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**Praise of the Crusaders' Attitude towards Muslims in Ibn Ġubayr's
Chronicle Concerning his Journey to the East (d. 1217)**

Abstract

Ibn Ġubayr replaced the linear vision of travelling by the spacious one. His *Rihla* presents a multi-thematic narrative concerning political, economic, historical, sociological and other subjects, becoming a model of a new literary genre: a diary of some journey. The present study concerns one of the most intriguing fragments of this narrative, i.e. the praise of the crusaders in spite of the fact that the author was extremely prejudiced towards the Franks.

Firstly, Ibn Ġubayr praised the crusaders for their attitude towards the economic dimension: light taxes laid on Muslims. Secondly, the traveller from Granada was astonished to see good relationships and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims. Those observations made him fear that the Muslims living in better comfort in the lands of the Franks than in the Islamic countries might want to convert into Christianity. However, on the basis of a detailed analysis of the source one can claim that staying in the Franks' world Ibn Ġubayr discovered something more than the economic tolerance for the followers of Islam. Namely, he became aware of the weakness of the Muslim society to build stable institutions. In the Medieval Islamic countries without fiefdom system or the countries with unilateral obligation of the weaker party to the stronger one encountered big difficulties to convince their officials and subjects to have a feeling of community of mutual interests. Therefore, Ibn Ġubayr discovered that objectivity and good management of the state by the crusaders constituted some deadly danger for the world of Islam and could be a dangerous 'contagious' disease. Finally, one should notice the contradictory feelings of fear and fascination as well as admiration and aversion, i.e. 'the ambivalence of Ibn Ġubayr' towards the Western world was developed throughout ages in the world of Islam and has been continued until now.



Unlike the other ancient peoples, Arabs are said to be great travellers. Before the pre-Muslim period Arabs moved mainly along the trade routes leading from *Arabia Petrea to Arabia Felix*.¹ After the Umayyad Caliphate had been created a considerable part of the main trade routes of the ancient world ran through the territories controlled by Arabs. The unity of the empire guaranteed development of trade and migration within the territory of the Mediterranean Sea. Finally, voyages were inspired by the duty to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. When the Baghdad caliphate was born in the 8th century Arabs created their geography, which André Miquel called 'daughter of the Abbasid Caliphate'.² The division of the Islamic world and the Crusades did not halt Arabs' migrations at all.³

a) From Spain to the Latin East

With reference to the developing tradition of Arabs' travelling a new literary genre, called the *Rihla*, emerged towards the end of the 8th century. It was a diary of some journey, which contained descriptions from the first to the last day of the expedition. *Rihla* presents a multi-thematic narrative concerning political, economic, historical, sociological and other subjects.⁴ Although one of the first diaries is connected with the person of Aš - Šāfi'ī (d. 820) it was the *rihla* written by Ibn Ġubayr that became the pattern for this genre, the first and one of the best works of this type⁵, taking into consideration its theme and specific illustrative language.⁶

There is no need to give a detailed description of the life of Ibn Ġubayr (1145–1217). However, it seems proper to outline the route of the pilgrimage (in the years 1183–1185) of this great Andalusian journeyer and writer. Ibn Ġubayr, secretary of the governor of Granada, began his journey to the East on 5 February 1183. From Ceuta he went to

¹ Cf. F.R. Scheck, *Szlak mirry i kadzidla. Od Arabii do Rzymu – śladem antycznych kultur*, tr. J. Danecki, Warszawa 1998, pp. 31–196; L. Casson, *Reisen in der Alten Welt*, München-Zürich 1976.

² Cf. A. Miquel, *La Géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du XI^e siècle*, Paris 1967, p. 2.

³ Cf. J.H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649–1571*, Cambridge 1992.

⁴ Cf. *Voyageurs arabes, Ibn Fāḍlān, Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa et un auteur anonyme*, ed. P. Charles-Dominique, Paris 1995, p. 22; R. Blachère, H. Darmaun, *Géographes arabes*, Paris 1957, pp. 318–348; J. and D. Sourdel, *Géographie*, in: *Dictionnaire historique de l'islam*, Paris 2004, p. 309.

⁵ Cf. Ch. Pellat, *Ibn Djubayr*, in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. III, Leiden-London 1986, p. 755.

⁶ See Ibn Ġubayr, *Rihla*, Bayrūt: Dār Sādir, no date; English translation: *The travels of Ibn Jubayr: being the chronicle of a medieval Spanish moor concerning his journey to the Egypt of Saladin, the holy cities of Arabia, Baghdad the city of the caliphs, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, and Norman Kingdom of Sicily*, ed. R.C. Broadhurst, London 1952; French translation: *Voyages*, tr. M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, vol. I–III, Paris 1949–1956; *Voyageurs arabes, Ibn Fāḍlān, Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa et un auteur anonyme*, ed. P. Charles-Dominique..., German translation: *Tagebuch eines Mekkapilgers*, ed. R. Günther, Lenningen 2004.

Egypt through Sardinia, Sicily and Crete. From Alexandria he set out to Mecca via Cairo, Qus and Judda. Then he went to Medina and from there via Kufa he reached Baghdad, Mosul, Aleppo and Damascus. At last he reached the lands conquered by the crusaders and from Acre he went back to Granada, which he reached in April 1185. The *Rihla* of Ibn Ġubayr is regarded as a very precious source to get to know the situation of Medieval Sicily.⁷ But it also gives numerous valuable information concerning the social, political and economic relationships in the Near East, including the Latin Orient. No wonder that one of the French editions of this work has appeared in the series *Documents relatifs à l'histoire des croisades*.⁸

One can say that Ibn Ġubayr replaced the linear vision of travelling by the spacious one. On the one hand, his *Rihla* presents numerous facts. On the other hand, it contains dynamic 'enlargement'. This is not a speculative deepening of problems but horizontal enlargement, full of digressions and various kinds of parentheses. Thanks to this manner of writing we have the fragment, which I am attempting to analyse.

Therefore, I propose an encounter with certain narrative of Ibn Ġubayr, an extremely talented writer, official, sharp observer and Muslim believer characterised by deep faith (suffice to say that he went on his pilgrimage to Mecca in order to atone for his sin of using alcohol). He did not think in general and abstract categories but he focused on the concrete. One can make a list of facts on the basis of his statements, and his observations have a very pragmatic dimension.

b) Praise among prejudices

Before getting to the testimony of Ibn Ġubayr, depicting the last days of his journey in the countries of the East, it is worth stressing that he treats Franks as 'damned enemy'. He characterised the crusaders whenever the occasion arose. For example when he writes about his stay in Tibnin he adds, 'The fortress belongs to that bitch called the queen [he meant Agnes of Courtenay, 1136–1184], who is the mother of that dog, lord of Acre [i.e. Baldwin IV, 1174–1185] – may Allah destroy this city!'⁹ Describing the weddings among the crusaders he writes, being obviously shocked by the dress of the bride, 'May Allah protect you from the temptation of such a view!'¹⁰ Even his description of the return contains imprecation against the Franks. 'On Saturday, 6 October, thanks to Allah's grace, we embarked on a large ship, taking food and water. Many Christians, called «bilghrin» [term from the Italian *pellegrini*] got on the ship. They made a pilgrimage to

⁷ Cf. J.H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean...*, pp. 1–3; S. i N. Ronart, *Jubayr ibn*, in: *Concise Encyclopaedia of Arabic Civilization*, vol. II, *The Arab West*, Djambatan-Amsterdam 1966, p. 193.

⁸ I mean the edition, *Voyages*, translated by M. Gaudetroy-Demombynes, vol. I–III, Paris 1949–1956.

⁹ Ibn Ġubayr, *Rihla*..., p. 284.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 278.

Jerusalem; no one could count them, there were over two thousand. May great Allah in his grace free us from their company!'¹¹

These epithets, which regularly appear in his whole description of the lands of the Latin East, result from his prejudice towards the crusaders whom he sees as enemies of Islam. However, and we should stress it strongly, his negative attitude towards the Franks did not influence his reliability in depicting the reality and facts. Honesty orders Ibn Ġubayr to appreciate the virtues of the crusaders. It is worth quoting all his words, which are full of praise for the Franks, and which will be the subject of our analysis:

We moved from Tibnin – may God destroy it – at daybreak on Monday. Our way lay through continuous farms and ordered settlements, whose inhabitants were all Muslim, living comfortably with the Franks. God protect us from such temptation. They surrender half their crops to the Franks at harvest time, and pay as well a poll-tax [*ḡizya*] of one dinar and five *qirāt* for each person. Other than that, they are not interfered with, save for a light tax on the fruits of trees. Their houses and all their effects are left to their full possession. All the coastal cities occupied by the Franks are managed in this fashion, their rural districts, the villages and farm, belonging to the Muslims. But their hearts have been seduced, for they observe how unlike them in ease and comfort are their brethren in the Muslim regions under their (Muslim) governors. This is one of the misfortunes afflicting the Muslims. The Muslim community bewails the injustice of a landlord of its own faith, and applauds the conduct of its opponent and enemy, the Frankish landlord, and is accustomed to justice from him.¹²

Ibn Ġubayr has the right to be sad because he discovered certain reality on the Syrian coast [present day Lebanon] that surpassed his expectations and stereotypes of the Muslim propaganda. What a paradox! Muslims feel better in a Frankish society than in the lands of Islam! Will they not want to turn their backs on their fellow believers and religion?

c) Legal regulations concerning taxes in the two worlds

The fears of Ibn Ġubayr are the reactions of a Muslim whose faith is deep and who is concerned about the development of Islam. He is afraid that Islam can be removed from the Franks' countries due to economic reasons like the decline of Christianity in the lands of Islam. However, one should notice some diametrical difference: in the Muslim lands frequent conversions from Christianity into Islam resulted from excessive fiscal burdens and persecutions,¹³ but the Muslims, according to the opinion of Ibn

¹¹ Ibid., p. 283.

¹² Ibid., pp. 274–275; *The travels of Ibn Jubayr...*, ed. R.C. Broadhurst, 316–317.

¹³ Cf. A. Ducellier, *Note sur la conversion des dhimmi chrétiens dans l'Orient musulman VII^{ème}–XI^{ème} siècle*, in: *Mélanges pour le 25^{ème} anniversaire des études arabes à l'Université de Toulouse-le Mirakl*, Toulouse 1998, pp. 183–193; R. le Coz, *Historie de l'Eglise d'Orient*, Paris 1995, pp. 212–214.

Ġubayr,¹⁴ living in comfort under the reign of the Franks, might not want to have anything in common with their brethren in the lands of Islam.

Although some scientists suggest that the Muslims living in the lands of the crusaders had a similar status as the Christians living in the Muslim lands,¹⁵ in the light of Ibn Ġubayr's narrative and other researches, certain differentiations should be made. We do not mean some 'bidding' which party had better or worse conditions in the Islamic lands and in the Christian territories. After all, Ibn Ġubayr presents only the conditions of some concrete place and time. The more important thing is to answer the question what impulses allowed Ibn Ġubayr to admit that the situation of the Muslims in the Frankish lands was favourable.

It is known that the Muslim theology divided the whole world into two zones: *dār al-islām*, i.e. the lands of Islam, the empire of faith, where the word of Allah reigns, and *dār al-ḥarb* – the lands of war, struggle for Islam, lands where one day Islam would prevail since that was the will of the Most High. Using the classical Muslim division Ibn Ġubayr compared the situation of the two worlds where Muslims lived: 'the lands of Islam' and 'the lands of war.' In his report the point of reference was the Franks, the Christians who ruled over the Muslims in *dār al-ḥarb*. He certainly expected that his brethren would be treated worse than in the lands of Islam. Since Christians were the second category citizens in the Muslim *umma* he could suspect that the followers of Islam would be treated even worse in the lands that were hostile to the crusaders. Although the Franks treated the Muslims as people of the lowest social status they guaranteed them more freedom than Muslims did for Christians or even Muslims for their brethren. Here it is worth looking closely at the principles of laying taxes on the infidels as used by Muslims and by Franks.

The presence of a considerable number of infidels, which constituted a minority of subjects during the first ages of the Muslim Empire, on *dār al-islām*, made the Arabs introduce legal regulations of their situation.¹⁶ The Muslim legal treatises included Christians in the group 'The People of the Book', treating them as *ḍimmī*, i.e. 'charges.' As some recompense for their lower social status, expressed in the 'Umar Chart and payment of taxes, Christians could live in the lands of Islam. 'Ḍimma', a specific form of contract concerning the question of jihad that Christians had for accept, was an annex to the legal treatises. In his standard work *Le ġihād dans l'islam medieval* Alfred Morabia

¹⁴ Ibn Ġubayr, *Rihla...*, p. 275.

¹⁵ See J. Philips, *Łaciński Wschód*, in: J. Rile-Smith (ed.), *Historia krucjat*, tr. K. Pachniak, Warszawa 2000, p. 127.

¹⁶ On the situation of Christianity under the Muslim rule in the first ages of Islam see K. Kościelniak, *Chrześcijaństwo wobec podbojów muzułmańskich do wypraw krzyżowych*, in: B. Michalak-Pikulska (ed.), *W kręgu cywilizacji Półksiężycza. 6. Ogólnopolska Konferencja Arabistyczna, Kraków 14–15 maja 2002 roku*, Kraków 2002, 195–207 and K. Kościelniak, *Sytuacja chrześcijan na ziemiach islamu – wczoraj i dziś*, in E. Sakowicz (ed.), *Czy islam jest religią terrorystów*, Kraków 2002, pp. 181–192.

showed the overwhelming character of the taxes that were levied on Christians: the poll-tax called *ġizya* and land tax called *ḥarāğ*.¹⁷

As far as the poll-tax is concerned the Muslims accepted the Sasanian division into three tax classes,¹⁸ which depended on the taxpayer's wealth. Various sources show that the amount of *ġizya* was between one and four dinars, one dinar being the payment for whole day work over two weeks. Thus in the Middle Ages the poll-tax meant two-week up to two-month work, whereas the land tax embraced about half of the crops. Besides, Christians were forced to pay other financial obligations, which depended on the needs of the country, i.e. the will of the ruler. Those taxes, depending on the regions and types, had various names: *qawānīn*, *ḍarā'ib*, *ma'āwīn*, *mağārim*, *maḡālim*, *ğibāyāt*, *rusūm*, *mukūs*.¹⁹ It also happened that *ġizya* was some pre-arranged sum of money to be divided among the members of the community who had to pay it. The poll-tax could be paid in crops, too. In Libya, Nubia and Persia the Arab conquerors demanded slaves as the land tax.²⁰

Ibn Ġubayr must have known the eagerness of the Muslim governors to extort the highest possible sums from the conquered people since such regulations had been long used in the Islamic lands. For example, it was as early as in the first half of the 8th century that 'Umar II (717–720) was dissatisfied with the excessive taxation of the provincial governors. This caliph wrote to his representative in Egypt Ḥayyāna Ibn Šurayḥ Allah sent Muḥammad to be the apostle of faith and not a tax-collector'.²¹

Our traveller from Andalusia was surprised that the Muslims 'owned their houses and all goods'.²² It seems that his astonishment resulted from the fact that in the Islamic lands Christians did not actually own their lands. According to the Islamic theology land belonged to God who made his faithful Muslims its users. The consequence of that principle was that only a Muslim community had the full right to benefit from the fruits of the earth.

As far as the Frankish party is concerned one should admit that in the first years of the conquest the crusaders slaughtered Muslims several times since they probably wanted to settle Christians in those strategic territories. But soon it occurred that such politics was unproductive. Since the Franks controlled too large territory to be settled by Christians. Additionally, relatively few crusaders stayed in the East. They returned to Europe after the consecutive crusades. In spite of numerous settlers from the West the Franks suffered from lack of people. Both the Franks and the Muslims could not fight without breaks. The image of the crusades as continuous fights or the epoch that shed

¹⁷ Cf. A. Morabia, *Le ġihād dans l'islam médiéval. Le „combat sacré” des origines au XII^e siècle*, Paris 1993, pp. 269–281.

¹⁸ Cf. C. Cahen, *Contribution à l'étude des impôts dans l'Egypte médiévale*, in: "Journal of the Economic and Social History of Orient" 5(1962), pp. 248–249.

¹⁹ Cf. A. Morabia, *Le ġihād dans l'islam médiéval*..., p. 271.

²⁰ Cf. K. Kościelniak, *Niewolnictwo w islamie wczoraj i dziś*, in: „Polonia Sacra” 14(2004), pp. 44–48.

²¹ Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, vol. V, Bayrūt 1960, p. 384.

²² Ibn Ġubayr, *Riḥla*..., p. 275.

blood all the time is not true. Ibn Ǧubayr wrote that 'the knights were occupied with war themselves and ordinary citizens lived in peace'.²³

The Franks understood relatively quickly that they had to reach some *modus vivendi* with the Muslims who inhabited the conquered territories. The feeling of realism made them put theory into practice. For example, in Sidon Muslims received the right to stay in their land in the year 1110 and Prince Tankred of Antioch (1100–1103; 1105–1112) was so much interested in leaving Muslim peasants in his territory that he ordered them to bring their wives from Aleppo where they had found shelter. The contacts between the Franks and the Muslims increased regardless of the ideology of war with enemy, which both parties developed. The contemporary Muslim writer Usāma Ibn Munqiz (1095–1188) maintained very good relationships with the Knights of the Temple of Solomon who defended him against a dishonest settler. Actually, any trade could only exist when their interaction was high. The trade between Christians and Muslims was relatively quickly developed. Merchants from both conflicting parties regularly travelled from Damascus to Acre. That situation made the Franks levy reasonable taxes on the Muslims, which meant – according to Ibn Ǧubayr 'one dinar and five *qirāt* for each person'²⁴ – the equivalent of the lowest tax class for poor Muslims in the Islamic lands.²⁵ The land tax was similar on both sides, but the crusaders did not levy any other serious burdens.

With time the descendants of the Western settlers more and more melted into the local society of the Arabic-speaking Christians. The discussion how to understand the famous fragment of Fulk of Chartres (1058–1127): 'Consider, I pray, and reflect how in our time God has transferred the West into the East, for we who were Occidentals now have been made Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank is now a Galilean, or an inhabitant of Palestine. One who was a citizen of Rheims or of Chartres now has been made a citizen of Tyre or of Antioch'²⁶ has been continued till today. Recent researches do not let us make a simplified thesis about the lack of assimilation or about a small assimilation of the Franks with the local people. According to the preserved sources among those crusaders who decided to stay in the Holy Land after 1099 were the Flemish, the inhabitants of Picardy, Provence, Languedoc as well as Germans, Englishmen, Italians and Hungarians. It was established that in the year 1131 only 17.5% of them belonged to the participants of the first crusade, which some scientists take to be a testimony of the great peaceful migration from Europe. Those settlers soon intermingled with the local Christians and in the next generations they regarded themselves as Occidentals, whom the sources defined as 'Firangi'. At the turn of the 12th and the 13th centuries, in the times of Ibn Ǧubayr's visit to the Latin East, the term 'Firangi' assumed a strong emotional character. The European chroniclers accused the Occidentals of love

²³ Cf. R. Irwin, *Islam a ruch krucjatowy*, in: J. Rile-Smith (ed.), *Historia krucjat*, op. cit., p. 250.

²⁴ Cf. Ibn Ǧubayr, *Rihla*..., p. 275.

²⁵ Cf. C. Cahen, *Contribution à l'étude des impôts dans l'Égypte médiévale*..., pp. 248–249.

²⁶ *Historia Hierosolymitana. Gest Francorum Ierusalem peregrinantium, ab Anno Domini MXCV usque Annum MCXXVII auctore domino Fulcherio Carnotensi*, in: *Historiens occidentaux, Recueil des historiens des croisades*, ed. Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, vol. III, Paris 1866, pp. 467–468.

for the Muslim style of life and many a time they accused them of too big tolerance for the enemies of Christianity and they even accused them of treason. Commencing with the end of the 12th century the Firangi regarded the Latin countries of the Holy Land as their homeland, which strengthened their sense of identity as compared to the new comers from the West.²⁷

Until recently it has been assumed that the percentage of Western settlers in the territories of the Kingdom of Jerusalem was small and the Franks mainly lived in cities. Such a view favoured the thesis on 'the Mediaeval apartheid', discrimination of Muslims who were condemned to live in the country by 'the race of Western lords.' But not long ago Ronnie Ellenblum showed in a convincing way on the basis of precise archaeological discoveries that the Frankish settlements evenly covered the whole territory of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and that the kingdom was larger than it had been estimated earlier.²⁸ That state survived till 1187, when the powerful Kurdish migration flooded the smaller number of the Frankish settlers.²⁹ Thus we can conclude that Ibn Ġubayr, travelling over the lands of the crusaders in 1185, did not exaggerate that the Muslims 'live in comfort among the Franks.'³⁰ The latter were often neighbours of the followers of Islam. Furthermore, the Muslims living in the Frankish towns were allowed to practice their religion. In Acre itself a part of the Great Mosque, which was changed into a church, was sectioned off for Muslim celebrations.³¹

The process of assimilation, the neighbourhood, the need to have a stable basis for the fighting Frankish units and the fact that the periods of peace were definitely longer than the times of wars favoured the establishment of good relationships between various ethnic and religious groups. Therefore, there were not many conflicts between Christian settlers and Muslims as it might have seemed only on the basis of the polemical sources. The European feudal order, which the crusaders introduced, began to be adjusted to the local conditions, taking into account the local estates.³² The chroniclers who came from Europe could not stop being astonished at the abilities of the local Franks, the Firangi, to co-exist with the Muslims and at the same time to wage wars against them.³³ The presented fragment of the narrative by Ibn Ġubayr becomes, therefore, a precious source confirming the existence of this strange, ambivalent situation.

²⁷ Cf. M. Balard, *Wyprawy krzyżowe i łaciński Wschód XI–XIV w.*, tr. M. Witkowski, Warszawa 2005, pp. 151–152.

²⁸ Cf. R. Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Cambridge 1998; and, *Colonization Activities in the Frankish East: The Example of Castellum Regis (Mi'ilya)*, in: "English Historical Review" 111(1996) pp. 104–122.

²⁹ Cf. M. Balard, *Wyprawy krzyżowe i łaciński Wschód XI–XIV w.*, p. 155.

³⁰ Cf. Ibn Ġubayr, *Rihla...*, p. 274.

³¹ Cf. S. Runciman, *Dzieje wypraw krzyżowych*, tr. J. Schwakopf, vol. III, Warszawa 1988, p. 333.

³² Cf. P.K. Hitti, *Dzieje Arabów*, tr. W. Dembski, et al., Warszawa 1969, p. 541.

³³ Cf. J. Philips, *Łaciński Wschód...*, p. 127.

d) Revealing the deficiencies of the world of Islam during the times of the crusades

Does the praise of the Franks by Ibn Ġubayr concern only economy? Was it only astonishment at the reasonable taxes levied on the Muslims and at good relationships between them? It seems that the report of Ibn Ġubayr gives something more than the way of paying taxes in the kingdom of the crusaders.

I want to return to the statement: Ibn Ġubayr appreciates the virtues of the Franks and at the same time he curses them. And this very paradox is the main point. The traveller from Andalusia discovers that the objectivity and good management of the state by the crusaders constitute some deadly danger for the world of Islam. In fact, his statement should be analysed in the whole context of the processes that developed in the Near East.

It seems that Ibn Ġubayr began realising that the Frankish society had a clear advantage over the Muslim one as 'the giver of law'. Although there were developed schools of law in the world of Islam, which accepted *Šharī'a* as God's law, bidding to all members of the *umma*. Juridical procedures were known and used. However, the authority of the caliph was not limited. The theocratic Islamic state did not create any mechanisms to start such organisms as merchant towns, which carried new ideas in the West. What Ibn Ġubayr saw in the Franks' organisms could be called specific 'citizen' regulations. Although the term 'citizen' was not known in the Middle Ages all members of the feudal society had diversified duties and privileges that concerned feudal owners, knights, clergy, burgesses and 'infidel' peasants. The ladder of allegiance caused that society and authority were united by a strong social relation. Thanks to that – recalling the thought of Mark Bloch – this system, in spite of its ruthlessness towards the little ones, gave our civilisations something what we would like to keep until now. Since this system emphasised the idea of binding agreement for rulers. The liege agreement was powerfully binding for the stronger party, the lord, and for the weaker party, the vassal.³⁴ During the crusades the power of the kings was also subordinated to certain rules that were regarded as indisputable. The king had to care for his subjects and the state as well as he had to be loyal to his liegemen.

The lack of stable and acknowledged institutions in the world of Islam must have influenced civil liberties.³⁵ Those liberties shocked Ibn Ġubayr. But he was not the only one, for example his contemporary Usāma Ibn Munqidh (1095–1188), in his *Kitāb al-I'tibār* (Book of instructive examples), regarded the crusaders as 'animals possessing the virtue of bravery but nothing else' but he stated that 'the decision of the king, accepted by the knights, cannot be changed by the king himself and by any Frankish prince'.³⁶

³⁴ Cf. M. Bloch, *Spółeczeństwo feudalne*, tr. E. Bąkowska, Warszawa 2002², p. 438.

³⁵ Cf. A. Maalouf, *Wyprawy krzyżowe w oczach Arabów*, tr. K.J. Dąbrowska, Warszawa 2001, pp. 278–279.

³⁶ Usāma ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-I'tibār*, ed. P.K. Hitti, Princeton 1930, p. 132.

Ibn Ġubayr might have known the weakness of the Muslim society to build stable institutions. For instance, during his visit to Acre he admired the quick and clear system of collecting customs duties,³⁷ but he complained about the Muslim control in Alexandria, which he described as 'full of humiliation and lack of respect'.³⁸ Soon after having arrived in the East the Franks created efficient state organisms. In the Kingdom of Jerusalem the succession occurred usually without big disturbances, the royal council had a real influence on rulers' politics and the Church played a considerable role in settling internal conflicts. No similar organs could be found in the Muslim world. Every monarchy was seriously threatened after the death of the ruler and almost every assumption of power caused civil wars. It was commonly thought that one seized power by sword.³⁹

Searching for the origin of this phenomenon, which is typical for the Islamic Middle Ages in the Near East, we can refer to the factography of continuous invasions and wars that destabilised the structures of subsequent Muslims' countries. However, it seems that one cannot reduce this issue to the military sphere. The instability of the institutions built in the world of Islam during the crusades mainly resulted from the nomadic origin of the peoples who seized power in the Near East. The Turks and Kurds played the key role. A considerable part of the steppe riders formed the commanders of the armies. But they did not have any relations with the Mediterranean and Arab civilisations, considering the fact that in 1134 Al-Mas'ūd (1135–1152), the sultan from the Selġuq dynasty, talked to caliph Al-Mustaršid (1118–1135) through a translator since the Selġuq did not learn Arabic 80 years after his clan had seized Baghdad.⁴⁰ The structure of clans in those countries caused that the organisms developed or decreased depending on the success of the leading families.⁴¹ During the voyage of Ibn Ġubayr the consequences of the Turkish migration were visible in the system of power as well as in the economic, social and cultural life. The abuse of power in the previous epoch, which was connected with excessive fiscal policy, became the principle of social order built by the rulers who did not live in the territories.⁴²

The Arabic Spain where Ibn Ġubayr came from was unique in the world of Islam. Although from the beginning of the 11th century it was divided into several duchesses it was one of the few regions of the world of Islam that was ruled by the Arabs. In spite of their high culture these small countries were not able to impose political, social and cultural patterns on the whole Muslims' world due to their disintegration. Because of that rift Ibn Ġubayr could have been embarrassed when he looked at his fellow countrymen. According to him the Islamic countries assumed different pragmatic attitudes towards the Franks. For example, the Turks in Asia Minor were not interested in the crusaders' countries but they fought with them only when the Frankish armies entered

³⁷ Cf. Ibn Ġubayr, *Rihla*..., p. 279.

³⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

³⁹ Cf. A.K.S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, Oxford 1981, p. 45.

⁴⁰ Cf. A. Maalouf, *Wyprawy krzyżowe w oczach Arabów*..., p. 279.

⁴¹ Cf. A. Hourani, *Historia Arabów*, tr. J. Danecki, Warszawa 1995, p. 115.

⁴² Cf. B. Lewis, *Muzułmański Bliski Wschód*, tr. J. Danecki, Gdańsk 2003, pp. 90–91.

their territories. It happened relatively often that the Muslims themselves asked the Franks to help them against their fellow Muslim brothers.

The reality that Ibn Ġubayr discovered in the Latin East clearly showed him certain abnormalities of the Islamic world. The countries without fiefdom or the countries with unilateral obligation of the weaker party to the stronger one encountered big difficulties to convince their officials and subjects to have a feeling of community of mutual interests. The Muslims' countries often lack that. Ibn Ġubayr understood that the presence of the Franks brought the lack to light but it did not create it.⁴³

e) Aversion and admiration, fear and fascination

Although there were numerous contacts between the Christian crusaders and the Muslims the cultural integration between them was very small. Life demanded *modus vivendi*, and even some friendly neighbourhood, but the cultural-religious differences did not favour any mutual understanding. The work *Bahr al-fawā'id* (Sea of Wonderful Features) written by an anonymous Persian living in the 12th century states that the books of the aliens were not worth reading. It seems that the Arabs consciously rejected the Western ideas. Learning the local languages was very helpful for the Franks. The crusaders learnt Arabic for practical reasons. Renald de Chatillon (1125–1187), the owner of Krak of Moab, knew that language to negotiate with the Bedouins. Although Renald de Sidon (1130–1202), knew Arabic well and read works written in this language he employed an Arab scholar to interpret the more difficult texts. However, learning the language of the conqueror meant certain agreement, serfdom, and perhaps even treason, for the Muslims.⁴⁴ Although the cultural integration was small, as it has already been mentioned, a complete look at the phenomenon, i.e. considering Spain, gives a different picture. It is commonly known that it was through the Spanish Arabs that the Franks rediscovered the heritage of Greek culture and the achievements in the fields of medicine, chemistry, astronomy, geography, etc.

Connecting Spain with the Latin East is not accidental. Since Andalusia was the homeland of Ibn Ġubayr. Spain and the Holy Land were the meeting places of the Western culture with Islam, which contributed to the development of Europe. In the analysed report Ibn Ġubayr showed briefly and clearly what the biggest problems of the Islamic world in the next ages were: ambivalence of aversion and admiration; fascination and at the same time fear of the Franks living in the Arab world. The period of the Crusades began a new economic-cultural development of Europe. In spite of the victories over the crusaders the world of Islam experienced stagnation. There occurred some kind of inner closeness and Islam many a time saw progress as a strange reality. One can ask whether the world of Islam had to reject European solutions in order

⁴³ Cf. A. Maalouf, *Wyprawy krzyżowe w oczach Arabów...*, pp. 278–279.

⁴⁴ Cf. R. Irwin, *Islam a ruch krucjatowy...*, p. 250; A. Maalouf, *Wyprawy krzyżowe w oczach Arabów...*, p. 281.

to defend its cultural-religious identity only because the solutions originated from its enemy and were symbols of the West? Until today the world of Islam, understood very widely, has not given an exhaustive answer to that problem. We are often astonished to discover how big is the degree of influence of Ibn Ġubayr's dilemma on the attitude of contemporary Muslims and what difficulty they meet when they try to distance themselves from the events that happened several centuries ago. The leaders of many Muslim countries constantly refer to Saladin and the capture of Jerusalem. For example, the Egyptian President Nasser was compared to Saladin because he united Egypt, Syria and Yemen. Many Islamic parties define Israel as the new country of the crusaders. Two divisions of the Palestinian Liberation Army have the historical names Hittin and Ayn Jalut. The Suez War of 1956 or the last two wars in Iraq have been constantly compared with the crusades. Have we not seen that comparison in the words of Ali Ağca who justified his decision to kill John Paul II, who he called the highest commander of the crusaders? The Islamic fundamentalists keep using the rhetoric of 'the crusaders'. For example, in the video recording of 3 November 2001 Bin Laden repeated his thesis that 'as the consequence of the First World War, which ended over 83 years ago, the whole world of Islam fell under the banners of the crusaders'.⁴⁵

On the other, hand the huge Muslims' migration to Europe, their desire to settle among Europeans and their rapture over the technological progress of the Western civilisation testifies to many Muslim believers' admiration for the achievements, welfare and efficient organisation of the Western world. Looking at the variety of Muslim options and at the same time seeing the extreme theses about the West spoken by some authors it seems that the contradictory feelings of fascination and fear, admiration and aversion, i.e. 'the ambivalence of Ibn Ġubayr', have continued, and the end of the ambivalence is not near at all.

⁴⁵ Cf. P. Marshall, *Islamic Counter-Reformation*, in: 'First Things' 145(2004) p. 23.