasha interceded with Istanbul for both Abdallah and Emir Bashir. Large sums of money changed hands, the Emir returned to Lebanon, and the siege of Acre was lifted in May 1823.<sup>43</sup>

### The raid on Beirut

Corsairing continued over the following years, but the most dramatic incident came in 1826. On the evening of 18 March, the residents of Beirut were, as the English traveller John Madox related, 'rather surprised at the sight of thirteen Greek ships, gliding quietly through the moonlight with a favourable breeze, and coming to anchor in the roadstead, about a mile below the town.'<sup>44</sup> The authorities of Beirut, though badly provided with munitions, rushed to prepare a defence. Before dawn on 19 March, 500 Greeks dressed in Albanian costume landed, set up ladders and scaled the outer wall. Cries of alarm and musket-fire rang through the city: a few of the attackers were killed, and some of the defenders, but the

---

<sup>37</sup> Dupont to Montmorency, 31 January 1823, AE 42CCC/1. A fortnight later, in another bold feat, corsairs off Tripoli carried away the artillery that Ottoman authorities had placed on the coast to repel them. Desrivaux to Montmorency, 15 February 1823, AE 346CCC/17.

<sup>38</sup> Regnault thought that Orthodox Christians of Tripoli had fled in part because they feared reprisals for corsair raids: Regnault to Latour-Maubourg, 9 February 1822, CADN 92PO/A/6.

<sup>39</sup> See Asad Rustum, *Bashir bayna al-Sultān wa-l-'Azīz, 1804-1841* (Beirut: al-Jāmi'a al-Lubnāniyya, 1956), 33-37.

<sup>40</sup> Desrivaux to Montmorency, 28 February 1823, AE 346CCC/17. The British consul at Beirut also reported a prize with cannonballs being unloaded at Acre: Abbott to Strangford, 26 March 1823 (FO78/115), in Prousis, *Rebellion, Unrest, Calamity*, 202-4.

<sup>41</sup> For estimates ranging from 4000 to 6000 besiegers, and 1000 defenders, see Desrivaux to Montmorency, 24 September 1822, AE 346CCC/17; Rustum, *Bashir bayna al-Sultān wa-l-'Azīz*, 37. The Ottoman force that attacked the Greeks from the east in July was only 13,000: Gallant, *Edinburgh History*, 284 (ebook), though St Clair says over 20,000 gathered at Larissa: *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 103.

<sup>42</sup> Desrivaux to Montmorency, 24 September 1822, AE 346CCC/17.

<sup>43</sup> Desrivaux to Montmorency, 2 May 1823, AE 346CCC/17; Rustum, *Bashir bayna al-Sultān wa-l-'Azīz*, 39.

<sup>44</sup> John Madox, *Excursions in the Holy Land, Egypt, Nubia, Syria, &c* (London: Bentley, 1834), 344.

Greeks withdrew beyond the walls. Only at this point did the Greek brigs approach and bombard the city, though impeded by a strong wind.<sup>45</sup> Badly-aimed cannon-balls whistled over Beirut, one taking off the legs of 'a poor Greek lad in the city'; several of the defenders were killed when one of their guns exploded.<sup>46</sup> The ships also lost some men, and soon retired to their anchorage.

The Greeks who had landed withdrew into the countryside around Beirut, pillaging the houses there. They took over a ruined tower halfway between the city and the anchorage, and there sat out the next three days. The Muslims of Beirut, meanwhile, put their defences in order.<sup>47</sup> The city's Orthodox Christians took refuge in the consulates, while many people living in the environs fled into the mountains.<sup>48</sup> Some took refuge in the house of the American missionary William Goodell, where they only had to put up with him reading the Scriptures to them.<sup>49</sup> Emir Bashir Shihabi had been alerted to the events: he sent his son Khalil and some servants to the outskirts of Beirut, and wrote to the elite of Mount Lebanon to assemble there with their men. They did so, along with Emir Bashir himself, on 22 March.<sup>50</sup> According to Lebanese chronicler Tannus al-Shidyaq, Beirutis came to welcome him, 'praising his zeal and courage'.<sup>51</sup> But as it appeared to Goodell, 'whether he will assist the Greeks or the Turks, or attempt to become master of the city himself in opposition to both, is a perfect mystery.'<sup>52</sup>

On the morning of 23 March, Goodell relates, 'All the Greek vessels spread their sails [...] before sun rise, & with a very light breeze moved out of the river. All eyes were fastened upon them. The Turks were at their posts, preparing for victory or death. And a most solemn silence prevailed. The Greeks passed the city at a respectful distance without throwing a single ball. Just at this time a large number of troops arrived from the Pasha of Acre, consisting chiefly of Albanians and Bedowins.'<sup>53</sup> Tannus al-Shidyaq thought that the Greeks decided to leave because of the appearance of this force, led by the Pasha's chancellor.<sup>54</sup> Another Lebanese chronicler wrote that the victory was rightfully claimed by Emir Bashir, as he had agreed with Beirut's notables to attack the Greeks and they had fled before him.<sup>55</sup> In fact, there was a little more to it than that.

The French consul Henri Guys got an inkling of what had occurred, by way of a Maltese fisherman who lived near the tower the Greeks had used as their base. During the night of 20 March, the fisherman told Guys, he had been approached by several of the chief Greeks, and three Orthodox priests. They tried to induce him to take a letter, written in Greek and

---

<sup>45</sup> Guys to Guilleminot, 28 March 1826, AE 346CCC/17; Goodell to Evarts, 9 April 1826 (with journal excerpts from 19 March to 4 April), Houghton Library, Harvard, ABC16.6.2 (microfilm 514); Barker to Stratford Canning, 9 April 1826 (FO 352/12A), in Theophilus Prousis, 'Bedlam in Beirut: A British Perspective in 1826', *Chronos* 15 (2007): 89-106.

<sup>46</sup> Goodell to Evarts, 9 April 1826; Madox, *Excursions*, 345-6; Shihābī, *Lubnān*, 780.

<sup>47</sup> Guys to Guilleminot, 28 March 1826; Barker to Stratford Canning, 9 April 1826.

<sup>48</sup> Madox, *Excursions*, 346.

<sup>49</sup> Goodell to Evarts, 9 April 1826.

<sup>50</sup> Madox, *Excursions*, 347.

<sup>51</sup> Ṭannūs al-Shidyāq, *Kitāb akhbār al-a'yān fī Jabal Lubnān* (Beirut: al-Jāmi'a al-Lubnāniyya, 1970), 438.

<sup>52</sup> Goodell to Evarts, 9 April 1826.

<sup>53</sup> Goodell to Evarts, 9 April 1826.

<sup>54</sup> Shidyāq, *Akhbār al-a'yān*, 439.

<sup>55</sup> Shihābī, *Lubnān*, 780.



Arabic, to Emir Bashir. In this ‘they told him that they had come to help him to shake off the Turkish yoke, and that they would restore Beirut and the coastal towns to him, if he would lend them his aid in executing their plan.’ (*ils lui disaient qu’ils étaient venus pour l’aider a secouer le joug des Turcs et qu’ils lui remettraient Beyrout ainsi que les villes de la côte, s’il voulait leur prêter son secours dans l’exécution de leur projet.*) The Maltese pleaded ignorance of the terrain, and a local man took the letter – a lucky escape for the fisherman, as the Emir’s response was to bastinado the messenger.<sup>56</sup> As Guys reported, ‘The Greeks, displeased at Emir Bashir’s reply, left hastily’ on the afternoon of 23 March (*Les grecs mécontents de la Réponse de l’Emir Bechir sont partis précipitamment*).<sup>57</sup>

Emir Bashir thus rebuffed the Greeks rudely enough, but he was clearly not trusted by the Ottoman authorities either. Madox thought that Abdallah Pasha’s chancellor had been sent ‘quite as much with the view of watching the Emir, as of repelling the enemy.’<sup>58</sup> Whether he suspected Bashir of actual coordination with the Greeks or merely of taking advantage of the situation, he allowed none of the Emir’s men to enter Beirut. He also took reprisals, apparently urged on by local Muslims: Christian merchants of the city were once again imprisoned and made to pay large fines, and many fled to the Mountain.<sup>59</sup> Emir Bashir soon withdrew with his troops to the Mountain, but he interceded with Abdallah Pasha to have the Beirut merchants released, or allowed to return safely, and their goods restored. Abdallah seems to have been keen for the city (his tax-farm) to return to business as usual – ‘for every piastre that is delayed from these revenues’, he reminded his chancellor, ‘the delay affects the interest of my treasury’ (*kull qirsh ta’akhkara min hādhihi al-aghlāl fa-ta’khīru-hu ‘āyid alā maṣlaḥat khizānati-nā*).<sup>60</sup> He was willing enough to accept that the Christians had fled simply in ‘fear’ (*khawf*) and ‘affliction’ (*i’tirā*), rather than through complicity with the ‘scoundrelly Greek unbelievers’ (*al-kufarā al-Arwām al-khāsirīn*).<sup>61</sup> Abdallah had perhaps learnt from his earlier reprisals against Christians that it was not wise to go too far: he might make a short-term gain via fines and seizures, but if too many merchants were ruined or fled he would destroy his own tax base.

### The Emir and the Greeks

As the Maltese fisherman’s tale suggests, though, there was a little more to the affair of March 1826 than a simple pirate raid. Behind it lies a shadowy history of negotiations between Emir Bashir and the Greek rebels, stretching back to before the outbreak of the rebellion in 1821.<sup>62</sup> These were conducted initially through the agency of one Hadjistathis Rezis, described in Greek sources as a Macedonian merchant resident in Mount Lebanon,

<sup>56</sup> Guys to Guilleminot, 28 March 1826; Barker to Stratford Canning, 9 April 1826.

<sup>57</sup> Guys to Guilleminot, 4 April 1826; see also Guys to Guilleminot, 28 March 1826. According to the Maltese, the Greek force was about 1500 strong and had with it two French officers, one of whom the Greeks addressed as ‘Colonel’.

<sup>58</sup> Madox, *Excursions*, 347.

<sup>59</sup> Goodell to Evarts, 9 April 1826; Guys to Guilleminot, 28 March 1826; Madox, *Excursions*, 348-9.

<sup>60</sup> Abdallah’s order to his chancellor, 3 Shawwāl [1241] (11 May 1826), in Shihābī, *Lubnān*, 782.

<sup>61</sup> Abdallah’s proclamation to ‘all the dhimmī merchants who have left Beirut’ (*al-khawājāt al-dhimmiyyūn al-nāziḥīn min Bayrūt bi-wajh al-‘umūm*), 13 Ramaḍān 1241 (21 April 1826), in Shihābī, *Lubnān*, 781.

<sup>62</sup> These contacts were uncovered by Protopsaltis, and further explored by Loukatos; my account is based on the documents they published. My thanks to Antonis Leontiou for his help in translating these texts.

friendly with Emir Bashir, and a member of the Filiki Etairia.<sup>63</sup> Rezis had apparently been in Odessa before the start of the rebellion, and visited the Greek leader Alexandros Ypsilantis with Bashir's proposals for joint action.<sup>64</sup> This was presumably at some point between Ypsilantis's arrival at Odessa in summer 1820 and his crossing of the Pruth in March 1821, which initiated the uprising. He was then trying to gain the support of potentates across the Balkans, who ruled (partially) Christian populations: Ali Pasha of Yannina, leaders in Serbia, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Romania.<sup>65</sup> Emir Bashir of Lebanon, the Christian ruler of a partly Christian domain, doubtless fitted the pattern. The project seems to have got nowhere, however, by the time Ypsilantis crossed the Pruth, and he was in any case defeated and in an Austrian gaol by July 1821.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile Emir Bashir, as we have seen, was having troubles of his own: he was in exile in the Hawran in spring-summer 1821, and in Egypt from summer 1822 to May 1823.

Soon after his return to Mount Lebanon in 1823, however, Bashir tried to re-establish contact with Rezis and the Greek authorities. He dispatched letters to them by a Greek merchant travelling from Damascus, who arrived in Samos in August 1823 – but they were then lost when the boat carrying them from Samos capsized.<sup>67</sup> By the summer of 1824, Rezis, whether in contact with Bashir or not, was in Nafplion urging the Greek authorities there to support plans for an uprising in Mount Lebanon.<sup>68</sup> The Greek leaders were uninterested at first, but paid more attention in the spring of 1825. This was doubtless because Egyptian troops under Ibrahim Pasha, Mehmed Ali's son, had landed in the Morea in February and were pressing Greek forces hard.<sup>69</sup> Mehmed Ali was known to covet Syria, and it was said that an operation there would divert his attention.<sup>70</sup> The man arguing this most forcefully was by now the Cypriot captain Charalambos Malis.<sup>71</sup> His visions of a pan-Ottoman rising were almost as expansive as Shelley's. Rebellions in both Cyprus and Mount Lebanon would enable the Greeks to take Crete; the Greeks should aim at fomenting revolt not just throughout Syria, but also in Serbia and Wallachia-Moldavia.<sup>72</sup> The Administration (Διοίκησης) finally approved a Lebanon plan in April 1825, and in July sent Rezis, Malis, and Bishop Eudokimos Gregorios to Mount Lebanon, to gather information and negotiate with

---

<sup>63</sup> For these details, Protopsaltis cites Rezis' file in the Archive of the Fighters, Greek National Library: 243, n. 2.

<sup>64</sup> The only evidence for this comes in a later letter from Alexandros' brother Dimitrios Ypsilantis to Emir Bashir, 15 June 1825, in Protopsaltis, 258-9. This refers to Bashir's 'lofty and philanthropic aims' (τους υψηλούς και φιλανθρωπικούς σκοπούς), which Rezis had communicated to Alexandros in Odessa 'before the Greeks took up arms'.

<sup>65</sup> Douglas Dakin, *The Greek Struggle for Independence, 1821-1833* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1973), 52-55; Richard Stites, *The Four Horsemen: Riding to Liberty in Post-Napoleonic Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 198-200.

<sup>66</sup> Stites, *The Four Horsemen*, 200-208; Dakin, *The Greek Struggle*, 61.

<sup>67</sup> See a later report read to the Greek Parliament, 1 April 1825, in Protopsaltis, 245-6.

<sup>68</sup> See Protopsaltis, 243-4; Rezis to Georgios Kountouriotis, President of the Executive (Εκτελεστικός), 1 August 1824; Rezis to the Supreme Administration (υπερτάτης Διοίκησης), 13 August 1824, in Loukatos, 379-81.

<sup>69</sup> The Syrian coast had been affected by the war preparations, with Mehmed Ali requisitioning ships and requesting troops from Abdallah Pasha and Emir Bashir (though the latter's troops were not in the event required). Guys to Chateaubriand, 24 April, 7 May, 17 May, 16 June 1824, 346CCC/17; Rustum, *Bashir bayna al-Sultān wa-l-'Azīz*, 40.

<sup>70</sup> Gallant, *Edinburgh History*, 323-5 (ebook); Malis to Alexandros Mavrokordatos, Secretary-General of the Executive, 13 February 1825, in Protopsaltis, 249-50.

<sup>71</sup> Biographical note in Protopsaltis, 249, n. 1.

<sup>72</sup> Malis to Mavrokordatos, 13 and 27 February 1825, in Protopsaltis, 249-52.

Emir Bashir.<sup>73</sup> They bore letters from the Administration to the Emir, the Orthodox clergy of Syria, Cyprus, and elsewhere, and the 'Community' (Κοινότητα) of Mount Lebanon, as well as one from Dimitrios Ypsilantis to Emir Bashir.<sup>74</sup>

Little is known about their mission. It seems to have been over by late January 1826, when Malis was back in Nafplion<sup>75</sup> – but Bishop Gregorios wrote a report, also from Nafplion, as late as May 1826, after the raid on Beirut had taken place.<sup>76</sup> He said he had travelled around Mount Lebanon gathering information on the people and their 'natural inclination to freedom' (περί της φυσικής κλίσεως των λαων εκείνων εις την ελευθερίαν), before meeting Emir Bashir and passing on the government's letters. Bashir initially received him with a 'deadpan' ([α]νέκφραστος) face, before 'expressing enthusiasm (έφθασε να εκφωνήση ενθουσιων), [saying] what is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine.' Gregorios does not say that Bashir committed himself to anything, but the fact he sheltered fugitives from Ottoman justice was encouraging. He suggested sending 'a few ships, 15 to 20, with 3000 Greeks', which might provoke a great rising of the Lebanese, drawing in the people of Palestine. He held out the tempting prize of Damascus, 'the treasury of the whole kingdom', which the Lebanese would easily take. Yet he added that the authorities 'should not take this conclusion to be self-evidently true' (Το συμπέρασμα τουτο η Σεβ. Επιτροπη ας μη το εκλάβη, ειμη ως αξιωματικην αλήθειαν).

Whatever they heard from the three emissaries, early in 1826 the official Greek government set the plan aside.<sup>77</sup> But at this point it was taken up by a group of Greek chieftains. These captains were independent actors in the Greek war – some, like Kolokotronis and Sisinis, had been in open rebellion against the government in 1824, before Ibrahim's invasion of 1825 drove Greek forces to reunify.<sup>78</sup> Those who adopted the Lebanon scheme in 1826 were lesser-known figures: Hadjimichalis Talianos (or Tailanos), Nikolas Kriezotis, Vassos Mavrouniotis, and Hadjistephanis Voulgaris.<sup>79</sup> Malis was dismayed at the prospect of a freelance operation, and in January 1826 demanded the Executive prevent the expedition, 'not wanting to see the dramas of Chios in other places, and even in my own homeland' (μη επιθυμων να ιδω τα της Χίου δράματα και εισ άλλους τόπους και μάλιστα την πατρίδα μου).<sup>80</sup> A small armed expedition to Chios in March 1822 had provoked the Ottomans into mass killing and enslavement of Greeks; Malis evidently feared a repetition.<sup>81</sup> The captains, he told the Executive, were only out for their own interests, not those of Greece.

---

<sup>73</sup> Protopsaltis, 252-3. Guys also heard that the Greeks had sent an Orthodox priest ('un Papas') to try to build support: Guys to Guilleminot, 4 April 1826.

<sup>74</sup> See below.

<sup>75</sup> Malis to Parliament (dated from Nafplion), 29 January 1826; see also Talianos to Executive, 31 January 1826: Protopsaltis, 263-4, 266.

<sup>76</sup> Gregorios to the Committee of the National Assembly (Σ. Επιτροπή της Εθνικής Συνέλευσεως), 4 May 1826, in Protopsaltis, 260-1.

<sup>77</sup> Protopsaltis, 262.

<sup>78</sup> Dakin, *The Greek Struggle*, 124-5, 130; 161-4. William St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 227-31.

<sup>79</sup> See Protopsaltis, 273.

<sup>80</sup> Malis to Executive, 26 January 1826, in Protopsaltis, 263.

<sup>81</sup> Gallant, *Edinburgh History*, 290-4 (ebook).

But the government had no real control over the chieftains. As related in an anonymous contemporary's account found by Protopsaltis, they gathered fighters on the island of Kea from late in 1825, and a force of 2600 in 14 ships, under Captain Apostolis Papa Apostolara sailed for Beirut in early March 1826.<sup>82</sup> The account goes on to relate the assault on Beirut, the retreat to the coastal tower, and contacts with Emir Bashir. The latter, it says, asked for the expedition's documents from the Greek government, and when they could not produce these, ordered them to take to their ships at once, before Ottoman troops arrived and destroyed them. They accordingly left on 25 March, and (realising Malis's fears) raided Cyprus, as well as the southern coast of Anatolia, on their way home.<sup>83</sup>

Exactly what they had hoped for is unclear. It seems unlikely that they shared Malis's grandiose schemes for a Syria-wide uprising. One of the leaders, Talianos, justifying their plans to the Executive and Theodoros Kolokotronis in January 1826, denied that they planned to attack Cyprus and Asia Minor (where fellow-Greeks lived); rather, the expedition would attack enemy provinces, and 'if it does not force the enemy to withdraw from Greece' (εαν δεν αναγκάση τον εχθρον να αποσυρθη απο την Ελλάδα), would 'benefit the Greeks with the spoils of the enemy' (τους δε Έλληνας να ωφελήσω με τα λάφυρα των εχθρων).<sup>84</sup> The Maltese fisherman who met the landing force thought that they aimed to pillage the rich merchants of Beirut.<sup>85</sup> For minor chieftains shut out from the main rewards of the war, a speculative corsairing raid may have looked like their best shot at wealth and glory. Their actions at Beirut suggest, though, that they expected aid from Emir Bashir.

What were the prospects of spreading a Greek-style dynamic to Mount Lebanon in the 1820s? As we have seen, reprisals for the Greek war and corsairing had put strain on relations between Muslims and Christians (especially Orthodox), along the Syrian coast. Yet this never reached anything like the levels found in the Morea and the islands. The Orthodox Christians, besides, were concentrated in the towns under the eye of the Ottoman governors, and possessed no military force. The only major independent armed forces were under the control of Emir Bashir and others of the Mount Lebanon elite; and Emir Bashir did enter into – guarded – negotiations with the Greeks. Had they appeared in sufficient strength, and had it suited his interests, he might well have collaborated with them on an opportunistic basis – as Abdallah Pasha had done in 1823 when the corsairs resupplied him in Acre. The Greeks were keen to impress on him (and other Lebanese) their successes against the 'Satrap of Egypt': they clearly sensed that potential allies would need to see evidence of strength.<sup>86</sup>

Anything more than a temporary alliance of convenience, though, would have required stimulating opinion in Mount Lebanon in favour of the Greek cause. The Greek authorities certainly appealed, in their letter, to Emir Bashir's 'brave and freedom-loving spirit' (τα γενναια και φιλελεύθερα φρονήματά Σας), inviting him to join an alliance of 'freedom-

---

<sup>82</sup> Protopsaltis, 273. This may be the Psaran Admiral, Nikolis Apostolis: Dakin, *The Greek Struggle*, 76.

<sup>83</sup> Protopsaltis, 274.

<sup>84</sup> Talianos to Executive and to Kolokotronis, 31 January 1826, in Protopsaltis, 266-8.

<sup>85</sup> Guys to Guilleminot, 4 April 1826.

<sup>86</sup> Administration to Bashir and to Community, 13 July 1825; Ypsilantis to Bashir, 15 June 1825, Protopsaltis, 255, 256, 259. Cf. Talianos to Kolokotronis, 31 January 1826, Protopsaltis, 267: the previous Greek emissaries to Mount Lebanon had failed because 'the inhabitants there demanded naval power' (οι εκει κάτοικοι εζήτησαν θαλάσσιον δύναμιν).

loving peoples' (των φιλελευθέρων λαων).<sup>87</sup> Dimitrios Ypsilantis not only urged him to show 'your zeal against the tyrant of humanity' (τον ζηλόν σου εναντίον του τυράννου της ανθρωπότητας), but also held out the prospect of his being 'renowned as the liberator of the Holy Places and Jerusalem' (και να ονομασθης ελευθερωτης των αγίων τόπων και της Ιερουσαλήμ).<sup>88</sup> Emir Bashir may have been happy to humour Rezis and others with hints at his sympathy – his predecessor Emir Yusuf al-Shihabi had, after all, presented himself as longing since childhood for Russian rule, when Orlov's fleet had occupied Beirut fifty years before.<sup>89</sup> But with the balance of power as it was, he was far too canny to commit himself.

Others may have been more receptive to Greeks' or their allies attempts to – as Henri Guys put it – 'create a party for them in the country' (leur faire un parti dans le pays).<sup>90</sup> The emissaries of 1825 apparently distributed over 2000 piastres' worth of gifts throughout Syria.<sup>91</sup> The Greek authorities addressed letters to other Lebanese notables and 'to the eminent Community of Lebanon' (Προς την περίβλεπτον Κοινότητα [...] του Λιβανίου),<sup>92</sup> writing of 'the freedom-loving notions of the inhabitants of Lebanon and their decision to combat the tyrants, and make triumph the true worship of the immaculate faith, the sweetest freedom, and independence' (τα φιλελεύθερα φρονήματα των κατοίκων του Λιβανίου και την απόφασίν των να πολεμήσουν τους τυράννους και να κάμουν να θριαμβεύση η αληθής λατρεία της αμωμήτου πίστεως και η γλυκυτάτη ελευθερία και ανεξαρτησία).<sup>93</sup> It is possible that this rhetoric struck a chord with some (Christian) Lebanese. Guys wrote, scornfully, that 'a few peasants may have said to them [the Greeks]: when will you come and deliver us from the tyranny that oppresses us? For they address this phrase to all the Europeans or Christians that they see.' (*quelques paysans peuvent leur avoir dit: quand viendrez vous nous délivrer de la tyrannie qui nous opprime? car ils adressent cette phrase à tous les Européens ou chrétiens qu'ils voyent.*)<sup>94</sup> The American missionary Jonas King claimed to have encountered an important Bedouin who asked, more ambiguously, that 'the English, the French, even the Greeks [might] come to free us from such oppression and misery!' (*que les Anglais, les Français, que les Grecs même viennent nous affranchir de tant d'oppression et de misère !*).<sup>95</sup> Abdallah Pasha, for one, had initially suspected the Christians of Beirut of 'intriguing and being in agreement with the rebellious unbelievers' (*bi-dasāsati-kum wa-muṭābaqati-kum li-l-kufarā al-khawārij*) – though this may have been only a pretext for fining them.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Protopsaltis, 255-6.

<sup>88</sup> Protopsaltis, 259.

<sup>89</sup> Du Quenoy, 'The Russian Occupation of Beirut', 137.

<sup>90</sup> Guys to Guilleminot, 4 April 1826.

<sup>91</sup> Protopsaltis, 260 (apparently based on Rezis's financial papers).

<sup>92</sup> Protopsaltis, 254, transcribes: Προς την περίβλεπτον Κοινότητα (έμσεχ εχιλ - τζεμαίκ) του Λιβανίου. The sense of the words in brackets is unclear – but they may possibly conceal the Arabic *mashāyikh al-jamā'ā*, 'shaykhs of the community'.

<sup>93</sup> Administration to Community, Protopsaltis, 254-5; Administration to unnamed Lebanese, 27 and 29 June 1825, in Loukatos, 387-88. Bashir himself was alert to the possibility: the first thing he asked Gregorios was whether he had brought letters for anyone else in his domains. Protopsaltis, 261.

<sup>94</sup> Guys to Guilleminot, 28 March 1826. For 'de la tyrannie qui nous opprime' he had originally written 'du joug [qui nous] accable', then crossed it out.

<sup>95</sup> Jonas King, *Extraits d'un ouvrage écrit vers la fin de l'année 1826 et au commencement de 1827, sous le titre de Coup d'oeil sur la Palestine et la Syrie, accompagné de quelques réflexions sur les missions évangéliques* (Athens: C. Nicolaidès Philadelphien, 1859), 34.

<sup>96</sup> See his order in Shihābī, *Lubnān*, 781.

One group whom the Greeks certainly tried to involve were the high Orthodox clergy. They sent letters – in similar terms to those quoted above – to the hierarchy not just of Syria, but also Cyprus.<sup>97</sup> Orthodox clergy are included, along with Bashir and others of Mount Lebanon's tax-farming elite, in a list of Lebanese notables preserved in the Greek Executive's files for April 1825.<sup>98</sup> But absent both from the list and from the correspondence of the Greek authorities are the Maronite Catholic clergy. These were the only Christian clerics with real political influence in Mount Lebanon: indeed, Bashir depended on them increasingly from 1825.<sup>99</sup> Without the involvement of the clergy or other Maronite notables, events in Lebanon were unlikely to take a Greek-style turn towards armed conflict between Christian and Muslim, or Maronite and Druze. And the Greek rebels had had little success in mobilising Catholics, even the Greek-speaking communities of the Archipelago.<sup>100</sup>

As it was, the pattern of cross-confessional elite bargaining held through the 1820s – despite the tensions created by the Greek rebellion, the uprisings of Christian commoners, and the growing political importance of the Maronite Church. In entertaining relations with the Greek rebels, Emir Bashir was – as usual – hedging his bets carefully, keeping in touch with all sides and avoiding a final commitment until the last possible moment.<sup>101</sup> When this moment arrived, he declared for the Ottomans, perhaps making use of the pretext of the Greek raiders' lack of official support. In this, Bashir was not so very different from other quasi-autonomous potentates who became caught up in the dynamic of the Greek war: Ali Pasha of Yannina, various Albanian chieftains, or Greek chiefs like Gogos or Odysseas who alternated between fighting for the Greeks and coming to arrangements with the Ottomans.<sup>102</sup> In the remote but conceivable event that European states had become involved in the war and the tide turned against the Sultan across the empire, Bashir might have made use of his Greek contacts to find new allies. But for the time being, in Syria it remained safest to keep in with the Ottoman governors and particularly with Mehmed Ali. In Greece, the balance of power was different, and powerful men not dissimilar to Bashir made different choices.

### The 'Christian Emirate'

There was, however, a sequel. Greek rebels and other observers of Egypt's growing presence along the Syrian coast during the war had not been mistaken: Mehmed Ali wanted the province. In 1831 his army invaded, again under his son Ibrahim, and held Syria for the

---

<sup>97</sup> Administration to Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and to Cypriot hierarchy, 13 July 1825, in Protopsaltis, 257-8; circular to hierarchy of Lebanon, 13 July 1825, in Loukatos, 389.

<sup>98</sup> In Loukatos, 385-6.

<sup>99</sup> Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto, 2007), 11.

<sup>100</sup> Charles A. Frazee, 'The Greek Catholic Islanders and the Revolution of 1821', *East European Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1979): 315-326.

<sup>101</sup> For similar situations, see Mishāqa, *Murder, Mayhem*, 47 (Napoleon and Ottomans, 1799); Rustum, *Bashīr bayna al-Sultān wa-l-'Azīz*, 2: 177-8 (Ibrahim Pasha and Ottomans, 1830s); Dimashqī, *Tārīkh Ḥawādith al-Shām*, 101-7 (Ibrahim Pasha, British and Ottomans, 1840).

<sup>102</sup> Giannēs Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821-1912* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), ch. 3; George Finlay, *A History of Greece: The Greek Revolution, Pt. 1, A.D. 1821-1827* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1877), 249-50, 265, 271, 306, 380-2.

following decade. While the Egyptians attempted to impose a rigorous bureaucratic government, the European commercial and diplomatic presence grew apace.<sup>103</sup> Ibrahim faced rebellion in different parts of Syria, but more importantly the anxieties of the European Powers. His defeat of the Ottoman armies in December 1832 at Konya had driven Sultan Mahmud to make an alliance with Russia: this the British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston viewed with great suspicion, as giving Russia access to the eastern Mediterranean. Palmerston engineered a diplomatic agreement among the European Powers (bar France), and in August-September 1840 intervened to expel Egyptian forces from Syria.<sup>104</sup>

A serious rebellion had broken out in Mount Lebanon earlier in 1840: it had several components, but one was a Christian commoner movement recognisably in the tradition of the 1821 leagues.<sup>105</sup> It issued a proclamation calling on the Lebanese to rise against Egyptian 'slavery': 'the Greeks,' it added, 'rose up before you, and obtained total freedom from God.'<sup>106</sup> The Christian rebels also attracted support from a few local Europeans: the aristocratic French vicomte Onffroy de Thoron, the fiery Polish Jesuit Maximilian Ryllo, a Piedmontese said to have been an acrobat performing 'Hercules', and the Greek consul at Beirut.<sup>107</sup> They were inspired by similar sentiments to the philhellenes of twenty years since, though with a greater role played by Catholic and Crusading themes.

The French consul Prosper Bourée was also carried away by his sympathies, despite his government's support for Mehmed Ali. He was probably responsible for rendering the rebels' proclamation into French: in this free translation, the Lebanese become 'Amis de la Patrie', moved by a 'patriotique appel' to recover their 'indépendance'.<sup>108</sup> Bourée sent to Paris a plan for setting up a Christian emirate in Mount Lebanon, under nominal Ottoman suzerainty and French protection – but was immediately recalled to France.<sup>109</sup> In the meantime, the British and Austrians made their move: they landed arms, troops, and money, and most importantly bombarded the Syrian coast, blowing up the supposedly impregnable citadel of Acre.<sup>110</sup> Mehmed Ali took the point and withdrew his army to Egypt; Bashir al-Shihabi, compromised by his association with the Egyptian regime, was packed off into exile in Malta.

---

<sup>103</sup> Polk, *The Opening of South Lebanon*, 111-2, 116-20, 161-66, 219-20; Chevallier, *La société du Mont Liban*, 182-192.

<sup>104</sup> Robert Holland, *Blue-Water Empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 61-64.

<sup>105</sup> Rustum, *Bashīr bayna al-Sultān wa-l-'Azīz*, 173-84.

<sup>106</sup> National Archives (Kew), FO 78/412.

<sup>107</sup> Vicomte Onffroy, 'Insurrection du Liban', *Revue de l'Orient* 4 (1846), 324-334; Ferdinand Perrier, *La Syrie sous le gouvernement de Méhémet-Ali jusqu'en 1840* (Paris: A. Bertrand, 1842), 374-6; Bourée to Thiers, 6 June 1840, CADN 92PO/A/24; Carol Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 27-28.

<sup>108</sup> Ignaz de Testa, *Recueil des traités de la Porte ottomane avec les puissances étrangères, depuis le premier traité conclu, en 1536, entre Suléyman I et François I jusqu'à nos jours*, 3 (Paris: Amyot, 1868): 74-76. On the different versions of this proclamation, see Peter Hill, 'Asad Rustum and the Egyptian Occupation of Syria (1831-1841): Between Narratives of Modernity and Documentary Exactitude', manuscript under review, 2020.

<sup>109</sup> Hakim, *Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, 28-29.

<sup>110</sup> Rustum, *Bashīr bayna al-Sultān wa-l-'Azīz*, 200-9; Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, 64.

Over the following months, as the emirate passed into the hands of his far less capable cousin Bashir Qasim, both the Maronite Patriarch and the French government took up Bourée's notion of a Christian emirate. Mount Lebanon's politics began to polarise between Maronites who supported this position, and Druze who refused to concede that the emirate was the hereditary property of the Shihabi family. In March 1841, the Patriarch had Maronite leaders sign a pact for common action, similar to those made by commoner leagues in 1821. In November, Druze leaders besieged Emir Bashir Qasim in his capital, and the Patriarch gathered a Maronite army to aid him. But the Maronite alliance soon disintegrated: Bashir Qasim too went into exile, and the Shihabi emirate ended.<sup>111</sup> Over the next decade, its resurrection was the hope and desire of Maronite churchmen and their French allies.<sup>112</sup> Their propaganda occasionally mentioned the example of the Greeks, but as in 1840 its tenor was mainly Catholic, with much emphasis on the perpetual Catholicity of the Maronites and their links with Saint Louis, the Crusader King.<sup>113</sup>

From 1840 onwards, we can thus see what look like symptoms of Shelley's 'general fever' appearing faintly in Mount Lebanon, as they had not in 1821. The polarisation of Christian against Muslim (or Maronite against Druze); the aspiration to an independent, European-protected Christian polity; the romantic movement of sympathy among Europeans – all these would after henceforth have a place in Lebanese politics. But the symptoms remained mild: there was no wholesale massacre of either Druze or Christians, no Muslim-free zone to become a homogeneous Christian nation-state, no major European movement in favour of the Christian Lebanese. These relative absences may be seen as indices of underlying differences between Mount Lebanon and Greece: the lack, in the former, of an overwhelming Christian majority, or of major exposure to the politico-military upheavals of the Revolutionary wars. But they also reflect the fact that the moment for a Greek-style upheaval had passed by 1840.

The Mediterranean was becoming subject to a more stable kind of order, and Palmerston's assertion of British power in that year would set the seal on it. The 1820s and 1830s would appear in retrospect an unsettled, transitional time, when the Congress of Vienna settlement chafed uneasily against aspirations deriving from the Revolutionary wars. Under these conditions, novel political projects could emerge – Greek national independence, Mehmed Ali's modernising state, or indeed philhellenism<sup>114</sup> – while features of the pre-

---

<sup>111</sup> Hakim, *Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, 30-35.

<sup>112</sup> Hakim, *Origins of the Lebanese National Idea*, ch. 2; Andrew Arsan, "'There Is, in the Heart of Asia, ... an Entirely French Population': France, Mount Lebanon, and the Workings of Affective Empire in the Mediterranean, 1830-1920", in Patricia Lorcin and Todd Shepard, eds, *French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 76-100.

<sup>113</sup> See Abd Allah Boustani, *Lettre de Mgr l'archevêque de Saïda ... au sujet du massacre des Maronites par les Druzes* (Paris: J.-B. Gros, 1847), 4; J. Azar, *Les Marounites : d'après le manuscrit arabe du R. P. Azar* (Cambrai: F. Deligne et E. Lesne, 1852), 112; Nicolas Murad, *Notice historique sur l'origine de la nation maronite et sur ses rapports avec la France, sur la nation druze et sur les diverses populations du Mont Liban*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Adrien Le Clere, 1844), 36. There was a more liberal variant: Alphonse de Lamartine, *La France Parlementaire (1834-1851): Oeuvres oratoires et écrits politiques par A. de Lamartine* (Paris: A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie., 1865) 4: 291-308, 439-455; but he does not mention Greece.

<sup>114</sup> Among other grandiose foreign projects for the Mediterranean, which included Saint-Simonianism and indeed the Protestant missions of men like Jonas King and William Goodell. Marwa Elshakry, 'Free Love, Funny Costumes and a Canal at Suez: The Saint-Simonians in Egypt', *Bidoun* 10 (2007), <https://www.bidoun.org/articles/free-love-funny-costumes-and-a-canal-at-suez>; Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of*



Napoleonic Mediterranean, like corsairing and warlordry, could also reassert themselves. The 1840s, by contrast, would see the consolidation of a more stable and peaceful Mediterranean order, of regular steamers and expanding Europe-facing trade, policed by British naval power.<sup>115</sup> Navarino, in 1827, marked one step towards the entrenchment of this order, leading on to the independence of the Greek state and the suppression of corsairing. 1840 marked a further step, as Mehmed Ali was confined to Egypt, and Lebanese politics subsequently frozen in their complex sectarian form. In the succeeding decades, European states continued to jostle for influence, in Mount Lebanon as in the Kingdom of Greece, but within the bounds of a reasonably fixed, though negotiable order.<sup>116</sup> While European influence expanded apace, Ottoman subjects' religio-national aspirations remained largely confined within the limits of formal Ottoman sovereignty, the Tanzimat reforms, and great-power diplomacy.<sup>117</sup> The age of instability and possibility that had made Greek independence possible had passed – to the particular regret of ambitious Frenchmen.

Another such age would arrive in the wake of the heavy Ottoman defeat by the Russians in the war of 1878-79. Sharper religio-national confrontations followed, in a context of heightened imperial competition: the 1890s massacres of Armenians, the Balkan Wars, then the First World War and Armenian Genocide.<sup>118</sup> This new wave of war, revolution, and ethno-religious cleansing ultimately swept away the Ottoman empire itself, leaving a new crop of independent nation-states across the Balkans and Anatolia; while European powers carved up the southern Ottoman provinces. Syria-Lebanon became a French League of Nations Mandate in 1923, giving fresh scope to old Franco-Maronite designs: a Christian-dominated 'Grand Liban' was soon definitively hived off from Syria. But this project – like others of the period in the southern ex-Ottoman lands – did not take a religiously exclusive form.<sup>119</sup> The independent Lebanese Republic which emerged from it in 1943 was designed as a Christian-dominated entity, but emphatically not a Christian-only one.<sup>120</sup> Multiconfessional power-sharing, not religious homogeneity, would form the basis of its national mystique.

---

*Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), ch. 3.

<sup>115</sup> Charles Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 46-48; Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, 66-67. For a portrait of this new Mediterranean for the European traveller, see Services maritimes des Messageries nationales, *Les Paquebots du Levant: guide des voyageurs des paquebots-poste de la Méditerranée* (Paris: Paulin et Lechevalier, 1853).

<sup>116</sup> Caesar E. Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon, 1830-1861* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2000); Gallant, *Edinburgh History*, 389-96 (ebook); Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, 69-71.

<sup>117</sup> M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), ch. 4.

<sup>118</sup> Hanioglu, *Late Ottoman Empire*, chs. 5, 6.

<sup>119</sup> See the contrasts between the northern (Anatolian-Balkan) and southern (Arab) Ottoman empire drawn by Ussama Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), chs 3, 4.

<sup>120</sup> Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence*, 134-141.