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Edited by JOHN FRANCE, KELLY DeVRIES
and CLIFFORD J. ROGERS

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1

Baktash the Forgotten: The Battle of Tell Bashir (1108) and the Saljuq Civil Wars*

Andrew Bolinger

Occurring only a decade after the Crusaders first arrived in Syria, the battle of Tell Bashir is unique for battles of the time. Though Muslims and Christians had certainly served alongside each other before, this was the first instance since the crusade where crusaders and Turks allied with each other to fight their co-religionists. Both the surviving sources as well as modern recapitulations vary widely in their retelling of how and why the battle happened. This article seeks to clear up why this confusion exists both in the sources and in our modern literature. Instead of synthesizing the many accounts of the battle, it argues that by following the most robust account provided we end up with the narrative that best coheres with what we know about the characters involved.

In the autumn of 1108, a curious battle unfolded near the castle of Tell Bashir.[1] Not unusual in tactics or strategy, the battle stands out because Christians and Muslims fought on both sides against their co-religionists a mere eleven years after the first crusaders reached Syria. Frankish Count Baldwin II of Edessa allied with Emir Jawuli Saqao of Mosul against the alliance of Tancred, the regent of Antioch, and Prince Ridwan of Aleppo. Though hard pressed, Tancred's coalition routed the forces of Edessa and Mosul. However, saying anything beyond

* I owe great thanks to those who helped me refine this paper. Of these, first and foremost is Jochen Burgtorf, who gave me several rounds of comments and advice. I also owe thanks to Stephen O'Connor and Maged Mikhail for their comments, insights, and encouragements. Finally, I am thankful for helpful feedback from anonymous reviewers.

1 "Tell Bashir" is also known as "Turbessel," "Tall Bashir," or "Tell Baschir." Likewise, "Jawuli Saqao" is rendered as "Cavli Sakavu," "Djavaly Secava," or "Chawli Saqawa" while "Baktash" is sometimes transliterated as "Bektash," "Artash," or "Ertash." While there is certainly value in accurate transliteration, the wide variation in how these names have been transliterated only muddles the story for those who rely on translations. Thus, proper nouns throughout this work will reflect the usage in Donald Richards' translations, regardless of whether they are the best transliterations available. See Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, trans. Donald S. Richards, in *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks: Selections from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh of 'Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir* (New York, 2002) and *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 1: The Years 491–541/1097–1146: The Coming of the Franks and the Muslim Response* (Burlington, 2005).

this level of summary is bound to conflict with some other scholar's work.[2] The disagreements are so pronounced that some authors do not even seem to be referencing the same event.[3]

These disagreements are a byproduct of synthesizing diverse sources into a single narrative. While normally reliable, synthesis is the wrong methodology for understanding the battle of Tell Bashir because of the great disparity between many of the sources in terms of thoroughness and reliability. Instead, we should break with normal methodology and try to make a coherent narrative out of the single best source we have: Ibn al-Athir. His work stands out among the extant sources as vastly more detailed and cohesive, but is sidelined because his version frequently conflicts with Latin accounts. In contrast to modern authors who cast the *casus belli* as local Latin politics, Ibn al-Athir posits that imperial Saljuq politics led to the battle of Tell Bashir. Specifically, that Jawuli Saqao tried to elevate a Saljuq prince to challenge Sultan Muhammad for the Saljuq domains.

Despite the battle's curious arrangement of protagonists and large ramifications for the region, it is, on average, poorly detailed in the primary sources.[4] Some accounts are short – bordering on dismissive – while others are so obviously exaggerated that they are normally dismissed.[5] The primary sources do

[2] A note on the usage of titles in this paper: Arabic and Turkish titles from this period do not translate evenly to Western titles. For example, *malik* is used for king or sometimes just local lord. I will use a very simple system: the widely acknowledged leader of the Saljuq Empire will be called *Sultan*, all other members of the Saljuq royal line will be called *Princes*, and non-Saljuq lords will be called *Emirs*. I do this not to devalue the titles that were used by locals, but because I want to make salient which actors might have had imperial ambitions due to their ancestry as opposed to those whose position prevented them from ever becoming Sultan.

[3] Paul Cobb and Harold Fink present two such incompatible versions. See Paul Cobb, *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades* (Oxford, 2014), p. 115; Harold Fink, "The Foundation of the Latin States, 1099–1118," in *A History of the Crusades, Volume I: The First Hundred Years*, ed. Marshall Baldwin and Kenneth Setton (Philadelphia, 1958), 393–94.

[4] Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitanae expeditionis* 9.46, 10.37–38, 11.10–22, trans. Susan B. Edgington (Oxford, 2007), pp. 700–03, 752–55, 780–97; "The First and Second Crusade from an Anonymous Syrian Chronicle," ed. and trans. Arthur S. Tritton, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 1 (1933), pp. 80–82; Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana expeditionis* 2.28.1–5, trans. Frances R. Ryan and ed. Harold S. Fink (Knoxville, 1969), p. 180; Gregory Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum* 10.273, trans. Ernest Budge (Amsterdam, 1976), pp. 241–42; Ibn Abi Tayyi, "Un Épisode Épico-féodal Franc dans une Chronique Arabe," ed. and trans. Claude Cahen, *La Noblesse au Moyen Age, XIe–XVe Siècles: Essais à la Mémoire de Robert Boutruche*, no. 1 (Paris, 1976), pp. 129–32; Ibn al-Adim, *La Cronique d'Alep*, in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Orientaux* (Paris, 1884), 3:595–96; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh* 10.457–66 (Burlington, 2005), pp. 136–42; Matthew of Edessa, *Chronicle* 3.39–43, trans. Ara Dostourian (New York, 1993), pp. 201–03; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* 15.10, 15.14, trans. Matti Moosa (Teaneck, 2014), pp. 625–27, 638–39; William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea* 11.8, trans. Emily A. Babcock and August C. Krey, vol. 1 (New York, 1943), pp. 474–75.

[5] For example, "The First and Second Crusade from an Anonymous Syrian Chronicle" is largely ignored by modern authors presumably for the author's excessive imagination regarding the interactions between Joscelin and Jawuli. See Thomas Asbridge, *The Creation of the Princi-*

not even agree regarding who was at the battle, much less why it was fought.[6] Understandably, these challenges have complicated modern attempts to build a robust synthetic account. To the extent that modern authors address the battle of Tell Bashir, they reflect the original sources' lack of consensus regarding how or why the events transpired.

Of the ten sources for the battle of Tell Bashir, the four that came from the Latin states (Albert of Aachen, Fulcher of Chartres, William of Tyre, and Matthew of Edessa) have had the largest impact on modern works. For instance, out of thirty-two modern accounts of Tell Bashir, 75 percent state in some fashion that the battle was over control of the lordship of Edessa, while about 34 percent claim the Edessans provoked the battle.[7] Both ideas primarily stem from

pality of Antioch, 1098–1130 (Woodbridge, 2000) where despite substantial overlap in content the work is hardly utilized. Likewise, the chronicle of Ibn Abi Tayyi asserts Joscelin traveled all the way to Constantinople to gain aid in defeating Tancred, and is likewise reasonably dismissed by modern authors as wildly implausible.

6 For a full breakdown of each source, see Andrew Bolinger, "The Crusaders' Sultan: Reinterpreting the Battle of Tell Bashir and its Implications for Twelfth-Century Franco-Turkish Political Relation in Northern Syria" (Master's thesis, California State University Fullerton, 2016), pp. 17–29.

7 Monique Amouroux-Mourad, *Le Comté d'Edesse: 1098–1150* (Paris, 1988), pp. 66–67; Thomas Asbridge, *The Crusades: The Authoritative History of the War for the Holy Land* (New York, 2010), pp. 145–47, and *The Creation of the Principality of Antioch, 1098–1130* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 111–14, 118, ; Malcolm Barber, *The Crusader States* (New Haven, 2012), p. 84; Aziz Basan, *The Great Saljuqs: A History* (New York, 2010), pp. 116–17; Claude Cahen, *La Syrie du Nord à l'Époque des Croisades et la Principauté Franque d'Antioche* (Paris, 1940), pp. 248–50; Cobb, *The Race for Paradise*, p. 115; Işin Demīrkent, *Urfa Haçli Kontluğu Tarihi (1098–1118)* (Ankara, 1990), pp. 119–25; Taef El-Azhari, *The Saljūqs of Syria: During the Crusades 463–549 A.H./1070–1154 A.D.* (Berlin, 1997), pp. 128–29; Fink, "Foundation of the Latin States," pp. 393–94; John France, *The Crusades and the Expansion of Catholic Christendom, 1000–1714* (New York, 2005), p. 116; Rene Grousset, *The Epic of the Crusades*, trans. Noel Lindsay (New York, 1970), pp. 56–58, and idem, *Histoire des Croisades et du Royaume Franc de Jerusalem* (Paris, 1934), pp. 433–43; Stefan Heidemann, *Die Renaissance der Städte in Nordsyrien und Nordmesopotamien* (Leiden, 2002), p. 208; Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York, 2000), p. 82; Andrew Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States* (Harlow, 2004), pp. 69–71; Michael Köhler, *Alliances and Treaties between Frankish and Muslim Rulers in the Middle East: Cross-Cultural Diplomacy in the Period of the Crusades*, trans. Peter Holt, ed. Konrad Hirschler (Leiden, 2013), pp. 65–66, 96–98; Bernhard Kugler, *Bohemond und Tankred, Fürsten von Antiochien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Normannen in Syrien* (Tubingen, 1862), pp. 38–39, and idem, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* (Berlin, 1880), p. 90; Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, trans. Jon Rothschild (London, 1984), p. 72; Cristopher MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance* (Philadelphia, 2008), p. 86; Hans Eberhard Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, 10th ed. (Stuttgart, 2005), p. 92; Joseph Michaud, *The History of the Crusades, Volume I*, trans. William Robson (New York, 1891), p. 285; Alan Murray, "Baldwin II," in *The Crusades: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan Murray, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, 2006), p. 135; Robert Nicholson, *Tancred: A Study of his Career and Work in Relation to the First Crusade and the Establishment of the Latin States in Syria and Palestine* (Chicago, 1940), pp. 170–78, and *Joscelyn I Prince of Edessa* (Urbana, 1954), pp. 12–23; Abdülkerīm Özaydin, *Sultan Muhammed Tapar Devrī Selçuklu Tahīrī (498–511/1105–1118)* (Ankara, 1990), pp. 53–55; Cihan Piyadeoglu, "Büyük Selçuklu Devleti Emîri Atabeg Çavli Sakavu" in *Istanbul Universitesi Edebiyat Fakultesi Tarih Dergisi*, ed. Ali İhsan

these four sources. The question of which leader or leaders are most responsible for this battle divides scholars even more: 69 percent blame Tancred, 53 percent blame Jawuli, 37 percent blame Ridwan, and 34 percent blame Baldwin. Given that Albert of Aachen is the *only* source that places notable blame on Tancred, his account clearly has a disproportionate impact on scholarship.[8] This bias arises because the synthesizing process favors convergence of data.[9] As these four "crusader" sources mostly agree with each other, they form a consensus bloc that heavily influences modern accounts.[10]

However, as already mentioned, all four of the sources in question are unreliable in relation to this particular battle, so synthesis is a poorly suited methology. First, William of Tyre copied Fulcher of Chartres' version of the battle, so his "agreement" with the others is easily sidelined and the validity of his version rests entirely on Fulcher.[11] Second, there are strong reasons to doubt the account of Albert of Aachen in regards to this particular battle. In his 1928 defense of Albert of Aachen's chronicle, Andre Beaumont Jr. enumerated the faults of the text. While he does exonerate the text as a whole, a majority of his problems with Albert's work center on the battle of Tell Bashir.[12] Albert's overt pro-Lorrainer and anti-Norman bias taints his portrayal of this conflict where those two factions came to blows.

The only remaining Latin source, Fulcher of Chartres, seems rather unbiased if only because he says so little. In fact, he is so terse that one might suspect he wanted to skip the battle entirely.[13] As one of Fulcher's dominant purposes in writing was to call Europeans to partake in holy pilgrimage and settle the Latin East, the affair at Tell Bashir – where Christians allied with Muslims to kill other Christians – undermined his goals.[14] Any in-depth telling of what

Gencer (Istanbul, 2003), pp. 50–53; Reinhold Röhricht, *Geschichte des Königreichs Jerusalem (1100–1291)* (Innsbruck, 1898), pp. 74–75; Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades, Volume II: The Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Frankish East 1100–1187* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 107–15; Pascal Sabourin, "Baudoin de Bourq, Croisé, Comte d'Edesse, Roi de Jerusalem. Proposition de Lecture d'un Itinéraire Peu Ordinaire," *Revue Historique Ardennaise* 31 (1996), pp. 8–9; William Stevenson, *The Crusaders in the East: A Brief History of the Wars of Islam with the Latins in Syria during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1907), pp. 83–86.

8 Albert of Aachen is also the most thorough of the Latin sources so his disproportionate impact does make some sense, but that speaks less to the thoroughness of Albert than the terseness of other Latin sources.

9 Bolinger, *Crusaders' Sultan*, pp. 30–35.

10 By "crusader" sources I am designating sources that were written or reported from the lands held by crusader lords of the Latin east. I avoid "Latin" because Matthew of Edessa is Armenian and I avoid "Christian" because some Christian sources like Michael the Syrian and Bar-Hebraeus wrote from lands held by Muslim Turks.

11 William of Tyre, *Deeds Done Beyond the Sea* 11.8, pp. 474–75.

12 Andre Beaumont, Jr., "Albert of Aachen and the County of Edessa," in *The Crusades and Other Historical Essays: Presented to Dana C. Munro by His Former Students*, ed. Louis Paetow (Freeport, 1928), pp. 137–38.

13 Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia* 2.28.1–5, p. 180.

14 Harold Fink, introduction to *Historia Hierosolymitana expeditionis*, trans. Frances R. Ryan and ed. Harold S. Fink (Knoxville, 1969), pp. 24–25.

happened at Tell Bashir violates his big picture goal, so he marginalized the battle as much as he could.

The sole Armenian account of the battle, Matthew of Edessa's, is problematic in ways very similar to Fulcher's account. Matthew was first and foremost an Armenian clergyman concerned with steering the Armenian people toward holiness. While Matthew was sympathetic with Baldwin's legal right to rule Edessa, he was also aghast that Baldwin allied with a Muslim Turk, Jawuli, to settle a dispute between two Christians.[15] This moral conundrum leads to a short retelling not unlike Fulcher's. Matthew was either oblivious to Ridwan's alliance with Tancred, or he deliberately ignored it to better relate a clear moral message: God judges allying with Turks. Had the outcome of the battle been reversed, we might very well have heard only of Ridwan's involvement and not Jawuli's. As the account is so very moralistic and focused on explaining who should be blamed rather than what happened, it should not be the primary basis for conclusions regarding the battle. Thus, all four of the crusader sources that formed the core consensus of the synthetic narrative are questionable, if not unreliable, in regards to this particular battle.

In contrast to the consensus group, the remaining sources diverge widely. Ibn al-Qalanisi, Ralph of Caen, and Usama ibn Munqidh are unfortunately silent regarding the battle despite being contemporaries of the battle who likely had knowledge of the events. On the other hand, Michael the Syrian, the anonymous Syrian Chronicle, and Ibn Abi Tayyi relate unbelievable tales that usually involve Joscelin doing something incredible, like round-trip travel from Tell Bashir to Constantinople in less than one month or being cleared of all his financial debts to Jawuli by an awesome display of manliness.[16] While Ibn al-Adim's version of the battle is less fanciful, it reads like bad propaganda aimed to exonerate Prince Ridwan from any wrongdoing in the affair and to vilify Ridwan's enemies: Jawuli and Joscelin. According to Ibn al-Adim, those two conspired to capture both Aleppo *and* Antioch (a laughable goal), and thereby *forced* the alliance between Ridwan and Tancred. Moreover, Jawuli (being the untrustworthy scoundrel that had forsaken an alliance with Ridwan) turned on his Edessan allies while they were engaged in battle, crushed their forces, and fled. Finally, Gregory Bar Hebraeus gives a very brief overview of the battle that is mostly noteworthy for corroborating the broad strokes of Ibn al-Athir, but otherwise adds very little.

This leaves Ibn al-Athir, who wrote by far the most detailed account of the battle of Tell Bashir despite writing a century after the battle occurred. His chronicle is one of the most treasured and reputable from this era, which has led modern authors to disproportionately cite his version of the battle in their own retellings.[17] Despite this heavy citation, Ibn al-Athir's account has been treated

15 Matthew of Edessa, 3.39; Asbridge, *Creation of the Principality of Antioch*, p. 114.

16 Ibn Abi Tayyi, "Un Épisode," p. 131; Tritton, "Anonymous Syrian Chronicle," pp. 80–82.

17 An example of this heavy citation can be seen in Nicholson's excellently footnoted *Joscelyn I* where despite being one of eleven primary sources, 28 percent of all original source citations go to Ibn al-Athir, more than double the next most used source. See Nicholson, *Joscelyn I*, pp.

more like a data mine for details than an independent narrative. For him the *casus belli* was Saljuq imperial politics, not Latin hierarchical disputes as the crusader sources assert. His view has been sidelined because it is incompatible with the nexus of consensus positions that carry more weight in the synthesizing process due to the number of confirming authors. That metric for evaluation seems to miss the fact that Ibn al-Athir's rendition of the battle is longer and more detailed than that of all four crusader sources combined.

While the individual sources may be compromised, one might think the synthetic narrative could still be valid as, despite their flaws, their overlap could accurately reflect actual events. While theoretically possible, such hypotheses do not bear out in practice: most modern synthetic accounts contain internal inconsistencies. Some of these issues arise from the crusader sources themselves, while many more are created by adding details from Ibn al-Athir's version to the consensus narrative. These details are meant to enrich, but tend to confuse the narrative they were meant to embellish.

For example, take Count Baldwin II of Edessa: by most summaries of his career, he was a politically skillful ruler, a cautious commander, and a very devout Christian.[18] However, some modern accounts of the battle portray Baldwin as rashly assembling an army to attack Tancred, his co-religionist, fellow crusader, and the commander of the strongest army in the region.[19] This story of Baldwin's aggression is constructed from Ibn al-Athir's data fused into the plots from Fulcher, Matthew, and Albert. Now according to these modern accounts, Baldwin had no land (Tancred retained Edessa), no army of his own (Tancred had been commanding Edessan forces through his cousin), no money (except what Tancred gave him), and he still had to pay a large debt to Jawuli (a detail many add from Ibn al-Athir). Aggressive military action in this context not only fails to mesh with what we know of Baldwin from elsewhere, it runs exactly contrary to our other accounts of the man. Instead of this rashness, we should expect caution and political maneuvering from Baldwin. Ibn al-Athir presents exactly that in his account; Baldwin avoids the battles that Tancred wants while politically outmaneuvering his militarily superior foe.

Equally confounding is the portrayal of Jawuli, the Turkish general who was cunning enough to separately defeat both Jokermish of Mosul then Prince Qilij

12–22. For analysis of the quality and reliability of the Ta'rīkh and its author, see Françoise Micheau, "Ibn al-Athir," in *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant*, ed. Alex Mallet (Leiden, 2014), p. 52, and R. Stephen Humphreys, "Ta'rīkh," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* vol. 10 (Leiden, 2000), p. 279.

18 Runciman, *History of the Crusades Vol. II*, pp. 123, 153, 159–61, and 173; Hans Eberhard Mayer, "The Succession to Baldwin II of Jerusalem: English Impact on the East," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 39 (1985), pp. 139–46; Murray, "Baldwin II," pp. 135–36.

19 For example, Heidemann (*Städte in Nordsyrien und Nordmesopotamien*, p. 208) and Mayer (*Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, p. 92) (among others) blame the Edessan faction for the Antioch–Edessa rift turning to outright warfare.

Arslan despite having fewer political allies or soldiers than either of them.[20] Qilij Arslan in particular was a very capable commander of great political importance. In fact, he had just declared his intention to challenge his cousin Muhammad for the Sultanate and it was on his first campaign towards that end that he came into conflict with Jawuli. Jawuli was a new provincial governor with limited forces who had just fought major battles less than a year before, so defeating an imperial contender is a testament to his skill as commander. Yet modern versions of the battle of Tell Bashir say that Jawuli fled when Mosul was besieged by Sultan Muhammad's army, freed his most valuable prisoner (Baldwin of Edessa), then allied with this ex-prisoner (who had no money or land), only to then travel all the way to Tell Bashir to try to reclaim the ex-prisoner-now-ally's lordship, all while doing absolutely nothing to counter the siege of Mosul.[21] If that version of Jawuli had a cunning military mind, it is well disguised. The most charitable explanation for that reading of Jawuli's actions is that Jawuli wanted to replace Prince Ridwan in Aleppo. However, there is no reason to think that Aleppo was more readily defensible than Mosul. If anything, Ibn al-Athir's account would lead one to think exactly the opposite: Mosul's defenses had been greatly increased and the city was in a far better position than Aleppo to resist the Sultan's army.[22] Ultimately, these poor caricatures of Baldwin and Jawuli stem from the over-reliance on problematic sources that assert Latin politics as the central cause for the battle. Conversely, Ibn al-Athir relates one coherent narrative that portrays both Jawuli and Baldwin as intelligent leaders who make rational choices that align with their reputations.

Saljuq Civil Wars: Political Context of the Battle

Ibn al-Athir's account of Tell Bashir concludes the sixteen-year succession crisis that followed Sultan Malikshah's death in 1092. That crisis is difficult to understand without some grasp of how authority passed in the medieval Islamic world. According to Stephen Humphreys, the region's blend of Arab, Turkish, and Islamic customs for transferring authority fed into vicious civil wars.[23] Authority was not simply inherited; the ruler needed to validate his rule by displaying competency in the role. Insofar as some authority was passed by inheritance, it was shared collectively by the ruler's family, meaning any male family members could claim headship. That being said, lineage was an important precondition that greatly assisted in the ascent to power. This means that

20 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh* 10.422–30 (Burlington, 2005), pp. 111–17; Gregory Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum* 10.270–72, pp. 239–41. Also, "Jokermish" is normally transliterated "Chökermish," "Jukarmish," or "Cökürmüs," but as with previous cases, I am intentionally using the same English referent as found in Richards' translation.

21 Runciman, *History of the Crusades Vol. II*, pp. 111–13.

22 See below nn. 46–47.

23 R. Stephen Humphreys, "Legitimacy and Stability in Islam," in *The Jihad and Its Times*, ed. Hadia Dajani-Shakeel (Ann Arbor, 1991), pp. 5–13.

when a leader died, the many "heirs" in the family would squabble over the inheritance until someone took and maintained control. As Malikshah marked the third generation of Saljuq rule, the number of contenders in 1092 was quite substantial.[24] Confirming Humphreys' analysis, from 1092 to 1108, at least nine Saljuq princes claimed the throne, while still more were assassinated or died in conflicts over regional control.

Squandered Inheritances: The Sons of Tutush

Malikshah's death led to a civil war between his son (Barkyaruq) and brother (Tutush). Though the more experienced commander, Tutush was defeated and killed by his nephew's army. His defeat opened the door for more challenges to the young Sultan Barkyaruq. Among those contenders were Tutush's sons, who claimed the titles and lands of their father but predictably quarreled over their father's inheritance.[25] The eldest two, Ridwan and Duqaq, took Aleppo and Damascus respectively, while the three remaining brothers were disinherited. Ridwan had two of those brothers put to death shortly after he came to power, while the last remaining brother, Baktash, lived in Duqaq's custody.[26]

Duqaq died unexpectedly in 1104, which should have made Baktash the ruler of Damascus. However, Duqaq's atabeg, Tughtakin, chose to elevate Duqaq's infant son instead.[27] Following the advice of his mother, Baktash fled Damascus for fear that Tughtakin would kill him, a fear partially confirmed by the opportune death of Duqaq's infant son some few months later.[28] The fledgling prince made his way into the service of the Latin king of Jerusalem in exchange for aid to reclaim Damascus. Upon realizing that King Baldwin I was in no position to retake Damascus, Baktash fled yet again, this time settling in the town of al-Rahba on the Euphrates.[29]

On a brief aside, up until this point Ibn al-Athir's account of Baktash ibn Tutush is perfectly corroborated by Ibn al-Qalanisi. After Baktash's settling in al-Rahba, the accounts diverge. Ibn al-Qalanisi relates that Baktash entered the service of Jawuli, but never mentions him again. On the other hand, Ibn al-Athir fails to mention Baktash ibn Tutush at all. Instead, he relates how Baktash ibn *Tekesh* (Tekesh and Tutush were brothers) joined with Jawuli. But before we jump to conclusions about who Baktash ibn Tekesh is, we must remember that

24 For more on the start of the civil wars see Carole Hillenbrand, "1092: A Murderous Year," in *Proceedings of the 14th Congress of the Union européenne des arabisants et islamisants* (1995), 281–96.

25 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh* 10.269 (New York, 2002), p. 294.

26 Robert Crawford, "Ridwan the Maligned," in *The World of Islam: Studies in Honor of Phillip K. Hitti*, ed. James Kritzeck and R. Bayly Winder (New York, 1959), pp. 136–37; El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs of Syria*, p. 159.

27 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh* 10.375 (Burlington, 2005), p. 80; El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs of Syria*, p. 178.

28 El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs of Syria*, pp. 178–82.

29 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh* 10.376 (Burlington, 2005), pp. 80–81.

while many sources do agree on parts of the timeline that leads Baktash ibn Tutush to al-Rahba at this time, none ever mentions a Baktash ibn Tekesh. While there is a remote possibility that Baktash ibn Tutush had a cousin with the same name, it is beyond belief that they both ended up in al-Rahba at the same time and that the one nobody had heard of joined with Jawuli while the one with some recorded military experience did not. Thus, it seems likely that Ibn al-Athir was in error and meant ibn Tutush, not Tekesh. D. S. Richards seems to affirm this as he translates the "ibn Tekesh" as "ibn Tutush" in the relevant passages. Apparently, this seemed so obvious that he did not even see the need for a footnote to explain his choice. I concur in Richards' assessment and treat the two names given by ibn al-Athir as referring to the son of Tutush.[30]

Meanwhile, the eldest brother, Ridwan of Aleppo, struggled in the decade following the First Crusade. He was largely unable to expand his territory or assert imperial claims due to the expanding power of Tancred of Antioch in addition to his own unpopularity with pious Sunni Muslims. Most works treat the sons of Tutush as minor local lords, which is true, but overly reductive. Tutush had been proclaimed sultan in the khutbah (Friday prayer) and had ruled over most of Syria and Iraq before his defeat at the hands of Barkyaruq. On Humphrey's model, any of Tutush's sons had claim to his authority and could challenge Barkyaruq for control of the whole Saljuq dominion, both broadly as Saljuqs and more narrowly as descendants of Alp Arslan and Tutush. While there is less data about Duqaq, Ridwan did claim the full authority of his father by having his own name read directly after that of the Caliph.[31] However, his claims never amounted to much because he was not very popular or successful in expanding his rule beyond Aleppo.[32] If any of Tutush's sons could prove their ability to rule or raise a sizable army, their claim to the sultanate would have been quite strong. This includes the oft-forgotten Baktash who, despite a lack of demonstrable power, had enormous potential.

Restructuring the Empire: Sultan Muhammad's Rise

After Tutush's death, the most notable contender against Barkyaruq was his half-brother Muhammad.[33] Their war over the empire raged from 1099 to 1105. Thirteen years after Malikshah's death, Barkyaruq died of severe intestinal issues (possibly from poison) leaving Muhammad as the strongest Saljuq heir.[34] With peace in sight, Muhammad was able to focus on issues that had been side-

30 Furthermore, even if the distant possibility that these two homonymous cousins were both in al-Rahba were true, it actually has little bearing on the broad argument of this article. Both Tekesh and Tutush were brothers of Malikshah, and their sons would have similar standing to claim the Sultanate. Furthermore, as both of their fathers had been rebels, both cousins would have been political outsiders or fugitives from Sultan Muhammad.

31 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh* 10.246 (New York, 2002), p. 279.

32 Crawford, "Ridwan the Maligned," p. 135.

33 Basan, *The Great Saljuqs*, pp. 98–121.

34 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh* 10.380 (Burlington, 2005), p. 84.

lined by the war. Chief of these issues was the excessive power of some emirs who had gained much more power for themselves during the civil war than Sultan Muhammad thought acceptable.[35] Moreover, many such lords in Iraq, Persia, and the Jazira had been loyal servants of Barkyaruq. As we shall see throughout Ibn al-Athir's account, Sultan Muhammad's solution was to pit these emirs against each other to erode their martial power and eventually replace them with men who had shown him loyalty during the civil war.

Muhammad also focused on eliminating or containing minor Saljuq contenders, usually by means of sending the aforementioned emirs to handle the situation. Some of these claimants were of little concern, like Mankubars whose rebellion in 1105 lasted only a few months.[36] Others, like Muhammad's cousin Qilij Arslan, posed a sizable threat as his powerful branch of the family had been contending for the sultanate for three generations. Following in his father's footsteps, Qilij Arslan consolidated power in Anatolia before moving into Mesopotamia.[37] In 1105, he skirted north of the crusaders to the city of Melitene, and from there to Harran and the Jazira.[38] Concerned by these movements, Muhammad gathered the most powerful emirs in Iraq to deal with the problem. These leading men were Emir Jokermish of Mosul, Emir Ayaz of Baghdad, and Emir Sadaqa of Hilla. All three men were the kind of emirs Muhammad wanted eliminated, but they could still be useful if they weakened or killed Qilij Arslan.

Tensions had been high between Ayaz and Muhammad following Barkyaruq's death, as Ayaz commanded Barkyaruq's army in the name of the deceased sultan's infant son.[39] In February 1105, Ayaz negotiated the surrender of and amnesty for Barkyaruq's forces, but Muhammad harbored concerns about Ayaz's loyalty, exacerbated by some unfortunate joking by Ayaz's soldiers at a dinner party. In early April, Muhammad called a general meeting of emirs to deal with Qilij Arslan and requested Ayaz and Sadaqa privately meet with him and his vizier. Ibn al-Athir reports:

> The sultan had prepared a group of his guard to kill Ayaz when he entered his presence. As he came in, one of them struck his head and separated it from his body. Sadaqa covered his face with his sleeve and the vizier fainted. Ayaz was wrapped in some sacking and thrown into the street near the Royal Palace.[40]

The earlier dinner party served as the pretext for the beheading, even though Ibn al-Athir dismissed that event as an unfortunate misunderstanding.[41] However, the context would not have been missed by the contemporary audience; the sultan executed Ayaz on a very thin pretext less than two months after the amnesty.

35 Ibid., 10.369, p. 77.
36 Ibid., 10.398–99, p. 96.
37 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh* 10.147 (New York, 2002), p. 223.
38 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh* 10.415 (Burlington, 2005), p. 106.
39 Ibid., 10.386–88, pp. 88–89.
40 Ibid., 10.388–89, p. 89.
41 Ibid.

Jokermish caught the hint. He was new to power, having only gained his position in 1102. Jokermish's involvement in the Turkish victory over the crusaders at the battle of Harran greatly helped confirm his competence as the ruler of Mosul.[42] It was at that battle that Baldwin of Edessa was captured and then imprisoned in Mosul until just before the battle of Tell Bashir. As a servant of Barkyaruq, Jokermish had been fighting Muhammad up until the amnesty signed by Ayaz.[43] Though he paid homage to the new sultan, Jokermish seems to have had no loyalty to Muhammad. In Qilij Arslan's first foray into Mesopotamia, Jokermish's men gladly handed the city of Harran over to the aspiring Saljuq prince, as if they had been waiting to welcome him.[44] Furthermore, after Jokermish's death, his men called to Qilij Arslan and other nobles for aid, instead of the more obvious option of Sultan Muhammad.[45] Additionally, Jokermish seems to have stopped paying his taxes to Muhammad, which prompted the sultan to replace him. In the words of Ibn al-Athir:

> When Jokermish had returned from the sultan's presence to his lands [when Ayaz was killed], as we have recounted, he promised personal service and payment of tribute. However, once firmly settled in his lands, he did not carry out what he had said and found service and payment of tribute burdensome.[46]

Ibn al-Athir informs us that, in 1104, Jokermish invested in repairing all the defenses of Mosul. Furthermore, in Jokermish's eulogy, Ibn al-Athir says that, "[Jokermish] had built up and strengthened the walls of Mosul, and had constructed a barbican and dug a moat, fortifying the city as much as he possibly could."[47] Given that he died in late 1106, had only begun to withhold taxes after Ayaz's death in 1105, and obviously spent money on fortifications, Jokermish probably spent the tax revenue on Mosul's defenses. The confluence of evidence supports a hypothesis that Jokermish was planning to ally with Qilij Arslan in a war against Muhammad.

In 1106, Muhammad sent Jawuli Saqao to remove Jokermish. Because he had limited forces, a direct assault on Mosul was impossible. Thus, Jawuli tried to draw Jokermish out of Mosul by attacking his underling, the emir of Irbil. Jokermish came with twice the force that Jawuli had, but Jawuli still won the battle and captured Jokermish. Then Jawuli moved on Mosul and began besieging the city (though with his small army it is more accurate to say he tried to negotiate an exchange of Jokermish for Mosul). Unfortunately for Jawuli, Jokermish died in his captivity and the garrison offered the city to Qilij Arslan. Jokermish was the second of the three powerful Iraqi emirs that Sultan Muhammad eliminated in as many years.[48]

42 Ibid., 10.342–43, pp. 58–59; 10.375, p. 80.
43 Ibid., 10.384, pp. 86–87.
44 Ibid., 10.415, p. 106.
45 Ibid., 10.424, p. 113.
46 Ibid., 10.422, p. 112.
47 Ibid., 10.424, p. 113.
48 Ibid.

Sadaqa, the remaining emir, was different from the others. He was very loyal to Muhammad and also extremely pious. In his eulogy, Ibn al-Athir extolls the man as "one of the ornaments of this world."[49] Why would Muhammad target this pious and loyal emir? Because during the civil wars Sadaqa had slowly amassed enormous land holdings in Iraq, encompassing all of the land on the Euphrates from ʿĀna (near the modern Iraq–Syria border) down to Basra (where the Euphrates and the Tigris meet) across salt marshes in southern Iraq to Wasit on the Tigris as well as control of the city of Tikrit just north of Baghdad on the Tigris. In short, excepting Baghdad's surroundings, Sadaqa controlled all of the waterways of Iraq. Muhammad's underlings deceptively convinced him that a man so powerful and generous was a danger to the sultanate. The conflict dragged out over the course of the year, at the end of which Sadaqa was defeated and killed in a battle that supposedly neither leader wanted to fight.[50] While Ibn al-Athir portrays both men as noble, the clear subtext is that the sultan was eliminating all of the powerful emirs that could cause trouble.

In the cases of Ayaz and Sadaqa the justifications for the violence were weak, though Ibn al-Athir does Muhammad the honor of accepting those justifications even while presenting evidence that the justification left ample room for doubt. Ibn al-Athir goes out of his way to be tactful in dealing with the morally ambiguous decisions that his righteous characters made. Even though the text does make it clear that Muhammad needed Sadaqa removed because he became too powerful, Ibn al-Athir would not state it that bluntly. This polite method of not being explicit continues throughout the chronicle.

Marching to Tell Bashir: Jawuli's Rebellion

Like Ayaz and Jokermish, Jawuli had been a powerful and loyal emir in service to Barkyaruq. At some point after 1100, Barkyaruq appointed him to govern Fars (modern-day southwest Iran).[51] His tenure there was marked by cunning plans to eliminate a sect of radicals that plagued the region.[52] By 1104, Jawuli was still loyally governing Fars for Sultan Barkyaruq.

After Barkyaruq's death, Jawuli had to defend his province from a replacement, Mawdud, sent by Sultan Muhammad. Ibn al-Athir noted that Jawuli was harsh and unpopular, so he feared the populace would give the city to the sultan's army. Thus, Jawuli had little option but to surrender directly to the sultan. Muhammad accepted the surrender and assigned him the governorship of Mosul (which was held by Jokermish) with orders to attack the Franks in Syria.[53] While seemingly generous, Muhammad was actually pitting two ex-Barkyaruq supporters against each other. Regardless of the outcome between Jokermish and Jawuli, Muhammad

49 Ibid., 10.449, p. 129.
50 Ibid., 10.445–46, p. 128.
51 Ibid., 10.297–98, pp. 29–30.
52 Ibid., 10.319–20, p. 44.
53 Ibid., 10.422, p. 112.

would be rid of a questionably loyal emir while not risking any of his own troops in the process. Moreover, Fars was now ruled by an emir more loyal to Muhammad.

As mentioned, Jawuli overcame Jokermish, but lacked the troop numbers to take Mosul. Qilij Arslan's advance into Mesopotamia to receive Mosul forced Jawuli to retreat. In 1107, Qilij Arslan occupied Mosul and was formally proclaimed sultan in the khutbah. Meanwhile, Jawuli seized al-Rahba on the Euphrates, when it is likely that Baktash entered into his service. To counter Qilij Arslan's superior forces, Jawuli made an alliance with Ridwan, Tutush's oldest son.[54] Ridwan's choice to fight Qilij Arslan might seem unstrategic, as Qilij Arslan was notably more powerful than Ridwan. However, when Ridwan took his father's place, the khutbah made in Aleppo was made in Ridwan's name, not Barkyaruq's, meaning that Ridwan was declared sultan as his father had been. Ridwan's claim made Muhammad and now Qilij Arslan his rivals. Furthermore, Ridwan had the most to lose from Qilij Arslan's claim, as the upstart sultan was quite popular in the western regions of the Saljuq empire, unlike Ridwan who was unpopular and suspected of radical Shi`i sympathies.

In May 1107, the combined forces of Jawuli and Ridwan defeated Qilij Arslan. Jawuli quickly took over the regions of Mesopotamia that had been ruled by Jokermish. He also sent the captive son of Qilij Arslan, Malikshah, to Sultan Muhammad as a gesture of gratitude.[55] This gesture likely was an attempt to buy more time as Jawuli knew he could not stay in the sultan's good graces for long. As a very powerful emir who had supported Barkyaruq his days were numbered. So while the conflict between Sultan Muhammad and Emir Sadaqa unfolded, Jawuli not only failed to send aid to the sultan, he tried to make an alliance with Sadaqa. That alliance never materialized and the sultan turned his army, led by Mawdud, to attack Jawuli in Mosul for his insubordination.[56] Jawuli gathered supplies and placed the citizens of Mosul on lockdown. Confident that the city could hold Mawdud at bay, he left it well garrisoned and took most of his army to gather support.[57] Between his and Jokermish's preparations, Mosul was very well prepared for a siege by 1108. Thus Jawuli knew he had some time to gather an army – but to what end?

As he tried to woo forces to his cause, the goal of his mission became clear. Ibn al-Athir informs us that Jawuli went to Emir Ilghazi of Mardin, his neighbor to the north whose loyalties had vacillated between Barkyaruq and Muhammad:

> Jawuli left and took with him the count, the Lord of Edessa [. . .] to Nisibis, which at the time belonged to Emir Ilghazi ibn Artuq. He wrote to him, asked for a meeting and invited him to support him, both of them acting as one. *He told him that their fear of the sultan ought to unite them in securing protection from him*.[58]

54 Ibid., 10.429, p. 116.
55 Ibid., 10.430, p. 117.
56 Ibid., 10.457–58, p. 136.
57 Ibid., 10.458, p. 136.
58 Ibid., 10.459, p. 137 (emphasis mine).

Ilghazi did not unite with Jawuli, but this passage does highlight that Muhammad represented a legitimate threat to emirs of consequence. Having failed to win over Ilghazi, Jawuli released Count Baldwin in exchange for money, prisoners, and military aid. Many cite this release as showing how badly Jawuli needed aid, but with the taking of hostages it was a low-risk chance of getting some money out of a prisoner that had not yet provided any profit. More importantly, this was hardly the only plan that Jawuli was enacting.

Edessan Interlude: Baldwin's Political War with Tancred

Upon his release in the summer of 1108, Count Baldwin II of Edessa returned to Antioch to reclaim his lands from Tancred, who was the acting regent. However, Tancred refused to restore Edessa unless Baldwin swore fealty to him and Baldwin rejected Tancred's conditions. If Albert of Aachen can be trusted on the subject, Edessan taxes represented a sizable income for Tancred, and he was loathe to just give that land away.[59] As they were at a political stalemate, Baldwin left Antioch to seek counsel from Joscelin of Edessa and his few other supporters. Keen to strike before Baldwin had substantial forces, Tancred "attacked" Baldwin and Joscelin at Tell Bashir. Ibn al-Athir states:

> Tancred, ruler of Antioch, now marched against them with his troops to bring them to battle before they became powerful and assembled an army and before Jawuli could join forces with them to bring them support. *They fought together but when the fighting was over, they met, feasted and conversed with one another*.[60]

While Ibn al-Athir says the armies "fought," this should be taken in the context of the feast, as it seems rather unlikely that large numbers of men would stop actively trying to kill one another to instantly switch to feasting together. Importantly, Ibn al-Athir mentions no deaths, no tactics, not even a victor. Moreover, every other source mentions only one battle, which Ibn al-Athir would technically agree with if it were not for a very literal interpretation of this passage. The last reason to doubt that this was a proper battle is the military power discrepancy between the two sides. Tancred was unquestionably the most powerful lord in northern Syria in 1108; if he brought his army to bear on Baldwin and his few supporters it would have been shocking if Tancred did not decisively win the pitched battle. More likely, there were some brawls while the leaders talked and afterwards there was a feast. It may be that Tancred's goal was not to actually fight a pitched battle but to display his military might to remind Baldwin and his allies that fighting against Antioch would be unwise.

Whatever happened in that first confrontation, Ibn al-Athir relates that the incident only escalated tensions between the two factions:

59 Albert of Aachen, *Historia Hierosolymitanae expeditionis* 9.46, pp. 700–03.

60 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, 10.461 (Burlington, 2005), p. 138 (emphasis mine).

> Tancred retired to Antioch without having settled any matter as regards Edessa. The count and Joscelin then went on a raid of Tancred's forts and took refuge in the area controlled by Kogh Basil, an Armenian, [. . .] the lord of Ra'ban, Kaysum, and other fortresses north of Aleppo. He supplied the count with 1,000 cavalry from amongst the [Christianized Turks] and 2,000 infantry. Tancred moved to meet them and they argued about who was to control Edessa.[61]

Importantly, it does not say they fought a pitched battle against each other; they amassed troops and faced off while the leaders argued. Ibn al-Athir shows that it was in this debate that Patriarch Bernard of Antioch intervened and settled the conflict:

> Their Patriarch [Bernard], who is for them like the Imam for the Muslims, whose authority is not to be opposed, acted as intermediary. Several [bishops] and priests bore witness that Bohemond, Tancred's uncle, had said to [Tancred], when he planned to sail the sea and return home, that Edessa should be restored to [Baldwin] when he was set free from captivity. Tancred duly restored [Edessa to Baldwin] on [September 18th, 1108].[62]

Tancred was politically outmaneuvered in these encounters. Baldwin avoided pushing the conflict in Antioch, where Tancred could arrest him, and thwarted Tancred's pre-emptive strike at Tell Bashir. Then he provoked Tancred to bring his army to the lands of Kogh Basil (Baldwin's ally), so that all the Christian lords in the region could bear witness to Patriarch Bernard's ruling on the matter. It was also key that Bernard was there to bear witness at all. He is not mentioned at the previous faceoff, and it seems unlikely that Tancred would willingly invite the Patriarch if he had any notion that man would take Baldwin's side. Most likely, Baldwin contacted Patriarch Bernard to ensure that he would mediate. Baldwin forced a political conflict instead of a military one, which was in keeping with the caution he normally displayed in military command. Contrary to modern opinions, the Latin conflict over the lordship of Edessa was primarily a political – not a military – conflict and it was resolved without aid from Turkish emirs.

The Battle of Tell Bashir

After he released Baldwin, Jawuli continued on to al-Rahba where he drew quite a gathering of Sultan Muhammad's enemies. Ibn al-Athir says:

> [Jawuli] proceeded to al-Rahba, where [Badran] and [Mansur,] the sons of [Sadaqa], came to him. After the killing of their father they had been at Qal'at Ja'bar with Salim ibn Malik. They reached an agreement to help and support one another and Salim promised them both that he would go with them to Hilla. *Their intention was to make Baktash ibn Tutush ibn Alp Arslan their commander*. While they had this plan

61 Ibid., 10.461, pp. 138–39.
62 Ibid., 10.461, p. 139.

> General Sabawa came to them. He had [just made peace with Sultan Muhammad] who had assigned him al-Rahba as a fief, as we have mentioned. [Sabawa] met with Jawuli and advised him to go to Syria, for the land there was empty of troops since the Franks had conquered much of it. *He told him that, if ever he aimed at Iraq while [Muhammad] was there or nearby, he could not be sure that some evil would not come upon him*.[63]

Having recently lost their father to Sultan Muhammad, the sons of Sadaqa were ardent opponents of the sultan. Any plan of theirs certainly aimed to do Sultan Muhammad ill. Second, the previously unmentioned General Sabawa was one of the most vocal opponents of Sultan Muhammad during the civil wars, so that when Emir Ayaz signed the amnesty in 1105, it explicitly excluded Sabawa because of his slanderous public statements. So when Muhammad "makes peace" with him, the gesture is a farce; yet again Muhammad is pitting his enemies against each other by sending Sabawa to take land from Jawuli. More importantly, between the amnesty in 1105 and this meeting in 1108, Sabawa was serving the Saljuq princes in Aleppo and Damascus. Thus he was well acquainted with their military capabilities, making his advice to attack Syria very reputable.

But the most important part of the passage is the intention to make Baktash the commander. Baktash had limited military experience, especially of a sizable army. The only reason to use Baktash when veteran commanders like Jawuli or Sabawa were options was that Baktash could challenge his cousin's imperial claims. General Sabawa's advice was especially good for Baktash, as taking Syria in particular would dramatically strengthen Baktash's claim to the sultanate. As a son of Tutush, Baktash had as strong a claim to Aleppo as Ridwan and a stronger claim to Damascus than Tughtakin. Had they defeated Ridwan, it is not unreasonable to think that this alliance could have united Islamic Syria.

Hostilities escalated when an Arab tribe allied to Ridwan seized al-Raqqa from Jawuli's ally, Salim of Qal'at Ja'bar. Jawuli marched north to respond, but his siege of the citadel dragged until it became too much of a political cost to continue. Jawuli's promise to Salim before leaving reveals more about his plans. Ibn al-Athir reports Jawuli as saying:

> I am face to face with an enemy, with whom I must concern myself rather than anyone else. *I am planning to go down to Iraq. If my cause succeeds, then al-Raqqa and other places will be yours*.[64]

Jawuli was clearly drawing up plans to head back to Iraq after campaigning in Syria. More importantly, Jawuli thought that he would at that time be in a position to grant lands and titles to supporters, i.e. a position like a vizier to Sultan Baktash. Following Humphreys' logic, the first step to in promoting

63 Ibid., 10.462, p. 139 (emphasis mine).
64 Ibid., 10.463, p. 140 (emphasis mine).

Baktash was to show his competence by winning notable victories in his name. Driving a few Bedouins from al-Raqqa's citadel was not sufficient; they needed to attack Ridwan.

Ridwan's nearest holding, Balis, lay between al-Raqqa and Aleppo. Jawuli took the city in less than a week. Ibn al-Athir curiously notes that Jawuli singled out and executed the cadi (judge) of Balis:

> Jawuli went to the city of Balis, arriving on [22 September 1108], but the populace resisted him. Those men of Prince Ridwan, the lord of Aleppo, who were there, fled. Jawuli besieged it for five days and took it after mining one of the towers, which fell on the sappers, killing several of them. He took the city and crucified a group of notables where the mine had been. *He summoned the Cadi Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Ilyas, who was a pious lawyer, and put him to death.* Then he sacked the city and took a great amount of money.[65]

As the text specifically says Ridwan's allies fled the city earlier and the notables seem to have been killed for the loss of the sappers, we are left with little reason why Ibn al-Athir singles out the cadi's death. However, a cadi could proclaim the ascension of a new ruler in the khutbah; incidentally the exact thing that Jawuli needed to legitimize Baktash.[66] Thus, I think that the most likely reason the cadi was killed was for not proclaiming Baktash as the sultan.

After Balis, Ridwan requested aid from Tancred by claiming "if [Jawuli] conquered [Aleppo], the Franks would no longer maintain their presence in Syria."[67] Tancred complied with Ridwan's request, which prompted Jawuli to call Baldwin and Joscelyn to assist.[68] This paints the aggression as squarely between the Turks, and we can see now that Jawuli was not desperate for help as modern accounts portray him; it was Ridwan who was desperate for allies. And the march toward Aleppo had less to do with running from Mawdud and the siege of Mosul than it did with following the best path for proclaiming Baktash sultan.

Unfortunately for Jawuli, just as his forces were assembling, the army received news that Mosul had fallen to the imperial army. Ibn al-Athir relates:

> In this state of affairs Jawuli received intelligence that the sultan's army had conquered Mosul and seized his treasury and property. This distressed him greatly and many of his followers abandoned him, including Atabeg *Zanki ibn Aqsunqur* [. . .] He was left

65 Ibid., 10.464, p. 140 (emphasis mine). While "Qadi" is a better transliteration, I continue to mirror Richards' usage for the sake of continuity.

66 Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 50–54; Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 83–85; Mathieu Tillier, "Judicial Authority and Qadis' Autonomy under the Abbasids," *Al-Masaq* 26:2, pp. 119–31; Taef El-Azhari, *Zengi and the Muslim Response to the Crusades: The Politics of Jihad* (London, 2016), p. 127.

67 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh* 10.464 (Burlington, 2005), p. 141.

68 Ibid., 10.465, p. 141.

> with a thousand horsemen but a large crowd of volunteers joined him and he camped before [Tell Bashir].
>
> Tancred drew near, leading 1,500 Frankish cavalry and 600 of Prince Ridwan's followers, not counting the foot-soldiers. On his right wing Jawuli placed Emir Aqsiyan, Emir Altuntash al-Abari and others, and on the left wing Emir Badran ibn Sadaqa, General Sabawa, and Sunqur Daraz and in the center Count Baldwin and Joscelin, the two Franks. The battle commenced and the men of Antioch charged the count. The fighting was fierce and Tancred drove the center from its position. Then Jawuli's left charged the infantry of the lord of Antioch and slew a great many of them. The defeat of the Lord of Antioch seemed imminent but at that moment Jawuli's men turned to the count's spare horses and those of Joscelin and other Franks. They mounted them and fled the field. Jawuli went after them to call them back but they did not return. His authority over them had been lost after Mosul had been taken from him. When he saw that they would not return with him, he took thought for himself, feared to stay and fled. The rest of his army then fled.[69]

The leaders of the rebellion dispersed and Jawuli had no option but surrender. He fled in secrecy to Sultan Muhammad to beg forgiveness, which was granted. However, the cost was that he had to hand over Baktash, who was promptly imprisoned in Isfahan.[70] The imprisonment of Baktash further confirms that this battle was about Baktash and the sultanate more than anything else.

The crumbling of Jawuli's forces also reveals to modern readers why Ibn al-Athir provides such a detailed account of Jawuli's doings while others seem to know so little. Zanki ibn Aqsunqur, one of those who abandoned Jawuli, was the founder of the Zankid dynasty in Mosul. Ibn al-Athir served Zanki's descendants and frequently wrote in praise of that family, which has led some to criticize his accounts as too pro-Zankid.[71] This close connection strongly supports the credibility of Ibn al-Athir's account of the battle of Tell Bashir. First, this account does not put Zanki in a favorable light as he ran before the battle even began. This goes against the grain of what we should expect from a positive bias, and so gives the young warlord's inclusion an air of truth. Secondly, as researching and retelling this family's history was of particular interest to Ibn al-Athir and he had family ties to the Zankid court, it seems quite reasonable to presume that in the process of learning about Zanki ibn Aqsunqur's early life he learned more details about this battle than most others. It also might explain why the Ibn al-Athir was somewhat cagey about explicitly saying that Jawuli was trying to use Baktash to overthrow Sultan Muhammad, as such a statement would have implicated Zanki in a coup against the Sultan. As with earlier cases, Ibn al-Athir was not lying to his audience, he was just being tactful and guiding his readers to truths that he did not want to explicitly state.

69 Ibid. (emphasis mine).

70 Ibid., 10.466, p. 142.

71 For the critique, see Hamilton Gibb, "Notes on the Arabic Materials for the History of the Early Crusades," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 7 (1935), pp. 739–54, and for a rebuttal and more recent appraisal see Micheau, "Ibn al-Athir," p. 52.

On the whole, Ibn al-Athir relates a much more cohesive version of this battle than does any other medieval or modern account. In contrast to modern portrayals, he depicts Baldwin as politically tactful and Jawuli as strategically competent. Though Baldwin's overt involvement in Saljuq politics may seem like a radical departure from the traditional narrative, Ibn al-Athir still presents the most coherent version of the count. The shift in focus from Latin or local politics to imperial Saljuq politics can radically change modern perceptions of the Latin East in the early twelfth century as it entails that the crusaders were involved with and affected politics for the entire region.