

Amalia Levanoni



A Turning Point
in Mamluk History
*The Third Reign of
al-Nāṣir Muḥammad
Ibn Qalāwīn
1310-1341*



E. J. BRILL

**A TURNING POINT
IN MAMLUK HISTORY**

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A TURNING POINT IN MAMLUK HISTORY

*The Third Reign of
al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn
(1310-1341)*

BY

AMALIA LEVANONI

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E.J. BRILL
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Amalia Levanoni

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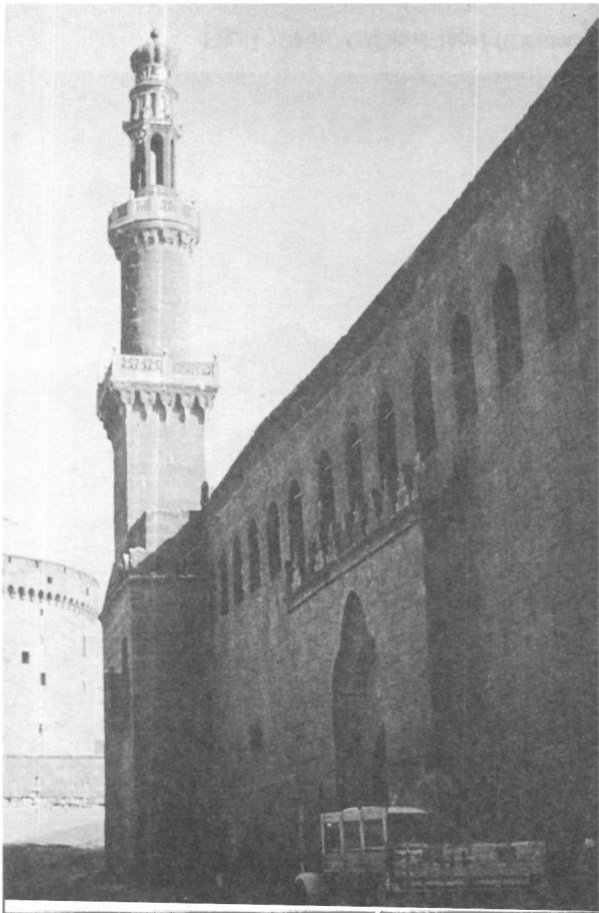


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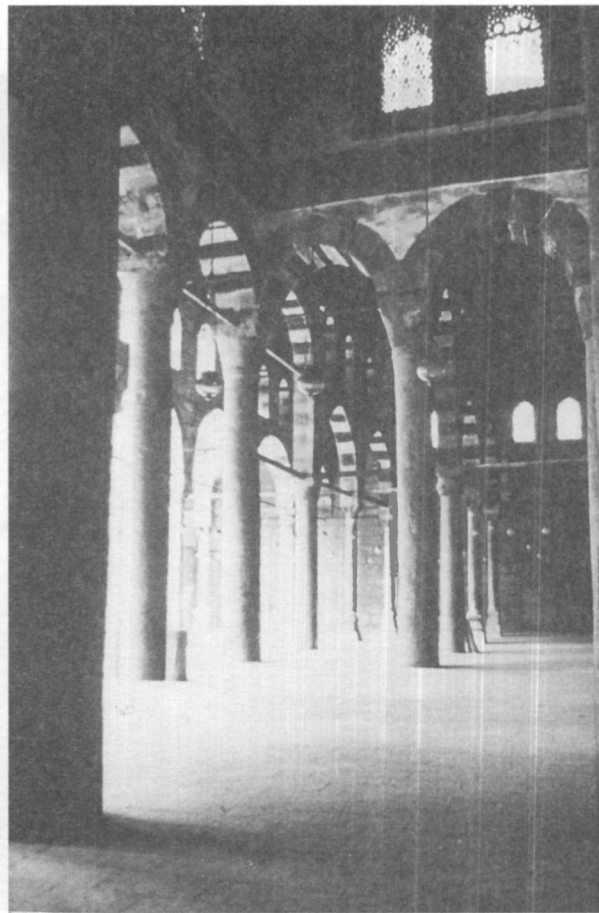


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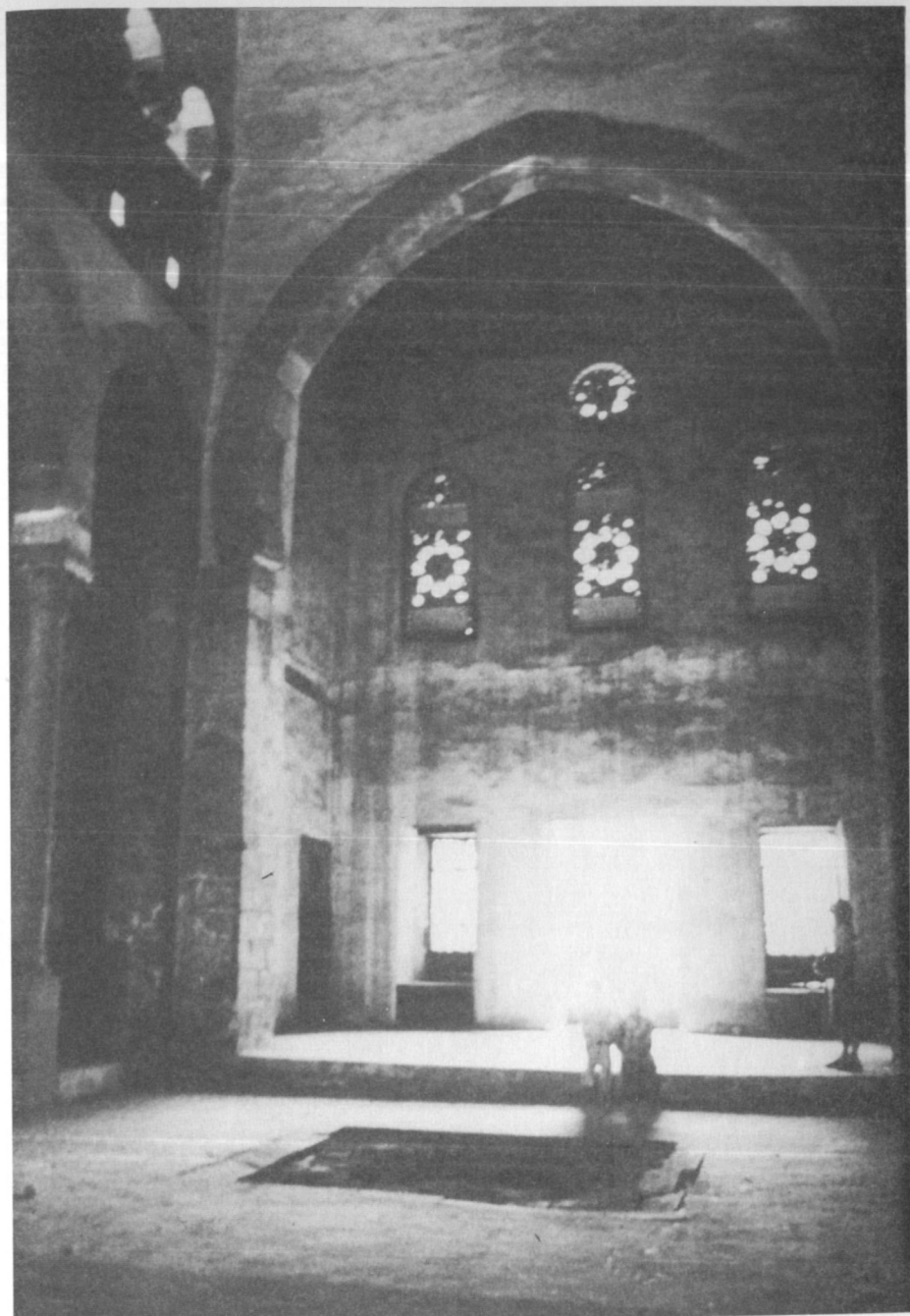


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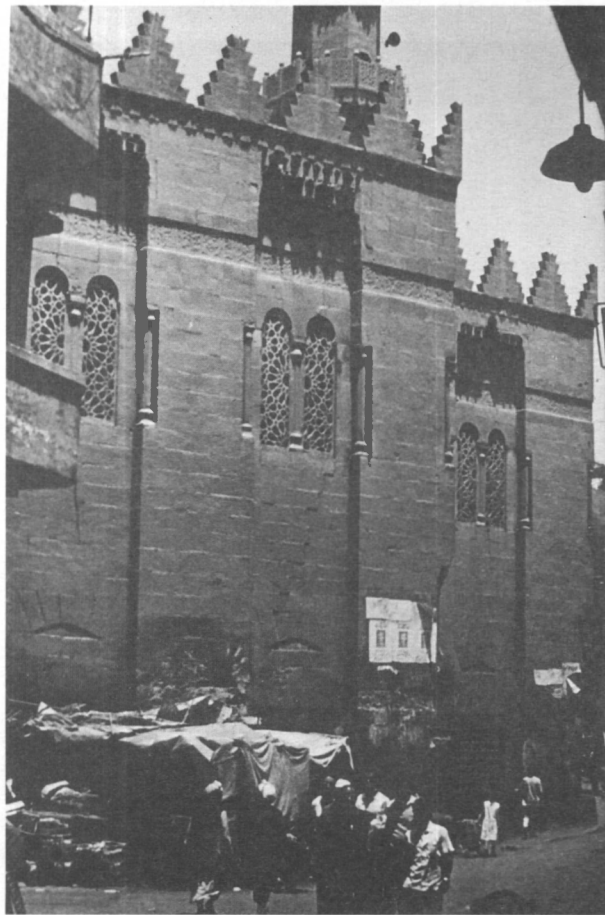


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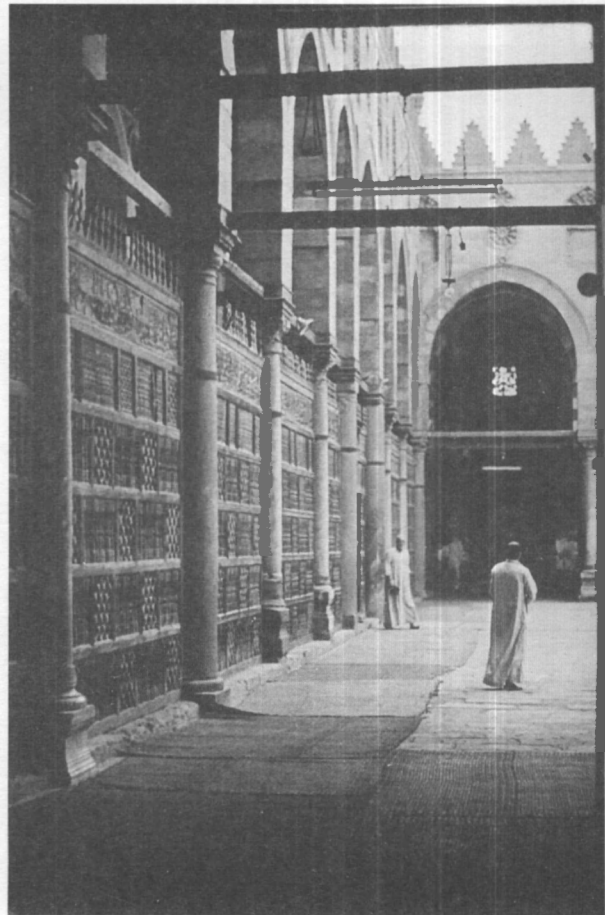


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INTRODUCTION

Modern historical research usually divides Mamluk autonomous rule in Egypt (648–923/1250–1517) into two periods, a Turkish or Bahri period (648–784/1250–1382) and a Circassian or Burji period (784–923/1382–1517). In this it follows contemporary Mamluk sources which already contain this division. Mamluks of Turkish origin were dominant in the army and held the reins of power during the first period while Circassians formed the majority in the army and sultans were drawn from their number during the second.¹

Also found already in certain Mamluk sources and adopted by modern historians is the view that the misrule that characterized the Mamluk state especially from the beginning of the 15th century and led to its decline, started with the rise to power of the Circassians.² Circassian rule is seen as having caused the gradual deterioration of military standards in the Mamluk army which subsequently had its impact on the economy and social order throughout the state.³ Since instances of the collapse of the traditional Mamluk system are regarded primarily as belonging to Circassian rule,⁴ when signs of similar phenomena are found to occur as early as Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign (709–741/1310–1341) and that of his immediate successors, these are treated as mere "sporadic manifestations".⁵ Furthermore, even though violations of the traditional principles of the Mamluk system are widely agreed to have

¹ Historians contemporaneous with the Mamluk era perceive the rulers of the Bahri period as belonging to the Bahriyya, the mamluk unit established by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, and their descendants, and those of the Burji period as coming from among the Burjiyya, established by Qalāwūn (678–689/1279–1290), though none of the Circassian sultans could, of course, actually have belonged to this faction; cf. Ayalon, "Bahri Mamlūk, Burji Mamlūks", pp. 22–24.

² See, e.g., idem, "Circassians", pp. 144–147; Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, pp. 9–11, 28–43; Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, p. 301; Udovitch, "England to Egypt", p. 120.

³ Ayalon, "l'Esclavage", p. 14; "Circassians", pp. 144–147; "The Mamluk Army", No. 2, p. 475.

⁴ Idem, "The Mamluk Army", No. 1, pp. 206–207; No. 2, p. 475; "Mamlukiyyat", p. 337.

⁵ Idem, "Circassians", p. 146; "Eunuchs", pp. 288–289; "The Mamluk Army", No. 2, p. 475.

been rife during the Circassian period, the system itself is portrayed as having remained constant. According to David Ayalon, these principles “remained the backbone of the military servitude in the Circassian period as well.”⁶ Thus, deviations are not regarded as perversions of these principles but rather seen as variations in the way they were implemented. “None of the principles on which the Mamluk system has been based was fully carried out (certainly not for long). Yet the cumulative effect of these partly carried out principles proved sufficient to ensure that unique might and longevity of the Mamluk system.”⁷

The present study is an attempt to show that, on the contrary, the Mamluk system, while it contained certain elements that remained constant, was a dynamic one, susceptible to change throughout its history. That is to say, the pivotal place the Mamluk system occupied in the life of the Mamluk elite led, almost from the outset, to reciprocal influence. Thus, the increasing number of deviations from Mamluk principles that occurred prior to the Circassian ascent to power should be seen as stages in a process of change already set in motion.

Our main thesis is that the origins of this process are to be found in the special conditions al-Nāṣir Muḥammad created in the Mamluk army, the repercussions of which were to affect the entire range of Mamluk norms.

Chapter One describes the Mamluk system as it took shape during the formative years of the Mamluk state, the reigns of Sultans al-Zāhir Baybars and al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn. This description is then used, in Chapter Two, to throw into relief the changes effected in the Mamluk system by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. First introduced into the Mamluk army, these changes are found to have had their impact on the social and political life of the Mamluk elite already during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s lifetime. Chapter Three then traces their development from al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death up to the end of Mamluk autonomous rule and reveals the transformation they wrought in the Mamluk code of values and Mamluk political concepts.

Chapter Four, finally, deals with the overall economic decline of the Mamluk state. After a brief outline of its various causes as found in modern historical research, viz., demographic decline,

⁶ Idem, “Circassians”, p. 145.

⁷ Idem, “Mamlukiyyat”, p. 337.

monetary crises, and the collapse of agriculture and industry, the link of each of these with the misrule of the Mamluk government is established. Here it is the repercussions of al-Nāṣir's expenditure policy on the economy which reveal his reign as a point of no return in that they crippled the state's ability to withstand the crises which were to beset it during the second half of the 14th century. Underscored, too, is the connection between the norms that came to prevail among the Mamluk military elite following al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death and the worsening of the economic crisis.

A few words on methodology. Unlike earlier periods of Islamic history, the Mamluk era is well documented. Contemporary Mamluk sources contain a wealth of information on the Mamluk system itself, the changes that occurred in it and the effect these had on Mamluk rule throughout the Mamluk period. A number of difficulties arise, nonetheless. Firstly, nowhere do Mamluk sources offer us a "systematic theory" on Mamluk training and advancement systems, and thus the way these were organized has to be pieced together from information scattered—often widely—throughout them. Somewhat more detailed descriptions—but, again, far from containing a complete picture—are two passages found in the works of the historian Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), a relatively late historical source on the period of Baybars and Qalāwūn.⁸ Secondly, as soon as signs of the decline of the state began to appear—in the course of the second half of the 14th century—contemporary Mamluk chroniclers increasingly came to depict the first sultans as the founding fathers of the state and tended to hold up the period of their rule as the ideal for their own and future generations to emulate.⁹ Al-Maqrīzī, for example, praises them as "rulers who ruled kingdoms and commanders who fought the Holy War",¹⁰ while he decries the Royal Mamluks of his own time as "the most contemptible, indolent and despised among men, most deprived spiritually, utterly ignorant of the ways of the world, and deviating from the true faith."¹¹ Ibn Taghri Birdī writes:

⁸ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 213–214; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 524–525.

⁹ Al-Shujā'ī, p. 95; al-Yūsufī, p. 414; *Manhal*, 3, p. 337; *Nujūm* 14, pp. 111–112, 199; Ayalon, "l'Esclavage", pp. III–IV and note 136 on p. 52.

¹⁰ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 214.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

A salute to that time and its people! How excellent were their deeds, how becoming were the ways in which they considered the education of their young and the honour which they extended to their elderly. Because of this they ruled the land and the people yielded to them. They won the hearts of their subjects and gained high office. But our times are the exact opposite of theirs, commanders are backward [in their ignorance] and the young evil-minded . . . [*li-lāhi darru dhālika al-zamān wa-ahlihi mā kāna aḥsana tadbīrahum wa-aṣwaba ḥadsahum min jawdat tarbiyat ṣaghīrihim wa-ta'zīm kabīrihim ḥattā malakū al-bilād wa-dānat lahum al-'ibād wa-istajlabū khawāṭir al-ra'īyya fa-nālū al-rutab al-saniyya, wa-ammā zamānina hādhā fa-huwa bi-khilāf dhālika kulīhi fa-l-muqaddam mu'akkhar wa-l-saghīr mutanammir . . .*].¹²

Are these the usual regrets of *laudatores temporis acti* or can we read such passages as representative of their authors' own time? In order to overcome these and similar difficulties inherent in Mamluk sources and to allow confident use of the information they contain I scanned the writings of Mamluk historians contemporaneous with the reigns of Baybars and Qalāwūn and could only conclude that they wholly corroborate the descriptions found in the later sources.

Throughout this study I have availed myself of contemporary and retrospective historical chronicles, encyclopaedias and socio-geographical writings. Modern literature based upon these sources, in particular when dealing with the structure of the Mamluk system and the social and economic history of the Mamluk era, have furthermore proved of invaluable help.¹³

¹² *Nujūm*, 8, p. 228.

¹³ For details, see Chapter 4, Introduction.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE MAMLUK STATE

And not one of them was occupied with anything other than the arts of war (. . .) and they became highly proficient in all military skills.

(*Sulūk*, 1, p. 512)

Organization

When the Mamluks rose to power in Egypt (648/1250) they based their claim to rule on continuing the reforms instituted by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (637–647/1240–1249),¹ reforms which had shaken the very foundations of Ayyubid rule and had led to its subsequent elimination by the Mamluks.² When Sultan al-Zāhir Baybars (658-676/1260-1277) attained power there was total chaos in the regions which had been under Ayyubid control, since the Mongols had meanwhile crushed the autonomous political power bases that had sprung up in Syria. Political instability was rife in Egypt as well, as shown by the rise of three different rulers in the space of ten years, each of them having taken power after the murder of his predecessor. This instability, and the continuous threat of Mongol invasion, had left the first Mamluk sultan with neither the time nor the opportunity to build up a governing apparatus adequate to the needs of the emerging Mamluk state.³

As with the Ayyubids, Saljuks, Ghaznavids and others before them, the Mamluks could derive legitimacy in the eyes of the people only from being seen as the custodians of the faith. Muslim tradition viewed the task of government as defending Islam from its enemies from without and ruling the country according to the dictates of the *sharīʿa* from within. In this sense, the Mamluks may

¹ *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, p. 27; *Zubda*, fol. 54b; *Tuḥfa*, pp. 23, 25–26, 27; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 448; Humphreys, “The Emergence of the Mamluk Army”, p. 154.

² Humphreys, “The Emergence of the Mamluk Army”, p. 150; Levanoni, pp. 135–137.

³ Humphreys, “The Emergence of the Mamluk Army”, pp. 153–154.

indeed be perceived as the successors of the Ayyubids. Baybars restored the Abbasid Caliphate in Egypt after it had been eliminated in Baghdad by the Mongol conquest (656/1258).⁴ He also established a judicial system based on the four Muslim legal schools and instituted procedures for its administration.⁵ Al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (678-689/1279-1290) continued this trend, while introducing further changes in the religious establishment and the legal system.⁶

Towards military and administrative institutions, however, Baybars showed an innovative and independent approach, and the far-reaching reforms he instigated—further improved during Qalāwūn's rule—were to become part of the accepted code of conduct of the Mamluk army.⁷

The importance of the reorganization of the Mamluk army during just this period stemmed from the fact that Baybars's rule, like that of Qalāwūn after him, was a time of successive wars with the Crusaders and the Mongols. Because the state needed permanent and clearly defined military and administrative bodies to enable the successful management of a single, large army at times of crisis, these years of war made a distinct contribution to the formation and definition of the Mamluk state's ruling institutions.

The entry, furthermore, of very large numbers of Mongol soldiers into Egypt during Baybars's rule and later, and Baybars's admiration for the methods of Mongol government and the standards maintained in their army may also have contributed to the formation of the new military and administrative structure of the Mamluk state: "And al-Malik al-Zāhir . . . acted according to the principles of the Mongol kings and most of the laws of Genghis Khan as the *yāsā*. . . ."⁸

⁴ *Sirat al-Zāhir*, pp. 141–142; *Bidāya*, 13, pp. 237–238, 276; al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fol. 162b; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 84; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 477–479; *Nujūm*, 7, pp. 118–120; *Iqd* (Amin), 1, pp. 348–349; *Ibar*, 5, p. 263, 273; *Ta'riḫ al-khulafā'*, pp. 757–761. See also Ayalon, "Caliphate".

⁵ *Bidāya*, 13, p. 246; *Zubda*, fols. 57a–b; *Tuhfa*, p. 51; al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fols. 176a–b, 181b–182a; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 282; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, pp. 152, 159; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 501–502, 668; *Nujūm*, 7, pp. 120–122, 332, 333; Ibn Waṣīf, fols. 67a–68b; *Ibar*, 5, pp. 272–273; *Iqd* (Amin), 1, pp. 407–408.

⁶ Ibn al-Furāt, 7, pp. 152, 159.

⁷ Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army", pp. 153, 167, 172, 178. Ayalon, however, is of the opinion that the Ayyubid army and military society continued without break and without any discernible drastic change into the Mamluk reign; Ayalon, "From Ayyubids to Mamluks", p. 55.

⁸ *Nujūm*, 7, pp. 182–185; *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, p. 221; on the influence of the Mongols

More than anything, however, it was the change that had occurred in the political status of the Mamluk army which infused Baybars's innovative actions. While during the Ayyubid period the army had existed to serve the ruling elite—with the Mamluk units only part of it—the Mamluk army now had itself become the ruling elite and from its own ranks provided the sultans of the Mamluk state. This in turn created the difficulty of how the sultan was to impose authority on his erstwhile colleagues and made it necessary to establish clearly defined formal rules for the administration and organization of the army, guaranteeing the sultan's sway over the ruling elite of which he himself was a part.

At the time of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death, the Ayyubid army did not have a single unified military framework but, rather, each Ayyubid principality had its own specific military structure dictated by its own traditions and needs. Though there were some common features, the command structure and manpower that each principality had at its disposal decided the size and formation of its army.⁹ These armies were run according to the needs and whims of the individual Ayyubid ruler who headed the principality and not by any permanent and formal administrative practices.¹⁰ Moreover, while it was left to the ruler to determine the size of the military unit inside his principality, such a unit changed structure from the moment it was incorporated into the larger Ayyubid army brought together for a particular military venture.¹¹

Following the battle of 'Ayn Jālūt (658/1260) after which Baybars

on the Mamluks, see *Sirat al-Zāhir*, pp. 135–140, 178, 180; Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī, fol. 5a; Ibn Shaddād, pp. 153–154, 237–238; *Bidāya*, 13, p. 276; al-Yūnīnī, 2907/E4, fol. 29a; *Tuhfa*, pp. 51, 78; *Zubda*, fols. 61b–62b, 130a, 138b, 139a, 206a–b, 220b, 246a–b; al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fols. 156b, 157a, 166b, 209a; 20, fols. 13b, 17a, 89a; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, pp. 250, 260; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 501, 515; *Iqd* (Amin), 1, pp. 364–365; *Ibar*, 5, pp. 264–265; Ayalon, "Sauvaget", pp. 299–300; Rogers, "Mamluk-Mongol Relations", pp. 385–404; Irwin, *The Middle East*, pp. 90–92; Kwanten, pp. 156–167; Saunders, pp. 119–139; Haarmann, "Rather the Injustice of the Turks", p. 68. For various evaluations on the Mongols' influence on the Mamluks, see: Ayalon, "Wāfidiyya", pp. 98–99; idem, "The Great Yasa", pp. 131–132; Sauvaget, *La poste*, p. 13; Little, "Notes on Aitamiš", pp. 387–401.

⁹ On the difference between the Ayyubid armies and the Mamluk army, see Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army", pp. 69–74; cf., however, Ayalon, "Aspects", No. 2.

¹⁰ Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army", pp. 70, 76–77.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 79, 81, 83; al-'Umārī, *Ta'rif*, pp. 242–253, 254–256, 259–262; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 231.

took power, the army in Egypt was composed of a large mixture of elements which included different Mamluk factions that had survived from the times of al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb, al-Mu‘izz Aybak, and al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz. Apart from these, the army had provided a haven for many refugees from the Ayyubid armies in Syria, the Kurdish tribes, the Turkomans, and others vanquished by the Mongols.¹² When Baybars set out to lay the foundations for the organization of the army in the Mamluk state, the first thing he did was create a discrete framework for a single army which he made subordinate to the central government. This framework contained three components: the Royal Mamluks (*al-mamālik al-sultāniyya*), the amirs' soldiers, and the *ḥalqa*. The Royal Mamluks were to gain a status of exclusivity in the Mamluk army, through permanent and clearly defined procedures which will be discussed below. Mamluks of amirs remained under the direct command of their masters but were to be placed at the disposal of the state if and when necessary.¹³ The *ḥalqa* consisted of soldiers not included in the two above-mentioned bodies, stood under direct control of the sultan and had its own command and administrative structure. Its status in the Mamluk army was secondary, since the sultan naturally fostered the Royal Mamluks.¹⁴

During the reign of Qalāwūn, the Mamluk army was organized on a permanent war footing. Both Qalāwūn and the military administration kept a list of all of the amirs in the Egyptian and Syrian armies defining their duties on either the right or left flank of the Mamluk army at times of war. In the event of mobilization,

¹² Humphreys "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army", pp. 157–158.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 155–162, 163.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 152–153. Humphreys thinks that Baybars determined the policy that the *ḥalqa*'s status was lower than that of the *khāṣṣakiyya*, the royal bodyguard in the Mamluk state. Ayalon holds the opinion that there was no change in the *ḥalqa*'s high status during the transition of rule from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks and that only later did the *ḥalqa* lose its prominence (Ayalon, "The Mamluk Army", No. 2, pp. 448–458; *idem*, "From Ayyubids to Mamluks", pp. 52–53.). However, the decline in the *ḥalqa*'s status would seem to have originated in the Ayyubid period. During al-Kāmil's reign (615–634/1218–1236) it had already stopped serving as the sultan's special bodyguard (Ibn al-Dawādārī, 7, p. 200). The Bahriyya was al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb's bodyguard and it was different from the *ḥalqa* both in its composition and status (Ibn Wāṣil, fols. 90a, 91a; Ayalon, "From Ayyubids to Mamluks", p. 52). In the Mamluk era the Royal Mamluks were fostered and the *ḥalqa* gradually declined, though its professional decline was not yet visible during the formative period of the Mamluk state. During the 14th century, when professional free-born soldiers like the Kurds who served

messages were sent to the amirs who, together with their soldiers, were then to ready themselves immediately for battle.¹⁵

Baybars established uniformity throughout the Mamluk army through two new procedures. First, he introduced the supply of equipment for the mamluks' needs out of the Sultan's treasury:

And those who had preceded him economized on clothing, grants, and equipment, and these, I mean the army of al-Zāhir . . . were the opposite because the expenses of the first were taken from their fiefs, while the expenses of the second al-Malik al-Zāhir himself incurred [*wa-kāna ūlā'ika al-ladhīna kānū qablahu . . . muqtaṣidīn fī al-malbūs wa-l-nafaqāt wa-l-ʿudad wa-hāʿulāʿi aʿnī ʿaskar al-zāhir kānū bi-l-ḍidd min dhālika wa-kānat kulaf mā yalūdhu bihim min iqtāʿātihim wa-hāʿulāʿi kulafuhum ʿalā al-Malik al-Zāhir*].¹⁶

In other words, Baybars did away with the improvisatory nature and the personal interpretation of the rules which had characterized the Ayyubid army when it came to equipping the Mamluk soldier and replaced it by a standard framework and standard rules for all Mamluk soldiers. It was Baybars's custom to inspect part of the army twice a week in order to verify that the orders regarding equipment were being carried out, while the entire army was inspected periodically.¹⁷ For these latter inspections, the troops were ordered to parade all on one and the same day and with all their equipment, "so that no soldier would be able to borrow items [of equipment] from his comrades [*ḥattā lā yastaʿira aḥad min aḥad shayʿ*]."¹⁸ On these occasions, "the sultan distributed to his mamluks superior military equipment [*al-ʿudad al-jalīla*]."¹⁹ On one rare occasion, Baybars ordered five mamluks to be executed by hanging because they had been absent from an inspection that he had carried

the Ayyubids and the Wāfidiyya Mongols stopped joining the *ḥalqa*, the signs of decline became definite. An indication that at a relatively early stage of the Mamluk state non-professionals joined the *ḥalqa* may be found in Qalāwūn's gesture in honour of his dead colleagues to accept their destitute sons into the *ḥalqa* (*Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 217; *Nujūm*, 7, p. 330).

¹⁵ Shāfiʿ Ibn ʿAlī, fols. 35b–36a; see also *Zubda*, fol. 91b; Abū al-Fidāʿ, 2, p. 24; *Nujūm* 14, p. 70.

¹⁶ *Nujūm*, 7, p. 197, also p. 198; *Sirat al-Zāhir*, p. 81; Ibn Shaddād, pp. 296–297; al-Yūnīnī, 3, p. 262; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 216; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 639–640.

¹⁷ *Sulūk*, 1, p. 501. See for other examples, pp. 510, 512.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 626; *Sirat al-Zāhir*, p. 211, and for more details on such inspections, pp. 209–212.

¹⁹ *Sulūk*, 1, p. 626, see also pp. 517–518, 564; *Zubda*, fol. 67a; *Sirat al-Zāhir*, p. 182; *Iqd* (Amin), 1, p. 376; Ibn Shaddād, pp. 166–167.

out in Ḥimṣ. They were strung up in the main hippodrome which was used for military training.²⁰ Similarly, Qalāwūn equipped the army according to a set of standing orders.²¹

The second procedure intended to underpin the uniformity of the Mamluk army had to do with the granting of fiefs (*iqṭā'āt*).²² While during the Ayyubid period principles guiding the granting of *iqṭā'āt* had always been somewhat unclear and ill-defined, Baybars and Qalāwūn introduced basic reforms which established a clear formal link between a soldier's rank and the size of his *iqṭā'*. Unlike the more abstract notions, such as seniority, which had been an integral part of the Ayyubid amirate, a soldier's rank now indicated the degree of economic power that came with it, implying the establishment of a military hierarchy.²³ During Baybars's reign it became the accepted rule, for example, that the size of the *iqṭā'* of an amir of forty was a third of that of an amir of one hundred. We learn this from Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī, who was in charge of correspondence during the reign of al-Malik al-Sa'id, son of Baybars. When Amir Kunduk was demoted by al-Sa'id from amir of one hundred to amir of forty, Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī was instructed to write an order reducing Kunduk's *iqṭā'* by two thirds. Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī adds: "And I wrote his order [ordering] the reduction of two thirds and that was the practice of those who held [the rank of] one hundred cavalymen [*wa-katabtu manshūran fī qaṭ' al-thulthayn wa-hiya 'adat ṣāhib al-mi'at fāris*]." ²⁴ Ḥusām al-Dīn Ṭurunṭāy, who was appointed *nā'ib al-salṭana* immediately after Qalāwūn had risen to power, further improved the reforms linking the hierarchy of rank to the granting of *iqṭā'āt*.²⁵

For Ayyubid rulers the army had primarily been a tool for enforcing their decisions, which, of course, reflected on their advancement policies. Commanders were appointed according to the needs of the immediate circumstances, the status of the soldier in question and the length of his service only seldom taken into account.

²⁰ Al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fol. 213a; Ibn Shaddād, p. 133.

²¹ *Tashrīf al-ayyām*, pp. 27–28, 117; Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī, fol. 85b.

²² On the *iqṭā'* method, see Cl. Cahen, pp. 45–48.

²³ Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army", pp. 167, 168; Ayalon, "From Ayyubids to Mamluks", p. 55.

²⁴ Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī, fol. 19b.

²⁵ *Wa-nazzala al-jujūsh manāzilahum 'alā ṭabaqātihim wa-maḥara fimā yajibu al-nazar fihā min iqṭā'ātihim*; *Zubda*, fol. 100b; see also al-Yūnīnī, 2907/E3, fol. 29b. For *nā'ib al-salṭana*, see Glossary.

There was no clearly defined hierarchy within the amir class, and Ayyubid military commanders did not serve in a specific Ayyubid army on a regular basis but were mercenaries who sold their services for specific periods of time. Thus there never arose a permanent hierarchical framework among the amir class and no linkage ever existed between administrative and court offices and military rank. In general, only a small number of military personnel filled administrative and court offices.²⁶ Obviously, such procedures left no room in the Ayyubid army for the creation of a defined advancement path and failed to encourage individual soldiers to try and make it up the ranks.

The absence of a hierarchy in the Ayyubid army is evident from the system of ranks it used. Distinct terms indicating some kind of rank in the Ayyubid army are *amīr*, *amīr isfāhsalār*, and *amīr kabīr*. The term *amīr* was used to describe a senior office-holder but did not define his duties. The rank of *amīr isfāhsalār* may have been equal to that of *amīr ṭablkhāna*, the amir of forty during the reigns of Baybars and Qalāwūn. *Amīr kabīr* appears to hint at some abstract part of an amir's position, such as status and seniority. The appointment to a military rank in the Ayyubid army was not part of standard procedure, and the rank itself was subject to changes at the whim of both the appointer and the appointee, and to local custom.

In contrast, the system of ranks Baybars established was a permanent one while he endowed those ranks which had survived from the Ayyubid period with new significance. It was Baybars who decided upon a military hierarchy of amir of ten, amir of forty, and amir of one hundred. Each rank was linked to the size of the military force, i.e., number of mounted soldiers the rank-holder was entitled to maintain, and thus a clear command framework was established. Moreover, amirs of one hundred could be given the command of one thousand troops in the battlefield. This rank was called *taqdimat alf* (command of one thousand) and the amir of one hundred who held it *muqaddam alf*.²⁷

A similar hierarchic pyramid soon developed also for courtiers

²⁶ Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army", pp. 71–72, 83, 85, 86.

²⁷ On these ranks, see Glossary. Al-Qalqashandī, 4, pp. 14–15; *Zubda*, fol. 64a; al Ṣafadī, fol. 86a; *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, p. 215; Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army", pp. 167–176. Ayalon, "Mamluk Army", No. 2, pp. 467, 469.

and administration personnel, since these posts were increasingly filled by Mamluks.²⁸ The characteristics of the court offices of *ustādhaldār*, *ḥājib*, *amīr jandār*, and *khāzindār*, in existence from the Ayyubid period, were changed by Baybars,²⁹ and he added the new offices of *dawādār*, *amīr ākhūr*, *ru'ūs al-nuwab*, *amīr majlis*, and others.³⁰ "And it was al-Malik al-Zāhir who, during his reign, began [to appoint] office-holders from among the amirs and the rank-and-file soldiers [*ibtada'a fī dawlatihi bi-arbāb al-wazā'if min al-umarā' wa-l-jund*], and even though some [of the offices] had existed before his time, they were not as they had been before [*falam takun 'alā hādhihi al-ṣiḡha abadan*]."³¹ Qalāwūn further added new offices.³² Most of these offices were mainly ceremonial in nature and directly connected to one or another of the constituent elements of the distinct Mamluk government and military hierarchy.

During the reign of Qalāwūn dress came to provide further evidence of the hierarchy of rank and *iqṭā'āt* in the Mamluk army. During the Ayyubid period all troops had worn the same type of clothing, but in Qalāwūn's time new forms of dress became a means of differentiating between ranks.³³

The sources give no evidence of the existence of military schools and barracks, *al-ṭibāq*, for the Royal Mamluks prior to Baybars's rule: "And he [Baybars] established . . . barracks for the mamluks which overlooked the great al-Dirkā gate and inside al-Qarāfa gate he built . . . a big building with small halls for the mamluks' quarters and above them barracks for those who were married."³⁴ Later, during the rule of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, the number of barracks apparently reached seventeen, while according to al-Zāhiri there were twelve during the 15th century.³⁵ These barracks and their growing number are also indicative of the institutionalization of the Mamluk army. Baybars, moreover, built stables for his own

²⁸ Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army", pp. 147–149, 153–154; Ayalon, "Mamluks", *El²*, V, p. 326.

²⁹ *Nujūm*, 7, pp. 183–184. Cf. Humphreys, "The Emergence of the Mamluk Army", p. 83, Ayalon, "Mamluks", *El²*, V, pp. 326–327.

³⁰ On these offices, see Glossary.

³¹ *Nujūm*, 7, p. 183; al-Yūnini, 3, p. 250; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 215.

³² *Nujūm*, 7, pp. 186, 332.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 330–332; *Manhal*, 2070, fols. 33b–34a; Ibn Waṣif, fol. 74a; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 98–99, 216–217.

³⁴ Ibn Shaddād, pp. 341, 343; *Nujūm*, 7, pp. 190–191; *Fawāt*, 1, p. 113.

³⁵ *Zubdat kashf*, p. 27; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 213. Ayalon, "l'Esclavage", pp. 9–12.

horses and their equipment and four stables for the mounts of his mamluks.³⁶

During Baybars's reign tournaments and military maneuvers were introduced in the Mamluk army and, again, later perfected. Thus, lance tournaments became part of the military training during Baybars's rule, to be refined by Qalāwūn's mamluks.³⁷ Baybars introduced a horseback target game, *al-qabaq*, for which he built a hippodrome bearing the game's name. The game itself was further improved during the reign of Qalāwūn and his son, al-Ashraf Khalil.³⁸ From 666/1267 until the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, this hippodrome was the main training site for the sultan's army.³⁹

Baybars had the habit of visiting the hippodrome each day, between noon and the evening prayer, to supervise the amirs and mamluks and to encourage them in their tournaments. His presence inspired every amir and mamluk to reach the height of his ability and thus greatly influenced standards of training.⁴⁰ Baybars also insisted that military training be carried out under strenuous conditions.⁴¹ Every now and again, he would go out disguised as a rank-and-file soldier in order to check how training was being carried out without his supervision. In this and other ways, Baybars succeeded in maintaining his army at the highest pitch of performance.⁴² In 662/1263, e.g., Baybars ordered maneuvers for the entire army with full equipment: "And not one of them (the soldiers) was occupied with anything other than the arts of war, like using the lance . . . and they became very proficient in military exercises [*walā ishtaghala aḥad minhum illā bi-naw' min anwā' al-ḥarb ka-l-ramḥ . . . wa-tafannanū fī anwā' al-furūsiyya*]."⁴³

³⁶ Ibn Shaddād, p. 342.

³⁷ *Nujūm*, 7, p. 311; Ayalon, "Furūsiyya", p. 47.

³⁸ *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, p. 213; *Zubda*, fols. 81b–82a; *Tuḥfa*, p. 134; *Bidāya*, 14, p. 195; al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fols. 65a; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 157; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 111; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 518, 519, 626; *Nujūm*, 8, p. 16; Ibn Waṣīf, fol. 68a; *Jawāhir al-sulūk*, fol. 90b; Ayalon, "Furūsiyya", pp. 55–56.

³⁹ Ayalon, "Furūsiyya", pp. 38–39.

⁴⁰ *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, pp. 338, 401–402, 429, 449–452; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 517, 518, 564, 573, 611–612; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, pp. 6–7, 22, 67–68; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 111.

⁴¹ Ayalon, "Furūsiyya", p. 44, note 65.

⁴² See, for example, *Zubda*, fol. 82a; *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, pp. 342–346, 359–360, 392; al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fols. 192a–b; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 540, 575–578, 583; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 82.

⁴³ *Sulūk*, 1, p. 512. For other examples, see *ibid.*, pp. 517–518; *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, pp. 210–212; Ibn Shaddād, pp. 76, 104.

Baybars furthermore established the *mawkib*, the procession whereby the sultan paraded through the streets accompanied by ceremonial officers and part of the army. The *mawkib* had definite military characteristics and became a standard procedure in the Mamluk state until the beginning of the 15th century, when it was discontinued by Sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj.⁴⁴

Important also is the efficient system of intelligence and mail services, *al-barīd*, which Baybars established.⁴⁵ Well known in the Islamic world from the Umayyad period, this system was based upon waystations which housed fully equipped horses and homing pigeons taking messages to and from the sultan. During Baybars's reign the system was the epitome of efficiency and no one would dare to use its horses without special order from the sultan.⁴⁶ The obvious link between a highly efficient intelligence service and superior military deployment was not lost on Baybars.

Baybars's reforms and Qalāwūn's after him naturally also extended to the Mamluk training system, for this was designed to prepare the Mamluk cadres for their future positions in the army. Contemporary sources reveal an extensive correlation between the mamluks' initial training and their performance and advancement during their military career, indicating that the Mamluk training system, too, was set up in the spirit of the new norms both sultans had introduced into the army. It was these norms which future generations came to look upon and venerate as the traditional Mamluk way.

Principles of Training

Mamluk training was based on the principle of loyalty. Its primary element was the inculcation of *khushdāshiyya*, i.e., the fostering of a common bond between mamluks who belonged to the household of a single master and their loyalty towards him.⁴⁷ It was this sense of loyalty which bound Mamluk factions together, and in the case of the sultan, *khushdāshiyya* among his mamluks was the mainstay of his rule and endowed him with the necessary power and authority.

⁴⁴ *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, p. 95; Ibn Shaddād, p. 313; *Masālik al-abṣār*, p. 107; Ibn Waṣīf, fol. 69a.

⁴⁵ Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī, fols. 23a-b, 84a-b, 85a, 97a-b; Ibn Waṣīf, fol. 69A; *Nujūm*, 7, p. 186. See also the monograph by Sauvaget on this issue, *La poste*, pp. 9ff.

⁴⁶ Al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fols. 192a-b; *Masālik al-abṣār*, pp. 105-106.

⁴⁷ Ayalon, "l'Esclavage", pp. 29-31; idem, "Mamlukiyyat", pp. 327-328; Petry, p. 17.

Because this bond between mamluk and master greatly influenced the political stability of the Mamluk state, maintaining a clearly defined, tightly knit framework for Mamluk training and military advancement became of prime importance and great efforts were invested in securing it. For the ruler, this framework had the advantage that it made it fairly easy for him to handle the mamluks—it left no room for a mamluk's personal aspirations except within the dictates of the system.

Mamluk training methods were based on a rigid hierarchy, special attention being given to the interim periods during which the mamluk prepared himself for one of the next stages he had to pass through from the moment of his purchase to his emancipation and recruitment into the army.

According to the traditional procedures as described by al-Maqrīzī, the mamluk was purchased at an early age: "And the order was that the traders should bring only young mamluks [*al-mamālik al-ṣiḡhār*]." ⁴⁸ The mamluks purchased by the sultan were the pick of those brought by the traders, ⁴⁹ while the rest were purchased by the amirs and others: "(. . .) Each time one of the traders in mamluks came to [the sultan's trader], he had to warn the [other] traders not to sell those mamluks suitable for service with the sultan to one of the amirs, whoever he might be; he had to warn them with all the force at his command, and if he found suitable mamluks of superior quality [*min al-jins al-jayyid*], they had to sign an agreement of purchase with him. . . ." ⁵⁰

The historian Baybars al-Manṣūrī (645–725/1247–1325) was purchased as a young mamluk by Qalāwūn when the latter was still an amir at the beginning of Sultan al-Zāhir Baybars's reign. ⁵¹ Baybars al-Manṣūrī's descriptions of his experiences during his education as a mamluk and later, during his military service, are of salient importance since they offer us a first-hand account of the methods used during the reigns of Sultans Baybars and Qalāwūn—according to Ibn Taghrī Birdī, Baybars al-Manṣūrī was more conversant with the history of the period of al-Zāhir Baybars than other historians who were office-holders in Baybars's service: "And he knows

⁴⁸ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 213.

⁴⁹ For the slave traders, see Ayalon, "l'Esclavage", pp. 1–4.

⁵⁰ Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī, fols. 99a–b.

⁵¹ *Zubda*, fol. 52a; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 103a; *ʿIqd* (Amin), 1, pp. 318–319.

more of [al-Zāhir Baybars's] motives than anyone else [*wa-huwa a'raf bi-ahwālihi min ghayrihi*]."⁵²

From Baybars al-Manṣūrī we learn that his purchase at an early age was not an extraordinary event at all. During the initial period of his training, al-Manṣūrī was one of a number of boys who because of their young age were put together to form a class: "I was one of the young boys [*kuntu ma'dūdān fī jumlat al-ṣibyān al-ṣighār*]."⁵³ Additional evidence can be found in the biographies of several amirs. Amirs Kunduk al-Zāhirī, Shams al-Dīn Sunqur al-Alfī, and Badr al-Dīn Bilik al-Khāzindār were all purchased by Sultan Baybars when they were young,⁵⁴ and Sultan Qalāwūn purchased 'Alam al-Dīn Sanjar al-Shujā'ī and Balabān al-Ṭabbākhi as youngsters.⁵⁵ Qalāwūn "raised" Amir Qajqār "as a son [*rabbāhu fī ṣughrihi kal-walad*]."⁵⁶ Ḥusām al-Dīn Lājīn grew up in the house of Qalāwūn in Cairo at the time when the latter was an amir in al-Zāhir Baybars's army,⁵⁷ and a similar case was that of Arghūn al-Dawādār who was purchased by Qalāwūn at an early age and grew up together with Qalāwūn's son, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.⁵⁸ Zayn al-Dīn Kitbughā al-Manṣūrī was bought by Qalāwūn from among the prisoners taken at the first battle of Ḥimṣ against the Mongols (659/1260) when he was "a lad, or possibly an adolescent [*wa-huwa shābb wa-la'allahu kāna fī sinn bulūgh al-ḥilm*]."⁵⁹ Al-Nuwayrī provides a conflicting version of this story and claims that Kitbughā was already an adult at the time of his purchase from among the prisoners. The first version, however, of this story is the more feasible as Kitbughā died in 702/1302 when he was "middle-aged [*fī sinn al-kuhūla*]",⁶⁰ which means that he must indeed have been young, at best an ado-

⁵² *Nujūm*, 7, p. 177.

⁵³ *Zubda*, fols. 52a, 70b; *Iqd* (Amin), 1, p. 319.

⁵⁴ *Zubda*, fol. 89b; al-Yūnīnī, 4, p. 110; *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, pp. 36, 86; Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, pp. 52–53; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, pp. 94, 95; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 644, 645; Ibn Waṣīf, fols. 66b–67a.

⁵⁵ *Tadhkira*, 1, pp. 234–235; al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fol. 266b; Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, p. 90; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 282; 15, p. 478; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 802; *Manhal*, 3, pp. 423–424; *Nujūm*, 8, pp. 51–52, 194.

⁵⁶ Al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fol. 39b; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 59.

⁵⁷ Al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fol. 93b; *Zubda*, fol. 99a; *Tadhkira*, 1, p. 212.

⁵⁸ *Durar*, 1, p. 374; *Nahj*, p. 26; Ibn al-Shiḥna, pp. 165–166.

⁵⁹ Al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fol. 37b; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 192; *Nujūm*, 8, p. 68; *Durar*, 3, p. 348; *Tadhkira*, 1, p. 258; *Fawāt*, 2, p. 173.

⁶⁰ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 6b; 2N, fol. 73b; al-Yūnīnī, 2907/E3, fol. 66b; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 947.

lescent, when he was captured. Furthermore, al-Şafadī claims that Kitbughā, Qarāsunqur and Ṭurunṭāy were all nearly the same age,⁶¹ and the sources are unanimous on the fact that Qarāsunqur was very young at the time of his capture. Shams al-Dīn Qarāsunqur al-Manşūri, who apparently belonged to the Christian inhabitants of the village of Qārā,⁶² was bought or captured as a child after the village had been taken by the Mamluks in 664/1265.⁶³ And his was not an isolated event: Following the conquest of the village, “the children of the village were taken as mamluks and trained together with the Turkish mamluks in Egypt and some of them became soldiers and amirs [*wa-ukhidhat şibyānāhum mamālik faruttibū bayn al-turk fī al-diyār al-miṣriyya fa-şāra minhum ajnād wa-umarā*]”⁶⁴ Taken together with Baybars al-Manşūri’s testimony that mamluks were trained in peer groups, the incorporation of these Christian children from Qārā into the Turkish Mamluk groups may be seen as a clear indication of the age of the Turkish mamluks, who were then the majority in the Mamluk army. Another source of young mamluks were the Mongols, the Uwayrātiyya, who voluntarily chose to serve the Mamluks in Egypt; their sons were taken as mamluks at an early age by the amirs in Egypt.⁶⁵

Once the property of a master, the young mamluk was given religious education which continued until he reached adulthood.⁶⁶ It was said of Baybars: “And he arranged a teacher for each group of mamluks who would teach them the Qur’ān and an *imām* who would lead them in prayer. . . .”⁶⁷ As soon as he had become adult, the mamluk embarked on his military training: “And when he had reached adulthood, they started to teach him [the arts of] warfare, such as archery, throwing the spear. . . .”⁶⁸ For example, when Baybars

⁶¹ *Durar*, 3, p. 330.

⁶² Qārā was a village south of Ḥimş, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 4, pp. 12–13.

⁶³ *Durar*, 3, pp. 330–331; *Ibar*, 5, pp. 275–276. On a similar case during the conquest of Antioch, see *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 567–568; *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, pp. 309, 324; *Manhal*, 2072, fol. 15.

⁶⁴ Abū al-Fidā’, 4, p. 4; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8, p. 120; al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fols. 90b, 236b–237a; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 552–553; For a similar case, see al-Yūnīnī, 2, p. 344; *Iqd* (Amin), 1, p. 425.

⁶⁵ Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 205; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 22–23. On the Uwayrātiyya, see Ayalon, “Wāfidiya”, pp. 99–101.

⁶⁶ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 213; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 524. For specific examples, see *Zubda*, fols. 52a, 89b; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 95; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 645, 947. On this period of education, see Ayalon, “l’Esclavage”, pp. 4–6, 13–14.

⁶⁷ Ibn Shaddād, p. 299.

⁶⁸ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 213; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 524.

al-Manṣūrī was nearing adulthood, he was under training with the units supporting the troops who took part in the battle of Arsūf in 663/1264.⁶⁹ This stage of Mamluk education was extremely rigorous and came to an end only when the mamluk had reached the proper standard in his military specialization: “until he acquired the complete and necessary knowledge [*ḥattā yablughā al-ghāya fī maʿrifat mā yaḥtāju ilayhi*].”⁷⁰ Baybars’s mamluks are described by Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir as being highly proficient in their skills,⁷¹ while Qalāwūn spent the same amount of dedicated training on his mamluks when he taught them the finer points of archery, not relenting until they had achieved expert mastery.⁷²

The mamluk’s training period at the time of the early sultans was a long one, extending over several years. Ibn Taghrī Birdī attests to the fact that Barqūq (784–801/1382–1399) emulated these educational methods when he allowed only one class of mamluks to graduate each year after a long period of training whereas with his predecessors this had been two classes a year.⁷³ Their long period of training served to inculcate the mamluks with a specific code of conduct which included modesty, order, and strictness. During the entire period they dressed in clothes of simple cotton and flax,⁷⁴ and were under the constant scrutiny of their teachers and instructors to ensure that there were no deviations from the established code of conduct:

And they (the mamluks) had a group of instructors and senior disciplinary officers who inspected each one strictly, reproved them severely [if they infringed upon the rules] and demanded an accounting for their deeds [*wa-lahum uzma min al-khuddām wa-akābir min ruʿūs al-nuwab yafḥaṣūna ʿan al-wāhid al-faḥṣ al-shāfi wa-yuʾākhidhūnahu ashadd al-muʾākhadha wa-yunāqishūnahu ʿalā ḥarakātihi wa-sakanātihi*].⁷⁵

Sharaf al-Dīn al-Zāhirī (d. 689/1290) was *muqaddam al-mamālik al-sulṭāniyya*⁷⁶ (the head of the Royal Mamluk schools) during the

⁶⁹ *Zubda*, fol. 70a; *Iqd* (Amin), 1, pp. 397–398.

⁷⁰ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 213; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 524.

⁷¹ *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, p. 213.

⁷² Shāfiʿ Ibn ʿAlī, fol. 52a.

⁷³ *Nujūm*, 14, p. 199. See also *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 214; Ayalon, “l’Esclavage”, p. 52, note 136.

⁷⁴ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 213; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 524.

⁷⁵ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 213; Cf. Ayalon, “l’Esclavage”, pp. 47–48.

⁷⁶ See Glossary.

reigns of both Baybars and Qalāwūn. The sources describe him as one who "was . . . awe-inspiring, who had a compelling presence, tremendous control, and who commanded great respect from the mamluks. He was highly respected by the kings and amirs, and only seldom was there a mamluk amir of al-Zāhir, al-Sa'īd and al-Manṣūr that Ṭawāshī Mukhtaṣṣ had not either struck, cursed, or tried. And they had fear in their hearts and great respect for him."⁷⁷ It was said of Shihāb al-Dīn Fākhir (or Qājir) al-Manṣūrī who filled the same post, that "he commanded respect and great influence among the Royal Mamluks. Veteran mamluks respected him and junior mamluks feared him. He was a noble soul."⁷⁸ An assessment of Fākhir's superior educational methods can be found in Ibn Taghrī Birdī when of the education received by Aruqtāy al-Manṣūrī he writes: "He was given the best education by Ṭawāshī Fākhir."⁷⁹

As the above makes clear, stringent discipline was an insoluble part of the mamluk's military training, foremost so as to foster a sense of respect for authority. Baybars demanded strict discipline from his mamluks while at the same time setting a personal example through his own behaviour.⁸⁰ The same goes for Qalāwūn,⁸¹ who was described as "a great influence on his mamluks, one who put terror in their hearts, and who never allowed them to do repulsive deeds [*kāna dhū [!] saṭwa 'alā mamālikihī lā yuḥsinu lahum fi'l qabiḥ qaṭṭu*]."⁸²

Principles of Advancement

At the end of his period of education and training, the mamluk underwent a ceremony of emancipation from servitude and was brought into his master's military service.⁸³ Thereafter, his advancement was a gradual one. At the beginning of his military career,

⁷⁷ Al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fols. 44a–b; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 105. On the staff of the Mamluks' tutors, see Ayalon, "l'Esclavage", pp. 14–15.

⁷⁸ *Jawāhir al-sulūk*, fol. 6b; see also al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 39b.

⁷⁹ *Nujūm*, 10, p. 244, also 8, p. 228. For *ṭawāshī*, see Glossary.

⁸⁰ Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 82; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 528–529, 559, 568, 637; *Sirat al-Zāhir*, p. 238, 389, 401–402, 451; *Iqd* (Amin), 1, p. 407.

⁸¹ Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī, fols. 126b–127a; *Tashrif al-ayyām*, pp. 24–26; *Jawāhir al-sulūk*, fol. 16b.

⁸² Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8, p. 303.

⁸³ For an example of this, see al-Yūnīnī, 4, p. 174; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 720; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 285; 8, p. 222; *Nujūm*, 6, p. 9. On this ceremony, see Ayalon, "l'Esclavage", pp. 16–22.

the mamluk first filled a number of small jobs through which the code of conduct and military skills that he had acquired during his training were meant to find full expression: "And when he joined the men, he was given an adequate post. He was to fill it according to the training he had received during his youth."⁸⁴ According to Baybars al-Manṣūrī, the mamluks' gradual advancement was designed to provide them with as rich an experience as possible, intended to assist them once they reached the upper echelons of the military hierarchy. We find evidence of this period of service in the advancement of the mamluk, for example, in the career of Amir Ḥusām al-Dīn Lājīn, when he served Qalāwūn before he became sultan,⁸⁵ and Amir al-Ḥājj Āl Malik, who "advanced gradually through various jobs until he was made an amir [*taraqqā fī al-khidma ḥattā ummīra*]."⁸⁶

As he progressed from job to job, the mamluk's salary during this period of service also increased gradually, from three to ten dinars, depending on the job he filled.⁸⁷ Considering that the average *iqṭāʿ* of a *ḥalqa* soldier brought its owner an income of some sixty dinars a month,⁸⁸ these wages were extremely modest. (The *iqṭāʿ* of the *ḥalqa* troops themselves were again, of course, of much lower value than those of the Royal Mamluks.) It is therefore not surprising that Āqūsh al-Afram, who was one of Qalāwūn's senior amirs, claimed he had been in constant need when he served as a mamluk.⁸⁹

Outside their normal wages mamluks and amirs were given special grants for valour in battle or outstanding performance in military training. In 671/1272, Baybars gave Qalāwūn a special reward for his bravery in the battle against the Mongols at al-Bira.⁹⁰ Those who excelled at *al-qabaq* tournaments were given rewards—amirs received horses complete with saddle and harness, while rank-and-file mamluks were given fine garment.⁹¹ Of Amir Kurjī it is reported that when he was despatched from the battlefield to inform Baybars of the conquest of Lesser Armenia by the Mamluks (664/

⁸⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 524–525.

⁸⁵ Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 222; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fols. 80b, 93b.

⁸⁶ *Durar*, 1, p. 439.

⁸⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 537; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 214.

⁸⁸ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 387; cf. Ayalon, "The Mamluk Army", No. 2, p. 452.

⁸⁹ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 26b.

⁹⁰ *Zubda*, fols. 79b–80a; *Tuhfa*, pp. 53–54, 76–77.

⁹¹ *Sulūk*, 1, p. 519, 520, 626; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 111, 112.

1265), Baybars saw that he had the makings of an excellent soldier and awarded him the rank of *amīr tablkhāna*.⁹²

When Sultan al-ʿĀdil Kitbughā (694–696/1294–1296) at one point decided to deviate from the norm and award the rank of amir of forty to Mongol soldiers immediately upon their arrival in Egypt from the Persian Ilkhanate (695/1295–6) even before their conversion to Islam, the outrage felt by the mamluks at this breach of the accepted code clearly indicates that this period of service was considered yet another obligatory and important stage in accepted Mamluk advancement. Referring to this incident, Baybars al-Manṣūrī criticizes Sultan Kitbughā:

And it would have been proper if they had advanced through the ranks gradually before being awarded command rank and if he (Kitbughā) had waited until they had converted to Islam, and when they had become Muslims and performed the rituals so that their conversion was assured, only then should he have promoted those suitable and awarded them a wage based upon land income [*akhbāz*] and an amirate. And when the Islamic amirs saw what he had done with them without due consideration, and promoted them prior to the most respected mamluks, they despised this act.⁹³

Thus, describing the rule to which Kitbughā should have adhered Baybars al-Manṣūrī corroborates that mamluks went through a definite period of service before they could be awarded the rank of amir. This also verifies al-Maqrīzī's descriptions.

The excerpt above furthermore shows that there were accepted military criteria for the award of an amirate. An incident in the biography of Amir Sayf al-Dīn Salār bears this out. Al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ, the son of Qalāwūn who was appointed regent,⁹⁴ returned from the hunt one day with a large haul, some of which he sent to Qalāwūn and Ṭurunṭāy, the *nāʾib al-saltāna*, and other amirs. The mamluk sent to divide the haul was Salār. Just as it was being displayed before Qalāwūn, Ṭurunṭāy came to see him on government matters, and when Qalāwūn asked him what he thought would be a suitable reward for Salār on the successful completion of his

⁹² *Iqd* (Amin), 1, p. 423.

⁹³ *Zubda*, fols. 192a–b; cf. al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fols. 77a–b; Zetterstéén, pp. 38–40; *Durar*, 3, pp. 349–350; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 812; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, 22–24; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8, p. 361; al-Yūnīnī, 2907/E3, fols. 80a–b; Abū al-Fidāʾ, 4, p. 33; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, pp. 203, 204.

⁹⁴ Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8, p. 238.

task, Ṭuruntāy answered that al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ would no doubt be pleased if Salār were awarded the rank of amir of ten. Qalāwūn then replied: “‘Ṭuruntāy, in the name of Allāh, a country in which Salār is an amir of ten is not a country! [*wa-allāhi dawla yakūn, fihā Salār amir ‘ashara dawlat kadhā*].’ And he commanded that he be granted five thousand dirhams and did not approve the rank of amir of ten. . . .”⁹⁵ This same Salār later became *nā’ib al-saltāna* in Egypt and the sources describe him as “one of the most courageous and wise mamluks.”⁹⁶ Salār’s military status and personal qualities all indicate that he was indeed worthy of the amirate rank which he later received.⁹⁷ Since Qalāwūn was renowned for his objective attitude to his mamluks—“He favoured those in whom he detected noble traits, whoever they might be”⁹⁸—his objection to awarding an amirate to Salār could only mean that at the time of the above-mentioned incident Qalāwūn did not think Salār had yet fulfilled his criteria.

Throughout the reigns of Baybars and Qalāwūn, evidence remains of the strict trend towards slow advancement and of a hierarchy founded on Mamluk seniority and military talents. Baybars “awarded amirates to those who deserved them and appointed commanders [of the mamluks] who were suitable for command [. . . *wa-ammara man yastahiqqu al-imra wa-qaddama ‘alayhim man yaşluhu lil-taqdima*].”⁹⁹ Several examples illustrate Baybars’s methods. In his book, *Mufarrij al-Kurūb fī Akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, Ibn Wāşil gives the personal account of Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Nahār concerning Baybars’s objective and uncompromising attitude towards the advancement of his mamluks in comparison to others.¹⁰⁰ Ibn Nahār relates that once al-Zāhir Baybars observed something from his window that obviously aroused his ire. Later, Amir Badr al-Dīn Bilik al-Khāzindār came into the room, whereupon Baybars reprimanded him for having behaved disrespectfully towards his (Baybars’s) colleagues in that he had failed to acknowledge their greetings while on his horse—Baybars’s colleagues were senior

⁹⁵ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 51a.

⁹⁶ Ibid.; al-Yūnīnī, 2907/E3, fols. 189a–b; *Fawāt*, 1, p. 232.

⁹⁷ *Zubda*, fols. 194b, 203b; *Tuhfa*, p. 84; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 822; *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 6, p. 19.

⁹⁸ *Nujūm*, 8, p. 327.

⁹⁹ *Sīrat al-Zāhir*, p. 74.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Wāşil, fol. 188b.

mamluks while he, Bilik, one of Baybars's mamluks, was young in years and junior to them in rank. Baybars ordered him flogged so as to maintain the firm trust of his colleagues. When he explained his motives for this act to Ibn Nahār, Baybars said that as ruler he was obliged to act objectively towards all his troops, and he illustrated this with his attitude towards the mamluks closest to him: "Among my bodyguard [*ḥalqa*] there are men who love me and whom I love, and their incomes from the land [*akhbāz*] are small, and there are also men who hate me and whom I hate, but their incomes from the land are great. And I cannot bear the consequences if I were to take the good *akhbāz* from those who hate me and give them to those who love me, for I am Bilik's master."¹⁰¹

Other examples come from the biographies of Baybars's amirs. Amir Āqsunqur al-Fāriqānī was awarded the rank of amir of ten after he had captured the ruler of Antioch during the Mamluk conquest of 666/1267.¹⁰² He was later promoted from amir of ten to amir of forty following the successful completion of an espionage mission by a Mamluk unit under his command in the al-Jazīra region.¹⁰³ Ḥasan, one of Aṭlas Khān's men, was awarded the rank of amir of forty for valour in the battle of Acre in 660/1261.¹⁰⁴ Amir Balabān al-Rūmī al-Dawādār, one of Baybars's trusted confidants, was in charge of intelligence affairs during his reign, at first together with Ḥusām al-Dīn Lājīn al-Aydamurī, and later alone. Despite his distinguished position, Balabān al-Rūmī never attained senior amir status. According to one version, he was awarded amir of ten while, according to another, he did not attain amirate rank at all: "And despite this special position, he was one of al-Malik al-Zāhir's amirs of ten, and some say just a simple soldier."¹⁰⁵

In his description of his personal career as a mamluk before he became an amir, Baybars al-Manṣūrī affirms of Qalāwūn that he, too, advanced all his mamluks gradually: "And this was his

¹⁰¹ Ibid; for an example of this, see *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, 33.

¹⁰² *ʿIqd*, A2912/4, fol. 97b.

¹⁰³ Al-Yūnīnī, 3, p. 299; *Manhal*, 2, 495; Ibn al-Ṣuqāʿī, pp. 12–13.

¹⁰⁴ *Sirat al-Zāhir*, pp. 159–160. For other examples of gradual advancement, see the cases of Sunqur al-Alfī and Lājīn al-Dawādār al-Darfīl: Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 238; Ibn al-Ṣuqāʿī, p. 52, 133.

¹⁰⁵ *Nujūm*, 7, p. 350; al-Yūnīnī implies that he was an amir of ten (al-Yūnīnī, 4, p. 107). Ibn al-Ṣuqāʿī, on the other hand, implies that he was an amir of twenty (Ibn al-Ṣuqāʿī, p. 54). Al-Ṣafadī implies that he did not get an amirate at all. *Wāfi*, 10, p. 282; *Manhal*, 3, p. 419.

(Qalāwūn's) custom in his attitude towards the rest of his servants (mamluks in his service), to be slow in the award of their ranks during his rule [*wa-kāna hādha da'bahu fī sā'ir khuddāmihi an yaniya ma'a* (?) *marātibihim fī ayyāmihi*]."¹⁰⁶ Baybars al-Manṣūrī had reached Egypt as a mamluk in 660/1261, and only some twenty-two years later, on 14 Rabi' al-Awwal, 682/12 June 1283, was he first awarded the rank of amir. The *iqṭā'* of his amirate was enough to support fifteen *ṭawāshī*. From the text of the order awarding the *iqṭā'*, *al-manshūr*,¹⁰⁷ we learn that Baybars was awarded amirate rank because of his talents and his seniority in the service of his master: "... and he has the astuteness of a commander and service long enough to make him a [suitable] candidate for election [as an amir] ... [*wa-lahu nabāha tuqaddimuhu ... wa-qidam khidma turashshihuhu ...*]."¹⁰⁸

A year later, on 5 Shawwāl 683/16 December 1284, Baybars al-Manṣūrī was awarded the rank of amir of forty and an *iqṭā'* which could support fifty cavalrymen.¹⁰⁹ When he was awarded the *niyāba* of Karak in Sha'bān 685/October 1286, he was made an amir of eighty, and served in this post for five years.¹¹⁰ Baybars al-Manṣūrī thus served for about twenty-five years before he reached the rank of amir of eighty, and yet this was not the pinnacle of military rank in the Mamluk army at the time. This he attained when in 693/1293–4, at the beginning of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's first reign, he was awarded the office of head of court correspondence, *dīwān al-inshā'*, and made amir of one hundred and commander of one thousand.¹¹¹

From the biographies of the amirs who received their Mamluk training during the reign of Qalāwūn, we learn that Baybars al-Manṣūrī's advancement path was not uncommon and that his claim that Qalāwūn advanced his mamluks slowly was in no way intended as an apology for his own slow advancement but was indeed a true reflection of Qalāwūn's methods. Amirs Āl Malik al-Ḥājj, Aydamur al-Shujā'i, Aybak al-Mawṣilī, Arjuwāsh al-Jamdār, Bahādur al-Manṣūrī, Baybars al-Shujā'i, Baktamur al-Ḥusāmī, Baktamur

¹⁰⁶ *Zubda*, fol. 152A (MS not entirely clear; "yaniya ma'a" is my preferred reading—A.L.).

¹⁰⁷ For *manshūr*, see Glossary.

¹⁰⁸ *Zubda*, fol. 152b.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 154b.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 157b–158a; *Tuhfa*, p. 115.

¹¹¹ *Al-Nuwayrī*, 2N, fol. 68b.

al-Silāhdār, Balabān al-Ṭabbākhi, Jawarshī al-Manṣūrī, Ḥusām al-Dīn Turunṭāy, Sayf al-Dīn Salār, Sanjar al-Shujā'ī, Qifjāq al-Manṣūrī, Shams al-Dīn Qarāsunqur, and Kitbughā al-Manṣūrī all underwent long periods of service as mamluks before they were awarded amirate rank.¹¹²

Two features characterized the award of appointments during the reign of Qalāwūn as they had during Baybars's reign. The first was their permanence. It was said of Baybars's policy: "And everyone whom al-Malik al-Zāhir appointed of the provinces' governors and others was diligent in his office during [the entire] period of his reign, and he did not relieve a single one of his duties [*walam yubaddil bi-aḥad minhum*]."¹¹³ Ḥusām al-Dīn Lājīn al-Darfil, e.g., was Baybars's *dawādār* from his accession until his death.¹¹⁴

During Qalāwūn's reign, important office-holders were relieved of their offices only in weighty circumstances, such as when they had broken the sultan's trust.¹¹⁵ The following amirs, for example, held office from the time of Qalāwūn's accession until his death: Ḥusām al-Dīn Turunṭāy was *nā'ib al-salṭana* and *atābak al-ʿasākir* in Egypt,¹¹⁶ Ḥusām al-Dīn Lājīn was *nā'ib* of Damascus,¹¹⁷ Balabān al-Ṭabbākhi was *nā'ib* of Ḥiṣn al-Akrād,¹¹⁸ Zayn al-Dīn Kitbughā was *nā'ib al-ghayba*,¹¹⁹ while Qarāsunqur al-Jūkandār became *nā'ib* of Aleppo in 680/1281 and was still in office when Qalāwūn died.¹²⁰ In 679/1280, Sayf al-Dīn Qajqār al-Manṣūrī was appointed *nā'ib* of Ṣafad, an office he held until his death in 686/1287.¹²¹

¹¹² *Tuhfa*, p. 84; *Zubda*, fols. 52a, 84a–b, 129a,b, 166b, 195b, 219b, 246b; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 51b; 2N, fols. 81b, 89b, 95a; Zetterstéén, pp. 156–157; *Fawāt*, 1, p. 232; 2, 173; Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, pp. 56, 90, 91, 94, 131; *Tadhkira*, 1, p. 211; *Jawāhir al-sulūk*, fols. 17a–b; *Durar*, 1, pp. 439–440; 2, pp. 16, 33; 3, pp. 325–326, 330–331, 348; *Wāfi*, 15, pp. 477–478; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 671–672, 731; 2, p. 314; *Nujūm*, 8, p. 55; *Manhal*, 3, pp. 85–88; *Manhal*, 2072, fol. 15a; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 196; 8, pp. 38, 181, 192; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 84b; *Ibar*, 5, p. 361; *Shadharāt*, 6, p. 19.

¹¹³ Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 90; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 640. See, for example, *Wāfi*, 9, p. 486.

¹¹⁴ Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, p. 133.

¹¹⁵ Sanjar al-Shujā'ī was discharged from his office after a long service on account of extortion and taking bribes, *Zubda*, fol. 162a; *Wāfi*, 15, pp. 475–478; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 802; *Nujūm*, 8, pp. 51–52.

¹¹⁶ *Zubda*, fols. 100b, 166b; *Tuhfa*, p. 92; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fols. 2a–b; 2N, fol. 45a.

¹¹⁷ *Zubda*, fols. 103b, 105a, 166b; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 672, 755; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 3a; 2N, fol. 45a; *Tadhkira*, 1, p. 212; Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, p. 132.

¹¹⁸ *Zubda*, fols. 102b, 109a–b, 156a; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 755; *Manhal*, 3, pp. 422–423; *Nujūm*, 8, p. 194; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 4a; 2N, fol. 15b.

¹¹⁹ *Zubda*, fols. 99a, 166b; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 671, 701; *Durar*, 3, pp. 348–350.

¹²⁰ *Zubda*, fols. 129a, 166b; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 755.

¹²¹ *Zubda*, fol. 105a; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 59.

The second feature that affected the award of appointments during the rule of Qalāwūn was that most of his appointments were senior amirs who had served him prior to his accession to rule. Evidence of this can be found in a list of forty amirs mentioned by Baybars al-Manṣūrī in his review of the period of Qalāwūn's rule who all attained senior posts. Their common denominator is that they came from the ranks of "the senior and respected Manṣūrī Royal Mamluks in his service from the time of the amirate, who had seniority [*qidam al-hijra*] and served him through good times and bad."¹²² The words *qidam al-hijra* refer to seniority in the Mamluk army but their use also indicates a special dimension to the mamluks' standing as Muslims. Like the first converts to Islam who had migrated with the Prophet from Mecca to Medina, they had left their home countries to become mamluks serving Islam, and as the principle of deciding the leadership after the death of the Prophet was based upon precedence in Islam, the senior mamluks, by the same token, felt entitled to assume leadership over their colleagues.¹²³

In another passage in which Baybars al-Manṣūrī describes Qalāwūn's advancement methods in detail, he repeats that advancement was based upon seniority and executive skills: "And he (Qalāwūn) appointed each man endowed with talent [*rabb waḥīfa*] to a suitable post [*waḥīfa lā'iqa bi-mithlihi*] for he awarded first his senior mamluks the rank of amir of forty, then his second-rank mamluks amir of twenty and fifteen, and his third-rank mamluks amir of ten and of lesser *iqṭā'āt*; and they advanced with years and later received fiefs of amir of one hundred, became experienced amirs and experienced in administration [*fa-kānū bi-l-imra mudabbirīn wa-fī al-tadbīr mujarrabīn*]."¹²⁴

Together with consistent and strict adherence to these customs of appointment it was the system of hierarchy which contained the model of Mamluk society and consolidated its framework. Status symbols, over and above economic standing expressed in the stratified granting of *iqṭā'āt*, were part of the mamluks' life during the entire period of their military service. As mentioned earlier, the standing of the amirs during the reign of Qalāwūn was distinguished by

¹²² *Zubda*, fols. 99a–b.

¹²³ For further examples of the use of this expression in the same context, see al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 120a; *Zubdat kashf*, p. 115.

¹²⁴ *Zubda*, fols. 100a–b.

their dress, the different ranks each marked by a particular dress.¹²⁵ One item of clothing used in this way was the sash. The sash of a commander of one thousand cost 300 dinars, that of an amir of forty, 200, while that of a commander of the *ḥalqa* cost between 100 and 150 dirhams.¹²⁶ Commanders of one thousand wore golden sashes on ceremonial occasions to emphasize their special status.

At the annual ceremony at which the sultan allotted horses to the mamluks, the amirs of one hundred were given horses complete with saddle and harness, while the others were given horses only, which was also intended to "make the prominent among them stand out from the rank and file [*tamyīz khāṣṣatihim ‘alā ‘ām-matihim*]."¹²⁷

Since the importance of the hierarchy had been an essential part of his training and military service, naturally a mamluk who was awarded the rank of amir guarded the essence and insignia of his new status jealously, conscious of the benefits that came with his new rank:

And when the mamluk attained a senior position and high rank, he knew its value and how the hardships he had known [compared with] the convenience [it afforded him] [*fa-idhā waṣala ilā manzila kabīra wa-rutba ‘āliya ‘arafa miqdārahā wa-mā kāna fīhi min al-shaqā’ wa-mā ṣāra ilayhi min al-na‘īm*].¹²⁸

It was this awareness on the part of the mamluk of the importance of his standing which, in turn, formed one of the main factors of the consolidation of Mamluk tradition: While it inspired him to hold on to his position, it reinforced his sense of solidarity with all of Mamluk society. The result of such an overriding identification was an utmost degree of respect for the dictates of the Mamluk elite and of awe for the authority of government, in particular that of his master, the sultan.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 98–99; al-Qalqashandī, 4, pp. 39–41; *Masālik al-abṣār*, p. 99; *Nujūm*, 7, pp. 331–332.

¹²⁶ *Khiṭaṭ* 2, p. 99; *Masālik al-abṣār*, p. 100.

¹²⁷ *Masālik al-abṣār*, pp. 94–95; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 216.

¹²⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 525.

¹²⁹ For this phenomenon in sociology, see *Sociology*, pp. 147, 149.

CHAPTER TWO

AL-NĀṢIR MUḤAMMAD'S REIGN: UNDERMINING TRADITION

When the mamluk sees riches . . . he follows his master.
(*Sulūk*, 2, p. 525)

Consolidating His Rule

When al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn attained the sultanate for a third period (709–741/1310–1341) it was with the overriding ambition to set up an autocratic and centralized government. Embittered by the experience of his two earlier periods of rule, when he had been entirely dependent upon the amirs of his father, al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn,¹ and of his brother, al-Ashraf Khalil, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was determined to return to sovereignty with the power of undisputed rule at his command. As he had made his way back to Egypt at the head of his own mamluk troops, he was able, immediately upon assuming control, to rid himself of those who had earlier deposed him and to bestow their offices on his own mamluk followers. Only two weeks after assuming power, on 16 Shawwāl 709/19 March 1310, he incarcerated the amirs who had allied themselves with his dispossessors.² “And his first act after coming from Karak was to imprison the Burjiyya amirs and others in one day, and their number was more than thirty amirs. And he cast terror into their hearts with killing and confiscation of property, for some he killed by starvation and thirst and some he strangled and drowned and some he exiled and imprisoned. . . .”³ In the same month,

¹ Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 196, 212; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 80, 523–542; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fols. 40b, 43b; *Wāfi*, 4, p. 365; 10, p. 349; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 166.

² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 77; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 14.

³ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 524; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 12–13; *Wāfi*, 4, p. 366; 10, p. 287; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 196, 243; *Durar*, 2, p. 273; 4, p. 263; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 48a; *Fawāt*, 2, p. 329; *Uyūn*, fol. 50b; *Tadhkira*, 2, p. 21; Zetterstéen, p. 151; al-Yūnīnī, 2907/E4, fols. 163a, 165a, 177b, 180b, 181a, 181b, 183b, 189b, 214a, 218a-b, 222b; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fols. 277b, 280b, 281a, 284b.

al-Nāṣir Muḥammad conferred amirates upon thirty-two of his own mamluks.⁴ Initially, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad left the Maṣṣūrī amirs alone, for they were his father's followers and had supported him in his bid to regain power. Some he retained in their positions in Egypt while others were appointed to governorships in important provinces in Syria (al-Shām). Yet, some two years later, in 711/1311, most of these, too, were purged and imprisoned, the majority to be executed, in 716/1316, and only a handful managing to escape. In the wake of these purges, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad again conferred amirates upon a large body of his own mamluks.⁵

On Rabi' al-Ākhir 712/27 September 1312, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad conferred amirates on forty-six mamluks, twenty-nine of whom received the rank of amir of forty and seventeen amir of ten.⁶ In the same month he conferred amirates on Tuquzdamur al-Dimashqī, Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri and Ṭashtamur al-Badri, who were among his leading amirs.⁷ From this time onwards al-Nāṣir Muḥammad appointed his senior provincial governors strictly from among those closest to him. Thus, Tankiz al-Ḥusāmī, for example, was appointed *nā'ib al-salṭana* in Damascus, 'Alā al-Dīn Aḷṭunbughā in Tripoli and Arghūn al-Nāṣiri in Egypt.⁸

Further consolidating his position as the country's sole ruler, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had his own way with bureaucratic functions and administrative religious offices. Not only were the caliph's movements much restricted and visitors to his home prohibited, but al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was also to intervene in the appointment of the caliph's successor, ignoring the will and testament of Caliph al-Mustakfi bi-Allāh when he died in 740/1339, and ordaining that

⁴ Al-Nuwayri, 20, fol. 49a; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 196; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 77; *ʿIqd*, A2912/4, fols. 272a, 276a, 279a, 280b.

⁵ *Wāfi*, 4, pp. 366–367; 9, p. 249; 10, pp. 75–76, 198–199, 287; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 92, 93, 94, 102–103, 104–105, 107–111, 115, 117–118, 128, 168; *Durar*, 2, pp. 4, 18–19; 3, p. 338; 5, p. 171; *Tadhkira*, 2, pp. 32, 37, 38, 39, 47; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 197–211, 212–216, 218–220, 225–235, 243; al-Nuwayri, 20, fols. 49b, 51a, 52a–b, 53a, 54a, 56a, 58b, 59a, 64b, 69a, 74a; 2N, fol. 16a; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 13, 14, 15–16, 17, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33–34, 41; Zetterstéén, pp. 146, 147, 151–152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157–158, 160, 163; al-Ṣafadi, fols. 80b–81a, 82b, 83a, 95a; *ʿIqd*, A2912/4, fol. 285a; al-Yūnīnī, 2907/E4, fols. 123b, 221b; *Dhuyūl al-ʿibʿar*, 17, p. 65; see also Irwin, *The Middle East*, p. 106.

⁶ Al-Nuwayri, 20, fol. 664b; Zetterstéén, p. 158; al-Ṣafadi, fols. 84a, 85a; *Sulūk* 2, p. 117; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 34.

⁷ *Tadhkira*, 2, p. 45; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 118; For other nominations, see *Sulūk*, 2, p. 230.

⁸ Al-Nuwayri, 20, fol. 49a.

the next caliph would be al-Wāthiq bi-Allāh Ibrāhīm Ibn Muḥammad.⁹ Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad imposed his will on legal rulings of the *qāḍīs* as well, sometimes compelling them to accept his opinions on the management of *Ṣūfī* religious orders.¹⁰

Through frequent changes of district appointees in Egypt and the abrogation of two offices, the *niyābat al-salṭana* and the *wizāra*, which tended to undermine the sultan's authority, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad further reinforced his position.¹¹

Finally, in the economic sphere, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad redistributed the arable land in Egypt, *al-rawk al-Nāṣiri* (715/1315), whereby he effectively increased his control over the amirs and at the same time succeeded in enlarging his personal land holdings.¹²

Discarding Traditional Norms

Two problems in particular preoccupied al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. The first was that he was sultan of a country ruled by a Mamluk elite while he himself had not risen through the mamluk ranks, and the second formed the continuing fresh supply of mamluks and the guaranteeing of their allegiance to the Mamluk state.

Formally in his two previous periods of rule, the sultanate had been conferred upon al-Nāṣir Muḥammad according to the principles of dynastic accession, but in practice his accession had resulted from the senior amirs' indecision as to which of them would rule. Thus, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's first two periods had been of a puppet ruler controlled by dominant amirs. When al-Nāṣir rose to power for a third time, he left no doubt that his right to rule derived from his talents as a soldier-statesman, as though he were indeed a mamluk and had not arrived at the sultanate simply because of dynastic succession. This meant, among other things, that in the policies he instigated he made every effort to dissociate himself

⁹ *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 115, 174; *Nahj*, p. 62; al-Shujā'i, pp. 14, 70, 92–93; *Durar*, 2, p. 338; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 502–503; *Dhuyūl al-'ib'ar*, 17, p. 214; *Ta'rikh al-khulafā'*, p. 772; Hayāt Nāṣir al-Ḥajj, pp. 20–36.

¹⁰ Al-Shujā'i, p. 67; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 243.

¹¹ Al-Shujā'i, p. 112; *Wāfi*, 9, pp. 370–371; 10, p. 251; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 375; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 132b; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 124, 280, 324; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 108, 174; *Durar*, 1, p. 431; *Masālik al-absār*, pp. 116–117, 119; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, 1598, fol. 12b; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 374b; Hayāt Nāṣir al-Ḥajj, pp. 65–67.

¹² *Nujūm*, 9, p. 42; Hayāt Nāṣir al-Ḥajj, pp. 177–183.

from his predecessors, including his father Qalāwūn: "And it was his practice to disapprove of what the earlier [*al-awā'il*] had accomplished."¹³ In other words, he was determined that his rule should form a new beginning. The way he felt free to discard Mamluk tradition may partially have been influenced by the mark his two earlier periods of rule had left on him—he had been witness to the assassination of sultans,¹⁴ maltreatment of mamluks by their rivals¹⁵ and the conferral of amirates and *iqṭā'āt* while accepted mamluk advancement practices were largely ignored.¹⁶

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's ambition for undisputed rule was accompanied, even nurtured, by a deep-seated fear that his government could be undermined at any given time even when such danger was non-existent. He was described by a contemporary historian, Shams al-Dīn al-Shujā'ī, as a capricious man whose greatest fear was that he would again be deposed, and that this led him to replace his amirs frequently, often not without bloodshed: "It was commonplace and typical of Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir's policy that if a mamluk or amir achieved greatness, he would rid himself of him and appoint a younger man in his place in order to protect [himself] from his cunning and ill-will [*li-ya'mana min makrihi wa-yaktafiya sharrahu*]."¹⁷

In order to address the problem which the Mamluk state had never entirely been able to solve, viz., the supply of mamluks and the guaranteeing of their allegiance to the state, and since he felt under no obligation to adhere to the laws of his predecessors, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad adopted new training and advancement methods based on a large measure of permissiveness. He acted on the assumption that if he succeeded in buying the unrestricted loyalty of his mamluks, this would secure the continuation of his rule: "The mamluk and his master are mutually satisfied in this [permissive] way, moreover, when the mamluk sees riches with his eyes and in

¹³ Al-Shujā'ī, p. 95; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 524; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 214; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 174.

¹⁴ See, e.g., the assassination of Sultan Lājīn by his mamluks, *Zubda*, fols. 202b–203a; al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fols. 91a, 93a, 95a; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 179.

¹⁵ Ibn al-Furāt, 8, pp. 174, 183, 192; al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fols. 68a, 69a, 71a; *Zubda*, fols. 187a, 201b, 202a-b.

¹⁶ *Zubda*, fols. 192a-b, 198b, 206a-b, 246a-b, *Durar*, 2, p. 15; compare these examples with Baybars's and Qalāwūn's appeasing attitudes towards their political rivals: al-Yūnīnī, 2, pp. 413, 459, 479; 2907/E3, fols. 45a, 46a, 46b, 47a-b, 48a, 52b, 66a, 142a-b; *Zubda*, fols. 103b–104a, 160a; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 281; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 50; *Nujūm*, 7, p. 108.

¹⁷ Al-Shujā'ī, p. 71. See also pp. 78, 81, 85, 113; Zetterstéén, p. 142; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, 1598, fol. 13a.

his heart, he forgets his country and follows his master.”¹⁸ As the problems the Mamluks encountered in keeping up a continuous supply of mamluks is a rather complex subject, we will here briefly discuss some of its main issues.

Each Mamluk sultan aspired to bring as many mamluks into the country as he could. They were particularly interested in attracting inhabitants of preferred regions, especially the Persian Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde, to become mamluks.¹⁹ But it is extremely doubtful whether, despite their efforts, the number of mamluks any one of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s predecessors purchased ever exceeded twelve thousand. During his fifteen-year rule Baybars apparently purchased some four thousand and during the twelve years of Qalāwūn’s rule, between six and seven thousand mamluks were bought. Under al-Ashraf Khalil their number was less than ten thousand, a figure which may have included his father’s mamluks, while in 715/1315 al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had no more than two thousand. These figures are low when one considers that during most of this period the Mamluk army was on a permanent war footing against the Mongols and the Crusaders, and especially when one compares them with the Persian Ilkhanid Mongol army which numbered several tens of thousands in battle order.²⁰

Evidence shows that the Crusaders and their allies in Armenia, Azerbaijan and other countries succeeded in undermining the mamluk trade from the Golden Horde to Egypt, as did the Persian Ilkhanid Mongols and their vassal Muslim amirates.²¹ Political maneuvering and military dictates by the Persian Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde made mamluk supply from their countries sporadic at best, considering the needs of the Mamluk sultans.

We even find that the Mamluks went so far as to conscript prisoners of war into their ranks soon after their capture together with Persian Ilkhanid deserters, such as the *wāfidiyya*.²² That they did

¹⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 525.

¹⁹ Al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fol. 157b; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 742; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 166.

²⁰ See, e.g., al-Yūnīnī, 2, p. 364; *Zubda*, fols. 200a-b; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 272, 275; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 226; Ayalon, “The Mamluk Army”, No. 1, pp. 222–24.

²¹ *Tuhfa*, pp. 120–121; *Zubda*, fols. 77b, 204b; al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fol. 44b; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 96; *Tashrif al-ayyām*, pp. 22, 98, 99–100, 166, 237; Ibn Shaddād, pp. 306–308.

²² Al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fol. 90a; Zetterstéen, p. 47; *Zubda*, fol. 259b; al-Yūnīnī, 2907/E3, fol. 38a.

so while the war was still at its height can only mean that their forces were sorely undermanned. Indeed, there are several examples showing that the Mamluk sultans harboured fears lest their mamluks flee back to their native lands.²³ Like the Mongols who crossed the lines to the Mamluk sultanate, there are instances of amirs who deserted to the enemy camp with their mamluks, with the objective of either returning to their native lands or simply of seeking refuge.²⁴ There are even examples of Mamluk amirs who served the Mongol intelligence system.²⁵

The case of Qibjaq al-Manṣūrī serves to show how the Mamluk training and advancement system instituted by Qalāwūn went only so far in solving the problem of the mamluk's allegiance to the Mamluk sultanate. Qibjaq was a youth taken prisoner at the battle of Ubulastayn (675/1277) who became one of Qalāwūn's mamluks. Throughout his entire rule, Qalāwūn remained afraid that if he were to send Qibjaq into battle in Syria he might desert and foment a mutiny against the Mamluks, and therefore did not promote him. After Qalāwūn's death Qibjaq was awarded an amirate by al-Ashraf Khalil and on the accession of Lājīn he was appointed *nā'ib al-saltāna* in Damascus. In the wake of the conflict that arose between Lājīn and himself, Qibjaq fled to the Persian Ilkhanate and at his urging the Mongols laid siege to Damascus and conquered it.²⁶

Confronted with these very same problems al-Nāṣir Muḥammad elected to openly encourage mamluks to come to Egypt by offering them the easiest possible conditions from the day they arrived. Parents now sold their children to become mamluks in Egypt in the knowledge that they would enjoy especially good living conditions.²⁷ Once in his service, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad bought the allegiance of his new mamluks with flattery and gold.²⁸

²³ *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 285a.

²⁴ *Tashrīf al-ayyām*, p. 100; *Zubda*, fols. 39b–40a; al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fols. 149b–150a; *Nujūm*, 8, pp. 204, 237; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 215.

²⁵ Ibn Shaddād, p. 104; *Bidāya*, 13, p. 268; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 692, 697.

²⁶ *Durar*, 3, pp. 325–326; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, pp. 94–95, 224; *Nujūm*, 8, p. 204.

²⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 526.

²⁸ *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 256a; *Masālik al-abṣār*, p. 96; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 214.

Training and Advancement

The training and advancement patterns established during the rule of Baybars and Qalāwūn were intended to carefully underpin master-mamluk relations founded on objective military criteria. As he had decided to ignore most of his predecessors' accomplishments, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad quite naturally discarded these criteria. There are many examples of how, during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's rule, amirs attained the highest ranks in the Mamluk army with the period of their military training in doubt. One of the outstanding examples is Amir Qawṣūn who arrived in Egypt in his eighteenth year in 720/1320 as a member of the retinue bringing al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's bride from the house of Berke, who were descendants of Genghis Khan and who ruled in the Golden Horde. He had joined the retinue as a traveller and merchant, carrying his merchandise, leather blade strops and pieces of embroidered leather,²⁹ with him for sale in Egypt. As he wandered through the streets of Cairo selling his wares, he met one of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's *awshāqiyya*³⁰ which resulted in a chance meeting with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad himself in the sultan's stables. As Qawṣūn was a tall and handsome young man, he inevitably caught the sultan's eye and was duly commanded to appear at an audience. The sultan then asked him to remain in his service in Egypt, promising to bring his brothers and the rest of his family from his homeland, Qibjāq. In order to become a mamluk, Qawṣūn sold himself to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad who immediately bestowed a grant upon him and appointed him a member of his *suqāt*.³¹ Later, al-Nāṣir "favoured him greatly and loved him and conferred an amirate upon him, increased his importance and elevated him to the highest ranks,"³² subsequently giving him the hand of one of his daughters in marriage.

There are some variations between al-Shujā'ī's version and that of al-Safadī (upon which Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī relies) regarding the story of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's purchase of Qawṣūn.³³ According

²⁹ See editor's note, *Nujūm*, 10, p. 20. On the Golden Horde, see Saunders, pp. 155–168; Kwanten, pp. 167–172.

³⁰ See Glossary.

³¹ See Glossary.

³² Al-Shujā'ī, p. 160; al-Nuwayri, 19B, fols. 119b–120a; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 143; *Manhal*, 2072, fol. 37a; *Durar*, 3, p. 342; *ʿIqd*, A2912/4, fol. 372b; *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 65–67; *Nahj*, p. 10.

³³ *Durar*, 3, p. 342; *Manhal*, 2072, fol. 37a.

to al-Şafadī, Qawşūn was indeed a member of the retinue escorting al-Nāşir Muḥammad's bride from the Golden Horde to Egypt where al-Nāşir Muḥammad forced the commander of the retinue to sell Qawşūn to him and the former on his return to the Golden Horde handed over the money from the sale to Sūşūn, Qawşūn's elder brother. Despite the differences between the two versions, they both tell us that Qawşūn reached Egypt and entered the mamluk ranks when he was already an adult, a fact that had some bearing on his later life. Important for our argument is that Qawşūn did not go through a period of apprenticeship at Mamluk schools nor served as a regular mamluk soldier prior to being awarded an *iqṭāʿ* and a military command, as had been standard practice during the rule of Baybars and Qalāwūn. He was sent to Amir Baktamur al-Sāqī for his military training and within only a few years was awarded the rank of amir of ten, amir of forty and commander of one thousand by al-Nāşir Muḥammad.³⁴ Qawşūn himself testified that he did not undergo accepted Mamluk training or rise through the ranks, and "would boast, saying 'I was bought by the sultan and became one of those closest to him; he made me an amir, awarded me commander of one thousand and gave me the hand of his daughter, while others went from the traders directly to the military schools [*al-ṭibāq*] . . .'"³⁵ While commander of one thousand (*taqdimat alf*) was a rank awarded to only a select few of the amirs of one hundred, sometimes simultaneously with their appointment as amir of one hundred and sometimes later,³⁶ Qawşūn was awarded the rank of commander of one thousand "in addition to the *iqṭāʿ* he had already been granted"³⁷ only five years after his arrival in Egypt (Jumādā al-Ākhira 726/May 1326). Thus, Qawşūn could have become amir of one hundred within less than five years. It is certain that within three years of his arrival in Egypt, Qawşūn had already attained such power that he was able to bring about the exile of Amir Sunqur al-Saʿdī, *naqīb al-jaysh*,³⁸ to Tripoli: "And the reason

³⁴ Al-Shujāʿī, p. 222.

³⁵ *Durar*, 3, p. 343; *Manhal*, 2072, fol. 37a; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 47.

³⁶ Amir Bashtāk, e.g., was awarded an amirate of one hundred in 728/1327 and later in 732/1331 command of one thousand; cf. *Durar*, 2, p. 10; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 132b. Alṭunbughā al-Māridīnī was awarded an amirate of one hundred and command of one thousand at one go; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 105.

³⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 272; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 372b.

³⁸ See Glossary.

for his expulsion was Qawṣūn's wrath against him [*wa-kāna sabab ikhrājīhi ghaḍab Qawṣūn minhu*]."³⁹

That Qawṣūn's advancement was indeed extremely rapid is also borne out by al-Nuwayrī. In his contemporary account of the marriage of Qawṣūn and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's daughter in 727/1326, he describes Qawṣūn thus: "And this amir, Sayf al-Dīn Qawṣūn . . . was not of senior rank in the sultanate, but the sultan had bought him some years earlier and favoured him, awarded him an amirate and continued to favour him until he attained his present exalted rank."⁴⁰

Incidences such as these, whereby also family members were brought to Egypt and immediately recruited to the army, only further increased the degree of laxity towards mamluk military training and the following of traditional advancement methods.⁴¹

It is somewhat ironic that Qawṣūn, who had come to Egypt not as a mamluk and had not received Mamluk training himself, was made responsible for the training of Bashtāk,⁴² whose arrival in Egypt and subsequent rapid advancement more than hints at the disdain in which Mamluk training and advancement norms were held by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. The background to Bashtāk's arrival had been al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's request to the slave trader, Majd al-Dīn al-Sallāmī, whether he could not bring him from the Golden Horde a slave resembling Abū Sa'īd, the Ilkanid-Mongol ruler of Persia. Majd al-Dīn al-Sallāmī responded that there indeed happened to be such a man, who made his living as a seller of drinks.⁴³ Bashtāk was therefore, like Qawṣūn, a free man when he was brought to Egypt to become a mamluk, and like Qawṣūn did not undergo traditional Mamluk training. In 728/1327, Bashtāk had already attained the rank of commander of one thousand,⁴⁴ not because of his military talents but because of the arbitrary fact that he physically resembled Abu Sa'īd and of the sultan's great love for him: "And the sultan loved him greatly and awarded him commander of

³⁹ *Durar*, 2, p. 273.

⁴⁰ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 120a; *Durar*, 3, p. 342; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 89; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 288.

⁴¹ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 120a; al-Shujā'ī, p. 33.

⁴² Al-Shujā'ī, p. 219; *Durar*, 2, p. 10.

⁴³ An intoxicating liquor made from grain and called *al-dūqī*, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 1, p. 361; see also editor's note, *Nujūm*, 10, p. 20.

⁴⁴ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fols. 131a–132b; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 291; *Durar*, 2, p. 10; al-Shujā'ī, p. 219.

one thousand and elevated him to high rank." A further example of a merchant who settled in Egypt and became an amir in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's mamluk army is Āqsunqur al-Rūmī.⁴⁵

Moreover, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had his own relatives come to Egypt and awarded them amirate ranks on their arrival, and suitable *iqṭā'āt*. Prime examples are al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's uncle Ṭā'irbughā and his sons, Zakariya and Yaḥyā, Muḥammad Ibn Jumaq and Burughlī al-Ṣaghīr.⁴⁶

The discarding of the objective military criteria established during the rule of Baybars and Qalāwūn is conspicuous also in the advancement of mamluks whom al-Nāṣir Muḥammad bought in the usual way. The advancement, for example, of several mamluks who attained the highest amirate rank in the army was clearly motivated solely by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's personal feelings towards them.

Amir 'Aqbughā Abd al-Wāḥid rose from the *jamdāriyya*⁴⁷ to become amir of one hundred and commander of one thousand and both his sons were awarded amirates during the period he served al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. "The reason for 'Aqbughā's advancement under al-Nāṣir was that al-Nāṣir had married his sister." Ṭughāy was al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's favourite wife and enjoyed special status.⁴⁸

In 728/1327, Bahādur al-Damurdāshī arrived in Egypt with his master, Damurdāsh Ibn Jūbān, seeking political asylum with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who took a liking to him. In the same year, after Damurdāsh had been murdered on al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's orders, Bahādur entered the sultan's service, became his confidant, and was rapidly advanced through the ranks. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad thought of promoting him from the ranks to commander of one thousand: "He would say, 'I have not awarded the rank of amir of one hundred to any rank-and-file mamluk [*min al-jundiyya*], yet I intend to award this mamluk (Bahādur al-Damurdāshī) the rank of commander of one thousand'".⁴⁹ When Baktamur al-Sāqī, as one of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's most senior amirs, expressed his disapproval, "the sultan did not heed the reproof and awarded him the rank of

⁴⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 716.

⁴⁶ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 28, 33; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 273, 280, 283–284; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fols. 115a, 122b, 123a; Zetterstéén, p. 177; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 88; *Durar*, 2, p. 10.

⁴⁷ See Glossary.

⁴⁸ *Manḥal*, 2, pp. 480–481; *Wāfi*, 9, pp. 204–205; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 107; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 115b; Zetterstéén, p. 148; *Durar*, 2, p. 418.

⁴⁹ Al-Shujā'ī, p. 253.

amir of one hundred and commander of one thousand, and further gave him the hand of one of his daughters in marriage.”⁵⁰ From the day he landed in Egypt to his attainment of amir of one hundred in 1329/730 Bahādur had served as a rank-and-file mamluk for less than two years.⁵¹

Alṭunbughā al-Māridinī, too, “was . . . one of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn’s mamluks and his *khāṣṣakiyya*, one whom he loved to distraction, and to whom he extended rapid promotion until he awarded him the rank of amir of one hundred and commander of one thousand and gave him the hand of his daughter in marriage.”⁵² Alṭunbughā al-Māridinī had been sent to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad by the ruler of Mārdin and, according to al-Maqrizī, in 735/1334 al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was consumed by a great love for Alṭunbughā and decided to promote him. In 738/1337, Alṭunbughā was among the four amirs who received a 100,000 dinar grant from al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. That same year Alṭunbughā became the people’s advocate in a petition they addressed to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to have them released from forced labour—he was approached while on his way from his home to the sultan at the Citadel. That the people felt that they could approach him with a request of this kind reveals something of his status.⁵³ Alṭunbughā was only twenty-five when he died in 744/1343, in other words, he had become an amir in 735/1334 when he was only sixteen years old, a further indication that his military training, if any, could not have been very long, which no doubt reflected on his military capabilities.

Amirs Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhrī and Ṭashtamur Ḥummus Akhḍar were awarded their amirates immediately after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s return to power in 709/1309, attaining the highest rank in an extremely short time, among other things because “they were consummate in their handsomeness”.⁵⁴ Other amirs whose rapid advancement the annals explicitly ascribe to their handsomeness were Baktamur al-Sāqī, Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī, Alṭunbughā al-Māridinī, Qawṣūn, Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī, Ṭuquzdamur al-Ḥamawī,

⁵⁰ *Manhal*, 3, p. 431. See also *Wāfi*, 10, p. 299.

⁵¹ *Al-Shujā’i*, p. 253; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 315.

⁵² *Nujūm*, 10, p. 105.

⁵³ *Al-Shujā’i*, p. 266; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 119; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 385, 434. Āqbughā al-Ḥasanī’s advancement was similar to that of Alṭunbughā al-Māridinī; *Durar*, 1, p. 419.

⁵⁴ *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 375b.

Bashtāk, ʿUghāy al-Kabīr, ʿUqtamur al-Dimashqī and ʿUghaytāmūr al-ʿUmārī, who were all awarded the rank of commander of one thousand “before any of them had a moustache [*wa-lam yaṭurra shārib wāhid minhum*]”.⁵⁵

Another incidental yet prevalent method of military advancement during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s rule was promotion by virtue of kinship to amirs close to the sultan. As we saw above, the sultan awarded many members of Qawṣūn’s family who had followed him to Egypt amirates in honour of their kinsman: “And many of his relatives came to him and the sultan made them amirs in his honour [*ammarahum al-sultān li-ajlihi*].”⁵⁶ Thus Ṣūṣūn became commander of one thousand and his son Baljak “enjoyed great success during the rule of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad because of his uncle.”⁵⁷ ʿUghānjaq, Qawṣūn’s uncle, was awarded the rank of amir of forty and on his death, in 738/1337, the sultan conferred his amirate upon his son, Duqmāq.⁵⁸

Other salient examples of the advancement of senior amirs’ relatives are those of ʿUlūtāmūr and Iwān, Bashtāk’s brothers; Qumārī and Aynabak, Baktamur al-Sāqī’s brothers; al-Ḥājj Aruqtāy, Aytamish al-Muḥammadī’s brother; Mankalibughā al-Nāṣirī, Arghūn al-Nāṣirī’s brother; ʿTābiṭa, Asandamur and Qarakiz, Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī’s father and brothers, and Ḥusayn Ibn Jandārbak’s relatives.⁵⁹

The rapid advancement of the majority of the above-mentioned amirs is explained by the sultan’s favouritism, yet the equally rapid advancement of amirs who, according to the sources, were not the subject of favouritism demonstrates that rapid advancement during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign was no longer the exception but had become the rule.

In 738/1337, Barsbughā al-Nāṣirī was appointed *ḥājib*. “Later, after a short while, his [position] close to the sultan was strengthened”,

⁵⁵ *Nujūm*, 11, p. 292; 9, p. 303; *Durar*, 2, pp. 324, 325; Zetterstéén, pp. 164–165; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 117b; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 376; *ʿIqd*, A2912/4, fol. 342; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 299; al-Yūsufī, p. 212.

⁵⁶ *Al-Shujāʿi*, p. 222.

⁵⁷ *Wāfi*, 10, p. 285; al-Yūsufī, p. 212; *Durar*, 3, p. 343; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 366; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 352, also pp. 376, 378; Zetterstéén, p. 188; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 103. According to al-Ṣafadī’s version, Baljak was the son of Qawṣūn’s sister.

⁵⁸ *Al-Shujāʿi*, p. 33.

⁵⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 118, 338, 391, 562, 733–734; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 8; 12, p. 349; *al-Shujāʿi*, pp. 33, 130–131; *Durar*, 1, pp. 453, 462; 2, p. 315; 3, p. 341; 5, pp. 136, 213; Zetterstéén, pp. 146, 158; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 114a; *Manhal*, 1928, fol. 432a; Ibn al-Wardī, p. 492; al-Yūsufī, p. 150.

and by 740/1339, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had already awarded him the rank of commander of one thousand.⁶⁰ Amir Muḡhulṭāy al-Jamālī attained the rank of commander of one thousand by passing over several stages of the advancement process: “Later, he was awarded an amirate and then the amirate of Bahādur al-Ibrāhīmī was given to him at one go [*dafʿatan wāḥidatan*].”⁶¹ Ṭuquzdamur al-Nāṣirī, Arḡhūn Shāh and others are further examples of amirs who attained their ranks very rapidly.⁶²

Needless to say, this kind of advancement could not fail but have repercussions on both the amirs’ professional standards and the level of their obedience to their master. Rapid advancement shortened their training period which in turn led to a lowering of professional military standards. Easy advancement and rapid attainment of the rank of amir diminished its value, which in turn lowered the appreciation of the amirs themselves toward their rank. They now looked upon it no longer as a privilege but as an obvious right, and began neglecting their duties, at times even indulging in public behaviour most unbecoming their high military rank.⁶³

Recruitment of Non-Mamluks

Yet another symptom of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s lack of regard towards accepted Mamluk codes of conduct was the arrival in Egypt of non-mamluks and their advancement to amir rank without them holding even formal mamluk status. In the following we will limit our discussion to those who attained the rank of commander of one thousand. Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī, one of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s closest commanders of one thousand, was a native of Baghdad and prior to coming to Egypt had been in the service of the philosopher ‘Uthmān Ibn al-Suhrawardī.⁶⁴ The sources describe him as a young man of nonconformist tastes, astonishingly handsome, tall

⁶⁰ *Wāfi*, 10, p. 114; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 316, 485, 498, 508; Zetterstéen, pp. 148, 211–212; *Manhal*, 3, p. 282.

⁶¹ *Nujūm*, 9, p. 291; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 165, 180, 190, 246, 256, 352; *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, p. 392.

⁶² *Durar*, 2, pp. 225, 326; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 146; 10, pp. 243, 244; *Wāfi*, 8, pp. 351–352; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 134a; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 344, 370, 817.

⁶³ See, e.g., *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 451–452, 455, 533; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 117a; *Durar*, 1, p. 419; 5, p. 127.

⁶⁴ Or Ibn al-Shahrazūri, *Sulūk*, 2, p. 75; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 184.

and fleet of foot. Upon hearing of this young man, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad asked the slave trader al-Sallāmī to persuade him to come to Egypt. At first, Maliktamur refused on the grounds that he was a free Muslim and as such could not be sold, but in the end al-Sallāmī tricked Ibn al-Suhrawardī and brought Maliktamur, with his consent, to Egypt. At his first meeting with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad he was attired in a typically unconventional fashion, with a flowered headdress and a Tatar tunic, and thus won himself the sobriquet “al-Ḥijāzī”. Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī was awarded the rank of commander of one thousand and became so close to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad that the sultan gave him the hand of one of his daughters in marriage, not directly because of the performance of his military duties. Unwilling, or unable, to discard his inherent character traits and nonconformist lifestyle, Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī, however, soon neglected his duties to the sultan: “And he turned to amusement, drinking, hunting, indulgence in pleasures with women and entertainment [in nature] [*fa-aqbala ‘āla al-la‘b wa-l-ṣayd wa-l-tahattuk wa-l-tanazzuh*].”⁶⁵ Because of the great love he had for him, not only did al-Nāṣir Muḥammad not take him to task for his conduct, he even lent him his tacit approval, merely distancing him from the other amirs—Maliktamur was not allowed to be present at the various government forums in which the amirs participated or at the games of polo the sultan enjoyed with his amirs.

On 17 Safar 738/14 September 1337, the Wazīr Maḥmūd Ibn ‘Alī Ibn Shirwān arrived in Cairo from Baghdad accompanied by the *nā‘ib* of al-Ḥilla. The latter was awarded the rank of amir of forty in Damascus and Ibn Shirwān received the rank of amir of forty in Egypt. Following the death of Ṭā’irbughā that same year, Ibn Shirwān was awarded the rank of commander of one thousand. Ibn Taghri Birdī ascribes Ibn Shirwān’s rapid advancement to the fact that on his first appearance before al-Nāṣir Muḥammad “he kissed his hand [and] put into the sultan’s hand a ruby weighing forty dirhams and whose value was two hundred thousand dirhams, and thus the sultan awarded him an amirate and the rank of commander of one thousand in Egypt.”⁶⁶ Muḥammad Ibn al-Sunna al-Buṣrāwī, Damurdāsh Ibn Jūbān, Nāṣir al-Dīn Khalifa and Aḥmad

⁶⁵ *Durar*, 5, pp. 127–128; *Sulūk*; 2, pp. 370, 451, 452–455, 466, 755; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 184; *Manhal*, 1928, fol. 363a–b.

⁶⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 437; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 183.

Ibn Badlik al-Turkumānī were also awarded amirates by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.⁶⁷

While both Baybars and Qalāwūn awarded amirates to political and military personalities, mainly from the Persian Ilkhanate which was then considered the main threat to Mamluk rule in Egypt in particular and to Islam in general, the amirates awarded to them when they decided to seek political asylum in Egypt did not, as far as we know, exceed the rank of amir of forty and they were never awarded for anything other than military and political considerations. Thus, in 671/1272, Baybars awarded the dignity of *amir ṭablkhāna* to Jalāl al-Dīn Shukr, son of the erstwhile *dawādār* of the caliph of Baghdad, Mujāhid al-Dīn,⁶⁸ and in 672/1273, he awarded the rank of amir of twenty to Arslān Da'mash, the ruler of Shamaysāt, who was forced to flee to Egypt when the Mongols accused him of spying for the Egyptian Mamluks.⁶⁹ In 680/1281, four Mongol soldiers, Alaquš, Tamur, 'Umar and Jūbān, arrived in Cairo following their conversion to Islam under the persuasion of Shaykh 'Alī. Qalāwūn inducted them into the Sultani Mamluks, granted them *iqṭā'āt*, gave them horses and gifts, but only later did he award them the ranks of amir of ten and amir of forty.⁷⁰

The Recruitment of Sons of Mamluks

During the rule of Baybars and Qalāwūn, the recruitment of sons of mamluks, *awlād al-nās*, into the Mamluk army ranks, when it occurred, was a rare exception. Here, too, the sources reveal a significant change between the rule of Baybars and Qalāwūn and that of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.

During the rule of Baybars and Qalāwūn there were eleven amirs who were sons of mamluks—eight in Egypt, two in Damascus and one whose whereabouts are unknown.⁷¹ Two were amirs of ten while

⁶⁷ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 32b; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 348; Zetterstéen, pp. 179, 197; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 175, 195, 207, 242, 290; *Durar*, 1, p. 122.

⁶⁸ *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 91b.

⁶⁹ *Tuhfa*, p. 78.

⁷⁰ *Zubda*, fol. 130a.

⁷¹ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 38a; 2N, fols. 5a, 8b, 9b; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, pp. 168, 169, 171, 219, 237, 239, 251, 285; al-Yūnīnī, 1, p. 204; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 677, 696, 709; *Tashrif al-ayyām*, p. 91; *Bidāya*, 14, pp. 195, 240; *Zubda*, fol. 207b.

the rank of the others is not mentioned. As the sources usually attach importance to the rank of amir of one hundred and seldom fail to mention it and as none of the six were famous amirs, it may be assumed that none held the rank of amir of one hundred. This confirms not only that the entry of sons of mamluks into the army was extremely limited during this period but also that the status of those who were recruited remained low.⁷² Sons of mamluks were usually granted an allocation of money, meat, bread and fodder until they reached adulthood when they became eligible for recruitment as soldiers in a designated unit of the *ḥalqa*.⁷³ It was Qalāwūn who, out of respect for his Bahri Mamluk colleagues, inaugurated a special unit in the *ḥalqa* for sons of mamluks, which he called "al-Baḥriyya". That is, he recruited those who were found dallying in Cairo "and gave them a wage and *iqṭā'āt* in the *ḥalqa*".⁷⁴ Also, the *iqṭā'āt* granted to the sons of mamluks in the *ḥalqa* were clearly inferior to those granted to the Royal Mamluks.⁷⁵

Qalāwūn was insistent on these conventions even where it concerned the sons of his most eminent amirs. Amir Ṭurunṭāy, who was *nā'ib al-saltāna*, and Amir Kitbughā, *nā'ib al-ghayba*, married their sons to the daughters of the other and petitioned Qalāwūn to grant *iqṭā'āt* in the *ḥalqa* to their sons. Qalāwūn refused on the grounds that they had not reached adulthood, "fearing that it would be said that he had granted *iqṭā'āt* to young men [*khashyatan an yuqāla a'tā al-ṣibyān akhbāz*]."⁷⁶

After Qalāwūn's death in 689/1290, Egypt was thrown into a state of political instability and turmoil which continued until al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third accession to the sultanate (709/1310), and it was during this period that a power struggle between the dominant Mamluk amirs ensued. Even though they failed in their efforts to take the sultanate, these amirs effectively continued to run affairs of the state, behind the nominal rule of Qalāwūn's sons.⁷⁷ The controlling position of the amirs in high government offices became a

⁷² On the Mamluk conception of *awlād al-nās'* position in the Mamluk army, see Haarmann, pp. 142–144; Ayalon, "The Mamluk Army", No. 2, p. 456–458; idem, "Mamlukiyyat", pp. 328–329.

⁷³ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 216.

⁷⁴ Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8, p. 303; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 658.

⁷⁵ Cf. Ayalon, "The Mamluk Army", No. 2, p. 457.

⁷⁶ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 216.

⁷⁷ Kitbughā, Lājīn and Baybars al-Jāshinkir ascended to power but their reigns were very short: Irwin, *The Middle East*, pp. 88–89, 90–94.

determining factor in the increase in number of sons of mamluks who were recruited into the army and their enhanced status—they were made holders of *iqṭāʿāt* and given high command in battle. The sources reveal thirty-nine amirs who were sons of mamluks at that time,⁷⁸ eleven of whom participated in battle at command level, the most prominent among them, relative to *iqṭāʿ* size, being Nāṣir al-Dīn Ibn Baktāsh al-Fakhri, who a year prior to his father's death in 706/1306 had been granted, at his own request, his father's *iqṭāʿ* which was that of a commander of one thousand. Others in point were 'Alī Ibn Aybak al-Khāzindār and Muḥammad Ibn Qarāsunqur, who both reached their positions because of their fathers' influence.

When political stability returned with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign, some weakening in the status of the senior amirs and a lower number of mamluk sons being recruited into the army could have been expected. In actual fact, not only did this kind of practice continue during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign but it became one of the more flagrant instances in which accepted Mamluk norms were completely put aside. The names of ninety-three amirs who were sons of mamluks can be collated from the sources dealing with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign.⁷⁹ However, as the information the sources contain on the number of Sultani Mamluks who served the

⁷⁸ *Zubda*, fols. 107b, 176b–177a, 207b, 221b, 222a, 235a, 239a, 241a; *Tuḥfa*, p. 168; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 34, 88, 135, 170, 174; *Wāfi*, 9, p. 489; 10, pp. 283, 398; al-Nuwayrī, 2N fols. 3a, 5a, 8b, 58a, 70b; 20, fols. 2b, 31a, 37a, 50a, 51a; *Durar*, 2, p. 71, 306; 3, p. 70; al-Yūnīnī, 2907/E3, fols. 13b, 19b, 45a, 47a; 2907/E4, fols. 4a–b, 18a, 25a; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 847, 939, 940, 947; *Dhuyūl al-ibar*, 17, p. 20; *Bidāya*, 14, pp. 195, 240; *Nujūm*, 8, pp. 241, 255; 'Iqd, A2912/4, fols. 122b, 206b, 222b, 227b, 253b; *Manhal*, 2, p. 496; Zetterstéén, pp. 118, 153; al-Yūsufī, p. 321; *Wāfi*, 2, p. 398; Ibn al-Furāt, 8, pp. 168, 169.

⁷⁹ *Zubda*, fols. 221b, 239a; al-Yūsufī, pp. 119, 159, 234, 235–236, 321, 367, 411, 416; al-Shujā'ī, pp. 17, 28, 33, 39, 41, 44, 49, 50, 54, 55, 56, 66, 73, 80, 89, 94, 95, 97, 121, 142, 148, 157, 158, 168, 175, 179, 180, 182, 192, 195, 196, 200, 213, 220, 223, 232, 233, 239, 241, 244, 247, 250, 251, 256, 257, 267, 273; *Durar*, 1, p. 418; 2, pp. 70, 173, 177, 178, 230, 306, 309, 316; 3, pp. 98, 100, 103, 104, 127, 338–339, 340, 343, 469; 4, pp. 79, 212–213; *Inbā'*, 1, p. 164; 3, p. 84; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fols. 2b, 3a, 31a, 37a, 39a, 48a, 50a, 51a, 60a, 67b–68a, 73a, 81a, 82a, 85a, 110a, 119a, 122a,b; 19B, fols. 9b, 38a, 97a, 114a, 115a, 119a–b, 123a, 124b, 127b, 128b, 130a, 133a, 138a, 139a, 143b; Zetterstéén, pp. 48, 118, 147, 153, 157, 160, 162, 165, 166, 169, 174, 177, 180, 182, 199, 201, 205, 206, 208, 210, 215, 216, 217, 218; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 34, 180, 206–207, 212, 216, 225, 239, 281, 284, 357, 366, 367, 368, 369, 371; *al-Jawhar al-thamin*, fols. 132a, 133b; *Wāfi*, 2, pp. 255, 310; 3, p. 170; 9, p. 285; 10, pp. 193, 300, 330; 12, pp. 348–349; 13, p. 398; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 14, 43, 74, 103, 106, 198, 232, 262, 269, 280, 282, 286, 287, 300, 306, 327; 10, pp. 10, 77, 100, 103, 119, 128, 135, 317; 11, p. 140; *Manhal*, 1, p. 257; 1928, fols. 378a–b, 432b;

various sultans⁸⁰ is incomplete, it remains difficult to assess the relative significance of the sons of the mamluks in each of the periods under discussion.

That, compared with the two earlier periods, the standing of the sons of the mamluks was greatly enhanced during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign is furthermore demonstrated by the ranks they held, the *iqṭā'āt* they were granted and the military and administrative positions they held. During al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's rule, nine of the ninety-three sons of mamluks were amirs of one hundred, seven in Cairo and two in Damascus. Seven of these amirs were commanders of one thousand, hence holding senior commands in the army. Muḥammad Ibn Ṭaybars al-Wazīrī was one of the commanders of one thousand who commanded a garrison that left Egypt to join the Syrian forces in the conquest of Malatya in 715/1315.⁸¹ Amirs who were sons of mamluks and held the ranks of amir of ten and amir of forty are reported to have been commanders of units involved in military campaigns during the rule of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. The three sons of Baybars al-Ḥājjib, for example, marched with their father in his campaign to Mecca to put down the revolt led by Sharif Ḥumayḍa in 719/1319.⁸²

Obviously, the award of the rank of amir of one hundred was accompanied by the grant of a suitable *iqṭā'*. Ḥusayn Ibn Jandārbak attained special status with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, for on his arrival in Egypt he received the *iqṭā'* of Amir Aṣlam who was amir of one hundred and commander of one thousand. After his death in 728/1327, "the sultan was exceedingly distraught [*wa-janna al-sulṭān jununahu 'ilā al-ghāya*] and granted *iqṭā'āt* in the *ḥalqa* to his

Sulūk, 2, pp. 75, 111, 146, 147, 169, 191, 194, 230, 238, 249, 250, 257, 281, 282, 287, 313–314, 326, 332, 338, 352, 358, 426, 461, 610, 621, 730, 747; 'Iqd, A2912/4, fols. 342b, 370a, 387b; *al-Dalil al-shāfi*, 1, p. 357. In order to remove all doubts that amirs who were sons of mamluks served in the *ḥalqa* during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's rule, a number of examples can be found that clearly demonstrate a distinction between amirs of ten, amirs of forty, amirs of one thousand and *muqaddamū al-ḥalqa*. In times of war, the *muqaddamū al-ḥalqa* were given command of forty *ḥalqa* soldiers (al-Qalqashandī, 4, p. 16) and those of amirate rank served with the Royal Mamluks (al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fols. 96b, 97a–b, 125a; al-Shujā'ī, p. 35; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 498–499).

⁸⁰ Cf. Ayalon, "The Mamluk Army", No. 1, pp. 222–228.

⁸¹ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 73a.

⁸² *Ibid.*, fols. 119a–b. See also Jariktamur Ibn Bahādur (*Sulūk*, 2, p. 418), Samḥān Ibn Sunqur al-Ashqar (*Sulūk*, 2, p. 191), Muḥammad Ibn al-Shamsī and 'Alī Ibn Qarāsunqur (*Sulūk*, 2, p. 194) and 'Ala' al-Dīn Ibn Qarāsunqur (al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 81b).

(Ḥusayn's) mamluks, awarded them wages, awarded amirates to several of his relatives, and granted an honorarium to his wives, daughters and relatives."⁸³ In 738/1337, the sultan gave Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī, the son of Ṭābiṭa, a magnificent, specially commissioned palace, and it would appear that this was in addition to his *iqṭā'*. In the following year he was granted al-Manzila in the Ushmūm district in addition to his *iqṭā'*, and the sultan heaped expensive gifts upon him "so that he would wonder at his munificence [*hattā yata'ajjaba min in'āmihi 'alayhi*]"⁸⁴ Several amirs of ten and amirs of forty whose names appear in the list of sons of mamluks are mentioned in the chronicles as having been granted an *iqṭā'* together with their amirate. Thus the sons of Arghūn al-Nā'ib returned their *iqṭā'āt* in Egypt when they were posted to Aleppo together with their father in 727/1326, but they received others in their place in Aleppo.⁸⁵ On the death of 'Alī Ibn Quṭlūbak al-Fakhri in 731/1331, his *iqṭā'* was granted to al-Nāṣir Ḥājj Ibn Ṭuquzdamur al-Ḥamawī,⁸⁶ and when Muḥammad Ibn Malikshāh died, in 727/1326, his *iqṭā'* was transferred to Bakmān.⁸⁷

Further evidence that the sons of mamluks held *iqṭā'āt* as valuable as those granted to *al-khāṣṣakiyya* can be found in a unique list compiled by Ibn al-Dawādārī which is part of a description of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's preparations for his *ḥajj* in 732/1332. In this list, Ibn al-Dawādārī enumerates the amirs left behind in Egypt when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his retinue embarked on the *ḥajj*. These amirs were bidden to provide carpets which, it seems, were used at the departure and return ceremonies in honour of the sultan. The size of the carpet each amir had to provide corresponded to the amount of his *'ibra*, the land tax levied according to the holding's size and quality: "and the size of these carpets was determined according to the *'ibra* [*fa-inna hadha* [!] *al-busuṭ qurrira* [!] *'alā al-'ibar*]." ⁸⁸ The list mentions eight amirs who were sons of mamluks. Using this carpet quota as a yardstick, a comparison

⁸³ Al-Nuwayri, 19B, fols. 119a–b; *Wāfi*, 9, p. 285; 12, p. 349.

⁸⁴ *Durar*, 5, p. 212; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 438, 463; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 185.

⁸⁵ Al-Nuwayri, 19B, fols. 115b, 130a.

⁸⁶ *Nujūm*, 9, p. 286.

⁸⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 327.

⁸⁸ Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 369; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 356. On a similar case see *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 871–872; Rabie, *Financial System*, pp. 47–48. For *'ibra*, see Halm, *Lehensregister*, vol. 1, pp. 40–42.

between the *iqṭā'āt* held by these amirs and those held by their Mamluk peers who had identical rank shows that the sons of mamluks were not at all discriminated against with regard to *iqṭā'* grants. Thus, for example, the *iqṭā'* of 'Umar Ibn Arghūn al-Nā'ib was equal in size to that of Ṭuqtamur al-Šālihi, both of whom were amirs of forty and were commanded to provide sixty-seven cubits of carpet.⁸⁹ The *iqṭā'* of Muḥammad Ibn Jumaq, who was not the son of a mamluk but a relative of the sultan, was equal in size to that of 'Ali Ibn al-Aghā'i or al-Aghānī, both of whom were amirs of forty and who provided eighty-four cubits of carpet. The *iqṭā'* of Balabān al-Sinānī, who was also an amir of forty, was smaller than that of al-Aghā'i, and he had to provide seventy-four cubits of carpet.⁹⁰ 'Ali Ibn Salār was an amir of ten and Āqūl al-Ḥājib an amir of forty, yet both had to provide sixty-seven cubits.⁹¹

The appointment and advancement paths of the sons of mamluks during the rule of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad were often identical to those used for his Sultani Mamluks—among the sons of mamluks and the Royal Mamluks alike one may find soldiers whose promotion was totally divorced from objective military criteria. Muḥammad Ibn Baktamur al-Ḥusāmī was the son of a senior amir who was awarded the rank of amir of ten well before he was ready for military service, i.e., upon the death of his father in 729/1328, when he was only thirteen years old.⁹² Thirty-five of the ninety-three sons of mamluks who received appointments during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign were the sons of amirs who were currently serving in the army, and with the exception of Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī, whose father attained fame thanks to his son, all were the sons of senior amirs who were extremely close to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. This may be seen as yet another instance of the advancement of the relatives of amirs who were close to the sultan and whose status was the motivating factor. There are several examples which demonstrate how the lofty status of the fathers was a decisive factor when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad awarded amirates to the sons. Amir Aḥmad Ibn Baktamur

⁸⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 338, 498.

⁹⁰ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fols. 97a, 103b, 123a.

⁹¹ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fols. 48a; *Sulūk*, 2, 260.

⁹² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 314. See also the case of Ṭābiṭā's son, Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī. *Nujūm*, 9, p. 133; 10, p. 185.

al-Sāqī was awarded the rank of amir of one hundred in 726/1325 when he was but thirteen years old and his father a very senior amir in the service of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.⁹³ The three sons of Aydughmish were awarded amirates by virtue of being their father's sons: "And [Aydughmish's] status in the eyes of his master al-Malik al-Nāṣir was unassailable [*wa-kāna makīnan 'inda ustādhi*] and he awarded amirates to his three sons, Amīr Ḥājj Malik, Amīr Aḥmad and Amīr 'Alī."⁹⁴ Tankiz, *nā'ib al-Shām*, had attained such lofty status that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad would not make decisions without first consulting him—at Tankiz's urging his son 'Alī was awarded an amirate in 732/1331. In the case of his two other sons, Muḥammad and Aḥmad, who were also made amirs during their father's lifetime, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad even claimed that he himself could only benefit from their promotion.⁹⁵

This leads us to a final important development where we find that the award of amirates to the sons of amirs, especially senior amirs, laid the foundations for a new nobility that subsequently could lay claim to rule. As previously mentioned, according to Mamluk norms that prevailed at the inception of the Mamluk state, members of the military elite were in place only for a single generation with their sons permitted to serve only in the *ḥalqa*. In the wake of increasing permissiveness, sons of mamluks, and especially sons of amirs, were allowed to serve in the army, their status *prima facie* similar to that of the rulers of the house of Qalāwūn. Consequently, out of a desire to protect his government, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad began consolidating his links with the amirs not only through according them political and military status but also by forging links through marriage. The result was an intricate web of relationships woven by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his relatives through marriage to the sons and daughters⁹⁶ of his amirs, which in turn

⁹³ *Wāfi*, 6, p. 267; 10, p. 196.

⁹⁴ *Nujūm*, 9, p. 100; *Wāfi*, 9, p. 489.

⁹⁵ *Durar*, 2, pp. 56, 57; 3, p. 104; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, 1598, fols. 3a–b. For another example, see al-Yūsufi, pp. 119, 137.

⁹⁶ Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 358, 380; *Nahj*, pp. 17, 37, 51, 98; al-Shujā'i, 18, 29, 33, 34, 42, 43, 44, 74, 111, 140, 160, 240, 247, 252, 253, 254; *Wāfi*, 4, pp. 370, 371; 8, p. 86; 9, p. 311; 10, pp. 197, 251, 299, 300; *Durar*, 1, pp. 422, 494; 2, p. 77; 3, p. 341; 5, p. 127; *Manhal*, 2070, fols. 172b–173b; 2072, fol. 37a; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 292; Sulūk, 2, pp. 237, 249, 272, 283, 296, 333, 346, 407, 417, 432, 436, 460, 461, 492, 497–498, 754, 755; 3, p. 152; *Dhuyūl al-'ib'ar*, 17, pp. 149, 169; *I'lām al-warā'*, p. 14; al-Yūsufi, p. 363.

created a new class of amirs' sons who were blood relations of the sultan. This kinship gave the amirs' sons and their fathers a spring-board for their claim to rule, and indeed, in the period that followed the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, the idea of handing over the reins of government to the amirs' sons, or at least handing over the power of decision to the amirs who were related by marriage to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, was to play a certain role.⁹⁷

Between 741/1341 and the fall of the house of Qalāwūn in 784/1382, there were some two hundred and fifty-seven amirs who were sons of mamluks.⁹⁸ The increase in the numbers of sons of mamluks joining the army⁹⁹ typified the entire period, not only that of Sultan al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, who openly encouraged the advancement of the sons of mamluks in preference to the mamluks.¹⁰⁰ The enhanced

⁹⁷ *Wāfi*, 9, p. 219; *Manhal*, 2, p. 425. For an outstanding example, see *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 151–153.

⁹⁸ *Inbāʾ*, 1, pp. 3, 77, 160, 164, 167, 189, 205; 2, pp. 130, 254; 3, p. 84; *Khiṭaʾ*, 2, p. 55; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 563, 571, 590, 594, 600, 603, 605, 606, 607, 609–610, 621, 643, 645, 661, 662, 672, 681, 684, 699, 709, 730, 731, 737, 742, 754, 768, 849, 857, 868, 869, 875, 895, 903, 905, 916; 3, pp. 34, 41, 51, 61, 63, 66, 67, 75, 84, 90, 91, 99, 100, 104–105, 110, 117, 118, 120, 144, 145, 151, 153, 158, 161, 162, 182, 183, 185, 219, 226, 232, 258, 262, 267, 268, 274, 275, 277, 288, 289, 290, 296, 304, 308, 309, 311, 313, 314, 317, 333, 341, 344, 356, 360, 368, 371, 377, 380, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 391, 392, 400, 404, 410, 441, 460, 467, 471, 523, 611, 648, 652, 653, 654, 671, 680, 681, 687; *Manhal*, 1, pp. 247, 257; 2, pp. 268, 436; 3, pp. 99, 217; 4, p. 263; 2070, fols. 69a–b; 2072, fols. 108a–b; 1928, fols. 432b; Ibn Iyās, 1, pp. 144, 204, 274; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 10, 17, 18, 57, 68, 77, 88, 93, 100, 119, 135, 168, 194, 220, 228, 253, 290; 11, pp. 30–31, 33, 34, 45, 47, 51, 54, 62, 63, 64, 71, 106, 110, 124, 141, 150, 155, 161, 179, 180, 194, 202, 209, 236, 244, 279, 281, 301, 317, 321, 322, 335, 340, 341, 344, 345, 346, 352, 382, 383; 12, pp. 10, 16, 24; *Durar*, 1, pp. 29, 115, 164, 315, 339, 373, 420, 422, 472; 2, pp. 15, 179, 306, 309, 310, 314–315; 3, pp. 98, 100, 101, 105, 126, 127, 128, 244, 351; 4, pp. 12, 13, 17, 268; 5, p. 149; *Wāfi*, 3, pp. 170–171; 10, p. 302; 12, p. 398; Ibn Qādi Shuhba, pp. 6, 10, 19, 31, 74, 109, 110, 124, 144, 154, 174–175, 201, 204, 205, 249, 264, 288, 301, 330, 331, 355, 363, 364, 366, 390, 391, 409–410, 493; *al-Jawhar al-thamin*, fols. 154b, 161b, 164a, 166a,b, 167a, 170b, 173a,b, 174b, 175a, 180a, 187a, 188a; *Intisār*, 2, pp. 7, 16, 17, 30, 31, 32, 36; Ibn al-Jiʿān, pp. 15, 19, 22, 30, 34, 42, 43, 46, 47, 50, 53, 54, 55, 67, 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 83, 85, 89, 91, 97, 99, 101, 109, 113, 116, 117, 120, 121, 123, 127, 129, 131, 132, 133, 134, 137, 151, 155, 157, 158, 162, 163, 164, 168, 169, 173, 174, 175, 177, 179, 183, 185, 187, 188, 190, 192, 193; *al-Shujāʿi*, pp. 148, 157, 158, 168, 175, 179, 192, 195, 196, 220, 223, 232, 239, 241, 244, 247, 251, 257, 266, 267, 273; *Dhuyūl al-ʿibʿar*, 17, pp. 293, 324, 364; *al-Yūnini*, 2907/E3, fol. 47a, 55b.

⁹⁹ On the position of Mamluks' sons, *awlād al-nās*, in this period, see Haarmann, "Sons of Mamluks", especially pp. 145–146; Krebs, pp. 104–105; Halm, 1, pp. 1–2.

¹⁰⁰ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 63; *al-Jawhar al-thamin*, fol. 166a; *Manhal*, 2070, fols. 29a–b; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 317; 11, p. 342.

status of the sons of mamluks was clearly manifested in the *iqṭā'āt*, administrative positions and military commands they held. During this period, one of the most obvious deviations of traditional Mamluk norms occurred in the field of distribution of *iqṭā'āt*. The dominant amirs who managed government affairs began awarding high amirate rank to their sons, a suitable *iqṭā'* granted with the rank. In 748/1347, the son of Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī, about seven years old, was already one of the amirs of forty in Egypt.¹⁰¹ Ṭashtamur Ḥummuş Akḥḍar awarded the rank of commander of one thousand and the concomitant *iqṭā'* that had belonged to Baybars al-Aḥmadī, to his son (742/1341).¹⁰² Arghūn al-Kāmīlī, the *nā'ib* of Aleppo, "had a three year-old son who was amir of one hundred and commander of one thousand and on al-Kāmīlī's death his *taqdima* was added to the *niyāba iqtā'*."¹⁰³

At least forty-four of the sons of mamluks who were awarded amirates during this period were made commanders of one thousand,¹⁰⁴ a figure which does not include those commanders of one thousand who were sons of sultans. (The latter were awarded the rank already from Baybars's time when they were heir-apparent so as to make their status stand out from that of the other sons of the sultan.¹⁰⁵) Sons of amirs had now come to hold the most senior administrative positions. In 769/1367, Khalīl Ibn Qawṣūn was appointed to the rank of *atābak al-ʿasākīr* by Sultan al-Ashraf Shaʿbān and Nāṣīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Āqbughā Āṣ was al-Ashraf Shaʿbān's *ustādār*, an office carrying immense political power.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ *Manhal*, 1928, fol. 342b.

¹⁰² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 606.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 895. For further examples of Mamluks' sons who were fief holders, see *Wāfi*, 10, p. 302; *Durar*, 2, p. 15; 3, p. 100; 5, p. 212; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 185, 194, 217, 220, 317; 11, pp. 31, 49, 54, 150, 155, 180, 341. *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 606, 621, 672, 709, 737, 903; 3, pp. 54, 63, 90, 91, 100, 145, 153, 161, 258, 288, 296, 308, 309, 341, 371, 387, 389; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, pp. 204, 355, 409–410, 493; *Manhal*, 2, p. 436; 2070, fols. 69a–70b; 1928, fol. 432b; *Wāfi*, 3, p. 170; 10, p. 302; *Durar*, 1, p. 29; al-Shujāʿī, 175, 192, 196, 213, 232, 247, 251.

¹⁰⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 609–610, 684, 709, 769, 895, 903; 3, pp. 41, 63, 90, 100, 145, 151, 153, 258, 296, 308, 333, 387, 389, 523, 605; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 194, 317; 11, pp. 31, 45, 47, 49, 62, 63, 64, 155, 161, 180, 209, 341; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 154b, 174b, 175a, 187a, 188a; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, pp. 19, 74, 204, 289, 290, 299, 355, 567; *Manhal*, 3, p. 99; *Durar*, 3, p. 127.

¹⁰⁵ *ʿUyūn*, fols. 48b–49a; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 90b; *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 43, 63.

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, p. 204; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 63. For further examples of sons of amirs holding administrative positions, see *ibid.*, pp. 51, 150, 161, 234, 341; Ibn al-Jīʿān, pp. 78, 133; *Durar*, 3, p. 98, 127; 4, p. 268; *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 75, 84, 85, 91, 100, 144, 145, 182, 183, 268, 290, 309, 356, 360, 377, 389, 400, 467,

Sons of amirs became vice-sultans of both small and large provinces in Egypt and Syria.¹⁰⁷

At the same time, many of the amirs who were sons of mamluks held military command posts and appear in the sources as active army officers in battle.¹⁰⁸ Most of these battles were between rival Mamluk factions. Thus we find 'Umar Ibn Arghūn al-Nā'ib as one of the three commanders of a 4,000 strong cavalry force which left Egypt in 742/1342 to subdue Sultan al-Nāṣir Aḥmad, who had fortified himself at Karak.¹⁰⁹ Khalil Ibn Qawṣūn led an army to put down a mutiny against his father-in-law, Amir Shaykhū, who at that time administered government affairs (758/1357).¹¹⁰ In 767/1365, Khalil was one of the commanders who rose against Amir Yalbughā al-'Umarī, who held the reins of rule behind Sultan al-Ashraf Sha'bān, and was one of the central figures in the rebellion against al-Ashraf Sha'bān in 769/1367.¹¹¹ In this rebellion, Amir Asandamur promised the sultanate to Khalil Ibn Qawṣūn as he was al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's grandson and his own daughter's son. The rebellion was unsuccessful, but the fact that "a great host [*jam' kabīr*]" of mamluks joined the rebel forces proves that the status of the sons of amirs was by now built on foundations strong enough to make their claim to rule not seem at all farfetched. It would appear that it was not the kinship between Khalil Ibn Qawṣūn and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad which made the former a suitable candidate for the sultanate but rather his strong military and political position. Daughters of mamluk sultans were not eligible for rule, since rule passed only to the sons according to the protocol established during the rule of Baybars and Qalāwūn. Even when a legal heir was ousted from rule, one of the

471, 523, 652; Ibn Qāḍi Shuhba, pp. 19, 204; al-Shujā'i, pp. 148, 273; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 173a, 174b; *Manhal*, 3, p. 99.

¹⁰⁷ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 267; Ibn Qāḍi Shuhba, p. 204. For further examples, see *Inbā'*, 1, p. 164; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 905; 3, pp. 63, 67, 84, 91, 145, 226, 308, 360; Ibn Qāḍi Shuhba, p. 19; *Durar*, 3, p. 101; 4, pp. 13, 17, 268; *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 51, 63, 124; *Inbā'*, 1, p. 164; al-Shujā'i, p. 192; *Manhal*, 3, p. 99; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fol. 166b.

¹⁰⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 610, 645, 646, 709, 868, 903; 3, pp. 51, 63, 67, 158, 161, 274, 275, 311, 317, 344, 360, 391, 404; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 68, 88, 135; 11, p. 54; *Durar*, 2, p. 306; *Manhal*, 2, p. 268; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 154b, 161b.

¹⁰⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 646.

¹¹⁰ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 34. For other battles in which he took part, see *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 610, 709; 3, pp. 105, 110, 274, 275, 311.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3, pp. 104–105, 151–153.

late sultan's sons was installed in his place, which is what occurred after Baybars' death with his sons when Sultan Sa'īd was ousted and his brother Salāmish installed in his stead. The same happened to the sons of Qalāwūn—when al-Ashraf Khalil was ousted, his brother al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was installed. Many of the sultans' daughters, including, as we have seen, those of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad himself, were married to high-ranking amirs, but none among them was ever a candidate for the sultanate. For Khalil Ibn Qawṣūn kinship to the sultan was a mere pretext—he actually derived his claim to rule from the special status the sons of amirs had won for themselves, that of a military and political nobility within the Mamluk community.

A further indication of this may be found in the attempt that was made to seize the sultanate for Aḥmad Ibn Yalbughā al-ʿUmārī. Amir Aynabak, who together with Qaraṭāy had earlier ousted al-Ashraf Sha'bān (778/1376), wanted the sultanate for Aḥmad. The caliph did not accede to their claim on the grounds that al-ʿUmārī was not of the house of Qalāwūn, and remained adamant even when Aynabak proffered the claim that Aḥmad was indeed of Qalāwūn's house as his mother had become pregnant by al-Ḥasan Ibn Qalāwūn and while with child had married Yalbughā al-ʿUmārī. The caliph's obstinacy, which ultimately was to cause him his downfall, shows that the claim of kinship between Aḥmad and the house of Qalāwūn was tenuous at best and it is doubtful whether the question of the legitimacy of Aḥmad Ibn Yalbughā's rule troubled Aynabak unduly. Clear is that Aḥmad would never have been appointed to the position had he not held a fitting military and political position.¹¹² Further proof of the strengthening of the position of the sons of mamluks was the emergence of a third generation of mamluks. During the rule of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad there were two amirs who were the grandsons of Mamluk amirs, a number which was to rise to thirty-six in the period between the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the ascent of Barqū.¹¹³

¹¹² He was a senior commander in the army prior to becoming a candidate for the sultanate; *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 274, 309, 391, 404; 3, p. 391; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 63; 12, 46.

¹¹³ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 121, 157, 220, 266; Zetterstéen, p. 217; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 225; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 174b, 180a; *Manhal*, 1928, fols. 346a, 432b; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 875, 905; 3, pp. 120, 161, 185, 289, 341, 389, 593, 654, 685; *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 71, 106, 150, 299, 317, 321, 322, 345, 346; 12, p. 10; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, pp. 19, 109, 154, 264, 391, 535; Ibn al-Ji'ān, pp. 19, 47, 65, 78, 113,

Iqtā'āt, *Wages and Grants*

Directly connected with the changes he wrought in the educational and advancement norms was the way al-Nāṣir Muḥammad began distributing *iqtā'āt*, wages and grants throughout all sectors of the army. Ignoring the fixed military and objective criteria laid down by Baybars and Qalāwūn, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's decisions, beginning with *al-rawk al-Nāṣirī*, the redistribution of *iqtā'āt* he conducted in 715/1315, were willful and self-serving, his own mamluks being granted bigger and better *iqtā'āt* than their peers.¹¹⁴

As to the distribution of *iqtā'āt* to rank-and-file mamluks, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad acted in an entirely arbitrary manner. The sources describe the process as a lottery with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad "awarding the *iqtā'* title deed, the *mithāl*, [to the mamluk] without further thought to what his hand had drawn [*min ghayr ta'ammul kayfamā waqa'at yaduhu 'alayhi*"]".¹¹⁵ At the same time, his decisions were final and he left no room for appeal, let alone criticism, not even from his court jester: When the latter, at an informal gathering of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his closest amirs, tried to make light of the way *al-rawk al-Nāṣirī* was conducted, he so aroused the sultan's ire that he ordered him bound to the *shādūf* used for bringing up the water for the garden where they were gathered, and only after repeated pleas of the amirs did he let the man go again, by now half dead, on condition that he be exiled from Egypt.¹¹⁶

The *iqtā'āt* al-Nāṣir Muḥammad granted to his closest amirs, even when one considers the high rate of inflation during his rule which led to the devaluation of the dinar, were huge, exceeding in size any ever granted before.¹¹⁷ For example, in 726/1325, Amir Qawṣūn, who held an *iqtā'* of *muqaddam alf*, was further granted the *iqtā'* of Ṭināl, who was also a commander of one thousand and who was transferred from Egypt to the office of *nā'ib* in Tripoli.¹¹⁸ In 733/1332, in addition to the *iqtā'āt* he already held, Amir Bashtāk

120, 127, 131, 155, 164, 169, 171; *Durar*, 2, p. 179; 5, 149; *Inbā'*, 1, p. 420; 2, p. 130; 3, p. 73; al-Shujā'ī, pp. 157, 220, 266; *Dhuyūl al-'ibar*, 17, p. 293.

¹¹⁴ Al-Ṣafadī, fols. 84b, 85a–86a, 97a–b; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 231; *Khiṭaṭ*, 1, p. 88.

¹¹⁵ *Khiṭaṭ*, 1, pp. 90–91.

¹¹⁶ *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 52–53, 54–55; *Khiṭaṭ*, 1, p. 91.

¹¹⁷ *Wāfi*, 4, p. 371; 'Uyūn, fol. 51a.

¹¹⁸ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 97a; Zetterstéén, p. 148; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 103; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 272.

was granted the *iqṭāʿāt* and property of Baktamur al-Sāqī. Bashtāk's *iqṭāʿ* was especially large, for when he died Baktamur al-Sāqī was the most senior amir in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's service. Yet Bashtāk already held an *iqṭāʿ* that befitted a commander of one thousand at least. On his death, his *iqṭāʿ* was found to equal seventeen *iqṭāʿāt* of amirs of forty—in other words, it was worth 680,000 dinars per annum¹¹⁹—and it was divided among eighty Royal Mamluks. The size of Bashtāk's *iqṭāʿ* was kept secret from his great rival, Qawṣūn, so as not to arouse his envy.¹²⁰ In the words of al-Maqrīzī: "And among the amirs there were those whose income each year reached more than 200,000 dinars, like Maliktamur and Qawṣūn and Bashtāk."¹²¹ Yet by the yardstick of *al-rawk al-Nāṣirī*, *iqṭāʿ* incomes of this size were not especially high, for the income from an average *iqṭāʿ* of an amir of one hundred of the *khāṣṣakiyya* reached 100,000 dinars (one dinar equalling ten dirhams), that of an amir of forty of the *khāṣṣakiyya* was 40,000 dinars, and of an amir of ten, 10,000 dinars.¹²²

An example of *iqṭāʿ* size during the rule of Baybars will suffice to show to what extent al-Nāṣir Muḥammad went beyond the traditional norms in his distribution of *iqṭāʿāt* to his amirs. In 668/1269, Baybars granted an *iqṭāʿ* to ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿUthmān, ruler of Ṣahyūn, from the lands of Ṣahyūn in exchange for Balāṭunus, which included five villages whose *ibra* was 30,000 dirhams or 3,000 dinars.¹²³ It is not surprising that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was harshly criticized by contemporary scholars for wasting the country's money on building and unfair distribution of *iqṭāʿāt*, as, for example, by Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn: "... and you have wasted treasury money on buildings and illegal *iqṭāʿāt* [*al-ʿamāʾir wa-l-iqṭāʿāt allatī lā tajūz*]."¹²⁴

Grants and gifts were bestowed in a way very similar to al-Nāṣir

¹¹⁹ This estimate is based on the average income from an *iqṭāʿ* of an amir of forty which at this time reached 40,000 dinars per annum; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 218.

¹²⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 357, 563, 591, 592, 614, 615, 672; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 74, 75; al-Shujāʿī, p. 219; *Durar*, 2, p. 11; Wāfī, 10, p. 142; *ʿUyūn*, fols. 39a, 59a–b; al-Yūsufī, p. 157, 159. For further examples of large *iqṭāʿāt* granted by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, see Zetterstéen, p. 200; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 436, 463, 467, 493; *Durar*, 5, p. 138.

¹²¹ *Sulūk*, p. 525; see also *Masālik al-abṣār*, p. 94.

¹²² *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 218.

¹²³ For further examples of great fiefs held by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's amirs, see *Sulūk*, 2, p. 314; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 123a. For the *iqṭāʿ* of ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿUthmān, see *ʿIqd*, A2912/4, fol. 100b.

¹²⁴ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 70b; see also fols. 79b, 107a, 121b.

Muḥammad's distribution of *iqṭā'āt*. As we have seen, his mamluks were no longer subject to the process of slow and gradual advancement and the austere lifestyle of apprenticeship and soldiering, but on arrival were already given conditions that his predecessors extended to their mamluks only when they had reached the peak of their military careers: "On the day of their arrival he (al-Nāṣir Muḥammad) bestowed upon these mamluks fine clothing, golden sashes, horses and grants, to impress them [*ḥattā yudhishahum*]." ¹²⁵ Previously the mamluk had no income at all during his apprenticeship period, while during the rule of Qalāwūn golden sashes were a way of payment and a mark of the military and social status of amirs of one hundred. ¹²⁶ As soon as the symbols that indicated military hierarchy were ignored during the mamluk's period of training, it became impossible to maintain their importance in the army. The precedent, set during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's rule, of amirs and rank-and-file mamluks wearing golden sashes became standard conduct in the mamluk army until al-Nāṣir Faraj came to power in 801/1399: "And each year the sultan (al-Nāṣir Muḥammad) would distribute golden and silver sashes in large amounts [*shay'an kathīran*]." ¹²⁷

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad also did away with the graduated pay scale whereby a mamluk's pay kept track with his slow military advancement. That is, he "did not preserve his father's custom of advancing the mamluks through all the stages of service so that he (the Mamluk) would gain experience through training . . . and gradually increase his pay from three dinars a month to ten dinars, and later transfer him to a service post, but resolved to fill their (the mamluks) needs in one fell swoop with high wages [*wa-lam yurā'i 'ādat abī . . . fī tanaqqul al-mamālīk fī aṭwār al-khidam ḥattā yatadarraba wa-yatamarrana . . . wa-fī tadrijīhi min thalāthat danānīr fī al-shahr 'ilā 'asharat danānīr thumma naqlihi min al-jāmakiyya 'ilā wazīfa min wazā'if al-khidma bal 'iqṭadā ra'yuhu an yamla'a*"]

¹²⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 524.

¹²⁶ On the high position of those who were awarded golden sashes during Baybar's and Qalāwūn's reigns, see al-Yūnīnī, 2, p. 430; 3, p. 5; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, pp. 7, 8, 158; 8, p. 50; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 627; al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fol. 6a; *Masālik al-abṣār*, p. 95; *Zubda*, fols. 103b–104a, 160a; Ayalon, "l'Esclavage", pp. 16–17.

¹²⁷ *Khiṭat*, 2, p. 99; see also Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 319, 357, 360.

a‘yunahum bi-l-‘aṭā’ al-kathīr daḡatan wāhidatan].”¹²⁸ Al-Kutubī described the wages paid by al-Nāṣir Muḡammad to his mamluks as “beyond all limits.”¹²⁹

Conscious of their contribution to the bolstering of his political position al-Nāṣir Muḡammad fostered his mamluk bodyguards, *al-khāṣṣakiyya*, and strove to bind them to him even further by awarding them special grants. Immediately upon his accession, he distributed among his *khāṣṣakiyya* amirs the treasures left by the deposed Sultan Baybars al-Jāshinkir,¹³⁰ and from then on made the award of special grants to the *khāṣṣakiyya* custom: “And al-Nāṣir Muḡammad reached new heights with his munificence, generosity, benevolence and open-handedness that exceeded all bounds [*ghāya takhruju ‘an al-ḡadd*], and in a single day granted more than one hundred thousand gold dinars and did not cease to award his *khāṣṣakiyya* [grants] of some ten thousand dinars.”¹³¹ For example, on 17 Rajab 713/7 November 1313, al-Nāṣir Muḡammad held a banquet to commemorate the successful conclusion of the building of a royal palace in the Citadel, al-Qaṣr al-Ablaq, and took the opportunity to award his amirs robes of honour, *khila‘*, and monetary grants according to rank: “And they were given robes of honour and one hundred thousand dinars were given to each amir of one hundred, ten thousand dirhams to each amir of forty, and five hundred dirhams to each *muqaddam ḡalqa*. The sum total distributed on this auspicious occasion was five and a half million dirhams.”¹³² In 738/1337, the daughter of the Marinid ruler of Fez passed through Cairo on her way to perform the *ḡajj*, bringing with her rich gifts for the sultan. With the exception of precious stones, al-Nāṣir Muḡammad distributed all her gifts to his amirs, the value of this largesse standing at over one hundred thousand dinars.¹³³

Again, al-Nāṣir Muḡammad’s policy of bestowing grants was in direct contradiction to that of Baybars and Qalāwūn who had been extremely careful with state money: “They would not permit [unnecessary] expenditure, but guarded the treasury jealously [*lā*

¹²⁸ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 214; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 524–525. For an example of a salary from Qalāwūn’s reign, see al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 26b.

¹²⁹ ‘Uyūn, fol. 50b.

¹³⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 82.

¹³¹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 535; see also *Tuḡfa*, p. 218; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 174, 211.

¹³² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 129; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 69a.

¹³³ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 448.

yasmaḥūn bi-l-māl wa-innamā yaddakhirūnahu ṣiyānatan wa-khawfan], and there is no record that either of them ever made a grant of one thousand dinars all at once".¹³⁴ The sources do record a grant of five thousand dinars made by Baybars to Qalāwūn which included three thousand dinars in cash, goods, such as a horse with a tooled saddle, and robes of honour to the value of two thousand dinars,¹³⁵ but even a grant of this size, given to Qalāwūn in recognition of his distinguished conduct in the repulse of the Mongol attack on al-Bīra in 671/1272, was modest compared to those made by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to his amirs. Amir Kunduk, who had received his training in the house of Qalāwūn and who was one of his senior amirs, became embroiled in a conflict with the son of his late master, Sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl, when the latter wanted to grant his confidants the sum of one thousand dinars. As he was in charge of the treasury he decided to ignore the sultan's order, claiming that the grant was excessive.¹³⁶ Such behaviour was clearly inspired by the norms which prevailed during Qalāwūn's rule.

Both the size of the grants and gifts and the manner in which they were bestowed indicate a large measure of flattery on the part of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad towards his amirs. This soon entailed the elimination of the distance that traditionally existed between the ruler and his amirs and that had enabled his predecessors to ensure their total authority. Thus Ṭughāy became one of the sultan's closest amirs in an extremely short time and the master-servant distance between them was reduced to such an extent that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad would come and visit Ṭughāy at his home whenever he was on his sickbed. In 713/1313, the sultan bestowed Qalāwūn's Cairo palace upon him. As Qalāwūn had been the founder of the dynasty, this gift was of particular significance and gave Ṭughāy special status, underscoring even further the lack of distance between him and the sultan. At one time, when he had fallen ill, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad went so far as to appoint Ṭughāy as his successor and asked him to take care of his children should he die. Yet, when he recovered

¹³⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 537; see also Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 14; al-Yūsufī, pp. 166–167, 207. Normal grants during Baybars' and Qalāwūn's reigns included fine garments, horses with or without saddles; see al-Yūnīnī, 2, p. 430; 3, p. 5; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, pp. 7, 8, 158; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 626, 627; *Zubda*, fol. 42a; *Tuhfa*, p. 84. On Qalāwūn's economy, see *Nujūm*, 9, p. 177.

¹³⁵ *Zubda*, fols. 79b–80a, also fol. 260b; *Tuhfa*, pp. 54, 76–77. For further examples, see *ibid.*, p. 106; al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fol. 58a; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 691.

¹³⁶ Al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fol. 274b; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 140.

al-Nāṣir changed his mind and, characteristically, decided to remove Ṭughāy.¹³⁷

In 738/1337, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad built two palaces, one for Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī and the other for Alṭunbughā al-Māridīnī. These palaces were so located that al-Nāṣir could observe them from his own palace at Qal'at al-Jabal. Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī's palace was designed and built under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's personal supervision and was the most magnificent of all the palaces he built for any of his amirs, costing 4.6 million dirhams. On the completion of the two palaces, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad arranged a splendid inaugural feast at which he gifted all the amirs present with robes of honour. He was so close to Yalbughā and Alṭunbughā that he would attend them at their homes in times of illness. Once when Alṭunbughā al-Māridīnī had recovered from an illness, he asked al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who had been at his side throughout, to build a mosque in gratitude to God for his recovery. The mosque al-Nāṣir Muḥammad subsequently built cost three hundred thousand dirhams, not counting the wood and marble which he contributed out of the sultani stores.¹³⁸

The original manner in which al-Nāṣir Muḥammad chose to bestow a grant upon Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī is a salient example of how little military criteria played a part in his considerations when it came to conferring grants upon his closest amirs. In a chance conversation in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's presence, the sum of ten thousand dinars was mentioned. Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī, who happened to be present, swore that he had never seen that much money in all his life. After he had left, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad sent him a gift of this sum, or perhaps more, from the treasury, together with robes of honour, *tashārīf*, that he could give to the treasury messengers who delivered the gift.¹³⁹ On another occasion amirs Bashtāk, Qawṣūn, Alṭunbughā al-Māridīnī, and Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī were all awarded two hundred thousand dinars in a single day by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ *Durar*, 2, pp. 322–323, 422–423; Zetterstéén, p. 167; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fols. 70b–71a, 100b–101a; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 131.

¹³⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 438, 451–452, 453, 477, 490, 541, 756; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 112; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 71; al-Yūsufī, pp. 265–268.

¹³⁹ Ibn al-Wardī, p. 478; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 535; *Durar*, 5, p. 212.

¹⁴⁰ *Durar*, 5, pp. 127–128; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 432; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 119. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad loved these amirs, elevated them to the highest ranks in a very short time and gave them his daughters' hands in marriage, see *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 89, 112; 10, p. 105; al-Shujā'ī, pp. 222, 266; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 288, 385; *Wāfi*, 9, p. 364; 10,

Paradoxically, in his efforts to bind his amirs closer to him—intended to reinforce his position of power as sultan—al-Nāṣir Muḥammad actually provided them with the lever they would soon use to undermine that power. That is, wishing to maintain his relationship with the amirs on an intimate and friendly footing, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad outdid himself in treating them more or less like kings and allowed them in the end to adopt authoritarian manners. This indulgent attitude of al-Nāṣir the amirs began duly to exploit in order to weaken his authority and further their own interests.

When Qawṣūn went hunting, he was usually accompanied by one third of the army.¹⁴¹ On one occasion, when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad went hunting accompanied by his closest amirs, he is described as disparaging his own status as sultan by giving the lead to Tankiz. Amirs Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī, Alṭunbughā al-Māridinī, Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī and Āqsunqur, who were all commanders of one thousand, had come before Tankiz each with a falcon on his arm, when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad approached him and said, “Amir, these men are falconers, I am your *amīr shikār*¹⁴² and these are your birds.”¹⁴³ Even if al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had wished to pay a special tribute to Tankiz, by his action he placed himself as it were in Tankiz’s service together with the rest of his amirs. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s father would hunt accompanied by men of his own class and only his closest amirs were permitted to join the hunt as part of the sultan’s retinue.¹⁴⁴ In Qalāwūn’s time, the fact that a single rare eagle was used exclusively by the sultan served to maintain the sultan’s discrete status, apart from the amirs. In contrast, in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s time, each senior amir was permitted to possess, apart from the usual falcons, ten eagles. Not only was the sultan’s status no longer distinguished through his ownership of birds rarer than those owned by his amirs, the latter were even allowed to hunt using the sultan’s personal falcons.¹⁴⁵

pp. 142, 299; *Durar*, 2, pp. 10–12; 3, pp. 342–344; 5, pp. 127–128; al-Nuwayri, 19B, fols. 119b–120a, 131a–132b. For examples of other amirs who were treated by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad similarly, see *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 131, 365, 535, 538, 539; *Khitāṭ*, 2, p. 68; *Durar*, 2, pp. 19, 20; *Wāfi*, 10, pp. 142, 144, 194.

¹⁴¹ *Durar*, 3, p. 343.

¹⁴² See Glossary.

¹⁴³ *Durar*, 2, p. 60; al-Shujā’i, p. 44. For additional examples, see *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 451–452, 493.

¹⁴⁴ *Al-Altāf al-khafīyya*, pp. 27–28.

¹⁴⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 452, 461, 493, 530; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 142; *Zubdat kashf*, p. 126.

It was reported of Baybars that his very presence filled the hearts of his amirs with awe: "And his amirs feared him greatly and when he fell sick, none of them would enter his chamber without permission."¹⁴⁶ Baybars could never have created and maintained such a relationship of fearful deference without guaranteeing that a suitable distance be permanently preserved between himself as sultan and even the most senior of his amirs. Qalāwūn behaved in much the same manner.¹⁴⁷

The Impact on Mamluk Society

The material plenty al-Nāṣir Muḥammad heaped upon the mamluks, the permissive attitude he adopted during their training period, and the way he advanced them while largely ignoring traditional Mamluk norms and military criteria are all measures of the benefits the mamluks had come to enjoy during their soldiering period. Within ten years of his rise to power an atmosphere of general laxity pervaded al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's army, and as early as 718/1318 the officer in charge of discipline, *muqaddam al-mamālik*, had to be reprimanded for dereliction of duty when the mamluks in his charge had gone off sailing on the Nile on days they had been taken for training at the hippodrome.¹⁴⁸

By 732/1331, this lack of discipline had become so severe that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad saw himself forced to dismiss 'Anbar al-Sakharti, *muqaddam al-mamālik al-sultāniyya*, and appoint Amir Āqbughā 'Abd al-Wāḥid in his place. This position was usually filled by eunuchs¹⁴⁹ but in view of the urgency of restoring discipline in the Royal Mamluk barracks, *al-ṭibāq*, it was temporarily given to Āqbughā who at that time was a senior amir. Known as a stern disciplinarian, Āqbughā had the eunuchs (*tawāshiyya*) responsible for discipline at *al-ṭibāq* punished by flogging and exile, and soon was so successful in restoring discipline that "not one of the mamluks dared to leave his barrack,"¹⁵⁰ this after a period in which the mamluks

¹⁴⁶ *Sulūk*, 1, p. 637; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 82.

¹⁴⁷ Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8, p. 303; *Nujūm*, 7, pp. 327–328.

¹⁴⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 183.

¹⁴⁹ Ayalon, "l'Esclavage", p. 15. Āqbughā was nominated to this office temporarily in addition to the *ustādāriyya* which he held already.

¹⁵⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 342; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 98–99; al-Yūsufi, pp. 230–231.

had been leaving the Citadel without permission from their superiors to go to Cairo whenever they felt like it. Yet the trouble was not wholly expunged. Three years later, in 735/1334, when discipline in the barracks had reached another low point Āqbughā was again made *muqaddam al-mamālik al-sulṭāniyya*. This time, when the *silāḥdāriyya* and *jamdāriyya* mamluks disobeyed Āqbughā's order to relinquish the arms-bearers they had taken from the Uwayrātiyya, it was their turn to be punished.¹⁵¹ That the mamluks could employ Uwayrātiyya soldiers serves as an indication of their economic strength, while their refusal to obey a direct order from a superior officer to dismiss them reveals their strong military position.

It was such breaches of discipline in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's army which led to a blurring of the distance of respect between the amir class and the rank-and-file mamluks. Amir Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī, the nonconformist brought from Baghdad at al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's behest, would organize ostentatious pleasure cruises on the Nile with a group of Sultani Mamluks whereby they would be entertained by local performers and enjoy the company of ladies of the town. In 738/1337, realizing that his favourite had gone too far, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad threatened Maliktamur with execution if he did not desist.¹⁵² That large number of mamluks were involved in scandals such as these demonstrates how widespread they had become, though not all mamluks found out were punished by the sultan. On the day Maliktamur was reprimanded, thirty-six mamluks were exiled and another forty were exiled the following day for drinking wine. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad used this opportunity to ban another form of mamluk amusement, archery, even though it could be considered part of military training. The mamluks had become so taken up with this sport that they would leave the Citadel without the sultan's permission and stay overnight in Cairo in direct contradiction of his orders. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ordered the *wāli al-qal'a*¹⁵³ to let no mamluk leave the Citadel without a pass, and those who were allowed out had to be back by evening. He had the archery butts dismantled and prohibited the fletchers from making and selling archery equipment used for target shooting. "Thus did the sultan intend to destroy the sources of amusement, for he

¹⁵¹ On the Uwayrātiyya, see Ayalon, "l'Esclavage", p. 15; idem, "Wafidiyya", pp. 99–101.

¹⁵² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 455.

¹⁵³ See Glossary.

despised whoever disported himself and neglected his work and his duties [. . . *yalha 'an shughlihi wa-khidmatihī*]."¹⁵⁴ Still, these events are doubtless at many removes from Mamluk tradition according to which amirs as well as mamluks were forbidden to congregate for any purpose: "And none of them (the amirs) and the mamluks would dare to meet with his comrade . . . either for archery [*ramy al-nushshāb*] or any other purpose. . . ." ¹⁵⁵ Mamluks were trained in this kind of isolation from the very outset of their education.

The atmosphere of weakening discipline which permeated the army went hand in hand with the gradual subversion of general military conduct. In the absence of a clearly defined advancement path, and since advancement possibilities seemed unlimited, the mamluks' ambitions for rapid advancement and their material demands from the sultan soon knew no bounds. This reached such proportions that at times al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's authority was brought into question. A series of events during his rule show that the mamluks' level of obedience to their master had dropped to such a low point that in order to safeguard his rule the sultan had no choice but to resign himself to a certain degree of erosion of his authority.

On 22 Ṣafar 721/23 March 1321, while al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was in his harem, fifteen hundred mamluks gathered outside the palace gate to protest the delay in payment of their wages.¹⁵⁶ Prior to their demonstration they had met Karīm al-Dīn, *mushidd al-jaysh*, humiliated him with their abuse, and also ignored the orders of the *muqaddam al-mamālik*. When word of this reached him, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad became greatly agitated and sent Amir Baktamur al-Sāqī, his senior *khāṣṣakiyya*, to meet the protestors. They greeted him with scorn and said they refused to negotiate with anyone other than the sultan in person. Al-Nuwayrī tells us that al-Nāṣir asked them to send a delegation into the palace where he would listen to their grievances, but they refused this too, so the sultan was forced to go out and meet them personally. It seems that he spoke to them gently and, with his usual political acumen, promised that he

¹⁵⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 455, 533.

¹⁵⁵ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 213, 216.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fols. 14a-b; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fols. 341b-342b; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 73; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 229-230. The mamluks did not hesitate to abuse even the sultan (723/1323) in a note that was put under his chair; see *Sulūk*, 2, p. 246.

himself would deal with their problem. Later he investigated the event, discovered who had been the inciters of this minor rebellion and ordered them expelled from the city. Al-Maqrīzī, in describing the event, gives a somewhat different version. He, too, reports that mamluks insisted on negotiating with the sultan, but then says that when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad went out to meet them his reactions were far from gentle, indeed, he cursed and humiliated them, grabbed the *muqaddam al-mamālīk*'s staff and with it beat the protestors about the head and shoulders and yelled at them to return to their barracks, which they did. In his determination to restore discipline, he ordered a parade to be held which he then used to exile one hundred and eighty mamluks to Syria whereas another group he later ordered to be housed outside the Citadel. On the sultan's orders, one mamluk furthermore was beaten to death after he had been found drunk and a number of eunuchs responsible for maintaining discipline were dismissed.¹⁵⁷ That not a single mamluk who had taken part in the demonstration was executed should be deemed a mild reaction indeed on the part of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad since the mamluks who had surrounded him "were an unruly armed mob, leaderless and senseless [*wa-hum ghawghā' lā ra's lahum walā 'aql wa-ma'ahum al-silāḥ*]" and his life had been in danger.¹⁵⁸ Even if we accept al-Maqrīzī's version of the incident as authentic, there can be no doubt that the protestors' demands to meet the sultan face-to-face while flouting court protocol and the sultan's willingness to go along with that show that the traditional hierarchy and those Mamluk principles which dictated a clear distance between the various military ranks, let alone between the sultan and his mamluks, had been severely disrupted. This is also borne out by the derision with which the mamluks had greeted Baktamur al-Sāqī, then the most senior amir. That the distance not only between the mamluks and amirs but even between the mamluks and the sultan had virtually been removed was a direct result of the mamluks' permissive education. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad may have felt some of this himself since following this incident he dismissed several *ṭawāshīyya* "for making light of Mamluk education [*kawnaḥum farratū fī tarbiyat al-mamālīk*]."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 229–230.

¹⁵⁸ *Nujūm*, 9, p. 73; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 342a–b.

¹⁵⁹ *Nujūm*, 9, p. 73.

Al-Maqrīzī also acknowledges that despite his forceful reaction during this episode, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had by now become apprehensive of the mamluks: “It was a wonder that he emerged unscathed [*wa-‘uddat salāmatuhu min al-‘ajā’ib*].”¹⁶⁰ This would appear to be the reason why he set out to appease them over and above their stated demands. Immediately after the episode, he rid himself of amirs who were not of his mamluks, replacing the majority with his own mamluks. Moreover, this protest would not remain an isolated incident: as the mamluks discovered, it proved an effective means of exerting pressure on al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.

A further development occurred when in Rabi‘ al-Ākhir 727/March 1327, a note was found in the sultan’s bed warning him of the intention of Amirs Ṭashtamur Ḥummuṣ Akhḍar and Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri to assassinate him. From the moment al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ordered their immediate imprisonment the Citadel was in uproar. In a show of great emotion, the office-holders among the Sultani Mamluks left the palace in tears to be joined by the rest of the mamluks in the barracks. In their protestations against the sultan and out of sympathy with the fate of their amirs, the mamluks refused to go in to fulfill their duties with the sultan and went on a hunger strike, preventing food from reaching their barracks despite the entreaties of their instructors. They then presented al-Nāṣir Muḥammad with an ultimatum, either to release Ṭashtamur and Quṭlūbughā or to be forced to imprison all his mutinous mamluks. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had no option but to release the two amirs, for the alternative would have meant for him to have to face an actual mamluk mutiny. A solution was found in an understanding reached between the sultan and the amirs, whereby the sultan “considered the pleas” of Amir Tankiz, *nā’ib al-Shām*, and Amir Baktamur al-Sāqī to release the two imprisoned amirs, keeping Ṭashtamur Ḥummuṣ Akhḍar at his post in Egypt while sending Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri to Syria with Tankiz. Actually it was Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri who seems to have been behind the note found in the sultan’s bed so as to provoke hatred among the mamluks against Baktamur al-Sāqī to whom al-Nāṣir was very close. In their protest at the imprisonment of the two popular amirs the mamluks claimed that Baktamur al-Sāqī was the writer of the note, suggesting that, as he was not one of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s mamluks, he had wanted to

¹⁶⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 229; *‘Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 342b.

undermine the relationship between the sultan and his mamluks. However, when he got to the bottom of the events and discovered their true origin, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was quick to direct his wrath at Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhrī whom he demoted for his part in the episode and exiled.¹⁶¹ And yet, again, the punishment meted out to him appears to be light when one considers the gravity of his action—fomenting a rebellion against the sultan.

On the subject of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reaction to the part played by the *ṭibāq* mamluks in these events the sources are silent and there is no indication, as in the earlier mamluk protest, that they were at all punished. Initially persuaded by the amirs to revolt against their master, the sultan, for which severe punishment would have been the rule, the rank-and-file mamluks instead had come out on top. From now on, they would no longer be a purely military force subservient to their master, but a factor to be exploited in political maneuvering. In other words, they had gained a certain measure of political power which they could use in advancing their own claims.

It is this changed situation which explains why al-Nāṣir Muḥammad would increasingly accede to the mamluks' claims even before a situation of direct confrontation had been reached. When in 737/1336 the mamluks complained to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad that they had not been issued with uniforms, the sultan ordered al-Nashw, *nāzir al-khāṣṣ*,¹⁶² to supply the necessary garments the following day and furthermore gave him twenty thousand dinars for distribution among the mamluks to make up for the delay.¹⁶³ The swiftness with which al-Nāṣir now satisfied mamluks' claims led to a deterioration in his relationship with the civilian population, especially the merchants who bore the brunt of his largesse to the mamluks. Despite the fact that "he found it difficult to bear that he was called an oppressor and a wrongdoer and that destruction and disorder occurred during his rule,"¹⁶⁴ in cases such as these, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was willing to have his good name as a ruler who upheld the *sharī'a* sacrificed in order to keep the peace with his mamluks.

¹⁶¹ Al-Nuwayri, 19B, fol. 117a, 117b; *ʿIqd*, A2912/4, fol. 375a; *Durar*, 3, p. 335.

¹⁶² See Glossary.

¹⁶³ Al-Yūsufī, pp. 356–357; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 414. In 739/1338 the mamluks complained that they had not been issued with soap and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad acceded to their claim immediately; see al-Shujā'i, pp. 52–53.

¹⁶⁴ *Nujūm*, 9, p. 174.

The decline of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's authority with the *ṭibāq* mamluks actually points to a deeper lying phenomenon. Their overt rebellion against the sultan was instigated by the amirs whose economic power, thanks to the extraordinary high pay, grants and *iqṭā'āt* awarded them by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, had grown immensely. At one point this had reached such dimensions that it even astonished al-Nāṣir himself: "And the sultan began to see the fine clothes and embroidered silks [*al-ṭarz al-zarkash*] worn by his *khāṣṣakiyya* and their wives, clothes and jewels, which he thought excessive."¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, they had begun erecting public buildings, e.g., mosques, in numbers unknown at the time of Baybars and Qalāwūn.¹⁶⁶ The legacies they left and the widespread commercial ventures in which they were involved and which demanded large sums of capital also testify to the growing financial and economic power of the amirs.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 245.

¹⁶⁶ On public building during Baybar's and Qalāwūn's reigns, see Shāfi' Ibn 'Alī, fol. 123a; *Tashrif al-ayyām*, p. 126; Ibn Shaddād, pp. 59–60, 73, 226, 344, 347, 360; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, pp. 83, 101, 116, 119, 278; 8, pp. 9, 94, 101, 104, 215–216; *Zubda*, fols. 13a, 52a, 62b, 64a, 64b, 144b, 153a; Ibn Waṣif, fols. 71a–71b, 72b–73a; al-Nuwayrī, 2M, fols. 181a–b, 273a; 2N, fols. 27b, 79b; al-Yūnini, 3, p. 6; *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 369, 379–380, 386, 406, 427, 430; *Bidāya*, 13, p. 266, 317; *Jawāhir al-Sulūk*, fols. 16b, 19b, 41a; *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 367–368, 556, 757; *Ibar*, 5, p. 314; *'Iqd*, A2912/4, fols. 90b, 93b, 99a; *Nujūm*, 7, pp. 120, 121, 150, 181–190, 325; *Wāfi*, 9, p. 311; 10, p. 339; 15, pp. 477–478. On public building during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign, see for (a) religious building: Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 388–391; Zetterstéen, p. 203, 225–228, 235; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fols. 63b, 85b, 102b, 103a; al-Yūsufi, p. 265–266, 275, 283, 311, 381–382, 385; *Wāfi*, 9, pp. 285–286, 336, 361, 364, 371, 372; 10, pp. 10, 197, 423; 12, p. 349; 15, p. 483; al-Ṣafadi, fol. 83b; *Durar*, 1, pp. 417, 421, 422, 423, 436–437, 439, 458; 2, pp. 17, 19, 57, 266–267, 273, 320, 326; 3, pp. 342, 349; 4, p. 264; 5, p. 124; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 184, 273, 323, 327, 353, 354, 364, 403, 423, 424, 445, 454–455, 456, 488, 516, 518, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 660, 756; *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 54, 65, 307–310, 312, 313, 314, 383–384, 392–393, 398, 418, 421, 423–424, 425, 426; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 94–96, 98, 112, 118, 143, 178, 210, 263, 276, 278, 291, 292, 310–312; 10, pp. 102, 105, 107, 183, 184; *Manhal*, 2, pp. 457, 481; 3, pp. 85, 181, 182, 368; 2070, fol. 185b; Ibn Baṭṭūta, 1, p. 60; al-Shujā'i, pp. 12, 27, 32, 33, 70, 90, 115–119, 266, 276; see also Humphreys, "Mamluk Architecture"; Lapidus, "Ayyubid Religious Policy"; (b) non-religious building: *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 68, 70, 71, 72–73, 74, 76, 90–91, 93; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 149, 156–158; al-Yūsufi, pp. 163, 340–341.

¹⁶⁷ Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 373–374, 396; al-Shujā'i, pp. 64, 130–131, 132, 133; *Durar*, 2, pp. 12, 20, 25, 60; 3, p. 343; *Uyūn*, fols. 46b–47a; *Bidāya*, 14, p. 191; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 149a, 149b; *Wāfi*, 9, pp. 10, 371; 10, pp. 194, 423; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 353, 357, 390, 391, 402, 439, 446, 466, 474–475, 507, 508, 560, 561, 563–564, 591–592, 686; *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 68, 72–73, 115, 116; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 108, 152, 153–154, 302, 318; 10, pp. 6–7, 9, 10–11, 18–19, 44–45; *Dhuyūl al-'ibar*, 17, pp. 176–177, 226; al-Yūsufi, pp. 168, 169, 207, 275.

Because the limits which traditional Mamluk norms had been careful to set to the amirs' military power had fallen away, they could translate their newly acquired economic power into greater military power. Traditionally, an amir of one hundred was entitled to have one hundred mamluks,¹⁶⁸ yet near the time of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, Amir Qawṣūn had seven hundred. By 732/1331, in addition to the arms already in his possession, Qawṣūn had acquired Baktamur al-Sāqī's armoury, valued at six hundred thousand dinars.¹⁶⁹ When Amir Bashtāk, together with some other amirs, was sent to Syria in order to capture Amir Tankiz in 740/1339–40, he headed three hundred and fifty of his own mamluks, yet the sources do not reveal whether this figure included all his mamluks. When al-Nāṣir Muḥammad lay on his deathbed and Qawṣūn readied his mamluks for a takeover of rule, al-Nāṣir prevailed upon Bashtāk to marshal his mamluks against those of Qawṣūn.¹⁷⁰ Even if Bashtāk's mamluk force was numerically inferior to that of Qawṣūn, the difference could not have been significant. It was said of Sanjar al-Jāwulī that "he advanced in the government, his position was strengthened and the number of his followers and mamluks increased [*wa-kathurat atbā'uhu wa-mamālikuhu*]."¹⁷¹ The numbers of mamluks owned by the various amirs can also be verified by the number of horses they owned. It was said of Āqbughā 'Abd al-Wāḥid that when he complained to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad that his stables were not large enough to house all his horses, the sultan jokingly suggested that he tether them in the adjacent al-Azhar mosque.¹⁷² The daily amount of fodder needed to feed Baktamur al-Sāqī's horses reached eleven hundred '*alīqa*.¹⁷³

It was the amirs' growing military power, the authoritarianism with which they were able to comport themselves, the absence of hierarchical distance between them and the sultan, and the governmental influence they already wielded, that were to lend them the political power with which they undermined al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's

¹⁶⁸ On the number of mamluks the amirs were entitled to possess, see al-Qalqashandī, 4, pp. 14–15.

¹⁶⁹ *Durar*, 3, p. 343; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 588, 615; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 194; *Manhal*, 3, p. 393; 2072, fol. 37a.

¹⁷⁰ Al-Shujā'ī, p. 76; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 143.

¹⁷¹ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 123a.

¹⁷² Al-Yūsufī, 327; *Manhal*, 2, p. 482.

¹⁷³ *Nujūm*, 9, p. 105; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 355, 364–365. The measure of '*alīqa* is not clear.

authority and in the end threatened his rule. The biographies of Amirs Baktamur al-Sāqī and Tankiz are telling illustrations of this development. Al-Nāṣir was so close to Amir Baktamur al-Sāqī that “the sultan and Baktamur are never apart, either Baktamur is with the sultan or the sultan is with Baktamur. And he will not dine but at Baktamur’s home where the mother of Aḥmad Ibn Baktamur prepares his food in a silver pot.”¹⁷⁴ The way al-Nāṣir Muḥammad doted on Baktamur’s son and spoiled him led many to think that he was his own. When he grew up, al-Nāṣir gave him the hand of one of his daughters in marriage. Al-Nāṣir extended such far-reaching powers to Baktamur al-Sāqī that it was said of him that in fact he was the ruler: “And Baktamur’s position in the sultan’s government was strengthened and he became [the actual] ruler [*wa-ṣāra huwa al-dawla*].”¹⁷⁵ That Baktamur’s status nearly equalled the sultan’s is also reflected in the comparable attitudes towards them: “Whenever someone gave the sultan something or presented him with [a gift] they gave the same to Baktamur. Whatever the sultan received, the lion’s share went to Baktamur and thus his wealth increased.”¹⁷⁶ Baktamur’s financial status was also much like the sultan’s. When they made the *hajj* in 732/1332, Baktamur’s train of luggage was no smaller than the sultan’s and he even outdid him with his gold-embroidered silks, *al-zarākish*, and gold vessels. Baktamur took three thousand ‘*aliqa*’ of fodder with him while the supply of the sultan was only one hundred ‘*aliqa*’ heavier.

It was on their way back from the *hajj* in that same year, however, that Baktamur and his son Aḥmad were eliminated by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. Al-Nāṣir had discovered that Baktamur al-Sāqī had been plotting his assassination with the Royal Mamluks so as to usurp power. After his death, the sultan found in Baktamur’s baggage not only robes of honour of the kind the sultan normally awarded to his amirs and soldiers, but also chains and manacles. But the most damning piece of evidence was a missive from Ulmās al-Ḥāḥib found in a leather pouch among Baktamur’s personal effects, in which Ulmās assured Baktamur that he would guard Cairo

¹⁷⁴ *Wāfi*, 10, p. 193; *Durar*, 2, p. 19; *Manhal*, 3, p. 391; al-Yūsufī, p. 158.

¹⁷⁵ *Wāfi*, 10, p. 193; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 394, 395.

¹⁷⁶ *Wāfi*, 10, pp. 193, 194, 195; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 364; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 105; *Durar*, 2, p. 20; al-Yūsufī, p. 150.

and the Citadel until he received further orders from him.¹⁷⁷ That Ulmās joined the conspiracy is a further example of the complete lack of moral compunction on the part of his most senior amirs when it came to betraying al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's trust. Ulmās was a mamluk al-Nāṣir Muḥammad "had bought, promoted and granted an amirate,"¹⁷⁸ and who in addition to his permanent post as *ḥājib al-ḥujjāb* acted as *nā'ib al-ghayba*. He enjoyed a highly honoured political status in that both junior and senior amirs were in his service and he had been able to amass great wealth in the course of his duties. The fact that he nevertheless joined Baktamur's conspiracy is an indication of the opportunism that had become rife among al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's amirs—Ulmās was not the only one to betray his master's trust. (As early as 721/1321 there had been the struggle around Karīm al-Dīn, *mushidd al-jaysh*, in which some of the Royal Mamluks joined Baktamur al-Sāqī.¹⁷⁹) According to Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad first eliminated Aḥmad, Baktamur's son, and then Baktamur himself in order to prevent Baktamur's supporters from joining Aḥmad in taking revenge on al-Nāṣir.¹⁸⁰ This implies that Baktamur's power and influence were indeed to be feared, while the flight of a small number of Royal Mamluks during a storm that preceded Baktamur's assassination indicates that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's suspicions about Baktamur were well founded.¹⁸¹

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad dealt with Tankiz, *nā'ib al-Shām*, in almost the same manner. Each year when he would arrive in Egypt from Syria, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad normally saluted him with much pomp and circumstance but on his arrival for al-Nāṣir's son's wedding to the daughter of Amir Tuquzdamur in 737/1336, al-Nāṣir greeted him with ceremony reserved for kings. Al-Nāṣir got down from his horse to greet Tankiz although he was the sultan and Tankiz his amir: "And the honour that the sultan accorded Amir

¹⁷⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 355, 364–365; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 104, 107, 108, 302; *Manhal*, 3, p. 395; *Wāfi*, 9, p. 371; *Durar*, 1, pp. 438–439; al-Yūsufi, pp. 135, 137, 138, 139, 143, 145, 149.

¹⁷⁸ *Nujūm*, 9, p. 301; *Wāfi*, 9, p. 371; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 373–374.

¹⁷⁹ *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 72–73, 75–76; al-Yūsufi, p. 157.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Ṣafadī's version shows how al-Nāṣir Muḥammad eliminated Baktamur on a false charge and then suffered remorse on his return to Cairo, but the rest of the facts are identical in both versions of the story. Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 380–381, 392; al-Yūsufi, p. 180; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 417, 510–511; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 93, 129.

¹⁸¹ Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 370; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 356; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 104–105; al-Yūsufi, p. 160.

Tankiz that day was never before accorded by royalty to his mamluk."¹⁸²

In 739/1338, when the marriages of two of the sultan's daughters to two of Tankiz's sons were arranged, the honour accorded Tankiz was greater than that accorded to kings.¹⁸³ This particular visit to Egypt was also occasioned by the confinement of his daughter, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's wife. Yet it would seem that it was not only familial relationship that caused al-Nāṣir to so honour Tankiz. Already by 715/1315, Tankiz had adopted regal pomp. When he left for the conquest of Malatya "Tankiz rode . . . as kings did . . . [*alā 'ādat al-mulūk*],"¹⁸⁴ and according to al-Maqrīzī, "no *nā'ib* had ever done so before."¹⁸⁵ Tankiz's conduct befitted his political status, for by 714/1314 he had become the actual ruler of Syria: "And he (al-Nāṣir) unprecedentedly appointed him governor of all al-Shām," and with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's approval he controlled the *nuwwāb* of the Syrian provinces.¹⁸⁶ Each missive they sent to the sultan was sent open via Tankiz so that he could check its contents—only those that fell into line with his views were delivered to their destination, others were simply returned to their senders. Indeed, Tankiz felt himself so powerful that he did not hesitate to try and undermine al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's authority. He demanded, for example, that he be involved in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's contacts with Aratnā, the ruler of al-Rūm, and once went so far as to send Aratnā's envoy back to his country when he had arrived in Damascus bearing only a single missive, addressed to Sultan al-Nāṣir. Insulted by this slight, Aratnā demanded that al-Nāṣir put an end to Tankiz's interference in the affairs of the two sultans, and when al-Nāṣir indeed did so, Tankiz retorted in language that aroused the sultan's ire. From the moment Tankiz refused three requests by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to release one of his mamluks, Jūbān, who had been incarcerated in the Shawbak prison, al-Nāṣir bore him a silent grudge.¹⁸⁷ In a similar incident, Baybars had Amir Sunqur al-Rūmī

¹⁸² Al-Yūsufī, p. 364; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 417; *Fawāt*, 1, p. 117.

¹⁸³ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 461, also p. 462; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 129–130.

¹⁸⁴ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 73b.

¹⁸⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 142.

¹⁸⁶ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 45, 72; al-Ṣafadī, fols. 92b–93a; *Wāfi*, 9, p. 370; 10, pp. 283–284; 12, pp. 348–349; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 38, 130; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 137, 511; al-Yūsufī, pp. 115, 116, 286, 319, 397.

¹⁸⁷ *Nahj*, p. 92; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 509.

executed for not heeding his request for a stay of execution of two of his mamluks.¹⁸⁸ Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, instead of enforcing his authority as sultan, had surrendered it.

In 740/1339, Tankiz brazenly flouted al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's order to send the taxes levied from the Damascene Christians to Egypt. The Christians had been obliged to pay this tax after they had been accused of sundry cases of arson in Damascus, whereby the money was to cover the expense of renovating the damaged houses and mosques. As it was bound to worsen his relations with Constantinople, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad from the outset had not wanted to levy this tax, but after Tankiz had disobeyed him and gone ahead with the levy, he demanded that the money be transferred to the treasury.¹⁸⁹

Tankiz's undermining of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's authority was to reach its climax in the idea of his overthrow. Tankiz had been angered by the sultan's refusal to allow him to go hunting at Ja'bar despite his repeated entreaties. Al-Nāṣir actually feared that the hunt could be used by Tankiz as a cover to flee to Dhū al-Qādir seeking asylum there, and Tankiz's response was: "By Allāh, our master has lost his mind for he listens only to the young men [*yasma'ū min al-ṣibā*] around him. By Allāh, if he would have listened to me I would have advised him to seat one of his sons [on the throne] and I would run the affairs of the state [in his name]."¹⁹⁰ For al-Nāṣir Muḥammad this was nothing less than an actual threat to his rule as Tankiz was definitely in a position to start an uprising in Syria with the aid of Dhū al-Qādir, chief of the Turkoman tribes of northern Syria, who had refused to recognise al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's authority but accepted that of Tankiz. This meant that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was dependent upon Tankiz's mediation for preventing a Turkoman invasion of the northern Syrian provinces—an alliance between Tankiz and Dhū al-Qādir was certain to wrest control of Syria from his hands, creating a situation in which he would be called upon to defend his rule in the face of the resulting political instability. Thus, as he had done away with Baktamur al-Sāqī in the past, he now brought about Tankiz's elimination.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Al-Yūnini, 2, p. 324; al-Nuwayri, 2M, fols. 178a-b.

¹⁸⁹ Al-Shujā'i, pp. 75-76.

¹⁹⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 509.

¹⁹¹ Al-Shujā'i, pp. 88, 89; al-Yūsufi, p. 400; *Nahj*, p. 93; 'Uyūn, fol. 46a.

Finally, in order to nip any threat to his rule in the bud al-Nāṣir Muḥammad took a series of general precautions. Thus, he did not allow his mamluks to meet with clerics and jurists lest they incite them against him and he forbade the amirs to get together outside duty hours, *al-khidma*. Whenever he had to be absent from Cairo, on the *hajj*, for example, he made sure to send the amirs to their *iqṭā'āt* until his return.¹⁹² But above all he tried to forestall any direct confrontation with the amirs by adopting a calculated, long-term plan for the elimination of his rivals: "And he was a forbearing ruler towards that which he hated . . . and when he set out to do something, he did not hasten but was very careful."¹⁹³ At the same time, while the cunning and circumspection al-Nāṣir Muḥammad employed to eliminate amirs who could threaten his position imply that he was well aware of the amirs' power, he may also have come to realize that direct confrontation was no longer possible. Indeed, when factions formed around Amirs Tankiz, Baktamur al-Sāqī, Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri, Qawṣūn, Bashtāk, Ṭughāy, Sanjar al-Jāwulī and others, their combined power could take on menacing proportions.¹⁹⁴ This also becomes clear when we look at the list of amirs he had fostered and then, once they had reached the upper echelons of government, either eliminated or relieved of their posts. Apart from Tankiz and Baktamur, this list includes Ṭughāy, Ṭināl, Mughultāy al-Jamālī, Sanjar al-Jāwulī, Baybars al-Ḥājjib, Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri, Aruqtāy al-Manṣūri, Aṣlam, Arghūn al-Nā'ib and Ulmās.¹⁹⁵ Most of them were removed on proven grounds of attempted conspiracy, and only a few, e.g., Aṣlam, on charges that had been trumped up.

¹⁹² *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 120, 197, 351, 532, 546; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 102, 172; al-Nuwayri, 20, fols. 110a, 116b.

¹⁹³ *Durar*, 4, p. 265; al-Shujā'i, p. 113. See also al-Yūsufi, p. 124, 153.

¹⁹⁴ Al-Nuwayri, 20, fols. 70b–71a, 123a; *Durar*, 2, p. 322; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 228; *Khiṭaṭ* 2, p. 71; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 72, 323.

¹⁹⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 209, 249, 253, 272, 276, 280, 281–282, 303–304, 812; al-Nuwayri, 19B, fols. 97a, 104a–b, 114a–b, 117a–b, 119a, 123a–b; 20, fols. 74b, 100b–101a; Zetterstéen, pp. 103, 148, 167, 170, 177, 178; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fols. 329a–b; Ibn al-Dawādāri, 9, pp. 319, 343; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 103, 109; 10, p. 103; *Manhal*, 2, pp. 455–457; *Durar*, 1, p. 374, 438; 3, p. 335; *Wāfi*, 8, p. 360; 9, pp. 285, 370–371; 10, p. 251.

The al-Nashw Episode

The confrontational relationship that developed between al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his amirs when in 733/1333 he appointed Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn Faḍl Allāh, known as al-Nashw, as *nāzir al-khāṣṣ*, is a clear example of the power the amirs had won for themselves and of the extent to which, when united, they could successfully question, even ignore, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's authority.

In a complaint he brought before the sultan in the middle of Rajab 734/March 1334 about the amirs' trade and tax evasion, al-Nashw claimed that "they (Amirs Qawṣūn and Bashtāk) and their like had become used to bribes from the sultan's officials amounting to half of the treasury's income . . . if he (al-Nashw) was free [of their pressure] he would fill the sultan's treasury and grain stores, but he feared that they [in reaction] would change the sultan's attitude towards him."¹⁹⁶ Although the sources ascribe a modicum of self-righteousness to al-Nashw's complaint, it surely indicates to what extent the amirs exploited the treasury and also how the sultan was forced to submit to their claims on administrative positions with which they complemented their financial interests. The amirs made sure to have any official eliminated who intended to lay hands on their property or business interests. Karīm al-Dīn, who had been appointed *nāzir al-khāṣṣ* in 709/1310, was eliminated "because of the jealousy of the amirs and others at his increased control over the sultan . . ."—they simply informed al-Nāṣir that he had used the sultan's resources for his own interests. Ḥājj al-Dīn Ishāq, who replaced him, was instructed not to deal with matters of trade,¹⁹⁷ and al-Akuwz, *shādd al-dawāwīn*, was eliminated when he investigated Qawṣūn's grain stores. When Qawṣūn complained to al-Nāṣir how Aydakīn, the *wālī* of Cairo, had conspired with al-Nashw to entrap wine drinking nighttime revellers among the amirs and the mamluks and then had used the damning evidence to extract money for the treasury,¹⁹⁸ al-Nāṣir Muḥammad berated Qawṣūn in terms that revealed his own weakened position: "You, every time I appoint someone effective, you want him removed. If he was on your side [*min jihatikum*] you would praise

¹⁹⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 369; al-Shujā'i, p. 64; al-Yūsufi, p. 179, 187.

¹⁹⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 244, 247, 249; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 346a.

¹⁹⁸ Al-Yūsufi, p. 306; *Durar*, 1, pp. 431–432; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 398–399.

him to the skies.”¹⁹⁹ On 11 Jumādā I-Ūlā 735/17 April 1335, several months after Qawṣūn had complained about him, Aydakīn was dismissed from his post and sent to Syria “because of Amir Qawṣūn’s changed attitude toward him [*li-taghayyur al-amīr Qawṣūn ‘alayhi*].”

Against al-Nashw the amirs took no action so long as his activities did not conflict with their interests, and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who was fully aware that al-Nashw’s methods of exploitation and torture of the people and office-holders in order to extract from them money for the treasury aggravated the population, chose to ignore this while the amirs looked on from the sidelines.²⁰⁰ When at one point they did object, their protest was as yet so mild that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad could afford to disregard it.²⁰¹

Once al-Nashw decided, however, to start applying different rules and began harming their interests, the amirs changed their tune: “He stopped extorting the masses [and started] to harm the notables [*fa-raja‘a ‘an zulm al-‘amma ilā al-ta‘arruḍ ilā al-khāṣṣa*].”²⁰² Their earlier half-hearted objections now swelled into a direct and uncompromising protest against al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s stance, to the extent that they even set aside their internal rivalries and presented him with a united front. The result was a severe challenge to al-Nāṣir’s authority and an obvious threat to his rule.

In one case al-Nashw brought Āqbughā ‘Abd al-Wāḥid’s embezzlement from the treasury before the sultan. Āqbughā was accused of forging a seal bearing his and the sultan’s names in order to increase his profits from glass production, over and above the quota allowed by sultanic decree, and feared for his life for “he could not present a reasonable defence”²⁰³ against the charge of administrative misdemeanours in his *iqtā‘*. The *khāṣṣakiyya*, angered by the sultan’s attitude towards their colleague, sided with Āqbughā, and it was Bashtāk who pleaded his cause and even paid the sum

¹⁹⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 372, 377; al-Yūsufī, pp. 198, 376. On the transliteration of al-Akuwz, see *al-Dalīl al-shāfi*, 1, p. 147; *Manhal*, 3, p. 35.

²⁰⁰ Al-Yūsufī, pp. 257, 269. The large grants which al-Nāṣir Muḥammad awarded his amirs, the magnificent parties which he held in their honour, and the grand palaces which he built for part of them were all financed by the monies levied by al-Nashw; see al-Shujā‘ī, pp. 58, 59, 60; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 432, 438, 439, 448, 452, 453, 460–461, 462, 463.

²⁰¹ Al-Yūsufī, pp. 257–258; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 381, 382–383, 386–387, 391–392, 393–394, 408–409, 413–414, 419, 420, 431; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 113–114.

²⁰² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 402, 473; see also al-Shujā‘ī, pp. 61, 63, 64.

²⁰³ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 402; al-Shujā‘ī, p. 61; al-Yūsufī, pp. 316, 317.

Āqbughā owed to the treasury. In 736/1335, Bashtāk was reprimanded by the sultan when he came to complain that al-Nashw had harassed his officials for making wine from grapes actually destined for the sultan as tax from the Shubrā region and had ordered twenty-two thousand jugs of wine found in the region to be broken.²⁰⁴

In 737/1336, one of Qawṣūn's officials was charged with having stolen sugar and honey valued at 100,000 dirhams. Qawṣūn came to his aid and would not yield until he was released, arguing vigorously with the sultan that he would not give up to the treasury property that was his but by chance had been found in the possession of one of his officials. The sultan relented and gave Qawṣūn the man's property. Obviously Qawṣūn intended to sound a warning that he would not tolerate interference in his personal affairs, which the sultan seems to have heeded. When al-Nashw incited him against another of Qawṣūn's officials, al-Ṣafiyy, al-Nāṣir accepted the fact that al-Ṣafiyy owed the treasury taxes on his profits from agriculture and trade but allowed Qawṣūn to levy and keep them.²⁰⁵

The amirs' response to al-Nashw's hectoring was not long in coming—on 17 Ramaḍān 737/30 April 1337 an attempt was made on his life. Although the assailant, 'Abd al-Mu'min Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Aslamī, was not a mamluk, the sultan immediately linked the amirs with the attempt and the fury it aroused in him only abated when he was assured that the injury had not put al-Nashw's life in danger. To prevent further attempts on his life al-Nāṣir assigned him round-the-clock bodyguards.

The assassination attempt was an open challenge to the sultan and signalled a turning point in the confrontation between al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the amirs. Al-Nāṣir picked up the gauntlet by backing al-Nashw's activities against the amirs.

Bashtāk was accused of letting a merchant use his name each year to avoid paying taxes on his merchandise. The merchant was punished by having his goods confiscated by al-Nashw, despite Bashtāk's defence. At about the same time, one of Āqbughā 'Abd al-Wāḥid's officials responsible for public buildings admitted under interrogation that his master had done all his personal building

²⁰⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 400–402; al-Yūsufī, p. 315.

²⁰⁵ *Sulūk*, pp. 419–420, 435; al-Yūsufī, p. 370.

using the sultan's money—Āqbughā was unable to deny acts committed in the public eye. Al-Nashw moreover called the sultan's attention to the fact that five thousand head of sheep belonging to Āqbughā had been brought down from Upper Egypt to graze on sowed lands. The sultan reprimanded Āqbughā, and but for Bashtāk's intervention would have had him punished. The entire amir class felt threatened when al-Nashw was asked to balance the treasury budget which he set out to do by reforming the sultanate's expenditure, taxation, and administration of state lands. The cutbacks enforced in the sultan's private expenditure and in the distribution of spices and chickens to the amirs and other office-holders were accepted with understanding, so long as the sultan himself set an example. The amirs were also willing to accept the cutbacks in the fodder quota, although the soldiers complained.²⁰⁶ But when al-Nashw submitted a plan to the sultan which would channel a million dinars to the treasury by changing the tax and land holding system, the amirs decided they had had enough and threw their combined weight behind a scheme to bring al-Nashw down.

Al-Nashw's plan was intended to centralize taxation, thus heightening supervision of the amirs' *iqṭā'āt*, and hitting incomes by abrogating the government's seed quota to the *iqṭā'āt* held by the amirs, soldiers and farmers on the sultan's lands. It was also to include a three-year retroactive tax payment from *iqṭā'āt* holders. The plan called for the expropriation of lands on al-Rawḍa Island which had been sold too cheaply or leased at rents which were too low, and have them returned to the sultan's treasury. The return of lands to the sultan threatened the amirs' rights as landholders in general. A direct threat was the clause calling for the imprisonment of Amirs Āqbughā 'Abd al-Wāḥid and Ṭajāṛ and foreclosing on their property which, it was claimed, had been acquired fraudulently with treasury funds.²⁰⁷ When the plan went into force, "Upper and Lower Egypt erupted."²⁰⁸ Acting in concert the amirs decided on the elimination of al-Nashw. Their first step was to rally the *khāṣṣakiyya* around Amirs Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī and Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī who then presented the demand for al-Nashw's dismissal

²⁰⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 439, 446, 455–456, 466, 469.

²⁰⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 468–469, 473–475; al-Shujā'ī, pp. 59–60; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 131–132.

²⁰⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 475; al-Yūsufī, p. 375.

to the sultan, while at the same time anonymous letters informed him of al-Nashw's extortions. The sultan did not react immediately, but sent a message to Tankiz asking his advice.²⁰⁹ Not by chance, office-holders, orphans, widows and cripples, a cross-section of those who suffered at al-Nashw's hands, held a demonstration at the Citadel on the same day Tankiz's reply arrived from Syria (26 Muḥarram 740/3 August 1339), and prayers offered in the mosques were used to curse al-Nashw, both obviously organized by the amirs. The amirs took advantage of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's close feelings towards Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī and had Yalbughā warn the sultan of an impending rebellion by the amirs: "The best thing is to imprison al-Nashw, for if you do not imprison him an unbidden guest will come and visit you [*dakhala 'alayka al-dakhil*], for there is not a single mamluk who is not waiting for a moment's inattention on your part [*yatarāqqabū ghafla minka*] in order to kill you."²¹⁰ Because al-Nāṣir Muḥammad greatly trusted Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī, he finally acknowledged that his rule was in danger, bowed to the amirs' demands, and had al-Nashw imprisoned. But imprisonment was not enough to placate the amirs, they wanted his execution, for they feared that as long as al-Nashw was still alive the sultan would continue to avail himself of his advice. When the sultan refused to give in, the amirs began to alienate themselves from him: "And that year the sultan did not go out to the Maydān to play ball, for the amirs, when al-Nashw's punishment was delayed, displayed their anger towards the sultan and so did he to them."²¹¹ The turmoil surrounding al-Nashw was further kindled by an anonymous letter found in the sultan's bed accusing Bashtāk and Āqbughā 'Abd al-Wāḥid of wanting to murder him. When the person who had actually written the letter was found, one Ibn al-Azraq, he admitted that the accusation was a fabrication. That he was released unpunished indicates that he had acted as part of the amirs' efforts to unsettle the sultan. Their pressure reached a point where "the sultan's fears increased and he became so agitated that he could not remain seated in one place."²¹²

²⁰⁹ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 8a; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 475–476, 479, 480; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 134, 135.

²¹⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 477; al-Shujā'ī, p. 60; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 133.

²¹¹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 483; al-Shujā'ī, p. 62; *Manhal*, 3, p. 282; al-Yūsufī, p. 353.

²¹² *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 484–485.

In his extreme wariness of the amirs al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ordered the closure of the professional archery equipment shops and had the butts dismantled and he forbade the amirs and their mamluks to carry weapons.²¹³

Matters came to a head on 24 Rabīʿ al-Awwal/19 September at the Council of Amirs, *al-mashūra*. Revealing his acute disillusionment at the way they had acted, even rebelled, against him during the entire episode, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad accused the amirs of ingratitude towards him. In a polite but nevertheless threatening way, the amirs responded that they would not back down from their demands regarding al-Nashw, even if it meant the sultan losing his throne: “But our master the sultan knows that the Caliphate was brought down by officials and that most of the sultans met their deaths because of the *wazīrs* [*wa-ghālib al-salāṭīn ma dakhala ‘alayhim al-dakhīl illā min jihat al-wuzarāʾ*].”²¹⁴ That same night al-Nashw’s brother died under torture, while his mother met the same fate shortly afterwards. Al-Nashw himself died after prolonged torture on 2 Rabīʿ al-Ākhir/27 September. That al-Nāṣir Muḥammad acted under pressure from the amirs is clear from the way Barsbughā, who was in charge of administering the torture, initially made sure that al-Nashw and his relatives, though they were tortured, stayed alive: “And he (al-Nāṣir) secretly ordered him (Barsbughā) to show him (al-Nashw) mercy, for this situation was not of the sultan’s making but rather he desired to appease his Mamluk amirs [*li-ajl khawāṭīr mamālikīhi al-umarāʾ*].”²¹⁵ When this came to light, the amirs “would not rest and their [relations] with the sultan became greatly unsettled because al-Nashw was kept alive [*tashawwasha khawāṭīruhum wa-waqaʿa bayn al-sulṭān wa-baynahum khabṭ kathīr bi-sabab ibqāʾ al-Nashw*].” Only when Bashtāk threatened Barsbughā and demanded that he change his methods did al-Nashw and his relatives die. In other words, the sultan’s authority by now carried so little weight that Barsbughā could carry out Bashtāk’s orders without fear of reprisal from al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.

Ironically, it was al-Nāṣir himself who, at the peak of the al-Nashw episode, was to give clear voice to the problem he had

²¹³ Ibid.; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 140–141; al-Shujāʿī, p. 62.

²¹⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 485; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 141–142. See also al-Shujāʿī, p. 61.

²¹⁵ Al-Shujāʿī, pp. 62, 63; *Wāfī*, 10, p. 114; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 485–486; *Manhal*, 2, p. 282.

created not only for his own rule but also for that of the Mamluk rulers who were to come after him: "O Amirs! these are my mamluks whom I have nurtured and upon whom I have bestowed great gifts, and yet I hear improper things about them [*yā umarā' hā'ulā'i mamālīkī ansha'tuhum wa-a'taytuhum al-'aṭā' al-jazīl wa-qad balaghani 'anhum mā lā yalīq*]."216

When al-Nāṣir Muḥammad lay on his deathbed, governmental instability had reached such proportions that the amirs immediately readied themselves for the power struggle that was inevitably to ensue. On first hearing of his illness, they hurried to move their wives and property from the Citadel to Cairo so that they would not be harmed during the battle, while between them Qawṣūn and Bashtāk almost already came into open conflict.²¹⁷ Under pressure from *al-mashūra* amirs, al-Nāṣir bequeathed the rule to his son, Abū Bakr, and appointed Qawṣūn and Bashtāk executors of his will, all those involved in the will, including al-Nāṣir Muḥammad himself, being aware that Abū Bakr's rule would only be nominal.

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad left an army in which both rank-and-file mamluk and amir had become accustomed to having their demands fulfilled. With no form of authority to keep them in check and opportunism their primary motive, the struggle for leadership that broke out among the various Mamluk factions exceeded anything the Mamluk army had known till then. It proved a vicious circle—the prospect that they could always amass greater power than their rivals in their bid for the reigns of government was from now on constantly to kindle the struggle between them. Abū Bakr soon realized that his only chances of attaining effective power lay in repealing the changes his father had wrought in Mamluk training and advancement, and in a return to the traditional ways of his grandfather, al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn: "He was determined not to change the rules laid down by his grandfather al-Manṣūr, and to abrogate the changes made by his father . . . [*kāna fī 'azmihi an lā yughayyira qā'ida min qawā'id jaddihi al-Manṣūr wa-yubṭila mā kāna abīhi aḥdathahu*]."218 In fact, Abū Bakr intended to reintroduce the traditional concept of master-mamluk loyalty. This venture, like the

²¹⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 485; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 141.

²¹⁷ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 68, 103–104; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 143; *Durar*, 3, p. 342; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 522; al-Yūsufi, p. 205.

²¹⁸ *Uyūn*, fol. 59a; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 252; *Durar*, 1, p. 495; *Manhal*, 1928, fol. 490a; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 18.

attempts of Yalbughā al-‘Umārī and Barqūq which came later, was doomed from the start, only revealing even more glaringly the gap which now existed between traditional Mamluk concepts and the new Mamluk norms of conduct—a gap which could no longer be bridged.

CHAPTER THREE

CHANGING SOCIAL PATTERNS AND POLITICAL CONCEPTS

They are traitors, for they have already betrayed their master (. . .) for a paltry sum after he had sheltered them with his benevolence for a long time.
(Al-Jawharī, 1, p. 50)

Ceaseless Power Struggles

Immediately after the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, even though Abū Bakr's rise to the sultanate had been formally dictated by his father's will, the senior amirs embarked on a struggle for power in order to gain effective control of the sultanate. This struggle was primarily between Qawṣūn, who supported Abū Bakr, and Bashtāk, who rejected the dictates of the will and supported the bid for power of another son of al-Nāṣir, Aḥmad.¹ Qawṣūn soon defeated Bashtāk and started to pave his way to the sultanate.² After only fifty-nine days in power, Abū Bakr was ousted and exiled to Qūṣ—where he was later murdered—and Qawṣūn replaced him by yet another son of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, the six year-old al-Ashraf Kujuk.³

Putting a minor on the throne left Qawṣūn in unchallenged control over the affairs of government.⁴ For his ultimate bid for the sultanate he needed the support of the army and thus he began bestowing generous gifts and grants upon amirs as well as rank-and-file mamluks.⁵ However, Qawṣūn failed to unite under his flag not only the army but even, more significantly, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's Sultani Mamluks, even though they were in fact Qawṣūn's

¹ *Durar*, 3, p. 370; *Manhal*, 2, p. 11; *Bidāya*, 14, p. 190; Ibn al-Wardī, p. 468; Abū al-Fidā', 4, p. 135; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 3, 5–6, 7–8, 17–18, 19–20.

² Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 130–131; *Sulūk* 2, pp. 560–562.

³ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 139, 141, 160; *Wāfi*, 10, p. 251; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 570, 613; *al-Jawhar al-thamin*, fols. 150b–151a; *Durar*, 1, p. 495; 3, pp. 351–352; al-ṣafadī, fol. 107a; *Dhuyūl al-ibar*, 17, p. 226.

⁴ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 139, 141, 160–161; al-Ṣafadī, fol. 107a; *Dhuyūl al-ibar*, 17, pp. 226, 227.

⁵ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 142–143, 161, 220, 222; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 572, 580, 583, 586.

khushdāshes. Ostensibly, Qawṣūn had the necessary military, economic and political power to rally the Sultani Mamluks to his cause—he had seven hundred mamluks of his own, the army initially supported him, he was independently wealthy and, moreover, had the state treasury at his disposal, and he held the formal office of *nā'ib al-salṭana* which, in the absence of a sultan with any effective power, accorded him wide governing powers.⁶ Six out of the seven amirs who had gained power from the beginning of the Mamluk state to the rise of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad—Aybak, Quṭuz, Qalāwūn, Kitbughā, Lājīn and Baybars al-Jāshinkīr⁷—had enjoyed conditions similar to Qawṣūn's. Prior to their rise to power, they, too, had managed the affairs of state to all intents and purposes by reason of the formal offices they held, as *atābakiyya* and *ustādāriyya*, and by virtue of the fact that they controlled the treasury and part of the army. Their rise to power was assured when the majority of the army's factions pledged their loyalty.

That Qawṣūn nevertheless failed to seize the sultanate points to the changes that meanwhile had occurred in Mamluk concepts of intra- and interfactional consolidation. Prior to their rise to power, the sultans mentioned above could still negotiate with Mamluk factions which had undergone traditional Mamluk military training, i.e., mamluks imbued with *khushdāshiyya*, who acknowledged the authority of government and the diligent loyalty they owed their chosen leaders. Such Mamluk cohesion and solidarity were clearly manifest in the relations between Sultan Baybars and his colleagues, *khushdāshes*,⁸ and those between Sultan Qalāwūn and his own *khushdāshes* and Baybars's mamluks.⁹ When Qawṣūn made his bid for power, however, the gap between Mamluk ideal and reality had already widened sharply. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had left behind an army permeated with an overall sense of indifference towards traditional Mamluk strictures—claims from their master now went beyond all accepted bounds and often impelled the mamluks, at best, to put his authority to the test or, at worst, to breach their

⁶ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 141, 159, 183, 184; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 568, 569, 570–571, 572–573, 574; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 40.

⁷ In this list Baydarā was not included among the Mamluk sultans because he reigned for only one day and his rule was not commonly accepted by the army.

⁸ *Zubda*, fol. 43a; al-Yūnīni, 2, p. 2.

⁹ *Zubda*, fols. 90a–b, 159b; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, pp. 18, 74, 150, 168; *Sirat al-Zāhir*, pp. 33, 73, 74, 79, 96.

fealty to him. In his fervour to safeguard his rule from his opponents, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had more or less condoned the latter practice, together with the ensuing rampant opportunism—to one of Tankiz's own mamluks, Qirmishi, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had promised a position in return for his help in getting rid of his master, and similarly to the first man who had come and informed him of Tankiz's demise.¹⁰

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's mamluks, most of whom served in the Sultani Mamluks of his son Abū Bakr, already displayed such a large measure of fickleness in their loyalty that they are found to sell their support to the highest bidder. Thus, when he decided to oust Abū Bakr, Qawṣūn could simply buy their loyalty, "making them many promises".¹¹ When Amir Ṭuquzdamur, who was *nā'ib al-salṭana*, confronted them with the shamefulness of this traitorous act against their master, they claimed, "We have no master other than Qawṣūn [*mā lanā ustādh ghayr Qawṣūn*]. The son of our master ignores us, he does not acknowledge us".¹² This, however, did not prevent these same mamluks from open mutiny against Qawṣūn only two months later, on 16 Rabī' al-Ākhir 742/29 September 1341, allegedly in protest of the immoral demands Qawṣūn would make on some of them, saying, "We are the mamluks of the sultan (al-Nāṣir Muḥammad), his property; how can we abandon the son of our master and serve another . . .?"¹³ In actual fact, their claims, as they had been already under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, were almost exclusively material.¹⁴ Qawṣūn was quick to pick up on the hint and, even though he brutally suppressed their mutiny, when soon thereafter he inspected the Sultani Mamluks in their barracks, *al-tibāq*, he made full use of the occasion: "Two hundred of these mamluks were granted *iqṭā'āt* with large incomes, amirates were granted to a group of them and Qawṣūn outdid himself in looking after their well-being and in the number of grants he gave them [*wa-akthara Qawṣūn min al-iḥsān ilayhim wa-l-in'ām 'alayhim*"].¹⁵

By yielding to the claims of the mamluks, Qawṣūn soon found himself within a vicious circle which forced him to pay an ever

¹⁰ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 77, 78, 85.

¹¹ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 567-568; al-Shujā'ī, pp. 136, 137.

¹² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 569.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 575; al-Shujā'ī, pp. 149-150; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 25-26.

¹⁴ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 149-150; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 29-30.

¹⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 577, also p. 580; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 28.

increasing price for support which became progressively fragile. This was borne out, e.g., when Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri set out from Egypt at the head of an army to protect Qawṣūn's interests from an alliance that had been formed between Aḥmad, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's son who was at Karak, and some of the *nuwwāb* from the Syrian provinces, led by Ṭashtamūr Ḥummūṣ Akhḍar, *nā'ib* of Aleppo.¹⁶ Despite the many grants he had received, Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri abused the trust Qawṣūn had placed in him and joined Aḥmad's camp.¹⁷ In a letter calling upon Qawṣūn to accept the majority decision and recognize Aḥmad's sultanate, Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri made clear that the main source of Qawṣūn's weakness was the capriciousness of the mamluks: "And you are alone with this band [*bi-hādhihi al-shirdhima al-yasīra*] and they will be of no assistance to you in the hour of your need, they will desert you and join us . . .".¹⁸ To Qawṣūn, Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri's words at first appeared pure bluff, for he had close to twenty thousand cavalymen in Egypt and Syria under the command of Aṭṭunbughā al-Sāliḥi, *nā'ib* of Damascus, on which he could rely, while Aḥmad had only a little over two thousand.¹⁹ However, Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri bribed Aṭṭunbughā al-Sāliḥi's mamluks prior to the battle so that, when the two camps faced each other, Aṭṭunbughā's mamluks deserted their master and brought about his defeat, Aṭṭunbughā himself and a group of his closest amirs only just managing to escape with their lives.²⁰

Following the defeat of Aṭṭunbughā al-Sāliḥi, the threat to Qawṣūn appeared more real, but the arrival in Egypt of Aṭṭunbughā and the remnants of his force again strengthened his position. To Qawṣūn the situation seemed to offer a good enough opportunity to seize power. First, he sent grants to Aṭṭunbughā al-Sāliḥi when he was still on his way to Cairo, and then directed his efforts towards the amirs and mamluks in the city,²¹ generously granting them amirates and *iqṭā'āt* and distributing grants to the value of 600,000 dinars from the treasury.²² But the senior amirs who supported him, such

¹⁶ Al-Shujā'i, pp. 161–165; *Bidāya*, 14, p. 194; Abū al-Fidā', 4, p. 135; *Dhuyūl al-ṣībar*, 17, p. 227.

¹⁷ Al-Shujā'i, pp. 156, 159, 161; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 581; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 33.

¹⁸ Al-Shujā'i, p. 175.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 159, 164–165, 177; *Bidāya*, 14, p. 195.

²⁰ Al-Shujā'i, pp. 171, 179, 180, 181; *Bidāya*, 14, pp. 195–197; Ibn al-Wardī, pp. 471–472; *Uyūn*, fol. 56a; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 583–585.

²¹ Al-Shujā'i, p. 281; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 586; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 37–38.

²² Al-Shujā'i, pp. 174–175; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 586–587.

as Aydughmish, his associate in running the affairs of state, and Āl Malik and Barsbughā, by now understood “that he wanted to be sultan”.²³ Fearing “his arbitrariness in the sultanate [*tahakkumihi fi al-salṭana*]”,²⁴ they decided to break the life-and-death oath of fealty they had made to him and deserted his camp, taking with them a large number of the Sultani Mamluks.²⁵ The irony of the situation was such that even Qawṣūn’s *amir ākhūr*, in return for certain promises, collaborated with Aydughmish, who needed him to make sure that Qawṣūn would not find his horses ready for battle when the amirs rose against him. The following day the now totally isolated Qawṣūn was defeated.²⁶

Even more than the way in which Qawṣūn tried to reach the sultanate, it was his swift decline that exemplified the changed situation which prevailed following al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death. Even though many of the amirs had the economic, military, and political power to make a bid for the sultanate—power they had accumulated both during and after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s rule when they were the actual rulers, manipulating puppet sultans from the house of Qalāwūn²⁷—they were unable to realize their political ambitions because their power was offset by their increasing dependence on the rank-and-file mamluks. There were two contrary reasons for this dependence. First, there were the misgivings of the amirs regarding the loyalty of their own mamluks, not to mention those of their peers who chose to join their faction; and second, there was the exploitation of the prevailing Mamluk corruption by the amirs for their own ends.

Mamluk Loyalty Discredited

Already before the Qawṣūn episode, Mamluk loyalty was no longer a foregone conclusion. During al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign, the amirs

²³ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 587.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 587; *al-Shujā’i*, p. 186; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 38.

²⁵ *Al-Shujā’i*, pp. 171, 182–183.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 186–187, 189–190; *Ibn al-Wardī*, p. 472; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 587–591; *al-Jawhar al-thamin*, fols. 151b, 153a.

²⁷ *Al-Shujā’i*, pp. 130–131, 183, 184, 222, 225; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 159, 175; 11, pp. 155, 156; *Wāfi*, 8, pp. 353–354, 355; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 567, 606, 653, 672, 685, 689, 690, 694, 720, 721, 735, 736–737, 738, 743, 749, 750, 822, 842, 860, 862, 890, 895; 3, pp. 119, 122, 213, 309, 310, 331, 346, 386, 402, 412; *Durar*, 1, pp. 231, 373; 2, pp. 294, 305; 3, pp. 335, 342, 343; 5, pp. 213; *Manhal* 2, p. 461; 2070, fol. 173b; *al-Qalqashandī*, 4, pp. 60–63; *al-Jawhari*, 1, p. 36; *Ibn Iyās*, 1, 205.

had begun emulating the sultan in the way they purchased, trained and advanced their mamluks²⁸ so that the typical characteristics of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's mamluks soon also pertained to those of the amirs. These mamluks took advantage of the permissive attitude of their masters and succeeded in amassing a good deal of wealth. An indication of this is the daily amount of fodder allotted to the mamluks: "One of his (al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's) amirs had a favourite [*ḥazī*] mamluk who received eighty portions of fodder [*alīqa*] each day, and another amir had a favourite mamluk who received forty portions of fodder each day".²⁹ Like al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, the amirs now found themselves bound by new Mamluk norms of conduct they themselves had helped create, recognizing that in order to guarantee their loyalty they had to fulfill the mamluks' demands. Thus, they started on a road of no return: the more the amirs yielded to the demands of the mamluks, the higher the aspirations of the latter grew. The upshot of the process was that the amirs as well as the sultans could no longer automatically count on the loyalty of their own mamluks. For example, Sultan Aḥmad (742/1341) knew full well that the fidelity of his mamluks was due only to "... a hope that if he gained power he would award them amirates and grants".³⁰ Thus he was more or less a prisoner of their demands and knew that if he did not conduct himself according to their dictates, they would betray him. During his second period of rule (755–762/1354–1361), Sultan al-Nāṣir Ḥasan chose to advance the sons of mamluks rather than the mamluks he had purchased and trained himself: "And his objective was to foster the sons of mamluks...for he used to say, I have never heard anyone say that the son of a mamluk would betray [*khāmara*] [his master] . . .".³¹

It did not take long for extortion and even violence to become part of the accepted methods whereby mamluks sought to achieve their objectives. In 746/1345, one hundred mamluks returned their *iqtā'āt* in protest at their small size, and the officer in charge of discipline was unable to hold them in check. The amirs reached a

²⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 525.

²⁹ *Ibid.* For further examples of amirs who awarded the mamluks exaggerated grants, see al-Shujā'ī, pp. 222–223, 276; Wāfī, 9, p. 371; 10, p. 299; *Sulūk*, 2, 561; *Manhal*, 2072, fol. 38a; *Nujūm*, 9, 108.

³⁰ Al-Shujā'ī, p. 200.

³¹ *Al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fol. 166b.

compromise with the mamluks and decided to let this act go unpunished.³² On 8 Sha'bān 758/28 July 1357, Quṭlūbughā fatally wounded Amir Shaykhū at *dār al-'adl* because Shaykhū had refused to change his status from that of a monthly-salaried mamluk to that of a mamluk holding an *iqṭā'*.³³ Mamluk threats on the lives of amirs and amirs being held hostage by mamluks until their demands were met became accepted ways of settling disputes between the amir class and the rank-and-file mamluks. The following are some of the more glaring examples.

On 6 Ṣafar 769/2 October 1367, the Yalbughāwiyya Mamluks gathered and demanded from Asandamur al-Nāṣiri that he hand over a certain number of amirs. At that time, Asandamur was managing the affairs of state with the backing of Mamluk colleagues who had rebelled against and murdered their master, Yalbughā al-'Umari. Asandamur "had no choice but to summon the amirs [demanded by the mamluks]",³⁴ whom he promptly imprisoned. However, the mamluks would not lay down their arms until the following day when Asandamur acceded to their demands that Amir Khalīl Ibn Qawṣūn be handed over to them. They only released Khalīl after subjecting him to harsh humiliation and the payment of ransom.³⁵

In 778/1376, Amirs Ṭashtamur al-Laffāf, Qaraṭāy, Aynabak and Asandamur al-Ṣarghitmishī, who until recently had themselves been rank-and-file mamluks, bought the support of three thousand Sultani Mamluks, mamluks from the ranks of the sultan's sons and the amirs, and currently unemployed mamluks for the sum of five hundred dinars per head, for the rebellion against al-Ashraf Sha'bān.³⁶ Following the success of the rebellion, when the mamluks came to collect their due, the amirs were unable to keep their word and decided to pay each mamluk the sum of only one hundred dinars. In protest the mamluks gathered on 13 Dhū al-Qa'da 778/25 March 1376 and took Ṭashtamur al-Laffāf prisoner, threatening to kill him if their demands were not met. Thereupon Qaraṭāy promised them he would meet their demands, thus obtaining the release of Ṭashtamur.

³² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 685; on the mamluks' unrestrained behaviour, see *ibid.*, pp. 568–569, 703–704, 860; 3, p. 279.

³³ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 33–34; *Durar*, 2, p. 294; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 163b–164a; *Dhuyūl al-'ibar*, 17, p. 214.

³⁴ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 150.

³⁵ *Ibid.*; *Durar*, 1, p. 413.

³⁶ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 275, 278, 287, 288.

The amirs themselves were not above using threats in order to have their demands met. In order to meet the mamluks' demands they turned on one occasion to the director of the orphan's fund and threatened to rob the fund by force if he did not give them the loan they required. Needless to say, such loans, once given, were never returned. Money was also extorted from office-holders and merchants.³⁷ About a year later, in Dhū al-Ḥijja 779/April 1378, Amirs Barqūq and Baraka, who also had a hand in managing the affairs of the state, demanded from the *atābak*, Ṭashtamur al-Dawādār, that he relieve Kumushbughā, who was his *ra's nawba*, of his duties. Ṭashtamur was inclined to give in and hand Kumushbughā over to them, but his own mamluks prevented him from doing so by putting his home under siege and threatening his life. They furthermore demanded that he defend Kumushbughā. Fearful of his mamluks, Ṭashtamur asked them to disperse after promising that he would do as they asked. Instead he hid himself in his palace. The mamluks did not give up and set out to fight against Barqūq and Baraka on their own. Although they came out of this particular confrontation as losers and their master was forced to hand himself over to his rivals, the incident shows the faintheartedness displayed by the amirs when confronted by threats of their own mamluks.³⁸

If already the amirs might have wished to turn the clock back to the days when the mamluks' loyalty to their masters and group solidarity were unassailable, they could only have done so by re-introducing the traditional training and advancement norms that had been in force during the rule of Baybars and Qalāwūn. These, however, were now in obvious conflict with the urgency with which they needed to build up the strength of their Mamluk forces in order to protect their current positions and to enable them to attain their political objectives.³⁹ Following the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, only two attempts were made till the end of the century at reforming this situation by educational means, one by Yalbughā al-ʿUmari and the other by Sultan Barqūq. Both were unsuccessful.

Yalbughā al-ʿUmari ruled between 762–768/1360–1366 behind the Qalawuni sultan and exploited his position to the full to build up his own Mamluk force to at least fifteen hundred cavalrymen.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3, pp. 290–291, 295.

³⁸ *Inbāʿ*, 1, p. 236. For similar incidents, see *Durar*, 1, p. 413; *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 139, 141, 152, 276.

³⁹ *Nujūm*, 10, p. 316.

He elected to counter their demands by harsh measures much reminiscent of the severe educational methods used by the first Mamluk sultans.⁴⁰ At one stage, his mamluks organized to protest to the *ru'ūs al-nuwab* about the harsh and inconsiderate treatment that was their lot. They informed their amirs that they would murder not only their own master but also anyone who did not go along with their chosen course of action. Their senior colleagues urged a stay so that they could plead with Yalbughā al-'Umarī and convince him to ameliorate his treatment of the mamluks. When Yalbughā not only rejected their pleas but vowed to flog several of his mamluks in public as an example to the others,⁴¹ his response so angered them that from the most lowly to the most senior they all rose against him and after his capture murdered him in the cruellest manner possible, brutalizing his corpse.⁴²

In their description of the rebellion against Yalbughā al-'Umarī, the sources say that "... Amir Yalbughā ... has become a miser and his virtues have become vices [... *kāna al-amir Yalbughā ... qad shahhat nafsuhu wa-sā'at akhlāquhu ...*]",⁴³ the use of the verbs "*kāna ... qad shahhat wa-sā'at*" indicating the change in Yalbughā al-'Umarī's attitude. They tell us that Yalbughā's mamluks amply complained of his crass attitude towards them, the humiliations they suffered at his hands, and the excessive punishments he meted out: "And his punishment of even the mildest transgression [*al-dhanb al-yasir*] was excessive".⁴⁴

The position of Yalbughā's mamluks was indeed not unsimilar to that of the trainee mamluk at the beginning of the Mamluk period, when instructors would keep a close eye on the trainees' conduct and punish them for even the slightest infringement of discipline: "And if one of the mamluk's instructors found ... that he had committed a transgression, or was disobedient, or had flouted a law of the Faith or a law of the world, he would punish him painfully and severely as befitting the crime [*qābalahu 'alā dhālika bi-'uqūba mu'lima shadīda bi-qadr jaramihi*]"⁴⁵ However, we know of no

⁴⁰ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 151.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁴² *Bidāya*, 14, p. 324; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 171b-172a; *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 130-137; *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 36-40.

⁴³ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 130.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 36.

⁴⁵ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 214; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 36.

protest by groups of mamluks during the rule of Baybars and Qalāwūn, let alone anything anywhere near the organized and incisive action of the Yalbughāwiyya against their master.⁴⁶ Some examples of organized protest by mamluks against their master can be found during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign, because of the permissive form of education they were now receiving and their subsequent audacity in speaking out against their masters.⁴⁷ By the time Yalbughā al-ʿUmarī tried to revert to the traditional harsh methods, his mamluks had already become too reliant on conditions of material permissiveness. Yalbughā's murder by his own mamluks, therefore, taught the amirs an unequivocal lesson: they would no longer again be able to turn to traditional educational methods if they wanted to change mamluk mentality and character since this would always be interpreted by the mamluks as a worsening of their conditions and provoke their protest, thus endangering the position of the amirs themselves.

Nevertheless, only fifteen years later Sultan Barqūq (784–801/1382–1399) made a second attempt to revert to the old ways. Ibn Taghrī Birdī points out that unlike his predecessors, Barqūq did not graduate two mamluk classes each year, but “would graduate one class of mamluks only after a long period of time, and after another long period, would graduate another. This was the procedure adopted by the first rulers [*ʿādat mulūk al-salaf*] . . . ”.⁴⁸ Thus it would appear that Barqūq to some extent had been successful in re-instituting traditional Mamluk training methods,⁴⁹ and that his mamluks in their military prowess could be expected to have been similar to those of Baybars and Qalāwūn, and in their solidarity with their masters and their peers, their *khushdāshiyya*, to have been more loyal than was the case before Barqūq rose to power. From the sources, however, a different picture arises.

Fifteenth-century mamluks were the subject of an uncompromising attack by Ibn Taghrī Birdī, who denounced them for lacking the military valour and talents which had enabled the mamluks of Qalāwūn's period to win many battles in the name of Islam. Called upon to show their courage on only one single occasion, they had disgraced themselves by fleeing in the face of the enemy without

⁴⁶ *Nujūm*, 11, p. 40; *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 136–137.

⁴⁷ See above, pp. 62–65.

⁴⁸ *Nujūm*, 14, p. 199.

⁴⁹ Ayalon, “l'Esclavage”, p. 52, Note 136.

even having made contact, thus leaving the country and its inhabitants to the mercy of Timurlang's bloodthirsty forces.⁵⁰ Ibn Taghrī Birdī is here referring to Timurlang's conquest of Syria in 803/1401.⁵¹ The majority of the mamluks and amirs who had taken part in that battle under the flag of Sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj had belonged to his father, Sultan Barqūq,⁵² and had been trained, according to Ibn Taghrī Birdī, along the lines set out by the early sultans.

When we examine the circumstances which led to the "flight" of these mamluks we find a situation which was somewhat more complex, i.e., Sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj's forces had not been routed by Timurlang—the Mamluks had won the first and second battles—but had been forced to return to Egypt to put down a rebellion fomented by some of the amirs and mamluks. The rebels had absconded the day after the second battle, 12 Jumādā al-Ākhira 803/29 January 1401, in order to get to Cairo while the sultan was absent from the city to put a mamluk from their ranks, al-Shaykh Lājīn al-Jarkasī, on the throne. Al-Nāṣir Faraj left the battlefield to pursue the rebels with whom he caught up in Damascus.⁵³ In order to hold on to his rule, he tried to remove part of the Sultani Mamluks who had supported the rebellion to Syria and orders were given to award them amirates in that country. As a result, about a thousand mamluks gathered at the foot of the Citadel in Cairo and protested against the orders. They beat up a mamluk and the two amirs, Āqbughā and Quṭlūbughā, who had been sent to negotiate with them. They then dug in and demanded that their opponents from among the amirs who ran the country at that time, like Yashbak, Jakam, and others, be handed over. Amir Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓī, who was part of the sultan's peace delegation to the mamluks, was taken hostage until their demands were met. The rebellion petered out only when the amirs demanded by the mamluks were imprisoned and the senior posts given instead to their leaders.⁵⁴ During the

⁵⁰ *Nujūm*, 7, p. 328; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 216b–271a; *al-Jawharī*, 2, pp. 87, 94.

⁵¹ For Timurlang's conquest of Damascus, see *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 1046–1051; *al-Jawharī*, 2, pp. 87–95; *Ibn Iyās*, 1, pp. 331–335.

⁵² *Nujūm*, 12, pp. 180–181, 184, 187; *Sulūk*, 3, p. 1062.

⁵³ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 1044–1045; *Nujūm*, 12, p. 236; 13, pp. 27, 158; *Inbāʿ*, 4, pp. 200–201; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 215b–216a; *al-Jawharī*, 2, pp. 84–87; *Ibn Iyās*, 1, p. 330.

⁵⁴ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 1060–1063, 1065; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 217b–218b; *al-Jawharī*, 2, pp. 107–114; *Ibn Iyās*, 1, pp. 335–337.

rebellion some of the mamluks were prepared to change their allegiance for money: Yashbak tried to divide the rebel camp by proposing, "a mamluk who fights at my side will receive ten thousand dirhams. A group (of mamluks) then joined him".⁵⁵ More than anything, the behaviour of the Sultani Mamluks in this rebellion reveals some of their salient characteristics, in particular their demanding attitude and their ever shaky loyalty to their master and comrades.

Here the question arises to what extent the conduct of Barqūq's mamluks stemmed from the absence of authentic master-mamluk relations. Obviously, Barqūq's mamluks did not have the same measure of respect for his son because he had neither purchased nor trained them, but, if so, what were the relations that existed between these mamluks and Barqūq during his lifetime?

Even though he was most generous towards them, Barqūq's mamluks displayed a lack of loyalty towards him from the time he held the *atābakiyya* until his death. When he became *atābak al-ʿasākir* in 780/1378, Barqūq experienced the first attempt on his life, but managed to seize the plotters in time.⁵⁶ In 781/1379, some of his mamluks joined a second unsuccessful rebellion against him, led by Aynāl al-Yūsufī.⁵⁷ In Shaʿbān 784/November 1382, about a month before he rose to power, his mamluks, together with the mamluks of the *asyād* (the sultans' sons), made another attempt on his life.⁵⁸ Thereafter, Barqūq actually lived in constant fear of his life: "After they had been imprisoned, *atābak* Barqūq lived in great fear and guarded his life with every means at his disposal from his own, and other, mamluks".⁵⁹ In 786/1384, eight mamluks accused of attempting to murder Barqūq were exiled to Syria.⁶⁰ In 791/1388, Barqūq faced a rebellion in Syria led by his colleague, Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī, and despite the fact that he led a force of some two thousand of his own mamluks and the rival camp was fragmented, Barqūq was ousted from rule for a short period.⁶¹ From the outbreak of the rebellion until he was defeated and ousted, Barqūq was highly generous in the way he disbursed grants so as to guar-

⁵⁵ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 1063.

⁵⁶ *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 165–166.

⁵⁷ Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, p. 9; *Sulūk*, 3, p. 365; *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 167–168.

⁵⁸ *Inbāʿ*, 2, p. 94; *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 212–213; Ibn Iyās, 1, p. 257.

⁵⁹ *Nujūm*, 11, p. 214.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁶¹ *Manhal*, 3, 308.

antee the loyalty of mamluks and amirs in his service,⁶² but nevertheless a steady stream of amirs and mamluks abandoned him for Yalbughā al-Nāṣiri. The most surprising of these defectors was Qarādamurdāsh al-Muḥammadī, who was *atābak al-‘asākir* at the time. Just before he decided to desert from Barqūq’s camp he had received the sum of thirty thousand dinars, three times the amount of the grant given to the other commanders of one thousand, and had then promised Barqūq: “My soul will be your sacrifice; do not fear, for while I am at your side you are in safe hands [*rūḥī fidāka lā takhaf mā dumtu anā wāqif fī khidmatika anta āmin*]”. Immediately afterwards, he left the Citadel, cut off its water supply, and joined al-Nāṣiri’s camp.⁶³

Signs of disloyalty were already evident at the beginning of Yalbughā al-Nāṣiri’s rebellion, not only among the Sultani Mamluks but also among the *kuttābiyya* mamluks, who were still undergoing training. After he learned that mutiny was rife because they had not been included in the list of those to be awarded grants (*nafaqa*), Barqūq was forced to grant two hundred dirhams to each of them.⁶⁴ Barqūq’s own assessment, furthermore, of his mamluks’ loyalty is highly instructive. Those mamluks who had remained with Barqūq until Yalbughā al-Nāṣiri’s army reached the Citadel gates tried to convince him not to give himself up by saying, “We shall fight to the death for you. Then give yourself up.” Barqūq “was not persuaded that they would do so, but he thanked them all the same.”⁶⁵

Even after Barqūq had returned to power the following year (792/1389) and by ridding himself of his enemies had come to enjoy a stable power base, he could not be assured of his mamluks’ loyalty, as shown in ‘Alī Bāy’s abortive rebellion in 800/1398. This rebellion was quickly put down after news of this senior amir’s intention of killing him reached Barqūq’s ears. ‘Alī Bāy was captured, on 19 Dhū al-Qa‘da 800/9 May 1398, and interrogated in order to find out who his fellow-conspirators were. Despite the torture inflicted

⁶² *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 261, 267, 268, 276, 278; *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 594, 600, 601, 602, 608, 609–610; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 194a–b.

⁶³ *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 267, 268, 276, 279, 289, 281, 282; *al-Jawhar al-Thamīn*, fols. 194a–195a; Ibn Qāḍi Shuhba, pp. 275–276; *al-Jawhari*, 1, pp. 204–205, 208–210; Ibn al-Furāt, 9, pp. 78, 83, 86, 87; Ibn Iyās, 1, p. 273.

⁶⁴ Ibn al-Furāt, 9, p. 67; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 267; *Manhal*, 3, p. 301. The *kuttābiyya* mamluks were not entitled to *nafaqa* as this was only awarded to soldiers preparing for war.

⁶⁵ *Nujūm*, 11, p. 284; see also Ibn al-Furāt, 9, p. 143.

upon him—to which he in the end succumbed—he did not implicate a soul, yet “from that time, relations between the sultan and his mamluks became strained [*fasada amr al-sultān*]”,⁶⁶ since the amirs obviously were worried that under torture ‘Alī Bāy might yet have given away some of their number. Two days later, on 21 Dhū al-Qa‘da/11 May, another attempt on Barqūq’s life was made by his mamluks when they broke in through Bāb al-Sirr and attacked him while he was on his way to the palace. As soon as he had imprisoned the suspected amirs, on 24 Dhū al-Qa‘da/14 May, Barqūq tried to appease the Sultani Mamluks with grants. He awarded each of them six hundred dirhams but “they were not satisfied with this”.⁶⁷ He then went out to meet them in order to persuade them to accept it. In line with his lenient approach, Barqūq punished only a few of his mamluks publicly, yet he found it difficult to assuage their agitation against him and rumours of another rebellion remained rife.⁶⁸

This latter assassination attempt and Barqūq’s response to it are reminiscent of the protest demonstration al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s mamluks staged in 721/1321. Like al-Nāṣir’s mamluks, those of Barqūq organized a protest against the backdrop of financial demands, and in both cases the protesters gathered in front of the palace, which was in direct contravention of accepted court practice. Barqūq, like al-Nāṣir Muḥammad before him, approached his mamluks without keeping any form of distance between himself and them, and went even further by breaking down in tears, forcing them to weep with him, in his efforts to persuade them to accept the grant he had offered. Even if Barqūq’s tears were crocodile tears, he had lowered himself to the level of his mamluks, and while the episode itself came to a peaceful conclusion, Barqūq’s relations with his mamluks thereafter only continued to worsen.⁶⁹ On the feast of ‘Īd al-Aḍḥā, Barqūq did not participate in prayers at the hippodrome, al-Maydān, as was his custom, but prayed instead in the Citadel mosque.⁷⁰ In another assassination attempt, Barqūq

⁶⁶ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 907; *Nujūm*, 12, p. 88; al-Jawhari, 1, pp. 469–470; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fol. 205b.

⁶⁷ *Inbā’*, 3, pp. 392–393.

⁶⁸ *Nujūm*, 12, pp. 101, 188; *Sulūk*, 3, p. 907; *Inbā’*, 3, pp. 392–393.

⁶⁹ When, in 794/1391, Barqūq’s mamluks led an unruly protest because of a delay in the distribution of grants and clothes, not only were they not punished but their demands were fully met; cf. *Inbā’*, 3, pp. 114–115; Ibn Īyas, 1, 297.

⁷⁰ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 909.

cunningly managed to get rid of the attempt's planner, Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓī. Nawrūz had tried to exploit the wave of resentment which prevailed among the mamluks in order to get their support for the assassination. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī characterizes Nawrūz's attempt as an act of ingratitude towards Barqūq, who had actually promoted him rapidly: "And the sultan awarded him an amirate, promoted him, and made him *amīr ākhūr*, and he wanted to kill the sultan."⁷¹ Though the amirs had not rejected Nawrūz's assassination plan out of hand, they had advised him to shelve it until Barqūq's deteriorating health situation had become clearer: "If he dies, he (Nawrūz) will achieve his objectives [*ḥaṣala lahu al-qaṣd*] without effort or underhand actions, and if he recovers from his illness, then he should do as he wishes."⁷² Shortly before his death on 15 Shawwāl 801/20 June 1399, tension between Barqūq and his mamluks had become so great that the mamluks could exploit it for settling accounts among themselves by simply trying to smear on their colleagues a charge of attempted rebellion. Barqūq, by then already too weak to sit in judgement over them and punish the alleged offenders, simply handed them over to their opponents for interrogation and punishment.⁷³

The parallels between the conduct of the Zāhiri Mamluks towards their master, al-Zāhir Barqūq, and that of the Naṣiri Mamluks towards al-Nāṣir Muḥammad would seem to prove that they were educated and advanced in much the same way. Conclusive evidence of this can be found in the biographies of some of Barqūq's amirs, whereby Jaribāsh al-Zāhiri is the exception that proves the rule. On 12 Ṣafar 801/24 October 1398, when Barqūq imprisoned Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓī, he also imprisoned Jaribāsh al-Zāhiri while asking him, "Why do you wish to kill me, for am I not your master?"⁷⁴ Jaribāsh, not seeming to be particularly overawed by Barqūq's question, replied that he had wanted to do so because in comparison with the amirs close to Barqūq he felt he had been discriminated against. Jaribāsh's insolent response to Barqūq reveals that the distance and respect traditionally shown by the amirs to their master had by now entirely evaporated. It was also indicative of

⁷¹ *Inbāʿ*, 4, pp. 5–6.

⁷² *Nujūm*, 12, p. 93; *Sulūk*, 3, p. 919.

⁷³ *Nujūm*, 12, p. 95.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29. For the transliteration of Jaribāsh, see *al-Dalil al-shāfi*, 1, p. 242.

the military norms current during Barqūq's rule—Jaribāsh could not have uttered his dissatisfaction so bluntly had he not been convinced that his cause was just. In other words, during Barqūq's rule rapid advancement had been the accepted norm.⁷⁵

Several examples of rapid advancement of Barqūq's amirs, most of which occurred during the period following his return to power in 792/1389, verify this. It was said of Amir 'Alī Bāy, who rebelled against Barqūq: "And al-Malik al-Zāhir promoted him and made him commander of one thousand, and in most matters he was advanced before his colleagues."⁷⁶ Amir Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓi was first promoted to the *khāṣṣakiyya*, advanced to the post of *ra's nawba* in 797/1394, and was then awarded the rank of commander of one thousand. In 800/1397, he was appointed *amīr ākhūr*, and a year later was imprisoned for the major part he played in the rebellion against his master.⁷⁷

Barqūq awarded the rank of amir of forty to Julbān al-Kumushbughāwī al-Zāhiri during Yalbughā al-Nāṣiri's rebellion of 791/1388, and on his return to power in 792/1389 awarded him the rank of commander of one thousand and appointed him *ra's nawba kabīr*. When he was awarded the rank of commander of one thousand he was only twenty years of age, and a year later, in 793/1390, he was appointed *nā'ib* of Aleppo, a highly important office, as Miṭāsh, Barqūq's political rival, was active in the region.⁷⁸ But despite the senior position Barqūq had awarded him, Julbān's name was linked with the Bedouin rebellion in Syria (797/1394) and 'Alī Bāy's rebellion in Egypt (801/1398). During Barqūq's second period of rule, Julbān was twice imprisoned for his part in these uprisings.⁷⁹

In 792/1389, also after Barqūq's return to power, Āqbughā al-Ṭulūtamurī al-Zāhiri was already one of the Zāhiri amirs. He was awarded the rank of commander of one thousand by Barqūq in 796/1393. In 800/1397, he was appointed *amīr majlis* and in 801/1398 he was among the conspirators who plotted with Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓi to kill the sultan.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ For a hint of this norm, see *Nujūm*, 11, p. 292.

⁷⁶ *Inbā'*, 3, p. 386; for his special path of training and rapid advancement, see al-Jawhari, 1, p. 470.

⁷⁷ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 827, 919; *Daw'*, 10, p. 204; *Inbā'*, 7, p. 163; al-Jawhari, 2, p. 345.

⁷⁸ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 605, 711; al-Jawhari, 2, p. 65. *Nujūm*, 12, pp. 14–15.

⁷⁹ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 818, 825, 871, 931; *Nujūm*, 13, pp. 14–15.

⁸⁰ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 700, 815, 894, 919; *Manhal*, 2, pp. 482–483; for further ex-

Rapid advancement was not Barqūq's only deviation from the traditional Mamluk norms established during the rule of Baybars and Qalāwūn. There is evidence that he shortened his mamluks' training period. For example, Baybars al-Zāhiri, known as al-Maliḥ, and Jaqmaq, who later became sultan, "were two youths who were promoted to the *khāṣṣakiyya* after only a short time [*ba'da mudda yasira*"]".⁸¹ Advancement not based on military criteria existed during Barqūq's reign as it had during that of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, i.e., Barqūq awarded the most senior amirates to his confidants without them having undergone the accepted training period and advancement through the Mamluk ranks. Thus he awarded the rank of commander of one thousand in Egypt to one of his relations, Qijmās, who had not even learned yet even to recite the *shahāda*, in other words, immediately upon his arrival in Egypt.⁸² Barqūq's father, Amir Anaṣ, who arrived in Egypt as an adult (782/1380), underwent a ceremony of purchase and on the day of his arrival was awarded the rank of commander of one thousand.⁸³ Barely one month old Barqūq's son was awarded the rank of commander of one thousand by his father, who at the time was *atābak al-'asākir*, and also all the *iqṭā'āt* of Amir Baraka, who had been Barqūq's collaborator and rival in managing the affairs of state.⁸⁴ In 800/1397, Baybars, Barqūq's cousin, was appointed *amīr majlis* with the rank of commander of one thousand.⁸⁵

Thus, when Ibn Taghrī Birdī claims that Barqūq reinstated traditional Mamluk training practices, he seems to some extent to contradict reality. Barqūq, Ibn Taghrī Birdī adds, "was a fervent supporter of upholding the customs of the kingdom, the ceremonies of the sultanate, and the customs of his predecessors, such as service in the court, the procession, and the festivals".⁸⁶ Actually we find Barqūq following two opposing trends, one which supported the traditional Mamluk training and advancement practices,

amples of rapid advancement, see *Manhal*, 3, pp. 375, 379; 4, pp. 168–169; *Inbā'*, 4, pp. 123, 161; *Nujūm*, 12, pp. 161–162, 163; 13, p. 16; *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 781, 783; *Ḍaw'*, 3, p. 44.

⁸¹ *Manhal*, 3, p. 484.

⁸² *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 51–52; *Inbā'*, 2, p. 94.

⁸³ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 403.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 380, 387.

⁸⁵ *Inbā'*, 3, p. 371; Ibn Iyās, 1, p. 308; Ibn Qāḍi Shuhba, p. 650. For further examples, see *Inbā'*, 3, pp. 72, 75.

⁸⁶ *Manhal*, 3, p. 337.

and another which promoted the rapid establishment of a powerful Mamluk military force. During his first period in power (784–791/1382–1388) Barqūq was unable to maintain his rule without satisfying the ambitions of the various Mamluk factions who were competing for power. He was therefore forced to dispense government and military honours to them while putting the advancement of his own mamluks in abeyance.⁸⁷ During the rebellion which was to topple him briefly from power in 791/1388, many of Barqūq's followers deserted him and he had no choice but to man the vacant posts with his own mamluks. Thus, for example, he awarded amirates to rank-and-file mamluks and even though they had no previous command and battle experience, sent them into battle as commanders.⁸⁸ On his return to power, one of the first things he did was to rid himself of the majority of his political opponents, leaving the way open for the advancement of his own mamluks. Indeed, he immediately "awarded the rank of commander of one thousand, amir of forty and amir of ten to a large group of amirs, and the affairs of the sultanate were on a better footing than during his first period of rule".⁸⁹ Moreover, in order to defend his rule successfully from further outbreaks of trouble such as the rebellions of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī and Mintāsh, Barqūq had to train and advance a Mamluk force of his own as rapidly as possible, thus reverting to the practices of his immediate predecessors.

At the beginning of the 15th century there was a third attempt to restore the Mamluk army, similar to that of Barqūq, by al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (815–824/1412–1421), but he was equally unsuccessful for his mamluks bore much the same characteristics as those of Barqūq's.⁹⁰

As the efforts of Yalbughā al-'Umārī, Barqūq, and al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh were the only ones of their kind in the eighty years following al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, it is clear that a return to the early Mamluk norms of training and advancement was no longer considered a practical solution to the problem of how to arrive at stable rule. Moreover, during the 15th century, it was the continuing spreading of professional and moral laxity in the Mamluk army

⁸⁷ See, e.g., on al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's training path, *Nujūm*, 14, pp. 1–2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11, p. 268.

⁸⁹ Ibn Iyās, 1, p. 291. Also see *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 214.

⁹⁰ *Nujūm*, 14, p. 112.

that was to complete the process of decline which had set in during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's rule.⁹¹

The training period for mamluks in the 15th century was very much shorter than it had been during the formation period of the Mamluk state. Sultan al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy rose to power on 8 Rajab 872/9 February 1468 and by Muḥarram 874/July 1469 had graduated the first course of mamluks he had purchased and trained—even if Qāyṭbāy had started training them immediately after assuming power, their training period could not have exceeded eighteen months.⁹²

With that, even the practical and ethical abilities the mamluks acquired during this period were far inferior. This is demonstrated by the fact that the mamluks remained largely unskilled even at the end of their military training. Amirs in the most senior posts in the Mamluk state, who should have been a shining example to the rank-and-file mamluks, the sources describe as being totally ignorant of the art of war. Taghri Birmish, who was *nā'ib al-salṭana* in Syria and later in Aleppo, was "a coward, usually showing his back in battle and fainthearted in the face of the enemy . . .". His mamluks "conducted themselves like their master [*kānū 'alā madhhab ustādhihim*]"⁹³ Yashbak al-Sūdūnī, who was *atābak al-'asākir* in Egypt, "lacked any knowledge and skill, but was good at archery even though his shooting had some minor flaws"⁹⁴ Bāyazīd al-Timurbughāwī, who was commander of one thousand in Egypt, was such a bad soldier that when he went on a mission for the sultan with other amirs, they would "leave him to guard their camp when they came across an enemy"⁹⁵

Recruitment of older men into the army, especially relatives of the sultan and senior amirs, also contributed to the low standards which came to characterize it during this period. It is extremely doubtful whether these people underwent any Mamluk military training at all—clearly their advancement to high rank and senior posts was not the result of military considerations. Thus, in 824/1421,

⁹¹ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 214; *Nujūm*, 7, pp. 329, 332; *Sulūk*, 4, pp. 1049, 1076–1077, 1091–1092, 1103; al-Jawhārī, 3, p. 416. Cf. Ayalon, "The Mamluk Army", No. 1, p. 211. For the contribution of the economic depression to the accumulative process of the decline of the Mamluk state, see below, Chapter 4.

⁹² Ibn Iyās, 2, pp. 91, 112.

⁹³ *Nujūm*, 15, pp. 293, 473.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 510.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28. For other examples, see also pp. 181, 477, 511, 521, 530, 532, 543; 16, p. 187.

Sultan Ṭaṭar awarded his brother-in-law Ḥasan Ibn Sūdūn al-Faqīh, who was the son of a simple mamluk, the rank of amir of forty and later made him commander of one thousand in Egypt.⁹⁶ Yashbak, brother of al-Ashraf Barsbāy, entered the army upon his arrival in Egypt and was immediately made amir of forty and later commander of one thousand.⁹⁷ Jānim al-Sharifi, a relative of Sultan Qaytbāy, was given only nominal military training and after only a very short time was awarded the rank of amir of ten and commander of one thousand immediately afterwards.⁹⁸

The sultan's mamluks, who in the past had been given the best of Mamluk training and were therefore assigned to the army's elite units, 15th-century sources describe as being rather incompetent soldiers. In 832/1428, the *juḷbān* or the *ajlāb* of al-Ashraf Barsbāy, mamluks he had purchased and trained, became involved in a scuffle with mamluks of the *atābak* Jarquṭlū, which soon developed into a pitched battle. Despite their numerical advantage, the sultan's mamluks were unable to hold their own against their opponents, "because of their unfamiliarity with battle and their lack of training and weapons [*li-'adam ma'rifatihim bi-l-ḥurūb wa-li-qillat darbatihim wa-silāḥihim*]"⁹⁹

Important, too, is that during this century the Mamluks never faced any serious external enemy threat, i.e., the only combat experience they ever had remained limited to the interfactional street fights that formed the backdrop of the struggle for rule, and battles against Bedouin inside the country and Turkomans on the northern Syrian border.¹⁰⁰ These latter experiences again revealed the mamluks' lack of military skills. The sources relate that when, in 836/1432, the mamluks suffered a bitter defeat at the hands of the Turkomans

⁹⁶ Ibid., 14, p. 209.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 15, p. 165.

⁹⁸ Ibn Iyās, 2, pp. 182, 187; for many other examples, see *Hawādith*, 2, pp. 352, 392, 461; *Nujūm*, 12, pp. 170, 187; 13, pp. 48–49, 121, 154, 156; 14, pp. 58, 74, 110, 172, 183, 208, 225, 259; 15, pp. 114, 116–117, 130–131, 165, 170–171, 218, 230, 263, 295; 16, pp. 63, 64, 129, 168, 264, 270, 275, 294, 332, 334; al-Jawhari, 2, pp. 489–490; 3, pp. 16, 226; *Iqd* (Qarmūt), pp. 189–190, 206, 299, 394, 469, 495, 513, 527; *Sulūk*, 4, pp. 1134, 1152–1153; Ibn Iyās, 2, pp. 104, 108, 124, 156, 160, 168, 171, 182, 186, 190, 198, 202, 203, 211, 226, 249, 260, 257, 280–281, 287, 292, 308, 320, 321, 324, 339, 340, 350, 351, 359; 3, pp. 25, 26, 70; Yashbak, p. 97.

⁹⁹ *Nujūm*, 14, pp. 328–329; for other examples, see *ibid.*, 15, pp. 236, 269; 16, p. 308; *Ḍaw'*, 3, p. 176; *Hawādith*, 2, p. 420.

¹⁰⁰ *Nujūm*, 14, pp. 371–372; 15, p. 28.

at Āmid, Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy saw himself forced to give them a severe tongue-lashing for the way they had comported themselves.¹⁰¹ When Amir Uzbek-Khujā furthermore told Barsbāy of the Turkomans' and Bedouins' military prowess: "Lord, these are soldiers that bring victory to the rulers, no others", the mamluks felt insulted by his words, and thereafter bore him a grudge "because he spoke the truth [*li-kawnihi takallama al-ḥaqq*]"¹⁰²

Moreover, on the eve of a battle the mamluks would first insist on their demands for material rewards from the sultan; they then did all they could to evade military expedition and when called upon to fight generally showed themselves to be cowards.¹⁰³ In 857/1453, during the battle against the rebellious Amir Īnāl, Sultan al-Manṣūr 'Uthmān was deserted by his mamluks even though they had a clear numerical advantage.¹⁰⁴ In the battle against the Ottomans at Marj Dābiq in 922/1516, the mamluks again showed the white feather, the most culpable being the sultan's *julbān*. While the veteran mamluks, who put up some resistance, fled from the battlefield incurring many casualties, very few of the *julbān* were killed because they "did not fight [at all] in this battle, did not display bravery [*furūsiyya*], and did not even draw their swords or brandish a lance, as though they were pieces of chopped wood stacked in a pile [*khashab musnada*]"¹⁰⁵

Exploiting Mamluk Corruption

After the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, not only did the opportunistic conduct of the rank-and-file mamluks become increasingly difficult to combat, the amirs themselves, because they took advantage of it to further their own ends, more or less acted to encourage it. Each of the amirs who took part in the power struggle that followed immediately upon al-Nāṣir's death was interested in increasing his own support as much as possible. They did not hesitate

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 15, pp. 17–18, 20.

¹⁰² Ibid p. 25, other examples in Ibn Iyās, 2, pp. 95, 110, 139, 148, 159, 165, 180, 221, 223–224, 227, 356, 357; 3, p. 54, 87.

¹⁰³ Al-Jawhārī, 2, pp. 516–517; 3, pp. 160, 178; Ibn Iyās, 2, p. 232; *Ḥawādith*, 2, p. 532.

¹⁰⁴ *Nujūm*, 16, p. 51; for similar cases, see *ibid.*, 12, p. 252; 13, p. 112; 15, p. 240; Ibn Iyās, 2, p. 386; *Ḥawādith*, 2, pp. 528–531.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Iyās, 3, p. 48, also pp. 45–46, 49–50, 58, 93, 97, 103; for further examples, see *ibid.*, 2, pp. 263, 266; 'Iqd (Qarmūṭ), p. 596; *Nujūm*, 12, pp. 235, 236, 322; 14, p. 349; 15, pp. 24, 26, 267; 16, p. 270.

to exploit fully the disintegrating solidarity between mamluks and their masters and even between mamluks and their peers and used every means at their disposal to buy their loyalty, viz., money, *iqṭā'āt*, offices, and amirate rank. By thus bribing the mamluks and turning a blind eye to their opportunistic conduct, the amirs virtually lent legitimacy to acts of betrayal in mamluk-master relations, and the practice rapidly became norm. Such loyalty could only be extremely fickle. At moments when the amirs faced a fateful decision about the rule of the country, the mamluks now could exploit the prevailing political instability and sell their services to the highest bidder.¹⁰⁶ As we already saw, Qawṣūn first bought the support of the Sultani Mamluks, which he needed to unseat Sultan Abū Bakr—whom only a short time previously he had supported enthusiastically—and replace him with his brother, Kujuk (Şafar 742/July-August 1341).¹⁰⁷ Later that same month, Qawṣūn's opponents bought the support of the same mamluks for an open rebellion against him! After the rebellion had been put down, Qawṣūn, instead of punishing them, placated the mamluks with grants and fiefs.¹⁰⁸ When Aḥmad opposed the ascension of his brother Kujuk, Qawṣūn gave the *nā'ib al-saltāna* in Syria and the Sultani Mamluks money, gifts and *iqṭā'āt* in an effort to prevent them from joining Aḥmad's supporters.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Qawṣūn's forces were heavily defeated by Aḥmad because the latter had had little difficulty in bribing large numbers of them.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Amirs also used every means at their disposal to rid themselves of political opponents. Amirs who had been defeated in the struggle for power were debased not only prior to but also following their deaths. After their arrest, e.g., the amirs would be taken to Khizānat Shamā'il prison which housed common criminals and not to the special prison set apart for mamluks; cf. *Sulūk*, 2, p. 570; 3, p. 331; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fol. 160b; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 16, 231; 11, p. 212; 12, p. 292. Mamluks were not stopped when they mutilated the corpses of their colleagues and masters; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 136–137, 151, 330, 331, 332; *Nujūm*, 12, p. 211, 212; 14, pp. 56–57, 250. Amirs and mamluks, after they had been beaten in the struggle for power, were furthermore humiliated by making them rank-and-file mamluks in the service of their peers; cf. *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 577–578; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 30. This atmosphere of breaching of Mamluk norms could only have increased the mamluks' disrespect for authority, but despite their unruly conduct in public they went unpunished; cf. *Sulūk*, 2, 689, 703; 3, pp. 286, 319; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 122, 128.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Shujā'i, pp. 136–137; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 567–568.

¹⁰⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 577.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Shujā'i, p. 222; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 586, 588.

¹¹⁰ Al-Shujā'i, pp. 156, 161, 164, 165, 177, 179, 180; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 581, 583–585; for further examples, see al-Shujā'i, pp. 245–246; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 677, 712, 731; *Manhal*, 1928, fols. 431b–433a.

Disloyalty, lack of restraint, and greed were all an integral part of Yalbughā al-‘Umari’s Mamluk unit, the Yalbughāwiyya, to which belonged those who had toppled the house of Qalāwūn. In Rabī‘ al-Ākhir 762/February 1361, Yalbughā al-‘Umari managed to convince his colleagues to join him in assassinating their master, Sultan al-Nāṣir Ḥasan. Apart from the terror Yalbughā instilled in their hearts vis-à-vis their master, many were spurred on by the amirates and fiefs Yalbughā promised them in return for joining him.¹¹¹ It was said of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan’s death that “his murder and the termination of his rule came at the hands of his closest mamluks and confidants [*alā yad aqrab al-nās ilayhi min mamālikihī wa-khawwāṣihī*] . . . he had purchased and fostered them, given them riches and appointed them to the highest offices . . .”.¹¹² Later, in Rabī‘ al-Awwal 768/November 1366, the Yalbughāwiyya mamluks rose against Yalbughā al-‘Umari himself.

In Muḥarram 775/June–July 1373, a struggle for effective ruling power took place between Sultan al-Ashraf Sha‘bān and Amir Uljāy al-Yūsufi, and was only concluded after eleven encounters. Uljāy did not accept the conditions of surrender al-Ashraf Sha‘bān in the end offered him and told him that he intended “to die in the saddle”. Al-Ashraf Sha‘bān tipped the scales in his own favour by sending Aynabak al-Yalbughāwī to Uljāy’s camp to persuade his Yalbughāwiyya comrades who were serving with Uljāy to desert, promising him the rank of amir of forty if he was successful. Aynabak had no trouble in fulfilling his mission—the Yalbughāwiyya mamluks crossed the lines in small groups and were later “followed by most of the amirs and mamluks who were with Uljāy”.¹¹³ On 3 Dhū al-Qa‘da, 778/15 March 1376, while al-Ashraf Sha‘bān was on the *hajj*, Aynabak was one of the leaders of the rebellion against him. They were joined by the Sultani Mamluks, *asyād*’s mamluks, and unemployed mamluks, who were all promised a sum of five hundred dinars. After this faction assumed power on behalf of ‘Alī al-Manṣūr, son of the ousted sultan, and began dividing the amirates and *iqṭā‘āt* among their adherents, those who came forward and demanded amirates were so numerous that they formed the majority of the entire faction.¹¹⁴ At the time that Aynabak was rebelling

¹¹¹ *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 312, 313.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 314.

¹¹³ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 213.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 275, 278.

in Cairo, another Mamluk faction, which had undertaken the *hajj* with al-Ashraf Sha‘bān, rebelled as well against him. After he had fled before them, they first pillaged his belongings, “as much as they could [*mā qadart ‘alayhi*]”, and later captured and imprisoned him.¹¹⁵ For agreeing to strangle the imprisoned al-Ashraf, Aynabak awarded Jarkas al-Sayfī the rank of amir of ten and the office of supervisor of public building, *shādd al-‘amā’ir*.¹¹⁶

When Barqūq al-Yalbughāwī rose to power in 784/1382, he held an inspection of the Ashrafī Mamluks, ostensibly in order to decide their future status in his army. In fact, he had already made up his mind to dismiss them, backing up his decision by telling them that he did not trust them, for “they are traitors, for they have already betrayed their master and helped in killing him for a paltry sum after he had sheltered them with his benevolence for a long time [*bi-shay’ haqīr min al-māl ba‘da an khawwalahum fī ni‘amihi mudda ṭawīla*]”.¹¹⁷ Although he himself was not entirely free of opportunism, Barqūq’s criticism undeniably painted a true picture.

In Ṣafar 779/June 1377, the expected split between Amirs Aynabak and Qaraṭāy, who until then had shared active rule, became a fact. Aynabak promised Barqūq al-‘Uthmānī al-Yalbughāwī and Baraka al-Ashrafī, who were then in the service of Qaraṭāy, the rank of amir of forty if they helped him murder their master: “And he promised them *amīr ṭablkhāna* and they agreed and promised him to murder him”.¹¹⁸ Following Qaraṭāy’s assassination, Barqūq and Baraka were promoted directly from the status of simple mamluk soldiers with an *iqṭā‘* in the *ḥalqa* to the rank of amir of forty: “They were rank-and-file mamluks and rose from holding *iqṭā‘* in the *ḥalqa* to *amīr ṭablkhāna* without first holding the rank of amir of ten”.¹¹⁹ On 1 Rabī‘ al-Ākhir 779/7 August 1377, Barqūq and Baraka were among Yalbughā al-Nāṣiri’s leading conspirators against Aynabak, and this time they were elevated from amir of forty to commander of one thousand.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 285, see also pp. 279, 280, 286.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 282, 289; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 76.

¹¹⁷ Al-Jawharī, 1, p. 50; *Sulūk*, 3, p. 479.

¹¹⁸ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 305.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 308.

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 313–314. For further examples, see *ibid.*, 2, pp. 677, 712; 3, pp., 137, 142, 144, 365; al-Shujā‘ī, pp. 245–246; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, p. 9; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 168; *Inbā’*, 1, pp. 310–311.

Once the buying of Mamluk support through bribery had become standard practice, all attempts to return to the training and advancement methods which had been established by the Mamluk state's founding fathers, proved futile. Even more significantly, it also meant that from here on the road to solutions for the problem of how to re-establish stable rule would be blocked.

Treachery was now accepted to such an extent that punishment of mamluks for breach of their masters' trust was invariably light or even non-existent. When al-Zāhir Khushqadam discovered that "those who had surprised him were among his own mamluks [*alladhī taraqahu innamā huwa min mamālikihī*]", surely he must have felt that his world had collapsed: the very same mamluks he had purchased, trained, brought close to him, and given preferential treatment to, intended, in 867/1462, to murder him and all his amirs, except one whom they would seat on the sultan's throne to rule as their puppet. The only way out for Khushqadam was to offset the power of his own mamluks—which he did by appeasing his opponents from the Zāhiriyya (which had been founded by Sultan Jaqmaq)—but also, at the same time, to gloss over their acts of treason.¹²¹

The reliability of the mamluks had become so suspect in the eyes of their masters that they made them swear a special oath of fealty, but this, too, did little to prevent the mamluks from betraying their trust. For example, Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qāyṭbāy demanded that his mamluks swear fealty on the 'Uthmānī Qur'ān, *al-muṣḥaf al-'Uthmānī*—in the space of a single year (902–903/1496–1497) they were called upon four times to swear on the Qur'ān that they would not betray him. Yet Ibn Iyās says that "all their oaths were themselves transgressions [*wa-kull imānihim kānat fājira*]."¹²²

As had happened when they had first acceded to the demands of the mamluks, the amirs here, too, found themselves caught up in a vicious circle. As the trustworthiness of the mamluks diminished, the amirs and sultans continued to bestow money and honours on

¹²¹ *Nujūm*, 16, p. 279; for other examples, see *ibid.*, 12, pp. 275, 287, 293, 295; 13, pp. 45, 61–62, 81, 82, 83, 86, 87, 112, 115, 116, 122, 195; 14, pp. 58, 64, 192, 214, 227; 15, pp. 33, 234, 236–237, 240–241, 271, 295, 307, 321; 16, pp. 241, 318; *Sulūk*, 4, p. 1129; Ibn Iyās, 2, pp. 148, 149, 190, 191, 326, 327, 376, 378, 382, 384; al-Jawharī, 3, p. 441.

¹²² Ibn Iyās, 2, p. 331; for other examples, see *ibid.*, pp. 309, 339.

their mamluks in order to hold on to their support, even if only temporarily.¹²³ In 842/1438, for example, despite the large amounts of money al-Zāhir Jaqmaq granted to his mamluks in order to try and quell a rebellion against him in Syria, they had few qualms about betraying his trust and joining the rebels. Jaqmaq appears to have borne no grudges, reconciled himself to the situation, and started to ready himself anyway for battle against the rebels.¹²⁴

It is this situation of advanced corruption throughout the Mamluk army which explains the growing importance of *al-ḥalqa* and *al-‘amma* in the struggle for rule between the rival Mamluk factions that had set in immediately after the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and was to continue in the 15th century.

The ḥalqa

There had been a significant decline in the status of the *ḥalqa* during the rule of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad following the reforms he initiated in the allotment of *iqṭā‘āt* in 715/1315.¹²⁵ Ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il described the economic situation of the *ḥalqa* soldiers in the wake of the Nāṣiri *rawk* as follows: “And the soldiers suffered greatly [*shadā’id ‘aẓīma*] and were unable to buy food for themselves and their families”.¹²⁶ The leasing of *iqṭā‘āt* within the *ḥalqa*, which became widespread after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death, was another symptom of the decline in their economic situation.¹²⁷ Elderly and disabled persons were among the *ḥalqa* ranks already in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s time.¹²⁸ After the Black Death had decimated the army, civilians—among them artisans, paupers, and even children—were admitted to the *ḥalqa*: “And a large group of children [*al-atfāl*] acquired fiefs which downgraded the army”.¹²⁹ This situation was to continue right up to the end of the period of Mamluk rule in

¹²³ *Nujūm*, 13, p. 14; 14, p. 209; 16, p. 63; *‘Iqd* (Qarmūt), pp. 157–158; Ibn Iyās, 2, pp. 294–295, 305, 327, 384, 389; *Ḍaw’*, 3, p. 175.

¹²⁴ *Nujūm*, 15, p. 295.

¹²⁵ *Al-Shujā‘i*, p. 114; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 156.

¹²⁶ *Nahj*, p. 100, also p. 99; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 228, 229, 469, 476; Ayalon, “The Mamluk Army”, No. 2, pp. 451–452.

¹²⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 643, 687, 860; *Khiṭat*, 2, p. 219; al-Ṣafadī, fol. 82a, 84b, 85a–b; Ayalon, “The Mamluk Army”, No. 2, pp. 453–455.

¹²⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 155, 476.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3, p. 830, also pp. 759, 781, 785, 831; *Khiṭat*, 2, p. 219.

Egypt (923/1517).¹³⁰ In 821/1418, Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh tried to improve the lot of the *ḥalqa* soldiers by ridding the *ḥalqa* of unsuitable elements and increasing the *iqṭā'āt* of those who remained, but soon after his death the earlier situation returned, with the elderly, children, and the infirm again admitted in the *ḥalqa*.¹³¹ Under conditions such as these, the military capability of the *ḥalqa* naturally declined, its soldiers variously described as being unable to ride and use their weapons. In 873/1468, Sultan al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy decided to put the *ḥalqa* soldiers to an archery test prior to their departure on a military expedition, having brought in three bows that each offered a different challenge—any soldier incapable of shooting with any one of these had his pay stopped: many *ḥalqa* soldiers chose to forfeit their pay rather than subject themselves to the humiliation of failure.¹³² On the whole, the *ḥalqa* soldiers did their best to avoid getting involved in battle. For example, in 767/1365, when they were called to arms to repel the Franks at Alexandria, Yalbughā al-ʿUmari was forced to threaten their very lives and property in order to mobilize them.¹³³

Having more or less reconciled themselves to the dismal state of the *ḥalqa*, sultans in the 15th century preferred to routinely offer its soldiers a choice between going to war or payment of a fine for staying at home, *badal*.¹³⁴ Thus, in 922/1516, on the eve of the Ottoman invasion of Egypt with the army gone out to the battlefield, *ḥalqa* soldiers were given the minor role of guarding the various districts against Bedouin incursions. Even so, many of them preferred to lose four months pay and not answer the call to arms.¹³⁵

Where despite their low standards the *ḥalqa* soldiers came into prominence was in the street scuffles that the Mamluk factions conducted as part of the ongoing power struggle, since here they filled the vacuum created by the constant changing of sides of the mamluks of the amirs between the warring factions. The precedent

¹³⁰ *Nujūm*, 14, pp. 69–71, 72, 75, 77, 171, 173; 15, pp. 68–69; *Sulūk*, 4, p. 462; al-Jawhari, 3, p. 60; Ibn Iyās, 3, p. 60.

¹³¹ *Nujūm*, 15, pp. 68–69; 16, pp. 82–83; al-Jawhari, 3, pp. 336, 367; Ibn Iyās, 2, p. 104; 3, p. 60.

¹³² Ibn Iyās, 2, p. 102; for other examples, see *Nujūm*, 15, pp. 68–69; al-Jawhari, 3, p. 336; *Sulūk*, 4, p. 1187.

¹³³ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 104; for similar cases, see pp. 409, 546, 775, 810, 811; *Nujūm*, 14, p. 68.

¹³⁴ *Nujūm*, 14, pp. 72, 75, 77; Ibn Iyās, 2, pp. 102, 105; 3, p. 19.

¹³⁵ Ibn Iyās, 3, pp. 16, 19.

for this occurred immediately after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death when Aydughmish mobilized the *ḥalqa*, unemployed mamluks, and even the common people, *al-ʿamma*, in order to defeat Qawṣūn (742/1341).¹³⁶ Following this, there was no longer anything extraordinary in the participation of *ḥalqa* soldiers in battles between rival Mamluks for rule, and we find them, e.g., at the side of the Mamluk force which supported the sultanate of al-Muẓaffar Ḥājji (748/1347),¹³⁷ while *ḥalqa* soldiers fought on both sides in the rebellion of the Yalbughāwiyya mamluks against their master Yalbughā al-ʿUmarī in 768/1366.¹³⁸

Anxious to win the support of the *ḥalqa* not only in times of strife but also after they had gained control of the foci of power, the amirs often became the protectors of the *ḥalqa*. Each time, for example, the *ḥalqa* faced a muster, which meant that part of its soldiers were in danger of being made redundant, the amirs made sure the muster would be cancelled. When Sultan al-Muẓaffar Ḥājji wanted to inspect the *ḥalqa* and rid it of incompetent soldiers, he was thwarted by Amir Aruqtāy who administered the government on his behalf.¹³⁹ When in the same year (747/1346) Sultan al-Nāṣir Ḥasan wanted to get rid of artisans who had purchased *iqṭāʿāt* in the *ḥalqa*, pressure of the amirs ensured that not more than twenty of them were dismissed whereby the majority could remain in the *ḥalqa*. Wanting to maintain the political balance by which he had consolidated his position as *nāʿib al-saltana*, Amir Baybughā Ṭaṭar refused to muster the *ḥalqa* soldiers, even though they were in a sorry state. Baybughā withstood the pressure a second time when he cancelled a muster requested by Mankalī Bughā, who held the treasury's purse-strings and wanted to dismiss *ḥalqa* soldiers in order to improve finances.¹⁴⁰ When, in 858/1454, Sultan al-Ashraf Īnāl issued orders to have the weak and orphans of the sons of mamluks who served in the *ḥalqa* dismissed, Amir Burdbak cautioned him against the disturbances this would provoke and he

¹³⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 588–589; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 41.

¹³⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 743.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, p. 129. The *ḥalqa* fought on both sides in the battle between Asandamur al-Nāṣirī and the Yalbughāwiyya in 769/1367, see *ibid.*, pp. 142, 151, 152; in 781/1379 in the battle between Barqūq and Baraka, cf. *ibid.*, p. 383; and in 791/1388 in the battle between Barqūq and Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī, *ibid.*, pp. 608, 611. For an additional example, see *Nujūm*, 10, p. 171.

¹³⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 721.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 747, 751–752, 830–831, 838, 842.

cancelled the orders.¹⁴¹ When Amir Yalbughā al-‘Umarī insisted on holding a muster of the *ḥalqa* soldiers (767/1365), it was to cost him both his position and his life. While the muster was at its height, the *ḥalqa* soldiers he had already dismissed joined the rebellion of Yalbughā’s discontented mamluks (768/1367). Yalbughā thereupon discontinued the muster and mobilized the *ḥalqa* soldiers who had not yet been inspected, but by then it was too late and the rebellion proved successful (Muḥarram 769/September 1367).¹⁴² Soon thereafter, the *ḥalqa* soldiers were again called to arms, this time by Amirs Asanbughā Ibn al-Abū Bakrī and Qushtamur al-Manṣūrī, who were then in power, to quell a revolt by some of their erstwhile associates, one of the Yalbughāwiyya factions. Finally, the amirs had an added interest in the *ḥalqa* which was economic in nature, i.e., some of their mamluks also held *iqṭā‘āt* in the *ḥalqa*.¹⁴³

The Common People, al-‘amma

Prior to the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 1341, the common people, *al-‘amma*,¹⁴⁴ lacked all influence on matters of rule and government. Every so often they would demonstrate, either at the behest of the ‘*ulamā*’, in order to elicit from the government a specific decision on religious issues, or, prompted by the senior amirs, on economic issues directly connected to their very existence, like taxation and food supply. A measure of the generally harsh, uncompromising attitude of the mamluk government towards the common people can be found in the way Qalāwūn in 681/1281 suppressed one of their demonstrations—the killing went on for three whole days and then stopped only after a group of ‘*ulamā*’ had gone to the Citadel to plead for the sultan’s mercy on and his forgiveness towards the people.¹⁴⁵

Following al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death in 741/1340, it was the

¹⁴¹ *Nujūm*, 16, pp. 82–83.

¹⁴² *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 119, 129, 130, 131, 133, 137, 151–152; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fol. 170a.

¹⁴³ *Nujūm*, 14, pp. 69–71; *Sulūk*, 4, p. 462; Ibn Iyās, 2, p. 102; 3, p. 16; Ayalon, “The Mamluk Army”, No. 2, pp. 449–450.

¹⁴⁴ On the definition of *al-‘amma*’s social status, see Staffa, pp. 180–185; Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, pp. 82–84, 174–175.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn Waṣīf, fol. 73a.

senior amirs who enlisted the aid of the common people in their struggle for power. Initially, the amirs allowed the people to play only a minor role, mainly in interfaction street fighting, but their importance grew rapidly and in the end it was they who swayed the balance in battle.

The first time the common people took part in fighting between rival Mamluk factions occurred soon after the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad when Aydughmish rallied the mob to loot Qawṣūn's palace and stables and take away the horses and weapons that were there. Aydughmish and his men even assisted the common people in gaining entry into Qawṣūn's property by diverting the attention of the mamluks Qawṣūn had positioned on the roof of the building. The scorn Qawṣūn directed through an envoy at Aydughmish makes clear that until then Mamluk property purposely was never left to the depredations of a mob in order to make the separation of the Mamluk elite from the local population unmistakable. Aydughmish's reply reveals that a definite change had set in: "It is you we were after, never mind how much property got lost [*nahnu qaṣḍuna anta wa-law rāḥa hādhā al-māl wa-aḍ'āfuhu*]"¹⁴⁶ Mamluks were now prepared to buy victory over their opponents, even at the price of reducing the distance between themselves as the ruling elite and the common people. That the latter would be quick to exploit this opportunity and take the law into their own hands at times of crisis became almost immediately obvious when, without permission of the amirs, they also looted the home of a *qādī* and a *ṣūfī* order allegedly allied with Qawṣūn. The historian al-Maqrīzī indicates that he was well aware Aydughmish's precedent had created a permanent threat to public order by taking down the barrier that traditionally separated Mamluks and commoners: "And this was the worthless order of deeds [*sū' tadbīr*] of Aydughmiṣī, for he caused the common people to dare [*jarra'a*] to loot the stables of Qawṣūn for his personal gain".¹⁴⁷

As soon as Qawṣūn had been defeated, the Mamluks did make some efforts to restrict the involvement of the *ʿamma* in what till then had been exclusively Mamluk affairs—e.g., they began confiscating the loot with which members of the mob came out of Qawṣūn's

¹⁴⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 588–589; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 43, 44–45; al-Shujāʿi, pp. 184, 185, 186, 197; Ibn al-Wardī, p. 472.

¹⁴⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 591, 592; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 45, 46.

palace, executing anyone who put up resistance, and punishing several of those who had looted the *qādi*'s home—but these were only ostensibly preventive measures.¹⁴⁸ In point of fact, the *‘amma* felt certain they would be allowed to continue with the looting of the homes of Qawṣūn's mamluks and even demanded that a new *wālī* be appointed, one who would turn a blind eye, after the *wālī* of al-Jiza, Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf, had ordered them punished for their actions. Not only did Aydughmish refuse to put them in their place, he even asked them to suggest whom they wanted for the post. Aydughmish also gave them permission to loot the homes of two public order officers, Ibn Rakhīma and Ḥāmiḍ, after the mob had demanded their dismissal. Only then did they stop looting Mamluk homes.¹⁴⁹ After these incidents it would no longer be possible for the Mamluks to exclude the common people in their factional struggles. However, the moment they had enlisted their support in these struggles, they also determined the price they were willing to pay for allowing them a say in determining the affairs of the state.

The sources do not report even a single effort to restrict the role of the common people in looting the homes of defeated amirs, while during the interfactional struggles their part became progressively more active.¹⁵⁰ In 768/1366, during the rivalry between the faction of Uljāy al-Yūsufi, Arghūn Ṭaṭar, and others, and that of Asandamur al-Nāṣiri, the common people actually fought in the street battle itself that took place and many of them, together with *halqa* soldiers, were wounded. They later joined forces with the soldiers in looting the homes of the defeated amirs.¹⁵¹

When, in the same year the Yalbughāwiyya, led by Asandamur al-Nāṣiri, were locked in battle for supremacy with the supporters of the sultan, led by Asanbughā Ibn al-Abū Bakrī, Qushtamur al-Manṣūrī, and others, the latter quite openly called in the help of the common people and then withdrew, leaving the fighting entirely to them! Not only “did the *‘amma* stand firm alone [*wa-thabatat*

¹⁴⁸ *Nujūm*, 10, p. 46.

¹⁴⁹ Al-Shujā‘ī, p. 190; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 51–52; for similar cases, see al-Shujā‘ī, p. 197; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 56, 62, 68.

¹⁵⁰ See, e.g., *Sulūk*, 2, p. 610; 3, pp. 152–153, 214, 347, 365, 382, 386, 650, 905–906; 4, pp. 1093, 1141–1142, 1182; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 27–28, 55, 84, 136, 258; 11, pp. 39, 48, 283–284, 286, 333–334, 335; 12, pp. 85, 86, 189; *Inbā’*, 3, p. 390; Ibn al-Furāt, 9, pp. 118, 119; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 173b–174a; al-Jawhārī, 1, p. 238; 2, pp. 110, 111.

¹⁵¹ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 142, 143.

al-‘amma waḥdahā]” in the face of the Yalbughāwiyya, they actually brought about a turning point in the battle, suffering casualties, after which the amirs and the mamluks returned to the fray. The following day, with the approval of the sultan, the mob continued to fight alongside the Sultani Mamluks in a final effort to subdue the Yalbughāwiyya.¹⁵² As a reward for their helping to consolidate his rule, al-Ashraf Sha‘bān remained considerate of their feelings throughout his entire period of rule.¹⁵³ In 775/1373, during Īnāl al-Yūsufi’s rebellion against him, the common people can be found among the troops commanded by the amirs who had been sent to suppress the rebellion.¹⁵⁴

A further development is the strategy used by Amir Barqūq, even before he became sultan. By then the amirs had come to realize that the common people could actually hold the balance of power and that it was worthwhile to assure their support well in advance. As soon as he belonged to those amirs who effectively held power, Barqūq made special efforts to win the trust of the people: “And Barqūq was always friendly towards the people and protected them”.¹⁵⁵ Towards the common people accused of aiding Ghulām Allāh in his attempt to murder him (Dhū al-Qa‘da 780/February–March 1379) Barqūq exercised restraint and showed conciliation. Soon thereafter, in Muḥarram 781/April–May 1379, he prevented them from being forced into doing corvée by his ruling partner, Baraka, and further protected criminals and inciters from within their ranks against threatened punishment.¹⁵⁶

Barqūq’s efforts bore fruit when, in Rajab 781/October 1379, the *‘amma* unreservedly closed ranks behind him during Īnāl al-Yūsufi’s rebellion against him. They stood by him zealously, even when Barqūq himself began to show signs of despair and seemed close to giving up, and in the end together with the faction which had remained loyal were successful in putting down the rebellion.¹⁵⁷ The disloyalty shown by some of Barqūq’s mamluks when they chose to join Īnāl al-Yūsufi only highlighted the common people’s devotion to Barqūq. In 782/1380, in his struggle against Baraka,

¹⁵² *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 151, 152–153.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 135, 173–174, 213; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 78.

¹⁵⁴ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 214.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 347, 353; *Inbā’*, 1, p. 299.

¹⁵⁷ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 365–366; *Inbā’*, 1, p. 311.

they again stood by him.¹⁵⁸ However, in 791/1388, despite numerous efforts Barqūq was unable to persuade the people not to leave his camp for that of the rebels led by Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī.¹⁵⁹ It was to have a profound effect on his destiny and demonstrates the increased military and political importance the common people had won for themselves. Some months later, during the power struggle between Miṅtāsh and Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī, they actually split into factions which identified politically with the Mamluk factions on whose side they fought.¹⁶⁰

Because of the increasingly important role the common people were now playing in the military-political arena, the Mamluk government reacted with a measure of tolerance toward the diminishing distance between them and the ruling elite. After Barqūq in 782/1381 had succeeded in defeating Amir Baraka, owing mainly to the help of the common people, they were given some say in government decisions, though only in those spheres that affected them directly. For example, when Barqūq stated in public, "O my people! If you are dissatisfied with the two *muḥtasibs* of Cairo and Fuṣṭaṭ, we shall dismiss them", the people were quick to take him up on that, claiming they were indeed dissatisfied, and Barqūq promptly dismissed the *muḥtasibs*.¹⁶¹ This also explains why the government ignored the fact that the dress worn by common women was increasingly similar to that of those belonging to the ruling class,¹⁶² which is significant not only because it points up the growing lack of distance between *al-‘amma* and the ruling Mamluks, but also because it reveals that the common people now had the means to purchase much the same consumer goods as the ruling class. In other words, it was through material rewards that the Mamluks showed they recognized the new status the common people had gained through their participation in Mamluk power struggles.

The picture that arises from the above also shows that the common people would never have been able to gain a foothold in internal Mamluk struggles had it not been for the corruption of Mamluk discipline and morals. The concomitant decline in the military

¹⁵⁸ *Al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 186a-b.

¹⁵⁹ *Al-Jawharī*, 1, p. 208; *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 280, 283–284; *Ibn al-Furāt*, 9, p. 82.

¹⁶⁰ *Nujūm*, 11, p. 335.

¹⁶¹ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 382, 386; on the recurrence of the case, see *ibid.*, p. 395.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 750.

capability of both the mamluks and the *halqa* had created a vacuum which was then almost automatically filled by the *‘amma*.

That nevertheless the common people never amassed any political power through their contribution to the various power struggles can be explained by the stratified social concepts which remained in place and which continued to be adhered to by both the *‘amma* and the Mamluks. Despite the need for their services, the Mamluks could suffice by extending to the *‘amma* material rewards in return for their support without ever giving any political power out of their hands because the common people lacked a clearly defined and authoritative leadership and never succeeded in acting as a cohesive social stratum that could look after its own interests. This lack of cohesiveness, inherent in urban Muslim society, the Mamluks exploited in order to harness the different social strata in support of Mamluk rule.¹⁶³

A New Political Reality

With the mamluks' disloyalty an established fact, accorded legitimacy by the amirs' willingness to accede to their demands and buy their support, it was not long before the new Mamluk norms took root. It soon became difficult to prevent their influence on Mamluk political concepts, which was most strongly felt in two areas, accession to the sultanate and in the foci of power of the Mamluk army.

Accession to the Sultanate

From the outset the Mamluks tended to view accession to the sultanate as something temporary, which resurfaced each time there was a change of rule in the Mamluk state. As soon as a new rule had been established, amirs who harboured ambitions of their own for the sultanate usually did not simply resign themselves to accepting the new rule but continued to look for opportunities to overthrow it.

¹⁶³ Since they formed the natural leadership of the common people, the fact that the *‘ulamā*, in order to safeguard their own objectives, on the whole cooperated with the Mamluk regime prevented the emergence of an effective challenge to Mamluk rule; cf. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, pp. 184, 190–191; Haarmann, "Rather the Injustice of the Turks"; Petry, "Scholastic Stasis".

Already Aybak al-Turkumānī, the first Mamluk sultan, was put on the throne in a compromise decision by senior Ṣaliḥi amirs who each had their eyes on rule. They were sure that because of his weak position it would not be difficult to depose Aybak again when the time was ripe.¹⁶⁴ Baybars, too, was made sultan as a result of a compromise between the senior amirs who had been involved in the murder of Sultan Quṭuz—fearing that any new sultan might share Quṭuz's fate, they elevated Baybars simply to see what might ensue.¹⁶⁵ When Baybars's rule did not quite fall into line with their expectations, some of the senior amirs made several attempts at undermining it.¹⁶⁶ Though firmly established from the start, Qalāwūn's rule, too, was not accepted by the amirs as the final word in their struggle for power.¹⁶⁷ During the period between Qalāwūn's death and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign (1290–1310), there were continuous attempts by amirs to wrest power from Qalāwūn's sons. Even the success of such amirs as Kitbughā, Baydarā, Lājīn, and Baybars al-Jāshinkīr in gaining the sultanate during this period never led to a resolution of the power struggle between the various factions in the Mamluk army. The same is true for each of the three times al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was put on the throne—for the amirs who provided their assistance his sultanate was merely a solution to their own temporary inability to agree on one of their peers to become sultan.¹⁶⁸

During the formative years of the Mamluk state, while most of the attempts at rebellion against Baybars and Qalāwūn were led by their colleagues, the amirs, their own mamluks never took part in them. In contrast, after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, there were frequent mutinies in which mamluks played an active role against their masters. The new Mamluk norms of conduct now prevailing robbed the decision-making process of its checks and balances. With a return to traditional training and advancement norms no longer possible the Mamluk attitude towards rule as temporary was given free rein and became one of the outstanding features of the Mamluk system of government.

¹⁶⁴ Al-Yūnīnī, 1, p. 55; Ibn Ḥabīb, fol. 1a; *Nujūm*, 7, p. 4; *Sulūk*, 1, p. 393.

¹⁶⁵ *ʿIqd* (Amin), vol. 1, p. 263.

¹⁶⁶ Al-Yūnīnī, 2, pp. 92, 317, 323–324, 453; 3, p. 244; al-Nuwayrī, 2N, fol. 10a; Ibn Waṣīf, fols. 69b–70a.

¹⁶⁷ *Zubda*, fol. 159b; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 168; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 69.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Irwin, *The Middle East*, pp. 85–102.

Following al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, the amirs were forced to form factional coalitions so as to enable them to rule de facto in the name of a Qalawuni sultan and at the same time to strengthen their position. Not surprisingly, each of the partners in such a coalition kept a sharp eye on the movements of the others while awaiting the chance to realize his own personal political ambitions. As each now without difficulty could sabotage the integrity of the other factions by simply buying the loyalty of the mamluks, the amirs were no longer able to see each other as reliable allies. Moreover, each of the amirs, of course, was fully aware of the other's personal motives when forming a coalition. Such partnerships dissolved when one of the parties concerned rid himself of the other, usually with the help of a future coalition partner. Such was the case in the partnerships of Qawṣūn and Bashtāk, Qawṣūn and Aydughmish, Aydughmish and Aḷtunbughā al-Māridinī, Mughulṭāy and Mankalibughā al-Fakhri, Mughulṭāy and Ṭāz, Ṭāz and Shaykhū, and many others.¹⁶⁹ It is Ibn Taghrī Birdī's criticism of al-Ashraf Sha'bān's amirs, who, in 778/1376, formed a coalition with the Yalbughāwiyya and the Sultani Mamluks in order to seize power, which better than anything points at the short-lived expectations and swift fall of these coalitions: "How wretched are these rebellious people . . . for they were the cause of the downfall of their master's rule . . . not one of them achieving anything . . . [*min ghayr an yaṣila aḥaduhum 'alā ṭā'il*]"¹⁷⁰

The sultans of the house of Qalāwūn existed in the shadow of these coalitions and their rule was purely nominal in nature: "For most of the rulers of Egypt who ruled in Egypt after him (al-Nāṣir Muḥammad) obeyed one of their own office-holders, who was in effect the sultan and the sultan [was among those who] obeyed his commands [*fa-yaṣir dhālika al-rajul huwa al-sulṭān ḥaqīqatan wal-sulṭān mimman yataṣṣarafu bi-awāmirihi*]"¹⁷¹ Bereft of authority, the Qalawuni sultans spent most of their time in pursuing all sorts of amusements, which often were anything but innocent. This then

¹⁶⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 560, 562, 590, 594, 822, 845–847, 919, 920; 3, p. 4.

¹⁷⁰ *Nujūm*, 11, p. 80.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 9, p. 175; for examples of the amirs' actual rule, see *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 567, 606, 607, 653, 672, 685, 689, 690, 694, 720, 721, 736–737, 738, 743, 749, 750, 842, 860, 862, 890; 3, pp. 310, 346, 387, 402, 412; *Durar*, 2, pp. 124–125, 294, 305–306, 310, 324; *Wāfi*, 9, pp. 295–296; 12; p. 266; al-Shujā'i, pp. 137, 205, 209, 211, 244, 252.

led to the further corruption of mamluks who in turn would not desist from harming even civilians.¹⁷²

Barqūq's success in ridding himself of his coalition partner and gaining rule for himself (784/1382) appears on the face of it as a breakthrough in the impasse created by the indecisiveness of the amirs regarding rule and their factional strife. But, as we have already seen, Barqūq was unable to take power without first fulfilling the political demands of his Mamluk colleagues.¹⁷³ Moreover, since it now had become the norm, he, too, had to bow to the constraints imposed by mamluk disloyalty. Forced to accept the reigning permissive criteria in the training and military advancement of his mamluks, he soon found himself defending his rule from the dangers it faced because of the ever-increasing demands made by his mamluks and their lack of loyalty to him. In 791/1389, when Barqūq temporarily lost his ruling position, it was said, "And his rule in Egypt was lost very rapidly, despite the respect he enjoyed, his many mamluks, and his large retinue . . . [*ma'a 'azama fi al-nufūs wa-kathrat mamālikihī wa-hawāshīhī*]"¹⁷⁴ Those who had deposed him were quick to renew the power struggle for control of the sultanate.

Thus Barqūq's ascent to power and his way of consolidating it did not constitute a radical change in the Mamluk concept of government—as during the period following al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, arbitrariness remained the decisive factor in who would be sultan. Usually whoever managed to recruit a larger Mamluk force than his rivals took power and held on to it as long as his mamluks remained loyal. This explains the success of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh who ruled for about eight years (815–824/1412–1421).¹⁷⁵ Al-Zāhir Jaqmaq rose to power in 842/1438 also after rallying most of the Mamluk army factions to his side.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 620, 662, 667, 679, 686, 689, 690, 693, 695–696, 697, 701, 703, 707, 708, 713, 715, 720, 722, 725, 726, 735, 745; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 17, 154, 156, 157; al-Shujā'i, p. 236; *Durar*, 2, p. 289. *Zubdat kashf*, pp. 121–124.

¹⁷³ *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 288, 289; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 195B, 207A.

¹⁷⁴ *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 289.

¹⁷⁵ *Khitāṭ*, 1, p. 95; cf. Irwin, "Factions", pp. 230–232

¹⁷⁶ *Nujūm*, 15, pp. 234–235; al-Jawharī, 3, p. 437; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fi waqā'i' al-duhūr*, Cairo, 1989, vol. 2, pp. 198–199.

The Shifting Foci of Power in the Mamluk Army

Prior to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third ascent to power, with each change of government candidates for rule had come from the ranks of the previous sultan's senior amirs and his closest confidants, and were generally long-serving amirs who had been the staunchest supporters of his rule. With their colleagues and rank-and-file mamluks closing ranks behind them, they would create pressure groups which put up claims for their stake in government. It was in this way, e.g., that Quṭuz, Qalāwūn, Lājīn, and Baybars al-Jāshinkīr had all risen to power. Qawṣūn and Bashtāk, the two amirs who engaged in a struggle for power immediately after al-Nāṣir's death, both held senior rank in the army and had been among al-Nāṣir's closest confidants. However, their training and military advancement had departed from the accepted Mamluk norms established during the formative years of the Mamluk state, i.e., neither had grown up among the rank-and-file mamluks nor could they be held up as examples of skilled military commanders. Thus, from the very beginning their candidacy signalled that from now on contenders for Mamluk rule no longer needed a typical military career in order to reach the apex of the pyramid of Mamluk hierarchy. At the same time, it was a clear indication that the traditional ground rules whereby sultans were placed on the throne were gradually done away with.

In the episode of the removal of Amir Qawṣūn, for example, we find that the rank-and-file mamluks played an active role in what had hitherto been the exclusive province of the small group of senior amirs, i.e., political decision-making. This directly followed from the lack of certainty which now prevailed among the senior amirs vis-à-vis the loyalty of their own mamluks and those of their colleagues, and from their own decision not only to condone the decline in the Mamluk military code, but even to exploit it, for their own ends. The rank-and-file mamluks were quick to grasp that the new process enhanced their political status to the extent that in return for their military support to an amir who laid claim to rule, they could now exact a say in the political decision-making. When this reached the point where they demanded a claim to part of the government itself, it meant the virtual annihilation of the ground rules for the accession to the sultanate. Soon they would want to decide who would be sultan.

Immediately after the demise of Qawṣūn in 742/1341 a group of mamluks united and fought on behalf of Ramaḍān, one of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's sons, in an effort to help him attain the sultanate, while not a single senior amir joined or led them.¹⁷⁷ Although they failed in their attempt, the very fact that they made claims to the sultanate without the benefit of the leadership of any of the amirs reveals that their influence on matters of rule was by now well established. From this time onwards, the amirs were well aware that they could not place a son of the House of Qalāwūn on the throne without guaranteeing the consent of the mamluks. When the amirs decided to remove al-Nāṣir Aḥmad from the sultanate and hastily (10 Muḥarram 743/22 June 1342) replaced him with his brother, al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl, two of the amirs, al-Māridīnī and Mas'ūd, made a somewhat apologetic approach the following day to the Sultani Mamluks: "We made him sultan while being unable to consult you. Now make up your minds and tell us what you think [*wa-mā kāna al-waqt mujtahid mashūratikum. wa-l-ān fa tabaṣṣarū ra'yakum aysh taqūlū*]."¹⁷⁸ Even if it had been the intention of the amirs to confront the mamluks with a fait accompli, they realized they could no longer ignore their part in the decision-making process—their ex post facto statement to the mamluks was meant as their formal expression of that inescapable fact. When al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl died of an illness in 746/1345, the mamluks formed the deciding factor between the supporters and opponents when they gave al-Kāmil Sha'bān their support.¹⁷⁹

After the murder of Sultan al-Muẓaffar Ḥājji in 748/1347, the mamluks wanted to place Ḥusayn, another of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's sons, on the throne and to that end exerted great pressure on the amirs, using threats of rebellion. However, the amirs did not yield to the mamluks' demands, but made a hasty and forced decision by nominating his brother al-Nāṣir Ḥasan.¹⁸⁰ In Rabī' al-Awwal 768/November 1366, when the Yalbughāwiyya mamluks rebelled against their master, Yalbughā al-'Umari, the idea of the rebellion had originated with the mamluks and they were the ones who forced the senior amirs to join them, threatening those who would not

¹⁷⁷ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 241–244; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 82–84, 85; *Durar*, 2, p. 203.

¹⁷⁸ Al-Shujā'ī, p. 230.

¹⁷⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 680–681; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 95.

¹⁸⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 744; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 173.

unite with them with dire consequences.¹⁸¹ Following the success of the rebellion, the mamluks insisted that the sultan, al-Ashraf Sha‘bān, hand over to them their defeated master whom they then murdered. Normally this should have satisfied their demands and enabled a return to Mamluk subservience to government authority and obedience to the senior amirs. But from the positions of governmental representation the Yalbughāwiyya mamluks were accorded in the wake of the rebellion it becomes clear that, whatever their stated intentions, what they had been after was no less than an active part in government. Four central government posts went to amirs who had only recently been awarded the rank of amir of ten. Jaraktamur al-Sayfī Manjak was appointed *amīr majlis*, Uzdampur Abū Daqn *amīr silāh*, and Alṭunbughā al-Yalbughāwī became *ra’s nawba kabīr*.¹⁸² Bayram al-‘Izzī, “one of the rank-and-file [*aḥad al-ajnād*]”, was awarded the rank of commander of one thousand: “And he was awarded the *iqṭā‘āt* of Ṭughāytamur al-Niẓāmī and all his property . . . and he was made *dawādār kabīr*”.¹⁸³ Since Ṭughāytamur al-Niẓāmī had been one of the staunchest supporters of Yalbughā al-‘Umārī’s establishment, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī adds that Bayram al-‘Izzī’s meteoric rise came as a great surprise to many: “And when Asandampur was victorious in Shawwāl 68 (768), he awarded him the rank of commander of one thousand, elevating him from the rank of simple soldier. And this was the cause of much amazement [*ammarahu taqdimā naqalahū min al-jundiyya wa-‘ajibū min dhālika*]”.¹⁸⁴

The conduct of the Yalbughāwiyya mamluks after their rebellion against their master introduced the next phase where the mamluks demanded that they themselves appoint their own representatives to the governing apparatus and even decide on who would become sultan. Even though the rebellion had been successful and some of their own colleagues had been appointed to key government positions, barely one year later, on 6 Ṣafar 769/2 October 1367, they demanded from Amir Asandampur al-Nāṣirī, who in effect held control at the time, that he hand over Bayram al-‘Izzī, Uzdampur Abū Daqn,

¹⁸¹ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 130–131; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 36; for further examples, see *Nujūm*, 12, pp. 196–197; 15, pp. 234, 265; 16, pp. 41, 356, 359; *‘Iqd* (Qarnūt), p. 159.

¹⁸² *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 116, 117, 118, 144; *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 44–45; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fol. 173a. Others had been awarded high ranks as well but then they were ousted; see *Nujūm*, 11, p. 41, 42.

¹⁸³ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 144; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 44; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fol. 173a.

¹⁸⁴ *Durar*, 2, p. 47.

and Jaraktamur al-Sayfī Manjak, to which he agreed. This was apparently not enough:¹⁸⁵ “They decided to murder Amir Asandamur and the sultan and replace him with another sultan [*wa-iqāmat sulṭān ghayrihi*]”.¹⁸⁶ What this amounted to was an attempt by the mamluks to wrest the power of decision regarding rule from the amirs. Although they were defeated by al-Ashraf Sha‘bān, the episode reveals that, being able to force their will upon others, the rank-and-file mamluks now had their own political power base upon which to rest their own claims to rule. The senior amirs at this point clearly recognized the mamluks’ claims to a say in de facto political decision-making, and would habitually present their claims to rule as joint amir-mamluk claims while extending a number of offices to rank-and-file mamluks as a reward for their part in the struggle. Since the key to Mamluk solidarity no longer lay in the hands of the amirs but of the rank-and-file mamluks themselves, from here it was only a small step to their ambition that one of their number head the government.

The rebellion in Cairo against al-Ashraf Sha‘bān when he was on his way to the *hajj* is generally described as a mutiny of the rank-and-file mamluks: “And in this case there was no great or exalted personage who planned it, with the mamluks following him [*lam yakun fī hādhihi al-waq‘a rajul ‘azīm lahu sha’n qāma bi-amr wa-tabi‘athu al-nās*]”.¹⁸⁷ News of the mutiny quickly reached the ears of the amirs whom al-Ashraf Sha‘bān had left behind in Egypt to preserve order. Those amirs who put up resistance were imprisoned, while others, informed of the mutiny, “ignored it, for fear of their lives [*fa-taghāfalū ‘anhum khawfan ‘alā anfusihim*]”.¹⁸⁸ By behaving in this manner the latter in effect tacitly acknowledged that they were willing to relinquish their part in the decision-making process concerning rule and see it transferred to the rank-and-file mamluks. After the rebellion had proved successful, these same amirs became mere rubberstamps for mamluk decisions and only held purely honorary offices.¹⁸⁹

The mamluks had now become the decision makers in all matters concerning the sultanate. They placed al-Ashraf Sha‘bān’s son,

¹⁸⁵ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 117, 164, 168.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150; *Durar*, 1, p. 413; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 47.

¹⁸⁷ *Nujūm*, 11, p. 160; *al-Jawhar al-thamin*, fols. 167a-b.

¹⁸⁸ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 277.

¹⁸⁹ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 277, 292; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 65.

al-Manṣūr ‘Alī, on the throne and divided the senior amirates among themselves. As they had no established hierarchy, each mamluk was deemed worthy of holding any of these offices: “And they divided the amirates among themselves until everyone who had wanted one held an amirate [*wa-taqāsamū al-imrayāt ḥattā ‘ammū man arādū minhum bi-l-imrayāt*].”¹⁹⁰ Ṭashtamur al-Laffāf, an amir of ten, took the *atābakiyya*, the rank of commander of one thousand, and all the property of his deposed predecessor. Qaraṭāy al-Ṭāzī, who prior to the rebellion had been one of the *mufārada* mamluks,¹⁹¹ became *ra’s nawba kabīr* with the rank of commander of one thousand, while all of his predecessor’s property and *iqṭā‘āt* were transferred to him. Asandamur al-Ṣarḡhitmishī, who, like Qaraṭāy, had been one of the *mufārada*, was also promoted to commander of one thousand and the office of *amīr silāḥ*. Damurdāsh al-Yūsufī, Balāṭ al-Ṣaghīr, Alṭunbughā al-Nizāmī, and Yalbughā al-Nizāmī were all *mufārada* mamluks who were awarded the rank of commander of one thousand in the wake of the rebellion. Many other rank-and-file mamluks were also promoted to the ranks of amir of ten and amir of forty at this time.¹⁹²

By now the traditional Mamluk hierarchy, in which the senior amirs enjoyed exclusivity, had lost all significance—in the words of al-Maqrīzī: “The bounds were broken, and everyone began to ignore the limits of his rank and no longer paid heed to his ability [*fa-inkharafa al-siyāj wa-akhadha kull aḥad yata‘addā ṭawrahu wa-yajhalu qadrahu*].”¹⁹³

Barqūq’s rise to power in 784/1382 is an example of how the political potential accumulated by the mamluks was effectively put into action. Al-Maqrīzī, again, assessed Barqūq’s rise to power in the following manner: “It was a result of the rebellions . . . and the mamluk coups and the [frequent] changes in their rule [*thawrāt al-mamālīk wa-taghayyur duwalihim*] which laid the groundwork for Barqūq until he ruled the country.”¹⁹⁴ The frequent coups al-Maqrīzī mentions and which occurred from the time of the Ashrafiyya and

¹⁹⁰ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 278.

¹⁹¹ The exact meaning of *mufārada* is not clear, but it might indicate a simple soldier.

¹⁹² Ibn al-‘Iraqī, fol. 52a; *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 287–289; *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 149–151; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 179b–180a.

¹⁹³ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 330; also *Nujūm*, 11, p. 159.

¹⁹⁴ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 316.

Yalbughāwiyya rebellions against al-Ashraf Sha‘bān were all instigated by rank-and-file mamluks. In the words of Ibn Taghri Birdī:

From the day of the murder of al-Ashraf Sha‘bān, Ṭashtamur al-Laffāf rose from the rank of simple soldier to [the office of] *atābak al-‘asākir*. He was followed by Qaraṭāy al-Ṭāzī, Aynabak al-Badrī, Quṭluqtamur, and the *atābak* Barqūq and Baraka. All of them were simple soldiers or amirs of ten and rose to their new ranks through aggression or fomenting civil war [and therefore] all the mamluks desired to be like them and do what they had done . . . [*tama‘a kull aḥad an yakūna mithlahum wa-yaf‘al mā fa‘alūhu*] . . .¹⁹⁵

The abolition of the traditional Mamluk code of conduct, together with the fact that the power of decision regarding rule was now concentrated in the hands of the rank-and-file mamluks, explains the meteoric rise of Barqūq and Baraka, originally simple Yalbughāwiyya mamluks in the service of the *asyād*, the sons of the sultans. As we saw above, Barqūq and Baraka were awarded the rank of amir of forty for helping Aynabak get rid of his governing partner, Qaraṭāy.¹⁹⁶ Both Aynabak and Qaraṭāy made it to their high positions from the lowest ranks in the army. Later, Barqūq and Baraka had no difficulty in plotting with Yalbughā al-Nāṣiri against Aynabak.¹⁹⁷ About a month after they were awarded the rank of amir of forty, they were both rewarded for their part in the removal of Aynabak with the rank of commander of one thousand, and became Yalbughā al-Nāṣiri’s partners in government matters.¹⁹⁸ The rise of Barqūq and Baraka from the lowly rank of simple soldier to their position as active rulers took a mere four months (Muḥarram-Rabī‘ al-Ākhir 779/May–August 1377).¹⁹⁹ Obviously, the extreme mobility in the Mamluk army to which this points precluded the existence of a stratum of senior and seasoned amirs. Amirs whose rise to the upper echelons of government had been extremely rapid were less likely to be as committed to social institutions—including the sultanate itself—as the senior amirs had been who had formed part of the traditional Mamluk establishment. Moreover, these new amirs had reached their senior status by shaking

¹⁹⁵ *Nujūm*, 11, p. 214, also pp. 191, 208, 346; *Sulūk*, 3, p. 315; *Inbā‘*, 1, p. 253; 4, p. 50; *Ḍaw‘*, 3, p. 11; *Manhal*, 3, pp. 221–222, 286, 352.

¹⁹⁶ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 305; *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 158, 223.

¹⁹⁷ *Sulūk*, 3, p. 313.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 315; *Nujūm*, 11, p. 223.

¹⁹⁹ *Nujūm*, 11, p. 159.

the foundations of the traditional Mamluk establishment. After Barqūq managed to rid himself of Baraka and gain sole power of rule (783/1381), there were no senior and seasoned amirs to be found in the military-political arena—with the exception of two, Aqtamur ‘Abd al-Ghanī and Aydmur al-Shamsī, all had achieved their senior amir status only quite recently as a result of their participation in one rebellion or another.²⁰⁰ And of the two senior amirs just mentioned it was clear that they had not been particularly keen on preserving the right of governmental decision in the hands of the senior amirs, but instead had readily yielded it to the rank-and-file mamluks by deliberately ignoring their preparations for the rebellion against al-Ashraf Sha‘bān and by submitting to their decisions afterwards. That the mamluks’ deference to the status of these two amirs was an empty gesture can be gathered from the purely honorary appointments they were given; after their deaths the new amirs had little difficulty in persuading their—slightly more—senior colleagues to accept Barqūq’s sultanate. Once these had given their agreement, the new political reality whereby the mamluks held the power of decision in all matters regarding rule was unassailable, as was the right they had won to demand the rule for one of their number.

In 803/1401, a short time after Barqūq’s death, some of the Sultani Mamluks tried to elevate a rank-and-file mamluk, al-Shaykh Lājīn al-Jarkasī, to rule. In this they were not successful but they were able to keep up their rebellion until their demands to have the heads of the rival Mamluk faction dismissed and receive their offices had been met.²⁰¹ In the rise of al-Zāhir Jaqmaq (842/1438) the mamluks played a decisive role. Some of the mamluks at the Citadel had decided to murder their leader, Īnāl al-Abū Bakrī, who held the strings behind the government of al-‘Azīz, son of al-Ashraf Barsbāy. After Īnāl had escaped from the Citadel, they approached Jaqmaq and urged him to take sole power. When he seemed to hesitate, they exerted pressure upon him, saying, “If the Grand Amir does not accede to our wishes, we will take another master in his place”.²⁰² Even if we assume that the mamluks’ approach to Jaqmaq could have been pre-arranged, it remains significant—not only did Jaqmaq’s rise to rule have to be shown as coming in response to the mamluks’

²⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 208, 214–215.

²⁰¹ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 1044–1045, 1060–1063, 1065; *al-Jawhar al-thamīn*, fols. 217b–218b; Ibn Iyās, 1, pp. 330, 335–337; *Nujūm*, 12, p. 236; 13, pp. 27, 158.

²⁰² *Nujūm*, 15, pp. 236–237; *al-Jawharī*, 3, p. 437.

demands, but, more important, the Mamluk elite fully recognized their power in legitimizing that rule.

The position of political influence the rank-and-file mamluks had achieved enabled them to decide not only on who should rule, but also on matters of government management. They now dictated to the sultan²⁰³ the allotment of *iqṭā'āt* and determined their own rate of pay and the size of the grants due to them.²⁰⁴ When in 822/1419 the Sultani Mamluks united (*yadan wāhidatan*) and demanded a pay increase from Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, retroactively from the day of his accession to the sultanate in 815/1412 and with their basic pay and clothing and food allowances upgraded to the rates they had been paid during the rule of al-Zāhir Barqūq, their demands were met unconditionally, only to prevent yet another rebellion.²⁰⁵

In 855/1451, the Royal Mamluks, threatening the *muqaddam al-mamālik* and other officers of the sultan, gave to understand that they refused a customary clothing allowance of one thousand dirhams each. When Sultan al-Zāhir Jaqmaq heard of this, he decided to be present at the grant ceremony, but even so, the mamluks remained steadfast in their refusal. At this, he cursed them and left the place in great anger. In negotiations that followed it was agreed that each mamluk would receive two thousand dirhams.²⁰⁶ In 861/1457, the mamluks applied the same tactics, this time succeeding in raising their clothing allowance from two thousand dirham to three thousand and their meat allowance for the festival of 'Īd al-Aḍḥā from two to three sheep each.²⁰⁷

The Mamluks now also had a greater say than ever in appointments, especially those directly connected with the management of their own affairs. In 854/1450, they rioted in order to reinforce their demands for the dismissal of the *muqaddam al-mamālik*, Jawhar al-Nawrūzī, and Abū al-Khayr al-Naḥḥās, who was *wakīl bayt al-māl*. The latter hid in the Citadel while the mamluks looted his

²⁰³ Ibn Iyās, 2, p. 277; *Nujūm*, 14, p. 190; 16, pp. 142–143; *Hawādith*, 2, pp. 410, 431; Irwin, "Factions", p. 231.

²⁰⁴ *Nujūm*, 14, pp. 213, 330, 371; 15, pp. 227, 279–280, 435; 16, pp. 94, 98, 100–102, 112, 132, 139, 362; *Hawādith* 2, pp. 331–332, 426, 431–432, 434, 449, 504, 517, 529, 547; *Sulūk*, 4, pp. 594–595, 804, 930, 1091, 1103; *Tibr*, p. 352; al-Jawharī, 3, pp. 160, 178; *Daw'*, 2, 106.

²⁰⁵ *Sulūk*, 4, p. 480.

²⁰⁶ *Hawādith*, 2, pp. 332–333.

²⁰⁷ *Nujūm*, 16, p. 102.

home, and raped and abused his wives. When he heard of this, Sultan Jaqmaq rent his clothes and threatened to abdicate, but the only alternative he was left with was to yield to the mamluks, promising that he would dismiss the two and exile them to Medina. But the mamluks were not satisfied with mere promises and demanded that he act on the spot. It was then that Jaqmaq decided to fight them and he readied soldiers and weapons to this end. Amirs who learned of his decision persuaded him to change his mind and representatives of the rioting mamluks were brought before the sultan who then promised to pardon them for their rebellious actions. Soon thereafter, Jawhar al-Nawrūzī and Abū al-Khayr al-Naḥḥās were both dismissed.²⁰⁸

During the long rule of Sultan Qāyṭbāy, who might have been expected to impress his authority on the mamluk household he had established, mamluks intended to set fire to the house of the *muḥtasib*, Badr al-Dīn Ibn Muzhir, because he had set maximum prices on consumer goods (891/1486). When they discovered that he had gone into hiding, they turned to the sultans' and amirs' grain stores and plundered them. Qāyṭbāy sent the *khāṣṣakiyya* headed by the *muqaddam al-mamālik*, who was responsible for discipline, to stop them. When this proved unsuccessful, Qāyṭbāy himself went to confront his mamluks who indeed, when they saw him, fled, but only to continue to loot the houses of other office-holders, extending their trail of pillage into the next day. Only then did they desist. Once order had been restored, they remained unpunished for their misdeeds while the civilian officials were replaced.²⁰⁹ Moreover, Qāyṭbāy's mamluks, who were serving in Aleppo at the time under the command of *atābak* Yashbak in the fight against the Ottomans, mutinied and intended to return to Egypt as a direct result of their dissatisfaction with the grants awarded them by the sultan. Left with no choice, the sultan sent money to Aleppo which was duly distributed, and the mutiny subsided. Yet some of the mamluks, without the sultan's permission, left the force and returned to Cairo where they waylaid the amirs who were on their way to see the sultan. Through them they issued a warning to the sultan to the effect that if he did not award them a grant, they would continue their mutiny. They also intended to humiliate the

²⁰⁸ *Nujūm*, 15, pp. 411–414, 417; 16, pp. 40, 114, 136–137, 147–148, 175; *Hawādith*, 1, pp. 267–268; 2, p. 533.

²⁰⁹ Ibn Iyās, 2, pp. 239–240.

dawādār, Amir Āqbirdī, who thereupon avoided going up to the Citadel. The mamluks' demands increased once the victorious expeditionary force returned from Aleppo at the end of Dhū al-Qa'da/November and they now demanded a grant "appropriate to their efforts [*fī naẓīr ta'ab sirrihim*]" in the battle against the Ottomans. They even asked Āqbirdī to intercede with the sultan on their behalf, asking him to increase their meat and fodder allowances. The moment they heard that the sultan had no intention of acceding to their demands, they mutinied. The amirs barricaded themselves inside their homes and the *qāḍīs* refrained from going up to the Citadel for the traditional Dhū al-Ḥijja blessing of the sultan. After a protracted discussion, the sultan let himself be persuaded by Āqbirdī and decided to award a grant of fifty dinars to each mamluk, to be paid at the beginning of the new year, in other words, in a month's time. When the sultan himself disbursed their wages (*al-jāmakiyya*), the mamluks refused to accept them and stubbornly demanded the promised grant together with their wages, saying they were not prepared to wait until the following month. Their resolve caused the sultan to give in, but when the grant was not awarded to those mamluks who had not taken part in the battle, there was again much talk of mutiny against the sultan, who this time did not back down.²¹⁰

The political power accumulated by the mamluks and the general recognition it was accorded quite naturally changed the social stratification of the Mamluk elite. The rank-and-file mamluks pushed the amir class downwards, while the sultan became dependent to a large extent upon rank-and-file soldiers, his authority and that of the officers responsible for discipline reduced beyond recognition. For this reason sultans in the 15th century were meticulous about preserving a clear separation between the rank-and-file mamluks and the commanding stratum in the army. The rank-and-file mamluks who usually formed the ruling sultan's household, in spite of the tremendous power they wielded in matters of government, were rarely advanced to high military ranks which instead went to the veteran mamluks of the sultan's predecessors who thus had but little say in government. There are a number of examples showing the amirs' vulnerability vis-à-vis mamluks' power.²¹¹ For instance, on 16 Şafar 846/27 June 1442, some two thousand mamluks

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

²¹¹ See, e.g., the case of the Mu'ayyadiyya, al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's household; Irwin, "Factions".

from the Citadel barracks rioted. They climbed on to the barrack roofs and from there pelted anyone entering or leaving the Citadel with stones, making it impossible for amirs and high office-holders to enter and see the sultan. Sultan al-Zāhir Jaqmaq, who had himself purchased and trained them, sent the officer in charge of discipline for a conciliatory meeting, but they refused to talk to him and “demanded the impossible [*mā lā yumkin fi‘luhu*]”. The following day they broke into the sultan’s armoury from which they took large amounts of weapons, all the while vilifying the sultan, whom they said they would depose. Only then did al-Zāhir Jaqmaq decide to act against them, but the amirs and veteran mamluks he mobilized for the battle stopped him and warned him of the danger of losing his throne. Four days later the rioting subsided, not because the mamluks had reached a compromise with the sultan but because of dissension among themselves. The sources make no mention of any punishment meted out to the mamluks, even though thirty civilians and eleven mamluks had been killed.²¹²

On 11 Jumādā al-Ūlā 854/2 July 1450, Amir Tanam min ‘Abd al-Rāziq, who was *amīr majlis*, complained to the sultan about his mamluks’ insolence and Jaqmaq imprisoned ten of Tanam’s mamluks for their misconduct towards their master. The following day, while he was on his way from the Citadel together with Īnāl, *atābak al-‘asākir*, the sultan’s mamluks, the *julbān*, surrounded Tanam and took him to task for complaining to the sultan about his mamluks. Īnāl succeeded in pacifying them, promising that the imprisoned mamluks would be released. The mamluks allowed them to proceed, but returning in the direction of the Citadel, they caught hold of Zayn al-Dīn Yaḥyā, the *ustādār*, and beat him with their cudgels till he threw himself from his horse and fled. Next day, the mamluks’ demands were met and their colleagues released.²¹³

At the end of Jumādā al-Ākhira 859/15 June 1455, Sultan al-Ashraf Īnāl readied an expeditionary force of some five hundred mamluks for battle against the Bedouin in al-Buḥayra province. Due to the prevailing economic difficulties, he was unable to provide the forces with the customary camels. The mamluks refused to fight and gathered in the Cairo horse market, *sūq al-khayl*, their actions again coordinated by many of the rank-and-file mamluks

²¹² *Tibr*, p. 41; *‘Iqd* (Qarmūt), p. 578; *Nujūm*, 15, p. 352.

²¹³ *Nujūm*, 15, pp. 410, 414.

“without a leader from among the amirs to manage things [*min ‘adam ra’īs yudabbiru amrahum min al-umarā’*]”.²¹⁴ When Amir Yūnus al-Āqbā’ī al-Dawādār left the Citadel, he was immediately surrounded by mamluks who intended to ask him, so it seemed, to speak on their behalf with the sultan about their remuneration. But Yūnus’s mamluks, who soon understood that they were actually out to kill him, defended their master wounding some of the attackers in the process. The moment Yūnus managed to extricate himself, he hastened back to the Citadel to inform the sultan of what had occurred. When the mamluks learned that he was again in the Citadel, they besieged the gates and demanded that he be handed over to them. The sultan sent the officers in charge of discipline to placate them, but these they treated with insolence and they only repeated their demands. They then went to loot Yūnus’s home but failed and returned to the horse market. When the sultan despatched a herald to the market to announce that no harm would come to the mamluks provided they desisted from their actions, the mamluks beat him into silence. The sultan also tried to offer compensation to the mamluks wounded, but they would not be appeased. The following morning, they blocked the path of the amirs as they made their way from the Citadel to their homes, forcing them to retrace their steps and remain in the Citadel. At noon, the sultan sent four amirs as emissaries who were promptly taken hostage for as long as the mamluks’ demands were not fulfilled. At the advice of the veteran mamluks, the younger mamluks intensified their struggle and “moved from the language of words to the language of deeds [*wa-kharajū min al-qawl ilā al-fi‘l*]”.²¹⁵ They took up arms and brought in the caliph so that his presence at their side might legitimize their deeds. Deciding he had no alternative, the sultan went into the offensive and routed them. Still, the mamluks were given their camels before they went into battle and the caliph was relieved of his post.²¹⁶

Another example indicative of mamluk independence and growing insolence occurred in 873/1468 when Uzbek, who was *atābak al-‘asākir* at the time, refused to go into battle against the Bedouin in al-Buḥayra province, afraid he would be unable to control the

²¹⁴ *Hawādith*, 2, p. 531.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 528–531, 532.

sultan's mamluks, *al-ajlāb*, who had been placed under his command. Instead of trying to dispel Uzbek's fears, the sultan pleaded with him until Uzbek agreed to go into battle.²¹⁷

That the once powerful status of the amirs was by now almost completely eroded and largely supplanted by that of the rank-and-file mamluks, we learn *inter alia* from the change that occurred in the 15th century in the position of the office of *amīr jāndār*, one of whose tasks was notifying the amirs of the sultan's decisions in matters of appointments, dismissals, and punishments. Ibn Taghrī Birdī reports that "this office was since filled by rank-and-file soldiers, but previously had been the most prestigious office".²¹⁸ With Mamluk military hierarchy now completely done away with, there was no need to maintain any correlation between their military ranks and the administrative positions the mamluks filled. Minor amirs and simple soldiers filled positions which in the past had been filled by amirs of one hundred and commanders of one thousand. Ibn Taghrī Birdī bears testimony to this when, enumerating the amirs of ten and amirs of forty who held office in the sultan's court in 841/1437, he adds, "And these, even though they were only amirs of forty and amirs of ten, their status was that of commander of one thousand, because, in previous generations, these positions had been filled by commanders of one thousand".²¹⁹

During the rule of al-Zāhir Khushqadam, government matters were for a long period in the hands of two amirs of ten, Jānibak al-Maḥmūdī al-Mu'ayyadī and 'Alī Bāy al-'Ajāmī al-Mu'ayyadī, who jointly held the post of *ra's nawba*, which was possibly what lend them their power.²²⁰ Amir Khā'ir Bāk ruled in much the same manner behind Sultan al-Zāhir Yalbāy (872/1467), with the support of the younger mamluks. He was *dawādār thānī* and held the rank of amir of twenty.²²¹

²¹⁷ Ibn Iyās, 2, p. 106. For many other examples of the mamluks' lack of discipline, see *ibid.*, pp. 218–219, 229, 230, 239–240, 247, 296, 322, 323, 330, 339; 3, p. 84; *Nujūm*, 15, p. 90; 16, pp. 95–96, 100–102, 138–139, 159.

²¹⁸ *Nujūm*, 16, p. 287; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 222. See as well *Hawādith*, 2, p. 431.

²¹⁹ *Nujūm*, 15, p. 223. Note especially, *Ibid.*, pp. 74–75.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15, pp. 286–287, 351.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 16, pp. 75, 306, 361, 372.

Even the allotment of grants indicates a preferential treatment of the rank-and-file Mamluk class, forming another encroachment on the amirs' status. The adverse economic situation during the last hundred and fifty years of the Mamluk state compelled sultans at times to award grants first to influential pressure groups, and only then, if at all, to others. The mamluks now constituted such a pressure group, while the amirs fell into the second category. Thus, in 865/1461, awarding the customary grants after his rise to power, Khushqadam first awarded grants to the Sultani Mamluks and held those for the amirs in abeyance. The latter were given their grants only after their own mamluks had staged demonstrations on their masters' behalf.²²² In 872/1467, with the rise to power of al-Zāhir Timurbughā, only the Sultani Mamluks were awarded grants.²²³

Finally, a clear indication of the rank-and-file mamluks' powerful position, not only within the Mamluk elite but also among the civilian population, is the rise of mamluks as arbiters in civil cases at the expense of the judicial system. Paradoxically, while it was the mamluks themselves who had broken the bounds of the law by casting terror into the hearts of sultans, amirs and the civilian population,²²⁴ in the anarchy which ensued they proved to be the only ones capable of enforcing decisions through the power they now held. For purely practical reasons, the civilian population eschewed the *sharʿī* courts and increasingly turned to the mamluks with their disputes. The mamluks themselves did not feel subject to the Mamluk judicial system as quite naturally they could turn to their own leaders.

²²² *Nujūm*, 16, p. 259.

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 363, 382; *Sulūk*, 4, p. 28.

²²⁴ Ibn Iyās, 2, p. 103; for many other examples, see *Nujūm*, 12, pp. 271–272, 280, 289, 297, 300, 327; 14, pp. 212–213, 220, 222–223, 321, 327–328, 330, 332, 340, 356, 371; 15, pp. 50–51, 83, 90, 228, 230, 232, 233, 263, 270, 279, 365, 397–400, 410–411, 418, 423, 433, 434, 435; 16, pp. 84, 87–89, 94, 95, 96, 98, 100–102, 112, 114, 117, 118, 123, 125, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 136–137, 138, 141, 158, 261–262, 276, 288, 290, 291, 297, 308, 361; Ibn Iyās, 2, pp. 141, 148, 149, 151, 153, 183, 195, 214, 215, 218–219, 220, 226, 228, 230, 239, 240, 241, 245, 248, 257, 287, 330, 339, 342–343, 346, 347, 351; 3, pp. 5, 6, 33–34, 43, 54–55, 80; *Iqd* (Qarmūt), 159, 359, 414, 455, 511, 518, 578, 628, 644, 656; *Hawādith*, 1, pp. 180–181, 266, 269, 271, 273; 2, pp. 333, 338, 448, 481, 486, 505, 517, 527, 529, 538, 568–569, 570, 586, 592–593, 595; *Sulūk*, 4, pp. 100, 105, 480, 551, 749, 784, 800, 804, 805, 818, 864, 930, 931, 1009, 1026, 1027, 1056, 1058, 1177; *Tibr*, pp. 313–315, 322–323; al-Jawhari, 3, pp. 147, 157, 178, 279, 304–305, 340, 400, 401, 406, 425, 426, 433, 435–436; *Dawʿ*, 2, p. 329.

The latter amassed such immense power that some of them had an administrative apparatus which resembled that of an amir.²²⁵ The authoritative positions certain mamluks enjoyed as “judges” naturally also played a great part in raising and consolidating their social status.

Al-Maqrīzī, and later, Ibn Taghrī Birdī, in their critical description of the rank-and-file mamluks’ capability as fighters and their attitudes towards their fellows, both within and outside the Mamluk elite, offer another telling glimpse of the drastic change that had occurred in their status:

And most surprising of all was that they (the early mamluks) were well endowed with courtesy, humility, and obedience towards their superiors, and good manners and courtesy towards their inferiors. And they (their contemporary mamluks) . . . do not try to hold the reins of the horse and when they speak, they speak arrogantly. They have no profession other than robbery. They are mighty at the expense of the weak and greedy for even a loaf of bread. Deriding the leader is their *jihād* and their raids are for straw and dried clover. . . .²²⁶

²²⁵ *Nujūm*, 16, pp. 114, 130, 159.

²²⁶ *Nujūm*, 7, p. 329, also p. 332. *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, p. 214.

CHAPTER FOUR

MAMLUK ECONOMY UNDER AL-NĀṢİR MUḤAMMAD: PAWNING THE FUTURE

And even if you wish to change this situation (. . .)
you will no longer be able to do so.

(Al-Yūsūfi, p. 207)

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, a number of studies have appeared examining the economic factors which brought about the decline of the Mamluk state and counterbalancing to some extent the traditional approach which saw that decline chiefly as a result of changes in Mamluk government and the latter's growing failure to manage the state.

Among Mamluk chroniclers, it was al-Maqrizī who blamed the Mamluk state's economic decline on the monetary crisis which beset it from the 1380s when the first Circassian sultan, Sultan Barqūq, was in power. More precisely, al-Maqrizī accused the Mamluk government of conducting a monetary policy which caused a drain of silver from Egypt to Europe and of flooding the local market with copper coins instead for the sole purpose of profit taking.¹ As a result, the monetary system in Egypt came to be based on copper and no longer on silver.² In order to remedy this situation, al-Maqrizī suggested a return to gold and silver coinage while using the copper currency solely for small, local business dealings.³ While modern historians of the Mamluk period have their reservations concerning many of al-Maqrizī's assessments, they all agree that the monetary crisis contributed to the downward spiral of Egypt's economy at the time.

¹ *Sulūk*, 4, pp. 28–29.

² Udovitch, "England to Egypt", p. 124.

³ Bacharach, "Copper", p. 35; see also Ṣāliḥ, "Maqrizī's Remarks", pp. 298–301.

J.L. Bacharach, following al-Maqrīzī, views the Circassian sultans as being responsible for the monetary crisis in Egypt, but does not think that the move to a monetary system based upon copper was the result of a clear-cut decision. Rather, it took place gradually. Bacharach does agree that it was during the rule of Barqūq that government officials, with the sultan's knowledge, initiated a deliberate policy of exporting silver from Egypt to Europe and flooding the market with copper currency for their own profit. In 783/1381, in order to make good the shortfall of silver currency on the market, Barqūq ordered the minting of a heavy copper coin that would come between another copper coin which was already legal tender, the *fals* (pl. *fulūs*), and the silver dirham. In Syria, apparently, a lead coin was minted in 787/1385. Both coins were rejected by the market.⁴ Only with the accession of Barqūq's son, Faraj, in 801/1399, did copper become the predominant coin in most of the population's business dealings. Soon it was the only currency in use locally and even replaced the silver dirham and the gold dinar in international commerce. Only in 805/1403 was the monetary system itself based upon copper, after Faraj had devaluated the dirham in order to meet the financial demands of his mamluks.⁵ The exchange rate thereafter was set in terms of copper, which meant that the rates of gold, silver and copper were now calculated in terms of a copper dirham (*dirham min al-fulūs*) and no longer according to the real value of the metals.⁶ From this time until 886/1481, when the monetary system emerged from its crisis during the rule of Qāytbāy (872–901/1468–1496), far from trying to formulate a monetary policy that could extricate the economy from the crisis, the Mamluk sultans turned manipulation of the exchange rate of the *dirham min al-fulūs* into a common practice.⁷ Moreover, copper gradually began to disappear from the market because of a number of reasons: copper mining was halted in Europe, copper was hoarded because of its value, it was increasingly used for household utensils, and, together with gold, copper became the means of payment for the import

⁴ Bacharach, "Copper", pp. 35–36; Shoshan "Exchange-Rate", pp. 42–43.

⁵ Bacharach, "Silver", pp. 270–272.

⁶ Idem, "Copper", pp. 37, 39–40.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40; idem, "Dinar", pp. 82, 84; Shoshan, "Exchange-Rate", p. 37.

of spices from India. As a result, copper coins were devaluated both in weight and metal value.⁸

Boaz Shoshan believes that since the Middle East depended on import for its precious metals, the move from silver to copper in the Mamluk monetary system resulted from a shortage of silver in those European countries where the metal was mined.⁹ Prior to the shortage in Europe there had been a large-scale movement of precious metals, both in the form of bullion and currency, from western Europe to the Levant in exchange for the raw materials and luxury items which were imported from there.¹⁰ The Mamluk rulers, therefore, when they flooded the market with copper currency because of the lack of silver, were following, rather than initiating, market trends.¹¹ Furthermore, the monetary crisis drastically reduced the income of a number of Egyptian sectors, among which the Mamluks themselves.¹² The Circassian sultans, in order to combat problems of inflation which had followed the change to copper, tried to implement reforms in copper currency and to instigate a single exchange rate, but market trends proved stronger and eventually beyond control. They also tried a return to silver: after they had obtained a limited amount of the metal, they first minted new silver coins and then by devaluating the dinar against the dirham sought to attract silver imports to Egypt so as to base the entire monetary system on silver once again. These efforts were only partly successful because they did not address the root of the problem, the lack of a steady supply of precious metals to Egypt.¹³ Only after silver, copper and the other metals had come back onto the market as a result of the renewal of mining operations in Europe did the monetary crisis come to an end.¹⁴

A.L. Udovitch sees the flooding of the Egyptian market with copper coins, following the shortage there of precious metals, as a

⁸ Bacharach, "Copper", pp. 42-43; Shoshan, "From Silver to Copper", pp. 110-111.

⁹ Shoshan, "Exchange-Rate", pp. 41-42; idem, "From Silver to Copper", pp. 100-101.

¹⁰ Idem, "From Silver to Copper", pp. 99-100; Ashtor, *Les métaux précieux*, pp. 65-70.

¹¹ Shoshan, "Exchange-Rate", p. 43.

¹² Idem, "From Silver to Copper", p. 106.

¹³ Idem, "Exchange-Rate", pp. 37-38, 51; idem "From Silver to Copper", pp. 105-106.

¹⁴ Idem, "Exchange-Rate", pp. 42, 47-50; "From Silver to Copper", pp. 103, 115-116; Bacharach, "Silver", pp. 272-278; Ashtor, *Les métaux précieux*, pp. 45-46; idem, *Levant Trade*, pp. 440-441.

symptom of the adverse trade balance which existed in the Mamluk state in its international trade during the 14th and 15th centuries.¹⁵ More precisely, while the trade balance with Europe was positive, it could not offset the negative trade balance with India and the Black Sea countries. This was because from the middle of the 14th century, gold which reached Egypt from western Sudan was siphoned off to Europe,¹⁶ and from then on the spice trade was Egypt's only source for precious metals. Moreover, Egypt's own natural resources, alum and emeralds, became exhausted during this period. Even with the drop in the government's reserves of precious metals, and despite the deep economic crisis in which the country found itself, the Mamluk sultans continued to buy mamluks as before while they made no attempt to reduce the imports of luxury goods from the Black Sea countries.¹⁷ Also, part of the spices imported from the Orient were consumed in Egypt instead of being used for export to Europe. This further caused a drain on the gold that would reach Egypt from Europe for spices.¹⁸

While agreeing that the Mamluk government continued to spend a certain amount of gold on the slave trade and luxury goods from the Black Sea and other regions, and that the Egyptian population consumed part of the spices from the Orient, E. Ashtor believed that this expenditure was balanced by the gold Egypt received from Sudan in exchange for the cheap goods it sold there. Moreover, from 746/1345 there was a gradual renewal of the European entrepôt trade with Egypt and Syria, which was maintained successfully¹⁹ from 772/1370 until the demise of the Mamluk state. Although Egypt's balance of trade on the whole was favourable, the Egyptian economy still collapsed in the middle of the 15th century as a result of the high cost of the wars against the Bedouin and Turkomans from within, the Portuguese in the Red Sea area and the Ottomans in the north, and also because technologically it lagged behind Europe

¹⁵ Udovitch, "England to Egypt", pp. 124, 126.

¹⁶ According to Ashtor, the supply of gold from the Sudan to Egypt did not cease from the middle of the 14th century but only diminished, as most of it found its way to Europe through Tunisia and Morocco, cf. Ashtor, *Les métaux précieux*, pp. 18–20, 28–29; idem, *Social and Economic History*, pp. 324, 329; Shoshan, "From Silver to Copper", pp. 99–100.

¹⁷ The import of mamluks to Egypt, far from being a luxury, was of vital importance for the maintenance of the Mamluk military elite.

¹⁸ Udovitch, "England to Egypt", pp. 126–128.

¹⁹ Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, p. 300; Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, pp. 23–25.

where new inventions had been adopted in industry and handicrafts.²⁰

All scholars agree on the far-reaching demographic and economic effects on the Middle East of the Black Death, which raged from the end of 748/1347 to the beginning of 750/1349. In Egypt alone, both the Mamluk elite and the common people suffered a demographic catastrophe.²¹ As to the extent of the depopulation in Egypt and Syria, historians tend to accept al-Maqrizi's assessment that one-third of the population was decimated, which corresponds with the accepted assessments of the mortality rate in Europe during the epidemic there.²² The urban populations, especially Cairo's, were so badly hit that whole streets were no longer inhabited, while the number of farmers who remained alive in the villages were insufficient to till the land. A shortage of manpower led many artisans to join the Mamluk army.²³

Demographic recovery in Europe in the wake of the epidemic was helped by the fact that the economic resources left in the hands of the survivors increased the per capita wealth.²⁴ But a further sixteen major epidemics in Egypt and fifteen in Syria from the 760s/1360s until the end of autonomous Mamluk rule in 923/1517, prevented the possibility of any economic recovery there, and the Egyptian economy entered its spiral of decline.²⁵

The early years of the 15th century were a particularly difficult period. It was a time of civil strife in which al-Nāşir Faraj (801–

²⁰ Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, pp. 511–512.

²¹ Udovitch, "England to Egypt", p. 119; Ayalon, "The Plague", pp. 68–70; Ashtor, *Histoire des prix*, p. 49; Darrag, p. 59; Dols, "General Mortality", p. 413; idem, *Black Death*, pp. 154–162.

²² Udovitch, "England to Egypt", p. 120; Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, pp. 302–303; idem, *Levant Trade*, p. 434; Dols, "Second Plague", pp. 168–173; idem, *Black Death*, p. 223; Tucker, p. 219; Poliak, "Demographic Evaluation", p. 201; Ayalon, "The Plague", pp. 67–73; idem "Population Estimates", pp. 6–12, 18.

²³ Udovitch, "England to Egypt", pp. 119–120; Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, pp. 301–302; Rabie, "Aspects of Agriculture", p. 76.

²⁴ Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, pp. 437–440; idem, "Factors of Technological and Industrial Progress", pp. 15–16; Dols, *Black Death*, pp. 231, 282–283. There is controversy in scholarly works on the history of the re-occurrences of the plague epidemics in Europe in the 15th century, some holding that the reappearance of the plague did not affect demography whereas others maintain that there was continual demographic decline in Europe; see Dols, *Black Death*, pp. 225–226.

²⁵ Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, p. 302; idem, *Levant Trade*, p. 433; Udovitch, "England to Egypt", pp. 119, 122, 127; Dols, "Second Plague", pp. 168–169; idem, "General Mortality", pp. 405, 409–411; idem, *Black Death*, pp. 223, 224.

815/1399–1412) burdened the population with heavy taxation to pay for his wars against the rebellious amirs. Apart from high inflation, Egypt was hit by droughts in 806/1403 and 807/1404 which further increased the distress of the population. Arab writers reported that half the population succumbed, many villages ceased to exist, and half of the land under cultivation was abandoned. Syria was ravaged by Timurlang's invasion in 800/1397 and those parts of Damascus that were destroyed remained in ruins until the middle of the 15th century. As a result of these catastrophes, large parts of Syria and Egypt lay waste, their populations forced to adopt a change in their way of life.²⁶ Furthermore, a corrupt and oppressive Mamluk government added to a further loss of economic potential, reducing the entire population to a standard of living so low that they often reached the point of malnutrition.²⁷

A further indication of the drop in population in the villages and the loss of arable land about which contemporary chroniclers complained so bitterly may be found in the fall in state land revenues. In 715/1315, at the time of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's land survey (*al-rawk al-Nāṣiri*), these revenues reached 9,428,289 dinar *jayshī* (the "army dinar"), 9,584,284 in 777/1375, while at the time of the Ottoman occupation in 923/1517, revenues totalled a mere 1,800,000 dinars. A Burgundian traveller who visited Syria in 1432 relates that the country areas around Hamat and Antioch were uninhabited at the time of his visit. Of the 2,322 villages which existed in Egypt in 777/1375, 2,122 were left by 858/1454.²⁸ The Fayyūm area fell into ruin because of the destruction of the irrigation system there. Of the 24,000 *faddāns*²⁹ which had been under cultivation at Luxor, only 1,000 were cultivated in 786/1384. The Mamluk sultans' efforts to repair the dams in Egypt and the irrigation system in Syria during the second half of the 15th century met with stiff opposition from the *muqāṭi'ūn*, the fief holders. The latter had the habit of levying money from the farmers for maintenance of the irrigation system but all the same forcing the responsibility for

²⁶ Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, pp. 304, 306–307; Dols, *Black Death*, p. 234; Darrag, pp. 58–59.

²⁷ Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, pp. 301, 308; Udovitch, "England to Egypt", p. 120.

²⁸ Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, p. 303, but in his "Economic Decline of the Middle East", p. 256, Ashtor used different data to indicate the decline of agriculture in Egypt. For *dinār jayshī*, see Glossary.

²⁹ For *faddān*, see Glossary.

keeping it up also upon them. However, the farmers were unable to bear the burden since they obviously lacked the financial and technical capabilities of the government. With the decline of agriculture and the resulting decrease in land revenues, the government increased the frequency of taxation and forced labour on the farmers. Farming suffered at that time also from Bedouin incursions into sown fields, causing further physical damage and impoverishment.³⁰ Farmers began to leave the villages for the city but there, too, their lot was not much different as they only swelled the numbers of the penniless and unemployed, the destitute who were easy prey for all kinds of disease.³¹

As Mamluks were fief holders, the decline of agriculture had a direct effect on the Mamluk elite. Once their income from the country areas dwindled, the Mamluks turned to the urban population. Despite the economic depression, there were two sectors in the towns which continued to flourish after the depredations wreaked by the Black Death. The first were the independent artisans, whose incomes had risen as a result of their reduced number and the growing demand for urban products by the survivors of the plague. The second were the big merchants, who had been left with the property of the epidemic's victims and who profited from the renewal of the transit trade with Europe in 746/1345.³² But this situation was short-lived and both sectors soon faced ruin as a result of the Mamluk government's fiscal policies. They, like the bourgeoisie in the past, had to bear a heavy burden of taxation and frequently faced governmental extortion, either through confiscation on various pretexts of their property, *muşādara*, or by means of the compulsory purchase, *ṭarḥ*, of products the government owned or produced. At one point, for example, the government forced Cairo merchants to purchase wheat, meat, sugar, and even camels which had been taken as booty from the Bedouin, not at free market prices but at rates set by the government.³³ Apart from the *ṭarḥ* system,

³⁰ Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, pp. 285–288; Udovitch, "England to Egypt", pp. 117–118; Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, pp. 21–22, 28.

³¹ Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, p. 437; idem, *Social and Economic History*, pp. 322–323; Dols, *Black Death*, p. 164; Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, pp. 170 off.

³² Udovitch, "England to Egypt", p. 122; Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, pp. 300, 320–321; idem, "Economic Decline of the Middle East", p. 257; idem, *Levant Trade*, pp. 66 off, 72–73, 87–88.

³³ Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, p. 320; idem, "Factors of Technological and Industrial Progress", p. 36; Udovitch, "England to Egypt", p. 118.

the Mamluk government tried to enforce a monopoly on the production and marketing of basic commodities, like sugar and wheat, but in the face of the stout resistance offered by the population these efforts were successful only in the field of luxury goods, such as spices.³⁴ The damaging repercussions were quickly felt—the government succeeded in stifling private enterprise, and industry went into a decline.³⁵

Finally, the economy of the Mamluk state suffered from European competition. Products for which Europe once had been dependent on Middle Eastern expertise, like silk and cotton, edible oil, sugar, soaps, paper and glass, were now produced—and at a better quality at that—in Europe itself and then sold in Middle East markets at prices which were below those of the local products. These low European prices were a result of new technologies which failed to be adopted in the Middle East.³⁶ For example, in the 13th and 14th centuries Upper Egypt produced sugar for all the countries of the Levant. The superior quality of the sugar Syria and Egypt exported was renowned not only in the Islamic countries but throughout the Christian world as well. It was exported to Bahrain, Baghdad, Sicily, and reached western Europe via North Africa and the Turkish countries via Lesser Armenia.³⁷ The decline of sugar production in Egypt went accompanied by the stifling of private enterprise through the gradual transfer of control of the industry from private to government hands, i.e., first from the bourgeoisie to the amirs and the family of the sultan, and finally to the state, whereby production became either a government monopoly or took place under tight government control.³⁸ Government involvement also impinged on marketing, and through the *tarḥ* forced the

³⁴ Shoshan, "Grain Riots", p. 468; Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, pp. 144–153; Fischel, "Spice Trade", pp. 172–174.

³⁵ Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, p. 320; idem, "Levantine Sugar", pp. 102–104, 107; Udovitch, "Aspects of Continuity", p. 16; Darrag, pp. 60, 70–73.

³⁶ Issawi, "Decline of Middle Eastern Trade", p. 250; Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar", p. 113; idem, "Economic Decline of the Middle East", pp. 270–271, 273, 277; idem, *Levant Trade*, pp. 201 off. However, for the idea that the technological gap between Europe and the Levant in the 15th century was not so big as posed by Ashtor himself, see his "Economic Decline of the Middle East", pp. 280–281, 284; *Levant Trade*, p. 207.

³⁷ Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar", pp. 93–96; idem, "Economic Decline of the Middle East", pp. 259, 263, 275–276.

³⁸ Idem, "Levantine Sugar", pp. 102–104.

population to buy sugar at a government-fixed rate. Inevitably, in the absence of a free market, motivation to improve quality and production methods was low. Manpower shortage in the wake of the Black Death and the cessation of sugar-cane cultivation in Upper Egypt raised the price of Syrian and Egyptian sugar but at the same time lowered its quality,³⁹ while in Cyprus and Sicily technological innovations were leading to improved sugar quality and increased yields. It is not surprising that under such circumstances Egyptian sugar producing enterprises gradually closed down and the Levant began to import large quantities of sugar from Cyprus, Sicily, and possibly from Spain. In the 15th century, the fate of the Syrian and Egyptian sugar industry was shared by their cloth, silk, glass, oil, and soap industries.⁴⁰ With the decline of local industry, the Mamluk state's economy primarily became a producer of raw materials for the European countries which then supplied it with all kinds of consumer goods.⁴¹

It is generally accepted that the misrule of the Mamluk sultans formed the common denominator of all factors that caused the economic decline of the Mamluk state, either as their catalyst or simply as their propellant. As the characteristics of misrule and economic decline become more evident from the beginning of the 15th century, some historians see the period of political instability leading up to the rise to power of the Circassian sultans (784/1382) as the starting point of the crisis, while others identify the decline of the state with the beginning of Circassian rule proper.⁴² At the same time, for all the attention it has received, the third period of al-Nāşir Muḥammad's rule has never been connected with the process of decline of the Mamluk state. This may be because the period is usually described as one in which the Mamluk state flourished.⁴³

³⁹ Idem, "Economic Decline of the Middle East", p. 276; "Levantine Sugar", pp. 105-107, 113.

⁴⁰ Idem, "Economic Decline of the Middle East", pp. 273, 276, 277-278, 280; "Levantine Sugar", p. 116; *Levant Trade*, pp. 201 off.; Udovitch, "Aspects of Continuity", p. 16.

⁴¹ Ashtor, "Economic Decline of the Middle East", pp. 258-262, 263, 264; idem, *Levant Trade*, pp. 465-466, 482, 494, 503-505, 507, 509.

⁴² Udovitch, "England to Egypt", pp. 117-118; Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, p. 301; Ayalon, "Circassians", pp. 144-147; Dols, *Black Death*, p. 281.

⁴³ G. Wiet in "l'Égypte arabe de la conquête arabe à la conquête ottomane" (pp. 481 ff.) and D. Ayalon, in "Auxiliary Forces" (p. 35), pointed at the importance of al-Nāşir Muḥammad's third reign for a better understanding of the economic decline of the Mamluk state.

However, contemporary Mamluk chronicles clearly indicate that the last ten years of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's rule were a period of deep economic crisis, with a fiscal policy that burdened the population no less than the one implemented by the Circassian sultans in the 15th century. A close reading of the sources reveals that, as with its military problems, the economic problems which beset the Mamluk state during the period of its decline, too, had their roots in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign.

Prosperity Carrying the Seeds of Decline

Upon his final ascent to the sultanate, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad set out to emulate, if not to surpass, the achievements of his predecessors. Naturally, the economy of the Mamluk state was part of his schemes, and, as he did with the system of government, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad introduced ambitious changes in the economy he had inherited.

Increase in State Revenues

Through a series of economic reforms al-Nāṣir Muḥammad swiftly succeeded in increasing the income of the state. He did so through *al-rawk al-Nāṣirī*—the land surveys and the redistribution of *iqṭā'āt* to the army which took place in Syria in 713/1313 and in Egypt in 715/1315—and through fostering the agricultural sector in which he took a special interest.⁴⁴ There was an increase in the area of land earmarked for distribution as *iqṭā'*, as lands which had passed into private hands and had thus been taken out of the distribution system were brought back into it.⁴⁵ Moreover, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad increased the sultan's personal *iqṭā'āt*, *al-khāṣṣ*, from 4/24 to 10/24 of all the land under cultivation.⁴⁶ Al-Jiza province and the villages of Huw, al-Kūm al-Aḥmar, Manfalūt, al-Marj, al-Khuṣūṣ and others were now all, part of the sultan's personal *iqṭā'āt*.⁴⁷ That the sul-

⁴⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 127, 146–147; al-Shujā'i, p. 114; Zetterstéen, pp. 160–161; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fols. 76b–77b; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 285; *ʿIqd*, A2912/4, fol. 312a; *Khitaṭ*, 1, pp. 89–91; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 36, 42–44, 177.

⁴⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 153.

⁴⁶ Rabie, *Financial System*, p. 54.

⁴⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 153. For the geographical location of these villages, see *ibid.*, editor's notes 5 and 6.

tan's personal *iqtā'āt* increased in agricultural and industrial importance and generally flourished is shown by al-Jiza. Al-Maqrīzī tells us that the al-Jiza area had al-Nāšir MuḤammad's special attention. Since its lands lay on a high elevation and thus were unaffected by Nile flooding, the area had previously been a wilderness (*shāsi'a*). The subsequent construction of a regional dam (*jīsr baladī*),⁴⁸ the Umm Dīnār dam (713/1313–14), which stretched from the Nile to the village whose name it bore, of local dams or aqueducts in all the villages of the area, and the digging of the al-Labānī canal made the lands of al-Jiza fit for cultivation. Part of these lands were then given to senior amirs, like Qawṣūn and Bashtāk, who put up buildings which they endowed as *waqf*, while the remainder was distributed among three hundred soldiers as *iqtā'āt*.⁴⁹

For several reasons, *al-rawk al-Nāširi* brought an improvement in the lot of the farmers who lived on the *iqtā'āt*. First of all, the influence the senior amirs could exert was reduced as the *iqtā'āt* they had been allotted after the *rawk* were located in different areas of Upper and Lower Egypt.⁵⁰ Second, the farmers were freed of the burden of heavy taxes, since al-Nāšir MuḤammad had decided to cancel these as part of the *rawk*.⁵¹ A poll tax (*jāliya*, pl. *jawālī*) on Coptic farmers, as part of the *iqtā'āt* given to soldiers, these farmers could largely evade by moving from village to village.⁵² Sensitive to the farmers' hardships, al-Nāšir MuḤammad instituted a tax policy which took into account low yields resulting from natural disasters. Thus, for instance, when in 738/1337 there had been a particularly heavy hailstorm, he lowered taxation on farmers from the district of al-Gharbiyya.⁵³

Al-Nāšir MuḤammad's personal supervision of the fief holders

⁴⁸ There were two kinds of dams: the small dams, *al-jusūr al-baladiyya*, the function of which was to irrigate the fields in the villages, and the grand dams, *al-jusūr al-sultāniyya*, which supplied water to the whole province. *Khiṭaṭ*, 1, p. 101; Rabie, "Aspects of Agriculture", p. 61; idem, *Financial System*, pp. 70–71, 115.

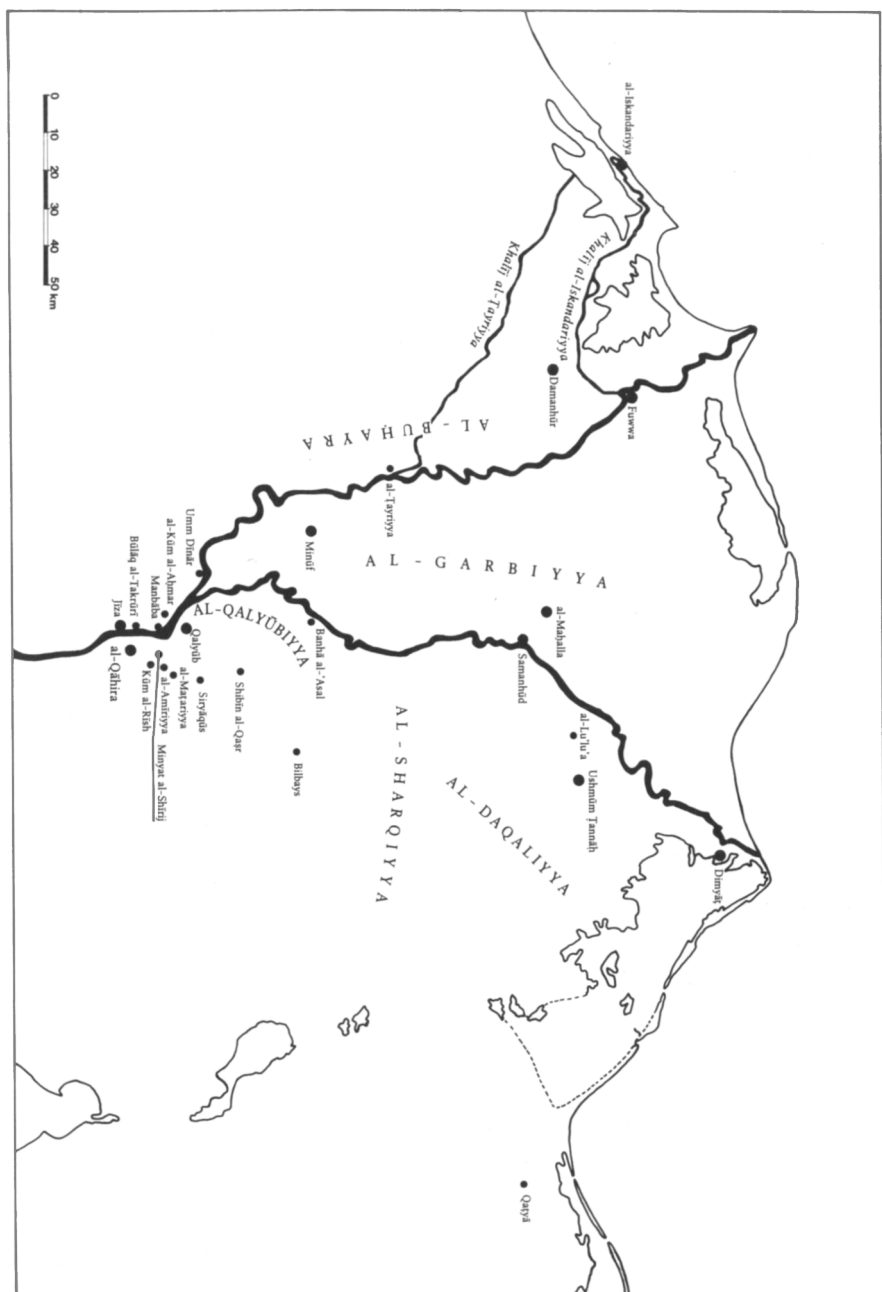
⁴⁹ Al-Shujā'ī, p. 114; Zetterstéén, p. 160; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 190–191; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 130, 541; Rabie, "Aspects of Agriculture", p. 61; idem, *Financial System*, p. 71.

⁵⁰ Rabie, *Financial System*, p. 56.

⁵¹ Al-Nuwayri, 20, fol. 71b; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 286–287; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 150–152; *ʿIqd*, A2912/4, fol. 312a; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 46–50; Rabie, *Financial System*, pp. 55, 82, 86, 103, 104, 105, 113, 114, 115, 121.

⁵² Rabie, *Financial System*, pp. 55–56, 111–112.

⁵³ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 454; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 166–167.



Map 1 Northern Egypt

regarding the upkeep of their lands and the special attention he paid to the irrigation system led to significant advances in agriculture and husbandry during his rule. Al-Maqrīzī reports that throughout Egypt land tax revenues, the *kharāj*, saw an amazing increase, while Ibn Taghrī Birdī ascribes a 50-percent increase in cultivated land to this period as a result of the norms of proper soil husbandry al-Nāşir Muḥammad established for all fief holders.⁵⁴ Thus, for example, if he heard that a village within the bounds of a certain amir's *iqṭā'āt* had not been flooded by the Nile waters, he would not rest until the problem had been solved, even though maintaining his *iqṭā'āt* was officially the sole responsibility of the amir. Regarding the soldiers' *iqṭā'āt*, he gladly acceded to requests for a grant when it benefited agriculture, such as the construction of an irrigation canal or the financing of an additional seed quota which could increase yields.⁵⁵

Not only did al-Nāşir Muḥammad improve all irrigation canals (*tura'*), dams (*jusūr*), and aqueducts (*qanāṭir*) in Upper and Lower Egypt during his rule, he also often personally supervised their maintenance.⁵⁶ Thus, the districts of al-Jiza, al-Buḥayra, Fuwwa, and al-Sharqiyya are all mentioned in the literature as having their lands reverted to cultivation during his rule.⁵⁷ As early as 721/1321 in al-Buḥayra alone, 25,000 *faddāns* were added to the total area of land under cultivation.⁵⁸

Apart from the Umm Dinār dam, al-Nāşir Muḥammad also built two regional irrigation dams. One was built in 723/1323 and stretched from Būlāq to Minyat al-Shirij. It was designed to prevent the flooding by the Nile of the western quarters of Cairo but was also of great benefit to agriculture in the area.⁵⁹ The second was built in 739/1338 and stretched from Shibīn al-Qaşr to Banhā al-ʿAsal and was designed to irrigate the lands of the al-Sharqiyya province, the greater part of which was not flooded by the Nile. With the completion of the dam, additional lands came under the plough.⁶⁰ Al-Nāşir

⁵⁴ *Nujūm*, 9, p. 198.

⁵⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 542; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 192–193; Rabie, *Financial System*, pp. 68, 70.

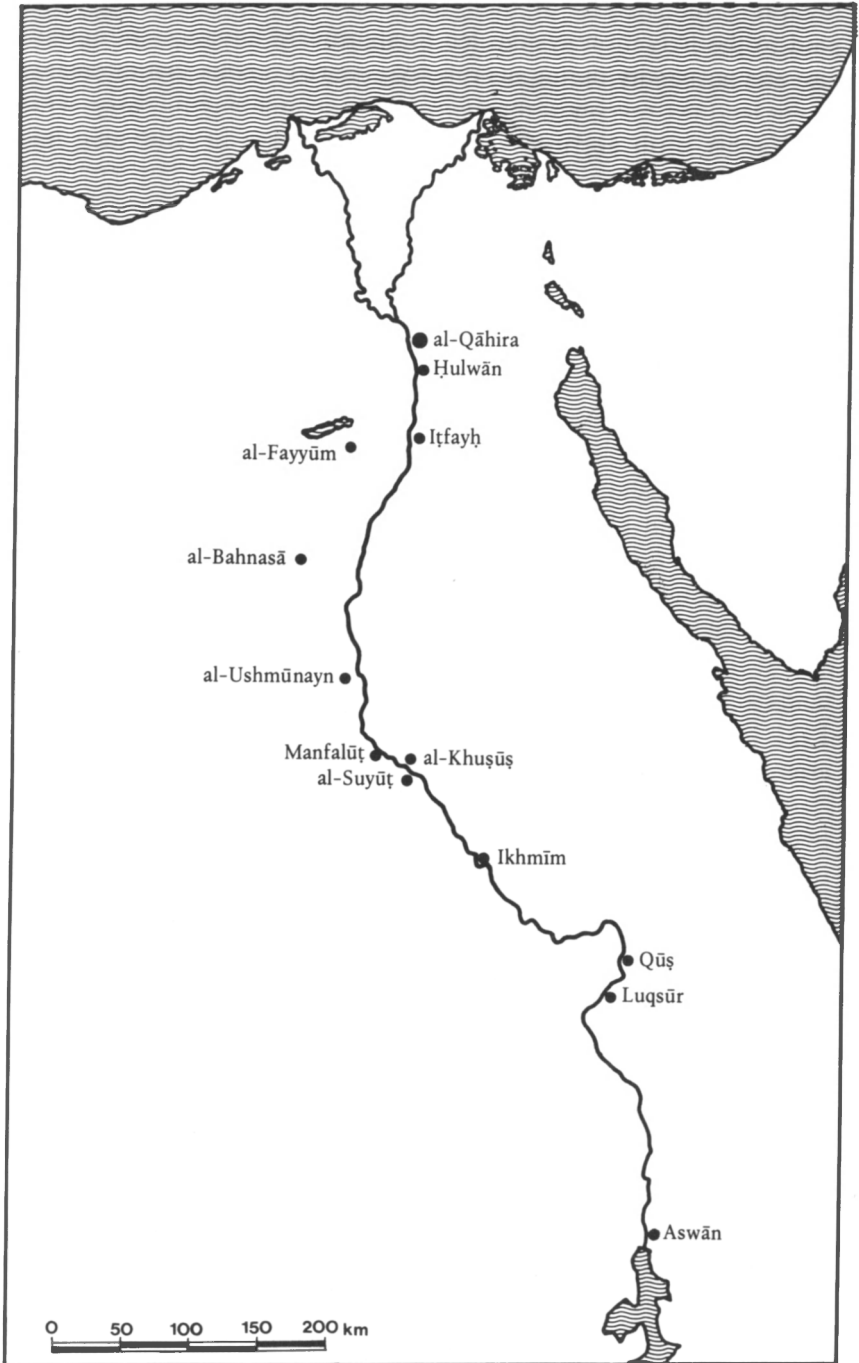
⁵⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 124, 137–138, 173, 541; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 192.

⁵⁷ Rabie, *Financial System*, p. 68.

⁵⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 231.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 251; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 166, 170; Rabie, *Financial System*, p. 71.

⁶⁰ Al-Shujā'ī, p. 47; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 466–467, 472; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 170; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 191–192; Rabie, "Aspects of Agriculture", p. 61; *idem*, *Financial System*, pp. 71, 115.



Map 2 Egypt

Muḥammad also erected the Khalij dam in the western delta and dug the Alexandria canal, resulting in a further 10,000 *faddāns* of arable land and the establishment of forty new villages.⁶¹ Similar developments took place in Syria during al-Nāşir Muḥammad's rule, owing to both the personality and lengthy term of office of the *nā'ib al-salṭana* in Damascus, Amir Tankiz.⁶²

Since it freed not only villages but also the general population from a long series of taxes, *al-rawk al-Nāşirī* brought agricultural and industrial growth. Moreover, industry during the pre-industrial period was based on the processing of agricultural produce, and thus the flourishing of agriculture had a direct effect on industrial production, and in turn on the Mamluk state's commerce. For example, a tax exemption enjoyed by the sugar-cane growers and the extraction presses led to the expansion of both the cane growing sector and the sugar processing industry in the villages and cities.⁶³ Soon sugar-cane was grown in nearly every Egyptian province while Syria also grew extensive tracts of the crop. As we already saw, sugar grown in Upper Egypt went to all the Levant countries and during the second half of the 13th and the first half of the 14th century, Egyptian and Syrian sugar was renowned for its quality throughout the Islamic countries and Europe.⁶⁴ The sultan himself and his Mamluk amirs were greatly involved in the sugar industry—Amirs Qawşūn, Bashtāk and others were large-scale sugar producers and merchants at that time.⁶⁵ Bourgeois families were also involved in sugar production and trade. Wazir 'Alā' al-Dīn Ibn Zanbūr (removed from office in 753/1352), for example, owned twenty-five sugar extraction presses and also traded in sulphur, salt and oil.⁶⁶ The Banū Fuḍayl owned both sugar plantations and sugar processing facilities, their plantations extending over 1,500 *faddāns* annually. In 737/1337, these produced 14,000 *qinṭārs*⁶⁷ of raw sugar as reported by officials the government had sent to over-

⁶¹ Zetterstéén, p. 183; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 111–112; *Khiṭaṭ*, 1, pp. 171–172; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 178–179; Rabie, "Aspects of Agriculture", p. 61; idem, *Financial System*, p. 72; Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, p. 318.

⁶² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 542.

⁶³ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 71b; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 151.

⁶⁴ Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar", pp. 93, 96.

⁶⁵ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 13–14; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 360–361, 419–420, 435, 544, 561, 688; Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar", p. 99.

⁶⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 878, 881.

⁶⁷ For *qinṭār*, see Glossary.

see sugar production for tax purposes. An additional quantity of unreported raw sugar reached 10,000 *qintārs*.⁶⁸ In 726/1324 in al-Fuṣṭāṭ alone there were sixty-six active sugar processing factories.⁶⁹

The involvement of the amirs in commerce provided a further boost. They were exempt from paying taxes not only on their own produce but also on what they imported. Basṭāk, for example, had business ties with a merchant who imported tax-free cloth in his name.⁷⁰ That the part the amirs played in the growth in commerce and trade was extensive is borne out by the number of markets and inns they built in Cairo to accommodate the foreign merchants who operated on their behalf.⁷¹ Further testimony to commercial growth within the Mamluk state can be found in the scale of commercial tax revenues levied at Qaṭyā, the customs post located on the road connecting Egypt with Syria and Iraq. In 725/1324, these reached 1,000 dinars daily, or approximately 350,000 for the entire year. A later drop in commercial tax revenues at Qaṭyā is an indication of the commercial resurgence Egypt enjoyed at this time.⁷² It is highly significant that such a degree of commercial prosperity was achieved despite the worsening situation of the country's transit trade with Europe which had set in at the beginning of the 14th century and continued until 745/1344.⁷³

Fiscal Policy—Establishing a Norm

Despite the growth in agriculture, industry and commerce, it was during the last decade of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's rule that signs of a deep economic crisis came to the fore. By then, expenditures greatly exceeded revenues and threatened to spin out of control. By 729/1328, as a result of low revenues (*min qillat al-wāsil*) the financial situation was such that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad saw himself forced to personally oversee government expenditure on a day-to-

⁶⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 431; Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar", pp. 99, 100, 101. For other examples, see *Sulūk*, 2, p. 347.

⁶⁹ Udovitch, "England to Egypt", p. 116.

⁷⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 360–361, 439; for another example, see al-Yūsufi, p. 198.

⁷¹ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 474, 543, 544; *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 93, 116.

⁷² Udovitch, "England to Egypt", pp. 116–117; Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, pp. 17–18, 39; Rabie, *Financial System*, pp. 101–102.

⁷³ Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, pp. 19, 44–47.

day basis, in order to bring about some improvement in the situation.⁷⁴ Three years later, in 732/1331, al-Nāşir MuḤammad appointed Sharaf al-Dīn al-Nashw to the post of *nāzir al-khāşş*⁷⁵ with the express aim that “he would obtain much money for him [*annahu yuḥaşşilu lahu māl kathīr*].”⁷⁶

That it was the treasury’s deficit which induced al-Nāşir to appoint al-Nashw to the post is obvious from the fact that while al-Nashw was still in the service of Ānuk, one of the sultan’s sons, he had already raised the subject of the treasury’s situation with the sultan and suggested various ways and means of increasing revenues, such as a special levy on administrative office-holders into whose pockets part of the state revenues were known habitually to disappear. In 734/1334, al-Nāşir MuḤammad admitted to Tankiz that he had relieved Ibn Hilāl al-Dawla of his duties as *shādd al-dawāwīn* and had ordered his property confiscated because he “needed his property [*muḥtāj ilā mālihi*].”⁷⁷ When in 739/1338, the sultan’s own expenditures reached 280,000 dirhams a month, he decided to cut them down, together with the expenditure on food and fodder for his amirs, office-holders and some of his personal mamluks.⁷⁸ These cuts had little to do with his overall financial policy for he continued to display his usual open-handedness in other sectors connected with the sultanate—from the court servants to the most senior amirs—and to burden the treasury with his frequent outlays on the ambitious construction projects through which he was determined to project an image of himself as a powerful and dynamic sultan.

Unlike Karīm al-Dīn al-Kabīr, who was *nāzir al-khāşş* in 723/1323 and again in 724/1324, and who had succeeded in keeping a check on al-Nāşir MuḤammad’s expenditures by simply claiming that the treasury was empty even when it was not,⁷⁹ al-Nashw during his period of office, out of fear for his own fate, acquiesced in virtually all of al-Nāşir’s demands, even when these increased with each successive compliance on his part: “And [the more] the sultan’s demands of him increased, [the more] al-Nashw feared

⁷⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 312; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 77–78.

⁷⁵ On al-Nashw, see pp. 73ff. For *nāzir al-khāşş*, see Glossary.

⁷⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 348.

⁷⁷ Al-Yūsufī, p. 251; ‘*Uyūn*, fol. 16a; Zetterstéen, pp. 193, 209. For *shadd al-dawāwīn*, see Glossary.

⁷⁸ Al-Shujā‘ī, pp. 50–51; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 468, 469.

⁷⁹ *Durar*, 1, pp. 403–404; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 245; ‘*Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 346b.

that he would be unable to meet them [*wa-ṭalab al-sultān yatazāyadu, khāfa al-Nashw al-‘ajaz*].”⁸⁰

At al-Nashw’s incentive a tough fiscal policy was now implemented, with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s knowledge and approval. Directed against the urban sector, it was to erode al-Nāṣir’s previous commercial and industrial achievements. With his assumption of office on 17 Rajab 732/15 April 1332, al-Nashw proposed that al-Nāṣir annul the tax exemptions he had granted the amirs, including that on sugar production. Al-Nāṣir accepted the idea and, despite the protests of Qawṣūn, who was one of the biggest sugar producers in Egypt, a current tax was levied on all raw sugar produced in 733/1332.⁸¹ In 738/1337, as part of his efforts to levy a full tax on the sugar production of Upper Egypt, al-Nashw confiscated 14,000 *qintārs* of raw sugar from the Fuḍayl family, and further imposed an additional levy of 8,000 *qintārs* upon them, which they subsequently managed to evade.⁸²

By appointing al-Nashw as *nāzir al-khāṣṣ*, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had found the rubber-stamp he needed in order to drive through his policy of confiscations.⁸³ From the moment al-Nashw took office that policy, *muṣādara*, was activated on such an intensive and non-selective basis that both senior administrative office-holders in Cairo and minor district officials suffered equally. Moreover, anyone somehow connected with the victims was usually included in the confiscation lists: “And the harm caused by al-Nashw affected everyone [*wa-‘ammat maḍarrat al-Nashw al-nas jamī‘an*].”⁸⁴ Mūsā Ibn al-Tāj, *nāzir al-jaysh*, for example, was dismissed in this way from his post and his property confiscated, as was that of his brother, Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Tāj, who had served as *nāzir al-dawla*, after they had first mercilessly been tortured.⁸⁵ The property of Ibn Hilāl al-Dawla, who served as *shādd al-dawāwīn* (734/1333), was confiscated after he had been similarly tortured, as was the property of all those identified with him.⁸⁶

A directive in 733/1332 ordered the confiscation of the property

⁸⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 473, also p. 432.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 360–361; Rabie, *Financial System*, p. 82.

⁸² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 431.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 361, also p. 358.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 348–349, 350–351, 358. For *nāzir al-jaysh* and *nāzir al-dawla*, see Glossary.

⁸⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 370, 381.

of all the office-holders in Upper Egypt. In 735/1334, Qushtamur, *wālī* of the al-Gharbiyya province (central Delta), was required to pay the treasury the sum of 80,000 dirhams. Qanghalī, *wālī* of al-Bahnasā, was subjected to several beatings before he paid the treasury the sum of 75,000 dirhams, while Khālīd al-Muqaddam was beaten until he paid the treasury 330,000 dirhams and undertook to pay a sum of 10,000 dirham per day (in actual fact he paid the treasury 100,000 dirhams over a period of a month). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Duwaydārī was flogged to death while under interrogation, which meant that 300,000 dirhams could be transferred to the treasury. The inspector of the sheep market died under similar circumstances.⁸⁷

Notable victims of al-Nashw were the merchants, simply because their goods were easily accessible to government authorities and because of the government's ability to control the market. The government would lay its hands on goods at the customs posts on the roads to the markets and then control their sale in the city through the supervision exercised by its functionaries over the market brokers.⁸⁸ Thus, in 733/1332, al-Nashw forced wealthy merchants to purchase from the government quantities of cloth, which at his orders had been brought from Alexandria, at a price three times higher than its real value.⁸⁹ By 739/1338, al-Nashw had refined the compulsory purchase system even further: he first levied a realistic tax on a large shipment of cloth from Ba'albek which had been brought by merchants from Syria, obliged them then to sell the cloth to the government at a price of his own choosing, and then coerced the Cairene cloth merchants to purchase the cloth at a price which again was three times higher than its real value.⁹⁰ In other instances, al-Nashw forced the Cairene merchants, often by violent means, to purchase wood, iron, beans, clover, and even obsolete military uniforms and second-hand shoes from the government.⁹¹

It is clear that at least part of the loss incurred by the merchants was passed on to the general populace, which suffered heavily in

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 360, 381; for other examples, see pp. 359–360, 392, 420, 431, 452, 456, 475; Al-Shujā'i, pp. 25, 52–53; al-Yūsufī, pp. 130–131, 177, 181–183, 242–244, 259, 261, 263, 288–289, 294; *Durar*, 1, p. 404; 3, pp. 272–273.

⁸⁸ On the office which was in charge of the taxes levied from merchants, *matjar*, see Rabie, *Financial System*, pp. 94–95.

⁸⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 361; for other examples, see pp. 360, 390.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2, p. 439.

⁹¹ Al-Yūsufī, pp. 128, 177, 350–353, 356–359, 372; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 360, 412, 420, 435, 444, 469; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 116, 131.

particular when day-to-day products were traded under the terms of the *ṭarḥ* system and in fact had become a government monopoly. In 737/1336, bean brokers were forced to sell only to the sultan, which caused financial losses to the water-wheel owners who raised water from the Nile, as the animals that operated the wheels were fed on beans.⁹² In the same year there was a shortage of meat when, following al-Nashw's practice of confiscating sheep and compensating the merchants with half their price, merchants simply stopped coming to Egypt. Al-Nashw took advantage of the meat shortage to force all meat traders in Cairo to buy from the government the old and tired animals that were used to activate the water-wheels inside the Citadel (*sawāqī*) and on the banks of the Nile (*dawālib*) at a price of two dirham and a third per *raṭl*.⁹³ He also sold such animals to millers and bathhouses at one hundred dirhams per head, when they were actually worth less than twenty dirham: "And the people suffered great hardship and loss because of this [*fa-buliya al-nās fī dhālika bi-mashaqqa wa-khasāra kabīra*]."⁹⁴

Despite this bleak situation, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's financial demands from the treasury remained extravagant. That they now more or less determined the size and intensity of the confiscations seems to indicate that by this time the treasury must have been completely empty. Two remarkable events may illustrate this. In 736/1335, when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad demanded a sum of 10,000 dinars, al-Nashw apologetically responded that he was unable to raise such a sum. After having been severely chastised by the sultan, al-Nashw withdrew money from deposits which had been placed in the charge of the '*ulamā'*' by donors to an orphans fund, an act which flew in the face of the *sharī'a*. Al-Nashw then confiscated 400,000 dirham from the al-Dawādārī orphans' home, compensating the home with goods. A further sum of 6,000 dinars, which had been contributed for the welfare of orphans by the sons of Arghūn al-Nā'ib and placed in the trusted hands of the chief Mālikī *qāḍī*, was transferred, after an acrimonious exchange in which the sultan was personally involved, to al-Nashw.⁹⁵

⁹² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 408. On turning emerald (*al-zumurrud*) mining in Egypt into a monopoly of the government during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign, see Rabie, *Financial System*, pp. 87–88.

⁹³ For *riṭl*, see Glossary.

⁹⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 409; for other examples of forced purchase on merchants, see *ibid.*, p. 435.

⁹⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 393–394. On other cases of confiscations from religious institutions, see *ibid.*, pp. 413–414, 420, 435–436, 464.

In 738/1337, Egypt was assailed by a series of natural disasters. The severe hailstorm which hit the al-Gharbiyya district caused extensive damage and made the sultan decide to exempt the farmers from paying tax on their damaged crops. In Manfalūṭ, a plague of mice destroyed both crops in the fields and yields in storage, causing damage to the sultan's own 60,000 *irdabb*⁹⁶ of beans. In Upper Egypt, in the Qūṣ, Aswān and al-Uqṣur (Luxor) areas, storms caused the destruction of homes and heavy damage to the date plantations. That year the Nile flood was late, but when it finally came it was with such sudden force and intensity (*ziyāda mutataḥbi'a 'alā hīn ghaḥḥa*) that its waters inundated the grain stores, causing heavy damage.⁹⁷

Al-Nāṣir's spending on consumer goods in 739/1338 may have been so exorbitant that he decided to cut down on his own sultanic household expenses, but these cuts proved so insignificant that they only highlight the immense size of his other expenditures that year. For the celebrations surrounding the confinement of his wife, the daughter of Tankiz, her father and other family members were invited to come to Egypt, and al-Nashw was ordered to provide all the required ceremonial accoutrements for the new mother which ran at 100,000 dinars, in addition to robes of honour for some of the amirs, and to provide everything necessary for the festive occasion, at a total cost of 300,000 dinars. Al-Nashw immediately turned to the population and began to raise the money by confiscating processed and raw sugar, honey, cloth and wood. He also imposed fresh taxes on the public which brought in a further 500,000 dinars and 100,000 *irdabb* of grain. Not a single resident of Greater Cairo was exempted from buying the confiscated produce, which went accompanied by such severe disciplinary actions that "the city trembled."⁹⁸

When al-Nāṣir decided to marry two of his daughters to two of Tankiz's sons and on the occasion to take Tankiz on a hunting expedition in Upper Egypt, al-Nashw confiscated property from merchants and others, raising 14,000 dinars—4,000 were spent on the girls' dowry and a further 14,000 on the hunting expedition for Tankiz.⁹⁹ Al-Nāṣir later in the year decided that he would double

⁹⁶ For *irdabb*, see Glossary.

⁹⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 454, 456 and editor's note no. 1, p. 84.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 460; al-Shujā'i, p. 42; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 119, 130; Rabie, *Financial System*, p. 103.

⁹⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 461; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 129–130.

the number of horses and the amount of provisions he granted Tankiz during his annual visits to Egypt, which came to a total of 150,000 dinars. Moreover, the two months Tankiz spent in Egypt cost some 4,000 dirhams a day—even the singer he brought from Syria, e.g., was granted 10,000 dirhams by the sultan, over and above the gifts she received during the celebrations, so that the combined value of the goods she took with her on her return amounted to no less than 70,000 dirhams.¹⁰⁰ It is not surprising, then, that in that year, apart from the confiscation of inheritances and merchants' property and the frequent imposition of *ṭarḥ*, al-Nashw laid his hands on the money held by al-Māristān al-Manṣūrī, the hospital built by Qalāwūn in Cairo, whereby in order to meet al-Nashw's demands, Amir Sanjar al-Jāwulī, who was in charge of the hospital's administration, was forced to sell land the hospital owned on the outskirts of Cairo for the sum of 400,000 dirhams.¹⁰¹

It did not take long for al-Nāṣir Muhammad's fiscal policy to lead to the ruin of the affluent sectors of Egypt and Syria. Where otherwise these would have sustained the commercial and industrial development of the economy by their investments, the economy was now plunged into a deep crisis, characterized by inflation and market shortages, the bankruptcy of local merchants and the reluctance of others to trade in Egypt.¹⁰² This downward spiral was aggravated by a monetary crisis further worsened by the government's manipulation of the precious metal market.¹⁰³

The sources, not without a degree of naiveté it would seem, link al-Nashw's dismissal in 740/1339 with a return of economic improvement. In point of fact, his dismissal did not bring about any change whatsoever in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's stringent fiscal policy. The methods the new *nāzir al-khāṣṣ*, Jamāl al-Kafāt, adopted in his efforts to raise money for the treasury were amazingly similar to those used by al-Nashw, and the economy remained unresponsive to any change.¹⁰⁴ What changes the government made in its fiscal policy in response to the massive popular protest that had

¹⁰⁰ Al-Shujā'ī, p. 45; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 462; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 130.

¹⁰¹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 464.

¹⁰² Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 51, 63–65; al-Yūsufī, 346; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 473.

¹⁰³ Al-Yūsufī, p. 292; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 393, 444; *Nahj*, p. 79; *ʿIqd*, A2912/4, fols. 330a, 333b. For details on the economic crisis during the 1330s, see Rabie, *Financial System*, pp. 193–194.

¹⁰⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 488, 494, al-Shujā'ī, pp. 67, 88–89, 96.

demanded al-Nashw's dismissal, were merely cosmetic. Still, the population was mollified when Jamāl al-Kafāt lowered the compulsory purchase price of raw sugar by a mere ten dirhams. The population's apparent apathy towards a continuation of the *ṭarḥ* system shows that they did not really expect any changes to be forthcoming but rather seem to have accepted the government's fiscal policy as a fact of life. Even more important, after al-Nāšir MuḤammad's death, confiscations and compulsory purchase became, almost as a matter of course, the norm in the overall fiscal policy of the Mamluk state.¹⁰⁵

Expenditure—The Illusion of Growth

That he could maintain his rule over such a long period without too many upheavals is explained by the fact that al-Nāšir MuḤammad spent huge sums of money on bribing, in one way or another, anyone of influence, both within and outside the Mamluk state.¹⁰⁶ We find that the '*ulamā*' frequently criticized al-Nāšir for the exorbitant amounts he took out of the treasury and for the ways he spent them. The sage Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī al-Bakrī, as we have seen, castigated him for having wasted the treasury's monies on illegal expenditures.¹⁰⁷ Three forms of expenditure stand out in particular: al-Nāšir MuḤammad's ambitious construction activities, his patronage of the Bedouin, and his own household and harem. In the short term, each of these had its share in the depletion of the treasury, while in the long run they proved to be cardinal factors in the overall decline of the Mamluk state.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Yūsufī, p. 423; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 312, 468–469, 697, 759, 819, 824, 828–829, 852, 880, 881, 920–921; 3, p. 5, 277, 291, 343, 374; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 320–321.

¹⁰⁶ On al-Nāšir MuḤammad's expenditure on the army and especially on his amirs, see above, pp. 57–60. Al-Nāšir bought peace with his enemies, the rulers of the Persian Ilkhanate, by showering lavish presents on them such as had never been given before (*Sulūk*, 2, p. 536). In the same way he achieved his interests in the Golden Horde, the Yemen and other areas (al-Yūsufī, p. 360; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 176).

¹⁰⁷ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 70b; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 135; for other examples, see *ibid.*, p. 537.

Construction

Determined to leave his mark on the city of Cairo and thereby as well to outdo his predecessors, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad embarked on a spate of construction activities of monumental dimensions, often tearing down buildings others had put up in order to erect even more magnificent ones of his own in their stead.¹⁰⁸ A special ministry was established in charge of building expenditure, which, the sources tell us, spent between 8,000–12,000 dirhams a day.¹⁰⁹ Maintenance of these monumental buildings and funding the events which took place in them added heavily to the burden on the treasury.¹¹⁰ A large part of these huge expenditures was a pure waste of treasury funds—the replacement of existing buildings with new ones served little purpose other than satisfying al-Nāṣir’s vanity, while there was no further benefit to the state for already soon after al-Nāṣir’s death some of them fell into disrepair, thus pouring good money after bad only a short time after their construction.

In the Citadel, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad replaced all government buildings, even those that had been built by his father Qalāwūn and his brother al-Ashraf Khalil in the forty years that led up to his own accession,¹¹¹ including a magnificent palace, al-Qaṣr al-Ablaq (713/1313), designed to match in its splendour the palace of the same name Baybars had built in Damascus.¹¹² According to one version, al-Nāṣir spent 1.4 million dirhams on the construction of this palace and at the official opening ceremony disbursed a similar sum in the form of grants to his amirs. Another version has it that al-Nāṣir gave away as much as 5.5 million dirhams to the amirs and the commanders of the *ḥalqa*.¹¹³ These expenditures did not even include wages as workers were generally taken from the army, the peasantry, prison inmates and Cairo’s marginal popula-

¹⁰⁸ As D. Ayalon in his “Auxiliary Forces” (1988) announced as forthcoming a detailed study of his on the expansion and decline of Cairo under the Mamluks we will here touch only on the economic aspects of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s building activities.

¹⁰⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 130.

¹¹⁰ See, e.g., *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 123, 131, 261–262, 433–434, 438–439, 540–541; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 71–72; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 357; Zetterstéen, p. 184; al-Shujā’ī, p. 25; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 102a.

¹¹¹ Al-Shujā’ī, p. 113.

¹¹² Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 266; al-Shujā’ī, p. 113; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 129; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 209–210; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 36–37, 179–180.

¹¹³ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 69a; ‘Iqd, A2912/4, fol. 306b; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 129; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 209–210.

tion.¹¹⁴ Not far from al-Qaṣr al-Ablaq al-Nāšir built equally splendid palaces for his wives and slave-girls, al-Quṣūr al-Jawwāniyya.¹¹⁵ In 720/1320, al-Nāšir demolished the mamluk barracks which his brother Khalil had built opposite al-Iṣṭabl, and replaced them with new ones for his guards (*qā'āt wa-ṭibāq lil-khāṣṣakiyya*). Additional barracks were erected in the area facing the *iwān* in place of the Ṭablkhāna built by Baybars. In 729/1329, he ordered a pit inside the Citadel built by his father as a jail for amirs to be filled in and on the site additional barracks to be built for the mamluks.¹¹⁶ Palaces were put up inside the Citadel for amirs he had married to his daughters.¹¹⁷ The construction of mamluk barracks on such a large scale tallies with the information in the chronicles that al-Nāšir purchased and trained many more mamluks than his predecessors whom he furthermore rewarded materially in an unheard-of manner.¹¹⁸

In 722/1322, al-Nāšir demolished Dār al-‘Adl, which was where the sultan held court to hear petitions against government officeholders at the foot of the Citadel to its north-west, and replaced it with a *ṭablkhāna*, designed to house the sultan’s orchestra, and the *iṣṭabl*, the sultanic stables.¹¹⁹ Inside the Citadel, after earlier buildings had been demolished, were also found the new *iwān* and the central mosque. However, when al-Nāšir decided that these, too, were unsuitable for his purpose, he demolished and rebuilt them a second time. The *Īwān*, the palace built by his father and renovated by his brother which was used as *dār al-‘adl*, al-Nāšir Muḥammad replaced for the first time soon after his accession (711/1311). When he rebuilt it a second time, in 734/1333, it was, according to the sources, one of the most magnificent royal edifices.¹²⁰ The mosque al-Nāšir Muḥammad demolished first in 718/1318,

¹¹⁴ Al-Shujā‘i, p. 114; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 130–131.

¹¹⁵ ‘*Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 306b; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 538, 539; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 210; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 181.

¹¹⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 208, 310, 538; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 213; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 372–373; Zetterstéen, pp. 186–187; ‘*Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 385b; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 179–180.

¹¹⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 538–539; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 180.

¹¹⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 524, 525, 536; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 166.

¹¹⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 236; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 206, 213; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 74; Behrens-Abouseif, “The Citadel of Cairo”, pp. 45–46.

¹²⁰ Al-Shujā‘i, p. 113; Zetterstéen, p. 161; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 238, 266; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 107, 148–149, 539; Behrens-Abouseif, “The Citadel of Cairo”, pp. 37–38.

together with a number of adjacent buildings in order to make room for a larger mosque. Dissatisfied with the results, he again tore down the structure (735/1334) and replaced it with a truly magnificent building.¹²¹ Here, too, we find that al-Nāṣir set little store by traditional practices, for mosques were never destroyed whenever more space was needed but were expanded.¹²²

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad built palaces in Cairo for his amirs, his wives and slave-girls, mosques and *ṣūfī* orders (*khānaqāt*).¹²³ For example, seven palaces were erected instead of the one at Manāẓir al-Kabsh which had been built by al-Ṣālih Ayyūb, so that his wives and slave-girls could watch him as he went down to the hippodrome on the banks of the Nile, at a cost which according to al-Maqrīzī was impossible to calculate (*fa-lam yanhaṣir mā anfaqa fihā li-kathratihi*).¹²⁴

Most of the hippodromes in Cairo were demolished as well. For example, al-Maydān al-Zāhiri, the hippodrome Baybars had built on the banks of the Nile at al-Lūq, al-Nāṣir replaced with gardens, Manāẓir al-Maydān (714/1314).¹²⁵ Maydān al-Qabaq,¹²⁶ built by Baybars in 666/1267 and used as the central hippodrome for training, was abandoned and houses were built on the site. In place of Maydān Birkat al-Fil, which al-ʿĀdil Kitbughā had built (694–696/1294–1296), and on the surrounding land, al-Nāṣir at the cost of one million dirhams built a magnificent palace with stables for Amir Baktamur al-Sāqī.¹²⁷ Old hippodromes were replaced by new ones. The construction of al-Maydān al-Nāṣiri, close to the Citadel, was begun in 712/1312 or 713/1313. During the summer months, when the Nile overflowed its banks, it was used for polo games. It was surrounded by a wall, on its grounds fruit trees were planted, wells were dug and water-wheels installed to supply water for drinking

¹²¹ Al-Nuwayri, 20, fol. 101b; al-Shujāʿī, p. 113; *Nahj*, p. 5; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 293, 382–383; Zetterstéén, pp. 167, 190; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 184, 380; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 212, 325; Behrens-Abouseif, “The Citadel of Cairo”, p. 33.

¹²² See, e.g., al-Aqṣā, Cordova and Qairawan mosques, Creswell, *Muslim Architecture*, pp. 204–210, 213–216, 254–256.

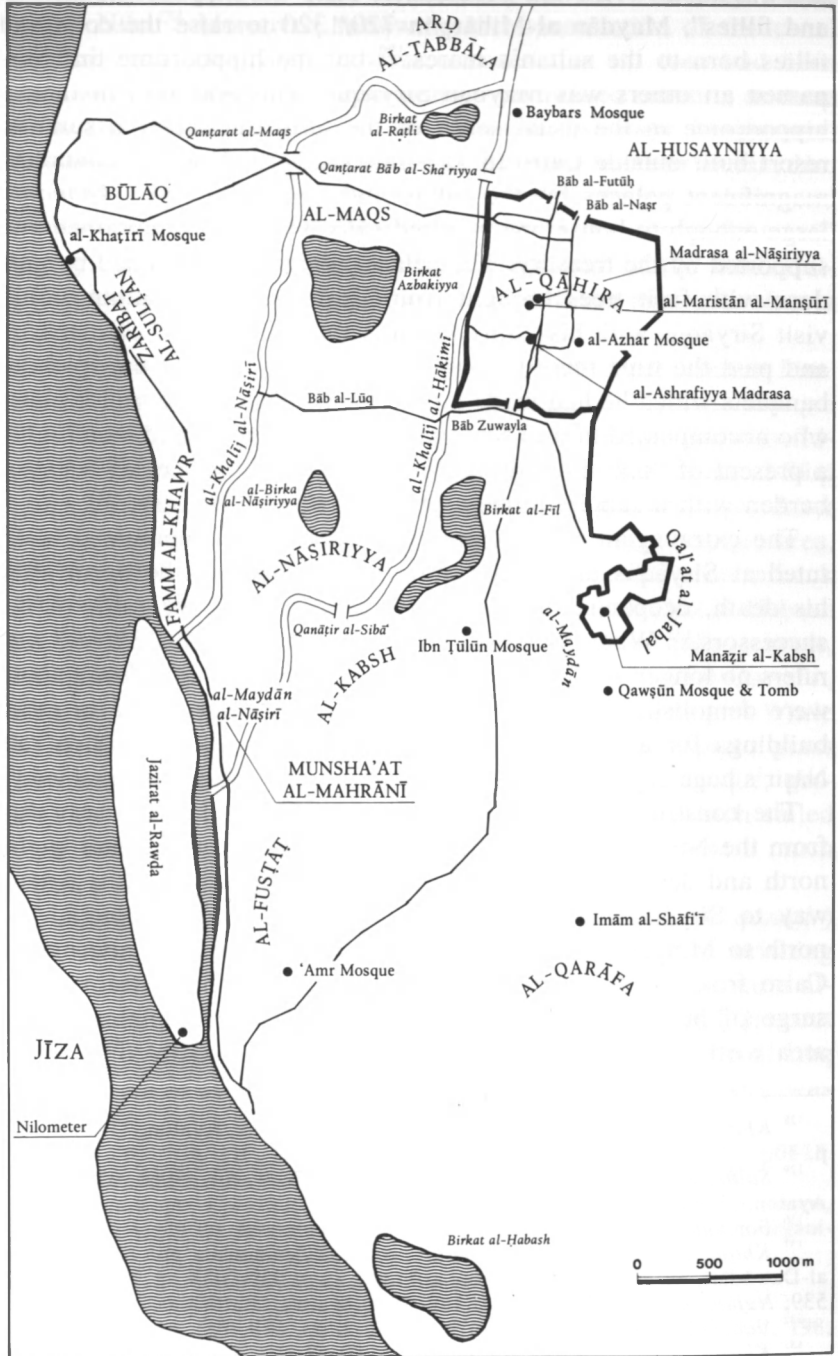
¹²³ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 114, 130–131, 232, 540, 541, 544; al-Shujāʿī, p. 113; al-Nuwayri, 20, fols. 100b–101a; Behrens-Abouseif, “The Citadel of Cairo”, p. 51. On the palaces which al-Nāṣir built for his amirs, see above, p. 58.

¹²⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 540; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 134.

¹²⁵ Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 357; Zetterstéén, p. 184; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 334; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 97–98; Ayalon, “Furūsiyya”, p. 38.

¹²⁶ This hippodrome was also called Maydān al-Sibāq, al-Aswad, al-Akhḍar; see Ayalon, “Furūsiyya”, p. 38.

¹²⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 540; Ayalon, “Furūsiyya”, p. 39.



Map 3 Mamluk Cairo

and irrigation.¹²⁸ Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad built “the hippodrome of colts and fillies”, Maydān al-Mihār, in 720/1320 to raise the colts and fillies born to the sultan’s mares,¹²⁹ but the hippodrome that surpassed all others was Maydān Siryāqūs. This was not, in fact, a hippodrome in the usual sense of the term but rather a summer resort built outside Cairo in 723–725/1323–1325, which contained magnificent palaces for the sultan and his amirs, and a *khānaqā*, large enough to house one hundred *ṣūfīs* who were maintained and supported by the treasury. The palaces were all surrounded by gardens with fruit trees brought from Damascus. The sultan would visit Siryāqūs with his amirs towards the end of each polo season and pass the time there hunting, playing polo, and at the splendid banquets which he had made a custom. To each of the senior amirs who accompanied him to Siryāqūs al-Nāṣir Muhammad would give a present of “one thousand gold *mithqāl*”¹³⁰ and a special beast of burden with a saddle, reins, a golden horse-blanket, etc.”¹³¹

The extravagant forms of recreation al-Nāṣir Muḥammad instituted at Siryāqūs and at his other resorts became the norm after his death, deepening the economic crisis during the rules of his successors.¹³² When the custom was abolished in 799/1396–97 and rulers no longer went to Siryāqūs, the palaces and hippodrome there were demolished, the rubble sold in 825/1422 for re-use in other buildings for a mere one hundred dinars. In other words, of al-Nāṣir’s huge expenditure on their construction not a trace remained.¹³³

The construction of al-Khalij al-Nāṣirī, a canal which was dug from the Nile to the old canal near the mosque of Baybars in the north and designed not only to supply water but also as a waterway to Siryāqūs, and a dam which stretched from Būlāq in the north to Minyat al-Shirij so as to protect the western environs of Cairo from the flooding of the Nile, brought about a tremendous surge of building activities, accelerating the development of the area west of Fāṭimid Cairo from al-Lūq in the south to Būlāq in

¹²⁸ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 200–201; ‘Iqd, A2912/4, fol. 306b; Ayalon, “Furūsiyya”, p. 40.

¹²⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 210; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 199; ‘Iqd, A2912/4, fols. 306b, 331a, 334b; Ayalon, “Furūsiyya”, p. 26.

¹³⁰ For *mithqāl*, see Glossary.

¹³¹ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 200, 422; al-Shujā‘ī, p. 113; Zetterstéen, pp. 175, 184; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 319, 357; Abū al-Fidā’, 3, p. 93; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 261–262, 539; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 79–80, 83–84, 182–183; Ayalon, “Furūsiyya”, p. 41.

¹³² ‘Iqd, A2912/4, fols. 306b–307a; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 689, 703, 917.

¹³³ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 199–200; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 80–81.

the north, and from the moat surrounding the city wall to the banks of the Nile.¹³⁴ Moreover, following the construction of the canal and the dam tracts of land were exposed that till then had been covered by the Nile. The sultan himself stimulated building in these areas and the amirs followed his example. Al-Nāšir Muḥammad bestowed the gardens on the banks of the Nile, Manāzīr al-Maydān, upon Amir Qawṣūn who built a levee (*zarība*) alongside them, and a palace and gardens, with a bathhouse, a market and a flour mill nearby, while he leased (*hakara*) the remainder of the land. Cairo's population continued to build there until the area grew into a quarter of Zarībat Qawṣūn.¹³⁵

On the banks of the Nile to the south of al-Lūq the sultan himself built a levee (*zarībat al-sulṭān*), near the al-Ṭaybarsī mosque on which he put up a hostel (*dār wakāla*) and two tenement buildings (*rab*^c, pl. *arbā*^c), one of which he gave to Baktamur al-Sāqī while the other he made *waqf* for the Siryāqūs *khānaqā*. After Baktamur added two public bathhouses, the Zarībat al-Sulṭān area, too, soon became populated. The built-up area on the eastern bank of the Nile now stretched from Minyat al-Shirij to Birkat al-Habash and was divided into busy quarters with markets, flour mills, schools, bathhouses, palaces, gardens, and houses, such as Zarībat Qawṣūn, Khaṭṭ al-Jāmi^c al-Ṭaybarsī, Zarībat al-Sulṭān and Būlāq.¹³⁶ While the entire area previously had been "sandhills and esparto grass [*tilāl raml wa-ḥalfā*]",¹³⁷ once "near the al-Khaṭīrī mosque, gardens were built as well as mooring basins for boats which sailed along the upper and lower reaches of the Nile", it became a much sought-after centre of entertainment in Cairo.¹³⁸

Markets and bathhouses close to bridges (*qaṇṭara*, pl. *qaṇāṭir*) built over al-Khalij al-Nāširī became the centres of flourishing quarters, among them the old port area, al-Maqs, near Qanṭarat al-Maqs, and the areas adjoining Qanṭarat Bāb al-Sha'riyya and Qanṭarat al-Baḥr.¹³⁹ Al-Maqrizī mentions that the area between Bāb al-Lūq and Munsha'at al-Mahrānī, to the west of al-Khalij al-Nāširī, was

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 109, 110, 130, 131, 151; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 182–183; Staffa, p. 113.

¹³⁵ *Khiṭat*, 2, pp. 131, 198; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 543; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 193–198.

¹³⁶ *Khiṭat*, 2, pp. 131–132; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 118; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 334b; Hanna, "Būlāq", p. 4. On the economic power of the Mamluk household in the organization of the city's quarters, see Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, pp. 44–77.

¹³⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 539; *Khiṭat*, 2, pp. 130, 145.

¹³⁸ *Khiṭat*, 2, p. 304; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 184–185.

¹³⁹ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 101b; *Khiṭat*, 2, pp. 124, 131, 148, 150, 151, 198; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 81–83.

soon built up because “all hands were turned to building as if the people, without exception, had all been summoned by some call to come and build, for people do as their masters do [*fa-imtaddat aydī al-nās ilā al-‘imāra wa-ka’annamā nūdiya fī al-nās allā yabqīya aḥad hattā yu’ammira wa-dhālika anna al-nās ‘alā dīn malikihim*].”¹⁴⁰ The Jazīrat al-Fil and Būlāq areas had earlier been covered by sand dunes and were mainly used for archery practice and the amirs’ polo games. Al-Maqrīzī notes that when building began in Būlāq, it was, again, as though people followed a signal given by the sultan: amirs and soldiers, notables and commoners all began building in order to find favour in the eyes of the sultan, crowding the area with houses, palaces, mosques, markets, and gardens. In Jazīrat al-Fil alone the number of gardens increased from twenty to over one hundred and fifty.¹⁴¹

The pit where clay had been extracted for the pier on the banks of the Nile al-Nāṣir Muḥammad turned into a lake which bore his name, al-Birka al-Nāṣiriyya. After al-Nāṣir had laid the infrastructure for a quarter, this area, too, became densely housed.¹⁴²

The area between Bāb al-Qarāfa and the Imām al-Shāfi‘ī mausoleum was built up in much the same way. Al-Nāṣir led the way by building a mausoleum for Amir Baybughā al-Turkumānī and was quickly followed by the amirs who rapidly filled the area between Bāb al-Qarāfa and Birkat al-Ḥabash with mausolea and monasteries. The area between the Citadel and Qubbat al-Naṣr was filled up with similar buildings after Amir Qarāsunqur built a mausoleum there.¹⁴³

Just as he had himself thought up architectural ideas for the many buildings he built,¹⁴⁴ al-Nāṣir Muḥammad insisted on doing the same for the water engineering projects intended to catch the Nile waters with which he had become preoccupied. His main objective was to improve the exploitation of those waters for agriculture, for the drinking water supply, and as a means of transport to and from Cairo. Instead of first soliciting the professional opinion of his engineers, he “insisted on the exact implementation of his ideas

¹⁴⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 131.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 539; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 131; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 118, 183; Staffa, pp. 113–114.

¹⁴² Al-Nuwayri, 19B, fol. 5a; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 216, 543; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 165.

¹⁴³ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 540; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 187–190.

¹⁴⁴ See, e.g., al-Shujā‘ī, p. 25; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 434–435, 453.

[*wa-kāna lā yaqifu 'inda shay' yaf' aluhu fimā yakhturu lahu*]."¹⁴⁵ His engineers tried to suggest to him that if his ideas were that good, his predecessors would certainly have thought of and implemented them,¹⁴⁶ but he ignored their warnings of the dangers inherent in his schemes. Thus, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's building activities were primarily based upon a policy of trial and error, placing a tremendous burden on the treasury, aggravated even more because large sums had to be spent on the subsequent correcting of obvious construction faults.

Actually, from the moment he was done with the new palaces inside the Citadel and the adjacent hippodrome at the beginning of his rule, al-Nāṣir began devoting much of his time and effort to guarantee their water supply.¹⁴⁷ In 712/1312, he built four water-wheels on the banks of the Nile in order to increase the flow of water to the Citadel walls and into the Citadel itself. In 741/1340, al-Nāṣir embarked upon the implementation of a plan he had drawn up already in 728/1327 for further increasing the flow of water to the Citadel, which included the digging of a canal from the Nile to the al-Raṣad hill even though he had been told that the project would lead to the destruction of many houses and gardens along the road from al-Jiza and Būlāq to the Citadel.¹⁴⁸ Ten water-wheels were to raise water from ten new wells which were to be sunk to a great depth in the hill, and aqueducts were to carry the water to the Citadel.¹⁴⁹ Apart from the investment squandered on clearing the road, overall expenditures were astronomical while, unfinished at al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, the project was never completed.¹⁵⁰

When Siryāqūs was built, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad decided to dig a canal to the palaces (724/1325), also to supply the area with water and for water transport. Amirs and soldiers alike worked on the canal, Khalij al-Dhikr, from the end of Jumādā al-Ākhira/June and invested large sums of their own money in it. When the work was

¹⁴⁵ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 95–96.

¹⁴⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 542.

¹⁴⁷ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 67b; al-Shujā'ī, p. 113; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 306b; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 538, 539. On the supply of water to other palaces which al-Nāṣir Muḥammad built in Cairo, see *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 210.

¹⁴⁸ On al-Raṣad's location, see the editor's notes nos. 2 and 3 in *Sulūk*, 2, p. 514; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 379a.

¹⁴⁹ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2., p. 230; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 124, 302; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 90–91.

¹⁵⁰ Al-Shujā'ī, pp. 94–95; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 514–515; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 230; *Nahj*, pp. 95–96.

completed and the water entered the canal, it proved unable to withstand the force of the stream and "Cairo was almost submerged [*kādat al-Qāhira an taghriqa*]." A dam built at the canal's opening in order to stem the flood also proved unable to withstand the flow (*fa-haddaha al-mā'*).¹⁵¹ As a result, in 725/1326 al-Nāṣir ordered the construction of a new canal which would link Siryāqūs with al-Khalij al-Ḥākīmī, a canal dating from before the Muslim conquest which linked Fāṭimid Cairo with the Nile.¹⁵² Similarly, the Alexandria and the Baḥr al-Maḥalla canals were each dug twice. A dam for water catchment, *jisr al-aḥbās*,¹⁵³ at the al-Sharqiyya and al-Qalyūbiyya districts, took three years to build and when the effort proved a failure, it was rebuilt using bricks and plaster. In both cases, vast amounts of money were involved.¹⁵⁴

The construction of the Shibīn dam (739/1338) took three months at a daily cost of 40,000 dirhams which were taken from the *iqṭā'āt* of the soldiers in the area. When a short time after its completion, one of the aqueducts carrying water from the dam burst, four thousand farmers were ordered to repair it. Apart from eight vessels which were sunk on the spot, wooden beams, stones, and other building materials were used to repair the rupture, all in all costing 30,000 dinars. With the flooding of the Nile the dam quickly proved completely ineffectual as it caused the inundation of the low-lying land (*wa-ṣārat al-bilād al-wāṭi'a tastabḥiru*). As a result, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad once again turned to the soldiers, levying a total of 480,000 dirhams from them, one-eighth of a dirham for every dinar they made on their *iqṭā'āt*, to finance the construction of a 30,000 *qaṣba*-long¹⁵⁵ levee to stem the flow of water.¹⁵⁶

The Minyat al-Shirij dam is of special interest since it had to be constructed three times owing to inadequate design. This dam apparently already existed before 723/1323 as al-Maqrīzī mentions in 717/1317 that it burst together with the Qalyūb dam and flooded the surrounding areas, whereby the population was forced to flee and a great deal of property was lost. The *wālī* of Cairo visited the

¹⁵¹ Al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fol. 33b; Zetterstéen, pp. 174, 175; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 80, 81–82.

¹⁵² *Khiṭat*, 1, p. 71; 2, p. 145; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, pp. 315, 319; Zetterstéen, p. 175; al-Nuwayrī, 19B, fols. 33b, 101a-b; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 261.

¹⁵³ *Khiṭat*, 1, p. 71; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 466.

¹⁵⁴ Al-Shujā'i, p. 114.

¹⁵⁵ For *qaṣba*, see Glossary.

¹⁵⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 466, 472, 493.

flooded area in order to secure the shops and close the markets, while soldiers and citizens were enlisted to repair the dams. Six years later, in 723/1323, all of Cairo's western neighbourhoods, al-Lūq, al-Khawr, Minya and Jazīrat al-Fil, were again inundated by the Nile. This time, as the waters rose, the entire area from Būlāq to Miṣr was under water (*wa-ṣāra mā bayna Būlāq wa-Miṣr baḥran wāḥidan*). The *wulāt* (prefects) of the provinces were ordered to open the dams in their region so as to discharge their waters into the sea and the population of Cairo was urged to build earth embankments along the Nile in the Būlāq area. Following these events al-Nāṣir decided to construct a replacement dam which would extend from Būlāq to Minyat al-Shirij. As usual, responsibility for carrying out the work devolved upon the amirs or, more precisely, on the farmers who lived on their *iqṭā'āt*, who also contributed their animals and tools. At the same time, all the property owners along the banks of the Nile in this area were asked to build levees at the water's edge.¹⁵⁷ When, despite these efforts, the Nile flooded the Būlāq area again in 739/1338, the sultan exempted the residents along the river bank from paying their leases on government-owned land as an incentive to build new levees. Nevertheless, "the flow of the Nile waters in the direction of the east bank increased in strength [*wa-tayār al-baḥr lā yazdādu min nāḥiyat al-barr al-sharqī illā quwwa*]."¹⁵⁸ This finally prompted al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to take drastic action. The plan now included the digging of a canal on al-Rawḍa Island which would direct the floodwaters towards the rebuilt dam extending from Būlāq to Minyat al-Shirij, from where there they would inundate the land in the Manbāba area. For the reconstruction of the dam, a total of 12,000 vessels, each carrying 1,000 irdabb (*wasq kull markab alf irdabb*) were sunk together with another 23,000 boatloads of stones quarried from the mountains, creating one continuous barrier between Cairo and al-Rawḍa Island. This time the dam proved strong enough to withstand the flood waters, which were steered in the direction of Manbāba and Būlāq al-Takrūrī.¹⁵⁹

However, while successful in one respect, al-Nāṣir's construction was to be disastrous in another: it accelerated the process whereby

¹⁵⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 251; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 166; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 349b.

¹⁵⁸ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 167.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Shujā'i, pp. 31–32; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 449–451; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 166–167.

the Nile had been moving away from Cairo. The receding of the Nile had begun already at the end of the 10th century, soon after Cairo had been founded, and continued until the middle of the 13th century, i.e., the beginning of the Mamluk period when the course of the river stabilized. Al-Maqrīzī tells us that “this dam was the reason for the receding of the water from the lands of Cairo, until it reached the state in which it is today [*wa-kāna hādihā al-jisr sabab inṭirād al-mā’ an barr al-Qāhira ḥattā ṣāra ilā ma ṣāra ilayhi al-ān*].”¹⁶⁰

Long after the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, the government was still spending a great deal of money, despite its empty coffers, on efforts to bring the water back to Cairo. In 747/1346, the Nile receded to the west of Cairo till its waters between the Nilometer, al-Miqyās, and Miṣr were shallow and land began to emerge in the western quarters of Cairo between Būlāq and Munsha’at al-Mahrānī, Būlāq and al-Minya, and Jazīrat al-Fil and Būlāq. Water vendors now began bringing their water from Manbāba, where the flow of the Nile had increased as a result of the dam’s construction, which raised the price of drinking water to some two dirhams for a jug (*rāwiya*), instead of a quarter or half a dirham. On the advice of their engineers, Sultan al-Kāmil Sha’bān and the senior amirs decided to build a dam from al-Jiza to the island of al-Rawḍa, and from there to the Nilometer, “so that it would again divert the water in the direction from which it had receded [*wa-yadfa’u al-mā’ ilā al-jihā allatī inkhasara ‘anhā*].”¹⁶¹ However, as it consisted of no more than earth and sherds taken from sugar processing factories, the dam was destroyed as soon as the Nile rose again. When, in 748/1347, the population once again complained about the high price of water, the sultan ordered the construction of a new dam through a levy of 120,000 dirhams from the property owners along the river bank, but he was assassinated before the plan was carried out.¹⁶² When the Nile rose the following year, its waters failed to reach the areas between Miṣr and Munsha’at al-Mahrānī, Zarībat Qawṣun and Famm al-Khawr, and al-Rawḍa Island and central al-Jiza became arid (*wa-ṣāra fī ayyām ikhtirāq al-Nīl rimālan*). Now the project abandoned the year before was picked up again, with a new levy imposed on the property owners along the river bank.

¹⁶⁰ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 167, also p. 109; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 124–128; Hanna, “Būlāq”, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 704; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 167.

¹⁶² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 724; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 168–169.

Building costs reached 150,000 dirhams, not including the building materials supplied by the government,¹⁶³ but this dam, too, failed to contain the Nile waters. A new plan combined the building of a dam with a canal that was to drain the floodwater. Again, money was raised from the population, especially the merchants, while amirs and mamluks, too, shouldered part of the financial burden. Within four months almost two-thirds of the work had been completed before the river rose again: the floodwater ran through the canal with such force that it almost destroyed the dam. The amirs tried to solve the problem again head-on by sinking 12,000 boat-loads of stones in the river, on which they piled earth and clay. The money levied from the population this time exceeded 300,000 dinars. Prior to the construction of the dam, sailors who used the Nile (*baĥĥāra*) had warned the amirs against the plan not only because of the high cost involved but also because they foresaw that it could rush the waters in the direction of Cairo without any way of diverting them. Indeed, when the Nile flooded the following year earlier and with greater severity than usual, its waters raced unhindered towards Cairo. The force of the flow (*al-fulfuliyya*) destroyed many houses in Būlāq and much property was looted by the mob.¹⁶⁴

In 755/1354, a particularly bad flood destroyed dams throughout Egypt and caused widespread damage to agriculture and also to houses on the banks of the Nile in Cairo. The two canals, al-Khalij al-Ĥākimi and al-Khalij al-Nāşiri, were also destroyed. The Kūm al-Riṣh, al-Maṭriyya, al-Amiriyya, al-Minya and Shubrā quarters were all flooded, only al-Ĥusayniyya escaped the same fate owing to a wooden dam which helped stem the flood.¹⁶⁵ However, this flood was a rare exception, and the Nile continued to recede westward from Cairo. In 784/1382, during the reign of Sultan Barqūq, Amir Jahārikas al-Khalili made another unsuccessful attempt to build a dam in an effort to bring the water back to Cairo: "Despite this, the water continued to recede from the lands of Cairo and Mişr so that with the construction of the dam, much land which was usually covered by the waters of the Nile remained uncovered, and the

¹⁶³ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 761–763.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 765–766, 769; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 169, 312.

¹⁶⁵ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 12–13; the quarters al-Ĥusayniyya and al-Raydāniyya were damaged in 778/1376 when al-Khalij al-Nāşiri was ruptured by flood water after someone who lived on its bank had made a denture in it so as to facilitate his fishing activities; *Sulūk*, 3, p. 265; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 23, 78, 139, 148, 151.

Nile receded from Cairo to a degree unknown since the beginning of the Muslim period [*wa-ma'a dhālika mā izdāda al-mā' illā intirād 'an barr al-Qāhira wa-Miṣr ḥattā la-qad inkashafa ba'da 'amal hādihā al-jisr shay' kathīr min al-arādī allatī kānat 'āmira bi-mā' al-Nīl wa-ba'uda al-Nīl 'an al-Qāhira bu'dan lam yu'had fī al-Islām mithlahu qaṭṭu*].¹⁶⁶

While Mamluk sources link the decline of Cairo on the whole to the stifling of its economic activity following the severe measures of the government's fiscal policies, it is clear that they saw the receding of the Nile as the main cause for the ruin of the city's western quarters. From 806/1403, when the Mamluk state was riven by civil war, the government ceased all efforts and investments in bringing the waters of the Nile back to Cairo, thus making the decline of these quarters inevitable. *Qādīs* who administered the many *awqāf* institutions situated on the river banks saw themselves forced to relocate and exchange the *waqf* buildings for others after which the vacated houses were sold cheaply as rubble for re-use as building material. Soon the river bank, from Munsha'at al-Mahrānī to near Būlāq, was turned into "a desert of destruction, as though it had never existed [*kharāb muqfir ka-anna lam yakun*]."¹⁶⁷

The perennially empty treasury and the low level of discipline in the Mamluk army which were part of al-Nāṣir's legacy¹⁶⁸ had far-reaching deleterious effects on the country's irrigation system and thereby on its agriculture. Neither al-Nāṣir Muḥammad nor his predecessors had been satisfied with simply maintaining the irrigation system through running repairs continually worked to extend and develop it through permanent supervision of the fief holders and the construction of new dams and canals. Amirs and soldiers participated in the financing of such new projects and sometimes even turned their hands at putting them up together with their tenant farmers, who contributed of their own labour and the use of their animals and tools.¹⁶⁹

Sultan Baybars invested a great deal of effort in the drainage of existing irrigation canals and the digging of new ones. In 659/1261, he sent Amir 'Izz al-Dīn al-Rashīdī to supervise the cleaning of

¹⁶⁶ *Khiṭat*, 2, pp. 169–170; *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 469–470; *Inbā'*, 2, pp. 85–86.

¹⁶⁷ *Khiṭat*, 12, pp. 131–132; also *ibid.*, 1, pp. 345–346; 2, pp. 109, 110, 146, 148, 151, 312.

¹⁶⁸ See p. 000.

¹⁶⁹ Rabie, *Financial System*, pp. 70–72.

the Ushmūn canal which had become silted up and in 663/1265 Baybars himself went to supervise the digging out of the canal, dividing the work among the amirs but also working with them.¹⁷⁰ In 682/1283, Sultan Qalāwūn went to al-Buḥayra to supervise personally the digging of the Ṭayriyya canal so as to allow the fresh cultivation of land which lay abandoned.¹⁷¹ Al-Maqrīzī relates that the entire army took part in the building of the Umm Dīnār dam during al-Nāşir Muḥammad's rule and that much importance was attached to its construction (*muhimman 'aẓīman*).¹⁷²

The Mamluk sultans even created a new office, *kāshif al-jusūr*, whose holder was responsible for the supervision of the dams' maintenance, appointing amirs and resourceful officials to this post. The *kāshif al-jusūr* had numerous assistants at his disposal aiding him in the construction and maintenance of dams.¹⁷³

Because of the dire straits of the economy, al-Nāşir Muḥammad's successors, on the other hand, adopted a hand-to-mouth policy in the maintenance of the water system and shifted the government's responsibility to the administrative office-holders in the provinces who in turn transferred it to the farmers who worked the land. Within three years after al-Nāşir's death, in 744/1343, most of the dams in Upper and Lower Egypt had given way and burst, causing extensive damage to the summer crops and crop storage facilities, the waters also threatening Cairo in the Būlāq and Birkat al-Ḥabash areas. For a full three days the *wālī* of Cairo himself together with the amirs worked extremely hard in an effort to repair the Birkat al-Ḥabash dam. When they had finished, the waters flooded the Qanāṭir al-Iwazz area and only receded after water from the al-Lu'lu'a dam in the al-Sharqiyya district had been discharged into the sea. The *wulāt* of all the various districts laboured hard and long to try and repair broken dams.¹⁷⁴ In 744/1343, when the office of *kāshif al-jusūr* remained inactive, the *wulāt* of the various provinces filled the post informally, till in 750/1349 it became an official part of their offices (*uḍīfa kāshif al-jusūr ilā wulāt al-aqālīm*).¹⁷⁵ In 788/1386, the post of *kāshif al-jusūr* in the al-Sharqiyya province

¹⁷⁰ Al-Yūnīnī, 2, p. 322; *Khiṭaṭ*, 1, p. 171; Ibn Shaddād, pp. 249–250.

¹⁷¹ Ibn Waşif, fols. 71a-b; Ibn al-Furāt, 7, p. 260; Rabie, "Aspects of Agriculture", pp. 60–61, Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, pp. 317–318.

¹⁷² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 130; see also 'Iqd, A2912/4, fol. 372b.

¹⁷³ Rabie, "Aspects of Agriculture", pp. 61–62.

¹⁷⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 648–649.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 806; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 322.

was filled by al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ibn ʿĪsā, head of the al-ʿĀʿid Bedouin tribe, and in 798/1396 the post at al-Qalyūbiyya was given to ʿAlī Ibn al-Tablāwī, in addition to the six offices he already held.¹⁷⁶

Even though the practice of purchasing appointments was formalized only in 745/1344,¹⁷⁷ it was, of course, already extant during al-Nāṣir Muhammad's rule. Not only did Amir Mughultāy al-Jāmālī, who was a *wazīr* under al-Nāṣir, grant appointments for money but he made sure, moreover, never to dismiss one of his appointees until the latter had been able to recoup his investment.¹⁷⁸ The effects of such a policy upon the maintenance of the irrigation system were not long in coming. As the *wulāt* viewed the money they had paid for their appointments as an investment, they did their utmost to regain it with interest. Thus, they "did not fulfill their obligations in maintaining the dams and sold the harrows so that great areas of land were flooded, and they also levied previously unknown taxes from the farmers [*aḍāʿa al-wulāt ʿamal al-jusūr wa-bāʿū al-jarārīf ḥattā ghariqa kathīr min al-bilād wa-maʿa dhālika imtaddat aydihim ilā al-fallāḥīn wa-gharramūhum mā lam tajri bihi ʿada*]."¹⁷⁹

Al-Maqrīzī recounts that in the past taxes were levied from the eastern and western provinces of Egypt for the maintenance of the dams and that the latter was the responsibility of the amirs. Later, in the wake of the civil war during the rule of al-Nāṣir Faraj, the government began levying taxes for dam maintenance, but in practice most of this money went to the sultan's supporters. Dam maintenance was now thrust upon the villagers in the form of *corvée*, but since the central government failed to give direction and the necessary labour force, the collapse of the irrigation system followed swiftly.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the 15th-century Mamluk sultans were unable to impose even part of the cost of dam maintenance on their soldiers while still during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's rule, apart from their outlay on special projects, approximately twenty-five percent of the soldiers' income went to the construction and maintenance of the irrigation canals on their *iqṭāʿāt*.¹⁸¹ After the death

¹⁷⁶ *Sulūk*, 3, pp. 544, 851.

¹⁷⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 668–669, 687, 750, 753, 833.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 353–354; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 393.

¹⁷⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 811, see as well, p. 843; Ayalon, "Auxiliary Forces", p. 36.

¹⁸⁰ *Khiṭaṭ*, 1, p. 101; Rabie, *Financial System*, p. 115; *idem*, "Aspects of Agriculture", p. 62.

¹⁸¹ *Idem*, *Financial System*, pp. 240, 241.

of al-Nāšir MuḤammad, when in order to maintain their status the amirs—and later even the Mamluk sultans themselves—had become almost totally dependent upon fulfilling the material demands of the mamluks, they would not dare cut their incomes. As we saw above, numerous examples illustrate how the rank-and-file mamluks came to terrorize the sultans with demands for wage increases, breaches of public order, threats of mutiny, and plots against the office-holders in charge of their wages.¹⁸²

No longer able to appropriate part of the income of the mamluks for the maintenance and improvement of the irrigation system, the government resorted to duress in order to force the farmers to repair the dams and canals.¹⁸³ *Al-rawk al-Nāširi* remained the basis for the distribution of fiefs until the demise of the Mamluk state, with far-reaching consequences for the status of the amirs and the *ḥalqa* soldiers and for their *iqṭā'āt*. Wanting to reduce the influence of the amirs, al-Nāšir MuḤammad had spread their *iqṭā'āt* over several areas and changed the frequency of their distribution. Although this practice improved the lot of the tenant farmers on the *iqṭā'āt*, there were a number of disadvantages. The dispersion of a fief over various provinces in Upper and Lower Egypt caused the amirs increased expenditure on the officials they had to employ to manage the fiefs on their behalf and made them more and more dependent upon those officials. After the death of al-Nāšir MuḤammad, it led to the weakening of the army when soldiers found it increasingly difficult to fulfill their military obligations, let alone the civil obligations they had for the upkeep of their fiefs which included the irrigation systems.¹⁸⁴

The decline of the *ḥalqa* soldiers in the wake of the *rawk* was already evident during the rule of al-Nāšir MuḤammad. Not only were the *iqṭā'āt* they were given inferior to those that were granted to the Sultani Mamluks, but the high expenditure for the construction and maintenance of water projects to which they, as all the fief holders, were subject, would prove too much to bear for many of them. As early as 738/1337, this resulted in a new phenomenon, the sale of *iqṭā'āt*.¹⁸⁵ Already common in 744/1343, by 748/1347 it had become not only institutionalized but even taxable.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² See above, Chapter 3, pp. 125ff.

¹⁸³ Rabie, "Aspects of Agriculture", pp. 62–63.

¹⁸⁴ Rabie, "Iqṭā'", p. 138; Poliak, *Feudalism*, pp. 100–101, 104–105.

¹⁸⁵ Al-Shujā'i, p. 32.

¹⁸⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 643, 687; see also pp. 759, 772, 819, 860, 890–891.

Inevitably the neglect of the irrigation system caused large tracts of land to remain uncultivated. Al-ʿAynī tells us that in 825/1422, when the Nile rose to remarkable heights, the flooding engulfed “many fields which had not been inundated for years [*arāḍi kathīra allatī lahā sinūn ʿadīda mā ruwiyat*].”¹⁸⁷

The neglect of the water system clearly also affected Cairo. Al-Maqrīzī attributes the flooding of the areas to the west of al-Khalīj al-Nāṣirī, between Arḍ al-Ṭabbāla in the north and al-Minya in the south to the fact that following the civil war in 806/1403, the government no longer did anything about draining the canals that ran through Cairo. He also recalls seeing the remains of harrows in the city environs, the harrows obviously no longer in use.¹⁸⁸

The collapse of the irrigation system appears to have brought about a drastic change in the soil conditions in the Nile Valley and in the 15th century created a shortage of those crops of which Egypt traditionally had been an exporter. An example of this was wheat. According to Ashtor, there was a drop in wheat prices following the Black Death epidemic which stemmed from changes in consumer habits because of depopulation and from an increased demand for Levant cotton on the European market. Adapting their crops to market demands, farmers grew less wheat but increased cotton production. In the second half of the 15th century, the price of Levant cotton dropped and was to remain low as a result of lessened demand in Europe and of competition from cotton grown in Anatolia and Cyprus.¹⁸⁹ From commercial data of the European nations trading with the Levant it is clear that most of the imported cotton came from Syria, not Egypt.¹⁹⁰ The data also show that during this period there was a shortage of grain in general and of wheat in particular, and that the Mamluk state imported these commodities from Europe. There are also particulars of large imports of wheat by Egypt and Syria in the years 874/1469, 875/1470–71, 883/1478 and 887/1482.¹⁹¹ Moreover, when during the second half of the 15th century wheat prices rose in central Europe as a result of a shortfall in yields, especially from 1470 onwards,¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ *ʿIqd* (Qarmūt), p. 184.

¹⁸⁸ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 130; for another example of the Nile’s flooding ruining parts of Būlāq in spite of the change in its course, see *ibid.*, 2, p. 326.

¹⁸⁹ Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, pp. 174, 318–320, 435, 471.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 254, 265, 321–322, 370–371, 470, 483, 507, 508.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 465, 466, 482, 503, 507; *idem*, *Histoire des prix*, p. 292.

¹⁹² *Idem*, *Levant Trade*, p. 439.

this may well have had an effect on the price of European wheat imported to the Levant; data on wheat prices in Egypt show that in comparison with the first half of the 15th century, prices indeed rose in the second half.¹⁹³ Ashtor also found changes in the Egyptian and Syrian consumer habits during the second half of the 15th century and that their populations had begun eating millet and grain sorghum (*dhura*) bread in the 1490s.¹⁹⁴

The question arises as to what prompted this change in Egyptian and Syrian eating habits and why it was necessary to import expensive European wheat. After all, all the Mamluk government apparently had to do was to turn Egyptian agriculture around and start growing wheat to the extent it had done before the move to cotton. In light of the above, the answer appears to lie in the changes that soil and water conditions in the Nile Valley underwent after the decline of the irrigation systems. Sorghum and millet are both crops that can withstand heat and arid conditions and produce yields even when soil conditions are dry. Wheat, on the other hand, needs damp soil conditions to produce a good yield and is adversely affected when grown in saline soil.¹⁹⁵ This, of course, is only a hypothesis which needs to be substantiated by an archaeological survey of the Nile Valley, similar to the one conducted by Robert M. Adams in the Diyala Valley in Iraq,¹⁹⁶ whose findings will then have to be compared with those loci in the chronicles dealing directly with this subject.

Bedouin Wages and Grants

In his discussion of the Bedouin as a military reserve force in the Mamluk state, David Ayalon mentions, without going into detail, the importance of al-Nāşir MuĤammad's third period of rule for the strengthening of the Bedouin and the effects this had on the country's economy.¹⁹⁷ In the following pages we will try to demonstrate that there was a direct connection between the consolidation of the Bedouin during al-Nāşir MuĤammad's rule and the part they played in the country's economic decline after his death.

¹⁹³ Shoshan, "Grain Riots", pp. 476-477.

¹⁹⁴ Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, p. 437; idem, *Social and Economic History*, p. 319. *Encyclopedia of Agriculture*, Ramat Gan, 1972, vol. 2, pp. 63, 85-86, 87.

¹⁹⁶ Robert M. Adams, *Land behind Baghdad: A History of Settlement on the Diyala Plains*, Chicago, 1965.

¹⁹⁷ Ayalon, "Auxiliary Forces", pp. 35, 36.

From the time of his stays in Karak, where he had taken refuge after his first and second periods of rule, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had developed a special affection for the Bedouin and held their devotion to him in high regard. In 697–8/1298–9, al-Nāṣir spent some eighteen months in Karak, being sent there by Sultan Lājīn. In 708/1308, after he had left the government in Egypt in protest, he again entrenched himself there, emerging a year later to defeat his political opponents and attain rule for the third time (709/1310).¹⁹⁸ It was the Shawbak Bedouin who were called to al-Nāṣir's ranks to assist him when hunting, and it appears that the hunt came to play a significant role in imparting military skills to al-Nāṣir's Mamluk household in Karak, enough to disturb Sultan Baybars al-Jāshinkir when he learnt that al-Nāṣir spent a great deal of time hunting with his mamluks—in an effort to reduce al-Nāṣir's power, he demanded that he return the horses and money that he had taken with him from Egypt.¹⁹⁹ When al-Nāṣir Muḥammad returned from Karak to occupy the throne a third time, the Āl Faḍl and 'Īsā Ibn Ḥasan al-Hajjān tribes were among those Bedouin who accompanied him.²⁰⁰

Back in Cairo, al-Nāṣir tended to affect Bedouin traditions. For example, when he returned from the *hajj* at the beginning of 733/1332, he wore Bedouin attire and the traditional Bedouin head-dress.²⁰¹ He made a period at Karak part of his sons' education. Aḥmad was sent there in 726/1326 and Bahādur al-Badrī was appointed to teach him the secrets of the hunt and drill him in horsemanship. Returned to Cairo in 731/1330 to receive his amirate, Aḥmad was sent back to Karak again after the ceremony. This time, the new *nā'ib*, Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī, was made responsible for "his education and upbringing [*bi-tarbiyatihī wa-ta'dībīhī*]." Aḥmad spent a great part of his life at Karak which was to have a far-reaching influence when he became sultan after his father's death.²⁰² Ānūk, Ibrāhīm and Abū Bakr also spent various periods of their lives in Karak.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ *Sulūk*, 1, pp. 832, 872; 2, pp. 31, 44, 524.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2, pp. 45, 52, 56, 60.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 816.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 122–123, 356; See as well, *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 60–61; Ayalon, "Eunuchs", p. 292.

²⁰² *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 332–333, 335, 387, 432, 436–437, 467, 523, 573, 577, 578; *Nahj*, pp. 74, 96–97; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 370b.

²⁰³ Ayalon, "Eunuchs", note 117, p. 292.

Al-Nāṣir MuḤammad's fierce love of noble Arabian horses may also have played its part in his obvious admiration of the Bedouin traditions. He had a true passion for collecting them and could recall the names of all the horses he had ever purchased and even the names of their offspring, and he established a special office which maintained their records. The Arabian horses and their Bedouin trainers all took part in the races he was fond of organizing in the famous hippodrome, Maydān al-Mihār.²⁰⁴

Al-Nāṣir was willing to pay exorbitant prices to the Bedouin and bestow on them the most extravagant gifts for prime Arabian horses. Rumours of his enthusiasm soon reached Bedouin ears as far afield as Iraq and Bahrain, and they flocked to supply him with such horses as he desired.²⁰⁵ He even went as far as granting them *iqṭā'āt*, robes of honour and grants, over and above the sums he already paid for the animals. Thus, in 715/1315, al-Nāṣir MuḤammad purchased a beautiful Arabian mare at the cost of 600,000 dirhams, 290,000 in cash and a village near Aleppo which was given to the seller as an *iqṭā'*.²⁰⁶ In 738/1337, al-Nāṣir for a single horse granted Mūsā Ibn Muḥannā a village as an *iqṭā'*, the annual income from which was one million dirhams, an act which so incensed al-Nāṣir that he reportedly blurted out, "I endangered my life to obtain this money and he gives it away."²⁰⁷ Some months later, Mūsā Ibn Muḥannā received a sum of 560,000 dirhams for horses supplied to al-Nāṣir, the same sum which was paid to the Bedouin for horses brought from Bahrain, while horses brought from Barqa (Cyrenaica) cost a further 400,000 dirhams.²⁰⁸ At his death, al-Nāṣir MuḤammad left 4,800 horses in his stables, apart from those he had given to his mamluks during his entire period of rule.²⁰⁹

Al-Nāṣir MuḤammad's excesses in this respect, too, went far beyond the bounds accepted by his predecessors. Qalāwūn had been thrifty in his purchases of horses, preferring the Barqa horses which he viewed as being both of high quality and inexpensive. Al-Nāṣir, on the other hand, thought them inferior—when a shipment was

²⁰⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 210, 526, 527, 529–530; *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, p. 199; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 169; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fols. 331a, 340a.

²⁰⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 526–527; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 167.

²⁰⁶ Al-Yūsufī, p. 198; al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 76a; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 144, 148, 526.

²⁰⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 432.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 452–453; for other examples, see pp. 236, 245, 246, 526.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 526; *Khīṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 224–225.

brought to him he picked out only the very best among them, and even those he tended to give away.²¹⁰

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was the first Mamluk sultan to grant the Bedouin *iqṭā'āt* in exchange for horses, in addition to their purchase price.²¹¹ When his predecessors had granted *iqṭā'āt* to the Bedouin, they had made sure that they were inferior to those granted to their mamluks, and if they carried an amirate, its rank never exceeded that of amir of forty²¹² and they were only granted for purely military services. Thus, when Baybars crossed the Euphrates and defeated the Mongols, Muḥannā Ibn Māni' Ibn Ḥudhayfa with two thousand of his Bedouin had assisted him by crossing the river first and acting as guides. On Baybars' return to Aleppo after the successful battle, Māni' Abū Muḥannā asked Qalāwūn to speak to Baybars on his behalf and ask him to grant *iqṭā'āt* to the members of the Muḥannā tribe in return for four horses and ten camels. When Qalāwūn raised the matter with Baybars, the latter remained silent, but when Māni' came before him, he scolded him in the presence of the amirs, "Woe betide you, Bedouin troublemaker [*waylaka yā badawī naḥs*], you think you can come and ask for additional *iqṭā'āt* for your son and bribe the sultan in return for his property! By Allāh, if I hear anything like this again I will throw you all out of the country." His fulminations and anger abated only through the entreaties of Qalāwūn and the other amirs.²¹³

During the second period of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's rule (698–708/1299–1309), when Amirs Baybars al-Jāshinkir and Salār governed in his name, Muḥannā and his brothers asked to exchange lands they had for *iqṭā'āt* in the province of Aleppo, which so angered Salār that he openly humiliated them, "O Bedouin! so you want to take the lands of the fortresses and of the soldiers and turn them into *iqṭā'āt* for yourselves!"²¹⁴

Āl Faḍl and Āl Muḥannā in Syria, on the other hand, in an unprecedented move were given *iqṭā'āt* and grants,²¹⁵ as part of al-Nāṣir's efforts to bribe them into remaining under his authority and so prevent them from joining his enemies in the Ilkhanate of

²¹⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 526; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, p. 225.

²¹¹ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 526–527; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 167; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fols. 323b, 346b.

²¹² Ayalon, "Auxiliary Forces", pp. 23–24.

²¹³ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 528–529.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 528.

²¹⁵ Al-Nuwayrī, 20, fol. 79b.

Persia and Iraq and maintain peace and quiet on the roads. Soon Āl Faḍl and Āl Muhannā became "so powerful that the Bedouin who were not in their ranks feared them."²¹⁶ Al-Nāšir Muḥammad showed such indulgence to them that they did not hesitate to make bold to ask him for the *iqṭā'āt* held by the amirs in Aleppo, Ḥamāt and Damascus, a request to which he acceded while compensating his amirs with other *iqṭā'āt*.²¹⁷ Al-Nāšir furthermore bestowed upon the Bedouin and their wives numerous grants which included money, gold, precious jewels, embroidered silk garments and rich cloths. Their wealth reached enormous proportions, especially visible when they changed encampments in summer and winter—their herds would extend over a vast area and dangling from the necks of their camels one could see the gold and silver they had amassed. The attire of the heads of the Āl Muhannā tribes during al-Nāšir's rule was truly magnificent, made of materials commonly used only by the Mamluk elite. Their women's clothes, too, were equally splendid. While previously their garb had been of simple cotton and their only jewelry metal bracelets, they now wore golden tiaras inset with jewels, silk ribbons embroidered with gold thread and bangles decorated with jewels and pearls.²¹⁸

Muhannā Ibn 'Īsā, the eldest and most senior amir of these Bedouin tribes, having returned to al-Nāšir's authority after several periods spent with his enemy, the Ilkhanate of Persia and Iraq (734/1334),²¹⁹ was to admonish al-Nāšir for the wasteful extravagance he lavished on the members of his tribe, arguing that his excesses could only have damaging consequences for both sides for they spoiled the character of the Bedouin, making them foolish and arrogant, which, in turn, weakened the Muslim army. Mentioning the soldiers' *iqṭā'āt* which had been transferred to his Bedouin, Muhannā acutely assessed the political significance of the situation: "And even if you wish to change this situation . . . you will no longer be able to do so [*wa-law aradta an tughayyira hādhā al-ḥāl . . . mā qadarta*]."²²⁰

²¹⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 527.

²¹⁷ Al-Nuwayri, 20, fols. 79b, 122a; al-Yūsufi, p. 207; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 144.

²¹⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 527–528, 529; *Nujūm*, 9, p. 168; *Iqd*, A2912/4, fol. 323b.

²¹⁹ Al-Yūsufi, pp. 198–206, 280–281; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 372–374. See also pp. 118, 119, 194; *Nahj*, p. 57. For Muhannā Ibn 'Īsā's relations with al-Nāšir Muḥammad, see Hiyari, pp. 518–519.

²²⁰ Al-Yūsufi, p. 207; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 529.

Muhannā's premonition was to come true only a short time later. In 737/1335, Mūsā Ibn Muhannā, one of Muhannā Ibn 'Īsā's sons, sent al-Nāṣir a letter informing him that the Bedouin were threatening to rebel and cross over to enemy territory if *iqṭā'āt* which had been taken back from them were not returned. Al-Nāṣir granted Mūsā's request, returning *iqṭā'āt* which earlier he had given to amirs and soldiers in Syria who just then were under intense siege in Lesser Armenia and whose expenses were understandably high. In order to avoid trouble during the battle, the *nā'ib al-sulṭana* in Aleppo, who headed the army, assembled the soldiers and promised them that he would petition al-Nāṣir on their behalf, but he knew full well that there was little chance al-Nāṣir would change his mind.²²¹

The ties of obligation al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had created vis-à-vis the Bedouin could not be ignored by his successors without provoking a Bedouin mutiny, especially as the power the Bedouin succeeded in accumulating steadily increased with the weakening position of the government. In 753/1352, the sons of Muhannā Ibn 'Īsā and their offspring numbered one hundred and ten, each forming a clan and each bearing the title of amir and owning *iqṭā'āt* (*mā minhum illā wa-man lahu imra wa-iqṭā'*).²²² Such power enabled them to disobey government edicts, and thus they virtually were a law unto themselves.²²³

Immediately after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, the rivalry between Āl Faḍl and Āl Muhannā over the leadership of the Bedouin on behalf of the government, *imrat al-'arab*, erupted into an open conflict between them, endangering travel on the roads in Syria and causing damage to commerce and agriculture.²²⁴ When the *imrat al-'arab* was awarded to Āl Faḍl in 743/1342, the Āl Muhannā *iqṭā'āt* were granted to Āl Faḍl and the amirs and soldiers in Syria. Āl Muhannā responded to this by rebelling and attacking Āl Faḍl while robbing travellers on the roads. One trade caravan on its way from Baghdad to Raḥba, for example, lost all its merchandise, one merchant's loss alone being 200,000 dinars.²²⁵ When again

²²¹ Al-Yūsufī, pp. 383–384; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 407–408.

²²² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 896.

²²³ Al-Shujā'i, p. 261.

²²⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 651, 656–657, 657–658, 684, 692, 722, 729, 758, 770, 815, 835, 917, 918.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 624, 627–628, 651, 656–657, 658, 667, 672.

they were not awarded the *imrat al-ʿarab* in 748/1347, they renewed their attack on Āl Faḍl and stole animals destined for the sultan. Āl Faḍl's pleas for help from the government in Damascus and Aleppo fell on deaf ears. The *nāʿib al-salṭana* in Aleppo informed the central government in Cairo that he was unable (*lā ṭāqa lahu*) to stand up to Āl Muḥannā.²²⁶ In 753/1352, under similar circumstances, they ignored sultanic edicts and assaulted the *iqṭāʿāt* which had been taken from them, looting their yields. They ignored the letter of reprimand sent to them by the *nāʿib* in Aleppo nor did they attend the sultan when he ordered them to pay heed. The Āl-Faḍl were unsuccessful in their attempts to repel them because of their larger numbers (*li-quwwatihim wa-kathrat jamʿihim*). In an effort to end this impasse, the *imrat al-ʿarab* in the end was awarded jointly to Āl Muḥannā and Āl Faḍl.²²⁷

With order broken down in Syria and the Āl Muḥannā among those who violated it, the rest of the Bedouin tribes, *al-ʿashīr*, soon followed and revolted.²²⁸ Internecine wars between them caused a good deal of bloodshed and took a high toll—babies held in their mothers' arms were cruelly slaughtered and women burned alive in their tents. *Al-ʿashīr* made the highways unsafe by brigandry and cut off the road to Tripoli and Baʿalbek. During 749–750/1348–1349, the Bedouin exploited the weakness of the central government following the Black Death, moved southward into Palestine and swooping down on the roads from their mountain lairs attacked towns and villages where they looted the sugar processing factories and killed the workers. They attacked Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, Lydda and Ramla, whereby Jerusalem and Hebron were emptied of their inhabitants and the roads between Syria and Palestine became completely deserted. Government forces despatched from Syria and Gaza to subdue the attackers proved inadequate—the booty taken by the Bedouin increased their strength.²²⁹

Despairing of military expeditions which seemed doomed to failure from the outset, the army began to explore stratagems to capture the Bedouin leadership without actually joining battle with their forces. For example, when the *nāʿib* of Gaza learned that the Syrian

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 729.

²²⁷ Ibid., pp. 729, 835, 896.

²²⁸ On the Bedouin tribes in Syria, see Ayalon, "Auxiliary Forces", pp. 27–28; Hiyari, pp. 517 ff.

²²⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 669, 698–699, 804–805.

Bedouin were planning another attack on Lydda and Ramla, he camped his forces opposite the Bedouin encampment and then invited their leaders to meet him, persisting until they gave in and sent two hundred of their leaders to meet with him. The moment these arrived he executed them all in public view by cleaving them in two, *tawsīṭ*, and dispersed their tribes. Not long afterwards, in the clover (*barsīm*) season, when these same Bedouin reached the al-Sharqiyya and al-Gharbiyya districts of Lower Egypt to graze their flocks, government forces lying in ambush captured three hundred of them, who were then sent to do forced labour and had their property confiscated, including three thousand camels, clothing and weapons which they had earlier looted from mamluk soldiers.²³⁰

The increase in the strength of the Karak Bedouin after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death was especially remarkable. When Aḥmad ascended the throne in 742/1341, he was brought to Egypt from Karak where he had spent most of his life from the age of eight. He arrived in Egypt—and was soon to leave it again—dressed in Bedouin attire.²³¹ He surrounded himself with the Bedouin he had brought with him from Karak and the money and gifts he gave them were in amounts “beyond all comprehension [*tunāfiru al-‘aql*].”²³² When the amirs curbed his actions, he decided to return to Karak and entrench himself there, just as his father had done. Before leaving, he first sent 15,000 *irdabb* of wheat, 100,000 *irdabb* of rice and cattle and sheep which had belonged to his father and Qawṣūn, ahead to Karak. He then directed that the animals which al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had left in Upper Egypt be sold and the two million dirhams this brought in he also took with him to Karak. Furthermore, he completely emptied the treasury, not leaving “anything of small or great value [*shay’ qalla wa-lā jalla*]”—it held one million dinars, two million dirhams, 180 chests of ceremonial garments and cloths, and seven chests of jewels, gold- or silver-embroidered silks, and more. He took all the jewels from the 505 singer-slave-girls al-Nāṣir had left behind in the Citadel while neither the carpets and copper utensils nor the harnesses and gold and silver chains the sultan used on his ceremonial processions escaped his attention. He then confiscated the property of two of al-Nāṣir's senior

²³⁰ Ibid., pp. 805, 807–808.

²³¹ Al-Shujā‘i, p. 217; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 601, 609; Ayalon, “Eunuchs”, p. 293.

²³² Al-Shujā‘i, p. 209; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 601.

amirs, Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhri and Ṭashtamur Ḥummuṣ Akhḍar, and added all this to the baggage he took with him to Karak.²³³ Once he was firmly entrenched at Karak, Aḥmad used the treasures he had absconded with from Egypt to bribe the Bedouin into remaining in his camp during the siege of the city that followed when his father's amirs set out to ensure his capture. When Karak fell in 745/1344, not one single item was found of all the treasures taken from Egypt.²³⁴

All in all, the amirs conducted seven military campaigns against Aḥmad at Karak, which cost the treasury a great deal of money, but in the end the city fell only when the Bedouin decided to abandon Aḥmad after all and join his brother, al-Šāliḥ Ismā'il, who had been put on the throne by al-Nāšir Muḥammad's amirs.²³⁵ For their desertion of Aḥmad the Bedouin did not go unrewarded and were given *iqṭā'āt* and lands, and one of their shaykhs, Bāligh, alone was given an *iqṭā'* with an annual income of 450,000 dirhams, his fellow shaykhs receiving similar rewards.²³⁶

In 749/1348, the Karak Bedouin tribes of Banū Numayr and Banū Rabī'a revolted and inflicted a heavy defeat on the Mamluk army led by the *nā'ib* in Karak, killing ten of his people. As a large force was required to put down this revolt, the *nā'ib* in Syria was ordered to prepare an army to attack the rebel forces.²³⁷ Al-Maqrizī attributes the increase in strength of these Bedouin to the civil war between Sultan Aḥmad and the amirs in Egypt which had Karak as its focal point.²³⁸

Even though al-Nāšir Muḥammad seems to have ruled the Bedouin in Egypt with an iron hand,²³⁹ there are indications that they succeeded in increasing their strength right under his nose. Thus, in 731/1329, the Bedouin in Upper Egypt broke out in revolt and embarked upon highway robbery. Al-Nāšir appointed Zūluzay to the post of *kāshif* of Upper Egypt who restored order to the area after he struck at the Bedouin mercilessly, "and was

²³³ Al-Shujā'i, pp. 216, 217, 218, 226, 227; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 610, 618–619.

²³⁴ Al-Shujā'i, p. 269; *Sulūk*, 2, p. 655.

²³⁵ Al-Shujā'i, p. 239, 246–247, 248, 258–259, 264, 265; *Sulūk* 2, pp. 634, 646, 652, 654, 661.

²³⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 661.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 798, 799; on the Bedouin tribes in Karak and its areas, see Ayalon, "Auxiliary Forces", p. 27.

²³⁸ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 799.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 908.

uncompromising with the amirs [when he entered] their *iqṭā'āt*.”²⁴⁰ It seems that the Bedouin would hide from the government forces on the amirs' *iqṭā'āt* and that Zuluḡay's predecessors had seldom bothered pursuing them there. This might mean either that the Bedouin found refuge on the *iqṭā'āt* as a result of an agreement between the *kāshif* and amirs not to damage their holdings, or that the *kāshif* himself had reached the conclusion that it would not be worth his while to become involved with the amirs.

An even clearer example of a Bedouin tribe in Egypt which amassed great power during al-Nāṣir Muḡammad's rule which it later used against the government is that of the 'Īsā Ibn Ḥasan al-Hajjān tribe. 'Īsā Ibn Ḥasan and his tribe were among the Bedouin who had supported al-Nāṣir at Karak. After al-Nāṣir's rise to power, 'Īsā Ibn Ḥasan was made responsible for the sultan's camels and it was in the course of these duties that his wealth and power increased.²⁴¹ In 748/1347, the fief he held was so large that the government decided, since he would hardly notice the difference, to levy the annual income of one of its villages—20,000 dirhams and 3,000 *irdabb* of grain—for the improvement of the postal service (*al-barīd*).²⁴² On his release from jail in 751/1350 where he had served a sentence for collaborating in the al-Sharqiyya district with the al-‘Ā'id Bedouin, who were unrepenting rebels, he had his *iqṭā'āt* returned to him, and a group of his fellow tribesmen were also awarded *iqṭā'āt*. He revolted anew in 752/1351, but the government again reinstated him. In the end 'Īsā Ibn Ḥasan al-Hajjān died a rebel and was publicly executed in 754/1353.²⁴³

The Tha'laba tribes of the al-Sharqiyya district were responsible for the maintenance of the *barīd*. At one point, even though they were also government appointees and their encampments were close to the seat of government, they decided they had had enough, broke up camp and started wandering throughout the country. Not only did this severely impair the functioning of the *barīd*, but they added insult to injury when they, too, joined the al-‘Ā'id tribes.²⁴⁴

The sources reveal that between 744/1343 and 754/1353 the wars between the Bedouin tribes in Upper Egypt, especially those in-

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 335.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 816.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 728.

²⁴³ Ibid., pp. 816, 826, 853, 905.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 841, 843; on the al-‘Ā'id tribes, see Ayalon, "Auxiliary Forces", p. 25.

volving the 'Arak and Banū Hilāl tribes, continually disrupted travel on the main roads, making travelling virtually impossible for fear of robbery.²⁴⁵ Tribes would attack and pillage villages, killing their inhabitants,²⁴⁶ and in some cases maliciously damage the irrigation system. Thus, they were responsible for "most of the lands of Fayyūm becoming arid wastes."²⁴⁷ One of their special targets were the sugar processing facilities²⁴⁸—al-Maqrizī and Ibn Duqmāq report that the sugar processing factories of Upper Egypt were in decline as early as the 14th century.²⁴⁹

In their manifest disregard of the authorities the Bedouin did not stop short even of killing government functionaries, as they did with Ṭughāyh, *kāshif* of Upper Egypt, and several of his men (749/1348).²⁵⁰ They also raided the seats of government in towns like Asyūṭ, pillaged them, and prevented the levying of the land tax, the *kharāj*, from the local villagers.²⁵¹ The military forces sent to quell these disturbances not only failed in their efforts to defeat or even control them, but suffered some embarrassing defeats. The defeat inflicted upon the *kāshif* of Upper Egypt, al-Hadhbānī (751/1350), highlighted the weakness of the government vis-à-vis the Bedouin which in turn led them to increase their highway robbery and maltreatment of villagers.²⁵²

At one point Upper Egypt was under the de facto control of Muḥammad Ibn Wāṣil al-Aḥḍab, chief of the 'Arak tribe, which made the Mamluks dependent on him for the collection of the *kharāj*, thus forcing the *wulāt* and *kushshāf*, despite the destruction the Bedouin wreaked in their districts, to ingratiate themselves with him. In order to bring about his downfall the central government finally decided to take drastic action (754/1353). Amir Shaykhū attacked the Bedouin at Iḥfayḥiyya, Fayyūm, Qūṣ and Bahnasā with a large force, which had even been reinforced once the number of Bedouin on a war footing had become known. Dealing the Bedouin a heavy blow, Shaykhū succeeded in purging Upper and Lower Egypt of them.²⁵³

²⁴⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 656, 657–658, 668, 695, 731, 841, 843, 850, 907–908.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 706–707, 821, 850, 859, 861, 896–897, 907–908.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 668, 896–897.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 850, 896–897, 908.

²⁴⁹ Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar", p. 98.

²⁵⁰ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 770, 843, 907.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 668, 833, 908.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 819, 820, 843, 864, 907, 908.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 909, 910–914; Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, p. 287.

Shaykhū's purge ended a period of some fifteen years during which the country's resources had been sorely depleted by the destruction brought upon commerce and agriculture by the Bedouin and by the vast government expenditure on the wars against them, not to mention the amount of military equipment which they had taken as booty. Important, too, is that since they were nomads, the huge amount of capital which the Bedouin had accumulated during the rules of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his son Aḥmad was, of course, never put back into the economy in the form of investments.

The Sultan's Harem and Household

In both the size of his harem and the opulence which he lavished on it al-Nāṣir Muḥammad easily surpassed all his predecessors. To begin with, the sultan's beloved wife, Ṭughāy, who was a freed woman, was treated as royalty. Exceptional was also that the amirs paid her the same respect they gave the sultan. When she went on the pilgrimage in 738/1337, the cost of her *hajj* was only slightly less than that of the sultan's. At her death (749/1348) she left one thousand slave-girls and eighty eunuchs. Sitt Ḥadaq, who had been al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's nurse and later became superintendent (*qahramāna* or *qahramaniyya*) of his harem, also wielded great influence in the sultan's household.²⁵⁴ She amassed great wealth during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's rule, among other things through her involvement in profitable building enterprises.²⁵⁵

Throughout his rule, al-Nāṣir purchased inordinate numbers of slave-girls, especially *muwalladāt*, women of mixed ethnic extraction, for whom he had a particular fondness.²⁵⁶ Of the slave-girls he left at his death twelve hundred were *muwalladāt* and at least five hundred and five of these were also singers.²⁵⁷ He built splendid palaces for his wives and slave-girls in the Citadel, al-Ḥawsh, and heaped expensive clothing and jewels upon them. The many novelties in women's fashions during al-Nāṣir's rule, which called for the use of various kinds of expensive material, all originated in the harem and were then quickly taken up by Cairo's women.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Al-Shujā'i, p. 50; Ayalon, "Eunuchs", note 10, p. 290.

²⁵⁵ *Khiṭat*, 2, p. 116; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 196–197.

²⁵⁶ *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 175–176; Ayalon, "Eunuchs", pp. 289–290.

²⁵⁷ Al-Shujā'i, p. 216.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 536, 618; *'Iqd*, A2912/4, fols. 348b–349a; Behrens-Abouseif, "The Citadel of Cairo", pp. 51ff.

Unlike his predecessors, al-Nāšir MuḤammad made sure that the sultan's household staff, from the official in charge of the sultan's stables, *amir ākhūr*, to the grooms, valets-de-chambre, gardeners and cooks, were well taken care of. He was very generous towards them and expected the same from his amirs, who were required, for example, to give them silver and gold sashes, silk garments embroidered with silver and gold, sometimes even fur jackets, as "tips" for the grants and gifts the sultan sent through them.²⁵⁹ He went so far as to award *iqṭā'āt* to the *bāzdāriyya*, the sultan's falconers.²⁶⁰ His household cook became a very rich man simply by selling, with the sultan's consent, the leftovers from the sultan's kitchens—he built a mosque in Cairo for the upkeep of which, instead of establishing a *waqf*, he paid out of his own pocket, while at his death he left twenty-five pieces of real estate.²⁶¹ The eunuchs 'Arafāt and Kāfūr al-Hindī were among al-Nāšir's closest confidants and as a result saw their lot much improved. Kāfūr al-Hindī, for example, built himself a huge mausoleum in Cairo.²⁶²

Here, too, the negative consequences of al-Nāšir MuḤammad's actions and decisions came to the fore only after his death. In the ensuing interfaction struggles, the Mamluk amirs exploited the huge harem and household al-Nāšir MuḤammad had left behind and it was then that the women and eunuchs of the harem acquired a say in politics, thus eventually gaining access to and even partial control of the country's treasury and natural resources.

After the death of al-Nāšir MuḤammad, active control of the government was restored to the amirs while the sultan's offspring ruled in name only. However, the amirs could maintain their ruling position only by forming coalitions among them. As none of them had any intention of foregoing his own personal ambitions to rule, and as the integrity on which these coalitions were based was almost non-existent since mamluk loyalty was now up for sale, cooperation between the amirs within the coalitions took on new, though increasingly limiting, aspects. They kept a close watch on each others' activities which they did their utmost to undermine. Under such conditions, even though his rule was only nominal, the status of the sultan gained a certain amount of power because of

²⁵⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 532; *Nujūm*, 9, pp. 171–172.

²⁶⁰ *Nujūm*, 9, p. 170; on the increase in the number of the sultan's birds of prey during al-Nāšir MuḤammad's reign, see Ibn al-Dawādārī, 9, p. 294.

²⁶¹ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 685–686.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 706.

his mere presence: without him open conflict between the amirs over rule was inevitably to erupt. Moreover, once they had decided to maintain a nominal sultanate, the amirs were unable to strip it of its formal authority, which included responsibility for the treasury. From the power thus invested in the sultan's nominal status, the harem and eunuchs all benefited.

The majority of the sultans put on the throne by the amirs were brought directly from the harem, which had significant repercussions.²⁶³ As all the amirs needed the Qalawuni sultans for was nominal rule, they never completely cut off their connections with the harem and even encouraged these. It was not a coincidence that Amir Arghūn al-ʿAlāʾī, who then held the reins of government and was the legal guardian of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl (743–746/1342–1345), was also married to the latter's mother. When al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl fell ill and died, Arghūn al-ʿAlāʾī was instrumental in the accession of his brother, al-Kāmil Shaʿbān, to the sultanate “because [al-Kāmil's] mother was his wife”.²⁶⁴ Al-Kāmil Shaʿbān was under the strong influence of his wives and, especially, his mother, and thus, for example, he acceded to their demands that he make the *ḥajj* in 747/1346, ignoring the vigorous opposition of the amirs who protested because of the country's difficult economic situation. When Arghūn al-ʿAlāʾī was defeated by his opponents, al-Kāmil Shaʿbān fled from the street battle raging in Cairo and sought refuge with his mother in the Citadel.²⁶⁵

Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ṣāliḥ (752–755/1351–1354) lavished an inordinate amount of love upon his mother and treated her with all the respect normally reserved for royalty. In 755/1354, when he left for Siryāqūs, in addition to the amirs and other senior government officials he took her and his wives along as well. While there, he arranged a banquet in honour of his mother and acted as her servant by laying the table before her and serving her dishes he had prepared himself. In the course of the banquet, he regaled her with sultanic ceremony and arranged a royal procession (*mawḳib sulṭānī*) in her honour in which she was given the role of sultan (*bi-ziyy al-mulk wa-hayʿat al-salṭana*) while servants and slave-girls played the roles of her amirs and bore the ceremonial regalia before her.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 714; *Manhal*, 2070, fol. 173a; *Nujūm*, 11, pp. 137, 187, 207; Holt, “The Mamluk Sultan”, p. 249.

²⁶⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 620, also p. 756.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 680, 708, 712.

Furthermore, the sultan bestowed robes of honour and large gifts of money on all the participants.²⁶⁶

Since it was the task of the slave-girls and eunuchs left by al-Nāšir Muḥammad to entertain his sons and help them pass the time in an enjoyable manner, their inevitable influence on them brought them great wealth and a social and political status previously unheard of. Sultan Abū Bakr, who succeeded his father but ruled for a total of only fifty-nine days, married two of the *muwalladāt* slave-girls, their bridal veils (*jihāz*) costing the treasury 100,000 dinars. His reign was too short and the age of his brother Kujuk who came after him too young for evidence of the influence of the harem already to be noticeable. But within little more than a year slave-girls, especially the *muwalladāt*, are found to play leading roles in the lives of three successive sultans, al-Šāliḥ Ismā‘il, al-Kāmil Sha‘bān and al-Muzaffar Ḥājji. During their reigns, all three had an attachment to Ittifāq, a *muwallada* slave-girl with a beautiful voice who also played the ‘ūd. Al-Šāliḥ Ismā‘il married her first and plied her with expensive gifts which the *nāzir al-khāṣṣ* brought him in secret from the sultan’s personal treasury.²⁶⁷ On the day he ascended the throne, al-Kāmil Sha‘bān took her because of “what he had felt for her since his brother’s time [*limā kāna fī nafsihi minhā ayyām akhihi*].”²⁶⁸ Al-Kāmil quite openly gave her real estate assets which he took away from their owners and, literally even, threw large sums of money on her and her harem friends.²⁶⁹ When she bore him a son, the cost of her confinement, apart from bedclothes, reached 95,000 dinars. When al-Kāmil was ousted from the sultanate and Ittifāq was ejected from the Citadel, she took with her forty dresses inlaid with jewels, sixteen dresses with silk hems embroidered with silver or gold, and eighty veils, each with a value of between 5,000 and 20,000 dirhams, and many other valuable things.²⁷⁰ Not long before al-Muzaffar Ḥājji’s accession to the sultanate (746/1346)

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 929, also p. 735.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 662–663.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 715.

²⁶⁹ During a party held on the occasion of the marriage of a eunuch with a slave-girl from the harem, al-Kāmil himself threw gold on the bride, see *Sulūk*, 2, p. 696. For other examples of al-Kāmil’s prodigal expenditure on the slave-girls of his harem, see *ibid.*, pp. 690, 713. When al-Kāmil was deposed all his 500 slave-girls were cast out of the harem and dispersed among the amirs, see *ibid.*, p. 715.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 707, 715.

Ittifāq and her slave-girls were once again brought to the Citadel where al-Muzaffar married her secretly and, like his brothers before him, lavished expensive gifts upon her while restoring the allowances she and her slave-girls had enjoyed previously.²⁷¹ When two years later the amirs decided to curb the sultan's activities (748/1347), Ittifāq and Salma al-Karakiyya were unceremoniously thrown out with only the clothes they wore. The value of Ittifāq's tiara, whose fame had reached the ears of the amirs since three sultans had competed in having it inlaid with precious stones, was put at 100,000 dinars.²⁷² Soon after he returned to the pleasures of the harem (see below), Ḥājji became as prodigal as he had been before. When the confiscated property of Amir Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī arrived from Damascus, he promptly gave Kīdā, his beloved slave-girl at the time, 20,000 dinars as well as precious stones and pearls, and then threw the rest of the gold and jewels high above the heads of the slave-girls and eunuchs for them to catch. The total cost of this occasion was 30,000 dinars, 300,000 dirhams, and assorted valuables such as jewelry, precious stones and pearls, to the value of 80,000 dinars. Two months after Ḥājji had been deposed, servants questioned about his expenditure revealed that during this brief period Kīdā had been given 35,000 dinars and 220,000 dirhams and the black slaves, dove-cote-masters and others had received 200,000 dirhams; one of the servants was found to have precious stones and items of clothing to the value of 200,000 dinars in his possession.²⁷³

It is therefore no wonder that the sultan's household expenditure (*hawā'ijkhāna*) increased substantially, even by the yardstick of the extravagance practiced in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's time. It soon reached 23,000 dirhams per day in comparison with only 13,000 at the time of al-Nāṣir. When in 743/1342, Wazīr Aytamish resigned from office in protest over the huge treasury expenditures, it was decided no longer to approve any sultanic expenses which exceeded the norms set during the rule of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. A little over a year later, in Muḥarram 745/May 1344, when the state was beset by a deep economic crisis reflected in an annual budget deficit of 30 million dirhams (with revenues standing at only 15 million

²⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 720–721.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 725.

²⁷³ Ibid., pp. 741, 745.

dirhams), the same decision had to be made. The new ruling was observed for no longer than one month, after which expenditure rose again to its previous heights.²⁷⁴ In the same year, while the treasury encountered difficulty in disbursing the allowance of sugar the sultan customarily granted the amirs, mamluks and office-holders for the month of Ramaḍān, the sultan's wives received their allowance without any problems.²⁷⁵ Not only had the sugar plantations of Upper Egypt that year been badly damaged, but since the rise to power of al-Şāliḥ Ismā'īl there had also been a number of expensive military campaigns against his brother, Aḥmad, dug in at Karak. An empty treasury forced the amirs to borrow money from merchants in order to pay the *nafaqa*, the grant soldiers were awarded before they left on a campaign.²⁷⁶

During the rule of al-Muẓaffar Ḥājjī, the treasury allowances for eunuchs, servants and slaves exceeded those of his predecessor, al-Kāmil Sha'bān, but after he was ousted, all allowances for slave-girls and eunuchs were cancelled, and the expenses of the sultan's wives were cut, as were the sultanic household posts. The *hawā'ijkhāna* expenses as a result dropped from 21,000 dirhams per day to 18,000.²⁷⁷

Thanks to the efforts of al-Tawāshī 'Anbar al-Sakhartī, the chief eunuch who had been responsible for the upbringing and education of Sultan al-Şāliḥ Ismā'īl, servants and eunuchs attained a status which allowed them, just like the mamluks, to ride on superior mounts, wear splendid attire, and receive an income which was based on land revenues. 'Anbar al-Sakhartī bought real estate, engaged in commerce and even allowed himself a hippodrome where he played polo, while he surrounded himself with the ceremonial usually reserved only for senior amirs. Thus he bought birds of prey and went hunting dressed in silk clothes embroidered with gold or silver, with an entourage of servants, and even his own *khāṣṣakiyya*, and mamluks.²⁷⁸ The wives and servants of Sultan al-Kāmil Sha'bān behaved in much the same way and even ignored the injunctions of the *sharī'a* by drinking wine while on their outdoor

²⁷⁴ Al-Shujā'i, p. 272; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 665, 808, also p. 468; Ayalon, "Eunuchs", pp. 283-284. For *hawā'ijkhāna*, see Glossary.

²⁷⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 671.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 660.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 722, 724, 749.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 679.

pleasure trips.²⁷⁹ His wives took advantage of their position to lay their hands on other people's estates in Cairo, such as sugar processing factories, flour mills, gardens and houses. Al-Kāmil's mother, for example, took for herself a sugar factory and a garden on the banks of Birkat al-Fil which had belonged to the *wazīr* of Baghdad, and five hundred *faddān* of land and their water-wheel which had belonged to the children of Ṭuquzdamur. Ittifāq had two sugar processing factories and four flour mills which also had belonged to the *wazīr* of Baghdad. Towards the end of his rule, al-Muẓaffar Hājji bought for his beloved slave-girl the buildings put up by al-Nashw and his relatives.²⁸⁰ It remains unclear to what extent the transfer of these factories to the women affected their efficiency and production.

Al-Muẓaffar Hājji's servants and slave-girls were given allowances from land revenues in the Bahtit, al-Jiza and other districts. Muqbil al-Rūmī, who was chief eunuch, received 10,000 *faddān* from lands in the district of al-Buḥayra while the sultan and soldiers covered the expenses of the irrigation system.²⁸¹ The 'ūd player, 'Abd 'Alī, who was Ittifāq's music teacher, received an *iqṭā'* in the *ḥalqa* over and above the one he already had and perquisites as though he were an amir.²⁸²

To what extent women and servants of the harem were involved in government affairs during this period becomes clear when we find that *iqṭā'āt* and allowances were now granted only through their mediation (*fa-ṣārat al-iqṭā'āt wa-l-rizaq lā tuqḍā illā bi-l-khuddām wa-l-nisā'*).²⁸³ Eunuchs succeeded in bringing about the appointment of some of their number to administrative positions in religious institutions, taking the place of 'ulamā' who were simply dismissed. The eunuchs Muḥsin al-Shihābī and Kāfūr al-Hindī were appointed to administer the al-Ashrafiyya *madrasa* and 'Alam al-Dār the Nāṣiriyya *madrasa* and the Citadel mosque, and they had their own candidate appointed to the office of *nāẓir al-khāṣṣ*, which was then the highest civil office in the state.²⁸⁴

Here, perhaps, it is worthwhile to recall how jealously the Mamluk

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 713.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 692, 713, 740.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p. 724.

²⁸² Ibid., p. 662; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 154.

²⁸³ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 679, 713; Ayalon, "Eunuchs", pp. 285–286.

²⁸⁴ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 624; Ayalon, "Eunuchs", p. 283.

elite had guarded the exclusive use of their own insignia of rank during the rules of Baybars and Qalāwūn. For example, even though the eunuch ‘Anbar, known as al-Bāz, who had the responsibility for the education of the Royal Mamluks, had gained a special status in the establishment and was one of Baybars’s favourites, Baybars ordered him flogged before him when he learned that ‘Anbar would go to the hippodrome in his absence, where he played polo as the mamluks did, and feasted with his friends in the harem. When, seemingly undeterred, ‘Anbar made so bold as to tell Baybars that flogging would be of no avail, Baybars ordered his execution by hanging in the central hippodrome, al-Maydān al-Aswad, and had the hands of his associates lopped off for their part in his misdemeanours.²⁸⁵

Ibn al-Furāt recounts that Qalāwūn divorced his wife, the daughter of Shams al-Dīn Sunqur al-Takrītī, because, according to one version of the story, “she became somewhat arrogant and appointed her slave-girls *silāhdāriyya*, *jamdāriyya* and *suqāt* and the other offices which were understood to be in the service only of the sultanate, and the sultan left her because of that [*ta‘āṭat naw‘an min al-kubr wa-aqāmat lahā min al-jawāri silāh dāriyya wa-jamdāriyya wa-suqāt wa-ghayrahā mimmā yata‘allaqu bi-l-salṭana wa-fāraqahā al-sulṭān li-dhālika*].”²⁸⁶ Qalāwūn further humiliated her by marrying her to the son of one of the amirs well known for his errant ways.

On the other hand, we find that servants and eunuchs of the sultans who ruled during the 740s/1340s were much involved in interfactional political intrigue with the active support and encouragement of the Mamluk amirs. In 744/1343, Sultan al-Šāliḥ Ismā‘īl and Arghūn al-‘Alā’ī learned that a group of amirs, including *nā‘ib* Āqsunqur al-Salāri, who all belonged to the governing Mamluk coalition, had joined the side of Aḥmad, who was at Karak, and that a group of palace servants were also involved. The amirs were promptly imprisoned but not the servants. When the sultan then wanted to interrogate one of the latter, Arghūn al-‘Alā’ī instead told him to let the matter go: “Do not risk unrest erupting among the amirs [*lā taftaḥ fī hādhā al-amr bāb yushawwīshu khāṭir al-umarā’*].”²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Ibn Shaddād, p. 133; al-Nuwayri, 2M, fol. 213a.

²⁸⁶ Ibn al-Furāt, 8, p. 69.

²⁸⁷ Al-Shujā‘ī, p. 254.

The rule of al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā‘il was maintained by a coalition of Arghūn al-‘Alā’i, Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī and Āl Malik. Tension abounded between Āl Malik, who was *nā’ib al-salṭana*, on the one hand, and Arghūn al-‘Alā’i and Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī on the other. Āl Malik, who was a religious and idealistic man, wanted to curb the influence and excesses of the slave-girls and eunuchs and reinstate norms which would guarantee the special status of the Mamluks in the social hierarchy.²⁸⁸ Arghūn al-‘Alā’i and Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī, however, had hoped that Āl Malik would use his office as a rubber stamp for their decisions regarding the distribution of *iqṭā’āt* and wages. When Āl Malik appeared repelled by their suggestions, they simply ignored him. Tension also surfaced when Āl Malik wanted to ban the drinking of wine, which brought him in open conflict with Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī. Frictions such as these between the three coalition partners help explain the increasing resolve slave-girls and eunuchs displayed in their opposition to the *nā’ib* and in their abrogation of decrees he issued (*wa-kathura istilā’ al-jawārī wa-l-khuddām ‘alā al-dawla wa-‘aradū al-nā’ib wa-abṭalū mā aḥabbū ibṭālahu mim mā yarsumu bihi*).²⁸⁹

Amir Ghurlū tried to gain control of government affairs through his ties with Sultan al-Muẓaffar Ḥājjī. He succeeded in removing the amirs who had earlier curbed the sultan’s activities and thus enabled him to return to a life of pleasure: “And he decided with the sultan that he hand over government affairs which he would manage in the sultan’s place, whereby the sultan could devote himself to pleasure.”²⁹⁰ Amirs Aruqtāy, who was *nā’ib al-salṭana*, Uljāybughā and Ṭanīraq, who were all partners in the coalition, were apprehensive of Ghurlū’s domination and tried to drive a wedge between him and the sultan. This they did by using the services of Aḥmad, the *shādd al-sharābkhāna*,²⁹¹ the court jester, who, by way of his jokes and gestures, succeeded in making the sultan suspicious of Ghurlū.

Disfigured by two humps, one on his chest and the other on his back, al-Shaykh ‘Alī al-Kaṣīḥ was an ugly man. Paralyzed, moreover, in both legs, he let himself be carried from place to place on the back of one of his servants. Despite these physical limitations,

²⁸⁸ Ayalon, “Eunuchs”, pp. 286–287.

²⁸⁹ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 653.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 726, 735; *Nujūm*. 10, pp. 156, 157, 164–165.

²⁹¹ For *shādd al-sharābkhāna*, see Glossary.

he succeeded in attaining an honoured status. Starting out as court jester, he had subsequently become the amirs' agent at court. At the same time, he assured his position with the sultan by serving as his contact with the outside world and by providing him with information on the activities of the amirs in government. 'Alī al-Kasiḥ's sharp tongue became his political weapon: "And the amirs and others were greatly frightened of his tongue, and they flattered him with money so that his wealth increased [*fa-khāfa al-umarā' wa-ghayruhum khashyat lisānihi wa-ṣāna'ūhu bi-l-māl ḥattā kathurat amwāluhu*]." ²⁹² Al-Muẓaffar Ḥājjī was deposed when Uljāybughā and Ṭanīraq learned from 'Alī al-Kasiḥ that the sultan was plotting with their colleagues to have them removed. ²⁹³

That in general the amirs were prepared to allow the sultan to squander a portion of the state's revenues on the harem and the servants as long as they had freedom of action in all other matters becomes clear when we look at the survey of state revenues and expenditure conducted by the amirs in 750/1349. This revealed that annual government revenues stood at ten million dirhams while the expenditures of the *wizāra* and the privy purse reached 14.6 million dirhams. The *wazīr* again complained about the high expenditure of the sultanic household which by now had reached 22,000 dirhams a day. Yet that same survey also revealed that a large portion of the sultan's land revenues was disbursed again as grants to the amirs, totalling 60,000 dinars from the land revenues of the al-Jiza province alone. When they heard these details, the amirs decided to ignore both the findings of the examination and the *wazīr's* complaints (*fa-taghāda al-umarā' 'inda samā' dhālika*). ²⁹⁴ At approximately the same time, the *nāzīr al-dawla* submitted reports on the expenditure practices of the government which had been adopted since the death of al-Nāşir Muḥammad. These gave details of all the grants and land revenues from all over Egypt, including *iqṭā'āt* lands and lands whose revenues were in the form of rent, as well as a list of the amirs, servants and wives who received them. When the report was presented to the amirs, they realised that "most of the revenues were in their names

²⁹² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 758; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 170, 191.

²⁹³ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 742.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 808.

and not one of them uttered another word [*wa-mu'zam dhālika bi-asmā'ihim fa-lam yanṭiq aḥad minhum bi-shay'*].²⁹⁵

It was only when, at the height of the Black Death epidemic with the economic crisis at its worst, the amirs decided to set aside their rivalries and after they had removed al-Muzaffar Ḥājji that the involvement of the harem in government affairs came to an end. In order to extricate the economy the amirs decided to strip the sultan of his authority to rule and transfer it to their own council, the *majlis al-mashūra*, which previously had been a mere advisory body to the sultan. Membership of the *majlis al-mashūra* was made permanent and now included nine amirs, one of whom was *ra's nawba*, primus inter pares. Amirs who sat on the council bore the title of *umarā' al-mashūra wa-l-tadbīr*, indicating that they had gained formal status as decision-makers in matters of state.²⁹⁶ As they were somewhat reluctant at the same time to forego the interests of the Mamluk factions and their leaders, cooperation on the *majlis al-mashūra* was limited to economic matters and control of the treasury, the disbursement of whose resources was carefully divided among them. Under conditions such as these, the amirs had a great deal of freedom of action which enabled them to annihilate the influence of the harem in government matters and also to keep the sultan in check.²⁹⁷

One of the first decisions of the *majlis al-mashūra* was to prevent involvement in government affairs by anyone other than themselves: "And not to allow the sultan to do as he wished with money, and not to let him award a grant to anyone, and not to allow him anything he asked for . . . [*wa-allā yada'ū al-sulṭān yatašarrafu fī al-māl wa-lā yun'imu 'alā aḥad wa-lā yumakannu min shay' yaṭlubuhu*]."²⁹⁸ The sultan, who until this time had been in formal control of the treasury, was given an allowance from the treasury of one hundred dirhams a day, over and above his daily needs, called *jāmaḳiyyat al-sulṭān* or *nafaqat al-sulṭān*. In the sources *jāmaḳiyya* tellingly refers to the monthly wage paid to the rank-and-file soldier of the Mamluk state and *nafaqa* was the grant the sultan awarded to his mamluks, either upon his accession to rule or on the eve of a military campaign so that his soldiers could

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 810; the taxes which were levied on commerce in Alexandria and Qatya were divided among the amirs instead of the mamluks; see *ibid.*, p. 760.

²⁹⁶ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 746, 752; *Nujūm*, 10, pp. 188, 190.

²⁹⁷ *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 748-749.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 751, 752.

equip themselves adequately.²⁹⁹ Thus, as in the case of Shaykhū and the Bedouin, the *majlis al-mashūra*'s drastic measures put an end to some fifteen years of squandering by the court of large parts of the government's income.

A final word on the adverse economic significance of the amirs' struggle for power. It will be remembered that immediately after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, the mamluks and the common people who had fought with the victorious amirs were given permission to loot the homes of the defeated amirs. For example, upon the defeat of Qawṣūn, one of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's most senior amirs renowned for his great wealth,³⁰⁰ it took the mob and the soldiers only one hour to loot his property. This included 600,000 dinars and 700,000 dirhams which he had prepared as grants for his mamluks. Bags of gold and silver found in his home, totalling 400,000 dinars, were thrown along the roadside which the mamluks and rabble divided among themselves. Utensils and jewelry to the value of some 200,000 dinars were taken, while marble tiles, windows and the wood veneer which covered the palace ceilings did not go unnoticed either. The common people further looted the homes of Qawṣūn's numerous mamluks and also those of his close confidants who lived in the various quarters of Cairo. One of the results was that after Qawṣūn's removal the quarter around Zarībat Qawṣūn, where he had owned real estate and had commercial enterprises, went into decline. The state of the market in the aftermath of the looting can provide an indication of its extent: the sources tell us that there was a drop in the price of wheat while the price of gold went down from twenty to eleven dirhams to the dinar.³⁰¹

The looting of the wealth of Qawṣūn and others is further significant because large amounts of capital which otherwise would have been used for long-term investment in commerce and industry—which was what Qawṣūn did with part of his money during his lifetime—were split up into sums too small for investment purposes. Moreover, these monies fell into the hands of people who anyway only intended to spend them on consumer goods. To this should be added that the looting of the homes of amirs and mamluks of factions defeated in the amirs' struggle for power became an

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 750; *Tuḥfa*, pp. 158–159; Ayalon, "The System of Payment", pp. 48–53.

³⁰⁰ Al-Shujā'i, pp. 186–187; *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 589, 591–592; *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 72–73.

³⁰¹ *Khiṭaṭ*, 2, pp. 73, 198.

accepted norm of behaviour. Not long after the looting of Qawṣūn's home, Sultan Abū Bakr's mother, together with her two hundred slave-girls and servants, in revenge for the murder of her son, looted the home of Amir Jariktamur Ibn Bahādur, leaving a few morsels for the mob to pick up after she had finished. At the same time, during the struggle between Amir Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī and Amir Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī, "the mob gathered below the Citadel in order to loot the houses of whichever of the two opposing sides would lose [*fa-tajamma'at al-ghawghā' taḥta al-qal'a li-nahb buyūt man yankasiru min al-fariqayn*]." ³⁰² This custom of looting the homes of the defeated amirs might provide at least part of the explanation why in the second half of the 14th century the amirs withdrew from involvement in industry—the capital they held had become scarce. ³⁰³ There was, of course, also the norm, after the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, of bribing mamluks to join a specific faction involved in the struggle for rule. ³⁰⁴ Thus, Qawṣūn, for instance, paid 600,000 dinars from the state treasury to amirs and mamluks in return for their allegiance during his struggle, and he would have given his mamluks a further 700,000 dirhams from his own pocket, had he not been defeated before he managed to do so. ³⁰⁵

To sum up, with the magnificence and splendour of his manifold building activities, the riches he lavished on those he favoured, and the generosity with which he fostered his mamluks, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad created not growth, but the illusion of growth. Soon after his death, his legacy was found to consist not of a firmly established infrastructure that could have guaranteed the economic future of the Mamluk state, but of a concatenation of increasingly complex problems, undoing most of his achievements within a generation.

Thus, the Mamluk state was plunged into a severe economic crisis as early as the second half of the 14th century. When, in addition, it was simultaneously hit by such calamities as the Black Death, civil war, floods and droughts, chances for recovery were reduced yet further and the country's economy entered the downward spiral usually depicted as characteristic of the 15th century.

³⁰² *Sulūk*, 2, p. 598; see also 3, pp. 142, 143.

³⁰³ Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar", p. 102; Darrage, pp. 66–67.

³⁰⁴ See pp. 85ff.

³⁰⁵ *Sulūk*, 2, p. 587, see also pp. 577, 580; *Nujūm*, 10, p. 28. For other examples, see *Sulūk*, 2, pp. 560–561; al-Jawharī, 2, pp. 107, 114.

CONCLUSION

On attaining the sultanate for a third and final time in 709/1310, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, embittered by his two earlier periods of rule when he had been no more than a puppet sultan, realized that he had to consolidate his position within a very short time. He was determined, furthermore, to secure a niche for himself as one of history's great rulers. Thus, in an effort to diminish the stature of his predecessors as the originators of the traditional norms of the Mamluk state, he almost immediately began introducing far-reaching changes in the Mamluk training, advancement and remuneration systems. Driven by his ambition for achievement and success, and aided by the virtual absence during his reign of external military threats, he remained oblivious to the harmful and destabilizing effect these changes might have on the established order of the Mamluk system. Once al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had replaced the traditional rules of stringent training and slow hierarchical advancement by a general attitude of permissiveness and had begun offering his mamluks easy access to material plenty, signs of an increasingly lax discipline in the Mamluk military ranks manifested themselves, already during his own period of rule, in frequent breaches of discipline and in instances where both rank-and-file mamluks and amirs were found to openly flout the authority of the sultan.

When during their struggle for power immediately after al-Nāṣir's death his senior amirs were forced to accede to the demands of the mamluks they sought to attract to their factions, the process of the deterioration of the traditional values upon which Mamluk factional consolidation had been based took on a dynamics of its own—soon the mamluks' professional excellence, their unswerving loyalty to their master, and their undisputed solidarity with their peers were supplanted by rampant opportunism and blatant materialism.

This new reality created a shift in the Mamluk elite's centre of power. While up to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign candidates for rule had come from among the late sultan's senior amirs—usually his closest confidants—with ordinary mamluks closing ranks behind them, after his death the key to factional consolidation gradu-

ally moved into the hands of the rank-and-file mamluks. Once the latter realized they could sway the balance, they no longer remained content with material rewards but insisted on an active part, first, in political decision-making and, later, in government itself. The culmination of this process came with Barqūq who, in 779/1378, rose from the rank of simple soldier to that of *atābak al-‘asākir* and *amīr kabīr* in less than four months from where he reached the sultanate in 784/1382. Thereafter Mamluk factional consolidation rested exclusively upon the fulfillment of the demands and interests of rank-and-file mamluks. The sultan was now considered the mere representative of the factional support he had succeeded in rallying behind him, which also underpinned his prerogative to rule. In other words, whereas at the outset of the Mamluk era rulers had been able to restrain mamluk ambitions through the rigorous Mamluk system established by Baybars and Qalāun, after al-Nāṣir’s death, with that system no longer in place, mamluk aspirations were left unbridled. The Mamluk tendency to exploit for all it was worth the power that attached to their status had come out triumphant. It became increasingly difficult, for example, to mobilize the army for work on and the financing of state projects which had fallen into disrepair, once considered one of the major tasks of the government. Measures that could have led to economic improvements were pushed aside for the harsh fiscal policies which the government adopted towards all sectors of the economy in response to mamluk avarice, in an attempt to appease the mamluks and guarantee some degree of political stability. For the same reasons, the government encountered growing difficulties in mobilizing the mamluks even for the defence of the country. The army, by now, consisted of soldiers who had little or no military talents and lacked all motivation for acts of belligerence but at the same time had come to accrue enormous social and political influence. A vicious circle was created when they proved able to force the sultan to accede to their demands irrespective of their military capabilities.

It is this rapid transformation of Mamluk norms which highlights the nature of the Mamluk system. In other words, exactly those elements in the Mamluk system which remained permanent—e.g., the augmentation of the army’s ranks by new recruits who had their origin in servitude and their inclusion in a one-generation elite—permitted the emergence of a pattern of constant change. The Mamluk elite, as a one-generation ruling society, never accu-

mulated sufficient experience to generate a tradition which could either cushion and absorb or reject such changes. What is more, because the new principles eminently suited the tendency of a one-generation elite to exploit the societal strata subordinate to it, the Mamluk elite proved eager to adopt and even reinforce them. This also explains why the Mamluk system as established during the formative years of the state after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death was venerated as an ideal but never again re-introduced.

One question remains: If, as the present study has tried to show, the Mamluk system lost its military vigour at a relatively early stage, how did it survive for as long as it did. The answer, it would seem, should be sought primarily in extraneous factors, viz., the characteristic structure of late medieval Muslim society and its links with Mamluk rule, and the absence of any serious external threats to the security of the country.

Finally, though it did have a certain effect, the transition from Turkish to Circassian rule alone cannot explain the decline of the Mamluk state. Instead, signalling the onset of the decline and thus marking a turning point in Mamluk history are the changes wrought in the Mamluk system during the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn.

GLOSSARY*

<i>Amīr ākhūr</i>	the inspector of the sultani stables.
<i>Amīr arba‘īn</i> or <i>amīr ṭablkhāna</i>	“amir of forty”, the third highest rank of an officer in the Mamluk army, entitled to keep about forty mamluk horsemen in his service.
<i>Amīr ‘ashara</i>	“amir of ten”, the rank of an officer in the Mamluk army, entitled to keep ten mamluk horsemen in his service.
<i>Atābak al-‘asākīr</i>	the commander-in-chief of the Mamluk army, commonly the natural candidate for the sultanate from among the senior amirs.
<i>Awshāqiyya</i> or <i>awjāqiyya</i>	the grooms responsible for preparing the horses of the royal stables for military training, processions and battles.
<i>Dīnār jayshī</i>	a financial unit the value of which equalled about two-thirds of the ordinary gold dīnār current in the Mamluk period.
<i>Dawādār</i>	the bearer of the sultani inkwell, as such in charge of presenting the mail to the sultan, and of conveying to the sultan petitions directed to him.
<i>Faddān</i>	land measure of one acre.
<i>Amīr hājīb</i> or <i>hājīb al-ḥujjāb</i>	the amir in charge of the administration of justice among the mamluks of the amirs, and responsible as well for presenting guests and envoys to the sultan and for organizing army parades.
<i>Ḥawā’ijkhāna</i>	an office under the inspection of the <i>wazīr</i> , its duty providing the sultani household and the amirs and officials with daily supplies of meat, spices, oil, etc.
<i>Irdabb</i>	a measure of capacity used for weighing grain which during the Middle Ages varied from

* Expressions whose first element is *amīr* are arranged according to the second element.

ca. 70 kg. and more over time and from place to place (see Ashtor, "Levantine Weights", pp. 479–480).

- Jamdār* the person in charge of the sultan's clothing.
- Amīr jāndār* the officer in charge of the *zardkhāna*, the sultani weapon stores and detention house for mamluks, and also in charge of executing the sultan's disciplinary orders; he was the official whose permission the amirs needed when they wished to see the sultan.
- Jāshinkīr* the sultan's food taster.
- Khāzindār* the officer in charge of the sultan's treasures.
- Amīr majlis* the supervisor of the physicians and the like who were in the service of the sultan.
- Manshūr* (pl. *manāshīr*) a document authorizing fief allocation, *iqṭāʿ*.
- Amīr miʿa* "amir of one hundred", the second highest rank of an officer in the Mamluk army, entitled to keep about one hundred mamluk horsemen in his service.
- Muqaddam alf* "commander of one thousand", the highest rank of an officer in the mamluk army, given to an amir of one hundred who was appointed to command one thousand horsemen in battle-field.
- Muqaddam al-mamālik al-sultāniyya* "the commander of the Royal Mamluks", the head of the military schools of the Royal Mamluks in the Citadel.
- Nāʾib al-salṭana* the sultan's viceroy in Egypt; until al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign the highest rank an amir could attain in the Mamluk sultanate. In the sultan's absence, the *nāʾib al-salṭana* substituted for him and in his presence acted as sultan on a more limited scale.
- Naqīb al-jaysh* the official whose duty it was to escort the amirs, mamluks and soldiers of the *ḥalqa* to the sultan whenever they were summoned to the court.
- Nāzīr al-dawla* the authority to supervise the work of the *dīwāns* jointly with the *wazīr*, under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad frequently referred to as *nāzīr al-dawla* or *nāzīr al-nuẓẓār*.

- Nāzir al-jaysh* the official in charge of the *dīwān al-jaysh*, or *al-juyūsh*, responsible for the affairs of the army and the *iqṭā'āt*.
- Nāzir al-Khāṣṣ* the inspector of the sultan's private treasury. When al-Nāṣir Muḥammad abolished the *wizāra* in 729/1329, most of its functions went to the *nāzir al-khāṣṣ*.
- Qinṭār* a weight of one hundred *raṭl*, or about 100 lbs. in Cairo and 420 lbs. in Damascus.
- Qaṣba* a measure about twelve feet and a half, or 3.53 meters.
- Ra's nawba*
(pl. *ru'ūs nuwab*) the supervisor of the mamluks' conduct and in charge of executing the sultan's or the amirs' disciplinary orders; responsible as well for organizing parades before the army set out for expeditions.
- Riṭl* or *raṭl* a weight of 5 lbs. in Syria and of 15.75 oz. in Egypt.
- Amīr silāh* "grand master of armour" whose duty it was to bear the sultan's arms during public appearances, and the supervisor of the sultani arsenal.
- Shādd al-dawāwīn* the official who assisted the *wazīr* in the collection of tax revenues.
- Shādd al-sharābkhāna* the official in charge of the drinks and medicine served to the sultan.
- Amīr shikār* the official responsible for keeping the sultan's birds of prey and for preparing his hunting expeditions, holding the rank of amir of ten.
- Taqdimat alf* see *muqaddam alf*.
- Ṭawāshī*
(pl. *ṭawāshīyya*) a eunuch in charge of the mamluks' education.
- Ustādār* "grand major domo", the head of the *dīwān al-mufrad* or *dīwān al-ustādāriyya*, an office in charge of the distribution of the monthly pay, fodder and clothes to the Royal Mamluks; the grand major domo of the royal palaces.
- Wālī al-qal'a* officer responsible for the opening and closing of the Citadel's main gate through which the army used to pass.

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Zubda, see Baybars al-Manşūri.

Zubdat kashf, see al-Zāhiri.

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Abbreviations

AAS	<i>Asian and African Studies</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
EI	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , First Edition, Leyden, 1913–36
EI ²	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , Second Edition, Leiden, 1950–
IC	<i>Islamic Culture</i>
IOS	<i>Israel Oriental Studies</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JEEH	<i>The Journal of European Economic History</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
REI	<i>Revue des études islamiques</i>
SI	<i>Studia Islamica</i>

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