



## VII.

NOTICE OF A MAMLÚK COIN, STRUCK BY COMMAND OF THE SULTAN MELIK DHÁHER ROKN-ED-DIN BIBÁRS BONDOKDARI.

الملك الظاهر ركن الدين بيبرس بندقداري

[Read before the Numismatic Society, February 19th, 1857.]

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AT one of our meetings I promised, on the invitation of our President, to read a few observations respecting a Mamlúk coin, which I then had the honor of exhibiting. I will now, with your permission, fulfil my promise.

The history of the Mamlúk sultans is so well described by the Arabic author, Taki-ed-din Ahmed Makrizi, and so beautifully translated by Quatremère, that it required little research on my part to enable me to give a short account of the life and works of the sultan, by whose command the coin in question was struck.

مَمْلُوك *Mamlúk*, is a word derived from the Arabic مَلِك *Múlk*, signifying possession, or property, and refers to the Turkish and Circassian slaves who formed the body

guard of the successors of Salahdin; and who, having been raised to some of the principal offices in the kingdom, became, at last, masters of Egypt themselves.

Melik Moezz Izz-ed-din Aibek was the first Mamlúk sultan, Melik-Mansúr Núr ed-din Ali was the second, and Melik Modhaffer Kutúz the third. These three Mamlúks reigned from the year 1250 to 1260 of the Christian era, when Melik Dhabar Rokn ed-din Bibárs Bondokdari began to reign and continued to remain in power till the year 1277.

Bibárs, a native of Turkey, was bought by Melik Sâleh Nejm ed-din Ayúb; he distinguished himself in the service of his master, and, by degrees, became elevated in rank. After the death of Melik Sâleh he entered into the service of Melik Moadham, and remained with him until the time when the life of the latter ended by having his throat cut. Bibárs continued to rise in estimation on account of his prodigious valor; and, after the death of Fares-ed-din Aktaï, he left Káhireh for Syria. A little while after, he returned to Egypt and accompanied Kutúz in his expedition against the Tartars. On that occasion he asked Kutúz to appoint him governor of Aleppo. This the Sultan refused. Fearing to have a man like Bibárs as an enemy, he resolved to deprive him of his life. Bibárs, however, received information of that project in good time, and he, one day, when the Sultan returned from a hunting party, entered the Royal tent to ask for the possession of one of the female prisoners of war; the Sultan immediately granted his request, and Bibárs, under the pretence of kissing his hands as a mark of gratitude, took hold of the Sultan's arm, which was a preconcerted signal with the other emirs to commence an attack. One emir struck him with the sword on the neck, a second pulled him down from the horse on which he still sat, and a third sent an arrow into his heart.

After the assassination of the sultan, all the emirs who took part in the plot entered the Royal tent, when the emir Aktai-Mostáreb rose and asked, "Which among you has taken the life of Kutúz?" and Bibárs, in the most composed manner, declared that he himself had perpetrated the act. Upon this Aktai-Mostáreb said, "Sit down in his place—sit on the throne destined for the Sultan."

Bibárs, the new sultan, took first the title of **الملك القاهر** *Elmelik Elkáhir*, "the conquering king"; but the vázir Zein ed-din Jakúb ben Zohaír advised him to change that title, as no one observed the vázir, who bore it ever succeeded in his career. Bibárs, therefore, adopted instead the title of Melik Dhaher, **الملك الظاهر**. This word has a double signification: first, "the glorious," and, secondly, an allusion to an individual who follows the practical devotions of religion, as prescribed by the simple words of the koran.

The inhabitants of Káhireh, as well as all Mamlúks in the different Egyptian provinces, gladly submitted to the sceptre of Bibárs, with the exception only of the emir Sanjar Halebi, the governor of Damascus. He persuaded the emirs to acknowledge his own supreme authority; and, on the 6th day of the month Dhoo'l Hidge, the prayer in the mosque was offered up for the life and prosperity of Melik Dháher as well as for that of Melik Mújáhíd, the latter being the title which Sanjar Halebi then adopted. He went even so far as to have money struck, bearing inscriptions which united the name of Melik Dháher with that of Melik Múdjáhíd.

In the same year, however, a revolution broke out at Aleppo, the governor was deposed, and the emir **حسام الدين** *Húsám ed-din El-júkán dár El-azízí* was appointed in his stead. He was favorably inclined to Bibárs; and after various battles had been fought with

marked success by the forces of the sultan, the revolution was quelled. The army of the sultan then directed their course, under the command of the emir Jemal ed-din Múhammad, towards Damascus, there deposed Melik Mújálíd, and proclaimed Bibárs as Sultan.

Bibárs suppressed the various revolutions in Syria, and made himself feared by the Mongols, the Greeks, and the Armenians.

To give more dignity to his elevated position, he caused Ahmed (Mostanser Billah), a prince of the Abbasside family, to confer upon him the title of Sultan, whilst he left the title of Khálifa to Ahmed. This important act took place in the year 1264, a year particularly distinguished in consequence of the brilliant comet which appeared in the constellation of Orion.

In the diploma which the Khálifa gave to the sultan, the following passages occur, which show what spirit of hatred pervaded the heart of the enemy with whom the Crusaders, at that time, had to fight:—

“One of the most important points which must be treated here,” says the Khálifa, “is the war against the infidels; this is a most indispensable duty incumbent upon all the Múslemin—this is an act, the remembrance of which will be recorded in history. God has promised a magnificent reward to all those who fight in the cause of religion, and has reserved for them a most eminent place in paradise.

“Already you have distinguished yourself by brilliant acts, which caused the envious to turn pale for shame. You have shown a power of resolution more penetrating than the sword, more agreeable to the Múslemin than the most entertaining feasts. It is by your valor that God protected the ramparts of Islam, and secured them from being profaned by the enemy. Your courage has preserved for the Múslemin the integrity of their empire. Your sword has

inflicted incurable wounds in the hearts of the infidels, and it is by you that the throne of the Khálifas, will, we hope, regain its former splendour."

To evince his gratitude to the Khálifa, and to make his devotion to the representative of the Prophet known to the Múslemin, he caused the inscription on the coins henceforth to be struck to contain the following words :—

ببیرس قسیم امیر المومنین الحاکم بأمر الله العباس احمد

Bibárs, the intimate friend of the Commander of the faithful, the Imam who governs by the command of God, Ahmed the Abbaside.

In his wars with the Crusaders, he encountered several disasters, but he nevertheless took from them many important cities; and a letter which I shall now have the honor of reading to you, addressed to Bohemond, the son of Robert Guiscard, after his taking of Antioch in the year 1267, will give you an example of the fierce manner in which he treated his enemies.

"To the illustrious, venerable and honourable Count, the warrior, the belligerent lion, the glory of the Christian nation, the chief of the Crusaders, and the greatest among the adorers of Jesus. To him, whose title of *Prince*, by the fall of Antioch became changed for that of *Count*. May God lead him into the right path, crown his enterprises with a happy result, and cause good counsel to find easy access to him at all times.

"The Count, I say, is well aware of our having marched against Tarablús and of our having carried war into the very heart of his estates. He has seen, since our departure, his ships destroyed, his men killed, and the churches swept from the face of the earth. The Count has also seen every house given up to all kinds of outrage; the dead



bodies heaped up on the sea-shore like islands ; the men slaughtered, and their children made prisoners ; the women sent into slavery ; and all the trees cut down except those required for the construction of implements of war and palisades. We have taken all that belonged to you and your subjects, money, women, children, and flocks ; the poor amongst us have become rich, the bachelor has received a wife, the servant is a keeper of slaves, and he who before walked on foot now rides on horseback.

“ And you, you did contemplate the sight of a man given up to the agonies of death, and on hearing a voice, you surely, in the most terrified manner, must have said unto yourself, ‘ Oh that voice is directed against me ! ’ You have been well aware of our having only left you for the purpose of again coming back to you, and our object in granting you some respite has only been to wait for the time previously fixed upon by us.

“ When we left your estates, there was not a single beast without its following our troops, not a girl without being in our power, not a column without having fallen under the blows of our pickaxes, not a field without its crops being gathered by us ; in short there was no single object of your property which fell not into our hands. You could not find refuge either in the caverns of the highest rock, or in the deepest valley, which penetrates even into the midst of the frontiers and surpasses all imagination.

“ You were also aware, how, after leaving you, we appeared in front of Antioch, the capital, without any sign being previously given of our approach ; you knew that we intended going away from you only for a short time, with the intention of coming back soon afterwards. Well, we send you now the accomplished facts, and we are going to inform you of all the calamities which befell the land.

“ We left Tarablús on Wednesday, the 24th day of Shábán, and encamped behind the wall of Antioch on the first day of the month of Rámádan. The moment after our arrival, your troops came out of the town to attack us, but we conquered them. They mutually supported themselves, but could not obtain any advantage thereby. The lord high constable, who was among the prisoners we had taken, asked for permission to have a conference with your subjects, and I agreed to it. He entered into the town, and soon returned, accompanied by a number of monks and principal personages among your attendants. They wanted to treat with us, but we soon found out that their designs were similar to yours, which are to kill the people; for when the matter under discussion was the doing of any good, their plans were opposed; on the contrary, when it was the doing of evil, they were all of one opinion. Seeing that their fate was decided without remedy, and that God had decreed their death, we dismissed them, saying, ‘We are now going to besiege you immediately; this is the first and last information we can give you.’ They left us, acting in a manner as you would do, fully impressed with the idea that you would come with your infantry and cavalry to help them. However, during the interval of less than an hour, the field-marshal, the superior of the monks, the keeper of the castle, all were surrounded by death. We made the assault, sword in hand, on Saturday at four o’clock, the fourth day of the month of Ramadán, and destroyed all those whom you had selected to guard and defend the town. Among the people we found there, every one had at least something in his possession, but now there is not one among us who has not either one of the people themselves, or something that belonged to them, in his possession. Oh if you had seen the riders, how they were thrown under the feet of their

horses ! your houses invaded by the plunderers, and freely over run by those who were searching after spoil ! If you had seen your wealth weighed by the kintar ; and your jewels, how they were sold or bought with your own treasures, at the price of four for one dinár ; if you had seen your churches demolished, your crosses cut to pieces, and the books of your false evangelists exposed ; if you had seen your enemy, the Múslim, ravaging the sanctuary ; the monk, the priest, and the deacon, all slaughtered on the altar ; the nobles given up to misfortune, and the princes of the royal family reduced to slavery ; if you could only have contemplated the sight of flames penetrating into your palaces ; the dead given up to the flames of this world previous to their being given up to the fire which awaits them in the other ;—your palaces, with all the furniture therein, destroyed ; the churches of St. Paul and Assian tottering, and at last ceasing to exist ; if you could have seen all this, you surely would have said, ‘ I wish to God I had been transformed into clay ! ’ or, ‘ I wish I had never received the letter which gives me the account of this fearful catastrophe.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ولورایت کنایسک و صلبانها قد کسرت ونسرت وصحفها من الاناجیل المزورة قد نشرت وقبور البطارقة وقد بعثرت ولورایت عدوئ المسلم وقد داس مکان القداس والمذبح وقد ذبح فيه الراهب والقسيس والشماس والبطارقة قد دهموا بطارقة وابناء المملكة وقد دخلوا فی المملكة ولو شاهدت النيران وهي فی قصورك تخرق والقتلى بنار الدنيا قبل الاخرة تخرق وقصورك واحوالها قد حالت وكنيسة بولس وكنيسة العسیان وقد زلت وزالت لکنت تقول یا لیتنی کنت ترابا ویا لیتنی لم اوت بهذا الخبر کتابا



"This mournful state of things will cause your soul to expire; and these flames will become extinguished by the water of your tears. Oh! if you were to see your habitations empty of all that belonged to them; all your chariots taken; all your vessels lying in the port of Súwádiah and your boats fallen into the power of your enemy; you, surely, would feel convinced, that God who has first given Antioch to you, has now again taken it from you;—that the Lord who has given the citadel into your possession, has now again deprived you of it, and made it altogether disappear from the face of the earth. You will now understand, that we have, thank God, taken again possession of the Islam fortresses which you had seized, viz. Shákif-Talmis, Shákif-Kafr-denin, and all other places in the district of Antioch. We have forced the soldiers to leave the castle; we have taken them by the hair, and dispersed them far and nigh. Nothing remained to which the word 'resistance' could be applied, unless it were 'the river'; and, even that, if it could, would cease to bear the name of *Así*, عاصي 'the rebel.' That river now sheds tears of regret. Formerly its tears consisted of clear water, but now they are of blood, which we have poured into it.

"This letter contains good tidings for you, inasmuch as it informs you, that it pleased God to watch over your life and to prolong your days, as it so happened that you have not been yourself at Antioch during that time. If you had been there, surely, you would now have been either killed or made prisoner, wounded or mutilated.

"A living man contemplating the sight of a field covered with dead bodies, must feel some pleasure in knowing that he is himself in safety; perhaps God granted the prolongation of your days that you may thereby have time allowed to

make good all you have hitherto neglected to do, with regard to obedience and service due to him.

“As none escaped who could inform you of this event, we have taken it upon ourselves to do so. It not being in the power of any one to let you know that your life is in safety, and that all the others died, we have given you all the information in this our despatch, that you might know things exactly as they are. After receiving such a letter, you ought not to accuse us any more of falsehood, nor need you to ask any one for further information.”

Bohemond, on receiving this letter, was very much irritated, this being indeed the first news he received of the fall of Antioch.

We must hope, and happily we have reason to believe, that the Múhammedan princes of the present century have given up that spirit of revenge, and that any royal diploma given to the sovereign of any of their countries will not any longer recommend the entire annihilation of the Franks; or, at all events, that the representatives of European powers will always take care, that the Múhammedans shall not act in strict accordance with injunctions similar to those of the Khálifa Abu'l-Kâsem Ahmed.

This letter, showing how the Múhammedans at that time felt with regard to Europeans, it may perhaps not be uninteresting to the members of this society to hear a few words of advice given by Admiral Sir Sydney Smith, in a letter which I had the honour of receiving twenty years ago. The original is in the following words:—

“Your note of this morning finds me at my writing table working for you, and surrounded by Arabic manuscripts, which I wished to put under your eye for your information and guidance in your projected tour. Your excuses for not coming to my distant residence I must necessarily

admit, knowing your multifarious and important occupations; but I cannot the less feel the disappointment at not having the opportunity of making some useful communications to you, such as :—

“An authentic copy of the capitulation granted by the Caliph Omar on his entry into Jerusalem, A.H. 15, to the Patriarch Zephirinus (Sophronius), giving and securing to the Christian subjects privileges still in existence when claimed by those who have the right and have the sense to appeal to the original (one of four) in the archives of the law officers at Constantinople, a copy of which I sent to the persons interested therein, living under the authority of the Pasha of Jerusalem, in order that they might exhibit to the latter, and remind him, in my name, that the Christian powers had an eye upon him, and would not fail to comply with each other's request, to make a joint effort for their protection in case of its arbitrary violation.

“2ndly. The correspondence of the ecclesiastical authorities of the four Christian right guardians of the Holy Sepulchre.

“3rdly. The correspondence of the present ministers of Sultan Mahmúd with me on their own affairs as dependent on me, knowing that my eye is keen as a hawk's, and my claws long when I am obliged to put them out, always against my will, and never but when forced by imperative circumstances, such as violation of principles and treaties, oppression of the defenceless, and their evident need of the succour my influence or action may be supposed to be equal to affording them.”

Bibárs then proceeded to the Holy Land, made himself master of Zafed, the castle of Kárák, of 'Tiberias, and various other places. He ravaged Little Armenia and made the king's son prisoner, took possession of Derbesák, Derkúsh, Belmish, Káfrdenin, Rábán and Merzéban. He

also penetrated into Nubia, upset the throne of David, and substituted Meshker, who engaged to give up to Bibárs half of his annual revenues.

In the year 1268, Bibárs went into the Hejáz, where he received the homage of all the Emirs; he entered Mecca and Medina, where he most creditably acquitted himself of his duties as a pious Múslim; and opened on that occasion friendly relations with the king of Yemen, who offered him many valuable and handsome presents.

Makrizi gives a description of the various contemporaries of Bibárs, among whom we find *St. Louis*, or Louis IX., who, with the intention of converting the Bey of Tunis, proceeded to his capital, and there died, at the age of fifty-five, in the year 1270.

With regard to Edward, who, after the death of St. Louis, went to the Holy Land, and distinguished himself by his valiant exploits, Makrizi gives the following account.

"Bibárs," he says, "having been informed of the arrival of the King of England, that he landed at Acre with 300 horse, eight large ships, and many other vessels, forming in all thirty sail, and that it was his intention to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he encamped at Tripolis, and there, after divers occurrences, the Franks sued for peace, and obtained a truce of ten years' duration."

Makrizi, however, adds, that Bibárs sent two of his officers with 3000 Egyptian dinárs to redeem the prisoners.

Bibárs was a most active prince; he examined personally all that was going on in his estates; he was sure to inspect his fortresses, and, on many occasions, he himself assisted to demolish the walls and strongholds of his enemies. His activity induced the poet of his age to say of him, "One day in Egypt, one day in the Hejáz, one day in Syria, and one day in Aleppo."

In the year 1268, when his army supposed him dan-

gerously ill in his tent near Orsúf, he secretly left the place, went to Egypt, there regulated all the affairs of the state, and, after a short time, re-appeared to his soldiers who were under the impression that he had never quitted his tent.

In the year 1277, however, the moment arrived when his glory was to become extinguished, and his life was to end, by a fate similar to that which he had prepared for his predecessor Kútúz. The astrologers told him, that some great man would die that year; and Bibárs, with the intention of removing the evil fate from himself, prepared a poison for Malik Kaher, a prince of the house of Salahdin; but the cup which contained the poison was forgotten to be removed, and Bibárs, taking it himself, drank its fatal contents and expired in the greatest sufferings, after a reign of seventeen years.

Bibárs bore the title of *أبو الفتح* *Abú'l futúkh*, "the father of victory," and ordered the figure of a lion, called in Arabic *الأسد الصرغام* *Elássad Eddharghám*, "the ferocious lion," to be struck on the money issued during his reign, as an emblem of the wars he made against his enemies, and the victories he achieved over them. Marsden considers the lion as an imitation of the style adopted by the Seljúk princes.

He also selected the title of *ركن الدين* *Rokn ed-din*, "The pillar or support of religion," in reference to the black corner-stone of the Cáaba, which is called *ركن البيت* *Rokn él-beit*, and to signify thereby his most fervent attachment to the Islam.

On the coin which I again have the honour to exhibit, the *أسد الصرغام* and the title of *ركن الدين* were inscribed, but not the title of *الملك الظاهر* which he was advised to adopt by his Vázir, Zeïn-éd-din Jakúb ben Zoháir: he is still called by his original title *الملك القاهر* *Elmelik Elkáhir* "The conquering king." It follows therefore that the coin in question must have been one of the first issued from the mint of Bibárs.



In conclusion, we must not omit to state some of his benevolent traits. He distributed annually one hundred thousand measures of corn, and provided munificently for the widows and orphans of the soldiers who died on the field of battle.

He founded the college of Dhaherieh at Kabireh, built a caravanserai in the Holy City of Jerusalem, made magnificent bridges across the Nile, and constructed the canals of Alexandria and Tánáh.

His two sons, Melik Saïd Nasr-ed-din Múhammad Bereke-Khan and Melik Adl Bedr-ed-din Selámesh, only occupied the throne for the period of two years. The former, having irritated the emirs by his tyrannical caprices, was deposed; and his brother, who was then proclaimed sultan, met with a similar fate after a reign of one hundred days.

These revolutions having been planned by Keláún, the Atábek of the army, he took the crown for himself, in the year 1279.

A coin of Bibárs with the inscription of **القاهر** being very scarce, this specimen from my cabinet deserves the attention of the numismatist. The alloy of the Dirhems of Dhaher consisted of seventy per cent. of fine silver, and thirty per cent. of copper.

Silver. 54 grains.

*Obv.*—**الملك . . . الدنيا والدين الملك القاهر**

“The King, the pillar of the world and of religion, the conquering King.”

The word **ركن** is effaced. Below the inscription is the lion called **الاسد الصرغام**

*Rev.*—**لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى**

“There is no God but God—Muhammad, the messenger of God—He sent him with guidance.”

The rest of the usual legend, **ودين احق ليظهره على الدين** and true faith, that he might exalt the religion above all, though the infidels be averse thereto,” is omitted.