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This volume on the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria grew out of an international conference, which took place in May 2000 at the Universities of Haifa and Tel-Aviv. This conference was a sequel of a similar symposium that had convened in 1994 at Bad Homburg, Germany, which resulted in the volume entitled *The Mamluks in Egyptian politics and society*, edited by Thomas Philipp and late Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

The conference at Haifa and Tel-Aviv (and subsequently this book) differs from the previous project in one significant aspect. The first book was limited to Egypt; the present volume includes the history of the Mamluks in Syria as well. Egypt was the center of the Mamluk Empire (1250–1517); the provinces known as Greater Syria (*Bilād al-Shām*) were wholly dependent on the capital Cairo, the seat of the sultan and the caliph, and was politically and strategically of a secondary importance. In addition, while Mamluks assumed a central role in the politics of Ottoman Egypt (1517–1798; particularly in the eighteenth century), they all but disappeared from Syria after the Ottoman conquest.

The editors would like to extend their gratitude to the persons and departments at the Haifa and Tel-Aviv Universities for their assistance in financing and organizing the Mamluk conference and the present volume.

We would like to thank Mrs. Genoveba Breitstein for efficiently and thoughtfully preparing the text for publication.

M.W. A.L.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANSMN  American Numismatic Society Museum Notes
AS     Annales Islamologiques
BIFAO  Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale
BRJMES British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies
BSOAS  Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies
CNRS   Centre National de Recherche Scientifique
EI     Encyclopaedia of Islam (new edition)
IFD    Institut Francis de Damas
IFAO   Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale
IJMES  International Journal of Middle East Studies
JAOS   Journal of the American Oriental Society
JESHO  Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
JRAS   Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JSS    Journal of the Semitic Studies
MSR    Mamluk Studies Review
REI    Revue des etudes Islamiques
SI     Studia Islamica
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INTRODUCTION

The nineteen articles that have been collected in the present volume cover the politics and society of the Mamluks from 1250, when the Mamluk Sultanate was established in Egypt until the end of the eighteenth century, when the French invasion of Egypt announced the end of the three centuries long, direct Ottoman rule of Egypt. The Syrian provinces were an integral part of the Mamluk Empire, and despite the strong union between Egypt and Syria during the Mamluk Empire (stronger than in any period before or since), there were different conditions in Syria in certain respects. Therefore, Parts IV and VII discuss respectively the conditions in Mamluk Palestine, a part of Greater Syria at the time, and Syria.

Part I, “The formative stage of the Mamluk state”, consists of two quite different studies. Hannah Taragan describes the portal to the Red Mosque in Safed, discussing its artistic themes and political messages, comparing that specific portal to other monuments commissioned by Sultan Baybars, the architect of the Mamluk Empire. Reuven Amitai looks at the meaning of loyalty among Mamluk amirs against the background of the Mongol occupation of Damascus in 1300, when several amirs crossed the lines to the Mongols and back.

It is well known that despite the richness of literary sources of the period, the archival documents from the Mamluk chanceries did not survive. In Part II, Frédéric Bauden uncovered at the University of Liége a unique manuscript. It is an imperial decree dating from the mid-fourteenth century. The document was used by the al-Maqrīzī, the famous historian, as scrap paper to write a passage from one of his chronicles. Complementing historical sources with Mamluk chancery documents, Bauden constructs more accurate pictures of political events in mid fourteenth century. Using the Haram al-Sharif documents in Jerusalem, Donald Richards suggests first hand information on Mamluk material culture.

Turning to the military aspects of the Mamluk society in Part III, Amalia Levanoni uses the study of Mamluk regal titles (alqāb) during the Circassian period to look at factional politics within Mamluk society. She challenges the model of Mamluk factionalism prevalent in research literature and shows that the Mamluks developed instead...
a bi-polar political system in which regal titles were used as symbols uniting various Mamluk groups through the generations. Robert Irwin challenges the theory of the late David Ayalon, arguably the founding father of Mamluk studies, that the Mamluks did not adopt firearms for social and psychological reasons despite the fact that they knew the technology. Irwin examines carefully all the relevant evidence of the Arabic chronicles and the technical pros and cons of the effectiveness of firearms of the time and concludes that not only did the Mamluks not reject firearms, but also “they could not get enough of them”.

The two articles of Part IV are concerned with society and administration in Mamluk Palestine. Donald Little offers new facts and fresh perspectives on Mamluk Jerusalem. Little describes the administration of the city under Qâytbây, the most powerful sultan in the fifteenth century. Joseph Drory’s study of Safed describes the considerations, which caused the Mamluk government to turn Safed from a small and politically insignificant town into a mamlaka, a province in Greater Syria. Drory surveys in some detail the officeholders in Safed, giving a list of the military and administrative personnel under the Mamluks.

In Part V, Yossef Rapoport gives an analysis of the significance of the attacks on divorce oaths by Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, the most famous and original theologian and polemicist of the Mamluk period. His rulings about this matter got him into trouble with the authorities, as did other things he said or wrote. Rapoport explains that divorce oaths were widely practiced throughout society, by commoners and the ruling elite alike. By attacking them on religious grounds Ibn Taymiyya challenged some basics of families and households, such as authority and control.

Part VI consists of three articles on the economy. Warren Schultz discusses the circulation of silver coins in the Bahri (or Turkish) period of Mamluk history (1250–1382). He rejects Balog’s assumption that Mamluk dirhams passed by count and argues that the Mamluks minted silver coins of changing alloys and weight and that their value was determined in the market in comparison to the money of account. Jonathan Berkey takes a close look at an ancient Islamic institution, the muhštāb (market inspector) in the Mamluk environment. He shows that there was transformation in the character and functions of the office; from a position of an ethical and religious
character, filled in by men from the religious-legal establishment in the early Mamluk period, it turned into a political and administrative office of the state, subordinate to the ruler’s interests. Carl Petry describes the estate and the economic activities of a woman, a royal spouse, who had been widowed several times and amassed considerable fortune. This study is based on archival documents that are relatively abundant for the last decades of the Mamluk Sultanate.

Part VII, “the Mamluks in Syria”, consists of three different studies. Nimrod Luz combines field research in Jerusalem and written historical and topographical sources to examine Mamluk residential houses planning as reflecting Islamic culture in specific towns during the Mamluk period, thus contributing to the ongoing scholarly debate about “the Islamic city”. Michael Winter uses waqf and milk (charitable endowments and private estates) documents from the Istanbul archives to examine Mamluk amirs—their religiosity, their families, households, and women, as well as some demographic data about family size and number of wives and children. The article is an example how early Ottoman documents can be used for late Mamluk social and economic history. Thomas Philipp describes the Mamluk household and military forces of Ahmad Pāshā al-Jazzār, the ruler of Acre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The article proves that the Mamluk phenomenon did not vanish entirely from Syria after the Ottoman conquest.

In Part VIII, “Mamluks in Ottoman Egypt”, André Raymond describes the wealth of the Egyptian amirs at the end of the seventeenth century, basing his study on the documents of legal bequests. He illustrates the economic differences among the various military units and ranks and between the military grandees and the civilian wealthy men. As he does in his previous studies, Raymond also presents the economic geography of Cairo. Daniel Crecelius discusses the political problems of leadership of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Katkhudā, an outstanding military and political figure in eighteenth century Cairo. The study is based on contemporary Arabic chronicles. Jane Hathaway challenges the notion, prevalent in the research literature, of “Mamluk revival” in Ottoman Egypt, after their defeat by the Ottoman in 1517. Hathaway strongly calls to differentiate between the historical realities of Ottoman politics that were based on households and had no relation to the defunct Mamluk Sultanate and the nostalgia that evoked Mamluk historical memories, often used for
political purposes, as to gain historical legitimacy. Finally, Reuven Aharoni compares the similarities and differences between the two warlike societies, Mamluks and the Bedouin Arab tribes of Egypt. He shows how they often needed each other, but also how they could be fierce rivals.
PART ONE

THE FORMATIVE STAGE OF THE MAMLUK SULTANATE
CHAPTER ONE

DOORS THAT OPEN MEANINGS: BAYBARS’S RED MOSQUE AT SAFED*

Hanna Taragan

Eight years after Baybars had conquered the Citadel of Safed from the Templar Crusaders in July 665/1266, he restored it and turned it into a new Mamluk stronghold that dominated the entire Galilee and functioned as a rear base for attacking Acre and the coastal region. Subsequently, having laid the foundations for the new Muslim city of Safed, which became the center of Mamluk rule in the Galilee1 Baybars built the so-called Red Mosque (al-Jāmi‘ al-Aḥmar), not far from the citadel.2 In spite of the fact that the mosque as seen today was repeatedly damaged by the earthquakes that wreaked havoc on Safed, the various renovations it has undergone over the years, and the pilfering of its minbar and the marble panels that decorated the miḥrāb, it can still be studied both as a work of art and as a document reflecting the religious and political outlook of its Mamluk builders.

* I wish to acknowledge the generous assistance of the Israel Antiquity Authority: Mr. Imanuel Damati, Regional Inspector for Safed, and the archivists of the Rockefeller Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem: Nurit Feig, Arieh Rochman-Halperin and Yael Barschak.

My special thanks to Mr. Zeev Pearl former mayor of Safed, whose love for his city inspired me so greatly.


The Red Mosque, which has a fortress like appearance (fig. 1.1) was built in 674/1274–5 of high quality limestone, surrounded by massive outer walls of ashlar masonry, which have been preserved to a height of 7 meters. In certain sections, the walls reach a thickness of 3.4 meters.\(^3\)

The plan of the mosque is rectangular, measuring 40.5 \(\times\) 28.3 meters (fig. 1.2). A deep, rectangular portal niche is set into the wall of the northern facade, crowned with a vault whose upper part contains an elaborate, four-tiered *muqarna* of the ‘Syrian’ type, topped by a gored conch design, only part of which has been preserved (fig. 1.3). The portal, built of reddish-orange limestone, was once higher than the wall, as evidenced by the broken fragments on both sides of the conch. It is flanked by the stone benches characteristic of Mamluk portals. An inscription can be seen on a marble panel in between the doorway and the *muqarna* vault.

The portal leads into the inner open courtyard, and is surrounded on three sides by cross-vaulted arcades, supported by piers (fig. 1.4). In the north corner of the western arcade it is still possible to distinguish the flight of stairs leading to the now-collapsed minaret. The western arcade opens southward on to a small, slightly raised grass-covered garden that adjoins the main courtyard. To the south, behind the garden wall, is another courtyard with two gates opening to the street. A side entrance leads from here to the mosque itself.

The prayer hall is located on the southern side of the complex. Its interior—as seen today, is of square dimensions, measuring 15.5 meters wide and 15.1 meters deep. The *qibla* contains two *mihrabs* (fig. 5). Four pillars with flat capitals, looking like “a rudimentary *muqarna* element”\(^4\) divide the hall into nine equal-sized bays. Seven of the bays, on the north, west and east sides are cross-vaulted and reach a height of 5.30 meters. The central bay is likewise cross-vaulted, and its four folded grooves, meeting at its center, create a rosette design. This bay leads into the ante-*mihrab* which features a dome on pendentives, reaching a height of about 8 meters. Seen from the side, the two bays, with their stepped vaults, form a rhyth-

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mically graded axis that conducts the eye from the hall entrance toward the mihrāb and serves to make the square hall appear oblong.

An expedition to the site in 1950 under the auspices of Israel’s Ministry for Religious Affairs, conducted by L.A. Mayer, I. Pinkerfeld, and J.W. Hirschberg—the only modern source to document the building—found the wooden minbar, which has since been lost, in place, measuring 5 meters high.

Mayer’s claim that the prayer hall as seen today dates from the nineteenth century, and that it was then covered with a single, central dome, is to my mind, inaccurate, since the mosque clearly features architectural and decorative elements from three different phases.

The first phase is characteristic of the period of Baybars and comprises the main portal with its inscription, also the general layout of the hypostyle mosque (fig. 6). I believe that the prayer hall originally extended to the west toward the outer wall and contained five aisles running from north to south, toward the qibla with its’ present western mihrāb. If this was indeed the case, it follows that Baybars had the mihrāb placed in the central aisle exactly opposite the middle entrance, where it is usually located in this type of mosque.

The second phase, still Mamluk, but probably dating from the first half of the fourteenth century, can be seen in the present, small prayer hall (fig. 2), with the eastern mihrāb and vaulted bays, which attests to a decline in artistic quality compared to the portal of Baybar’s period. Since the overall style of this latter phase of the Mamluk period is not covered in this article, only several of its major features will be mentioned below.

The third phase is characteristic of the Ottoman period, although the mosque clearly underwent repeated restorations in the course of the last two centuries. However, the photograph that appears in Mayer’s report—and which was certainly not taken after 1950—would seem to document what is no longer found in situ: the huge Ottoman decorated minbar and the ḫughrā which appears above the mihrāb (see fig. 7).

Today, the mosque contains two inscriptions. The one which has already been mentioned, appearing on the portal, is a foundation inscription (fig. 8), written by Baybars, reading:  

\[\text{\textsuperscript{7}}\] Mayer, Pinkerfeld and Hirshberg, 45.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{6}}\] Ibid., fig. 49.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{7}}\] Ibid., 46.
The building of this blessed Friday-mosque was ordered by our lord the Sultan al-Malik al-Zahir (the venerated, the great lord, the learned, the just, the wager of the Sultan al-Malik al-′ālim al-′ādil al-murābiḥ al-mu′ayyad al-muṣaffar) al-mānjūr ruḥn al-dunyā wa;l-dīn ( ) (sultan al-Islām wa;l-Muslinin) gābir al-kafrār wa;l-mushrikin gābir al-ḫawāṣrīr wa;l-mutanarrīdīn Baybars al-Ṣāliḥī (qaṣīm Amīr al-Muʾ mínān) wa;l-dhālika fi sanat arbaʿ wa;saʿīn wa;sittamīʿa.

In the name of Allah the merciful and compassionate.

The building of this blessed mosque and the tomb inside it was ordered by the humble servant of Allāh, Najm al-Dīn Fayruz al-Malikī al-Nāṣirī wa;waqafa ′alayhīnā wa;al-dārīn wa;l-zamān wa;l-muṣaffār wa;l-shamsīn wa;l-mawṣūṭīn wa;l-qawmīn al-nāṣirīn wa;l-dīnīn wa;l-muṣaffārīn (co-ruler with Amir of Believers [the Abbasid Caliph]) in the year of 674 [1274/5].

In the name of God the merciful and compassionate.

None should visit the mosques of Allāh except those who believe in Allāh and the Last Day, attend to their prayers and pay the alms-tax and fear none but Allāh. These shall be rightly guided.

The building of this blessed mosque and the tomb inside it was ordered by the humble servant of Allāh, Najm al-Dīn Fayruz al-Malikī al-Nāṣirī and he endowed a waqf, for [their maintenance] and for [salaries] of an imām, a muezzin, an acting manager and Qoran reciters, and for the carpets and illumination, [consisting of] all [the following]:

The adjacent two barracks and stables, half of the fruit gardens known as al-Rashīdī and the bath that he had built in al-′Aṭṭārīn [the drug-

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8 Ibid., 45–46.
gist market]. Expenditures [on the mosque and tomb maintenance] will be paid from the rent of those [the aforementioned properties] as was specified in the waqf document and the remaining [of the rental income] should go to his children, grandchildren and descendants.

This inscription, which provides an illuminating document for the study of the local history of Safed, raises questions that fall beyond our present context. I will confine myself to some details that are important for our purpose here.

After citing verse 18 of Sura 9, (which is highly popular for inscriptions chosen for mosques), it states that the mosque and the turba, or tomb therein were built by Najm al-Din Fayruz, officer of al-Malik al-Nasir Muhammad, who made waqf (waqafa) in favor of ten mosque functionaries, among them Qoran reciters. Mention of the latter may point to the funerary nature of the complex at that time.

In any case, today the site contains no turba. Emanuel Damati, the Israel Antiquities Authority archeologist of Safed, has identified the still-remaining podium, attached to the qibla wall by means of a door that was blocked by Damati, as the turba. However, Mayer and his colleagues in the 1950 expedition, while referring to the inscription and its location above the mihrab, made no mention of a turba.

It is also worth noting that Evliya Tshelebi, who recorded his visit to the mosque in 1649, said nothing about the turba and the endowment inscription but did mention Bayabars's portal inscription, as well as an additional, contemporaneous inscription; the latter must also have been lost during one of the restorations of the mosque. In

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11 Blair, 71.

any case, I believe that if the building indeed comprised a turba, built in the second phase, in the early years of the 14th century, it would have been located in the western part of the prayer hall.

Baybars ostensibly built the mosque as a place of prayer and as part of the development plan for a new neighborhood on the outskirts of Safed, which was designed to attract numerous inhabitants and thus strengthen the Muslim settlement of the city. Indeed, we know that he encouraged the civil population from Damascus and the villagers of Galilee to move to the city. He also sought to attract religious dignitaries, and absorbed refugees that were in flight from the Mongols. We should also bear in mind that Safed was close to the fertile agricultural heartland and enjoyed a proportionally large part of its produce.13 However, above all, it would appear that Baybars built the mosque as a monument of the victory to Islam over the Crusaders, thus commemorating his own glorious conquest of the Citadel.

Examining the “expressive intent” of Mamluk architecture in Cairo, Humphreys analyzes its structure, function, and metaphorical or symbolic quality.14 This inherent quality—which is ‘beyond’ structure and function—relates to values and ideas that the patron seeks to convey to the viewer, and it is independent of the building itself. It should be noted that Medieval rulers, were fully conscious of the symbolic level of architecture, employing it deliberately and shrewdly, exploiting the building’s various elements, such as the dome and the portal, to convey overt as well as covert messages. Furthermore, in Medieval Islam a ruler who built solely for functional purposes would be suspected of putting his faith in the everlastiness of material things and hence be accused of self-aggrandizement. Even the Qur’an admonished against edifices that were intended only to glorify the builder.15 Hence, investing the building with a symbolic significance

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Baybars indeed enlisted both the verbal and the visual media to relay political and religious messages with the aim of institutionalizing the power apparatus of Mamluk rule in general, and to legitimize his own rule as a defender of Islam and protector of the Muslims in particular. After all, we should bear in mind that al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars al-Bunduqdārī (658–677/1260–1277), and all other Mamluks, were not born Muslims but had been purchased as slaves, converted to Islam, and conscripted into the army, from where some succeeded in rising to power or to senior positions. Their rule was justified primarily by presenting themselves not only as devout Muslims but also as Jihād warriors and guardians of Islam. It appears that “The concept of Jihād is a plastic one, which can be employed in widely varying ways for varying ends... For thirteenth-century Muslim rulers, there was a happy and all too rare marriage of values and interests.”

I intend to examine to what extent the portal of the Red Mosque at Safed reflects Baybars’s ambitious aims. This will be done by making a stylistic analysis of the portal with its decorative elements and its inscription; by investigating his ambitious use of stone and stone muqarnas and by considering the portal and the mosque generally in the context of the regional art that evolved in Syria and its environs.

Baybars’s emphasis on the portal of his monumental buildings is evinced both in written sources and in the actual examples familiar to us. Our knowledge of the portal of the Great Mosque in Cairo for example, relies on two biographies of Baybars, which were written in his lifetime and under his patronage, one by Muhŷî al-Dîn Ibn ‘Abd al-Zâhir17 (died in 692/1292), the other by Ibn Shaddâd ‘Izz al-Dîn18 (died in 684/1258), and on a third record, written two centuries later by al-Maqrîzî19 (died in 845/1442). They all dwell on Baybars’s special request, prior to his destruction of Jaffâ, in 666/1268,

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that the portal of his new Great Mosque be identical to the portal of the Zahiriyya Madrasa at Bayn al-Qasrayn in Cairo, built by Baybars himself in 660/1262–63, and that the dome match that of Imam al-Shahiti, built by the Ayyubids in 1211. In all other respects, Baybars gave the architect a free hand. From the said texts we thus learn that the elements of the portal and the dome were of central importance to Baybars.

Another example is provided by an inscription in the mosque of Ramla commemorating Baybars’s victory over Jaffa. In their survey of inscriptions found in this area (the R.C.A.) Combe, Sauvaget, and Wiet claim that the inscription was located in the White Mosque at Ramla. In their survey of inscriptions found in this area (the R.C.A.) Combe, Sauvaget, and Wiet claim that the inscription was located in the White Mosque at Ramla.20 Rosen-Ayalon has it that the inscription is located on the minaret to the north of the ruined White Mosque, and suggests that Baybars had restored the dome over the now-ruined prayer hall.21 Although literary amara bi-insha means that he ordered the establishment of the dome, according to S. Blair restoration texts generally used the same form as foundation texts.22 According to another source, the inscription came from the Great or ‘al-Umar’ Mosque, a former Crusader church situated in the market of Ramla (incidentally, I have found no trace of such an inscription at either site).

The inscription opens with verse 18 of Sura 9—one of the most common Qur’anic inscriptions, being one of three references in the Qur’an ran to the mosques of God (masjid Allâh), as distinct from any earthly masjid or place of prayer. It continues:


22 S. Blair, 32.
In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate.

None should visit the mosque of Allāh except those who believe in Allāh and the last day, attend their prayers and pay the alms tax and fear none but Allāh. These shall be rightly guided.

When Allāh may his greatness be exalted, wanted to carry out his decree because of his foresight, he allowed his humble servant, trustful in Him, labouring on [carrying out] His orders, wager of His holy war, supporter of the religion of His prophet, beloved and true friend, the sultan, the venerated, the great, the wager of Holy War, the frontier warrior, the raider in the name of Islam, the pillar of the world and faith, Sultan of Islam and Muslims, Baybars b. `Abd Allāh, co-ruler with the Amir of Believers, may Allāh [bring] enjoyment by his longevity. He departed with his victorious army from the land of Egypt on the 10th of Rajab resolved to wage Holy War, raiding the polytheists and infidels. He camped early that morning in the port-city of Jaffa and conquered it with Allāh's will, in the third hour of the day. Then he ordered the establishment of this dome above the blessed minaret and this gate of this blessed Friday-mosque by the humble...

Whereas the two aforementioned examples demonstrate how the construction of a portal was intended to symbolize Baybars's triumphs over the Crusaders, the two that follow show how the transfer of an extant portal likewise connoted his victory by appropriating enemy property as part of the spoils of war. This was decidedly the very purpose of Baybars's transfer of Bāb al-Tid from the Fatimid palace in Cairo, as recorded by Mujir al-Dīn:


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He did in Jerusalem charity acts among which are the following. He took care to establish the khān [caravansary] outside noble Jerusalem, to the north-west, known as al-Zāhir’s khān. Its establishment was in the year six hundred and sixty two. He transferred the portal of the Fatimid Caliph’s palace. He endowed half of the village of Liftā and other villages in the provinces of Damascus as a waqf [for its maintenance]. He set up a bakery and a mill in the khān. He nominated an imām in the mosque which is inside [the khān] and stipulated that acts of charity be carried out there such as distributing bread at its gate and improving the conditions of its guests and their food and the like.

Finally, we are told that when Baybars recaptured Aleppo from the Mongols, he removed the iron plates and nails from the portal of Qīnārīr at Aleppo and took them to Damascus and Cairo for some purpose. If this transfer from Aleppo may seem to be primarily utilitarian, the aforementioned Cairo transfer appears to be at least partly symbolic.25

In these chronicles, I believe, the portal figures as a metonym for a comprehensive idea. Indeed, generally the medieval chroniclers do not investigate art or architecture according to aesthetic criteria. Any ruler would be extolled for his building activity for contributing to the prosperity and civilized existence of his subject;26 for architecture that rivaled that of other nations in order to glorify Islam: “wa-inshā’i maḥāsin yubālhīna al-umām bi-bahā’ihā”,27 or for his self-reflection as a great builder.28 This is of course not contradicted by the fact

27 These words were written by the judge Khālid b. Īsā al-Balawi who spent the years 1336–1240 on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The record is contained in B.M. Or. 9232 and Paris (B.N.) 2286. See: A.S. Triton, “Three Inscriptions from Jerusalem” BSOS, vol. XX (1957), 539.
28 See, for example, Muḥammad b. ʻAbdūs al-Jalāshīyārī, Kitāb al-Wazār wa-l-kuttāb, Cairo, 1938, 48, where al-Jalāshīyārī (d. 942) describes the reasons for the foundation of al-Ramlā by Sulaymān. See also: N. Luz, “The Construction of an Islamic City in Palestine. The Case of Umayyad al-Ramlā”, JRAS, vol. VIII/i, 47.
that Mamluk rulers also built religious edifices and charitable institutions under the auspices of the waqf in order to secure their descendants' income and circumvent the iqṭāʾ system. Thus, when the portal element is mentioned by the chronicles as a separate and emphasized item in Baybars's building activity—sometimes in conjunction with the dome and/or minarets—it is afforded a special role among the other elements of the building, signifying, in our case, the victory of Islam, and of Baybars himself, over their enemies. It should be borne in mind that portals and gateways had constituted a declaration of the patron's power and victory already in the Eastern and Western Roman and Christian Empires, and from the early Islam period on. We already find clear examples of this in the monumental entrance gates to the Umayyad palaces as well as to the prayer hall of the Great Mosque of Damascus, in the city gates of Baghdad, Fatimid portals, etc.

The importance assigned by Baybars to the portal element is likewise evinced by the mashhad of Abū Hurayra at Yavne, also known as the tomb of Raban Gamliel—where the cushion vousoir frieze adorns the arches of the portal in the same way as on the main portal of Baybars' Great Mosque in Cairo. This element was deliberately borrowed by Baybars from Crusader buildings such as the Holy Sepulcher on the one hand, and the Fātimid gate Bāb al-Futūḥ on the other as well as from other monuments. Both buildings—in Safed and in Yavne—also feature inscriptions commemorating Baybars's victory over his enemies.

If the portal is indeed a bearer of Baybars's political and religious message, its inscription declares this publicly. Even if the foundation inscription is often a “banal formulation,” it perpetuates both the metaphorical quality of the mosque portal and the name of the ruler inscribed on it, and automatically establishes a link between the two. Anyone passing by or through the portal would have to read it, and the name of Baybars would be impressed on his mind. In a culture

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that could not present a visual image of the ruler or patron who had endowed the building, unlike the custom in Christian edifices and portals, the written word—that is, in our case, the name of the ruler—became a surrogate means of magnifying his deeds. The Mamluks in Syria kept up this practice, which originated in the Ayyubid period with Nur al-Din (541–569/1146–1174). The later, in the wake of the battles against the Crusaders at Edessa, Antioch, and Tripoli, had his epithets as a warlord of the jihād inscribed in Arabic on the portals of the buildings that he erected, emphasizing his dedication to the holy war against the infidels as well as his affirmation of Sunni orthodoxy.32

The foundation inscription appearing on the portal of a mosque or other edifice thus clearly proclaims the agenda of the ruler. Sheila Blair even singles out this type of inscription as an insignia of ruling power, similar to the mandatory khutba in the Great Mosque.33

It is no coincidence that Baybars built a hypostyle mosque of the arcades open courtyard type in Safed, repeating the plan of his Great Mosque in Cairo. We should keep in mind that mosques of this type were predominant in the Umayyad period, with the Great Mosque of Damascus constituting a likely prototype. The open courtyard mosque soon turned into a symbol and, throughout the Middle Ages, such mosques would be erected wherever Islam made a new conquest and its victorious presence was to be declared.34 The legitimacy of rule is founded, *inter alia*, on the continuity of a glorious past. Thus, just as the Umayyads had fought against Byzantine Christianity, the Mamluks fought against the Crusaders; this historical memory is clearly manifested in the Red Mosque.

Baybars’s mosque at Safed is built and decorated entirely in stone. The use of stone had been prevalent in Syria and Palestine already in the Roman-Byzantine period. However, the Ayyubids and Mamluks

33 Blair, 68.
most probably chose stone because masonry, being both strong and workable, can be used to great effect to make even the functional elements of a building look grand and imposing. Hence, cut and dressed stone would be almost exclusively employed both inside and outside mosques for walls, piers, columns, and vaults, and their decorative motifs. Furthermore, the stone *muqarnas* ornamentation of portals and vaults called for the best limestone and for the most highly-skilled masons and craftsmen, since the stone had to be cut with great precision in order to coordinate elements of structure, color and geometry. More than a technical feat, then, the *muqarnas* was an exquisite work of art, which only rulers could afford to commission as a symbol of their status and patronage. Hence, it is not surprising that this type of portal was also adopted for palatial architecture.

Most of the preserved Mamluk buildings in the area have a portal niche of the type seen at Safed (although each portal is unique and there are hardly two examples with the same structure or decoration), and their decorative elements—quite frequently only the *muqarnas*—are concentrated in, if not restricted to the portal section. The portal through which the monument is entered thus becomes one of the most ambitious elements of the building.

In the Red Mosque at Safed, as in other Mamluk mosques in Syrian cities, the facade is plain and devoid of decoration, apart from the monumental portal, so prominent in its height and warm reddish limestone shade. It was the latter that gave the mosque its name, first mentioned by al-‘Uthmānī in 1372 who described the mosque as a resplendent source of grace. Apparently this reddish stone was brought from elsewhere, since the stone quarry near the entrance to the city provided a white stone, as it does to this day.

The portal, with its stone *muqarnas* vault, is 7.20 meters high, rising some 20 cm above the wall, 1.50 meters deep and 3 meters wide. It is thus twice as wide as deep. According to Terry Allan’s “Muqarnas Questionnaire” these became the standard proportions

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for any vaulted portal in Damascus built after Nur al-Din. There
are still remnants of the stone benches on either side. The doorway
is topped by a plain monolithic lintel, that rests on two corbels (fig.
8). Although this is a feature rarely found in Ayyubid Syria, it can
be seen in Damascus in the Madrasa Shihhiyya al-Murshidiyya
(654/1255)\(^{38}\) and in the early Mamluk period, in the portal built by
Ashraf Khalil in 692/1292 at Yavne.\(^{39}\)

In the portal of the Red Mosque at Safed, between the mono-
lithic lintel and the muqarnas vault above, a framed slab panel
with five lines of inscription appears in the center (fig. 3). This is a
typical Damascus tabula ansata (inscription cartouche).\(^{40}\) The muqarnas
vault springs from corner brackets (fig. 8) and can be compared
for example, to the corner brackets in the al-Shihhiyya al-Shihba
madrasa in Damascus (630–643/1233–1245) (fig. 9).\(^{41}\)

The vault in our portal rises up steeply through four tiers of muqar-
nas terminating in a big scalloped shell. The back corners of the
vault form an “arch”. These back corners are developed in the sec-
ond tier into two recessed squinch-like domelets whose inner apexes
contain little globular pendants carved with a floral pattern (fig. 10).
Each tier alternates cells of the ‘Syrian’ type (somewhat triangular
in profile), with dominating branched massive brackets. In the first
tier the central cells are divided into two. In the second tier they
are divided into three-petaled “conch-like” flowers (fig. 11). Three-
petaled flowers like those we find within the cells are not common,
perhaps because of the difficulty in carving the stone. However, we
can find similar examples from the late Ayyubid period on the por-
tals of al-Farafra Khanaqah (635–8/1237)\(^{42}\) and Kamaliyya Madrasa
(639–649/1241–1251)\(^{43}\) in Aleppo, as well as on the entrance portal
to the mausoleum of Baybars (676–680/1277–1281) which is the
only part that remains of the original Madrasa al-Zahiriyiya
in Damascus (fig. 12).\(^{44}\)

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(1946), 65, Fig. 87.

\(^{39}\) Targan, Fig. 13.


\(^{41}\) Herzfeld, “Damascus III”, 12, Fig. 11.

\(^{42}\) E. Herzfeld, Materiaux pour un Corpus Inscriptions et Monuments d’Aleph, Le Caire,
1954, tome II, Pl. CXXXIV/a.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., CXXXVI/a.

\(^{44}\) K. Wulzinger and C. Watzinger Damaskus II: die Islamische Stadt, Berlin and
The third tier is lower and the cells vary in height and depth. The fourth tier is flat, with fluted cells functioning as a “base” to the tall gored half conch above. Because of the crude cement filling applied in the modern period to repair the cracks, it is difficult to detect the boundaries between the tiers.

The portal of the Red Mosque is an impressive artistic feat indeed. Its complexity is expressed not only in the virtuosity of the stonework, but also in the relationship between the units: the geometry, the light and shade effects, the rhythm of the protrusions, the proportions of the three-dimensional forms, and the numbers of tiers. Baybars’s portal thus masterfully demonstrates what T. Allen observed, referring to Ayyubid architecture: “This is what geometry means... the display of skill and the harnessing of the abstract in the service of a patron or institution.”

It is worth mentioning here that notwithstanding the repeated restorations and repairs that it has undergone over the centuries, the Red Mosque at Safed manifests elements of a well-defined regional style in type, scale and ornamentation that characterized the artistic centers of both Damascus and Aleppo and, from 1293 on, also of Tripoli, which was rebuilt by Qalāwūn after the Crusaders were repelled.

The stylistic characteristics that we find in the Red Mosque from the second phase, i.e., the first half of the fourteenth century, link it to the above-mentioned local tradition. The architecture stresses the interior and as in Aleppo the mosque in Safed also tended to vault all interior bays with cross vaults after Crusader models, which remained the basic type of vaulting system in Syria throughout the Mamluk period (fig. 5). The arcades are supported by piers, and the vaults in the hall are supported by columns with muqarnas capitals, dividing the prayer hall into bays, with the line of cross vaults meeting in a central concave rosette, a feature commonly seen in buildings in Tripoli. Another element deriving from Tripoli is the dome.
on pendentives in the ante-mihri\textregistered. These and other elements which are typical of the second phase will be discussed in a separate article.

We should now address the question of why Baybars chose to adorn the portal of the Red Mosque with 
\textit{muqarna}. After all, it would indeed have been possible to ornament it differently.\footnote{O. Grabar, “The Iconography of Islamic Architecture”, 57–59. For the technical aspects of the 

For example, Baybars could have installed gates like those at Yavne, intended to remind the local population of the Great Mosque—his “coronation” mosque—in Cairo. This question brings us back to an additional aspect of the discussed metaphorical quality, namely, the believer-beholder, to whom the patron and ruler sought to impart his message: How, could the viewer be made to grasp the ruler’s message, as formulated in architectural terms?

We know that the manner in which a building conveys a message or connects with a community relies on special, fixed codes crystallized in the textual and visual collective memory which that community has itself established.\footnote{Serageldin, “Introduction: Regionalism” in M. Frishman and H.-U. Khan (eds.), \textit{The Mosque}, 72–76. T. Allen, \textit{Five Essays}, 91–110.} Innovations are confusing whereas stability is reassuring. A portal that looked familiar to the local population thus signified continuity, and so facilitated identification with the ruler who built it. Hence, it was mandatory to effect a visual experience common to the ruler or architect and the viewer.

In other words, by stressing the link with the local population while concomitantly dominating it with the sheer impact of overpowering architecture, the sultan’s right to rule was underlined. The portal of the Red Mosque indeed constituted a dominant element in the architectural vernacular evolved by Baybars. Whereas the stone 
\textit{muqarna} portal featured in Cairo only from 1298,\footnote{Only in the Z\textit{awiya} of Zayn al-D\textit{īn} \textit{Yüsuf}, see: \textit{ibid.}, 107. See also Behrens-Abouseif, \textit{Islamic Architecture in Cairo}, 112.} and in Jerusalem...
from 1295,\textsuperscript{50} it had appeared in Aleppo as early as 589/1193 in the madrasa of Sadbaht, and in Damascus in 1213,\textsuperscript{51} subsequently becoming prevalent throughout Syria. In other words unlike Cairo, which adapted earlier architectural elements—e.g. Fatimid at least in the early Mamluk period—to express and enhance the intent of the imperial patrons, Syria’s prevailing architectural style perpetuated the patterns set by local tradition.

This conclusion goes counter to the view of Creswell, who, on the basis of Cassas and Roberts’s drawings from the early 19th century, claimed that the portal of the al-Zāhiriyya Madrasa built by Baybars at Bayn al-Qaṣrāyn in 660/1260, was the first muqarna portal in Cairo, and that it was destroyed or disappeared soon after being visually represented by Roberts.\textsuperscript{52} Creswell was aware of, but did not explain, the time lapse between the alleged appearance of the muqarnas portal of the madrasa in 1260 and its actual appearance in Cairo in the early 14th century.\textsuperscript{53} However, as we have seen above, according to the chronicles, Baybars wanted the portal of his Great Mosque, built in the years 1266–69, to reproduce the portal of his madrasa—which is not a muqarnas portal, but features arches elaborately decorated with cushion voussoir and zigzag patterns, which were chosen because of their association with the architecture of their enemies.

\textsuperscript{50} Burygine, \textit{Mamluk Jerusalem}, 92: “the earliest and one of the most remarkable is the Dawādāriyya (695/1295) which is of a particular type developed earlier in Damascus . . . In a series of fine eighth/fourteenth-century portals (at the Saḍdiyya, Bāb al-Ṣaḍqānīn, Kīlānāyya, Manjākīyya, Taḥsamurīyya and Palace of Sīt Tunshūq) the recesses are covered by semidomes carried on three, four or five tiers of muqarnas corbelling”. See also, K.A.C. Creswell, \textit{The Muslim Architecture of Egypt (MAE)}, Oxford, 1952–1960, vol. II, 146–47.


\textsuperscript{52} Creswell, \textit{MAE}, 146–7. See also: J. Bloom and T. Allen, who concur with Creswell in his state of mind J. Bloom, “The Mosque of Baybars”, 64. T. Allen, \textit{Five Essays}, 105–108. Allen claims that Syrian artists were imported to Cairo and built this portal.

\textsuperscript{53} Creswell, Bloom and Allen thought that Roberts and Cassas painted the portal exactly as they had seen it in Cairo. I believe that European painters who came to the ‘Orient’ in the 19th century saw visions or sites exactly in the way they were expected to: “Specific objects to be seen in specific ways by specific audiences”. See: D. Gregory, “Scripting Egypt-Orientalism and the Culture of Travel” in J. Dancen and D. Gregory (eds.), \textit{Writs of Passage–Reading Travel Writing}, London, 1999, 114–50. I believe that they identified ‘muqarnas’ with terms like ‘typical Islamic Cairo’, ‘exotic Egypt’ etc. and not with the desire to paint the ‘truth’ or to be ‘realistic’. We should therefore be very cautious in using these paintings as a scientific document. See my forthcoming article on Roberts and ‘his’ Mamluk Cairo paintings.
the Crusaders and/or the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlīs. Moreover, had Baybars indeed built a muqarna portal in his madrasa, it is possible that other sultans would have been likely to imitate him and this did not occur. In the final analysis, therefore, Baybars would have appealed to a local model for his Zāhiriyya Madrasa(270,159),(499,218), familiar to the population of Cairo, rather than a muqarnas portal.

According to al-Nuwayrī and in the (now lost) wall inscription of the Citadel, Baybars pledged to replace the Crusader bell tower with the adḥān (the call for prayer by muʿadhdhin), and the Gospel with the Qurān.54 Eight years after capturing the citadel Baybars announced the fulfillment of this oath by founding a Muslim city in Safed, in the center of which he constructed the Red Mosque, whose unique and prestigious portal proclaims not just Baybars’ power and might as a patron, but also his wielding of an ideology of religious guardianship.

The muqarnas in this portal, as we have seen is not a ‘functional’ element. Its semiotic or symbolic ingredients pose a complex interpretative challenge. Being a kind of ornament,55 the muqarnas “refuses” to receive any iconographic interpretation unless there is an accurate inscription that implies a specific meaning.56 However, we may conclude that in a region in which the Christian memory—in the form of Byzantine churches and Crusaders fortresses—was so dominant, the muqarnas portal constitutes a kind of bearer and signifier not only of Muslim presence but also of the victory of its patron Baybars over the infidels.

Today no Muslims live in Safed as most of its Arab inhabitants fled the city during the war in 1948. The Red Mosque currently serves as a wedding and banquet hall. While this metamorphosis may seem to flaunt the cynical, postmodern Zeitgeist, it also highlights, if ironically, the fact that throughout history, architectural constructions have conveyed the ideological message of the establishment.

55 Grabar, The Iconography.
56 Grabar, The Alhambra.
CHAPTER TWO

THE MONGOL OCCUPATION OF DAMASCUS IN 1300:
A STUDY OF MAMLUK LOYALTIES*

Reuven Amitai

The direct inspiration for this paper is an article by Jürgen Paul which recently appeared in a collection of studies dealing with Iran during the period of Mongol rule. In this article, entitled “The Mongol invasion as a ‘revealer’ of Iranian society,” Dr. Paul suggests that the examination of times of crisis can be a useful opportunity to analyse aspects of a society.1 When things are running normally or at least quietly, the sources are often apt to pass over interesting phenomena, be they social, political or otherwise: why write about something that is working or obvious? It is during a crisis that various hitherto unnoticed matters become noteworthy, and thus recorded by contemporaries for posterity.

In the present case, the crisis in question is that of the Mongol occupation of Damascus following their victory over the Mamluks at the battle of Wādī al-Khaznadār near Homs on 22 December 1299. The Mongols, led by the Ḩāzān, completely trounced the Mamluks under the titular command of the young sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn.2 Not only were the Mamluks, under the real command of the viceroy (nāʾib al-saltana) Salār, ultimately unsuccessful on the battlefield, they behaved less than commendably in the aftermath of their defeat. In the words of the contemporary historian, the Ayyūbid scion Abū al-Fidāʾ:

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* A version of this paper was also read at a forum sponsored by the Middle East Center at the University of Pennsylvania in October 2000. I am grateful to the participants for their comments.


The Muslim forces fled pall-mall in utter rout to Egypt the divinely protected. The Mongols pursued them. They occupied Damascus, and pressed after the fugitives to Gaza, Jerusalem and the territory of al-Karak, robbing and plundering much from the fugitives.3

Before proceeding to the actual Mongol occupation of Damascus,4 it is worth noting the presence in the Mongol army of a group of Mamluk renegades, led by the former governor of Damascus, Sayf al-Dīn Qipchaq al-Mansūrī. Since Qipchaq and company are one of the test-cases of Mamluk loyalty examined in this paper, it is important to review, even briefly, the circumstances in which they abandoned the Sultanate for the Ìlkhānate: In the fall of 1298, during the reign of Sultan al-Manṣūr Lāchīn (1296–9),5 word had been received that the Mongols were planning an offensive to Syria. Orders had been sent to Damascus dispatching the governor, Qipchaq, to the north along with the local army. There is some disagreement among the sources as to the exact sequence of events, but there is agreement about the end result: a group of senior Mamluk amirs, accompanied by at least some of their personal mamluks and under the leadership of Qipchaq, fled to the Ìlkhānate in order to escape their arrest ordered by the then viceroy Mengü-Temür al-Ḥusāmī. Originally Qipchaq himself appears to have had nothing to fear personally from this over-weening personality, but his attempts to protect other amirs—most notably Bektemür al-Ṣīlādīr and Elbegi—put him in the viceroy’s bad graces. Realizing that his own arrest and possible execution were imminent, Qipchaq along with the others fled to the north-east, soon crossing the Euphrates into Mongol territory. In the meantime, a number of amirs in Cairo formed a con-


4 A short account of this occupation is offered by Muria Tora, “The Saliḥīyya Quarter in the Suburbs of Damascus: Its Formation, Structure and Transformation in the Ayyubid and Mamluk Periods,” Bulletin d’études orientales, vol. XLVII (1995), 161–63. Muria, however, gives a misleading rendition of Qipchaq’s joining the Mongols, implying that it was just before Ghāzān’s occupation of Damascus; he does not mention Qipchaq’s desertion to the Mongols months before their 1299 offensive to Syria.

spionage against Sultan Lâchîn, and murdered him and his nāʾib, setting up a temporary junta that matters could be sorted out. Given the cruelty of Mengü-Temür, the conspirators appear to have understood the fears and actions of Qipchaq and friends, but not fully to have comprehended the extent that they were willing to go. When news of the coup reached Qipchaq, he thought it was a trick to get him to return, and then be arrested. When the news was finally confirmed, it was already too late for him to turn back, since he was already deep in Mongol territory; to his great sorrow, he realized that his desertion had been unnecessary. The Îlkhanîd wasâḥîr and historian, Rashîd al-Dîn, also writes that Qipchaq, upon receiving news of Lâchîn’s deposition, regreted his decision to desert, but that it was too late to go back.

Qipchaq and his friends were well received by the local Mongol commander and then sent on to Îlkhan. Upon reaching the ordo (the mobile camp of the ruler), Ghâzân himself went out to meet them, showing the importance which he attributed to the desertion of such senior personalities. The Mamluk amirs and their entourages (there were ten amirs altogether and 500 soldiers) were well received, the senior amirs receiving grants of money in accordance with their ranks. Qipchaq is reported to have received Hamadân as an iqṭâ’.


On their way they passed by Mârdîn, where the local Artuqid ruler—a Mongol vassal—received them well. This prince feared the Qipchaq would reveal that he had maintained secret contact with the Mamluks, a fear which was evidently not realized; Zetterstêen, 49; Abu Bakr b. ‘Abdallâh ibn al-Dâwâdârî, Kânz al-duwar wa-jâmî’ al-ghurar, vol. 8: al-Dawâr al-hanzîyya fi akhbâr al-duwar al-turkîyya (Die Berichte über die frühen Mamlûken), ed. U. Haarmann (Freiburg-Cairo, 1971), vol. VIII, 373.
although it is not clear if this refers to a Mamluk-type appanage, a local governorship or something else.\(^9\) The various amirs were granted Mongol spouses, Qipchaq receiving the sister of one of Ghâzân's wives. The sources note that Qipchaq, who was of Mongol origin, found his father and brothers among the Mongol officers.\(^10\) Ibn Ḥajar reports that Qipchaq actually encouraged the Ilkhân to launch his campaign into Syria.\(^11\) This possibility cannot be completely rejected, but given Qipchaq's behaviour in the long run (discussed below), it is perhaps more likely that it was the news of the fractured state of politics in the Sultanate that Qipchaq brought which strengthened Ghâzân's growing resolve to invade Syria.\(^12\) A more measured judgement, with less direct blame attributed, is provided by Ibn Abī al-Fadā'īl: “[Qipchaq’s desertion] was one of the reasons which propelled Ghâzân to attack Syria...”\(^13\)

The question of Qipchaq's origins is of some interest in the present context, as it may tell us something of how Mamluk loyalties, or rather the loyalties of Mamluks, were shaped. The young Qipchaq had been captured at the battle of Abulastayn in 1276 (together with Salār, it might be added),\(^14\) and was subsequently enrolled in the personal mamluk unit of Qalâwûn. This was not a unique occurrence: the future sultan al-‘Ādil Kitbughâ was also a Mongol, captured in 1260 in the first battle of Homs, eventually also becoming a Mamluk of Qalâwûn.\(^15\) Some writers tell that Qalâwûn sensed that Qipchaq,}

\(^9\) Ibn al-Dawādārī, vol. VIII, 375, reports that when Ghâzân gave the iqṭā’ to Qipchaq, the latter refused it, so as to remain in the Ilkhân’s presence. On this case, and the larger question of Ghâzân’s later granting of iqṭā’ to his army, see R. Amitai, “Turco-Mongolian Nomads and the iqṭā’ System in the Islamic Middle East (1000–1400 A.D.),” in A. Wink and A. Khazanov (eds.), Nomads in the Sedentary World (London: Kegan, Paul, in press).


\(^12\) See the evidence cited in note 5 above.


\(^15\) Ibid., 51.
whom he greatly liked, was still not to be completely trusted. Supposedly that Sultan had a hunch that this mamluk, were he to be stationed in Syria, would avail himself of the opportunity to flee to the Mongols and “sow the seeds of great discord (fitna kabira).” This, of course, is what eventually happened. The non-contemporary nature of these sources, and the fulfilled prophecy lend it a post-facto air, but it does give expression to the perception that some mamluks of Mongol origin might have had divided loyalties. How Qipchaq was to resolve this in the end will be discussed below.

Qipchaq and the other amirs accompanied Ghāzān on the campaign into Syria in late 1299, and were present at the battle of Wādī al-Khaznadār, in which he played a certain role. First, it is reported that he convinced Ghāzān not to flee during the battle, when the Mongols initially suffered a setback; later on, he explained this action as a means by which he hoped that the Ilkhān would be taken prisoner. Secondly, in the aftermath of the battle, Qipchaq was instrumental—so he claimed in retrospect—in dissuading the Ilkhān from pursuing the retreating Mamluks, and thus a complete rout and much larger Mamluk casualties were prevented. It is not unlikely that Qipchaq, who eventually returns to the Mamluk fold, was engaged in some urgent damage control: not only was he attempting to minimize the impact of his desertion, he was also hoping to show that in reality he had assisted the Mamluk cause. In this vein, it is noteworthy that the contemporary Armenian writer Het’um, who describes in some detail the campaign (in which an Armenian contingent participated), reports that Qipchaq secretly sent messages to the Mamluks before the battle.

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16 Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn al-Furat, Taʾrīkh [= Taʾrīkh al-duwal wa’l-multāk], vol. VIII, ed. Q. Zurayk and N. ‘Izz al-Dīn (Beirut, 1939), 94–95, where this mamluk’s name is given as Qunjāq/Qunjaq, which of course is a corruption of Qibjaq/Qibjaq (<Qipchaq). This author writes that this information was attained by Ṭalāwùn during a scapulamancy ceremony. On this whole matter, see Linda S. Northrup, From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwùn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 A.H./1279–1290 A.D.) (Wiesbaden, 1998), 67.


19 Het’um [Hayton/Hethoum], “La Flor des estories de la Terre d’Orient,” in Recueil des histoires des Croisades: Documents arméniens, 2 (Paris, 1906), vol. II, 192. Het’um’s evidence does not have to be accepted at face value. Although he provides a fairly detailed account of the battle of Wādī Khaznadār, he apparently arrived at the scene at the end of the fighting, together with the Armenian contingent (see Amitai, “Whither the Ilkhanid Army,” 251). Qipchaq was certainly a
We are now in position to deal with the Mongol occupation of Damascus. My intention, however, is not to provide a detailed rendition of the hundred days or so during which the local population suffered under Mongol depredations and exactions, but rather to examine how three cases—two Mamluk amirs and one civilian notable—behaved “under fire,” i.e. how they weathered this period of disruption and uncertainty, and how this tested their traditional loyalties and identities. As can be ascertained from the previous discussion, one of these military case studies will be Qipchaq al-Manṣūr; the other will be Alam al-Dīn Sanjar Arjuwāsh al-Manṣūr, commander of the Damascus citadel, who throughout this period led a spirited resistance against the Mongols, holding out until the end of their occupation. The civilian figure to be examined is no less than Taqī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Taymīyya, a well-known personality in the religious and social life of Damascus (and beyond) both before and after this episode.

While the civilian population of Damascus is not my main concern here, it is useful and not without interest to present briefly the reaction of the civilian leadership to the Mamluk defeat, the imminent arrival of the Mongols and the subsequent occupation. Our main source for the Mongol occupation in general, and the experiences of the civilian population in particular, is an account found in several contemporary Damascene works, which according to the researches of Li Guo are all evidently based on the original report given by al-Birzālī in his Muqafā. Since the latter is not readily available, I will base the following discussion on the version given by al-Yūnīn, now presented in a well-edited edition (accompanied by a good translation) prepared by Li Guo.22


21 Birzālī, al-Muqafā li-taʾrikh al-shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Abī Shāma, MS. Topkapı Sarayi, Ahmet III 2951/1–2. For the poor state of this manuscript, see the comments in Little, Mamlūk Historiography, 46–7; Northrup, From Slave to Sultan, 41.
from Jazari’s *Hawādith al-zamān* has been lost. Henceforth, I will mainly cite the Arabic of Yunānī’s account, adding from other sources which contain unique evidence. The sources for the events of this year have been thoroughly and conveniently analyzed by D.P. Little, *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography* (Wiesbaden, 1970), chapter 1, *passim*; this is supplemented by the discussion in Li Guo’s introductory chapters, 54–80.
As news, often confused, arrived in Damascus about the Mamluk defeat, there was terrible confusion and disorder in the city, including the breakout of several prisoners from jail. On one hand, there were reports that Ghāzān was a good Muslim, and that the majority of his troops had converted, and therefore, there was no reason to worry. On the other hand, the Shāfī‘ī and Mālikī judges, the muhtasib, the prefects of the city and the countryside (military positions), and many civilians—including notables and lesser folk, fled from the city. Damascus, however, was not bereft of leaders: prominent citizens, including the army judge (qāḍī al-‘asākir), the Shāfī‘ī Najm al-Dīn Ibīn Șaṣrā,23 and the Ḥanafī Taqī al-Dīn Ibīn Taymiyya, soon gathered to discuss the dispatch of a delegation to Ghāzān to ask for an amān, a formal guarantee of safety.24

After this delegation had set off,25 Sanjar Arjuwāsh, commander of the Citadel, the one important military figure who remained in the city, issued an announcement: “Not a single item of army equipment is allowed to be put on sale! Your sultan is still in power.” His call seems to have been pretty much ignored. Equipment was indeed sold, and the first Mongol representatives who arrived were well received. On Friday, 1 January 1300, al-Nāṣr Muḥammad’s name was omitted from the khutba, although the Ilkhān’s was still unmentioned. The next day, the first substantial group of Mongol soldiers arrived, bringing with them Ghāzān’s famān. Yūnīmī and others give the text of this document in extenso.26 Basically, the people of Damascus were promised security of life and property by Ghāzān, who emphasized his own commitment to Islam, and the tyranny and misgovernment of the Mamluks.

23 He was to become chief Shāfī‘ī judge only in 702/1302; see W. Brinner, “Ibn Șaṣrā,” EI, III, 930b.
24 Yūnīmī, ed. Li Guo, 97–100. Muria, “Salhiyya Quarter,” 162, writes that only the leaders of all the schools but the Ḥanbalīs fled the city, and only the last mentioned played a role in the submission of the city to Ghāzān. This statement is belied by the list provided by Yūnīmī (ed. Li Guo, 99–100) of notables—including the above-mentioned Shāfī‘ī Najm al-Dīn Ibīn Șaṣrā—who participated in the consultation in Damascus.
25 The meeting with Ghāzān, on the march from Homs, is reported in Yūnīmī, ed. Li Guo, 138.
26 Yūnīmī, ed. Li Guo, 102–4; see also Zetterstéen, 62–4; Nuwayrī, reproduced as an appendix in Maqrīzī, vol. I, 1011–12. Somogyi did not translate this document, found in Dhahabi, fols. 125a–126a.
The emptiness of these words would soon be fully revealed to people of Damascus, especially those living outside the walls in the villages of the Ghūṭa, and particularly in the suburb of al-Ṣāliḥiyā. This, however, was not obvious at the very beginning. But, even had the full extent of the Mongol exactions, as well as the depredations executed by them (especially those of the Armenians who were found in their army),27 been known ahead of time by the remaining notables, it is doubtful that they would have or could have behaved any differently. They had been abandoned by the Mamluk army, which bypassed it on its retreat south to Egypt. The job of the notables was to protect themselves and their fellow townspeople, which was best accomplished by an orderly submission to the new powers that be. It certainly was not their business to engage in hopeless resistance for the sake of a sultan or military caste which had proven themselves incapable on the field and had deserted them without further ado. The fact that the Mongols were now ostensibly Muslims made this submission that much more palatable. The policy of surrender to the Mongols, first revealed in 1260,28 was a fortiori applicable in 1300.29

The notables of Damascus, those that remained that is, generally kept a low profile during the months of Mongol occupation. They, like the rest of the population, were candidates for expropriations, including “mugging” in the streets (the expression is used by Li Guo) by either Mongols or local ruffians taking advantage of the unsettled situation.30 Perhaps not surprisingly, the one notable example to this admittedly understandable meekness is Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymīyya, who more than once sets out from the city walls—certainly at great

28 On this, see Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 29–31.
29 A similar policy was adopted by the notables of Damascus in 1400, when Tamerlane threatened the city; see Muira, “Ṣāliḥiyā Quarter,” 163–64. The submission of local notables to conquerors was an honored tradition in the Islamic world: It is reported that Maḥmūd of Ghazna admonished the civilian leaders of Balkh for having resisted an invader, and thus causing unnecessary destruction. Resistance was to be left to the military class, C.F. Bosworth, The Ghaznavids, 2nd edn. (Beirut, 1973), 253. My thanks to Dr. Peter Jackson for this reference.
risk to his life—to confront the Mongols, even seeking an audience with the Ilkhan. He first sought out Ghâzân’s shaykh al-mashâ‘ikh in the city, but this was to no avail. Ibn Taymiyya then left the city for Shâlihiyya; supposedly, the Mongol troops engaged there in looting withdrew upon his arrival. This was on 12 January. Two days later, having returned to Damascus, Ibn Taymiyya set out again for Ghâzân’s camp (ordo) near Tall Râhiţ. He was introduced to the Ilkhan’s presence, but could not speak with him, having to make due with a short prayer for his sake and to leave quickly. Ibn Taymiyya was shunted aside with the excuse that Ghâzân was indisposed. Besides, if Ibn Taymiyya complained, the Ilkhan would execute some Mongols in rage, and this in turn would lead to only greater confusion and suffering. The Shaykh, however, did have a chance to talk with Ghâzân’s two ważîrs, Sa’ûd al-Dîn Sawajî and Rashîd al-Dîn, the latter the well-known historian. They told him that if he wanted the Mongols to desist from their detrimental activities, the senior officers would have to be satisfied, i.e. paid off with large bribes. This being said, Muslim prisoners were released to Ibn Taymiyya, who returned to Damascus two days later. Later, we have Ibn Taymiyya’s account of this adventure, transmitted personally to Birzâlî. This story includes a report of the Shaykh’s interview with Qutlu(qh)-Shâh, the senior general in the Ilkhan’s army, which contains inter alia some important and unique information showing how the newly converted Mongols understood Islam.

31 This was Nizâm al-Dîn Mahmûd b. ‘Alî al-Shârîhâni; see Yûnûs, 109, line 8. On him, see: Rashîd al-Dîn, ḽami‘ al-tawârîkh, ed. Jahn, index, s.v. “Mahmûd, Shaykh al-Mashâ‘iykh.” Muira, “Shâlihiyya Quarter,” 162, appears to think that this individual was one of the Damascene notables, and not an official who arrived in the city with the Mongols.
32 Yûnûs, ed. Li Guo, 108.
33 Yûnûs, ed. Li Guo, 109, line 10 has ḵirdâwâ‘, which in the translation (1:147) is rendered “al-Ardawâ‘,” as if it were a place-name; any doubts to its true meaning is cleared up by the parallel passage in Badr al-Dîn al-‘Aynî, ʿlîd al-zamân fî târîkh ahl al-zamân, vol. IV, ed. M.M. Amîn (Cairo, 1312/1992), 34, line 13.
34 Yûnûs (and others) write that Ghâzân suffered from a sore leg and was preoccupied with other matters. Cf. Maqrîzî, vol. I, 892, who writes that Ghâzân was occupied with drinking. Since this latter report is both late and unique, its credibility can be doubted. Little, Introduction to Mamluk Historiography, 79, first noted this incongruity.
36 Yûnûs, ed. Li Guo, 119; here the version in Dhahabî, fols. 129b–130a, is slightly different; cf. the translation in Somogyi, 377–8.

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36 Yûnûs, ed. Li Guo, 119; here the version in Dhahabî, fols. 129b–130a, is slightly different; cf. the translation in Somogyi, 377–8.
however, is a subject beyond the present concerns. What does interest us is that even such an uncompromising figure as Ibn Taymiyya, who in his famous fatwā was to call for the waging of jihād against the Mongols even after their embracing of Islam—half-baked in his eyes—was now willing to find a modus vivendi with the conquerors. His brave and forthright manner towards the new masters of the city had nothing to do with lingering loyalty to the Sultan or his kingdom, but rather was meant to protect the local Muslims for whom he felt responsible. We will soon see another example of this Ibn Taymiyya’s realistic approach.

But whereas Ibn Taymiyya’s loyalty was to his fellow Muslims and Islam at large, Sanjar Arjuwāsh, commander of the citadel, from the beginning of the Mongol occupation made clear that his allegiances were somewhat different, or at least in part could be interpreted differently. As will be remembered, Arjuwāsh, as he will henceforth be called, had announced to the townspeople that “Your sultan is still in power!” Not only was he not to surrender, he maintained a spirited resistance to Mongol attempts to capture the citadel, even launching raids into the city to destroy Mongol positions and disrupting their plans. No less important, he unequivocally rejected every call from the local notables to surrender for the sake of the local population. His actions, which initially must have appeared to have been hopeless, reveal great bravery, fortitude, presence of mind and the ability to command men—not necessarily all professional soldiers—under the most difficult conditions. The uniqueness of his story demands a somewhat detailed rendition.

is described as al-tabbūr, while in Dhabābī, he is called Rashīd al-Dawla, hinting thus at his non-Muslim origin. For these passages, and the matter of Rashīd al-Din’s presence at Damascus at this time, see R. Amitai-Preiss, “New Material from the Mamluk Sources for the Biography of Rashīd al-Din,” in J. Raby and T. Fitzherbert (eds.), The Court of the Ilkhans, 1290–1340 (= Oxford Journal of Islamic Art, vol. XII) (Oxford, 1996), 28.

37 For a thorough analysis of this fatwā, see the important study, regrettably hard to obtain, by Thomas Raff, An Anti-Mongol Fatwā of Ibn Taymiyya (Leiden: privately printed, 1973).

38 Short appreciations of his personality, which only briefly mention his actions in 1299–1300 are found in the biographical dictionaries: Ibn al-Shuqā’ī, Tāhkhākit waṣafat al-dā’im, ed. and tr. J. Sublet (Damascus, 1974), 91–92 (no. 155); Khalil b. Aybeg al-Safadī, al-Wafī bi’waṣafat, ed. H. Ritter et al. (Wiesbaden, 1931–), vol. VIII, 338–9 (no. 3766); Ibn Ḥajar, vol. I, 371 (no. 865). We know little of Arjuwāsh’s early career beyond that he was one of Qalāwūn’s early personal mamluks and
The first efforts to get Arjuwāsh to surrender were made by Qıpchaq and his associates, saying that the “blood of the Muslims was on his hands,” i.e. if he did not give up, Muslims would be killed. Arjuwāsh rebuffed them thus: “It is you that are responsible for the shedding of Muslim blood. You are the ones who have caused all this. It is because of you that it happened.”

This was on 4 January. The next morning, at the instigation of a senior Mongol commander, a group of ʿulamāʾ, righteous people (ṣulḥāʾ), shaykhs (mashāʾikk), and leaders (ruʾasāʾ) were ordered to talk Arjuwāsh into surrendering. If he did not submit, the Mongols would enter the city and wreak much havoc. The notables complied and were joined by ṣūfis. Arjuwāsh treated this group with contempt, calling them “lying hypocrites that are traitors to the Muslims (munāṣṣūn kadihābān al-khāʾīn liʾl-muslimān), who had surrendered the city to the enemy.”

He further related that he had received a notice (biṭāqā) via pigeon post that the Mamluk forces had regrouped and defeated at Gaza the Mongols who were pursuing them. Nothing more was to come of this parleying, or that of the next day.

Arjuwāsh’s resolve was not only expressed verbally. He worked to strengthen the citadel. That he meant business was shown a few days later, when two Mongol mangonel operators were killed, evidently by men from the citadel. Arjuwāsh seemingly ignored a call from Ghāzān, now extremely annoyed, to surrender or bring destruction upon the city. A couple of weeks later, at the beginning of Jumādā 1/25 January, the siege of the citadel began in earnest. The Mongols began taking up positions around the citadel, setting up mangonels in the precincts of the grand mosque. No details of actual combat are given at this time; it appears that the Mongols were hoping to starve out the defenders, and were primarily preoccupied with looting and extorting the local population.

during his reign was first appointed commander of the citadel of Damascus; he had a run in with Sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl (1290–3), for which he was briefly punished before being reinstated as commander of the citadel. See also: Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa’l-nihāya fi al-taʾrīkh (rpt., Beirut, 1977), vol. XIV, 20; Baybars, Zubda, 176; ʿAynī, vol. IV, 40–41.

39 Yūnūsī, ed. Li Guo, 105.
40 Yūnūsī, ed. Li Guo, 110, lines 7–8.
41 Yūnūsī, ed. Li Guo, 110, lines 18–19.
42 Yūnūsī, ed. Li Guo, 113.
Twelve days later (12 Jumādā I/5 February), Ghāzān himself left the city with part of his army, leaving Qūṭlugh-Shāh in charge together Qipchaq who was the titular governor. The reasons for this sudden withdrawal back across the Euphrates are interesting but need not detain us here.45 Mongol forces in the city were reduced, but a light force (al-yazak, literally “scouts” or “advanced force”) kept a watch on the citadel. Mangonels from inside the citadel lobbed stones at them, and the defenders launched a sortie, in which some Mongols were killed; the Mamluk troops returned safely to the citadel.46

Up to now, we have been following Yūnīnī. The impression gained is one of resolution shown by Arjuwāsh and his men, but this in the face of a somewhat desultory siege carried out by relatively small Mongol forces. A greater appreciation of Arjuwāsh’s actions can be gained by studying additional material found in the al-ʿAynī’s ʿĪqād al-jamān. Al-ʿAynī, it may be mentioned, initially renders a slightly shortened version of much of the same account found in Yūnīnī,47 but at some point48 begins a somewhat different account, based to some degree on the short report in Baybars al-Manṣūrī’s Zubda,49 but with additional material whose source is not yet clear.

For example, Baybars al-Manṣūrī—and thus al-ʿAynī—report explicitly that Arjuwāsh destroyed buildings by fire around the citadel, including the Dār al-Saʿāda, so that the Mongols would have difficulty seeking cover, especially for their mangonels.50 Al-ʿAynī notes that Mongols responded by a concerted effort to build more mangonels, placing them in the Umayyad mosque. When Arjuwāsh learnt this, he sent out a force at night, who fell upon the mangonels with nafṭ (Greek fire); the Mongol guards fled at this time, and the fires continued for two days.51

This particularly annoyed Ghāzān, who entered the city to inspect the matter at first hand.52 He ordered that the moat around the

43 See the comments in Amitai, “Whither the Ilkanid Army?” (note 2) and references there.
44 Yūnīnī, ed. Li Guo, 115, lines 10–16.
46 This would be around Yūnīnī, ed. Li Guo, 114.
47 Baybars, Zubda, 332–33.
48 Baybars, Zubda, 332–33; ʿAynī, 41.
50 This was evidently the second time Ghāzān was in the city. The first time he
citadel be filled in, an order which does not appear to have been carried out. Meanwhile Qipchaq and others approached to speak to Arjuwāsh, promising him the Ḫūn’s favor. The latter, in fairly harsh language, basically told them to jump in the proverbial lake, reserving some choice phrases for the Ḫūn himself. Qipchaq et alia ran off in a barrage of arrows, naf, and other objects. Arjuwāsh thereupon bid his time until new mangonels were almost ready. Then he sent down again at night a specially prepared squad, who killed the mangonel specialist and others and set the machines on fire with naf. In short, this parallels the information in Yūnīnī, but this report is more detailed, and we gain a greater appreciation of Arjuwāsh’s activities and initiatives.

An additional anecdote can be recounted: Sometime late in the siege, the khaṭīb Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamāʾa and Ibn Taymiyya approached the citadel and tried to mediate a ceasefire (sulḥ) between Arjuwāsh and the Mongol commanders. Arjuwāsh, not surprisingly, does not agree, and the matter was left to rest. We see here that Ibn Taymiyya’s activities were not limited to trying to mitigate Mongol excesses and release Muslim prisoners, but to end the siege of the citadel, which was causing so much suffering to the people of Damascus, not the least since the Mongols were taking out their anger by demanding more money. Ibn Taymiyya, as we know, was a tough character, willing to take on Sultans, the majority of ‘ulamāʾ, jāfīs, etc., and even the Mongols about their excesses. But at the same time, in the interest of avoiding bloodshed of Muslims, he was willing to tell the citadel commander, who he perhaps admired for his resistance, to desist. There were limits even for Ibn Taymiyya.

was accompanied by Rashīd al-Dīn and other members of his entourage; ‘Aynī, vol. IV, 40.


33 On these additional extortions, see ‘Aynī, vol. IV, 43–44.

34 This description would seem to be contradicted by information in Ibn Kathīr, vol. XIV, 7–8, who writes that early on in the siege, Ibn Taymiyya had actually written to Arjuwāsh to encourage him to continue resistance, as long as he had “one rock left”. There are reasons to doubt the veracity of this statement: firstly, it seems to be unsubstantiated by any other source; secondly, it is not contempo-
Having reviewed Arjuwâsh's actions in some detail, we can see in hindsight that his resolute and cool-headed behavior enabled him to resist successfully all Mongol attempts—verbal, psychological or military—to gain possession of the citadel. This successful result, however, was not at all obvious at the beginning of the Mongol occupation, or during most of the siege. It should be noted initially that Arjuwâsh was under no compulsion whatsoever to remain in the city and resist. As mentioned above two of his colleagues, the perfect of the city and perfect of the countryside had absconded right after receiving news of the Mamluk defeat at Wâdî al-Khaznadâr. Arjuwâsh could easily have done the same, without fear of reprimand or repro- bation. Likewise, he could have easily submitted to Mongols, joining his ḥuṣīyâ (comrade) Qipchaq, looking forward to a warm reception by the Ilkhan, and a cushy life ahead. Yet he chose neither of these options, but rather a third route, fraught with difficulties, dangers and uncertainties. Of his tenacity there can be no doubt, but his motivation is not obviously clear. I think that we can do best by looking at his statements, especially during his repartee with the local notables or Qipchaq. Even before hand, he sends out an announcement that “Your sultan is still in power” as Yûnînî and others put it.58 The intention is clear: loyalty is to be rendered to the Mamluk sultan, even if he is far away. True, this loyalty appears to be conditional on the correct behavior, or at least the absence of overtly incorrect conduct. Arjuwâsh is reported to have said to Qipchaq relatively late in the siege: “O hypocrite, who is drawing close to the citadel? By God, even if my patron al-Malik al-Manṣūr (Qalâwûn) drew close, he would have received an arrow in the breast. Tell Ghâzân to come forth so to see what will happen to him.”59 Yet it would seem that this statement is a rhetorical devise to emphasize his resolve in the face of Mongol threats, Mamluk traitors and local dithering. I doubt whether Arjuwâsh really thought that his ustâdh
patron) Qalāwūn would have done anything like calling on him to surrender to the Mongols.

Arjuwāsh’s use of terminology is interesting and probably not a coincidence. In his first parley with the Damascene notables he states that Qipchaq et alia are “lying hypocrites, that are traitors to the Muslims, who have surrendered the city to the enemy.”60 Munāfiqūn is, of course, an emotionally packed word. The falseness of Qipchaq’s and his associates’ loyalty to Islam—or at least the lack of full commitment—is contrasted to that of Arjuwāsh, willing to fight the enemy, who in spite of his recent embarrassment of Islam does not even rate the name munāfiq.

We see then that two motives have combined here: loyalty to the Sultan, and perhaps by extension, the Mamluk state which he led; and, willingness to fight the enemy in the name of Islam. As a corollary, there is no truck with backsliders and those who were faint of heart. Sultan and Islam (and the Muslims in an abstract way) appear as two of the foci of the loyalty of this mid-ranking Mamluk officer, who was willing to wager all in their name. An even cursory look at the events surrounding Wādī al-Khaznadār clearly shows that not all Mamluk officers and troopers were cut from the same cloth as Arjuwāsh (but he was not alone in the Citadel either). But between a willingness to fight to the end for ideals, and a total lack of principles and ideology there is a large distance. I am suggesting that Arjuwāsh’s attitude, albeit extreme, was somehow representative of Mamluk identity, or rather the identity of many of the Mamluks, at least in principle.

Principles are all well and good, but they become much more readily applicable when backed up by force, or at least the hope of such. Arjuwāsh and his companions may have been alone up in the citadel, but they were not completely cut off. Mention has been made of a message which he received early on from Gaza, telling that the Mamluks had regrouped there, and even defeated a Mongol advanced force. This may have been nothing more than wishful thinking on the part of the Mamluk authorities, but it seems to have succeeded in raising Arjuwāsh’s spirits. More important may have been subsequent messages which he may well have received. Baybars al-Manṣūrī, who was stationed at Şāliḥiyya in Egypt with a Mamluk

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60 Yūnūs, ed. Li Guo, 106.
advanced force, writes that secret couriers (qussâd) were sent out to the commanders of the fortresses in Syria with messages encouraging them and reporting that the Mamluk army was organizing to return to Syria. This, according to our source, emboldened the commanders, and thus not one fortress—including the citadel of Damascus we might add—fell during the entire period of Mongol occupation.\textsuperscript{61}

The interplay of resolution, personal capabilities, ineffectual attacks and the knowledge that help was on the way combined to enable Arjuwâsh to hold out in the citadel until the last of the Mongols left Damascus in March 1300.

Another example shows the complexity of loyalties among high ranking Mamluks. This is the story of Qipchaq, whose earlier history has already been reviewed, and whose actions in Damascus during the Mongol occupation have been briefly alluded to. During much of the Mongol period, Qipchaq acted as a sort of commissar cum ombudsman: on one hand representing the Mongols to the local population, and on the other hand, trying to mitigate some of the more drastic measures adopted by the Mongols. Certainly, as a former governor of Damascus and of Mongol origin, he was apparently well suited to this job. We find him trying to convince Arjuwâsh to surrender the citadel, to absolutely no effect as has been seen. He collects money from the local population for the Mongols, but here and there makes an effort to restrain Mongol avarice.\textsuperscript{62} In other words, he is the “human face” of the Mongol occupation. On the whole, however, it cannot be stated that he was particularly successful in this role, if the actual suffering of the local population is any indication.

With the withdrawal of Ghâzân from Damascus in early February, he is appointed governor of Damascus, as is Bektemûr al-Siâdâr of Aleppo; and Elbegi of the coastal region.\textsuperscript{63} This arrangement, however, was under the clear tutelage of the Mongol commander Qutlugh-Shâh. The last mentioned withdrew from Damascus with part of the Mongol army less than a month later, and he was followed by Mulâi (also called Bulaî)—who had led the Mongol forces raiding in Palestine—with the remaining Mongols. Around this time Ibn Taymiyya

\textsuperscript{61} Baybars, Zuhda, 344–5.
\textsuperscript{62} Yüníf, ed. Li Guo, 106–25, passim.
\textsuperscript{63} Ghâzân’s fârmân to Qipchaq making him governor is found in Baybars, Zuhda, 340–1.
met with this officer in order to negotiate the release of prisoners. Baybars al-Manṣūrī reports that Qipchaq may have encouraged Qutluğ-Shâh’s withdrawal with a timely gift of a large sum of money. What is significant, to my mind, is that Qipchaq himself did not return to the east. There are reports that he even briefly displayed some of the signs of sovereignty, perhaps indicating that he toyed with the idea of some type of local rule along the lines attempted earlier by Sanjar al-Halabî (1260) and Sonqor al-Ashqar (1279). Whatever Qipchaq’s local aspirations, they were soon abandoned, and he and his comrades left Damascus in early April 1300 to meet the Mamluk army then making its way into Palestine.

No explicit evidence has come down to us to explain Qipchaq’s actions, so I admit that the following may be somewhat speculative. One could ask, what was to prevent him from accompanying Qutluğ-Shâh or Mulai back across the Euphrates and continuing to enjoy the dolce vita with the Mongols, where he had family and even a new wife? At the same time, was he not heading back to reproach, punishment and even death at the hands of his former Mamluk peers? One initial thought, perhaps a little tongue in cheek, is that Qipchaq’s brief stay in the İlkhanate had shown him that life at the ordo could be even rougher and less secure than that in the upper echelons of Mamluk society.

The answer, however, is to be found elsewhere. Qipchaq had decided to throw in his lot with his Mamluk comrades. In spite of his Mongol origins, family ties and the fine treatment which he had received from the İlkhan, Qipchaq’s Mamluk loyalties were to predominate in the long run. It is difficult to say which component or components of these “Mamluk” loyalties were the most decisive: was
it fidelity to the Sultan, to his Mamluk comrades, to Islam as represented by the Sultanate, or perhaps longing for his family in Syria? Or perhaps it was to the whole structure of “Mamlukdom,” the complex of identities and loyalties which had been inculcated since his youth which overcame any residual loyalty to the Mongols due to birth and family connections?

The behavior of both Arjuwāsh and Qipchaq during the above-described events each show in its own way an underlying commitment to certain ideals, which can be called “Mamluk ideology,” combining on one hand vague principles of loyalty to the sultan as well as to the Muslim faith, with notions of fidelity to comrades—primarily khushdāshiyya—and family. One is reminded of a formulation by Robert Irwin, where Mamluks, albeit the Mu’ayyadīs of the fifteenth century, operated “within a single ideology, a one party state, whose leader is the Sultan and whose ideology is Islam.” This seems to apply equally to the Mamluk Sultanate in the “heroic age.” Further research may yet reveal that other ideals were also held by members of the Mamluk elite at this time.

Of course, loyalty would go only so far, without some knowledge how his return to the Mamluk fold would be received. Feelers had been sent out before the actual meeting took place, even before Qipchap even left Damascus. There are indications that the senior amirs were not of one mind about receiving him, but eventually decided to absolve him. Qipchaq and company met with Salār and Baybars al-Jāshnakīr on their way to Damascus. The former suffered a certain admonishment, but considering their ostensibly traitorous activities, they got off rather easy: He and his companions were sent off to the Sultan, camped not far from Cairo, and were well received. Qipchap himself was sent off to the governorship of Shawbak, and subsequently played a certain role in Mamluk affairs. One might have expected that he would have received a harsher treatment.

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71 Šalāfī, vol. VIII, 184; Abū al-Fidā’, vol. IV, 43.
72 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, vol. VIII, 129.
73 Šalāfī, vol. VIII, 184.
74 For the harsh punishment—including execution—of local collaborators with the Mongols, see Yūnīnī, ed. Li Guo, 129. These collaborators included both non-Muslims and some Muslim notables.
How can we explain the relative equanimity of the Mamluk elite to Qipchaq at this stage? I think it derives from two reasons. The first is the understanding that he and his companions had fled to the İlkhanate under duress: Sultan Lâchîn and his viceroy Mengütemür had unjustifiably persecuted these officers, and they had no choice but to flee for their lives. This understanding of Qipchap’s actions is seen by the attempts to return him to the Mamluk fold immediately after that Sultan’s assassination (but to no avail). When he had met the senior Mamluk amirs after the Mongol occupation, they further admonished him for his contribution to Ghâzân’s campaigns. He was able to extradite himself by saying that he had no alternative, given what Lâchîn had attempted to do to him.75 The second reason is that Qipchaq appears to have been playing a double game all along. We have seen that the Armenian historian Het’um accused Qipchaq of secret contacts with the Mamluks early on, and this contributed to Ghâzân’s initial difficulties at Wâdî al-Khaznadâr.

This may be taking things too far, but there appears to be a whiff of truth in this. Qipchaq himself says he tried to maneuver Ghâzân during the battle for the advantage of the Mamluks. Baybars al-Manbûrî, who certainly was in a position to know, reports that Qipchaq bribed Qutlug-Shâh to encourage him to leave Damascus. Finally, there is a particularly important piece of evidence transmitted by al-Šafâdî: “He secretly communicated (yubâšinû) to Arjuwâsh not to surrender the citadel.”76

Thus, to the mind of the Mamluk elite, Qipchaq was not such a bad fellow, and he could thus be taken back into the fold and rehabilitated, albeit he would not return to the high position which he had previously held. In other words, the Mamluk grandees recognized the prevailing nature of Qipchaq’s Mamluk loyalties and the secondary characteristics of his ties to the Mongols.

And what of Arjuwâsh, the true hero of this story? With the withdrawal of the Mongols and Qipchaq’s departure to the south, he did his best to restore order until the arrival of Mamluk forces.77 Meeting Salâr and Baybars al-Jâshnakîr and the other senior amirs when they arrived at Damascus, he was praised for his actions, given

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75 Ibn Taghri Birdî, vol. VIII, 129.
76 Šafâdî, vol. XXIV, 183.
a robe of honor and reinstated in his command of the citadel. With this, he drops out of the limelight and high Mamluk politics, and is mentioned again only at his death at the end of 701 (summer of 1302). In many ways, he had saved the honor and perhaps more of the Mamluk Sultanate in 1299–1300, but he was now shunted aside and forgotten. One might use this as an opportunity to meditate on the nature of fame and real achievement, as opposed to opportunism and posturing, and not only in the Mamluk Sultanate.

78 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, vol. VIII, 130. Neither Yūnīnī nor Baybars al-Manṣūrī mention Arjuwāsh’s reception by the Mamluk commanders, indicative how unimportant this was in the eyes of the Mamluk elite.
PART TWO

MAMLUK ARCHIVAL EVIDENCE
As is well recognized, our view of Mamluk society and institutions is mostly an indirect one, mediated to us by literary sources. We lack large quantities of archival material in brute form. Most of our information has passed through a selective and re-shaping process. Furthermore, such collections as are extant largely represent the non-Muslim dhimmī communities. That is why the documents now generally known as the Haram documents are so important. With particular concentration on a range of years towards the end of the 14th century A.D. they offer a broad picture of social, economic and cultural life in a minor but also special part of the Mamluk state, Jerusalem. What is more, the picture is not confined, as the literary sources so often are, to the higher echelons of society but illuminates lower levels. The people of whom we catch a glimpse in the Haram documents do not generally leave any trace elsewhere, although two of those whom we shall mention were connected with individuals known through the major literary sources.

The documents which provide the bulk of the collection are those which in a small variety of forms give notification of a death and list the effects of the deceased or which list a person’s effects during an illness and apprehension of death, or which are concerned with the appointment of executors (sing. wasīy). (For present purposes I am not interested in the formal differences in the documents but in the general subject matter they cover.) Testamentary bequests are often specified as are the identities and relationships of heirs. It is generally accepted that, apart from any quite natural desire to

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have such matters clearly and legally stated for family or internal purposes, one aim from the authorities’ point of view was to establish whatever rights the public Treasury (bayt al-māl) might have had as an inheritor of last resort. However, in none of the small selection I have looked at is the bayt al-māl expressly named as an “heir” although it is in others in the whole collection.

These inventories and allied documents have been very usefully studied in bulk for a broad picture by Huda Lutfi. There is still scope, I hope, to look at a small group in greater detail and I have isolated a small number (fourteen in all). The persons who feature in these appear to belong to what I believe can be characterised as “Mamluk society” in the widest sense. They do so by the nature of their service, by their affiliation, kinship or marital status. To what extent this view is justified will become clear later. Not all the individuals had an essential association with Jerusalem, as it is often the case that people who appear in the Ḥaram inventories were visiting or passing through Jerusalem when illness or death struck them. However, the non-residents of Jerusalem among the fourteen are generally associated with Syria or Palestine and do not represent the centre at Cairo. One of the strengths of the Ḥaram documents is that they provide a corrective to the Egyptian bias of so many Mamluk sources and studies.

I am certainly not going to pretend that a selection of fourteen documents will provide a meaningful statistical basis. In the long run not even the whole collection does that. As has been stressed before, the collection is not a complete and organised archive but a mass of random survivors and therefore at its best it is suggestive and illuminatory—and that is the way in which I approach this selection.

The documents in question are the following: nos. 56, 141, 193, 242, 256, 284, 331, 411, 525, 533, 540, 544, 593 and 757. All remain unedited, as far as I am aware, except for no. 331, which has been published by Kāmil al-‘Asali. Their dates fall between Shawwāl 793 and Ẓā’īf 797, that is, September 1391 and December 1394, a period of a little over three years. As it happens, not one falls in 1392. Of those we may call the “principals” in the docu-


ments nine were male (three of them already deceased) and five female. None of the females had yet died when the documents were drawn up.

Who were the individuals we are concerned with and why are we connecting them with Mamluk society, even in the broadest possible definition? Amongst the men, firstly, only two principals are qualified as al-amīr. Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Salā (no. 256) is described as al-amīr al-ḥabīr. Normally a resident of Damascus, he is here said to be ill in a stable block (iṣṭābīl) of someone or something illegible in Jerusalem. Even if the title “amir” is an inflation, a mere courtesy, the further information is given that he was the uṣūdār of Aqbulāt, one of the amirs of Damascus. His wife, Asin, was at home in Damascus with their two sons, Muḥammad and Ṭāḥī.

Otherwise, name and nisba and mention of a manumitter may serve as a good indication. We have a Sayf al-Dīn Tulaktīmūr b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Manjakī (no. 525). One would love to think that this man was a freedman of the famous Manjak, who had connections with Damascus. However, two daughters (Umm ʿUmar and Umm Faraj), resident in Damascus, are said to be the heirs of his deceased muṭṭiq and the well-known Manjak had sons. The nisba al-Manjakī appears again in the name (Arghūn b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Manjakī) of the husband of the Hájj Malik who is the subject of no. 56.

Alṭunbughā b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Shihābī (no. 533) was probably a mamluk in legal status but whether he was a military man is perhaps doubtful as his manumitter is named as the Shaykh Fūlād. No. 544 gives us an ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Ḥusāmī and no. 593 a Qutlubughā b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Damūrāshī, who had been the husband of Sitt al-ʿAṣyaḥ, herself, as it happens, a daughter of al-amīr al-ʿajal ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿĀlī b. ʿUṭmān b. Bakhtīyār, whose ʾiqrār (dated in Rajab 795/May 1393), made during an illness, constitutes no. 193. The latter served as a member of the Ḥalqa in Damascus. His wife, Sutayt, was made his executor under the oversight (naẓār) of an Amir Mubārak Shāh b. ʿAbd Allāh.

No. 331 contains legal arrangements in the event of death made by, as ʿAsalī has it, a Sayf al-Dīn Qabaqjī b. ʿAbd Allāh. The personal name has probably not been correctly read in my view but no alternative springs to mind. Nevertheless, he had connections

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with past great men in that his detailed and involved nisba shows him to have been a freedman of the Amir Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Baktimur al-Sāqī, who along with his father had been high in the favour of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and then fell catastrophically.

Of the two remaining men, the nature of one, called Yalbughāb. ‘Abd Allāh, must remain in question, at least until the details of his quite extensive inventory (no. 284) can be made to give a clue. In no. 540 we meet Urunbughāb. ‘Abd Allāh, known as al-‘Alūjī Mūhammad b. Yalbughāl-Khāṣṣakī, whom it is tempting to identify with the amir who was the effective ruler of the state until he was killed in 768/1366. The money from the sale of Urunbughā’s effects was received by Yalbughāb. ‘Abd Allāh in the presence of other officials. This ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Taybughā6 was ra’s nawaḥ of Shihāb al-Dīn b. Yalbughā6 and acting as his agent (wakīl). It is equally tempting to take it that only one Yalbughā is involved, i.e. Yalbughāl-Umar b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Khaṣṣakī, who indeed did have a son Shihāb al-Dīn Ahamad. 5

We now come to the women, the better half of Mamluk society, associated with it as daughters and wives, or as both. We have already met ʿHājjī Malik bint al-Sayfī . . . (?), who was the wife of Arghūn al-Manjakī (no. 56). In no. 141 a Bint ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkiyya (her given name is illegible) was ill in the Bāb Hitṭa quarter. She was wife to al-amīr al-kabīr Tulbughāl-Qashtimūr. A comparable case is that of Quṭlūmalīkī bint Yāllū b. ‘Abd Allāh (no. 757), who was the wife of al-amīr al-kabīr Sayf al-Dīn Qarābughāl-Ruknī, in the service of (min ashāb . . .) a one-time nāʿīb of Jerusalem, Sayf al-


Din Jantimur. In no. 411 the principal is an Armenian woman, Yasmin bint ‘Abd Allâh, whose mu’tiq was an Amir ‘Alâ’ al-Dîn ‘Ali al-Halabi. The last of the women is a Khadija bint Muhîy al-Dîn b. Shihab al-Dîn (no. 242), “weak [and ill] in the Ribât of Sallar”, whose interest for us arises from the fact that her husband, Zayn al-Dîn Sadaqa b. Nasir al-Dîn Muhammad b. ‘Alam al-Dîn Sulaymân, is described as the naqîb al-tulb in the service of the nâ‘ib of Jerusalem Shihab al-Dîn Ahmed al-Yaghmûrî. To the best of my understanding this would mean that the husband was an officer of the nâ‘ib’s personal body of troops, responsible for their marshalling and discipline. It should be noted that the woman Khadija herself is said to be known as “bint naqîb al-zayt . . .”, but the significance of this escapes me.

Out of the fourteen principals three name no spouse: Al-Qunubughâ (no. 533) and Urunbughâ (no. 540) and the Armenian Yasmin (no. 411). There are no children to inherit, so in these cases, as there are no agnate or collateral relatives, the manumitter or, if deceased, the children of the same, may be named as heirs. Of the remaining eleven persons, as halves of couples, five have no offspring to name among their heirs and in these cases children of the mu’tiq are again mentioned alongside the spouse and, in two instances, brothers. Children are distributed as follows: no. 56—one son (Amir ‘Ali), no. 256—two sons, no. 284—three sons and one daughter (the latter absent in Damascus), no. 544—three sons, no. 595—a son and a daughter, and no. 193—four sons and four daughters. For what it is worth, the average number of children per couple was 1.27. It is as well to remember, when thinking of apparent single status and also lack of children in a marriage, that hardly anywhere in the Haram documents is there any indication of a person’s age.

Potentially the interest of these document resides in the detail of the inventories, although I have to admit that they are a little less interesting than I hoped. Those that designate executors do not deal

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9 It would be rash to suggest that Quṭlûmalik was the daughter of the Yâlû, who had himself been nâ‘ib of Jerusalem. A Yâlû was given an appointment in Damascus in 798/1394 and is described as “a former nâ‘ib of Jerusalem” (Ta’rikh Ibn Qudî Shuhb, ed. ‘Adnan Darwish, Damascus, 1977, vol. I, 574). He is perhaps behind the Bulûtâwâ in Little, A Catalogue, see index, 434.

10 Note that I read tulb and not talab (Little, A Catalogue, 89).

11 Little (loc. cit.) fills this gap with “. . . al-Mağribî (?).”
with property details and in those cases the interest lies in the family details or the affiliations. It should also be remembered, as mentioned already, that some persons involved were not permanent residents of Jerusalem and therefore their full possessions are not represented.

Two documents record the sale of effects and therefore give monetary values in dirhams. Qutlubughā’s property (no. 593) was sold for 4,783 dirhams and that is property that was expressly “at Jerusalem in particular (khāṣṣatan)”. It included a quantity of wheat and a horse. Against the latter is written “in the name of Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Dawādārī”, the significance of which is not immediately clear, unless it indicates the purchaser. The Amir Nāṣr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Saʿlā, normally resident in Damascus (see no. 256), had two horses (farasayn ikdīshayn) with him in Jerusalem. Qutlubughā, apart from personal apparel, had other typical equipment, which included a saddle, boots, spurs, sword, quiver and arrows. It is of course gratifying actually to find weapons in the belongings of several principals, whom we are interpreting as members of the military society. Oddly, in the case of Qutlubughā I can see no mention of a bow but bows appear in other lists. Our member of the Damascus ħalqa, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān b. Bakhtiyār (no. 193) had with him a bow, a leather quiver (called tarkash burghālī, otherwise bulghārī), arrows and a mace (dabbūs). From Qutlubughā’s 4,783 dirhams a large proportion (1,375) was deducted for administrative expenses (quite a lot for the storing and brokering of the wheat) and for funeral expenses, including “readings of the Koran and cost of food according to the contents of his waṣiya.” The last are items regularly found. This left 3,408 for his heirs. His wife received her eighth or 3/24 (that is, 426 dirhams) and his son, al-ʿamīr al-ajall Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad got 1996 dirhams (i.e. 14/24) and his daughter Baykhāṭūn 986 (i.e. 7/24).

The other makhzūma (sale of effects) is no. 540. Unfortunately in this document the items sold from the estate of Urunbughā are not specified and the global sum was only 425 dirhams, from which thirty-seven were deducted for administrative expenses. This left 388 dirhams, which, as we have said, perhaps went to the treasury.

One notable feature is the provision made for freedmen and freedwomen through bequests or through their being named amongst the heirs as part of an “extended” family. The woman Ḥājj Malik, wife of Arghūn al-Manjākī, set out her bequests in document no. 56. Her
heirs were her husband and her son, Amīr ʼAlī. However, she made bequests to various people she had freed and to Bulāṭ, her son’s lāla, which totalled 8,300 dirhams. Since no more than a third of an estate can be given in bequests, this means that the minimum value of her whole estate was 24,900 dirhams. In document no. 544 ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Ḥusāmi bequeathed 1000 dirhams to a freedwoman Qamarī, 500 to his freedman Sunqur and 100 to the latter’s wife Tughay, which makes 1,600 dirhams altogether.

The inventory (no. 242) of the woman whose husband was naqīb al-ṭulb for the nāʾib of Jerusalem, provides a rather full list of apparel and other effects, if only all could be reliably deciphered and identified. A gold object of some sort, weighing six mithqāls, was on pawn (marhūna) with a woman and it was her will that a ten year-old slave girl called Mubāraka should be freed after her death and that 400 dirhams should be held by the Shāfiʿī Qādī to pay for a surrogate Ḥajj performed for her benefit.

In the document published by ʿAsalī (no. 331) the person who is making the waṣīyya, himself described as al-amīr al-kabīr, appointed three people as his executors, the Amir Shihāb al-Dīn Khanjar, a Shaykh ʿAlī al-Dīn, a servitor at the shrine of Moses (khādim sayyidnā Mūsā), and al-Qādī ʿAlam al-Dīn, who was the clerk (diwān) of the testator’s former master, al-Nāṣir Muhammad b. Baktimur al-Saqī. In addition to the testator’s wife, called Zumurrud and absent in Cairo, the two sons of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad are named as the legal heirs (again in the absence of other kin). Apart from an inventory of possessions, which has no surprises, the declaration is made that the testator has received his allowance (murattab) of fodder (ʿalīq) for the two preceding months from Shihāb al-Dīn Khanjar, one of his executors, and also from the same man his pay (maʿlūm), that is, 300 dirhams for one preceding month. In addition, and puzzlingly, he has also received his jāmākīyya (how is this different?) from another of his named executors, ʿAlam al-Dīn. That amounted to 360 dirhams for the current month. Can one perhaps guess that our man was on some official duty in Jerusalem? Or was it private business for the family of his muṭīq?

In no. 525 we find Tulakṭimur al-Manjākī ill in a house in the Jerusalem quarter of al-Ghawānîma, a house which he had previously made a waqf. The house could therefore no longer be considered among his personal assets. Real estate is mentioned in only one other of these selected documents (no. 284, see below). There
the person involved must have been in rented accommodation, because, although he died fi dīr saknihi, the property is not recorded as one of his assets. Amongst Tulaktimur’s personal clothing, items of interest include “a black Turcoman fur”, and two cotton takhtīfas, the characteristic head-dress of a mamluk. He also has a bow, a quiver with arrows and a chest (sandīq bugā) containing 200 dirhams. All the household furnishings and chattels are said to be the property of his wife, as is the Abyssinian slave girl (a Muslim), called Nasīm, who was purchased by his wife’s own money. Tulaktimur also had some interest in the sīq al-khila in Jerusalem (which is not fully understood) and was due the next two months’ rent for a shop.

The Alṭunbughā b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Shihābī, whose background we queried as being a freedman of a Shaykh Fuladh, was a military man to the extent that his inventory (no. 533) contained “a Damascened iron sword, a quiver with nineteen arrows and a bow.” He also had to his credit matajadi (commercial interests) in the villages of Bayt Unya and Bayt ‘Arīk from his salary as mushīd (enforcer) over those two places (60 dirhams worth) and an allowance (jī‘āya). Does this mean that he had matajadi because his salary was in kind and the cash value had to be realised or had he invested his salary in local undertakings?

The last person to consider is Yalbughā b. ‘Abd Allāh (no. 284), the one whose status is perhaps also in doubt. He lacks the affiliating nisba of the others. He died in his place of residence in Jerusalem (dīr saknihi), given no precise location. His inventory stands out, firstly because he is the only man to have had, as it appears, two wives, neither of whom is named, and secondly because he possessed books. They comprise two Korans, a book of [dream] interpretation (taḥbir), a Hadith book, two books of sermons, a collection of qisas, a book on eschatological signs (malhama), a law book and another expressly on the Ḥanbalī mādhab, a book on arithmetic (ḥisāb), two miscellanies, and a book in Persian (bi‘l-ajam). He also had the following titles: Riyāḍ al-sāliḥin, Sayf al-mulūk, Mukhtasar al-taysir, Fadā‘il al-Quds.

14 Perhaps this is the work of Ibn al-Jawzi (510–597/1116–1200), see Brockelmann, op. cit., vol. I, 506 and Suppl. I, 920.
and Kashf al-āsrār. The list of his effects, much of which is obscure (as is the case with all the documents considered), mentions some other intriguing items. He seems to have owned some sort of time-piece (lāt li-mu'rifat al-waqt) and arba'a shukhūs dhabab miṣrī, which I initially took to be, rather unusually, four gold figurines but, as has been suggested to me, possibly means four Egyptian gold coins.

There follows the transcription of document no. 593, as complete as it can be made at the present, and a reproduction of the original text. Siyāqa numerals do present problems, despite many years of struggling to decipher them. I am confident about the numerals for the main figures, that is the total value of the estate, the total of the deductions and then the residue to be distributed among the heirs and its detailed breakdown, especially as one can apply arithmetic based on the Koranic shares. However, the details of the deductions, as I have read them, cannot be reconciled with the stated total. The fact that some items cannot be deciphered is an obstacle. A very useful note by Little on Mamluk siyāqa should be consulted.  

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15 There are several titles that begin thus, see Brockelmann, op. cit., Suppl. III, Index, 935.
Verso:

1. وسار الساسبل بعد ذلك كثرة

2. يخض الزوجة بحق الأمر مما تسلمت بخصوص شهود

3. يخض الديوان الباقى مما شمله الوصي المفكر بحضره شهوده 982

4. أحمد الفكري

5. بخطان الآلي [254]

6. إن شاء الله تعالى

7. الحمد لله رب العظيم وصلى الله على محمد وآله وسلم

8. حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل

a) far left

1. مخزومة

2. بما تحصل من طرقة الجرموج ق kazih

3. الخلفية بالبديع الشريف خامسة

4. في سنة أخراً سنة عشر المحرم سنة أربع وثمانين وسبعين

b) written vertically:

1. حضرت بع ذلك علي ما شرح فيه وشهدت

2. على [العنين يفاضة]?

3. وكتب علي بن حسن؟ [ ]

4. جلسات

5. بع ذلك علي ما شرح فيه وشهدت

6. على الوصي يقين ما غير نافتا

7. كتبه عبد الله [ ]

8. جلسات

9. بع ذلك علي ما شرح فيه وشهدت

10. على الوصي يقين ما غير نافتا

11. كتبه خليل بن موسي

12. جلسات

13. بع ذلك علي ما شرح فيه وشهدت

14. على الوصي يقين ما غير نافتا

15. كتبه [ ] الشافعي
GLIMPSES OF PROVINCIAL MAMLUK SOCIETY

1. السم الله الرحمن الرحيم وهو حسبى وكفى وسلوته على سيّدنا محمد وصحبه وسلم.
2. مخزون
3. بما تشمل من شتى تركة الحجوم ضلولاً ابن عبد الله الدرباش
4. المنطقة عن مبادئ الخسر الدفت لباقس الشرف
5. إنها وجهة الله تعالى في يوم معركة المبارك سنة ثلاث وسبعين ومسبماً
6. أثناء ذلك بعده وقته في تواصيها يوم عريضة
7. المتاحر الرث في رجنه يست يعمل بخيرة أمر الإجلال
8. يل الدين علي بن شعبان بن بعثي الوصي على الامام الاتينة
9. دكرها البكري ووفقه من الوجوه المذكورة وفيها السيّرة الآلية
10. شهاب الدين أحمد وب_STOP_لياً مما تغلب ذلك خلا القمح
11. الوصي الدكر وقلمين من الحكم العزيز بالقديس الشرف
12. في مدة الخمر تنسب عشرة شهر لل.imgur TAKE優 عام أربعة ويشتم ومنع وسداد
13. [ ]
14. [ ]
15. [ ]
16. [ ]
17. [ ]
18. [ ]
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CHAPTER FOUR
THE RECOVERY OF MAMLUK CHANCERY DOCUMENTS IN AN UNSUSPECTED PLACE
Frédéric Bauden

I

The discovery of an unknown manuscript of al-Maqrızî (d. 845/1441) has always to be considered as an important event. When it proves to be a specimen of his note-books, which necessarily implies that it is a holograph copy, it becomes even more exciting and fascinating.¹ Specialists of the history and historiography of Islam, particularly during the last decades, have considered the question of the working method of the medieval historians. Al-Maqrızî's unpublished note-book represents a missing link between the moment when a historian hit upon the idea of writing a book and the final result, and so will help to fill a gap which hitherto has puzzled us.² The discovery is all the more important as the author acquired such a reputation that he is better known as shaykh al-mu’arrikhīn.

¹ The manuscript was discovered in the holdings of the library of the University of Liège/Belgium, where it is preserved under the shelf-mark 2232. For an accurate description of the contents of the manuscript and its history, see my “Maqriziana I. Discovery of an autograph manuscript of al-Maqrızî. Towards a better understanding of his working method. Description: Part 1”, Mamlûk Studies Review vol. VIII (2003) (to appear). The present writer is currently preparing a critical edition of this note-book, which should be published by the Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale in Cairo.

² This theme will be the subject of a paper to be presented at a conference on the legacy of the medieval Egyptian historian al-Maqrızî, to be held at Notre Dame University on 29–30 September 2001. It should be published in the proceedings of this conference under the title “Maqriziana II. Discovery of an autograph manuscript of al-Maqrızî. Towards a better understanding of his working method. Analysis”.

This paper is the shortened version of a booklet to appear under the provisional title “Maqriziana III. Scraps of paper to the rescue of History: the reconstruction of Mamluk chancery documents from the reign of sultan ‘Imād al-dīn Ismā‘īl (743/1342–746/1345)”. 
Moreover, texts such as the manuscript in question shed new light on matters which are only imperfectly known through other sources. Some of the epitomes made by al-Maqrīzī as well as his notes preserve the unique versions of texts which are otherwise lost, or, at least, of which we had merely brief excerpts thanks to the quotations of later historians, like al-Maqrīzī himself. These resurrected texts finally deal with historical facts sometimes unknown. And so any historian should be delighted when new data come to light as a result of the discovery and analysis of texts such as that under investigation here. However, the manuscript in itself, I mean as a codex and in the frame of codicology, can bring us much more than is conceivable.3

II

When I discovered the manuscript in question, I became deeply intrigued by some inscriptions in larger characters than those of al-Maqrīzī’s script, sporadically written at different places on various folios. These had nothing to do with al-Maqrīzī: on the pages where such inscriptions appear, it is clear that he endeavored to fill in the blanks, writing around them as closely as possible (see picture at the end of this study). This demonstrates conclusively that the paper had already been used for another purpose prior to al-Maqrīzī and that, at some stage of its history, it was treated as, in effect, scribbling paper. But what had this paper been before? After some time, it became clear to me that the script was a chancery one, and that therefore I had found fragments of chancery documents utilized by al-Maqrīzī as scrap paper. It remained to be determined what kind of documents these were (either marsūm, or amān, or ta‘ṣī‘, or manṣūr, or ‘ahd, etc.) and to which period they belonged. As al-Maqrīzī lived most of his life in Egypt, it seemed logical to surmise that they were most likely issued by the Egyptian chancery. But from which

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3 A codicological analysis of the manuscript has permitted me to understand its internal organization and particularly how it was constituted with time by al-Maqrīzī. The results were presented in a paper at the 3rd International Conference on Palaeography and Codicology of Middle Eastern Manuscripts (Bologna, 4–6 October 2000) and will appear in the proceedings of the conference under the title “Maqriziana IV: Le carnet de notes d’al-Maqrīzī: l’apport de la codicologie à une meilleure compréhension de sa constitution”, Manuscripta orientalia (to appear).
period: the Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid, or Mamluk? I was not at all sure, due to the complexity of the task, that I could reach a satisfying result, i.e., reconstruct a consistent text and afterwards date it exactly or even approximately.

III. Method developed for the reconstruction of the documents

First, it was necessary to put the manuscript back in order, on the basis of both textual analysis and external evidence. Quires were not at all in the right places; some folios that had become detached over time had been inserted at the wrong places. Once this chore was completed, it was still necessary to reconstruct the inscriptions. For this, I used a scanner which allowed me to put the beginning of each inscription appearing on a folio together with its end, which, of course, is not to be found on the immediately opposite leaf, but rather on the opposite leaf in the second half of the quire. I then produced a list of reconstructed sentences, which demonstrated that there are such inscriptions in only nine quires of the manuscript.4

At this stage, in order to reconstruct the text as coherently as possible, it was necessary to analyze the script. Of course, it was easier to discern various scripts once each line had been reconstructed. A thorough study of them led me to differentiate five distinct groups: nine lines for group I, twenty-one for group II, five for group III, five for group IV, and finally three for group V. It thus became easier to reconstruct each document, through comparison with examples in the preserved chancery manuals.5 However this task could not have been successfully carried out without taking into account other important factors, such as the space left blank when the documents were originally written (in other words the size of the space between the lines), and also the width of the right margin.6 As the

4 The ms. is composed of 21 quires.
6 It is a well known fact that the space between two lines as well as the width of the right margin, which was left blank too, varied in chancery practice according to the importance of the person for whom the document was issued. See al-Qalqashandī, Subḥ al-dīrāḥ, VI, p. 196.
original documents had been cut in smaller pieces of paper, it was necessary to be satisfied with the measurement of the space between the top edge of the leaf and that of the inscription, as well as that separating the bottom of the inscription from that of the leaf. These measurements have stood me in good stead for the reconstruction, since an average value could be established for each document. Any significant big discrepancy compared with this average value might indicate that the proposed ordering of the leaves was not the correct one; alternatively, I had to consider the possibility that there were sometimes lacunae and that some parts of a document were missing in the manuscript.7

Considering all these factors, my textual and physical analysis suggests that the following reconstruction is accurate.8

IV. Reconstruction of the documents

A. Group I

1. Text

(1) al-majlis al-sāmi al-amīr al-qāl al-kabīr al-mujāhidī
(2) al-ghāzi al-mukbbī
(3) ḥusām al-dīn majd al-islām bahā'
al-anām nūṣrat al-mujāhidīn
(4) [zayn al-qabā'il..umdat al-mulāj/k [wa]
al-[salāj]/[in]
(5) Bālish ibn Yūsuf ibn /
(6) jazīl hādīhī al-ṣā'id ǧārī-
dhālikā kharaqa al-amr
(7) al-sharīf al-ʾālī al-muṣlaḥī al-sūṭānī al-malākhī
(8) al-Šāhī bi al-Imādī la barika yuʾīṭ jazīlan iwa-yūʾīī māʾīfan?;9

7 For instance, in group IV, the extreme values for the spacing between the lines are 12–13.8 cm. We could not imagine that the inscription on ff. 187b–1a would come after the one on ff. 188b–195b, just because the value obtained in this case would have been of 21.5 cm, which is completely inconsistent with the preceding extreme values.

8 For reasons of space, only documents I, II and III are transcribed and analyzed in this paper. Documents IV and V are by far less consistent and could not be linked to a particular event, even though their contents gives some indications which permit us to guess why they were issued. The most interesting ones are indeed the first three documents which seem to be closely connected to the same historical fact, as I shall try to prove it. The texts of the five documents in Arabic characters will be found in the full version of this paper.

9 Line 9 consists only in the article followed by a kāf and a wā'.
2. Translation

[When] (1) his eminence, the most splendid and the grand amir, the fighter, (2) the conqueror, the lover, the favorite, the mightiest, the most perfect, the appreciated, (3) the sword of the Faith, the glory of Islam, the splendor of mankind, the aid of the fighters, (4) the ornament of the tribes, the support of the] Kings and the Sultans, (5) Bâligh b. Yusuf ibn [...].

(6) [...] the abundance of this assistance, that is why the (7) noble and exalted order of our Lord, the Sultan, the King (8) al-Šâlîh Imâm [al-din]—he never ceases to give profusely and to [do favor?], was decreed (9) [...].

B. Group II

1. Text

(1) wa-ja'ala ḥarama-nâ al-ghâlîb mansûran bi'l-me'minîn min [...]
(2) la-hu shâhâda yazîd ikhâsûhâ al-qulîb yaqînîn [...]
(3) wa-yahdî tîkrârûhâ ahl al-walâ' ilâ al-'amal al-nâjih [...]
(4) wa-shayyâda sâllî Allâh 'alâ-yhi wa-šâlî alîhî wa-šâlahî (5) alladhîna lam yazâlî fî intîthâl amr Allâh wa-amrîhi 'alâ (6) amr jâmî' wa-allađhîn qâmî bi-nuṣûr dinîhi fâ-mâla'î bi-fâdîlihîm [...]
(7) al-qulîb wa-aqârû al-'uyûn wa-shannafî al-masâmî [...]
(8) man hajara al-awdân wa-tâ'âdâd fî mahabbat abwâbîn al-sharîf (9) bi-šâhid al-sûrâ fî šâbîh al-nâjah ilâ'âk lahun 'uqâb [...]
(10) udkhilî bâb man sojâda [...]
(11) wa-lahum lisân al-'afî [...] 
(12) ma'aqîd al-ma'aqil al-islâmîyya bi-tâ'ât imâm al-mahdiyyîn [...]
(18) wa-badhâla naṣûfahî fî marâdî Allâh wa-marâdînîn al-sharîf [...]
(19) 'alâ'î al-tâ'a min birînî hazzâha wa-nâfûr [...]
(20) fa-hajara li-abwâbîn wa-li-avtânhî li-hajara fâ li-dhâlîka (21) kharâja al-amr al-sharîf al-'âli al-mawla'î [...]

2. Translation

(1) [...] and He let triumph our victorious sacred precinct with the help of the believers from [...].

(2) [and we testify that there is no god but God alone, without associate, that] being a creed which, when faithfully observed, increases
the heart in certainty and, (3) when frequently uttered, guides those who are loyal to act successfully [. . .].

(4) [. . .] and he erected (?), God bless him, his family and his companions (5) who never ceased complying with God’s command and his one [of the Prophet] on (6) a gathering matter,10 and who attended to support His Faith, thus pleasing, (7) comforting and delighting their merit [. . .].

(8) [. . .] Those who abandon their homes and their children for the sake of our noble portals, (9) with patient endurance, those will be rewarded [. . .].

(10) [...] They were let in [through] the door of whom prostrate himself [. . .].

(11) [...] apologizing [. . .].

(12) [...] of the fortresses of Islam by obeying the leader of the rightly guided [. . .].

[When his eminence], (13) the most splendid and grand amir, the conqueror, the defender, the most perfect, the commander, (14) the unique, the supporter, the sword of the Faith, the glory of Islam, (15) the splendor of mankind, the ornament of the tribes, the support of the Kings and the Sultans, (16) Bālígh b. Yūsuf ůn Ŵayyir—may God, how exalted He is!, make lasting his welfare—(17) was the one who whetted the sword of victory and unsheathed [the scimitar. . .].

(18) [...] and sacrificed himself for God’s favors and our noble favors [. . .].

(19) [...] the obedience . . . his prosperity and we give abundantly [. . .].

(20) [...] Thus he emigrated to our portals and left behind him (21) and that is why the noble and exalted order of our Lord, [. . .], was decreed [. . .].

C. Group III

1. Text


10 Cf. Koran XXIV, 62.
2. Translation

(1) Let it be registered in the Office of Supervision on the District of al-Karak and al-Shawbak, if God, how exalted He is!, wills.
(2) It has been registered, praise be to God! Praise be to Him who deserves it.
(3) He made the desire abundant for the friends of our state and let gain (?) [. . .].
(4) God bless him, his family and his companions from among whom (5) God set aside the generous and illustrious lords and [. . .].
(6) Now then, he who deserves the more that the doves of favors coo [. . .].
(7) [. . .] a heretic for he did not turn away from supporting the Faith and did not withhold from (?) [. . .].

V. Analysis

Let us now proceed to the analysis of these documents. Just a few lines have survived for the first document, but these nonetheless provide us with two titles. The first one is royal (ll. 7–8): al-sulṭān al-malik al-ṣāliḥ al-imād. The last two words are the only ones that can help us to identify the ruler. This ruler must have had as ruling name al-Ṣāliḥ and as laqab ‘Imād al-dīn. In the complete list of all the rulers of Egypt, there were only two who bore these two elements: either the Ayyūbid al-Ṣāliḥ ‘Imād al-dīn, who reigned from 635/1237 to 635/1238 and from 637/1239 to 643/1245, or the Mamluk sultan Ismā’īl, son of al-Nāṣir Muhammad b. Qalāwūn, whose complete titulature was al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ ‘Imād al-dīn Abū al-Fidā’ Ismā’īl. He ruled only for three years, from

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12 Ibid., 63.
743/1342 to 746/1345, the date of his death. Thus the first document could be dated quite precisely to one of two periods. But to which ruler did the text refer? For this, the document provides us a major clue. In the chancery manuals, titles such as those found in this document typically end with a name. On line 5 of the present document, this name is almost illegible; yet we can barely decipher the name “Ibn Yusuf ibn”. Here document II, for which twenty-one lines are preserved, provides further evidence. We find in ll. 13–16 almost the same royal titles as in document I, but this time, the name is clearly legible: Baligh b. Yusuf b. Tayyib. This name is rarely attested in the sources. However, this same name appears in some chronicles of the Mamluk period, during the reign of the sultan Isma’il.

Before going further, we must study the political events that followed al-Nasir Muhammad’s death, events soundly described as “ceaseless power struggles”.


15 A. Levanoni, op. cit., pp. 81–82.
tan by some emirs, he took his time before coming to the capital in order to receive the oath of allegiance. He did not leave al-Karak without his faithful Bedouin. The struggles for influence made him change his mind quickly, and two months later he decided to return to al-Karak, where he intended to rule, taking with him the main dignitaries of the diwān together with all the money and the treasures kept in the citadel of Cairo. Under such conditions, having declined the offer to come back to Cairo, his position as sultan was clearly untenable. His brother Ismā‘īl, then seventeen years old, succeeded him. However, he could not rule peacefully, since his brother Aḥmad at al-Karak refused to return the treasury and scoffed at him. During the short reign of Ismā‘īl (743/1342–746/1345), the outstanding event was the siege of al-Karak, for which successive expeditions (seven or eight, according to the sources), in which all the emirs of Egypt and Syria took part, were necessary. Indeed, the city and the fortress of al-Karak were reputed to be impregnable, as long as food was supplied to the inhabitants, a task generally fulfilled by the local Bedouin, and this was still the case during this siege. When the city was built, a network of cisterns was developed in order to collect rainwater, so the defenders had a steady supply of water. Even though the Mamluk troops surrounding the city succeeded in imposing a more or less efficient blockade, the siege was brought to an end only by perfidy of some of the most trusted persons in Aḥmad’s entourage, in other words of those he considered as his loyal friends and fellows: the Bedouin and the local Arabs.

The best historical source for the period that has come down to us is the chronicle of al-Shujā‘ī (adhuc viv. 756/1356–7), who was an eyewitness of the events in question. The following passage,

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17 For a general history of the city of al-Karak under Mamluk rule, see M.’A. al-Bakhtī, Mamlakat al-Karak fi al-‘ahd al-mamlūkī (1976); translated in German by A. Scheidt, under the title Das Königreich von al-Karak in der mamlukischen Zeit (Frankfurt am Main, 1992).
18 Another contemporary source must have been even more accurate: Mūsā b. al-Shaykh Yaḥyā al-Yūsufī (d. 739/1338), who wrote Nuzhat al-nāẓir fi širat al-Malik al-Nāṣr. This history covered, as it seems, the years that followed al-Nāṣr Muḥammad’s reign. Unfortunately, the fragments preserved deal only with the years mid-733 to mid-738. See on this D.P. Little, “The Recovery of a Lost Source for Bahri Mamluk History: al-Yūsufī’s Nuzhat al-nāẓir fi širat al-Malik al-Nāṣir”, JAOS, vol. XCIV (1974), 42–54. For al-Shujā‘ī’s indebtedness to al-Yūsufī, see B. Schäfer, Beiträge zur
quoted in full because of its importance for my analysis of the chancery text, refers to an event dating to 744, a few months before Ahmad’s surrender to his brother’s troops.

The Sultan [Ismâ‘îl] had corresponded with Bâlîgh, the muqaddam of the foot soldiers who was at al-Karak, making him promises and tempting him because it was he who led the prince Ahmad to resistance. So he tried to win his confidence and wrote him. He answered favorably to this and betrayed the prince Ahmad. He left al-Karak, fleeing Ahmad, and he presented himself to the noble portals on Monday 6th Dhî al-Qa‘da of that year [744/21st March 1344]. The Sultan honored him and rewarded him and those of his friends who came with him. He guaranteed to the Sultan the capture of al-Karak saying: “O Lord! All the people in the fortress of al-Karak are my friends and those in the city are my family and my kinfolk. No one among them contradicts me. Send with me whom you trust and I will surrender him al-Karak”. The Sultan sent with him eight mamluks chosen from among the royal ones and they set out on Thursday [9th Dhî al-Qa‘da 744/24th March 1344].

This passage must be compared to the following one, from the same source:

Al-Karak could not be seized because those who were in al-Karak were, for the greater part, Arabs and Jabaliyya, and their muqaddam was Bâlîgh b. Ţâyyî and Maṣ‘ūd.

These texts identify Bâlîgh as the muqaddam of the soldiers (Arabs and Jabaliyya) of al-Karak. Incidentally, al-Maqrîzî describes him as “[Ahmad’s] most important confidant among the people of al-Karak”. At first he set his hopes on his master, hoping upon the return of Ahmad to the throne to obtain a reward for his loyalty. However, he must have changed his mind as Ahmad’s position became more fragile. In 744, Bâlîgh took the decision to betray his master on


20 Al-Shujâ‘î, Ta‘rikh, 258.
21 One must understand here that his title was probably muqaddam al-hulqa. On this title and its implications, see D. Ayalon, “Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army”, BSOAS, vol. XV/iii (1953), 446–51.
24 This is confirmed by al-Maqrîzî (ibid.) who says “due to the abundance of his
behalf of the legitimate sultan. First he wrote a letter to the emirs besieging the fortress, in which he promised that he would facilitate their capture of the town; but before doing so he requested to be allowed to go to Cairo and speak to the sultan Ismā‘īl. The sultan agreed and gave an order for an amīn to be delivered to him. Bālīgh escaped from al-Karak and went to the capital where he arrived on the 6th Dhū al-Qa‘da 74425 with other dignitaries of the city. As a reward for his treason and his help, he solicited iqṭā‘s and lands with an average revenue of 450,000 dirhams per annum, while his fellow conspirators received a similar amount (these details are not provided by al-Shujā‘ī). They all left Cairo three days later and went back to al-Karak, which surrendered on the 22nd Șafar 745 [5th July 1344].26

Here are the facts. What links can we establish between these and documents I and II? The Bālīgh b. Yūsuf b. Ṭayyi‘ who is mentioned there is undoubtedly the same as the one about whom the sources speak concerning the aforementioned events, even though these sources simply name him as Bālīgh or Bālīgh b. Ṭayyi‘. The period in question (the first document clearly indicates now that it goes back to sultan Ismā‘īl’s reign) and the singular name of Bālīgh, rarely found in chronicles and biographical dictionaries, make this identification certain. It remains to be determined what kind of documents these are? Here again, it is al-Maqrīzī who helps us as he indicates27 that Bālīgh and his fellows received from the sultan manshūrās for the iqṭā‘s they asked for. Originally, the word manshūr meant in the chancery terminology an unsealed document, an open decree.28 For the Mamluk period, the use of this term was reserved for documents issued on the occasion of the grant of iqṭā‘, or land tenure.29

expenses, al-Nāṣır Ahmad’s wealth came to depletion and a cruel need for money was rife. Bālīgh began to work upon him”.

25 According to al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulāk, vol. II, 654, they arrived in Cairo on the 8th of the same month [23rd March 1344] and that they set out for al-Karak the 11th [26th March 1344].


Several elements prove that documents I and II are these famous manshùrs which were given to Bâligh in exchange for his betrayal and his assistance for the surrender of the fortress.

First, there is the textual evidence, mostly in document II. Lines 8–9 and 20 and even 12 seem to be a direct allusion to the role played by Bâligh, his flight from al-Karak to Cairo, and his submission to the authority of sultan Ismâ’il: “Those who abandon their homes and their children for the sake of our noble portals with patient endurance, those will be rewarded” (ll. 8–9); “Thus he emigrated to our portals and left behind him his home” (l. 20).

Secondly, there are the rigid rules of the chancery, as they are described in the manuals and other sources:

(1) In the Mamluk period, the formula “fa li-dhàlika kharaja al-amr al-sharìf” was exclusively reserved to the manshùrs.30

(2) As we have seen, Bâligh received ḱiṭâ’s annual revenue of which was 450,000 dirhams. The sources do not tell us what title he received on that occasion, except al-Šafādî31 who simply indicates that he received an imrî mî’a, which means the title of amîr mi’a and muqaddam al-alf. However, everything leads us to believe that this information provided by al-Šafādî is erroneous.32 On the one hand, it is known that the highest title received by the emirs of Arab tribes was the rank of tāblkhāna.33 Now, there is no doubt that Bâligh was an Arab Bedouin, but certainly not an emir of his tribe.34 On the other hand, the revenue of an amîr mi’a was by far superior to the rev-

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32. This is even more curious when one thinks that he was working at the dîwân al-ahsî in 745 and that he must have been well aware of the affairs of the state. See D. Little, “al-Šafādî as biographer of his contemporaries,” in Essays on Islamic Civilization presented to Niyazi Berkes (Leiden, 1976), 208–9.
34. The occurrence of the imn Ťayyi’ in his name seems to indicate that he was a member of the Rabî’ta tribe which was part of the Ťayyi’. They were divided into two major clans: the Faḍl and the Mîrî. So far, I have not been able to determine to which clan Bâligh belonged. It must be noted that the Arabs who lived around al-Karak up to the borders of Hijâz were the Banû’Uqba. See A.S. Tritton, “The Tribes of Syria in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” BSOAS, vol. XII (1947–8), 567.
enues obtained by Bālígh.\textsuperscript{35} So, we must prefer the title of ṭabīkhāna. Indeed, according to al-Maqrīzī,\textsuperscript{36} the bearer of such a title received an iqṭā’ the value of which was 40,000 dinars per annum, in proportion of 10 dirhams for one dinar (that means 400,000 dirhams), if he was a khāssakī, or if this was not the case an iqṭā’ the value of which was 30,000 dinars per annum, in proportion of 8 for 1 (that means 240,000 dirhams). Bālígh was not a Mamluk. So he could not have received a revenue superior to 30,000 dinars per annum. Notwithstanding, we know that the values mentioned by al-Maqrīzī refer to a given period and that these values are not valid for the whole Baḥrī period. For instance, we know that there was inflation and an exaggeration in the value of the iqṭā’s during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.\textsuperscript{37} My hypothesis is confirmed by the chancery manuals. The width of the sheet of paper used in the chancery varied according to the hierarchical position of the person for whom the document was issued.\textsuperscript{38} The more important he was, the wider the sheet of paper was. The width reserved for an amīr ṭabīkhāna was half a cubit (nisf dhīrā’).\textsuperscript{39} The value of the Egyptian cubit (also known as the cloth cubit, dhīrā’ al-qumāsh)\textsuperscript{40} being of about 58 cm.,\textsuperscript{41} a document issued in favor of an amīr ṭabīkhāna could not be wider than about 29 cm. The width of two leaves in al-Maqrīzī’s note-book is 27.4 cm, but it must not be forgotten that part of it was trimmed when the documents were cut into pieces, and once more when the manuscript was bound. Moreover, the titles (alqāb) reserved to an amīr ṭabīkhāna who was not a khāssakī, or who did not exercise a function (wazīfā), were the following: al-majlis al-sāmī followed by epithets (alqāb) devoid of the emphatic final yā’.\textsuperscript{42} This is exactly what we have in documents I and II. On the other hand, a manshūr did

\textsuperscript{35} The value of the iqṭā’s attributed to an amīr mī’a ranged from 85,000 to 100,000 dinār jayshī, that is to say from 1 million to 850,000 dirhams per annum. See S. Tsugitaka, State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam: Sultan, Muqta’s and Fallahun, Leiden, 1997, 154.

\textsuperscript{36} Al-Maqrīzī, Khitat, vol. II, 218; S. Tsugitaka, ibid.

\textsuperscript{37} See A. Levani, op. cit., 53 sqq.

\textsuperscript{38} Al-Qalqashandī, Sabh al-dāshā, vol. VI, 313.

\textsuperscript{39} Al-Qalqashandī, Sabh al-dāshā, vol. VI, 191.

\textsuperscript{40} Al-Qalqashandī, Sabh al-dāshā, vol. III, 443 and VI, 190.

\textsuperscript{41} See W. Hinz, Islamische Masse und Gewichte, Leiden, 1955, 56.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibn Nāṣir al-Jayshī, Tathqīf al-tūrīf, 190.
not begin with the *handala* unless it was issued for an *amīr mi‘ā* or an *amīr tabkhāna*. Document II contains part of the *handala*, as it is attested by the presence of the end of *shahāda* (l. 2).

To conclude, all the collected elements clearly indicate that Bālīgh received the title of *amīr tabkhāna* in reward for his treason, that the value of the *iqṭā‘*s he received on that occasion was about 450,000 dinhāms per annum, that documents I and II must be identified as two *manshūrs* in relation with his obtaining this title. I would like to stress the fact that, until now, we have possessed a single example of a *manshūr iqṭā‘* from Egypt. This unique item goes back to the reign of Qānish al-Ghwārī (916/1511) and concerned an *amīr tabkhāna* too. So, the two documents that I have reconstructed and analyzed perfect our knowledge of this kind of document, considering that they are more ancient than the one preserved hitherto. They will give us the opportunity to study what differences may be detected between them and how the chancery evolved between the Bahri and Burji periods.

What happened to Bālīgh after this? Maqrīzī quotes his name once more for the year 745 (Rabī‘ II/init. 12th August 1344), but for a murder case: a certain Ḥasan b. al-Radān, a camel merchant, was found murdered in his house in the horse-market, in Cairo. His son charged a Ḥasan, who was responsible for the sultan’s camels, and Bālīgh al-‘Araj, in other words Bālīgh the lame, because of enmity between them and his father. The nā‘īb ordered that they be arrested and stripped, and he planned to bastinado them, but they succeeded in deferring the punishment for some days, while the nā‘īb was supposed to make investigations in order to discover the murderer. They took advantage of this to exercise influence on some emirs and to be released only a few days later, against the nā‘īb’s opinion. Was this Bālīgh the same person? I think

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43 *Manshūrs* issued in favor of the sons of the Sultan, the *amīr mi‘ā* and *maqaldam aţf*, and *amīr tabkhāna* were to begin by the *handala* (al-Qalqashandī, *Suhb al-ašā‘*, vol. XIII, 167, 169 and 184). Inferior titles received *manshūrs* beginning by *annā ba‘dhu* and in case of the lowest titles, these began by *kharaja al-amr al-sharif*. Bedouin could receive *manshūrs* of the three types according to their function (al-Qalqashandī, *Suhb al-ašā‘*, vol. XIII, 198).

44 The *handala* section comprised three elements: the *handala* itself, followed by the *shahāda* and beginning by *na‘ūdhu* and in case of the lowest titles, these began by *kharaja al-amr al-sharif*. See, for instance, al-Qalqashandī, *Suhb al-ašā‘*, vol. XIII, 168.


46 This comparison will be treated in the full version of this article.

so. On the one hand, his name was quite rare, and on the other hand, al-Maqrîzî mentions him only a few months later after the facts in connection with al-Karak.\textsuperscript{48} This time, however, he is described as lame, and this is not unlikely. It is again thanks to this historian that we learn that during the fourth expedition an intense fight took place between the people of al-Karak and the Mamluk army, on the 8th Rabi\textsuperscript{i} II 744 (30th August 1343), a fight during which a lot of people were injured and killed. Maqrîzî gives no name, except that of Bâligh, who, he says, was injured. This happened exactly one year before he was arrested as an accessory to a crime, and we may surmise that he had been hurt in the leg the preceding year. This is the last occurrence of Bâligh in the historical sources. After all these events, in which he played a central role, the chronicles send him back to anonymity.

Let us now proceed to document III. The text of this document can be reconstructed acceptably, despite its many lacunae, especially in those essential parts which might allow us to identify its destination more clearly. That is, it lacks any mention of titles or names. However, the spacing between the lines (18,3 cm) and the width of the document seem to indicate that it was issued for a person of the same rank as documents I and II (qa\textsuperscript{f} al-nisf). The preserved text in itself is quite vague and we could not date it with certainty, were it not for a very important registration mark. This one is to be found at the head of the first leaf and must be read like this: li-yuthbat bi-dawân al-nazar 'alâ al-mamlaka al-karakiyya wa'l-shawbakiyya in shâ'a Allâh ta'âlâ, and just below: utthiita al-hamd li-Allah li'l-mustahiqq al-hand. These notes require a commentary. It is well known that once written, a document went through the different services of the chancery, where it had to be registered by secretaries. The order was given by a high dignitary who wrote it on the document itself. Once fulfilled, the clerk indicated, just below the order, that it had been executed (uthbiita in our case) and then he added his personal motto/alâmâ\textsuperscript{49} (here, al-hand li-Allah li'l-Mustahiqq al-hand). So, document III was clearly registered at the diwân al-nazar, that is the

\textsuperscript{48} Moreover, 'Isâ b. al-Hasan and his tribe were among those Bedouin who brought their support to al-Nâsir Muhammad when he was at al-Karak (see A. Levanoni, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 182). This link brings us clear evidence that Bâligh al-A'raj must be identified as the Bâligh who betrayed al-Nâsir Ahmad.

Office of Supervision, in the department responsible for the affairs of the mamlaka (the mamlaka being a region administered by a nāʾib) of al-Karak and al-Shawbak (Montréal). Now then, it may be surmised that document III, is certainly linked to documents I and II and that it must have been a manshūr iqṭāʾi probably issued in favor of one of Bāligh’s fellows.

6. Now we must ask ourselves how al-Maqrīzī had access to these documents and why he used them as writing material. As ever, it is the protagonist himself whom we must consult. It is indeed al-Maqrīzī who gives us the answer in his Khiṭat,\textsuperscript{50} where he declares that he worked at the dīwān al-īnshāʾ as a secretary until about the year 790/1388. Still it is not this passage which is important for us, because we can hardly suspect him to have taken for himself documents in the chancery during this period; however, the following sentence is fundamental for our purpose:

When the reign of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq came to an end and was afterwards re-established, many things went in confusion. Among them, there was an affair of the room of the dīwān al-īnshāʾ at the Citadel [. . .] and the documents (awrāq) that it kept were taken, sold by weight (biʾl-qināʾ) and the information they contained was forgotten (nusya rasmuhā).

Thus it was during a particularly terrible period (791–2/1389–90) during the reign of sultan Barqūq (784/1382–791/1389 and 792/1390–801/1399), when this sultan had to abandon temporarily Cairo because of a coup d’état organized by certain emirs, that the documents preserved in the room of the dīwān al-īnshāʾ were sold by weight, probably to the paper merchants.\textsuperscript{51} Indeed, some of the documents issued by the chancery in medieval Egypt took the form of rolls (darj) made up of several sheets of paper (waṣl) pasted one to

\textsuperscript{50} Al-Maqrīzī, Khiṭat, vol. II, 225–26; M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, La Syrie à l’époque des Mamelouks d’après les auteurs arabes, Paris, 1923, LXXI.

\textsuperscript{51} We are aware that original documents were normally given to their beneficiaries and that only copies of them were kept in registers. However, we don’t understand what use the paper merchants could have made of such registers as these were not suitable for their purposes once filled (see a unique example of these registers, although from the Fāṭimid period, in G. Khan, “A copy of a decree from the archives of the Fāṭimid chancery in Egypt”, BSOAS, vol. XLIX (1986), 459–459. Moreover, al-Maqrīzī clearly states in the passage quoted above that these awrāq were documents and not just blank paper. It remains to be proven if original documents could be kept by the chancery, as it seems to be implied by those studied here.
the other on a margin of about 1–2 cm.52 The secretaries of the chancery had to leave spacing between the lines, which spacing varied according to the width of the sheet, and so according to the person for whom the document was issued. This waste of paper was the sultan’s prerogative.53 The warrāqūn made haste to cut the documents at the most convenient size in order to transform them into scraps of paper,54 which they offered for sale in the shape of quires of 5 sheets.55 This could explain why documents connected to the same event and period are to be found in our manuscript. During the critical period mentioned, it may be presumed that paper had become a luxury product. In this respect, Qalqashandī informs us that the price of paper had risen during the 8th/14th century.56 It was clearly after these events that al-Maqrīzī took in a supply of scribbling paper in order to write down on it his reading notes, but also his personal works, because the Liège manuscript is not the only one to contain such paper. It is possible that other autograph manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī were written on the same kind of paper.57 So,

52 See Gaudefroy-Demontjoy, La Syrie, LXX–LXXI.
54 In the case of our documents I to III, the spacing between the lines was of at least 18 cm.
55 This is proven by the internal organization of al-Maqrīzī’s note-book. See our article entitled “Maqriziana IV: Le carnet de notes d’al-Maqrīzī: l’apport de la codicologie à une meilleure compréhension de sa constitution”, Manuscripta orientalia, to appear.
56 Al-Qalqashandī, Suhb al-qābūh, vol. XI, 132 (it must have taken place sometime after al-Nāṣir Muhammad b. Qalāwūn, as the text seems to imply it). E. Ashtor (Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l’Orient médiéval, 366) dates also this increase of the price of paper from the beginning of the 15th c. A.D. He noticed that this price doubled in the lapse of one century (early 14th–early 15th c. A.D.).
57 At this time, I have identified such fragments of chancery documents, the Liège ms. apart, in the following autograph ms. of al-Maqrīzī: 1) al-Rahbar ʿan al-baḥr, Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi (ms. Fatih 4340), see F. Egerer, “Zu al-Maqrīzī’s Schrift al-Rahbar ʿan al-Baḥr”, Islamica, vol. 1 (1923), 339; 2) Musawwodat al-Mawdūdī ʿan l-ʾibhār, Istanbul, Topkapı Saray (ms. Ahmet III 1472), Ayman Fuṣaṣd Sayyid (ed.), London, 1995; 3) al-Muqaddāsī, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (ms. 2144), see G. Wiet, “Kindf et Maqrīzī” (BÍEAO, vol. XII (1915), 61–73), 62 (note 1), Leiden, University Library, ms. or. 1366a, 1366b, 3075, 14533. To date, this kind of scrap paper has not been found for the Islamic world but in the autograph manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that a link between the genre of inscriptions and chancery documents could not be established prior to my discovery, although it was already noticed almost a hundred years ago (G. Wiet, ibid.) that some leaves found in an autograph manuscript of al-Maqrīzī had been used for another purpose before this author scribbled them.
one would only have to gather the inscriptions preserved on the leaves, sort them out, and analyze them, as I have been doing, in order to reconstruct documents coming from the Mamluk chancery, documents, it is needless to say, that historians terribly miss. These would allow us to throw a new light on this institution, but also on historical facts sometimes reported in the chronicles. These scraps of paper would then come to the rescue of History.
PART THREE

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE MAAMLUK ARMY
CHAPTER FIVE

THE SULTAN’S LAQAB—A SIGN OF A NEW ORDER IN MAMLUK FACTIONALISM?

Amalia Levanoni

I

The regnal title, or laqab (pl. alqāb) first came into use during the Abbasid period. From the outset, it was designed to convey the image that a new ruler sought to accord himself. While we are unable to examine the motives of the sultans of the Turkish Mamluk period (648–784/1250–1382) in choosing particular laqabs when they took the throne, it appears that we can discuss these intentions in the Circassian period (784–923/1382–1517), and show the new order in Mamluk factionalism that was undergirded by the laqabs they chose. All the sultans who came to power from within the ranks of the Mamluk army, rather than inheriting power from their fathers (with the exception of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh and Tūmanbāy), bore one of two regnal titles: al-Zāhir or al-Ashraf.

Behind the systematic recurrence of these two regnal titles lies, in fact, a political reality that differs from the model of Mamluk factionalism to which we have become accustomed. According to this model, the Mamluk sultan ensured his rule by fostering a faction of his own mamluks, purchased, trained and emancipated by him during his period of rule. The unity of the faction was based upon the mamluks’ loyalty to their master, ustādhi, and on solidarity among them, khushdshiyya, throughout their master’s life and afterward. The sultan’s authority was assured when, in the course of his rule, he

placed his mamluks in the highest echelons of the army and in key
government positions in place of mamluks from his predecessor’s fac-
tion. The unity of the Mamluk faction after the sultan’s death ensured
both its durability and its ability to continue holding the reins of
power by supporting the sultanate of one of the amirs from within
its own ranks. The cyclical nature of this process—the rise of new
Mamluk factions triggering the fall of their predecessors—stood at
the centre of the system of Mamluk factionalism.2

During the Circassian period, however, there were practices that
did not fall into line with this model. Mamluks of the ruling sultan
were promoted only minimally during his lifetime and, at the zenith
of their power, were generally unable to unseat old factions from
the higher echelons of the army. In reality, old Mamluk factions
continued to be politically active long after the deaths of their founders,
and as a result, fragments of factions, yesterday’s allies and rivals,
and individual mamluks could unite in coalitions in struggles for
power through relationships that crossed factional boundaries. This
perpetual relationship between old and new factions that extended
through generations of mamluks created a new order in Mamluk
factionalism. This new order necessitated general and permanent
symbols that went beyond the *khushdāshiyya* of a specific faction in
order to unite the Mamluk factions through the generations. One
such symbol, perhaps the most important, was the sultan’s regnal
title. The aim of the present article is to clarify the new pattern of
Mamluk factionalism in the Circassian period and the place of the
sultan’s *laqab* in it.

II

During the Circassian period there was a recurring phenomenon
in the way in which the sultans built up their armies. Even sultans
like al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh (815–824/1412–1421), al-Ashraf Barsbay

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1 David Ayalon, “Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army”, *Bulletin of the
School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. XVI/i (London, 1953) [hereafter—Ayalon,
“The Mamluk Army”], 206–10; idem, “l’Esclavage du Mamelouk”, *Oriental Notes and
Studies*, Jerusalem, 1951 [hereafter—Ayalon, “l’Esclavage”], Introduction, IV–V; idem,
“The System of Payment in Mamluk Military Society”, *JESHO*, vol. 1/i (Leiden,
1958), 43–45.
(824–841/1422–1438) and al-Zahir Jaqmaq (841–857/1438–1453), whose periods of rule were sufficiently long for them to build up Mamluk units of their own, promoted only a few of their julbān,3 the new mamluks they had purchased and trained during their rule. This was because they maintained separation between the commanding levels and the rank-and-file mamluks. They filled the ranks of the amirs mainly with veteran mamluks who had not grown up in their own Mamluk households, while the julbān were hardly ever granted amirate ranks.

After sixteen years of rule al-Ashraf Barsbay left behind a class of amirs holding the rank of muqaddam alf (commander of a thousand), of whom only two were Ashrafi (that is, members of Barsbay’s personal household): Jānim al-Ashraf and Qarajā al-Ashraf, whose entry into the ranks of the senior amirs came after long periods of service. Jānim was a relative of Barsbay who reached Egypt with some other relations at the beginning of Barsbay’s rule, and was an Amir of Forty (amīr arba‘īn) for many years until, in 836/1432, he was awarded the rank of muqaddam alf.4 Qarajā was purchased by Barsbay while the latter was still an amir, and was awarded the rank of muqaddam alf only in 838/1436.5 Throughout the period of Jaqmaq’s rule, there was not a single amir from his julbān among those holding the rank of amīr mi‘ā (Amir of a Hundred) and muqaddam alf. At his death in 1453, there were only three of his mamluks among the amirs of lower rank: Qarajā served as keeper of the sultan’s treasures (khāzīn al-dawār) and held the rank of Amir of Forty, Lājin was head of the royal armoury (zardkāsh) with the rank of Amir of Ten (amīr ‘ashara) and Timurbühgā was second executive secretary (dawārdār thānī) with the rank of Amir of Ten.6

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3 Julbān often appear in the sources also as ajlāb or mushtarawāt.
5 Al-Sakhawi, Daw‘, vol. VI, 214.
The recurrence of this separation between the amirs and *julbān* during the Circassian period indicates that it was an intentional policy which was designed to safeguard the sultan’s position and rule from both his mamluks and the amirs. The *julbān*, whose power gradually increased and eroded the sultan’s authority and the status of the amirs as early as the fourteenth century, were prevented from establishing a leadership of their own that would threaten the sultan’s position. To the same extent that the alienation of the amirs from the *julbān* enabled the sultan to curb the latter, the *julbān* constituted a guarantee of his security from the aspirations of the senior, office-holding amirs. The terror sown by the *julbān*, with almost no intervention on the part of their master, cast fear into the hearts of the amirs and assured their submissiveness to the sultan.15

In 832/1428, the riots that the *julbān* staged against their master al-Ashraf Barsbây and the amirs reveal the political balance achieved by the sultan in separating the command level from his rank-and-file mamluks. The riots began when the *julbān* learned of a consultation held between the sultan and his prominent amirs on ways and means of dealing with the *julbān*’s constant violations of public order and abuse of office-holders, which caused agitation among the senior mamluks. At this meeting, the *atābak al-‘asākir*, Amir Jar Quli, advised the sultan to deal with the *julbān* rioters with an iron fist and to destroy them. His reasoning was that at any time of his choosing, the sultan could bring new mamluks into his service and that the veteran mamluks were preferable, for a hundred veteran mamluks were better than a thousand from the *julbān*. When the sultan tended


to accept Jar Qutlu’s opinion, Bayhughā al-Muzaffarī, who was then supervisor of the royal council chamber (amīr majlis), explained the importance of the julbān, even at the cost of compromise with their rebellious conduct, in these words: “By God, had it not been for the mushṭarawūt mamluks, no one of us would have obeyed you” [wa- ullamā’i la wal al-mamālik al-mushṭarawūt nā aṭā’aka wāḥid minna].

When the julbān got wind of the meeting and its content, they attacked one of Jar Qutlu’s mamluks; he was able to repel them and managed to reach his master’s house, which was promptly attacked by the julbān. Jar Qutlu and his mamluks, who had fortified themselves in the house, succeeded in defeating the julbān and putting them to flight. The defeat of the julbān despite their large number [ma‘a kathratihim] stemmed, so the historian Yusuf Ibn Taghri Birdī (d. 874/1470) tells us, “from the lack of unanimous agreement among them and the flight of most of them” [li-‘adm ijtimā‘ kalinatihem wa-li-furūr akharhīm]. Their defeat also stemmed from “their lack of experience in wars, lack of training and weapons” [li-‘adm ma‘rifati-him bi‘l-harūb wa-li-qillat darbatihim wa-silatihihim]. Next day the julbān demanded that the sultan hand over their enemies from among Jar Qutlu’s mamluks, but the sultan was at a loss and decided not to accede to this demand but to punish Jar Qutlu’s mamluks himself, a solution that would not arouse the ire of the amirs. And so he “flogged them, but not with the necessary seriousness” [wa-∂arabahum ∂arban laysa bi-dhakā]. The julbān, who realized the significance of the previous day’s defeat, viewed this solution as a reasonable fulfillment of their demands. This incident created tension between the amirs and the sultan. The latter was unable to ignore the amirs’ anger and again found himself at a loss until he managed to make peace between the julbān and the amirs.

This revolt by the julbān, like numerous other cases of their breaches of public order, highlights their weakness despite their great power. Their military experience was limited in the extreme, and this might

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well have been part of the sultan’s intentional policy of limiting their power. We learn from the sources that although their numbers were great, their weapons were limited in quantity. The sultans also avoided sending them on military campaigns, possibly because they feared risking the investment they had made by purchasing and training them, and perhaps because they feared the possibility of any relationship emerging among the julbān, the amirs and the senior mamluks, who almost exclusively bore the brunt of the wars. David Ayalon believes that the sultans did not send the julbān out of Cairo for fear that if they did, they would be overthrown.

A result of the sparse representation of the julbān in the ranks of the amirs was that they lacked political experience, too, and they were deprived of a mature leadership which could have unified them and initiated them in the political secrets of the mamluks’ inter-factional struggles after the deaths of their masters. Barsbāy purchased numerous mamluks during his reign; their number reached two thousand at one point, but some died in the epidemics of 833/1429 and 841/1437. After his death he apparently left some fifteen hundred julbān. Despite their numbers, the majority were left in disarray after the death of their master in 842/1438, when they failed to unite around his son, al-‘Azīz, and secure his rule from the threat of the veteran Mamluk coalition led by Jaqmaq, one of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq’s mamluks. First, a group of julbān led by a non-senior amir, İnāl al-Abū Bakrī, broke away from the main body of julbān as a result of internal strife and joined Jaqmaq. The remainder of the Ashrafiyya mamluks, who were the majority, enjoyed a number of advantages that enabled them to defeat their opponents. The Abbasid shadow-caliph was at the Citadel, Qal‘at al-Jabal, with al-‘Azīz, thus lending legitimacy to his rule. They were fortified in the

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Citadel, which commanded the surrounding area and protected them from the senior mamluks at the foot of the hill. And most important, they controlled the treasury and the sultan’s arsenal. Yet after a short battle they surrendered. Ibn Taghribirdi estimates that their failure stemmed from the fact that “they were ignorant of the stratagems of conflicts... They had no experience and they had not practiced wars. And what is more, they never brought close any one of the veterans or the experienced. Therefore they went astray [illā annahum juhhūl li-makā‘id al-akhbām... lam tamurrā bihi m al-tajārib wa-lā màrasū al-\\textit{shaqīf} wa-d‘zam min hādhā annahum lam yaqarribū ahḍān mina al-akābir wa-arba‘ al-\textit{mu‘ūṣ}a fa-du‘lū].”

Jaqmāq had no difficulty in overcoming the Ashraf mamluks. In the negotiations he held with them after the battle, with the mediation of the chief judges, they displayed no political sophistication. Their inexperienced leaders submitted to the terms laid down by Jaqmāq in return for peace, evacuated their barracks (\textit{tabaqa}) in the Citadel, and went down to their dwellings in Cairo. Approximately fifteen hundred mamluks left the Citadel. The attempts at revolt by the Ashrafiyya mamluks against Jaqmāq that came after their expulsion from the Citadel were likewise unsuccessful, again because of their inexperience and the dissension among them. On the other hand, in 857/1453, a short time after the death of Jaqmāq, these same Ashrafiyya mamluks were already well-acquainted with the intrigues of the inter-factional power struggles, both political and military.

The young mamluks, the \textit{julbān}, of al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh were also expelled from their barracks in the Citadel and sent down into Cairo. After they were dispersed, leaving them to their own devices, Amir Ṭātār, who administered government matters on behalf of al-Mu‘ayyad’s son, began to conciliate them and calm their fears until...
“each of them joined one of Ta’atar’s followers [‘alâ anna kull wahid minhum intam li-shakhis min ūwâshî Ta’atar’]. The julbân of al-Zâhir Jaqmaq suffered the same drawbacks; there was no agreement among them [‘ârî’âhum mafsîka wa-kalinatahum ghayr munâdibîta]. As in previous cases, they were in the Citadel with their master’s son, al-Manšûr ‘Uthmân, and despite their large number and the weapons they had at their disposal, they were passive and did not plan their battle against the multi-faction mamluk group that formed against them. Despite their awareness of the strategic importance of the Madrasa of Sultan ˙Hasan, which commanded the approach to the Citadel, they did not go out and place guards on it. On the last day of the battle, when their opponents burst into the hippodrome at the foot of the Citadel, the julbân fled the Citadel, leaving its gates open wide for no reason. Once again, their failure stemmed from “their being young and inexperienced; they had no practice in wars and did not know which deception or stratagem to employ against their enemies, and they had no amirs... who understood these things... [‘li-kawaâhim shabâban lam tumrura bihim al-tajûrib, wa-lâ lahum mumârsâ bi’l-‘urâb, wa-lâ yârîfiqa nawi’an min anwâ’ al-khâdî’a wa’l-mâkr bi-akhshââmîh wa-ayâdan lam yakun ‘indahum mina al-umârâ... minman lahu khûbra bi-hâdîhî al-anwâ’]”.

Neither did the julbân of al-Ashraf Ênâl succeed in defending the rule of his son, al-Mu’ayyad Aḥmad, which would have been in their interest. Once they saw that they would be unable to withstand a battle with the veteran mamluks, they became indifferent and “each one cared only for his own interest [‘wa-akhadha kull wahid... fi maslahat nafsîha’]”.

These examples, and many others, of julbân who, at the beginning of their careers, were inexperienced and lost in the Mamluk political maze, but who became wily foxes in the army and in politics after they had achieved seniority in the system, confirms the impression that the sultan had every intention of limiting the julbân’s experience.

34 Ibid., vol. XVI, 41.
35 Ibid., 42, 46.
38 Ibn Taghrî Birdî, Nüjûm, vol. XVI, 247, see also 240, 242, 246.
The breakup of the *julbān* and their departure from the Citadel, which became a matter of routine during this period, left the political and military arena empty of the biggest and strongest Mamluk faction. However, the sultans’ practice of filling the ranks of the commanding class with senior mamluks granted the amirs a position in government. That status, albeit monitored, in the face of the *julbān*’s inexperience and disintegration, accorded the minority factions an advantage and power that under the circumstances were sufficient for them to take power.

III

In the interim phase between the expulsion of the *julbān* from their barracks in the Citadel and their return to the political-military arena united as a minority faction, they were absorbed into new frameworks. Some of those expelled from the Citadel were reinstated in the Mamluk sultan’s household (known as sultani), usually after they had been carefully screened and classified. The employment possibilities that faced the majority of the *julbān* were in the Mamluk households of the amirs in Egypt and Syria. We learn from the sources that in 805/1402, two hundred and thirty sultani mamluks were left unemployed. As mentioned earlier, the majority of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh’s *julbān* entered the service of the amirs who were followers of Ta’ār on an individual basis. After the death of Sultan Barqūq (801/1399), Ta’ār himself was one of the *julbān* who fled from al-Nāṣir Farāq and wandered from place to place in Syria. Ta’ār joined the Mamluk household of Amir Jakam min ‘Awd, and with the latter’s death he joined up with the two rebel amirs in Syria, Nawrūz al-Hāfiz and Shaykh al-Mahmūdī, who later became sultan. Later, when these two fought each other for rule, Ta’ār chose to join Shaykh al-Mahmūdī, and when the latter came to power, Ta’ār returned to the Sultani household, gaining continuous promotion until he attained the rank of Amir of a Hundred. In con-

It is worthy of note that with the death or removal of amirs by the sultan, their mamluks, too, moved into new mamluk households. Some were taken by the sultan and made sultani mamluks, while others sought positions with the amirs. Inâl al-Jakamî was one of Amir Jakamî min ‘Awâ’s mamluks, and when his master died he entered the service of Amir Südûn Buqjâ al-Zâhiri. He later moved into the service of al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh when the latter was still an amir. As a result, he was advanced during al-Mu‘ayyad’s rule.\footnote{Ibn Taghri Birdi, Najüm, vol. X, 276; Ibn Taghri Birdi, Manhal, vol. III, 205, 206; Ibn Hajjar al-‘Asqalânî, Ahmad b. al-‘Att, Inb, ‘Alî, al-gham bi-abn ‘Amr, Haydar Abad, 1974–1975 (hereafter—‘Ibn Hajjar’), vol. VIII, 166. For more examples see: Ibn Taghri Birdi, Najüm, vol. XV, 157, 179, 180–81.} Qâni Bây al-Ḥamzâwî was one of Tanâm al-Ḥasanî’s mamluks, and after his master’s death he was purchased by Südûn al-Ḥamzâwî during the rule of al-Nâşir Faraj. After Südûn’s death, Qâni Bây consecutively served a number of amirs and finally entered the service of al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh, who, on taking the throne, awarded him an amirate. Qâni Bây’s case was not exceptional, for he was one of a large group of Ḥamzâwî mamluks who served al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh for a long while after their master’s death.\footnote{Al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh held the opinion that the sayfīya, i.e., the amirs’ mamluks, were experienced soldiers, and therefore he employed and promoted many of them.\footnote{Ibn Taghri Birdi, Najüm, vol. XIV, 112.}} Al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh held the opinion that the sayfīya, i.e., the amirs’ mamluks, were experienced soldiers, and therefore he employed and promoted many of them.\footnote{Al-Sakhawî, Daw‘, vol. II, 319, 328; vol. III, 39, 77, 277, 279, 283, 284; vol. X, 165; Ibn Taghri Birdi, Manhal, vol. II, 438; vol. IV, 21, 257; vol. VI, 167; idem, Najüm, vol. XIV, 195, 240; vol. XV, 130, 161, 184, 239, 240; al-Sakhawî, Daw‘, vol. X, 275; Ibn Taghri Birdi, Hāwâdith, vol. I, 195, 238, 305, 308; vol. II, 351, 394, 463, 550–51.} The sources note the entry of mamluks into the service of the amirs, using terms like ittāsala bi . . . , ḫaḍanma ilâ . . . , intamā li . . . and
These terms indicate the voluntary relationship between the mamluk and the amir. The entry of the sultani mamluks into the service of the amirs was based on the mutuality required by a relationship between free men. This was because these mamluks were already emancipated when they were expelled from the Citadel. Those mamluks who were included in the *kuttâbiyya* at the deaths of their masters, were still in training and retained the status of slaves. Therefore they were left in the barracks and purchased by the new sultan. While the master was alive, the master-mamluk relationship was binding. The only way the mamluk could break this tie was to desert his master even when, *prima facie*, he was already a free man.51 In contrast, there was no such obligation in the relationship between emancipated mamluks and amirs, who were not their masters. The relationship could be severed whenever one of the parties wished, and we have indeed found that these mamluks moved from the service of one amir to another without limitation.

The status of mamluks who joined the amirs’ households was, no doubt, also different from that of mamluks who were purchased by the amirs. The sources define their status as *atbâ’* (s. *tâbi’*), in the sense of ‘followers’, i.e., those who were only attached to the household and were not part of its nucleus. The different status of the brothers Hasan and Husayn, who both served in an amir’s household, explains the difference between the status of the *atbâ’* and that of the amirs’ own mamluks. The two brothers fled their hometown of Bahassân (a fortress in Aleppo province) when Timur invaded Syria, and reached Egypt some years later. Hasan, the older of the two, served Amir Qarâ Sunqur al-Zâhirî under terms defined by Ibn Taghrî Birdî as *tâbi’*, i.e., he had the status of a *tâbi’*.52 Mubârâk Shâh al-Muzaffarî, too, was employed by Sultan Barqûq under the same conditions while the latter was still a rank-and-file mamluk and certainly could not purchase mamluks of his own.53 Therefore the historian Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Râhîm al-Sakkâwî (d. 902/1497)

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defines Mubārak Shāh as one of Barquq’s 'abāt.54 To return to Ḥasan’s brother, after working as a tailor’s apprentice in Cairo he, too, entered the service of a Mamluk amir, Īnāl Ḥaṭṭāb al-ʿAlāʾī, but as a mamluk of his kuttabīyya. On the death of the amir, he was transferred to Amir Tāghrī Bīrdī, who changed his name from Ḥusayn to Tāghrī Barmish and continued his training as one of his mamluks in the barrack; Ḥasan, by contrast, had no need to change his name. It should be remembered that in the Mamluk elite it was customary for the mamluks’ names to be Turkish or Circassian as this was a marker of their status.55 Another indication of a strong bond between Ḥusayn and his master is that when the former fled with two other mamluks, it caused their master and instructor great sorrow, and steps were taken to bring them back and punish them. The case of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, then, shows clearly that the status of the tābi was inferior to that of the amir’s mamluk.

Not by chance, the expressions that became commonplace in the sources for describing the jallān’s moving from one Mamluk household to another also reflect their hardship and humiliations during this period. Examples of such expressions are “He suffered the various vicissitudes of fate after the death of his master [qāsā khitāb al-dahr abūna bā'da maṣūr ustādhi]”.56 “His life was spent in remote places [inqātā ’umruhū fi ashtāt]”.57 “Later, fate humiliated him after the death of his master and he served a number of amirs [humma ḥattahu al-dahr ba'da maṣūr ustādhi wa-khadama ‘inda jamā‘a mina al-unmār]”.58

54 Al-Sakhawī, Daw‘, vol. VI, 237. There is a clear difference in the sources between the amir’s mamluks and his hawāshī, see for example: Ibn Tāghrī Bīrdī, Nīṣām, vol. XVI, 44; vol. XV, 117; Ibn ʿIyās, Badī’, vol. II, 322.
57 Al-Sakhawī, Daw‘, vol. X, 276; see also idem vol. IV, 93, 149; vol. VI, 220–21, 222; al-Jawharī, vol. III, 140, 206, 340; al-ʿAynī, Ḥādīth, 347.
The conditions of the *atbā‘* in the amirs’ households were, perhaps, the reason for their great mobility, for it might well be that they sought to improve their lot. The mamluks’ mobility in the service of the amirs created a dynamic and intricate system of relationships that connected various Mamluk factions and blurred the boundaries of the *khushdāshīyya*. The network of personal relationships created by the mamluks during this phase of their career was based upon friendships in far smaller and more intimate frameworks than those of the sultanic factions of *julbān* housed in the Citadel barracks; these factions consisted of thousands of mamluks. The above-cited examples of the mamluks’ service to the amirs, and particularly of those who later rose to power and promoted their followers, show the importance of this system of personal relationships in the building of the amir stratum in the Mamluk regime. It was also important for the formation of coalitions that supported the government, for behind the amirs stood Mamluk households that extended the factional fabric. As a research case of this system of relationships, I will later show the networks of personal friendships of the sultans ʿAğar Barsbāy and Jaqmaq prior to their rise to power, and the role these networks played in filling the ranks of the amirs during their regimes.

IV

The entire picture of the network of personal relationships in the Mamluk system is incomplete without an examination of the framework in which the mamluks were trained to be soldiers. During the training period, there were certain practices which, by their very nature, fostered deeper personal relationships among the *julbān* than the somewhat abstract *khushdāshīyya* that was supposed to unify them in the *ṭibāq*, or barracks, into a consolidated Mamluk faction. We shall limit ourselves here to two practices. The first is the custom of dividing the *julbān* into groups, each of which lived in one of the Citadel’s barracks.59 The *ṭibāq* classification system was usually based on the *julbān’s* ethnic origins.60 Thus, for example, mamluks who had

60 Al-Maqritzī, Ahmad b. ’Ali, Kitāb al-Madārẓ wa ’l-ṭibār fī dhikr al-khūṭ wa ’l-
been brought from al-Ghūr (in today’s Afghanistan) were housed in the Ṭabaqat al-Ghūr.\(^{61}\)

The second custom was to bind fresh mamluks, *inyāt* (sing. *ini*), with senior mamluks, *aghāwīt* (sing. *aghā*),\(^{62}\) in an apprenticeship bond so that the latter would guide the former during the training period, aside from the curriculum, which was the responsibility of the *ṭibāq*’s professional staff. Thus, for example, during Barquq’s rule Qaṣrān min Timrāz was one of Jāribāsh al-Shaykh’s *inyāt* and Tānibak al-Burdbakī was one of Ṭabhrī Birdī’s.\(^{63}\) Yashbak al-Jakāmī had *inyāt* from among the mamluks of Sultan al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh.\(^{64}\) Ṭabhrī Birdī, Qaṣrān’s relative, was Khushqadam’s *aghā*.\(^{65}\) Tānibak al-Bījāsī and Sūdūn al-Mārdānī were Jār Quṭlū al-Zāhīrī’s *inyāt*.\(^{66}\) During Barsbāy’s period of rule, Khujā Sūdūn had *inyāt* in the Ṭabaqat al-Tāziyya and Ināl in Ṭabaqat al-Ashrafīyya.\(^{67}\)

The division of the mamluks purchased by the sultan in the course of his rule into groups housed in different barracks, and the special relationships that existed between the trainees and their instructors from among their elder colleagues, quite naturally created hierarchical categories of loyalty and solidarity among the *jualbān* that can be described simply in terms of circles of affiliation. In the inner, nuclear circle stood the relationship between the *inyāt* and the *aghāwīt*...
that was the most personal and intimate. In the second circle, there was the bond among the mamluks from the same tabaga. The outer, widest circle contained all the sultan’s mamluks, the khushdāshiyya. In contrast to the Mamluk system model, whereby the Mamluk faction is shown as a single unified collective, this order of affiliation of the julkān presents different levels in the khushdāshiyya and endows it with a more qualified meaning.

An example illustrating the three circles of mamluk affiliation can be found in the division of the julkān after the death of Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy in 842/1438. The Ashrafiyya split into two groups that fought each other for power. The first was consolidated around the mamluks’ identification with their tabaga and aghā. Its members were defined in the sources as the inyāt and brothers of their leader, Ināl al-Abū Bakrī from the Ṭabaqat al-Ashrafiyya [min inyāt Ināl wa-ikkhwatihi]. The second group consisted of julkān defined as their khushdāshiyya, i.e., their colleagues from other barracks. With regard to the measure of solidarity in each of the groups, Ināl al-Abū Bakrī’s group was smaller and more consolidated and knew how to negotiate with veteran Mamluk factions, though eventually their demands were not met due to their weakness. The rival faction, however, consisted of the majority of al-Ashraf Barsbāy’s julkān, but due to the great schism among them [ikhtilāf arā’ihān], they were easily dispersed by the senior mamluks and even easily driven out of their tabāq in the Citadel, despite the strategic and political advantage they held.

The importance of the tabaga as a place enabling the consolidation of the mamluks housed in it into an organized group with its own specific interests, which did not fall into line with the khushdāshiyya of the whole Mamluk faction, is borne out by the skirmish among the mamluks of the tabāq in the Citadel that took place in Dhū al-Ḥijja 920/February 1515. The mamluks from Ṭabaqat al-Ṭāziyya attacked those from Ṭabaqat al-Zammāmiyya with clubs because the latter had backed down from their demands to Sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī (906–922/1500–1516) for a wage increase in order to curry favour with him and thus gain an advantage over their fellows. The

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Tabaqat al-Taṣiyya mamluks felt that the mamluks from all the barracks should unite in their demand for a raise of a hundred dinars for each mamluk. When each party maintained its position, a split opened among the sultan’s mamluks between those who sided with the sultan and those who opposed him. The crisis was resolved when the sultan promised all the mamluks a raise of fifty dinars per person, with payment being deferred for two months.71

The relationship between the agha and the ini took on the characteristics of patronage that was bound up in moral commitment throughout their careers.72 There were even mamluks who were named after their respective aghas. One such mamluk was Tūkh Māźī, who was one of al-Nāṣir Faraj’s mamluks and was named after his agha, Māźī al-Zāhirī.73 Similarly Ṣūdīn al-Qāḍī was named after his agha, Tanībak al-Qāḍī.74

As was mentioned earlier, Ṣūdīn al-Māridānī and Tanībak al-Bijāsī were Jār Quṭlū’s inyāt, and much later, when both had surpassed their agha’s status, Ibn Ṭaghrī Birdī tells us, Tanībak al-Bijāsī was grateful to him for the education he had given him and continued to honour and respect him in recognition of days gone by.75 On the recommendation of Ṣūdīn al-Māridānī, Sultan Barqūq enrolled Jār Quṭlū into his bodyguard, or khāṣakīya.76 Normally, it was the agha who was the ini’s advocate with the sultan and was concerned with his promotion and advancement.77 In his youth, Sultan al-Zāhir Khushqadam was made a khāṣakī in Barsbāy’s bodyguard on the recommendation of his agha, Ṭaghrī Birdī.78

The bond between the agha and the ini stood also at the center of the friendships among the inyāt who were affiliated to the same agha, thus forming exclusive groups within the tabaqat. Mamluks who belonged to such groups felt very close and preserved their friendship many years after their manumission. Thus Asandamur was one

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76 Ibn Ṭaghrī Birdī, Mābal, vol. IV, 212, 213.
of Jārikas al-Muṣāriṭ’s innā in the ṭabaqat al-Zammāmiyya (see also later). Many years after they left the ṭabaqa, Asandamur and his friends were described by Ibn Taghrī Birdī as Jārikas’ band [rifqa].

The special relationship between the inyāt and the aghāwāt in the barracks and the solidarity that the mamluks had with their colleagues of the same ṭabaqa explain the phenomenon, which was common during the Circassian period, of the confusion felt by kutṭābiyya mamluks who were purchased by the new sultan from the estate of his predecessor. These mamluks lacked a sense of solidarity and often even felt alien to the julbān purchased during the rule of their new master. All were formally the sultan’s mamluks as they had been purchased, trained and emancipated by him. However, the kutṭābiyya mamluks were of two minds. They identified with the previous sultan’s veteran mamluks, with whom they had been trained during their first period of kutṭābiyya. It is not difficult, therefore, to imagine the crisis they underwent when their masters changed. This was because the custom of an ascending sultan during this period was, as mentioned above, to dispose of their predecessor’s julbān, and so, quite suddenly, the ābāq were emptied and the kutṭābiyya were bereft of their older colleagues. Furthermore, in many cases they had to adapt to a new professional staff. Therefore, despite the advantage of their status as the ruling sultan’s julbān, they often rebelled against their new master and even joined their older colleagues, with whom they really identified.

The revolt which broke out in 859/1455, some two years after Sultan al-Ashraf Īnāl rose to power, brought to the surface the solidarity between the mamluks of the julbān the sultan had purchased from the kutṭābiyya of his predecessor, al-Zāhir Jaqmaq, and their senior colleagues from the ZāHIRiyya. It is worthy of note that there was no prior liaison between the julbān and Jaqmaq’s Zāhirī mamluks. The julbān’s protest began because of their demand for higher wages, or jawāmik. In order to further their claims they surrounded Amir Yūnus, the sultan’s ink bearer (dawādār) at the time, as he left the Citadel and asked him to intercede with the sultan on their behalf.


behalf. When it appeared to Yūnūs’s mamluks that the Julbān intended to harm their master, they attacked them, wounding several. As a result, the Julbān rioted and demanded that Yūnūs be handed over to them. When this did not happen, they moved to his house to loot it and burn it down, but there, too, Yūnūs’s mamluks beat them off. Sultan Īnāl tried to appease the Julbān by compensating their wounded, but they were not to be conciliated and stood in the Horse Market throughout the night, albeit they were unarmed. When the sultan sent four amirs to negotiate with them, the amirs were taken hostage. An expeditionary force was, coincidentally, to have set out to engage the Bedouin in al-Buḥayra (a western province in the Nile Delta), and in the force were Jaqmaq’s Zāhirī mamluks. This force, however, refused to go to al-Buḥayra as the mamluks had not been given camels, as was customary before a military campaign. Initially the Zāhirī mamluks stood aloof and watched the Julbān, but once it became clear that the latter were rebelling against their master, they joined them in order to avenge the injustice they believed he had done them. The Zāhirī mamluks instructed the Julbān to recruit the Abbasid caliph to their cause in order to improve their position in the struggle. Once the caliph took their side, they were joined by numerous mamluks from various factions and a large mob from the civilian population. In the end, the size of the camp mustered against the sultan frightened the Julbān and they fled the scene, one by one. The Julbān, then, intended to protest against the sultan but not to depose him. The sources tell us that from that time the schism within the Julbān was clear-cut. They split into two groups, one consisting of those mamluks bought by Sultan Īnāl from the kuttābiyya of al-Zāhir Jaqmaq and his son (the latter had ruled for only one month), and the second composed of the Julbān Īnāl had purchased during his period of rule.

Whereas the above case shows that the Julbān “of two minds” got cold feet and eventually backed down from their revolt for fear of losing their status as a privileged Mamluk faction, with the downfall of their new master, in a period of changing rule, they had no compunction about identifying entirely with their colleagues from

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their initial training period. The same two julbān groups of al-Ashraf Īnāl openly faced one another after his death in 865/1461. At the side of his successor, al-Mu'ayyad Ahmad, who ruled for only a few months (February–June 1461), stood the julbān purchased by Īnāl during his rule, their number reaching one thousand mamluks, while those he had purchased from the estate of al-Zahir Jaqmaq and his son joined the Zahiriyya at the instigation of Amir Jānībak, who supported the candidacy of one of its number, Khushqadam, for the throne. Apart from the attractive benefits he granted to them, Khushqadam played on their group affiliation, saying, “You are Zahiriyya and your purchase by al-Ashraf is not right [antum Zahiriyya wa-shirā’ al-Ashraf lakum ghayr sahiḥ]”.83 It should be noted that the problem of the technical transfer of the kuttābiyya mamluks from one sultan to another had arisen earlier in the above-mentioned revolt of these julbān against Īnāl. After this revolt, Īnāl had arrested a number of Zahirī mamluks and driven a large number of the julbān out of the Citadel barracks into Cairo, when the following words of one of his julbān from the kuttābiyya of al-Ẓahir Jaqmaq came to his ears: “We are the emancipated slaves of al-Malik al-Ẓahir and were trained by him. I cannot be an emancipated slave of al-Ashraf only by a piece of paper...[naḥnu ‘utaqā’ al-Malik al-Ẓahir wa-tarbiyatuhu wa-lā asīr ‘atīq al-Malik al-Ashraf bis-qiṭāt wa-raqaq]”.84

Towards the end of al-Ashraf Qāytbāy’s reign (900/1494), a conflict broke out between two groups of Ashrafī mamluks that ultimately encompassed the entire army and threatened the sultan’s rule.85 One group was led by Aqbirdī, who was not only one of Qāytbāy’s mamluks but also his brother-in-law.86 The second was headed by Qānṣūh Khamsmī’a. According to Muḥammad b. Ahmad Ibn Iyās (d. 931/1524), one version has it [ṣuqal] that Qānṣūh Khamsmī’a was purchased from the kuttābiyya of al-Ẓahir Khushqadam.87 At a consultation held by Qāytbāy it became clear that most of the army had in fact gathered around Uzbak,88 who was then commander-in-chief,

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85 Idem, Badawi, vol. III, 311. In fact this conflict between these two groups of Mamluks goes back as early as 892/1486; see: ibid., 237, 285, 309, 311–12.
86 Ibid., 178, 421.
87 Ibid., 354.
88 He was the founder of Uzbakiyya quarter west to Fatimid Cairo; ibid., 116–18.
or atābāk al-ʻasākir. Further information gathered from the sources shows that he had joined the rebels because Qānish Khamsmi’a was his son-in-law and that Uzbak, like Qānish, was a Zāhirī. He was identified with al-Zāhir Jaqmaq and close to him also because he had married two of his daughters. After Qāybāy’s death (902/1496) the julbān were again split according to the lines drawn in this revolt.

It should be noted that the daring of the julbān from the previous sultan’s kuttābiyya, who did not form a majority among the julbān of the ruling sultan, and their open identification with their senior colleagues stemmed from the new factional order that had been created in the Circassian period. In this new order, there was room for the Zāhirīyya or Ashrafiyya veteran mamluks to take part in Mamluk politics for a very long time after their masters death and it was from among them that the new sultan came to power. Therefore, when the julbān were driven out of the tibāq and dispersed after the death of their master, there was an advantage in the kuttābiyya identifying with their senior colleagues as this could rapidly bring them closer to the new regime and winning offices in it. I will expand on this in the last part of this article.

V

The mamluks’ personal relationships during their training period in the barracks and those created during their service in the amirs’ Mamluk households were intertwined, forming a network on which Mamluk politics were based. This network determined the movements of mamluks between the government’s coalition and opposition on which the stability of the regime actually depended. To illustrate the way in which this network of personal relationships worked, I will focus on the way in which Sultans Taṣār and Barsbāy filled the ranks of their amirs and the implications of this strategy on the constituents of the coalition that supported their rule.

89 Ibid., 241, 242, 311.
90 Ibid., 412.
91 Ibid., 342–51.
Fortunately, the sources have left us sufficient information on the history of these sultans from the beginning of their training in the barracks to their rise to power. Al-Ẓāhir Taṭār was originally from Sultan Barqūq’s jülbaš, and like Barsbāy and Jaqmaq was trained in the Tabaqat al-Zammāmiyya, but he was more senior by one intake, or khārj. Clearly, the three knew one another in their tabaqā during their training in the kuttābiyya and this relationship was the centre of personal connections which, in one way or another, continued throughout their lives. Taṭār and Barsbāy were very close friends. Thus Taṭār protected his friend when al-Mu’āyyad Shaykh wanted to imprison him, and then facilitated his promotion in Damascus, far away from al-Mu’āyyad Shaykh’s eyes. When Taṭār took the reins of rule and became the de facto ruler on behalf of al-Mu’āyyad’s son (824/1421), Barsbāy was appointed ḍawāddīr kabaḥ with the rank of muqaddam al-ḥajjāba. After being redundant in Damascus, Barsbāy was sent to Syria as Taṭār’s trusted right arm to settle a disagreement with the latter’s opponents, and as a result of his blandishments they came to Damascus, where they were liquidated, thus paving Taṭār’s way to rule. A short time after Taṭār’s rise to power, he fell ill and on his deathbed he willed his rule to his son, who was a minor, with Barsbāy as his legal guardian and Jānibak al-Ṣūfī responsible for management of rule.

“There was a firm friendship [ṣuḥba akīda]” between Barsbāy and Amir Taṭār. This amir returned from Iraq immediately after hearing that Taṭār was the man making the decisions in government. Taṭār was unable to give him an office immediately, but promised him that he would do so when he took the throne. Upon his ascension, he appointed Taṭār grand chamberlain (ḥājib al-ḥujjāba). Later, when Barsbāy rose to power he appointed Taṭār

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95 Al-Maqrīzī, Sulūk, vol. IV, 381.
100 Ibn Taḥrī Birdī, Manhal, vol. VI, 375; idem, Nujūm, vol. XIV, 201.
atābak al-‘asākir, the most senior position in the manluk army. Ţarabāy helped Barsbāy overcome Jānībak al-Ṣūfi, who vied with Barsbāy for rule.\textsuperscript{101} Even later, when Ţarabāy wanted power for himself and openly opposed him,\textsuperscript{102} Barsbāy did not forget their friendship. He released Ţarabāy from prison in 827/1423, granted him a thousand dinars and sent him to Jerusalem “to stay there without being in a plight [li-yuqīma bīhi ghayr mudāyyaq ʿalayhī]”.\textsuperscript{103} Those around Barsbāy thought that Ţarabāy’s release ran counter to any political logic, but Barsbāy paid them no heed because of “the old affection and friendship they had from their early days [limā kāna baynahum mina al-ṣawdā al-qadīm waʾl-sabba min mabādiʿ annihīm]”.\textsuperscript{104} In 831/1427, Barsbāy appointed Ţarabāy governor of Tripoli, an office he held until his death in 838/1434. Ibn Taghṛ Birdī estimates “that had it been anyone else he would not have treated him this way”.\textsuperscript{105}

With regard to Ţatār’s relationship with Jaqmaq, once Ţatār’s status had risen, he appointed Jaqmaq prefect of the Citadel with the rank of muqaddam al-lim, who was Jaqmaq’s older brother. As Jāmaka’s relationship gained the latter access to any political logic, but Barsbāy paid them no heed because of “the old affection and friendship they had from their early days [limā kāna baynahum mina al-ṣawdā al-qadīm waʾl-sabba min mabādiʿ annihīm]”.\textsuperscript{104} In 831/1427, Barsbāy appointed Ţarabāy governor of Tripoli, an office he held until his death in 838/1434. Ibn Taghṛ Birdī estimates “that had it been anyone else he would not have treated him this way”.\textsuperscript{105}

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Another of Jāmaka’s inīs was Asandamur al-Nūrī.\textsuperscript{109} This relationship gained the latter access to Ţatār’s coterie and the
appointment of amir with the rank of muqaddam alf. When Barsbây took power, he first appointed Asandamur governor of Alexandria, leaving him with his rank. Later, when one of Barsbây’s opponents escaped from the Alexandria jail, Asandamur’s negligent and selfish life style was brought to the surface. Yet Barsbây pardoned him after a short time and even gave him the rank of muqaddam alf in Damascus. When Jaqmaq rose to power (841/1437), Asandamur expected promotion as he was his close colleague and his brother’s ini.110 Because of his commitment to Asandamur, neither Jaqmaq got rid of him, but awarded him a monthly salary of five thousand dirhams until his death at seventy in 848/1444.111 Asandamur was out of the ordinary because of his problematic character. In fact, Jaqmaq promoted during his reign many of his brother’s myât and his company [nifgatuha].112 Thus, for example, Qâni Bây al-Jârikasî, who was also a relative of ˇTa.tar, was included at the beginning of his career in the latter’s khâsakiyya. Later, during Jaqmaq’s reign, due to his family ties, he was rapidly promoted to the highest rank in the army and nominated consecutively as shâdd al-sharab khâna (supervisor of the royal buttery), Dawâdar kabir and amir akhûr kabir (grand supervisor of the royal stables).113

Taghrî Barmish was a mamluk who was given to Jârikas al-Muṣâri‘ as a gift by his brother Jaqmaq. With the removal of Jârikas by al-Nâṣir Faraj for joining a revolt against him, Taghrî Barmish was taken from his estate into Faraj’s kuttâbiyya. With the elimination of Faraj, he was again moved to al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh’s kuttâbiyya. When Jaqmaq demanded ownership of him with the claim that he was his brother’s legal heir, al-Mu’ayyad did not give him up, arguing that Taghrî Barmish was an asset to his household because he was well-versed in the Koran and knew fiqh. Al-Mu’ayyad compensated Jaqmaq with money and another mamluk. When ˇTa.tar rose to power and Jaqmaq had free access to him, he returned Taghrî Barmish to him because ˇTa.tar had sought legal grounds for his return and made him his own khâsaki. Barsbây, however, banished this Taghrî Barmish

111 Ibid., 448–49.
112 Ibid., 448.
to Qūṣ, apparently because of his coarse behaviour, and for the same
reason, Jaqmaq did not accede to Taghrī Barmish’s requests for a
senior amirate. Yet, because of his commitment to Taghrī Barmish,
Jaqmaq did grant him an iqṭāʿ and an Amirate of Ten in 844/1440.
Then he appointed him vice regent of the Citadel, a post he held
until 851/1447.114 In the same way, Jaqmaq’s commitment to ‘Ali
b. Ināl al-Yūsufī—his master before he moved to Barqūq’s house-
hold at his brother’s request—ultimately made him include ‘Ali’s two
sons, Ahmad and Tāmān Bāy, among his amirs.115

A gift sent to Sultan Barqūq by Amir Duqmāq al-Muḥammadī,
who at the time was governor of Malatya, included eighteen mam-
luks, among whom were Barsbāy and Timrāz al-Qurmushī. The
friendship between the two, which had begun in Duqmāq’s Mamlik
household, continued throughout Barsbāy’s life and brought him into
the close circle round Jaqmaq. When Barsbāy rose to power Timrāz
became one of the amirs who were closest to him [muqarraban ilā al-
ghāya]116 and maintained this status until Barsbāy’s death. When
Jaqmaq rose to power Timrāz became one of the senior office-holders
in his regime, with the rank of muqaddam al-f. A short time later he
was appointed amīr silāḥ, or the sultan’s arms bearer, a position he
held for a long period until his death in the epidemic of 853/1449.117

Qasrūh min Timrāz, Timrāz al-Qurmushī’s mamluk, was another
of the stalwarts of Barsbāy’s rule. When Taṭār rose to power, Qasrūh
was given the office of ra’s nawba (head of the royal guard) and, after
a short time, served as amīr ākhūr with the rank of muqaddam al-f. He
was very active in preparing the ground for Barsbāy’s rise to power.
Barsbāy kept him in this position and later appointed him amīr ākhūr
and governor of Tripoli, Aleppo and Damascus consecutively.118

Qasrūh min Timrāz and Uzbak al-Muḥammadī were inās of Barsbūghā al-Muzzaffārī at the Taḥaqat al-Rafraf. This connection
brought Uzbak close to Taṭār and Barsbāy. Upon Taṭār’s rise to
power, Uzbak was promoted to an amirate of Forty and later to an

114 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, Manhal, vol. IV, 68–70; idem, Nījūm, vol. XV, 530–32; al-
For another example see: idem, Nījūm, vol. XVI, 213–14.
XV, 199.
amirate of a Hundred and taqdimat alf. When Barsbây rose to power he served as ra’s nasbat al-nuwsîb and later as dawâdâr kabîr. In 831/1427 he was removed from office as a result of a false accusation that he wanted to rebel against the sultan. Barsbây’s forgiveness towards Tarabî and that of Jaqmaq towards Taghrî Barmish and Asandamur al-Nûr, in contrast to his severity towards Uzbak al-Muhammadî, show the existence of different levels of personal connections within the same Mamluk household. The relationship between Tarabî and Barsbây and that between Jaqmaq, Taghrî Barmish and Asandamur al-Nûr were closer and therefore more binding than relationships among mamluks from different barracks, even if they were all affiliated to one master.

It is worthy of mention that during the Circassian period it was customary to recruit relatives into the Mamluk army, and special envoys were often sent by sultans and dominant amirs to bring them to Egypt from the Caucasus. Amirs and mamluks also entered the sultans’ families by marriage. These familial relations by both birth and marriage were also instrumental in the formation of the sultan’s coterie. Thus Hasan b. Südûn, Tatar’s brother-in-law, was appointed Amir of a Hundred and muqaddam alf. Yashbak, Barsbây’s eldest brother, reached Egypt when Barsbây was already sultan and died in 833/1429, holding the rank of muqaddam alf. Jânîm, too, was a relative who was brought to Egypt by Barsbây in 828/1425. Initially he was one of Barsbây’s khâßakîya, and by 836/1432 he already held the rank of muqaddam alf.

Another way in which the mamluk network of personal relationships became stronger was, as mentioned earlier, through the mamluks’ service in the amirs’ Mamluk households after the deaths of their masters. During the civil war that lasted for some twelve years after the death of Barqûq, Tatar, like many other mamluks, moved from

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the service of one amir to another. He first deserted from al-Nāṣir Faraj b. Barqūq’s army, finding refuge with Jakam min ‘Awd, who rebelled in Egypt in 804/1401 and who later, in 809/1406, occupied Syria with the support of Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓī, declaring himself an independent sultan. It is worthy of note that in 807/1404, Jakam’s rebel camp in Syria included Jārikas al-Muṣārī and Qārā Yūsuf, the Turcoman ruler of Iraq who had fled before Timur’s invaders.124 When Jakam was defeated and murdered by the Turcomans in Syria, Ṭāṭār moved into the service of Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓī in Syria.125 After the removal of al-Nāṣir Faraj from the Egyptian throne, Nawrūz did not recognize al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh’s sultanate too and rebelled in Syria.126 With Nawrūz’s defeat, his mamluks and amirs and those who had joined him were pursued by al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh.127 In contrast, Ṭāṭār found a way of entering al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh’s service,128 advancing to the rank of muqaddam al-fa‘ar and serving in senior positions such as ra‘īs nawba and amīr majlis.129 Before his death, al-Mu‘ayyad bequeathed the throne to his son Aḥmad, who was then only one year old, and appointed Ṭāṭār as Aḥmad’s legal guardian until the return of Al Ṭā’unbugha al-Qirmishī, the atābak al-ma‘ālim, from a campaign in Syria.130

Prior to Ṭāṭār’s rise to power, during the short period in which he ruled in the name of the young al-Mu‘azzafar Aḥmad, the sources indicate that mamluks from the Jakamīyya and the Nawrūziyya, i.e., mamluks of Jakam min ‘Awd and Nawrūz al-Ḥāfiẓī respectively, were already in his service.131 Yashbak al-Jakamī was one of Jakam’s

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mamluks who had fled from al-Mu’ayyad and found refuge with Qarā Yūsuf, who in the meantime had returned to rule Baghdad and Tabriz. When he heard that Taṭār had taken power, he returned from Iraq and was immediately appointed amīr īkhtār kabīr. Jānibak al-Jakamī was another mamluk of Yashbak al-Jakamī; he served as a khāṣṣākī during the rule of Barsbāy, and during Jaqmaq’s rule, he was first the sultan’s cupbearer (ṣāqi) and later was awarded an amirate. Among the positions he filled were ra’s navba, wālī (prefect) of Cairo and hājjī (chamberlain). Qānī Bāy al-Abū Bakrī was one of al-Nāṣir Faraj’s mamluks who first served Burdbak al-Jakamī, i.e., one of Jakam’s mamluks, and later served Taṭār during the period of his amirate. On his rise to power, Taṭār appointed him ra’s navba and awarded him an amirate of forty. During the rule of Barsbāy and Jaqmaq he was among the amirs with the rank of Muqaddam al-falīkā. He served as vice regent of Malatya, and atābak in Aleppo and Damascus, among other positions. Shād Bāk al-Jakamī, Südūn al-Jakamī, Qānī Bāy, Burdbak al-Jakamī and İnāl al-Jakamī were all Jakam’s mamluks who were promoted by Taṭār, Barsbāy and Jaqmaq.

Yashbak al-Sāqī, known as al-‘Arāj, was one of Barqūq’s mamluks, serving first in the khāṣṣākīyya and later as Barqūq’s sāqi. Yashbak was a close friend of Taṭār since their training period [wa-kānsa min ikhwat Taṭar]. They both served in Jakam min ‘Awjī’s and Nawrūz al-Hāfīzī’s households. Because he had served Nawrūz, Yashbak was exiled to Mecca by al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh. From the outset al-Mu’ayyad intended to exile him to Yemen because he was concerned that he would incite the mamluks when they made the pilgrimage, or hājjī. Taṭār, however, begged al-Mu’ayyad for mercy and succeeded in having Yashbak’s punishment commuted to exile in Mecca rather than in Yemen. In the same way, Taṭār later facilitated Yashbak’s

134 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, Najum, vol. XV, 520.
135 Ibid., vol. XIV, 202; vol. XV, 320.
136 Al-Sakhāwī, Duw‘, vol. VI, 194.
transfer from Mecca to Jerusalem. When Taṭar rose to power, he brought Yashbak back to Egypt and made him his close adviser. When Taṭar went to Syria to quell a rebellion, he left Yashbak in the Citadel to guard his wives. When Taṭar went to Syria to quell a rebellion, he left Yashbak in the Citadel to guard his wives. 138 Taṭar died before he could award Yashbak an amirate, but Barsbāy did so, awarding him the ranks of Amir of a Hundred and muqaddam ʿaff in one fell swoop [dafʿatan wāḥidatan] and appointing him amīr silāḥ. From this rank he moved to the highest office, atābak al-ʾasākir, serving in this capacity until his death in 831/1427. 139

Uzbak al-Ṭūmān Bāyī was one of Barqūq’s mamluks who was promoted by Nawrūz al-Ḥāfīzī, al-Muʿayyad’s rival in Syria, to the most senior amirate rank. After Nawrūz’s rebellion had been suppressed, Uzbak was imprisoned for a number of years in Marqab (a fortress in Syria near the Bāniyās). He was released by al-Muʿayyad in 822/1419 and was awarded an insignificant amirate, Amir of Five, in Damascus. When Taṭar came to power, Uzbak became one of his confidants. He was awarded the rank of Amir of a Hundred and muqaddam ʿaff, and with the death of Taṭar, Barsbāy awarded him the office of raʾs naṣṣib al-nawwāb. In 827/1423 he was appointed to the office of dawādār kabir, which he filled most admirably until 831/1427. 140 Qānish al-Nawrūzī, Arghūn Shāh al-Nawrūzī, Arkamās al-Nawrūzī, Sūdūn al-Nawrūzī, Īnāl al-Nawrūzī and Jānībak al-Nawrūzī were all Nawrūz al-Ḥāfīzī’s mamluks who were promoted during the rule of Taṭar and Barsbāy, and part of them even during Jaqmaq’s. 141

A clear illustration of the interweaving of personal relationships within the khusdāshiyya and outside it into a single network that influenced the mamluks’ decisions as to which faction to join during power conflicts over rule, can be found in the power struggle between Barsbāy and Jānībak al-Šūfī after the death of Taṭar in 824/1421.

Zahiiri amirs like Tarabay, Jabinak al-Hamzawi, Sudun min ‘Abd al-Rahman, Qurmush al-Awar, Musa al-Karkari and others, were *khushd shiya* of Tatar and Barsbay. They were honoured and awarded offices by Tatar on their return from Iraq, and likewise by Barsbay immediately after the death of Tatar. However, they joined Jabinak al-Sufi against Barsbay because they felt closer to him.\(^{142}\) When Barsbay asked Qurmush al-Awar to leave Jabinak al-Sufi’s group and join him, Qurmush replied: “How can I not be with him, for I bore him on my shoulders in the land of Jarkas and raised him like a child [Kayfa lu akhri mu’adha wa-qad hamaltahu ‘ala kitfayya fi bilad Jarkas wa-rabbaytuha ka’l-walad].”\(^{143}\) Thus Barsbay was unable to compete with Qurmush’s commitment to Jabinak, but this commitment of friendship and the recognition of Jabinak’s leadership and seniority by these amirs did not prevent them from eventually leaving him and joining Barsbay.\(^{144}\) Their hatred of Yashbak al-Jakami, who was in their camp, tipped the balance. He had treated them with a lack of respect when they were with Qaraysuf in Iraq, and they could not bear the idea that Jabinak, too, had made him one of his close companions, just as Qaraysuf had done, and demanded that he be sent to Syria. Jabinak al-Sufi, however, found it difficult to renounce Yashbak al-Jakami because he had recruited his inits, Diliat Bay al-Mu’ayyad, into his camp, bringing with him his colleagues from among the Mu’ayyadiyya mamluks. It should be noted that Yashbak al-Jakami entered the service of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh when the latter was still an amir, and it was during this period that Diliat Bay was

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\(^{143}\) Al-Sakhawi, *Daw*, vol. VI, 221; Ibn Taghri Birdi, *Nujum*, vol. XIV, 235–36. See another example of personal commitment instrumental in promoting a mamluk: Ibn Iyas, *Badar‘*, vol. II, 69. It might well be that Qurmush al-Awar’s words refer to the Circassian practice known as *atalique* whereby boys of noble families were entrusted at an early age to vassals to be raised and trained in military fashion. Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Circassians*, Richmond (England), 2001, 175–77. During the Circassian period relatives were brought from the old country and at times mamluks’ offsprings born in Egypt were sent to the homeland to be raised traditionally. My thanks are due to Jane Hathaway for this information and her useful comments on this issue.

When the demands of these amirs were not met, they moved over to Barsbây, thus deciding the power struggle in his favour. Tarabây, who was Barsbây’s close friend, as was mentioned earlier, was also a member of this group of amirs. Quite naturally, he served as the mediator between these amirs and Barsbây, and it was through his efforts that they moved over to Barsbây’s coalition.146

The above case illustrates the convergence of the various types of personal relationships discussed in this work, creating a network that activated Mamluk factionalism. We have seen that the khushdâshiyya was split into groups with disparate interests and that it did not remain united as required by the Mamluk system model. The way in which the khushdâshiyya sub-groups were reunited indicates the links of personal friendship and the relationship between the aghâ and the inî as focal points in group unification. And finally, relationships that were formed in the amirs’ Mamluk households crossed factional borders, binding sub-groups from different factions, like the Zâhiriyâ and the Mu’ayyadiyya in this case, into new coalitions.

VI

Against the background of the structure of Mamluk factionalism described here, not a single coalition (îzib) was found in the Circassian period that formed around a candidate for rule in which khushdâshiyya was the central and the only unifying factor. Instead, Mamluk groups and individuals integrated into coalitions through a multi-dimensional network of connections. These forms of Mamluk coalitions stemmed from the two above-mentioned common practices in Mamluk politics during this period. One was the filling of the amirs’ ranks with veteran mamluks, the faction of the majority of whom had been dispersed many years earlier. The second practice was the removal of the julbân from the tîbâq in the Citadel. These two practices created a situation in which the julbân and the senior Mamluks had to cooperate as, first of all, the latter were left active in the political arena

145 Al-Sakhwî, Dhu’, vol. X, 275; Ibn Taghrî Birdî, Nujûm, vol. XIV, 217. Even though the sources call Timur’s invaders ‘Tatars’, they were no longer Mongol speakers. My thanks are due to Reuven Amitai for this information.

side-by-side with new generations of mamluks. Second, with their removal from the barracks, a great number of julbān were forced to move through the amirs’ Mamluk households. This phenomenon lessened the tension between senior and younger mamluks, thus making their participation in a single hizb easier. This kind of cooperation between the senior and younger mamluks called for new symbols of unity that would allow the integration of various Mamluk groups into a single coalition. The sultan’s laqab became one of these symbols. With his rise to rule, the new sultan bore the laqab of the master of the coalition’s dominant group, thus creating a new generation that carried the same name. When, in time, there were a number of factions bearing the same name, the laqab became the symbol of party allegiance.

The precedent of using the laqab of the faction’s founder was set with the rise of Ǧaḥr to power in 824/1421. He took the laqab “al-Zāhir”, which was that of his master, al-Zāhir Barqūq. His aim was to gain legitimacy for rule as the Zāhiriyya were split and each faction viewed itself as the legitimate political heir of their common master, al-Zāhir Barqūq. Al-Ashraf Barsbāy’s mamluks adopted the laqab “al-Ashraf”.

Jaqmaq’s ascent to power in 841/1438 was facilitated by a coalition formed of Barqūq’s Zāhiriyya mamluks (Ḡaḥr had not managed to build up a Mamluk household of his own), Nāṣirīyya, Muʿayyadīyya and individuals from the amirs’ households—that is to say, sayfyya mamluks—and even some Ashrafiyya mamluks of al-Ashraf Barsbāy.148 Lack of cunning on the part of the Ashrafiyya leader gave the Zāhiriyya a dominant position in this coalition. Therefore, Jaqmaq was called al-Malik al-Zāhir, like his master, al-Zāhir Barqūq [wa-talaqqaba bi’l-Malik al-Zāhir mithl laqab ustādhihi al-Zāhir Barqūq].149

Khushqadam, who rose to power in 685/1461, was one of al-Muʿayyad’s mamluks. In the coalition that brought him to power were mamluks from the Zāhiriyya, Nāṣirīyya, Muʿayyadīyya, Ashrafiyya and sayfyya. The Zāhiriyya already included Barqūq’s and Jaqmaq’s mamluks. The Ashrafiyya of this coalition included, as noted above,

those mamluks who were purchased by Ínáil, the deceased sultan, from the kattáhibiya of Jaqmaq and therefore they regarded themselves as part of the Záhiríyya. As the Náširíyya and Mu’ayyadíyya were by then small and very old minority factions, the Záhiríyya formed the dominant majority in this coalition. In the negotiations with the rival Ashrafiyya party, Jánibak al-Záhirí, the Záhiríyya coalition leader, succeeded in persuading Ínáil’s Ashrafiyya julbán to put Khushqadam in power until their candidate for the sultanate, Jáním al-Ashrafi, then the vice-regent of Damascus, returned from Syria, arguing that Khushqadam was weak and could be easily deposed. It is of importance to note that this case exposes the peaceful nature of Mamluk politics achieved by a factional system based on two parties only. Khushqadam’s ascent to power was concluded by negotiations between the two rival parties which took place in his own dwelling. Once the Ashrafiyya agreed on Khushqadam’s election, his laqab became “al-Záhir”.152

In the struggle between the Záhiríyya and the Ashrafiyya in 872/1467 that brought about al-Záhir Yalbáy’s rise to power, the Záhiríyya already included two groups of mamluks. One was al-Záhiríyya al-kibár (the elder Záhiríyya) and the second was al-Záhiríyya sighár (the younger Záhiríyya). It is not entirely clear whether al-Záhiríyya al-kibár included Barqùq’s veteran mamluks in addition to those of Jaqmaq, for if they were still alive then, they would have been very old indeed. It is clear, however, that the al-Záhiríyya al-sighár were Khúshqadam’s freshest mamluks, who were dominant in this coalition. A similar coalition brought Timurbughá to power a few months later, and therefore he also bore the laqab “al-Záhir”.154 Qánshúh min Qánshúh, who ruled for approximately two years, from Rabi’ al-Awval 904/October 1498 to Dhú l-Hijja 905/June 1500, was an Ashrafi who bore the laqab “al-Záhir”. His rule was backed by part of Qáyrbáy’s Ashrafiyya faction. This is, prima facie, the first

deviation from the custom of the sultan bearing the laqab of the dominant faction in the coalition that brought him to power. As a matter of fact, the leader of the faction that brought Qansuh to power was Qansuh Khamsmi’a, who, it will be remembered, was from al-Zahir Khusqadam’s kuttābiyya and who, on the latter’s death, was purchased by Qaytbay.155 This is also the reason why Táníbak al-Jamáli, who was identified with Qansuh Khamsmi’a’s group within the Ashrafiyya, was the one who awarded him this laqab.156

The laqab “al-Ashraf” referred to al-Ashraf Barsbây. Sultan İnâl was one of Barqûq’s mamluks and was inherited by his son, al-Nâşir Faraj. He was elevated to the sultanate in 857/1457 by a coalition of the Ashrafiyya, Mu’ayyadiyya and sayfyya mamluks. The Ashrafi mamluks forced him to become sultan because he was elderly and would pose no problems for them, and thus his laqab was that of their master, al-Ashraf Barsbây.157

Qaytbay rose to power (872/1468) with the help of a coalition in which both senior and younger Ashrafiyya mamluks were dominant [al-Ashrafiyya al-kibr wa’l-Ashrafiyya al-sighar], that is to say, mamluks of Barsbây and İnâl.158 Although Qaytbay was formally a Zâhirî, he had strong roots as Ashrafi because he was purchased by al-Zâhir Khusqadam from al-Ashraf Barsbây’s kuttābiyya.159 He was, therefore, quite naturally supported by the Ashrafiyya groups, and his laqab was decided accordingly.160 By the same principle Jân Balât (905/1499), Qansuh al-Ghawrî and Tûmânîbây min Qansuh al-Nâşirî successively bore the laqab of Qaytbay161 because Qaytbay’s long period of rule left only some insignificant remnants of the Zâhirîyya. It should be mentioned that many of the Zâhirîyya mamluks were

decimated in the campaigns in Syria and the recurring plagues during Qâytbây’s reign. 162

It is not entirely clear why Tûmân-bây, who ruled for approximately three months in 906/1500 and initially took the laqab al-Mu’âyyad with his ascension to power in Syria, changed it to al-‘Adîl when he returned to Egypt. 163 The change of laqab, however, shows that he had some difficulty in bearing a laqab (namely, al-Mu’âyyad) inappropriate to the accepted custom.

The centrality of the laqab as a symbol of unifying identification among different generations of mamluk factions within the coalition is borne out by the fact that towards the end of the Mamluk period, even a sultan’s son, like Qâytbây’s son Muhammâd, was compelled, on ascending to power, to consider the issue of the laqab. The rule of a sultan’s son was perceived throughout the fifteenth century as an interim period aimed at preparing the transition from the rule of one Mamluk sultan to the next. 164 As a result, a son’s period of rule was typically short, and the Mamluks did not expect the rise of a new Mamluk unit during this reign that would have to join one of the two Mamluk coalitions, the Zâhirîyya or the Ashrafiyya. Therefore there was no importance attached to a sultan’s son bearing one of these two alqâb.

Muhammâd b. Qâytbây’s laqab, however, was changed twice. The first time was immediately after he was brought to power before the death of his father in 901/1495, when his laqab was changed from al-Manṣîr to al-Nâşîr. 165 In other words, those who brought him to power thought that his laqab should be changed but did not yet think that the new laqab should be either al-Zâhir or al-Ashraf. The problem arose when al-Nâşîr Muhammâd inaugurated his first intake of mamluks. As a result, some of his supporters were called Ashrafiyya in accordance with the laqab of Qâytbây, his father, while others were known as Nâşîriyya after his own laqab. When the new laqab threatened to split his camp, the rank-and-file mamluks demanded that the amirs change Muhammâd’s laqab from al-Nâşîr to al-Ashraf.

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so that all the mamluks in his coalition would have the same name: “Give the Sultan the laqab al-Ashraf so that all of us will be Ashrafiyya [laqībū al-sulṭān bi‘l-Ashraf, naṣīr kullūn Ashrafiyya].” Despite the embarrassment involved, the mamluks’ ultimatum brought about a change in his laqab. Appointments had already been sent to Syria and sermons had been delivered in the mosques under the old laqab. The confusion was so great that some of the sermons were delivered in the name of al-Nāṣir and others in the name of al-Ashraf.

At the end of the fifteenth century, then, the dichotomy of the Zahiri and Ashrafi parties in Mamluk politics was strongly established, to the extent that when a third party, not even a dominant one but only bearing a different name, was introduced into the military-political arena, it threatened the regime’s stability. To restore stability, steps were immediately taken to change the party’s name by changing its master’s laqab in order to facilitate its absorption into one of the two “recognized” parties.

In conclusion, the dichotomy in Mamluk factionalism into Zahiriyya and Ashrafiyya parties indicates that during the Circassian period the Mamluk political system, in practice, underwent a change. It moved from a one-generation and uni-factional structure to a multi-generation and bi-party structure. This kind of political system inevitably imposed a change in the conception of khushdashiyah. Whereas khushdashiyah had been understood—but not always practiced—as solidarity shared strictly by mamluks who belonged to the same manumitter and formed a single cohort, in the political reality of the Circassian period, khushdashiyah was generally extended to solidarity among successive Mamluk factions by linking them to an ancient, quasi-mythological ancestor by handing down the master’s laqab from generation to generation. The common framework created by the laqab for Mamluk factions and individuals from different generations and background created an atmosphere that blurred the traditional factional borderlines. It not only curbed the tension between younger and senior generations of sultani mamluks but also opened the way for the integration of the amirs’ households into the fabric of the political system through the inclusion of individuals and groups of mamluks of amirs in the coalitions. This heterogeneous makeup of

166 Ibid., 351–52.
167 Ibid., 351.
the Circassian Zahiri and Ashrafi coalitions for power might well explain the relatively non-violent character of Mamluk politics after al-Nasir Faraj’s reign; power struggles were now largely bloodless.

Finally, a word on the place of *khushdashiyya* in Mamluk political system. The model of Mamluk factionalism laid by the late David Aylon some fifty years ago, is based on the assumption that the ideal of *khushdashiyya* was an indispensable factor in Mamluk politics reality. For, according to this model, it was *khushdashiyya*, the solidarity and loyalty of all mamluks who belonged to the same manumitter, that determined who belonged to a Mamluk faction and who were excluded as their rivals or ad hoc allies. However, we have seen that, *khushdashiyya* included, at least in the Circassian period, a variety of categories of loyalty and solidarity among mamluks included in the same Mamluk faction and that coalitions for rule reflected, in fact, a wide network of relationships that crossed the “traditional” factional borderlines. In his study of the history of the Mu‘ayyadiyya, the Mamluk faction established during al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh’s reign, Robert Irwin has concluded that *khushdashiyya* had never constituted a strong bond in Mamluk factions. Judging from the information scattered in the sources regarding the Bahri period about mamluks discarding factional solidarity bonds for more vital political interests, my impression is that during this period too *khushdashiyya* had never been such an essential requisite for Mamluk factional unity. In light of these observations, it seems that the Mamluks’ attitude to the idea of *khushdashiyya* was not different from the pragmatism they showed to other political or social issues they encountered. *Khushdashiyya* was essentially an idea liable to change in accordance with practice in Mamluk politics and not to inflexibly determine them. Seen from this angle, even the move from the traditional conception of *khushdashiyya* to the more pluralistic perception of solidarity of the Circassian coalitions for rule might appear to us not so revolutionary. These new perspectives on factional solidarity should, perhaps, encourage us to reexamine the validity of the “classical” model of Mamluk political factionalism throughout the Mamluk period.

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CHAPTER SIX

GUNPOWDER AND FIREARMS IN THE MAMLUK SULTANATE RECONSIDERED

Robert Irwin

David Ayalon’s *Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamluk Kingdom: A Challenge to a Medieval Society* was published in London in 1956. The argument of this important book has been summarized by Reuven Amitai as follows: “A more direct reason for the demise of the Mamluk Sultanate is the failure of the mamluks to adopt the use of firearms; thus they were not able to meet the challenge of both the Ottoman Empire and the Christian West. This inability to modernize the army was rooted in the social psychology of the mamluks. The adoption of firearms contradicted their training and vocation as mounted archers, as the use of primitive handguns required dismounting; this would have meant the transformation of the mamluks into infantrymen... it made inevitable the defeat of the mamluks by the Ottomans at Marj Dábīq in 1516 and their conquest of Egypt and Syria”.¹ *Gunpowder and Firearms* in the Mamluk Kingdom presented a Toynbean model of the collapse of an empire, as the Mamluk Sultanate was presented with a challenge—new military technology—to which it failed to respond. In this failure to adapt, the Mamluks differed from the Ottomans and from the various European nations. *Mutatis mutandis*, Ayalon had offered a Middle Eastern version of the line taken in J.F.C. Fuller’s *The Decisive Battles of the Western World* where, according to Fuller, “Gunpowder blasted the feudal strongholds and ideals of their owners. By changing the character of war, gunpowder changed the medieval way of life”.²

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Ayalon’s book has had a remarkable influence on other historians, among them Mamlukists like M. Holt and Carl Petry, and, outside the obsessively narrow field of Mamluk studies, also on such important figures as the historian of the Islamicate world, Marshall Hodgson, and on the wide-ranging military historian, John Keegan. That it should have had such an influence is hardly surprising. It was written by the leading historian in the field. Ayalon’s establishment of the chronology of the introduction of Gunpowder and Firearms into the Sultanate was based on an extensive reading of the sources. He had a discriminating approach to the problems of terminology and translation, as well as a properly cautious attitude regarding the dating of technological firsts. On many key issues in chronology and terminology, it is most unlikely that Ayalon’s monograph will ever be superseded.

However, there are grounds for unease with the more general portrait of the mamluks as an arrogant and obsolete military caste who were incapable of appreciating the usefulness of the cannon and musket (as it were the dinosaurs of the late medieval Levant.) First, if the Mamluk elite was indeed hostile to firearms, then this was an unusual attitude for a medieval military elite to take. In the medieval West, finely worked guns were produced specially for princes. Guns were christened in churches. Nobles and knights competed for the office of Master of the Ordnance. Fifteenth-century noblemen put guns on their blazons. Anthony the Great Bastard of Burgundy, one of the greatest jousters of the fifteenth century, chose a wooden barbican with gun ports as his emblem and Louis of Bruges chose a bombard as his blazon. Cannonades featured in the chivalric romance of Amadis de Gaule. The Earl of Warwick lost the second Battle of St Albans in 1461 because of his enthusiastic over-reliance on guns and other bits and bobs of military gadgetry. The guns with their fixed emplacements fatally reduced the mobility of the Earl’s forces and the gunners were overrun before they could fire their pieces off. (I will return to the Battle of St Albans later.) The point is that in late medieval Christendom, the deployment of cannons and musketry were considered of as being an extension of chivalry rather than as its antithesis.

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Again, in sixteenth-century Japan, the Samurai, elite horse-archers, were similarly enthusiastic. “Within months of the first guns being brought into Japan they were being copied and mass produced for the daimyo armies”\(^5\). In China, the Ming were making use of artillery from the fifteenth century onwards.\(^6\) Even in desolate, backward and impoverished Circassia with its illiterate kleptocracy, or robber-aristocracy, the noblemen rode about with guns slung over their back.\(^7\) It is worth noting here that the Mamluk elite in the late Middle Ages were mostly recruited from the Circassians of the Caucasus. But it is perhaps also worth noting that Germans and Hungarians were also prominently represented in the ranks of the mamluks and such renegades or captured soldiers were also likely to be already familiar with firearms.\(^8\)

Muslim regimes in the Near East and North Africa were not slow to adopt firearms. Indeed they may have been ahead of Europe in doing so. The first reference to cannon being used in Europe is in Florence in 1326. By the 1340s references to the deployment of cannons become common. The first unambiguous reference to the English using cannon is at Crecy in 1346. The earliest reference to European use of handguns is 1346. A fourteenth-century Swedish handgun still survives. By 1411 the matchlock was in use. However, the handguns of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were not of the sort that could be fired from the saddle. That sort of firearm only became available in the sixteenth century.\(^9\)

According to Lişan al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb, a fourteenth-century courtier and historian in the service of Granada, the Nāṣirīd prince

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Abū Walid Ismā‘īl I used cannon at the siege of Huesca in 1324. Because of the overlapping use of the Arabic term naft to refer to both naphtha, or Greek fire, and to gunpowder, it is difficult to determine when precisely gunpowder was first used in warfare in the Mamluk sultanate. Ayalon argued that naphtha, or naft, ceased to be used by the Mamluks in either battles or siege warfare at around the end of the Crusading period. The very word naft fell out of use for about a century or a century and a half. When the word did come back into circulation, it no longer meant naphtha, but rather referred to gunpowder. Therefore in the fifteenth century naft effectively means bārūd. Professor J.R. Partington in his History of Greek Fire and Gunpowder (1960) doubted this. Ayalon replied that “naft cannot be the same as naptha, for the simple reason that in spite of its being used in fighting many hundreds of times, it never causes fire, it is never aimed at inflammable targets and none of the normal measures of protection work against it”.

But the matter is not so clear-cut. In 1400, when Timūr deployed a siege tower against the Damascus citadel, the garrison hurled naft at it and the tower burned down. Also in factional fighting in Damascus in 1412, both sides were using arrows and naphtha, which set shops on fire. In 1439 in a naval skirmish in the Delta a Mamluk boat was set on fire by “midfūt naft”; they shot it but the fire blew back, burning some of the supplies and injuring some of the crew. The conclusion seems inescapable. Greek fire was being used as late as the early decades of the fifteenth century.

The Burgundian traveller, Bertandon de la Brocquière, makes it clear beyond any shadow of doubt that in the 1430s the Mamluks and their subjects were still accustomed to deploy both cannons and naphtha-throwers. Bertrandon’s sojourn in Beirut coincided with a Muslim festival, during which the garrison of the citadel fired off their cannons. At the same time “the people launched into the air,

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11 Ayalon, Gunpowder and Firearms, 9–21.
14 Ibid., vol. VI, 266.
very high and to a great distance, a kind of fire larger than the
greatest lantern I ever saw lighted. They told me they sometimes
made use of such at sea, to set fire to the sails of an enemy’s vessel”.
Bertrandon spent a ducat on acquiring recipe and he returned to
France with the recipe, the ingredients and even the wooden moulds.16
However, it is necessary to note that Ayalon was in general right to
suggest that in the fifteenth century naft normally refers to gun-
powder and Partington was wrong to doubt this.
Setting the naft problem aside, there are ambiguous references in
Mamluk sources to the use of makāḥil (maybe handguns) and madā’if
(maybe cannons) in the 1340s and 50s. In an untranslatable passage
in al-ʻUmarī’s chancery manual, al-Tārīf bi’l-muṣṭalḥ al-sharīf, there is a reference to makāḥil al-būrād (guns using gunpowder). (Al-ʻUmarī
died in 1349.)17 There are numerous and unequivocal references to Mamluk use of cannons from the 1360s onwards (which is earlier
than we have evidence for Ottoman Turkish use of cannons). It is
again difficult to be precise about the date of the introduction of
the handgun into the Mamluk Sultanate, because of the looseness
of usage of terms used to refer to firearms. For a long time madā’if
and makāḥil were used indiscriminately in the sources to refer to both
cannons and handguns. For example when Ibn Taghibirdi discussed
the fighting in Cairo between the Sultan Jaqmaq and rebellious mam-
luks in 854/1450, in the Nujūm he referred to Jaqmaq’s warden of
the armoury setting up madā’if on the towers of the Citadel. However
when Ibn Taghibirdi wrote up the same incident in the Ḥawādith,
he reported that makāḥil were set up on the citadel.18 Also, bunduqīyya,
which in the early Mamluk period referred to the crossbow, in the
later Mamluk period came to mean arquebus.19

16 “The Travels of Bertrandon de la Brocquière A.D. 1432, 1433”, in Thomas
Wright (ed. and trans.), Early Travels in Palestine (London, 1848), 296. Clearly it is
not true as Guilmartin has claimed, that the secret of Greek fire was lost with the
sack of Constantinople in 1204. (John Francis Guilmartin Jr, Gunpowder and Galleys:
Changing technology and Mediterranean warfare at sea in the sixteenth century (Cambridge,
1974), 60 and n).
17 Ahmad b. Yahyā b. Faḍl Allāh al-ʻUmarī, Al-Tārīf fi al-Muṣṭalḥ al-Sharīf,
(Cairo, 1894), 208; cf. Ayalon, Gunpowder and Firearms, 5n. and 41–42n.
18 Ibn Taghibirdi, Nujūm, vol. VII, 192; idem, History of Egypt, 1362–1469 A.D.,
(William Popper, tr.) University of California Publications in Semitic Philology
(Berkeley, California, 1960), vol. XIX, 129 and note.
19 The use of bunduqīyya to mean both crossbow and arquebus has led to occa-
sion confusions in modern scholarshi In “The Problem of the Bida' in the Light of
However, the Leningrad furūṣiyā manuscript, entitled Collection Concerning the Various Branches of the Art, which is a late fifteenth-century (1474) copy of an early fourteenth-century manuscript, describes what is unambiguously a handgun, calls it a midfa’ and has a picture of it.20 Ayalon claims that the first unambiguous reference to use of the handgun in the Mamluk Sultanate dates from 1490. This was when Qâytbây offered members of the hāliqa extra pay if they managed to learn to handle the arquebus.21 However, I have found an earlier reference, albeit a trivial one. In 1424 a Circassian mamluk captured in the raid on Cyprus turned out to be a considerable acrobat and marksman. He entertained Barsbây’s Cairo with displays of a mukhala and a bow while walking a tightrope.22 Moreover, Western sources, which Ayalon did not use, suggest that the Mamluks were using handguns well before 1490. For example, Bertrandon de la Brocquière, who was in Mamluk Syria in the years 1432–3, noted how the pilgrim caravan returning from Damascus was provided with an escort some of whom carried “small harquebuses which they fired off every now and then”.23 Jacques Couer was accused by his enemies in 1451 of having supplied guns to the Mamluk sultan Barsbây.24 According to the traveller, Joos van Ghistele, Ferdinand of Naples sent the Sultan Qâytbây a shipload of weapons including culverins, arubesques, serpentine and other firearms in 1482 and the Sultan was delighted by the gift. The following year, 1483, the

an Arabic Manuscript of the 14th century”, in JESHO, vol. VII (1964), 191–96, Subhi Y. Labib erroneously deduced from certain passages in al-Turkomani’s treatise on bida’ (1397) that the shutṭār, rabish huntsmen who specialised in targeting certain birds, were using arquebuses to do so. However, it is perfectly clear from the context that they were using crossbows. Al-Buḫqiyya is also the Arabic for ‘Venice’ and this may have led the sixteenth-century historical romancer, Ibn Zubbul, to deduce erroneously that the gun was a Venetian invention. Ahmad b. Zubbul al-Maḥallī, ʿAbharat al-Mamlūkīk waqf al-Sūltān al-Ghawrī qat al-Sulṭan al-Uthmānī, A.T. ‘Amir, ed. (Cairo, 1962), 58–59.


21 Ayalon, Gunpowder and Firearms, 39.


23 Bertrandon de la Brocquière, 301.

24 Eliyahu Ashtor, Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages (Princeton, 1983), 349.
pilgrim Felix Fabri in Egypt was escorted by an arquebus-bearing mamluk.25

However, it is, of course, useful to distinguish between the introduction of a weapon and the first instances of its effective deployment in a battle or a siege. When are guns used to do more than frighten the horses? In the West, cannons were used for siege warfare as early as the late fourteenth century.26 But cannons on the battlefield were hardly more than noise-making machines until the mid-fifteenth century. It is true that artillery did play a crucial part at the Battle of Castillon in 1453, but the guns in question were not field guns, but siege guns in deeply entrenched positions deployed against densely packed infantry.27 By common consent, the Battles of Ravenna (1512) and Marignano (1515) were the first European battles to be won by field artillery.28 As for the handgun, the Swiss made effective use of them in the 1430s, as did the Hussites a decade or so earlier. Even so, the Italian wars of 1494–1559 were still largely fought by heavy cavalry with lances, even though the Spanish army in Italy had some arquebusiers.29 Arquebuses only replaced the crossbow in France in 1567.30 English armies were similarly slow to switch to the handgun.

Turning now to the Middle East, it is a mistake to think that it lagged behind Europe in the deployment of firearms in the battlefield. More or less contemporaneously with Marignano and Ravenna, artillery was playing some part in the battles of Chaldiran (1514), Marj Dâbiq (1516) and Raydâniyya (1517). Moreover, somewhat earlier, Ottoman cannons and arquebuses seem to have played a decisive role in Mehmed II’s victory over Üzün Hasan and the Aqqüynlû at the Battle of Bashkent in 1473.31

26 Goodman, Wars of the Roses, 164.
27 Ross, Wars of the Roses, 112.
29 Vale, War and Chivalry, 70.
30 Vale, War and Chivalry, 136.
The Mamluk sultanate made significant use of handguns from the late fifteenth-century onwards and it was ahead of the Ottomans and Safavids in doing so. Qāytbāy had the awlād al-nāṣ trained to fire bunduq al-raṣās. (Raṣās means lead or bullet. According to Ayalon, bunduq al-raṣās can refer to both the arquebus and its ammunition.)

The musketeers received extra pay and were equipped with camels and were sent off to fight the Ottomans in 895/1490. It was a remarkably successful campaign. The mamluks reached Kayseri and sacked its suburbs and the following year Bayezid II sued for peace. It has been suggested that it was Ottoman defeats in this war that persuaded Bayezid II to reform his army and equip it with firearms. The earliest references to Ottoman troops having handguns dates from 1465. Spandugino, writing in 1510, says that the Janissaries had only recently learned the use of handguns. Venetian consular reports of the Ottoman struggle against the Safavid Shah Ismāʿīl in the opening decades of the sixteenth century make it clear that only a minority, albeit a large minority, of the Janissaries were schiopeteri (marksmen). At that stage most Janissaries still carried bows and the maritime historian, John Guilmartin, is of the opinion that most of the Janissaries who fought at Lepanto (1571) were still bowmen.

It is true Middle Eastern generals were slow to equip their infantry with handguns. However, there may have been good reasons for this. The handgun in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries offered very few advantages over the composite recurved bow used by the mamluks and the Janissaries. The composite recurved bow, com-
posed of layers of horn and sinew and a little over three feet long, was more accurate and had a longer range than the sixteenth-century handgun. An arrow, fired from such a bow, could hit a target 500 yards away. That arrow could pierce plate armour at fifty yards. In the hands of a trained archer a composite recurved bow fired six shots a minute (as against the one or two shots a minute that a man with a matchlock might manage). Unlike the early matchlocks, the recurved bow could be managed from the horse. A study of the seventeenth-century wars between the Tartars and the Poles and the Russians has shown that even at so late a date and after the adoption of the musket, the horse-archer still usually had the advantage of infantry using firearms. The bows of the Tartar cavalry had a longer range and fired faster than the Russian muskets and, of course, the horse archer had the additional advantage of mobility.38

The chief disadvantage of the composite recurved bow was that it was difficult to handle and it had a heavy drawing weight—heavier even than that of the famous English longbow. It took years to train the men who used these bows and it was expensive to maintain such a skilled force.39 However, if one did actually possess such a skilled force, as the Mamluk sultans did, then plainly it would have been a regressive step to dismount those cavalry archers and give them guns. It made more sense to give these guns to low-grade infantry troops and that is precisely what Mamluk sultans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did. the sultans recruited sons of mamluks, Egyptian peasants, Maghribis and so forth and then gave them the small amount of training necessary.

In general, firearms gave no very clear advantage on the battlefield in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The deployment of cannons on the field could actually contribute to defeat by creating a static defence line and making the troops less mobile. The Earl of Warwick’s defeat at the second battle of St Albans has already been mentioned. Similarly, as we shall see, Tūmānbāy, the last Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, placed too much faith in fixed emplacements defended by

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cannons, and it was this faith in gunpowder as some kind of victory-bearing talisman and this contributed to his decisive defeat at Raydāniyya in 1517.

The medieval cannon had several serious weaknesses, a few of which can be noted here. First, first because of poor casting techniques, the early cannons had a low life-expectancy. Sooner or later they blew up quite a few on their first trial—especially cannons cast from iron.40 Secondly, they had a slow rate of fire. One reason for this was that the cannon needed cooling and washing with vinegar and water before it could be reloaded. If all went well, ten shots might be fired in an hour, but evidently, if the cavalry charged the guns, then the gunners would only be able to lose off one shot before the attackers were upon the guns. Thirdly, the projectile force of a medieval cannon was not as great as it would become by the seventeenth century. Medieval gunners used serpentine powder. Modern gunpowder is nearly twice as strong. Corned (or granulated) powder was introduced in the West in the 1430s (at about the time the handgun began to be used in battles) and it was somewhere between the two in strength. However, one problem with corned powder is that it needed to be fired from stronger-cast barrels. Fourthly, in the case of the earliest guns, each shot needed individual ignition by the gunner and the gunner needed to keep a match alight for this purpose. (Matchlock ignition only began to appear in Europe in the mid-fifteenth century.) Fifthly, the early handgun, or arquebus, had a short range and its shots had relatively little penetrating power. Musket-shot had much greater range and penetrating power, but use of the musket only became general in the late sixteenth century. Sixthly, the stone balls fired by early guns were labour-intensive to make. There was no standardisation of calibre, so ammunition had to be specifically tailored to a specific gun. Seventhly, the recoil from early guns was such that it could break an unwary gunner’s ribs. Eighthly, early cannons were cumbersome and it might take a long time to bring them to the field. It took twenty-four horses to pull a heavy gun and three to pull a light gun (or falcon). Once on the field artillery hampered the free movement of one’s own cavalry.

40 See, for examples of guns exploding on trial during Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī’s reign, Carl Petry, Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt’s Waning as a Great Power (Albany, N.Y., 1994), 192–3.
(When one considers these and other problems, it seems a miracle that gunpowder technology ever took off at all.) Probably the early guns were most effective in frightening the horses (and this may have been what happened at Chaldiran).  

However, though gun-carriages and munitions carts might slow the progress of an army, once they had arrived on the battlefield, they might, if disposed in a ring or some other line of defence, provide a cover quite independent of the fire of the guns themselves. One way of looking at Selim’s victory over the Mamluks is as the triumph of Turkish “wheel culture” over “Egypto-Syrian camel and mule culture”. The Ottoman ṣarabs (carts) were chained together and used as Wagenburgs, or Lagers, which could easily be defended against cavalry charges. This was also the practice of the Bohemian Hussites. Such Lagers were defended by both cannons and bows. The Ottomans were masters in the use of wagons for defence. When in 1516, the Damascen chronicler, Ibn Ṭūlūn went to visit the Janissaries camped outside Damascus, he was most impressed by the carts used to carry the big guns and which were chained together to form a line of defence. He said that he had never seen anything like that before. Safavid cavalry failed to penetrate the Ottoman line of wagons at Chaldiran. Therefore, they adopted the practice themselves and Shah Tāhmāsp successfully deployed 700 ṣarabs and four cannons against the Uzbeks in 1528. Previously, the Mamluk Sultan Tūmānhāy had deployed wagons (less effectively, of course) at Raydāniyya—the wagons serving to defend his cannons as well as his Maghrībi and Sudanese musketeers.

It has been argued above that there were good military reasons for being cautious about the wholesale adoption of firearms, whereas Ayalon and others have suggested that the Mamluk elite resisted the

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45 On the sources for the Battle of Raydāniyya and its outcome, see below.
adoption of firearms for psychological and chivalric reasons. However, evidence for a chivalric ethic or ideology attached to the science of furusiyya (horsemanship and the related military skills) would appear to be very slight indeed. Furusiyya manuals dealt with practical skills and did not waste any space on expounding a chivalric ethos. It is perhaps worth noting that Faraj, who of all the Mamluk sultans was the one most praised for his furusiyya, was also one of the most enthusiastic users of artillery (in his struggles against the Emir Shaykh). At the very end of the Mamluk period, the Sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri sought to revive the skills of furusiyya and built a new maydan for the mounted exercises. But Qansuh was also enthusiastic about guns. He had guns cast in Egypt. He bought guns from abroad. He raised an arquebus regiment to go and fight the Portuguese in the Red Sea. As remarked above, since it would have been wasteful to issue arquebuses to the highly (and expensively trained force of extremely effective Mamluk horse archers, guns were customarily issued instead to halqa troopers, Maghribis and other low grade footsoldiers.

I do not think that the Mamluks had a psychological problem regarding the acquisition of firearms. Their problem was rather material and logistical. Copper had to be imported from Europe for the most part. (The Tyrol was a major source of copper in the Middle Ages.) The best source for wood (charcoal) and saltpetre, as well as iron was Ottoman-controlled Anatolia (and hence vulnerable to an embargo on the part of the Ottomans). The Mamluks may also have had problems recruiting skilled gun-casters, for there was, of course, no tradition of casting church bells in the Middle East and the Mamluks were less well-placed than the Ottomans when it came to enslaving or recruiting skilled European workmen.

47 On Faraj’s furusiyya, see Ibn Taghrībī , Najīm, vol. VI, 271.
48 On the revival of furusiyya under Qansuh al-Ghawri, see Ayalon ‘Notes on Furusiyya Exercises’, 43–44, 45, 51–52; Petry, Protectors of Praetorians, 191.
51 On measures to preserve the Lebanese forest, see Bertrand de la Brocquière, 297.
When he came to discuss Qāiytbāy’s alleged indifference to artillery, Professor Ayalon observed that “[h]is indifference is of special interest in the light of the costly and protracted battles which Qāiytbāy waged against the Ottomans and their satellite Shāh Siwār. In none of these battles is there any reference to the Mamluk army using artillery, whereas we may deduce from a casual remark that the Ottomans and Shāh Siwār did”.52 However, this is not the case. In the years 1465–71 the Mamluks fought a war against Shāh Siwār, a rebellious Dhu’l-Ghadrid prince in south-west Anatolia, whom the Ottomans were covertly sponsoring as a thorn in the flanks of the Mamluks. Then again in the years 1488–91 the Mamluks fought a war with the Ottomans over the status of Qaramān beylicate. The first thing to note is that the Mamluks won both these wars. Secondly, in discussing these wars, Ayalon cites Ibn Taghrī Birdī and Ibn Iyās as sources for the first war and Ibn Iyās alone for the second war. (So he has relied on rather few sources.) Thirdly, if the Mamluks had in fact failed to use artillery in these late-fifteenth-century wars, this would have been strange, for the Mamluk prince Ibrahim used cannon against the Qaramān town of Laranda as early as 1419.53 A little later Barsbāy used cannons against the Cypriot fleet at sea in 1424.54 Then again, after Barsbāy had failed to take Aqqūyunli ruler Qara ‘Uthmān in 1433, he ordered the casting of a brass canon weighing 1,20 qintars.55 Finally, when the Mamluk general Nawkar set out against Ibn Qaramān in 1457, he took with him naphtha gunners.56

In the light of these precedents it is not surprising to find that the Mamluks did in fact make decisive use of artillery in their war against the Dhu’l-Ghadrid Amir Shāh Siwār. Ibn Ajā’s “History of the Amir Bashṭak” (sic), also known as Rihlat al-Amīr Yashbak (“Journey of the Amir Yashbak”) is the most detailed account to have survived of Yashbak min Mahdī’s campaign in 1471 against Shāh Siwār. The Amir Yashbak min Mahdī was the Sultan Qāiytbāy’s leading general and the most powerful of all the amirs. While he lived, Yashbak

52 Ayalon, Gunpowder and Firearms, 48.
54 Ibid., vol. III, 80; cf. ibid., 91.
seems to have been even more powerful than the Sultan himself. Since Ibn Ajā (d. 1476) was not only Yashbak’s military qāddi, but also his confidante, ambassador, and civilian aide-de-camp, he was in a position to know about what he wrote about. It is important to note that in the course of this war the Ottomans did not use artillery, for the simple reason that they were not directly involved in the fighting. Indeed they sent what purported to be a friendly embassy to Yashbak.

Yashbak however did make use of artillery. In 1471 having marched north through Syria with a lot of infantry, he waited at Marj Dābih to catch up. In the opening stage of the campaign, ‘Aynāb, intimidated by the Mamluk deployment of artillery and the subsequent nine days of bombardment, surrendered. Thereafter the Mamluks used the city as their arsenal and the place where their gunpowder was stored. Later on in the campaign the Mamluk general Ināl, having invested Adana and demolished one of its towers through artillery, had to send for more gunpowder to finish off the operation. Shāh Siwār himself did possess two cannons at Khirmān, but we only hear about these pieces when they were surrendered to the Mamluks. Indeed, they and the castle seem to have been surrendered to the Mamluks without a shot being fired and Yashbak subsequently used the captured guns against the fortifications of Zamanti. (It also seems, though the Arabic is not clear, that additional guns were cast for the siege of Zamanti.) Zamanti was Shāh Siwār’s final redoubt and, with its surrender in June 1472, the war was over. While it is true that artillery was not used by the Mamluks on the battlefield during this war, this was because Shāh Siwār never dared offer battle in the open field. This was a war of sieges.

57 Shams al-Dīn Muhammad b. Mahmūd b. Ajā, Tarikh al-‘Amīr Bashāk al-Ẓāhirī, ed. Ahmad Tulaymat, (Cairo, 1974); on Ibn Ajā’s life and writings, see Tulaymat’s preface.
59 Ibid., 79–83; Har-El, 93.
60 Ibn Ajā, Tarikh, 123.
61 Ibid., 128.
62 Ibid., 140, 142.
63 On the general progress of this campaign see Evrard, Zur Geschichte Aleppos und Nordsyriens in letzten Halben Jahrhundert der Mamlukenherrschaft (872–924 AH) nach Arabischen und italienischen Quellen (Munich, 1974), 23–24; Har-El, 93–96.
It is indeed striking that in his account of the war against Shāh Siwār, Ibn Iyās, who was a Cairo-based civilian, makes no reference at all to the use of artillery. Neither for that matter does the hadīth expert and historian, Ibn Ḥajar, though he gave a much fuller account of the campaigning than Ibn Iyās’s scrappy jottings. If we did not have Ibn Ajā’s Rihla, and we had to rely only on sources of the kind produced by Ibn Iyās and Ibn Ḥajar, then we might indeed conclude that the Mamluks ignored the potential of firearms and gunpowder. But the truth is that it was Arab, civilian, religious scholars who (not surprisingly) failed to register contemporary developments in military technology. Incidentally, this leads one to the broader reflection that the conventions, clichés and vocabulary employed by traditionally minded chroniclers of the Mamluk period similarly prevented them from registering other economic and technological changes. For one example among the many possible of this negative phenomenon—the numerous dogs that did not bark in the night—no Mamluk chronicler notes the rise of a luxury carpet industry in Cairo in the late fifteenth century, though that is what seems to have happened. But, to return to the firearms problem, Ibn Ḥajar, who was an admired literary stylist, may well have shrunk from such neologisms as makāhil al-nafl, zanburaq, bunduqiyya and so forth. (Similarly, Froissart in his chronicling of the Hundred Years War omitted all reference to the English guns at Crecy, lest they be offensive to his cultivated French readers.)

As for the second war, that between the Mamluks and Ottomans, which was fought over the Tarsus-Adana region, this has been the subject of a well-researched and discriminating study by Shai Har-El, entitled *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East. The Ottoman Mamluk War, 1485–1491*. The Egypto-Syrian army sent out to confront the Ottomans cast cannons at their camp at Ayas. The Mamluk general Uzbek, having defeated the Ottomans in the field, laid siege to Adana and attacked it, using cannons, mangonels and ballistas. An Ottoman

\[\text{\textsuperscript{64}}\] For the campaign itself, see Har-El, 133–51; see also Evrard, *Zur Geschichte Nordsyriens*, 32–40.


\[\text{\textsuperscript{66}}\] Har-El, 140.
relief army engaged the Mamluk besiegers and succeeded in disabling some of their cannons, before it was crushingly defeated. Adana and Tarsus thereupon surrendered to the Mamluks.67

In renewed fighting in 1488, the Ottomans recaptured Cilicia and they then tried to use naval artillery to block the Syrian pass of Bāb al-Malik. However, strong winds sank some of the ships and dispersed the rest. The Mamluks advanced into the Cilician plain and at the Battle of Aga-Çayırı defeated the Ottomans. This was a cavalry battle in which firearms do not seem to have played a significant part. However, when, in 1490, fighting on a smaller scale continued in the region, Qāytbāy sent a force of awlid al-nāṣ, equipped and trained to use the arquebus (bunduq al-raṣāḥ) as part of the Mamluk force which ravaged Ottoman Anatolia.68

If the Mamluks did not neglect firearms, then why did they lose to the Ottomans at the Battle of Marj Dābiq in Syria in 1516 and then again at Raydāniyya in Egypt in 1517? According to Professor Partington, a historian of Gunpowder and Firearms (and also one of Ayalon’s bêtes noires) (“In 1514 an Ottoman army of 12,000 completely routed a Mamluk army much larger through the use of handguns.”)69 But nothing is correct in Partington’s statement—not even the date! I turn now to the causes for the Mamluks’ defeat in battle and the termination of their Sultanate.

The Mamluk Sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī, who was to command the Mamluk army at Marj Dābiq, was crazy about guns. Gun casting was intensive throughout his reign.70 He also raised an arquebus regiment (as indeed Qāytbāy had done before him). However, it must be borne in mind that during the final crisis years of his reign many (perhaps all?) of the arquebusiers that had been raised in Egypt were actually campaigning in the Hijāz and Yemen where they were deployed against the Portuguese.71 As for the cannons cast

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67 Ibid., 141–42.
68 See note 33.
69 Partington, A History of Greek Fire and Gunpowder, 209.
70 On Qānṣūh’s gun foundry at Rajab, which after early difficulties, was casting cannons from 1511 onwards, see Petry, Twilight of Majesty, 162–63; Protectors or Praetorians, 192–93.
71 On the despatch in 1513, of the Fifth Corps, equipped with muskets to the Red Sea campaign, see Ayalon, Gunpowder and Firearms, 73–83; L.O. Schuman, The Political History of the Yemen: Abu Makhrumâ’s Account of 906-16/1500–21, (Göttingen, 1960), 16–20, 69–78; Petry, Protectors, 60, 195; Halil İnalcık, “The Socio-Political
on al-Ghawr's orders, many of those had been sent to defend the Delta ports, especially Alexandria, against an anticipated Ottoman naval attack (though no such attack ever came).  

In 1516, Qânsûh al-Ghawr led an army out of Egypt into Syria. His aim may have been the purely defensive one of defending Syria from a possible attack by the Ottoman troops led by Selim the Grim. On the other hand, al-Ghawr may have believed that Selim was planning to invade Safavid Iran once more, in which case the Mamluk army might attack the Ottomans on the flank. Ghawr’s motives remain unclear. The Mamluk Sultan, straining every resource, brought with him 5,000 royal mamluks from Egypt to the field at Marj Dâbiq, but plainly his army was larger than that, for the royal mamluks were only an elite force within the larger body of the Sultan’s army. In fact, the Venetian consul in Alexandria reported that the Sultan left Egypt with 15,000 mamluks and awlâd al-nâs, as well as between 25 and 30 pieces of artillery. (These last would presumably have been relatively light pieces of field artillery, rather than large guns of the size used, for example by Mehmed II to bring down the walls of Constantinople in 1453.) He also reported that a vast number of camels had had their ears stopped up so that they could be sent against artillery. The Venetian added that the Sultan was alleged to be able to add 150,000 Arabs (that is to say bedouins) to his army. However, the consul doubted this figure. Even so, it seems likely that the Sultan would have recruited some thousands of auxiliary troops from the Bedouins and others.

The Sultan would certainly have added to his forces as he passed through Syria. Syrian troops had previously borne the brunt of the fighting against the Turkomans, the Safavids and rebellious Bedouins. Apart from Mamluk elite forces garrisoned in the cities, the Syrian troops seem to have been predominantly foot-soldiers. Many of these


would have been ‘ushrān, semi-nomadic Arabs who usually fought as infantry—often as archers on foot. The highlands of Palestine and Lebanon were major recruiting grounds for such troops. Ibn Ajā’ī’s account of the earlier war fought by Yashbak against Shāh Siwār provides quite lot of detail about the recruitment of Syrian auxiliary forces. (Press-gang tactics, as well as promises of money were used to bring such men into the field.) Apart from Arab tribesmen, Kurds and Turkomans were regularly recruited for major campaigns.

It seems that likely that some of the Syrian troops, both from the towns and the countryside, possessed firearms. As early as 1498 Kurtbāy, the Nā’īb of Damascus, was training men to handle hand-guns and assigning uniforms and barracks to them. Moreover, official initiatives apart, it would be surprising if the Druze, the Kurds and Arab tribesmen of Syria had not sought to acquire guns for their own use. The Baḥr Sākhṛ were using arquebuses in their attacks against Syrian villages as early as 1502–3. (An Ottoman firman for Palestine in 1527 sought to address the problem of Bedouin buying muskets—often muskets that were superior in quality to the ones that the Janissaries possessed—from ports like Acre. In that year there were already an estimated 7,000 muskets in the Sanjak of Safad alone. It seems that Italian and French merchants were trading guns for local cotton.)

Mamluk numbers had of course been depleted by the plagues of 1505 and 1513. According to Paolo Giovio, Qānṣūh brought 13,000 mamluks with him into Syria, though the total number of his army was much larger than that. According to the sixteenth-century Syrian, Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī advanced northwards out of Aleppo with 30,000 men. However, Michael Winter believes that Qānṣūh’s army may have numbered as few as 5,000–7,000 soldiers. Selīm’s army was certainly larger than the Mamluk one.
When one thinks of Ottoman armies, one tends to think first and foremost of the famous Janissaries, or “New Troops”. It is true that the Janissaries furnished an important part of the Ottoman army. However, they were, in a sense, the rejects of the Ottoman devshirme and palace school system. They did not furnish the bulk of Selim’s army, for they were outnumbered by the sipahi cavalry and by the yaya, or free-born infantry. In Selim’s reign they do not seem to have been a particularly well-disciplined force. They had mutinied soon after the Battle of Chaldiran. Then they mutinied again at their winter quarters in Amasya and had to be sent back to Istanbul for reorganisation. In the fifteenth century the Janissaries seem still to have been predominantly a force of infantry archers and it was only slowly that they were equipped with guns. However, as has been noted, it has been suggested that the process of re-equipping the Janissaries may have speeded up somewhat after Ottoman defeats at the hands of the Mamluks in the war of 1485–91. Even so, according to Guilmartin it was only by the end of the sixteenth century that most of the Janissaries were equipped with tüfeks, or muskets. At the naval Battle of Lepanto (1571) most of the Janissaries seem to have been archers.81

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine how large a proportion of Selim’s army in 1516 consisted of Janissaries. However, various contemporaries offered guesstimates of the size of the Ottoman army as a whole. According to Contarini, who was based in Cyprus at the time, Selim passed through the Taurus region en route for Syria with 200,000 men, though he added that Selim’s army was for the most part ill-disciplined and poorly equipped.82 According to the Damascan chronicler, Ibn Tulun, the Ottoman army that entered Damascus after the Battle of Marj Dabiq numbered 130,000. He added that Selim’s army was a heterogenous lot, including Rûmis,

81 Guilmartin, Gunpowder and Galleons, 251. The Turkish cavalry elite, like the Mamluk cavalry elite was reluctant to handle guns themselves, preferring to leave them in the hands of low grade infantry. Ogier de Busbecq reported that when, in 1552, Rustam Pasha prepared for the third campaign against the Persians, he armed his cavalry with muskets. However, many of the cavalymen promptly broke or lost their guns and they all complained about the way gunpowder dirtied their uniforms and they successfully argued that they should revert to using bows and arrows. (The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople 1554–1562, tr. Edward Seymour Forster, Oxford, 1927, 123–24).

Armenians, Tatars, Siwāriyya (who were presumably troops formerly in the service of Shāh Siwār?), Franks and others. According to Ibn Iyās, a renegade from the Ottoman army reported that the Ottoman force that subsequently advanced on Egypt consisted of 60,000 men. (It should be borne in mind that Selim would have left substantial garrisons in the main Syrian cities.) Thomas Venier gave an even smaller figure. According to his contemporary report, Selim’s forces, which subsequently fought against Tūmān-bāy in Egypt, numbered 25–30,000 horsemen and 8,000 Janissaries of which half were schiopeteri (marksmen, presumably both gunners and archers) and half were rochonieri (pikemen). Several other European reports confirm the estimate of half the Janissaries as being schiopeteri. Returning to the Battle of Marj Dābīq in 1516, Ibn Zunbul, in his account of the battle, says that the Mamluk army was heavily outnumbered, with 2,000 mamluks facing an Ottoman force of 150,000—for what that is worth. However, the historical testimony of Ibn Zunbul is worth very little. (I will come back to him.)

One reason, then for the Mamluk defeats at Marj Dābīq and subsequently was that they were outnumbered. Secondly, the Mamluk commander, Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī, who was some eighty years old, died of a fit (of apoplexy?) half way through the battle. Thirdly, there were traitors in the Mamluk ranks, most notably the Emir Khāyrbak, who led his section of the army off the battlefield. (Ibn Zunbul placed particularly heavy stress on role of traitors in turning what had begun as a Mamluk victory into a defeat.) Fourthly, there were tensions between the qarāniya (seasoned mamluks) and the julbān (recent recruits). The former resented the fact that they were being used in the charges on Ottoman positions, while the julbān were held back. Fifthly, the ill-disciplined looting of Ottoman supplies by Mamluk cavalry played a part in the Mamluks’ ultimate defeat.

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84 Ibn Iyās, Badaʾiʿ, vol. III, 121.
85 Samuūd, Diarii, vol. XXIV, 171.
86 Ibn Zunbul, Akhīrat al-Mamālikh, 129.
It is also possible that firearms contributed to the Mamluk defeat. But let us consider the matter carefully. Ibn Iyās mentions Ottoman firearms. Ibn Ṭūlūn writes of the Mamluks being driven off by men firing bunduq al-raṣāṣ (lead pellets?). However, what was used to fire off this sort of ammunition? One may be tempted to think that musketry fire is being referred to here. However, a subsequent mention of bunduq al-raṣāṣ by Damascan chronicler, Ibn Ṭūlūn, in the context of his account of Selīm’s entry into Damascus, reveals that each bunduq al-raṣāṣ was as big as a fist and they were fired by field-guns on boxes mounted on wagons which could be chained together. Selīm entered Damascus with 30 of these guns. They were field cannon then rather than muskets or handguns.88 As for artillery, it seems to have caused more panic than actual damage. What caused more of a problem for the Mamluk horsemen was their inability to break through the Ottoman Lager of chained wagons. Even so, Marj Dābiq was a close run affair. At noon it was still looking as though the Mamluks were going to win.89 Venetian and Rhodian observers, as well as Ottoman informants, agreed that Selīm’s losses had been heavy. Approximately 15,000 Turks had been killed. Mamluk losses were relatively light (500–1,000), as so many of them preferred to run away and fight another day.

Turning now to the second big battle, that fought at Raydānīyya, a little to the north of Cairo in 1517, no source, not even Ibn Zunbul, claimed that Raydānīyya was lost because the Mamluks failed to use artillery.90 In fact, a contemporary letter by an Arab scribe in the Ottoman army reveals that Ṭūmānbāy’s men collected guns from all over Egypt, including makāhil, kafyāt, sabaqiyāt, and bunduqiyāt.91 According to Ibn Iyās, Ṭūmānbāy initially mustered more than thirty cannons mounted on carts, and more guns were deployed by gunners mounted on camels and others were carried by footsoldiers. (As Ayalon has noted, Ṭūmānbāy was extremely keen on guns.) By the eve of battle, Ṭūmānbāy had increased his firepower to more

89 Ibid., 24.
91 Quoted in extenso in Ibn Ṭūlūn, Muḥṭākahat, vol. II, 45.
one hundred brass cannons on carts. Additionally, he had recruited 200 Turkoman and Maghribi artillerymen, plus black slave gunners ('abid naftiya). The Egyptian army dug ditches and raised screens at Raydānīyya and placed Frankish and other marksmen there. When the Egyptians attacked the Ottoman vizier, Sinān, on the right wing, they did so with guns and the Ottoman Turks drove them off with swords.

What happened at Raydānīyya was that Tūmānbāy’s redoubts and entrenched positions were outflanked by the more mobile Ottoman troops who outflanked and attacked the gun emplacements from the rear. Tūmānbāy’s faith in artillery had led him to adopt too inactive a role on the battlefield. (Moreover, according to report by the Grand Master of the Hospitallers at Rhodes, Tūmānbāy’s flight from the field was provoked by reports of a Maghribi uprising in Cairo.)92 The Ottoman victory at Raydānīyya proved to be decisive. Even so their losses had again been heavy.

From all the foregoing, it should be clear that the Mamluks’ failure to appreciate fully the significance of firearms did not contribute significantly to their defeat by the Ottomans in the early sixteenth century. The only prejudice the Mamluk sultans had regarding firearms was a prejudice in their favour. The only problem they had with firearms was that could not get enough of them. The contrary view relies heavily on Ibn Zunbul’s narrative of the struggle between the Mamluks and the Ottomans. Ibn Zunbul placed heavy emphasis on the role of gunpowder in bringing about the ruin and destruction of Mamluk chivalry. According to Ayalon, “The evidence gathered from Ibn Zunbul’s work proves beyond any shadow of doubt that by far the most important cause of Mamluk defeat was the Ottoman use of firearms”. But Ibn Zunbul’s narrative of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and Syria is not the sort of source on which one can rely for indubitable proof of anything whatsoever. Ibn Zunbul’s background, chronology and literary aims are so far poorly explored and the issues raised by his various books are so complex, that I am publishing an article devoted specifically to his shadowy life and confusing writings.93 For the time being, it suffices to remark that it is

92 Sanudo, Diarii, 171.
93 Forthcoming, as “Ibn Zunbul and the Romance of History”, to be published in The Status of Medieval Arabic Literature, Julia Bray and James Montgomery, eds.
not clear when Ibn Zunbul was born, or when he died, or when he produced the various versions of his story of the conflict between Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī and Selim. On the other hand it is also clear that much of what Ibn Zunbul reports could not possibly have happened (unless, that is, one believes in telepathy, magic and witchcraft). It also seems probable that he was only a child at the time of the Ottoman occupation of Egypt. (He certainly was not Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī’s court astrologer, as Benjamin Lellouche has recently claimed.) Rather this fascinating writer, who flourished in the 1560s and 70s, has claims to be considered as the Arab world’s first historical novelist. It is true that, in his romanticised version of the downfall of the Mamluks, (the correct title of which is Kitāb infīsāl dawlat al-awān wa’t-tisāqal dawlat Bani ‘Uthmān), he stressed the importance of gunpowder and firearms in bringing about the defeat of the Mamluks. However, he made use of this as an excuse to explain the downfall of his chivalrous Mamluk heroes. The speeches in which Mamluk officers denounce firearms and their effects are clearly fictitious. Moreover, though Ibn Zunbul did indeed stress the importance of firearms, he laid even greater stress on the role of traitors within the Mamluk ranks and, above all, he repeatedly observed that when God has decreed the end of a dynasty, that dynasty is indeed doomed.

While it is the case that the deployment of firearms brought with it certain problems, the fact that the Mamluk empire maintained so grand a presence in the eastern Mediterranean for so long was in some measure due to its adoption and deployment of firearms. Indeed, the Mamluk Sultanate may be regarded as the first, though one of the most short-lived, of the “gunpowder empires” of the Islamic world.

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PART FOUR

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION IN MAMLUK PALESTINE
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CHAPTER SEVEN
THE GOVERNANCE OF JERUSALEM UNDER QÂYṬBÂY

Donald P. Little

Thanks to Carl Petry we have a clear and well documented understanding of the nature of Qâyṭbây’s long reign as sultan as seen by contemporary historians from the Mamluk capital in Cairo, most, but not all, of whom regard him with favor, the exception being Ibn Taghřī Bīrdu, with his criticisms based on the early years of the sultanate. Petry concurs in the majority judgment and depicts Qâyṭbây as “esteemed custodian . . .”, “the principal monarch of Sunni Islam . . .”, who “radiated an aura of majesty that inspired many of his subjects to revere their overlord as a conservator of grandeur they recalled from days when Egypt’s primacy was uncontested.”

Moreover, for Qâyṭbây’s sultanate we are fortunate to have an additional, non-Cairene source, written from a provincial point of view, namely al-Uns al-Jalâl bi-ta’rîkh al-Quds wa’l-Khalīl written by Qâyṭbây’s contemporary, the Ḥanbali scholar and historian of Jerusalem, Mujīr al-Dīn al-‘Ulaymī. This source Petry did not use. In his desire to record as much as he could about the merits and history of the city, Mujīr al-Dīn divided al-Uns into sections discussing its Islamicity within the monotheistic tradition, its shrines, and biographical notes on its notables, both religious and political. Unexpectedly, the work ends with an annalistic account of the reign of Qâyṭbây, beginning with the year of his installation as sultan in 872/1468 and ending, conveniently but not conclusively, with 900/1495, even though Qâyṭbây .


continued to rule for another year and Mujir al-Din himself lived until 928/1522. Somewhat surprisingly, Mujir al-Din passes up the opportunity to eulogize a reigning sultan in an introduction characterizing his reign, stating merely that “He spread justice among his subjects (al-ra'iyya) so that the people (al-nâs) had confidence in his reign. Jerusalem was decorated and the good news was proclaimed when the report of his sultanate arrived.”4 But the titles that Mujir al-Din bestows on Qâybtây give some indication of his admiration: “Animator of Justice in the Worlds, Righter of the Oppressed against the Oppressors, Fighter of Unbelievers and Polytheists, Destroyer of Despots and Renegades, Uniter of the Faith, and Suppressor of Tyranny and Aggression”, even though these may well be stereotypes.5 This favorable impression in Jerusalem is confirmed for the most part throughout the detailed annals that follow. These I will use to reconstruct aspects of how the city was governed during Qâybtây’s reign and at the end examine briefly its governance in the context sketched by Petry for Qâybtây’s rule in Syria in general.

Appointment and dismissal of officials, both political and religious, in Jerusalem figure prominently in the annals. Here I will focus on the political. Not surprisingly, following the custom of his predecessors, Qâybtây initially retained the two Mamluk officials appointed before he came to power, but not for long. These two held the titles of Supervisor of the Two Shrines in Jerusalem and Hebron (Nâzîr al-Haramayn bi‘l-Quds al-Sharîf wa‘l-Khalîl) and Viceroy of the same two places (Nâ‘îb al-Sultana . . .). Although Mujir al-Dîn never spells out the distinction between the two offices, it would seem that the viceroy acted as the sultan’s deputy in all matters except oversight of the endowments of the shrines of both cities. As might be expected the two officials did not always work together in harmony. In fact, the first two appointed after Qâybtây’s accession in 872/1468, had a serious falling out that divided the city into two factions after the Nâzîr Bardbâk al-Tâjî was wounded in an attack by the Nâ‘îb Damurdâsh al-‘Uthmâni. Amidst the resultant civil strife and the nâzîr’s poor management, supervision of Jerusalem’s endowments suffered so that theft and brigandage became rampant, to the extent

5 Ibid., 282.
that an envoy was sent from Cairo to investigate the matter. As we shall see, this was the first of many incidents in which the sultanate intervened in the public affairs of Jerusalem. Otherwise, relations between the two representatives of Mamluk authority pass without Mujir al-Din’s notice, though there is mention of animosity between the viceroys of Jerusalem and Gaza in 896–900/1491–95. Another element of ambiguity comes from the fact that we know from the Haram documents that at an earlier period there were Shafi’i judges who bore the title of Supervisor of Pious Endowments (Nazzir al-Aqiq al-Mabrura) in Jerusalem and Hebron, but their relationship to the Mamluk nazzirs has not been defined. More vexing still is the scarcity of Mamluks in Jerusalem in Mujir al-Din’s pages, other than the two top officials. True, there is occasional mention of Mamluks who had retired in or been exiled to the city, and there are brief references to officers such as the mutasallims and dawads in the service of the nuwâb as well as the commanders of the citadel, but we know very little about these Mamluks, less, in fact, than about those sent on missions to the city from Cairo.

In any event for the twenty-eight of the twenty-nine years of Qâytbây’s reign recorded by Mujir al-Din, three Mamluk amirs served as nazzir al-Haramayn exclusively, as well as one qâdi who in 873–75/1468–71 served as an interim appointee. Twelve Mamluks served exclusively as viceroys. But in 893/1488 Qâytbây for some reason decided to combine the two offices, and they remained so through 900/1495. From 893, after an interregnum when the dawâds of the viceroy of Gaza served until new appointments could be made, through 900, three amirs served in the dual capacity. Thus under Qâytbây fifteen viceroys served a little less than two years on average, including Khađir Bâk, who served once in 891/1486 and was appointed to the two offices in 896/1491; in contrast, six nazzirs served for an average of four-and-a-half years. Whether or not these figures reveal anything significant about the stability of Mamluk rule in the

6 Ibid., 285.
7 Ibid., 359, 367, 373.
city is problematic, since we have no comparative figures for other times and places. It is noteworthy, though, that one nāẓir, al-Amīr Naṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-NaṣĪḥ, remained in office for almost eighteen years (875–93/1470–1487) until, exceptionally, he resigned rather than being dismissed. He is one of the few Mamluks singled out for praise by Mujir al-Dīn, “for serving with decency and vigor, providing civility to the Holy Land through his presence. He held frequent sessions with the ‘ulamā’ and jurisprudents, whom he treated well, receiving them with a joyful countenance.”¹⁰ More specifically, he undertook to rebuild the endowments and to restore the serving of free meals in Hebron.

What were the circumstances of these appointments? Although there is disagreement as to precisely when the sultans, as opposed to the viceroys of Damascus, began naming the two officials in Jerusalem, whether 1391, 1394, or 1413,¹¹ there is no doubt whatsoever that during Qāyyūb’s reign the positions were firmly in the hands of the sultanate. Occasionally, to be sure, there are indications that Qāyyūb’s highest notables played an active role in the process, especially in depositions. Thus in 896/1491 Duqmāq Dawādār Ināl al-Aṣḥār was dismissed as nā‘ib and nāẓir by al-Amīr Aqbirdī al-Dawādār al-Kabīr while he was in the vicinity of Ramla on an official mission for the sultan.¹² This was the same powerful official of Qāyyūb’s court whose support Duqmāq had previously bought the previous year against complaints lodged against him in Jerusalem.¹³ It is clear that graft was an element in political and other appointments. When, for example, Duqmāq was appointed in Cairo to the two positions, he paid 10,000 dinars to the royal treasuries in addition to the gratuities he conferred on the pillars of the state (“istaqqara . . . fi nazar al-Haramayn al-Sharīfayn wa-niyābat al-saltana bi‘l-Quds wa-balad Sayyidinā al-Kālid . . . bi-badhī ‘asharat al-ḥālaf ‘li‘l-khazīn al-sharīfīa ghayrā mā takallufahu lī-‘arkān al-dawla.”).¹⁴ In 899/1494, one of

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¹⁰ Ibid., 288.
¹³ Ibid., 353.
¹⁴ Ibid., 342.
his successors, Jān Balāt, after being summoned to Cairo to answer complaints lodged against him from Jerusalem, was allowed to remain in office, like Duqmāq, after he had paid a sum of money. Further evidence of the prevalence of graft comes in a dispute between the two viceroyes of Jerusalem and Gaza during the same year over the post of amirate of the Jurm Arabs. In any event, the viceroy of Gaza wrote to the sultan, opposing the Jerusalem viceroy’s candidate on the grounds that he was not suitable for the post because “he could not put up the donation (al-qawd) nor the amount specified for the royal treasuries.” Accordingly the sultan instructed that a council be convoked in which the two viceroyes, their judges, and all the candidates who were qualified for the post “and were satisfactory to the subjects (al-ra’iyya) consider the stipulated amount and submit a legal report (mahdar) to Cairo.” In the end the Jerusalem nominee prevailed because its viceroy agreed to pay five hundred dinars in excess of the customary donation and the stipulated amount. Other than willingness and ability to pay the price, little is known about the process of selecting political officials. According to al-Qalqashandi, in 777/1376 the viceroyship of Jerusalem was established for an amir of forty. While it is evident from al-Uns that all the viceroyes during Qātābāy’s reign were Mamluk amirs (except for the one temporary appointee), I have been unable to determine their ranks from the biographical dictionaries. In addition we know that all the na‘ibs and nāzirs were appointed in Cairo with a diploma (tawqī’ā) issued by the sultanate. These designees then set out for Jerusalem, preceded usually by a mutasallim—an assistant or vice-governor. In at least two instances when Mujir al-Dīn provides names, it is evident that these officers were also Mamluks. In fact, one of them, Khādir Bāk, who represented al-Amīr Jānim Bāk upon the latter’s appointment in 888/1483, later became viceroy himself, in 891/1486. Shortly after the mutasallim’s arrival, the viceroy came to Jerusalem, dressed in viceroy’s robes, accompanied by his entourage and notables of Jerusalem who had come out to meet him, and was greeted

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17 *Ibid*.
18 Subh al-dā‘shā ft sinā‘at al-irus (Cairo: al-Ma‘āṣir, 1913–19), vol. IV, 199.
19 *Uns*, vol. II, 336.
by the populace. By custom the diploma of investiture was read on
the most public occasion possible, that is in al-Aqṣā Mosque, fol-
lowing the Friday prayers. Obviously the sultanate felt the need to
demonstrate the legitimacy of the appointment to the people, mak-
ing manifest his will in governing the city.

What, precisely, did the two Mamluk officers do? Given the nature
of our one source, this is difficult to determine: annals, like news-
papers, rarely report routine activities but focus instead on the unusual.
In fact, in a section listing the governors of Jerusalem Mujīr al-Dīn
states that there is no advantage in discussing them at length but is
content to mention those who were known for good deeds.20 Among
these meritorious acts, it can be deduced, are construction activities
in and around the city. The most notable building erected during
Qāyybāy’s reign was, of course, the Ashrafiyya Madrasa. The com-
plicated history of the building/s has been written in detail.21 Suffice
it to say here that the original building was built for Qāyybāy’s pre-
decessor, Khushqadam, by the nāẓir, al-Amīr Hasan al-Zāhiri, with
his own funds, but that when he was dismissed from office he per-
suaded Qāyybāy to accept it as his own, whereupon the sultan’s
name was inscribed over the door.22 Hasan’s successor presided over
the finishing touches in 873/1468–69, installing the doors and fur-
nishing the building with carpets.23 Later, when Qāyybāy decided he
did not like the madrasa and had it reconstructed, this was apparently
done at his own expense and under the supervision of one of his
elite Mamluks sent from Cairo for that purpose.24 The fountain bear-
ing his name also dates from this reconstruction according to Mujīr
al-Dīn.25 Other construction works at the Jerusalem Haram are men-
tioned. In 877/1472–73, for example, the Nāẓir Ibn al-Nashāshībī
rebuilt and enlarged one of the staircases leading to the Dome of
the Rock, and in 884/1479 he undertook to replace the old lead
on the Dome with new, like that recently installed on al-Aqṣā. But
he was vociferously opposed in this project by an official called

20 Ibid., 269.
21 Michael Hamilton Burgoyne and D.S. Richards, Mamluk Jerusalem: An Architectural
Study (Great Britain: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1987), 589–605.
22 Unu, vol. II, 284.
23 Ibid., 286.
24 Ibid., 325.
25 Ibid., 330.
Shaykh al-Ḥaram, who was not a Mamluk but a member of the religious notables. His insistence that the old lead was better than the new was confirmed by Mujīr al-Dīn’s observation that it was still in use “until today.” Fourteen years later, in 895/1490, the Shāfi’i Shaykh al-Īslām al-Kamālī complained to Qāytbāy about the poor state of al-Aqṣā and the need to repair and restore it; this was but one complaint lodged against the nāʾīb/nāẓīr Duqmāq. In 892/1487 the Nāʾīb Khaḍīr Bāk rebuilt the judgment seat at the Dār al-Niyāba (al-Jawliyya) in the Egyptian style, complete with a roof. Here I cannot resist pointing to Mujīr al-Dīn’s sharp critical sense, for even though he relied heavily on documents and inscriptions, he notes that the date inscribed on the seat commemorating its completion was an error: 891 should read 892!

Building projects outside the Ḥaram include repairs to waterworks such as the Qanāt al-Sabīl lying outside the city at Birkat al-Sulṭān, supervised by the nāẓīr in 873/1468–69, and to the Qanāt al-ʿArrūb and the Birkat al-Marjī in 888/1483. At Qāytbāy’s instruction the ex-governor of Damascus, now resident in Jerusalem, was given four thousand dinars for expenses and a thousand as a fee for his supervision of the latter projects. Upon completion of the work, the amir sent a report to Qāytbāy along with the plans he had used, reflecting, I think, the sultan’s close interest in the project, having dispensed, Mujīr al-Dīn observes, “a large sum” on it.

Besides attention given to public works and the Muslim shrines of Jerusalem, the Mamluks were also involved in the tumultuous controversies over the holy places claimed by the Dhimmis. I have written at some length about the fights during Qāytbāy’s reign over a synagogue and Christian shrines on Mt. Zion. These were waged primarily between Muslim legists on one side and representatives of the Dhimmis on the other but resulted in numerous investigations and interventions from the sultanate in Cairo that required convocation of councils in Jerusalem attended by the nāʾīb and nāẓīr. The

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26 Ibid., 292.  
27 Ibid., 349.  
28 Ibid., 337.  
29 Ibid., 285, 330.  
30 Ibid., 330.  
31 Ibid., 331.  
case of the synagogue developed into a public contest of will and jurisdiction between the Mamluk state and its provincial judiciary, involving as well Mamluks in both Jerusalem and Cairo. In the end Qâytbây prevailed of course, given his power of appointment, dismissal, and punishment of judges. The case of the shrines on Mt. Zion was similar but ended with a touch of humor when the Muslims, including the viceroy and Qâytbây’s own envoy, became convinced that Qâytbây was on his way to Jerusalem and upon entering the city would forbid demolition of the Christian monastery. Thereupon they rushed to level the structure before the false alarm of the sultan’s arrival could materialize.

Of special interest might be the impact of Mamluk-Ottoman relations on Jerusalem, Ramla, and Nablus. What Mujir al-Dîn characterizes as a fitna between Qâytbây and Sultan Bayazîd b. ‘Uthmân Malik al-Rûm began for these places in 888/1483, when a Mamluk expeditionary force bound for battle against the Ottomans arrived in Ramla. The viceroy of al-Quds, al-Amîr Jânîm, accompanied by semi-nomadic tribesmen (‘âshîr) recruited from Jabal al-Quds, marched to Ramla to meet the Egyptian troops. A similar expeditionary force, led by the Grand Dawâdâr Aqbirdî, arrived in Ramla the following year, where he enlisted men from the area under the jurisdiction of Shaykh Jabal Nâbulus, but there is no mention of the participation this year of Jabal Qudsîs. Such was not the case in 893/1488 when an expedition led from Egypt by the grand Dawâdâr and the powerful Kâthîb al-Sîr Ibn Muzhir again reached Ramla. This time they were met by the viceroy Duqmnâq, a Shâhî’î qâdî, and other notables of Jerusalem. The viceroy and the qâdî were given five thousand dinars from the royal treasuries for disbursement to the men recruited from Jabal al-Quds and Hebron. When the viceroy fell ill, responsibility for recruitment and pay fell upon the qâdî, who delivered the men to the Mamluks at the staging ground in Ramla, where they were joined by troops from Jabal Nâbulus. As is well known these troops disgraced themselves on the battlefield in Anatolia by deserting and returning to Palestine. There in 894/1489 the grand Dawâdâr demanded repayment of their disbursements from Duqmnâq.

33 Unûs, vol. II, 332.
34 Ibid., 335.
35 Ibid., 343.
Duqmāq set about retrieving these funds by force, flogging and jail-
ing the deserters when they could be found along with their rela-
tives, friends, and neighbors when they could not be. "The people
were treated in a way unheard of since the Jāhiliyya," Mujir al-Dīn
comments, "to the extent that one man sold his daughter like a
slave, and the people remained in dire straits and tribulation unpar-
alleled in the Holy Land before that time." Nevertheless, additional
troops were levied the next year from Jabal al-Quds and Jabal al-
Khalīl for still another expeditionary force, apparently without inci-
dent. Finally, in 896/1491, the Mamluk-Ottoman strife ended, for
Mujir al-Dīn’s purposes at least, with a visit to Hebron and Jerusalem
by the Ottoman peace envoys, on their way back to Istanbul from
Cairo. Thus ended the eight-year fitna in which men in the vicinity
of Jerusalem and surrounding towns were conscripted to serve in the
sultan’s armies.

So far, economic matters and government attempts to manipulate
Jerusalem’s resources have been touched upon only briefly, as in,
for example, the payment of bribes, the expenditure of funds for
construction, and the payment of troops recruited from around the
city. In addition, however, we know from al- Uns that there were
occasional attempts from Cairo to monitor the estates of persons
who died in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Syria (as well as other
resources) in an attempt to assign to Bayt al-Māl portions of estates
that contained residues after distribution of shares to the legal heirs.
Unfortunately, the Haram collection of documents contains invento-
ries conducted by the Bureau of Escheat Estates in conjunction
with the Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanafī courts for only a short period at the end
of the fourteenth century. As a result there are no inventories
dating from the reign of Qāṭbāy around a century later. Nevertheless,
we can probably assume that the practice of making such invento-
ries continued, especially since there are occasional references to
them in al-Uns. Thus in 898/1493 a khasakī sent to Damascus to
inspect its endowments and madrasas stopped in Jerusalem where, in
the presence of the political and juridical notables, had a royal edict

36 Ibid., 345. Cf. Shai Har-El, Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-
38 Ibid., 359.
39 Lutfi, Al-Quds, 12–13.
read relating to a totally different matter, namely, “inspection of the documents and proceeds of those who had died in the plague, earmarked for Bayt al-Mal.” Since there had been many plague deaths throughout the Mamluk empire, the government clearly felt obliged to reap such financial benefits as this pandemic bestowed. But the Mamluk envoy in Jerusalem also took the opportunity to extract around 1500 dinars from the waqfs of the city, “causing injury thereby to the poor and the jurists.” As in similar trials and tribulations Mujir al-Din remarks only that “Judgment belongs to God the Great and High.” Beyond the harvest from the estates of plague casualties in Jerusalem, there are at least three references to estates in which inventories were conducted on behalf of the state. The first reference is to the estate of a viceroy of Damascus, Janibak Qilqis—conducted by a qadi sent from Cairo in 885/1480 for this purpose. In fact, the only reason he appears in al-Uns is that he stopped off in Jerusalem, accompanied by one of Qaytbay’s elite Mamluks, to oversee the demolition and reconstruction of the Ashrafyya Madrasa. In 888/1483 the assets of the Jerusalem viceroy Ahmad Mubarak Shah were inventoried after his dismissal and replacement by Janim al-Ashrafi. This, of course, was an exceptional case of an inventory made before death or even terminal illness, perhaps in an effort by the government to determine whether it had any entitlement to his assets. The third case does involve an estate inventory of an individual in Jerusalem, namely that of the viceroy Khadir Bak, who died of plague in 897/1492 and was replaced by his brother Jan Balat. When the estate had been itemized, seven hundred gold dinars were deposited in Jan Balat’s strongbox in al-Madrasa al-Arghuniyya along with other items. When the box was produced in the presence of the viceroy, a Shaykh al-Islam, and qadis, it turned out to be broken and the contents missing and never found. Be that as it may, the point is that the Mamluk authorities kept close tabs on any possible source of revenue in Jerusalem during Qaytbay’s reign.

In this respect the most detailed reckoning provided by Mujir al-Din concerns the manipulation of the olive-oil market in the area—

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41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., 325.
43 Ibid., 330.
44 Ibid., 364.
one of its chief business enterprises—to the benefit of the Cairo regime. This is a complicated story. In the good old days, according to Mujīr al-Dīn, oil was brought from Jabal Nābulus and sold in Jerusalem and Ramla at the market price "without any difficulty for anyone."45 This continued until 890/1485 when a market middleman became involved and began cornering the oil and imposing its purchase on its consumers, namely the soap merchants in Jerusalem and Ramla, paying them a fixed amount, again "without bothering anyone else."46 At first there was an amir present to accept payments. But, then, every year one of the mamluks in the service of the grand dawādār started coming to Jabal Nābulus and sequestered the oil, sold it to its consumers, and received payments. In other words, until 890 the olive-oil market had been free; thereafter the Mamluks began intervening and taking a cut, without, apparently, any complaint, since the soapmakers had a monopoly on its purchase. This arrangement changed, however, in 896/1490, when the viceroy in Jerusalem, Duqmāq, allegedly taking revenge for the complaints lodged against him in Jerusalem, persuaded the grand dawādār during one of his periodic visits to Ramla, to issue an edict imposing the forced sale of Nablus oil at fifteen gold dinars per qintār on all the people of Jerusalem, including "the elite and the general public, whether Muslims, Jews or Christians."47 In collaboration with the dawādār’s agent, Duqmāq had lists of all the citizens of Jerusalem drawn up with a set number of qintārs of oil that each had to buy. Those who resisted were pursued without mercy. Those who did not appear were beaten and jailed, or, in their absence, their neighbors, relatives, and casual acquaintances, until the amount levied was paid. The necessity to procure gold resulted in a selling spree of clothing and other goods and a rise in the price of the dinar, with the result that oil purchased at the fixed price of fifteen dinars was sold for 250 silver dirhams worth only five dinars. According to Mujīr al-Dīn, Duqmāq imposed a similar levy in Hebron:

This was a disgusting ordeal, unheard of in any era or in any religious community (milā), especially in this noble spot where one of the three mosques was frequently visited, at the sacred site of God’s Prophet

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
and His friend, Abraham, peace be upon him. Judgment is God’s, the High and Great! 48

Ironically, when Duqmāq presented the approximately twenty-thousand dinars he had extorted to the grand dāwādar at Ramla, the latter deposed him from his two offices and “drove him from the Holy Land.” 49 But two years later when al-Amīr Jān Balāt (who had returned from campaigning in Anatolia in 897/1492), had become viceroy and supervisor, the forced sale of Nablus oil was renewed, this time by an edict from the Grand Dāwādar Aqbirdī, who once again had come to Ramla. In spite of the public proclamation that the subjects were not to be molested, along with the promise of security to the general public and the restriction of the forced sale of oil, again for fifteen dinars per qinţār, to soapmakers, the levy was extended to others, including Jews and Christians. 50 Over a period of forty days, money was extorted for 1340 qinţārs in Jerusalem, 160 in Hebron, 1000 in Gaza, and an unspecified amount in Ramla. Although people were again flogged and imprisoned during this ordeal, they were not treated as badly as they had been before, thanks to the intercession of Jān Balāt for the people of Jerusalem, according to Mujīr al-Dīn. Further evidence for Cairo’s exactions from its provinces is the fact that before the grand dāwādar left Ramla he received delegations from the viceroys and amirs of Tripoli, Ḥamāh, Ṣafad, al-Bīra, and Damascus bearing gifts of money and livestock. 51 Two years later in 900/1494–95, the forced sales were renewed, this time on the basis of a royal edict sent to Jerusalem. Because of the intervention again of Jān Balāt, the inhabitants of the towns were not molested as they had been in the past, but the poor still suffered, Mujīr al-Dīn notes, because they lost almost half their money between the purchase and sale of the oil imposed on them. 52

To conclude this survey of the Mamluk, as opposed to civilian, governance of Jerusalem, let us look more closely at the relationship of its officials to the sultanate in Cairo by focusing on the regimes of two of the Mamluk officers characterized by Mujīr al-Dīn as
unjust and tyrannical and the measures adopted by the central government to deal with them. In Mujūr al-Dīn’s opinion, Duqmāq was the worst of the offenders. Appointed in 893/1488 as viceroy and supervisor of Jerusalem and Hebron after paying his dues to the royal treasuries and the pillars of the state, he retained these two positions for about three years until his deposition in 896/1491, when Mujūr al-Dīn says, God took revenge on him for his evil deeds. The arrival in Jerusalem of this “wicked tyrant (al-zālim al-fājir), clothed in his robes of office, was “among the most distasteful and offensive of events,” especially in contrast to the tenure of the benevolent Nāẓir Ibn al-Nashāshibī. Duqmāq immediately incurred Mujūr al-Dīn’s ire when he took the unprecedented step of curtailing the practice of distributing free meals in Hebron for almost five months. After recovering from illness, Duqmāq’s “tyranny increased so that the conditions of social life were crushed and order was upset: thieves multiplied and committed atrocious acts of banditry and murder on the roads.”

But in addition to being a poor administrator, Duqmāq was also a public object of ridicule for his careless speech and unseemly acts. More serious, however, was his brutality in reclaiming the money that had been paid to the Palestinian recruits who deserted in Anatolia, foreshadowing his ruthlessness in exacting the olive-oil levies. In the meantime, his closing of the Hebron soup kitchen elicited a royal edict from Cairo condemning him as an accused non-Muslim. This edict was read publicly at the Dār al-Andalus, in the presence of the common people and the notables, but its only practical result was the temporary dismissal of an implicated Ḥanāfī qāḍī. In the following year, 895/1480, the distinguished shaykh of al-Madrasa al-Ṣalāḥiyya, the most prestigious educational institution in Jerusalem, wrote to Cairo complaining of Duqmāq’s injustice and tyranny along with the sad state of al-Aqṣā and the Christians’ claim to institutions on Mt. Zion. In response Qāṭbāy sent one of his elite Mamluks, al-Khāṣṣāṣī Azbak, with a decree authorizing him to look into and settle the many complaints of the ra‘īyya lodged against Duqmāq. Curiously, Duqmāq himself attended a hearing held in Hebron in which Azbak heard the complaints. In

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53 Ibid., 342.
54 Ibid., 344.
55 Ibid., 347.
Jerusalem the decree was read at al-Aqšā, also in Duqmāq’s presence, before the shaykhs of Islam and the general public.\(^{56}\) Indignant, the people addressed him with insults, and the next day at al-Ashrafiyya attacked him before the qādis with accusations, some of which he denied and confessed to others. Thereafter the pressure on him seems to have abated as he participated in the various councils convoked regarding Mt. Zion. Nevertheless, the khāṣṣākī eventually decided that the charges were serious enough to put him into custody, and a report accusing him of misconduct and oppressing the reʾūya, signed by the notables of Jerusalem, was sent to Cairo.\(^{57}\)

In secret Duqmāq’s dawādar, Ṭūrbāy, went to Cairo and won the grand dawādar’s support by paying a bribe. The envoy from Jerusalem entrusted with the report enumerating Duqmāq’s sins was apprehended and prevented, temporarily, from meeting with the sultan. In the meantime the investigation of Duqmāq continued in Jerusalem for twenty-six days.\(^{58}\) The whole affair now took a comic turn when Ṭūrbāy returned to Jerusalem with a royal edict, probably obtained by bribing the grand dawādar, which denounced the khāṣṣākī for detaining Duqmāq without authorization from the sultanate and summoned the viceroy to Cairo. There he succeeded in retaining his offices, again by a payment to the grand dawādar, as did the shaykh of al-Salāḥīyya, Ibn Jamāʿa, also summoned for interrogation, upon payment of one thousand dinars. The qādi Ibn Nusayba, also implicated, Qāytbāy sent into exile. This episode ends with a curious anecdote concerning the envoy who had come to Cairo bearing the official report of the proceedings against Duqmāq—the imām of al-Šākhra. Placed in detention upon his arrival in Cairo, he eventually succeeded in meeting with Qāytbāy. After giving him a tongue lashing for interfering in matters that did not concern him, Qāytbāy pardoned the imām and, for some unknown reason, invited him to demonstrate his skill in archery. Pleased by his performance, Qāytbāy ordered him “to wear his turban like those of the soldiers (jund), as it had originally been.”\(^{59}\) More importantly, however, the sultan confirmed him in his post of half the imamate of the Dome of the

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 350.
\(^{57}\) Ibid., 353.
\(^{58}\) Ibid.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., 354.
Rock and deposed the man whom Duqmàq “had appointed illegally, without a royal decree.” Back in Jerusalem Duqmàq continued in his evil ways by arranging for the dismissal of the chief Hanafi qàdî because of abusive language he had used against Duqmàq during the investigation, replacing him with the dismissed half-time imàm of al-Šakhrà as a reward for his support. Duqmàq was also responsible for having three more members of the religious establishment summoned to Cairo, where, after the usual payments, one of them succeeded in retaining his position. Otherwise, Duqmàq sought revenge, as we have seen, through his strict enforcement of the sale of olive oil imposed from Cairo but was dismissed in 896, without any reason cited except God’s revenge on malefactors.

A parallel case is that of al-Amîr Khaḍîr Bàk, appointed viceroy of Jerusalem in 891/1486. According to Mujiyr al-Dîn his regime was also marked by “tyranny, bloodshed, and seizure of the people’s money,” so that the shaykh of al-Madrasa al-Šalâhiyyà, Ibn Jamâ‘à, wrote in protest to the sultan. Again Qàytbày sent a khâṣṣakà to investigate the matter through public hearings. These lasted more than ten tumultuous days while people from Jerusalem and Hebron denounced Khaḍîr Bàk in petitions. An official report of the viceroy’s oppression, signed by ‘ulamà’ and qàdîs was sent to the sultanate. But the issue was complicated by accusations lodged against the Mâlikî qàdî, charging him with taking bribes in return for supporting Khaḍîr Bàk. In a dramatic confrontation during prayers conducted at al-Madrasa al-‘Uthmânîyyà, the Nâzîr Ibn al-Nashâshibî accused the qàdî of taking bribes in exchange for his judgments, and the latter accused the nâzîr of accepting bribes related to endowments. Furthermore, when the nâzîr produced a report from the Kadîb al-Sîr Ibn Muzhir announcing the deposition of the qàdî, the latter refused to recognize the kadîb’s power to dismiss him in the absence of any authorization from the sultan. Nevertheless, faced with a vocal uproar from those in attendance and the argument that “the kadîb al-sîr was the voice of the ruler in dismissals and appointments,” the qàdî was deposed, sent to Cairo, and shipped off to Yemen.

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60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 356.
62 Ibid., 340.
63 Ibid., 341.
Reports of the hearings signed by dignitaries from Jerusalem and Hebron were sent to the sultanate. As a result the viceroy was summoned to Cairo. When he was unable to refute the charges brought against him, he was flogged, imprisoned, and required to repay those people he had fleeced. The nāẓir, also questioned, was allowed to resign.64

Beyond this summary of two evil regimes, some generalizations regarding Mamluk rule in the city are warranted. First it is evident that Qāyyūbāy and his coterie carefully supervised and controlled the government of the city through appointments, investigations, recalls, confirmations, and dismissals of officials in both the political and the religious cadres. Although Mujr al-Dīn’s references to bribery and sweeteners in these processes are only occasional, they are sufficient to indicate that the positions were certainly marketable. So far I have not reviewed the numerous instances in which officials and functionaries of all categories—qādis, shaykhs, imāms, mubāshirīn, et al.—were summoned to Cairo, but they are frequent enough to warrant the suspicion that money was definitely an important factor in holding office. Moreover, the fact that there was special place where the “ahl al-Quds” were flogged (at least on one occasion by the sultan himself) as well as an official who kept “ahl Bayt al-Maqdis” in custody also indicates that their activities were closely monitored.65 In addition to recalls, public investigations were conducted in Jerusalem with the participation of the nāʾīb/nāẓir and judicial and religious establishment of the city as well as occasional Mamluk and judicial envoys. Official reports of these proceedings, signed by the notables, were routinely submitted to Cairo. When the sultan was displeased with the progress or findings of these hearings, he convoked panels of his own in Cairo, and in the case involving the synagogue, overruled the provincial findings and recommendations. I find it interesting that these hearings were conducted in a variety of public places in al-Quds—al Madrasa al-Tankiziyya, al-Aqṣā, Qubbat Mūsā, Dār al-Niyāba, al-Madrasa al-Ashrafiyya, al-Madrasa al-ʿUthmāniyya, Jāmīʿ al-Maghārība—in the presence, moreover, of the populace (al-khāṣṣ waʾl-ʿāmm) as well as legists and notables (al-fuqahāʾ waʾl-āyān) in addition to the official members of the panels. There was obviously, then,

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 314.
an attempt to get many people involved and spread the sessions among a number of public institutions. I was also surprised to learn that private citizens sometimes took the initiative in launching protests to the sultanate against perceived misdeeds of officials in Jerusalem. Thus, in 879/1474 in the synagogue dispute, an unidentified dervish sent a letter to Cairo by which he persuaded Qāṭbāy to reopen the affair on a new legal basis.66 Earlier, a commoner had actually gone to Cairo and through his complaint to the sultan was instrumental in the convocation of a deliberative council.67 Moreover, as already noted, Mujīr al-Dīn sometimes refers to the welfare of the subjects during the reigns of different Mamluk officers. Besides convoking judicial councils, the central government also made use of periodic visits to the area, most notably by the grand dawādār, for the obvious purpose of implementing measures dictated by the sultanate: the forced sale of olive oil, conscription of troops, and collection of residues from escheat estates and pious endowments being examples. Sometimes these officials, acting presumably under the sultan’s authority, intervened decisively in Jerusalem affairs, as in 895/1410, for example, when the amir Azbak, in Ramla, ordered Jerusalem notables to determine whether the Tomb of David on Mt. Zion was an asset of the Christians and, if so, to come to terms with them.68

But the clearest evidence for Qāṭbāy’s desire to control the administration of Jerusalem comes from his own visit to the city, and Hebron, in 880/1465. In both towns he took matters into his own hands. In Hebron he revoked the right of the viceroy of Jerusalem to appoint the muḥtasib and to collect the bribe imposed upon the designee. Instead, the muḥtasib was to be appointed thereafter by royal decree, without payment of a donation (kulfa). This measure proved to be temporary, however.69 In Jerusalem Qāṭbāy was accompanied by many of the leading officers of his state, including the Grand Amir Azbak; al-Amīr Yazbak al-Dawādār; al-Qāḍī Zayn al-Dīn Ibn Muzhir, Kāṭib al-Sīr; al-Amīr Khushqadam al-Ṭawāshi, al-Ważūr; and al-Qāḍī Tāj al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, Nāẓūr al-Khawāṣṣ, as well as eminent judges.70 Sitting in state at both Qubbat Mūṣā in the

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66 Ibid., 305.
67 Ibid., 301.
68 Ibid., 348.
69 Ibid., 314.
70 Ibid., 315.
Haram and in a window at his madrasa, he heard complaints and received petitions from the people against the ruling viceroy, Jār Quṭlī, that accused him of oppression and tyranny. Summoning him into his presence, Qāytbāy ordered him to come to terms with his complainants, to pay his debts in full, and to repay half the amount of the fines he had imposed. Assured by the dawādār that Jār Quṭlī had complied with these demands, Qāytbāy bestowed a robe of continuance (khiṭat al-istimrār) on him with the following admonition: “ Treat the people well and rule them with justice and fairness by the Shari‘a. If after today anyone complains about you, I will cut you in half!”

Writing in a different context but summing up, nevertheless, aspects of Qāytbāy’s character and career from a Cairo perspective, Carl Petry concludes, “We are thus left with the impression of an individual who was not only authoritative, resolute, and trustworthy, but prudent as well.” Although Mujīr al-Dīn in Jerusalem has little to say about the sultan’s trustworthiness and prudence, his pages offer ample corroboration of Qāytbāy’s authoritativeness and resolution in his determination to oversee the governance of the city. His piety is also demonstrable through his construction of a major shrine in the city and his determination to protect the Dhimmi holy places in accordance with the Shari‘a. “His fascination with judicial proceedings, alternately appreciated and resented by judges, attests to his familiarity with the Shari‘a and his belief that a ruler’s sworn oath to uphold it meant more than mere enforcement of cases subordinates had decided.” This concern for legal procedure and responsiveness to the expectations of the ra‘īyya are also evident in Jerusalem. Petry’s observations on Qāytbāy’s administration of Syria seen from the vantage point of its two major cities, Damascus and Aleppo, are also applicable, with reservations, to the special case of Jerusalem as a small but important town because of its religious status. The apparent lack of a sizeable Mamluk garrison in Jerusalem meant that it could not be used, like Damascus and Aleppo, as a center of opposition to the central government, and the appointment of

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71 Ibid., 316.
72 Ibid.
73 Petry, Twilight, 33.
74 Ibid., 31.
75 Petry, Protectors, 35–37.
rather obscure, evidently low or medial ranking Mamluks to the nīyāba and nazar militated against the building up of long-lasting households, especially since with one exception these officials were frequently changed by the sultanate. But the frequency of change did not prevent the development of rivalries among the officers in Jerusalem or between the viceroy of Gaza and Jerusalem, paralleling the situation elsewhere in Syria. Nevertheless efforts were made in Palestine to patch up these differences, so that they did not become so disruptive as in the major cities. Finally, though I have not dwelt on Qāytbāy’s manipulation and control of the judiciary in Jerusalem, I can verify that his policy there is similar to that which Petry describes for Damascus and Aleppo. For al-Quds also “the sultan jealously guarded his prerogative of choosing the senior qādis”76 as well as lesser jurists and officials in other religious institutions. But it is my impression that Qāytbāy did not try to play off local appointees against Cairenes, relying instead, with exceptions, on “local ‘ulamā’ families” in Jerusalem. Control, then, was exerted not so much by encouraging regional rivalries but by constant monitoring of judicial and religious affairs in Jerusalem. Finally, Mujir al-Dīn provides evidence for what Petry characterizes as the regime’s tolerance of economic “exploitation in the provinces,”77 which would include in the case of Jerusalem, and I suspect elsewhere, trafficking in public offices.

76 Ibid., 36.
77 Ibid.
CHAPTER EIGHT

FOUNDING A NEW MAMLUK: SOME REMARKS CONCERNING SAFED AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE REGION IN THE MAMLUK PERIOD

Joseph Drory

After undergoing a setback in his attempt to raid coastal Acre, the main Crusader stronghold and political focus in Palestine, in Ramadān 664 (June 1266), the Mamluk Sultan Baybars turned instead to subdue another Frankish bulwark, that of Safed in eastern Galilee. Forty days of siege ending in 18 Shawwāl 664 (July 1266) led to the conquest of that immense fortification.

The aim of the first part of this article is to demonstrate the distinctive local consequences of Baybars’ success, which has generally been disregarded or not properly evaluated in scholarly literature. The second part reviews a variety of offices carried out in the province of Safed, a province which was established purely thanks to Baybars’ feat. This is principally intended to present a view of everyday administration in a medieval Syrian district.

Evidence of any noteworthy urban settlement in Safed prior to its conquest by Baybars is scarce. No clear mention of Safed in antiquity can be cited. In a Geniza document, dated 1034—perhaps the earliest mention—a transaction involving the purchase of a shop in Tiberias was conducted by a trustee of a boy named Mūsā b. Hiba.1 Mūsā, or one of his forefathers, was nicknamed “He who comes from Safed”. The chapter allocated to Safed in the Aḥṣāq of Ibn Shaddād (d. 1285) states that “formerly Safed was a flourishing village [qarya ‘āmina] beneath the ‘orphan’s castle’ [burj al-yatim] until

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1 M. Gil, A History of Palestine 634–1099 (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 213–14. In 1023 in the marriage deed of Hiba’s wife, written in Tyre, her husband is referred to as “ha-Ṣefati” (coming from Safed). This leads M. Gil to determine: “There is no doubt, therefore, that there was a Jewish community in Safed . . .”
its occupation by the Crusaders in the twelfth century". 2 But this statement is undermined by a more insightful observation by the same author: “Safed [according to Ibn Shaddād] was not referred to in any of the books composed about early Islamic history.” 3

More apparent is the total omission of Safed by Jerusalem-born and local patriot Muqaddasī in his geographical work. Conversely, Muqaddasī’s Agālīm (assumed to have been written in 985) did not fail to record other minor settlements in the eastern Galilee (such as Farādhiyya, Qadas or Jesh). 4 Moreover, Yaqūt, the thirteenth-century composer of the geographical voluminous dictionary Muḥjam al-buldān, who visited Palestine and included tiny places (such as Yaḥrūd north of Jerusalem, Bayt Māmā in the Nablus district, or Bayt Nūbā east of Ramla on the road to Jerusalem) in his book, leaves Safed unmentioned. 5

A year after the blow inflicted on the Franks by ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn (1187), he was able to conquer the fortress of Safed. He then placed a remote relative (a son of Saladin’s niece) named Masʿūd b. Muḥārak 6 in charge of that place (d. 606/1211). This Masʿūd bequeathed this position to Aḥmad, his son. No information on their activities as rulers is recorded in history books.

Some information regarding the existence of a Jewish community in 1211 comes from R. Samuel b. Samson who traveled from Tiberias and nearby Kfar Ḥanania to the eastern Galilee and preferred Safed as a resting-place on Sabbath. 7 Jehūdā al-Ḥarīzī in his “Taḥkemōnī”, believed to be written around 1215, mentioned a certain “righteous Ṣadōq”, the head of the seminary of Jewish learning in Safed. 8

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7 Yaʿār, Igūt Erez Israel, Tel Aviv, 1943, [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1943), 80.
8 Al-Ḥarīzī, Taḥkemōnī, ed. Toporowski (Tel Aviv, 1952), 350.
The description of the castle of Safed, written in 1260 by Benedict of Alignan, the archbishop of Marseilles, attests to a “civic quarter on slopes of the citadel”. Benedict even describes this undefended district as a “large town comprising a market and a large population”.

Although the description of Baybars’ siege in 1266 does not record contacts or friction with the civilian population in Safed, and given that Benedict’s description is not devoid of tendentiousness—its aim being to augment the Templars’ undertaking, even with regard to the non-combatants—it seems that we cannot categorically rule out the possibility that, alongside the Crusaders’ castle, there did exist a permanent urban population of Jews and Moslems. This could entail an infrastructure of buildings, tenements, streets, alleys, water supply and markets, albeit in a limited scale and only in one district, namely: the western one. That puzzle, the extent of urban life in pre-Baybars’ Safed, is far from solved.

In any event, a remarkable change was about to follow. Although the lists drawn up by Baybars’ chroniclers, in the enumeration of their sultan’s conquests, do not lend a special emphasis to Safed, this accomplishment was apparently characterized by a number of unique aspects.

Firstly, Safed—in contrast to other cities and castles mainly on the seashore, such as Arsûf and Caesarea (and later Jaffa)—was not razed to the ground. It would have been an enormous blunder for Baybars to fail to profit from Safed’s splendid advantages. These may be outlined as follows: topography—the city is located on top of an insurmountable mountain; fortifications—whose power and endurance Baybars personally experienced; and environment, since there was no menacing Frankish town or castle within a periphery of at least 40 km.

Baybars, possibly as early as 664/1266, appointed a governor to the castle, ranked as wālī. Just less than two years later, Baybars paid a second visit to Safed (Rajab 666/March 1268), at which time he carefully took pains to reconstruct its Templar citadel. According to a contemporary biographer of Baybars,9 these reconstructions consisted of establishing gateways to the fortress, construction of a reservoir with scales flanking its four sides and an extremely high tower

adjacent to the reservoir, deepening and widening the ditch which surrounded the fortress, constructing a (probably new) bath and transforming a former church into a mosque. In the inner (or forward) barbican [bāšūra]—a section rebuilt by Baybars after, atypically, demolishing this unsatisfactory Crusader post—he installed turrets, curtain walls [badana], machicolation [talāqa], shooting stands, and a gateway together with a moveable bridge, and made arrangements for a permanent water supply from a nearby hill.

The next aspect—the reshaping of Safed’s castle—was of further significance, apart from strengthening Safed’s military perseverance and defensive valor. It spurred and promoted the development of a civilian city next to the castle, for the first time in the history of this site.

Baybars’ activities in reconstructing the fortress were supplemented by other actions, destined to amplify the hitherto humble urban and civil nature of this newly-conquered site. These involved, to cite the author of al-Aţlāq, constructing khanṣ, markets, baths and gardens. The plural form, while it might be exaggerated, points to the evident intention. In addition, Baybars set up a mosque in the city, second to that of the citadel, which was simply a church modified to comply with Muslim ritual requirements. The location of that city mosque, intact to this day, allows determination of the location of the residential core of thirteenth-century Safed.

All of this shows that Baybars’ accomplishment consisted of transforming what had been primarily a military fortress into a prosperous civilian town.

The third distinctive dimension which characterizes Baybars’ role in shaping the fortunes of Safed is its transformation into a bureaucratic territorial center. Safed and the neighboring region were entrusted to a nāţib, Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-‘Alā‘ī;10 it is, however, hard to tell what his authority was and who yielded to his command. One can only speculate as to whether this was Baybars’ abrupt decision immediately after his takeover; but in any event, the decision may be assumed to have been made not too much later and to have been based on weighty strategic grounds.

The Crusaders never ceased to constitute a military threat from the coastal area. Even if it were possible for Acre to be occupied

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and destroyed, a sudden sea-invasion could not be discounted. Safed offered a perfect location as a rear headquarters to carry on the struggle against the Franks, and its surrounding fertile districts could be awarded as compensation to Baybars’ deserving warriors.

Expelling the Templars from Safed facilitated the annexation of areas in the eastern Galilee, previously cultivated and administered by the Franks. In his efforts to replenish the newly-annexed area with a trustworthy population, Baybars allocated portions of land to 54 of his Mamluks in the region.11 At the head of this group of Mamluks, he placed several of his Amirs. The officer “responsible for the new allowances” [iqāš], ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Kundughdāy,12 was an additional pillar of the new regional order. His nomination with these powers enhanced the chances of Safed—the probable residence of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn—to officiate, successfully, as the regional focus of the veteran residents.

The decisive factor in promoting the singling out of Safed as a center of niyāba (later to become an independent mamlaka) was its tenable citadel, which derived its might both from the Templar initiative phase—which Baybars had found difficult to subdue—and from Baybars’ efforts of renovation. That citadel guaranteed the survival of a huge military garrison which could, if needed, endure a prolonged blockade by potential foes. As already mentioned, Acre and Tyre were not to be disparaged as active Frankish menaces. The existence of a defensible citadel and the lack of similar fortress in the region lent clear priority to Baybars’ decision to designate Safed as the core of what would become a Galilean province.

It should be pointed out that, in all of the other conquests by Baybars, who styled himself the extirpator of castles from infidels’


seizure [muqtalī al-qilā‘ min aydī al-kuffār]—i.e., taking over Frankish towns and fortresses, or seizing control over old Muslim towns in Syria, Asia Minor or Nubia—no new (annexed) town was assigned a Mamluk administrative center. Safed is an exception to the rule. (A similar, exceptional status awaited Tripoli, following its capture by Qalāwūn in 1289.)

The overall impact of Baybars’ actions in Safed: conquest, reconstruction of the citadel, lending it an unprecedented administrative status, summoning men-of-capacity and apportioning land—thus fostering commitment—to loyal officers, is described by the historian in these phrases: “Safed turned out to be, owing to what [Baybars] established there, one of the prettiest and most defensible castles and best and most fertile regions (fa-sārat bi-mā‘ abdathahu fīhā min aḥsan al-qilā‘ wa-amma‘ihā wa-aṭyab al-biqā‘ wa-akhṣabihā).”

A more thorough appreciation of the Mamluk creativity in Safed must take into account additional factors: The administrative organization generated by the Mamluks was a completely new one. The Galilee—at least since its occupation by the Franks—could not have adhered to the Muslim secretarial tradition accountable for correspondence, taxation, justice procedures, land allocation or agricultural control. The Safed province officials had to start from scratch, bereft of any relevant local precedent which they could follow. Safed’s former population was meager, lacking wealth or education. The site suffered from inconvenient weather (in the winter) and poor accessibility, which explains its having been overlooked during previous centuries; moreover, it could not claim any Islamic heritage and prestige whatsoever, due to past neglect and the desolate nature of the place.

These poor starting points notwithstanding, the Mamluk authorities were able to institute, within a short period of time (its exact duration cannot yet be determined)—a multifaceted executive structure constructed after the model of long-standing, well-established Syrian provinces. This administrative structure contributed to—and was certainly sustained by—the arrival and settling of a greater civilian population, which catered to the bureaucrats’ needs.

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13 As stated in the Nabi Mūsā inscription, R.C.E.A., vol. 12, 142, no. 4612.
14 Aḥṣāq, vol. 3, 150.
The second part of the article will describe and evaluate the main functionaries in the mamlaka of Safed. Such a description portrays the routine outlines of an administrative province in Mamluk Syria with regard to officeholders: main positions, officers’ ranks, their influence, survival, capacity and further stages of career. Studying Safed from a bureaucratic point of view helps to engender a wider outlook on Syrian towns in the Middle Ages.

Governors (Nuwwâb)\textsuperscript{15} of Safed

We are able to trace the whereabouts of Safed’s viceroys for the entire two and half centuries of the Mamluk period. Ample information is produced by Khalîl b. Aybak al-Şafâdî in both of his books, al-Wâfî bil-waâfîyât and Ayân al-’âsir. Born in 1296 to a local family who later moved to Damascus, and operating in Safed at the beginning of his career, Şafadî was familiar with senior officeholders in the town and is thus qualified to supply extensive first-hand information concerning them. Even without consulting Şafadî’s voluminous works, it is possible to compile a full list of Safed’s governors, based upon the chroniclers’ writings and the biographers’ supplements.

If we review the biographies of the municipal governors, the following conclusions arise:

(One) The ordinary duration of a governor’s time in office shortened as time passed. From the establishment of the governorship (niyâba) in 1266 until the mid-fourteenth century, 26 governors were counted (i.e. an average term in office of more than three years for each governor). By contrast, during the period from 1347 to the last days of the Mamluk state, a

\textsuperscript{15} The ālîb is a functionary also referred to, by and large, in official terminology, inscriptions and documents, as kâfîl. Ālîb could have meant deputy or representative of any officeholder including agents of the sultan in other Syrian towns and castles. Kâfîl, less frequently in use (Zahiri’s constant use of the term kâfîl—see e.g. Khalîl ibn Shâhîn al-Zahiri, Zabîdat bayâd al-mamâlik, facs. of P. Ravaisse edition (Paris, 1894) by F. Sezgin, Islamic Geography Series no. 79, Frankfurt 1993, 131–34—is an exception), was definitely a more prestigious term, used, for example, for Yashbak al-Ḥamzâwî as stated in Zâwiyat banât Ḥâmid’s inscription. This Yashbak served as governor of Safed between 1447 and 1451 and came to Safed, very typically, from the niyâba of Gaza.
time-span of 170 years, we have listed more than 100 governors—or, to be precise, more than 100 appointments, since several governors ruled more than once. Among those governors nominated for more than one term are Timurbughâ al-Manjîkî in 1400 and 1401; Timurbây al-Dimurdâsh in 1376, 1380 and 1383; Alqûnbughâ al-‘Uthmânî in 1399, 1406, 1409 and 1414 (four times); and Qurqumâ b. akhî al-Dimurdâsh in 1408, 1410, 1411 and 1412. It means that each governor held his office—on average—for slightly more than one and a half years.

(Two) The governor who remained in office for the longest period, Aruqtîy al-Qipchaqi, officiated for more than 18 years. He is entitled to be considered the most eminent governor of Safed in the Mamluk period, the like of Tankiz in Damascus or Sinjar al-Jâwîli of Gaza. His long tenure of office might serve to mitigate some scholars’ impression that al-Nâşîr Muḥammad’s suspiciousness and ill-temper could not enable talented officers to hold a post for a long period of time. The days of Aruqtîy in Safed constitute an example of perseverance and an expression of the trust bestowed on him by his Sultan.16

(Three) Every now and then, mostly in the period following the Black Death—a pivotal point in the nature of provincial government in the state—some second-generation mamluks (awlâd al-nâs) managed to infiltrate to the highest post of power. Such were the cases of ‘Umar b. Arghûn in 136317 and Müsâ b. Aruqtîy in 1371,18 to name but a few.

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16 Aruqtîy’s accomplishment is even worthier of praise, considering the fact that Tankiz was not always in his favor and made several efforts to get rid of him. Sultan Nâşîr Muḥammad expressed his appreciation of Aruqtîy’s capacity for survival: “By God, you managed to escape him as a prey from his lion”: Muqaffa, vol. II, 288.


It is hazardous to generalize where caretakers of Safed placed themselves on the political map, or to ascertain whether they demonstrated rebellious separatist inclinations, taking advantage of their almost impregnable castle. The chronicles of Safed’s governors include manifestations of opposition to the Egyptian rule, a result of the ruling sultan’s weakness or political energetic ambitions of a local ruler. They do, however, relate instances of cooperation with the Egyptian sultan vis-à-vis irredentist local political troopers and commanders in Syria.

The case of ‘Alâ’ al-Dîn Aydughdây al-Kubâkî in 1280 is an example of rebellious tendencies of governors in Safed. This Amir supported the disobedient ruler of Damascus, Sunqur al-Ashqar, against Sultan Qalâwûn. When Qalâwûn managed to do away with Sunqur, he did not spare the governor of Safed from punishment. Another case is that of Arâq al-Fattâh in 1346, who supported the Damascene viceroy Yalbughâ al-Yahyâwî against the weak Sultan of Egypt, al-Kâmîl Sha’bân.

Contrary examples are that of Baktamur al-¸âhirî (also referred to as Jilliq) who, in 1405, supported Faraj—or rather, the adherents of the ten-year-old Sultan—against insubordinate governors of Damascus and Aleppo, or Shaykh al-Ma˘hmüdî—the future Sultan al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh—who backed Sultan Faraj in 1407 against the Amir Jakam, as the latter proclaimed himself Sultan [al-Malik al-’Adîl] in northern Syria.

The title of the governors of Safed was muqaddam alf—the highest of the officers’ ranks in the Mamluk regime. A force numbering hundreds of mamlûks was at the governor’s command. One unclear report illustrates his command over one.
hundred mamluks, a number resembling the amount of soldiers stationed regularly in Safed’s castle. The routine obligations of this governor included the appointment of deputies to enforce law and order in the district.

(Six) A personal assistant [dawādār] escorted the governor in his main duties. Sometimes the dawādār was sent to the villages as the governor’s representative and acting with his master’s full approval. Analogous powers were conferred upon the private caretaker [ustādār]. In the only instance found, this ustādār was responsible for the hospital erected (not later than 1327) by Tankiz.

(Seven) The rulers of Safed originally came from other Syrian territories, or were later sent to such territories for a further assignment. The main Syrian regions mentioned are that of Gaza or Tripoli; less frequent are those of Aleppo, Karak and Hamāt. There is a tendency to assume that, in this period, a civil servant’s career followed certain common stages. A “provincial” superintendent served at a given time in one of the Syrian cities mentioned above, but was rarely promoted to a higher post, such as the governor of Damascus or a similar esteemed position in Egypt.

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33 A dawādār named Shīhāb al-Dīn Ahmad won Safed’s attention when he was dispatched in 1352 together with the ḥājī Mohammad b. al-Bakhīt (hence a civilian, non-military ḥājī) to arrest an eccentric in the village of Ḥīṯn who claimed to be Mamluk Sultan, a descendant of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad [Ayun, vol. II, 25].

34 Ayūn, vol. IV, 478.


36 The career of Kumushbūgh al-Ḥamawī may be viewed as typical. This mamluk, originally from Ḥamāt, carried out several important duties in Syria around 1380, until he was imprisoned. When freed, he was shipped off to Safed; after six months, however, he was sent to Tripoli to replace its former amir. After some vicissitudes in his occupation, he was again sent off to Safed where he served for about a year. His next station was again Tripoli; this time he remained four and a half years in office. Muqaffa, vol. V, 10. His is but a random case.
There are few indications of exclusive secessionist movements in Safed. They differ from the above-mentioned examples [paragraph (d)] in that they were initiated and stimulated in Safed. One of them occurred in the days of Tankiz. Until 1314, Safed was administered directly by the Egyptian head of state, at which point it was decided to subordinate Safed, like other Syrian cities, to the dominion of Damascus. In the course of a visit to Damascus, Balabān was jailed and spent a period of ten years before returning to his former high status.

A second incident is that of Aḥmad al-Sāqī, who revolted in 751/1350, seized control over the castle and filled it with provisions and ammunition. The reason he gave for the revolt was an attempt on his life. The governor of Damascus, who had to deal with this insurrection, sent military forces to Safed which laid siege to the castle. When Aḥmad found out that his ally, Baybughārūs, was confined, his willingness to rebel dwindled. He later discovered that his other supporter had transferred his loyalty, joined the government and was now willing to arrest him. Aḥmad halted his mutiny and proclaimed willingness to obey, but was arrested and sent to the prison of Alexandria.

The governors of Safed constructed considerable installations and buildings in Safed and the surrounding regions. Among these were a public bath and a tomb edifice (by

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Àlā’ al-Dīn Aydughday al-Aldakuzī [or: al-Ildikzī],33 the renovation of Jacob’s cave (by Baktamur al-Jūkāndār),34 a monumental tomb-edifice to the governor’s wife, a primary school [kuttāb sabīl] and a high school [madrasa] (by Aruqtāy),35 the tomb of Sitt Sukayna in Tiberias (by Fāris al-Dīn Ilbākī),36 two shops in the vegetable market37 and a bath in the nearby village of ‘Ayn Zaytūn38 (by Balabān al-Jūkāndār), another bath (by Taștamur al-Sāqī),39 and a family tomb edifice (by Mūsā, son of Aruqtāy) which remains standing to this day.

The governors—who functioned outside the castle in dār al-niyāba—molded a conventional administrative organization which included soldiers, communication clerks, correspondence writers, financial employees and personal assistants. They were answerable to the Syrian governor, and that subordination was often a source of tense frictions. Aytamish, Aruqtāy’s successor, refused to concede to Tankiz’s orders, asserting “I am not your governor, but my sultan’s.”40 A new governor was made to promise that he would not have to comply with Tankiz’s regulations and that he should communicate with Egypt directly in all matters.41

(Ten) The governors of Safed overshadowed the concurrent commanders of the castle in rank and command. While we can produce a full list of the city nuwwāb, we are less equipped and far less informed with regard to the castle commanders (nuwwāb al-qal’a). Although much was invested in the castle during Baybars’ reign, it played only a limited role in the history of the city. After the extirpation of the Crusaders in

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33 Wāfi, vol. IX, 486.
34 Wāfi, vol. X, 199.
38 Ayān, vol. II, 44.
40 Tāṣufī, 319.
41 Tāṣufī, 321.
1291, the castle is referred to mostly as a prison for local Amirs who went astray or were suspected as such.

(Eleven) An appointment to Safed was at times an alternative to punishment. Arghûn-Shâh al-Ustâdhâr was said to be haughty with his young Sultan, al-Mu'azzâr Hajji, and talked to him in a vulgar manner. The sultan decided to arrest him. The then strong-man in Egypt, Araqûtây,\(^{42}\) formerly a Safedî ruler, recommended mitigation of the punishment. Subsequently, Arghûn-Shâh was sent to be a governor in Safed.\(^{43}\) This is a clear-cut indication of the limited importance placed upon Safed, from where no threat could come.

Two other examples in the same vein which appear in the accounts of Safedî governors, during the rule of Barqûq and Faraj, support the same conclusion. The main rationale for sending officers to perform from Safed was to check their danger.

A certain Baktamur was given an appointment to Safed in 722/1322, since the Sultan considered it inappropriate that such an old officer should still be present in daily service \([\textit{khidma}]\). By appointing him to a position in Safed, the Sultan aimed at relieving him \([\textit{qaßada iðhatahu}]\).\(^{44}\) The supposition concerning Safed's limited significance remains unaltered.

Other officials in Safed

Following the choice of Safed, immediately after its conquest, to be the region's capital, an administrative establishment similar to that of other Syrian provinces was constructed in the town.

Within this establishment, the following main military officials operated on behalf of the Mamluk authority:

\(^{42}\) Araqûtây succeeded where most Safedî governors failed. He was summoned to Cairo, where he was given an influential position and authority. \(\textit{Wâlî},\) vol. 8, 362. Baktamur al-Jûkândâr was another example of a Safedî ruler who rose to prominence in Cairo.

\(^{43}\) \(\textit{Sulâk},\) vol. II, 720.

\(^{44}\) \(\textit{Muqâffâ},\) vol. II, 458.
The ruler of the castle (nâ‘ib al-qal‘a). The earliest nâ‘ib al-qal‘a, Majd al-Dīn al-Ｔūfī, was nominated by Baybars in 1266. He was then only a low-ranking wāli. Years afterward, the officer in charge of the castle became nâ‘ib and was promoted to the rank of Amir of Forty. The commander of the castle, apart from his obligation to maintain its various sections (e.g. moat, fortifications, towers, water reservoirs, warehouses, mosque and probably living rooms, ammunition and provisions for men and livestock), was also in charge of supervising the municipal governor.

Having received his mission directly from the sultan, rather than the local or Syrian chief governor (nâ‘ib al-Sham), the castle-commander felt committed to him. Consequently, entrusted with the control and supervision of the performance, initiatives and behavior of the local governor.

In 905/1500, the Egyptian sultan al-Ashraf Qānṣūh directed the castle-governor to detain the city governor, whom he suspected of treason. It should be noted here that a wing of the castle served as a prison where high-ranking inmates were confined.

Some of the castle commanders progressed to become local or territorial governors. Sinjār al-Kurjī (in 1280), Baylık al-Ṭayyār (in the same year) and Arāq al-Fattāḥ (in 1344) are a few examples.

The chamberlain (ḥāṣib [al-ḥujjāb]). This was a senior post frequently held by a muqaddam alf officer, but more often by an Amir

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46 The story of the soldier who caused damage to the castle’s ammunition and whom Aydamur refrained, out of piety, from executing, mentions the officer who eventually slew the criminal, fearing the Sultan’s rage. This officer was wāli al-qal‘a, and the affair could not have taken place later than 676/1277. Muqaffā, vol. II, 362.
48 Suhb, vol. IV, 150 “This castle has an independent governor... appointed by the sultan... and there is no rule of the region-governor upon him, but rather, he is independent.”
49 When Syrian amirs led by Yalbugh al-Yahyawi plotted to wipe out Sultan al-Kamil Shahbān, the Safed castle governor did not join this malicious initiative and was, when proved wrong, reprimanded for this loyalty. Suluk, vol. II, 717.
50 Although the name of nâ‘ib al-qal‘a is not mentioned, it may be assumed that the Safed military force that routed the disloyal former ruler Baybars al-Ahmadī was directed and led by the commander of the castle. Muqaffā, vol. II, 556; A‘yān, vol. II, 82. However, the chief chamberlain (ḥāṣib al-ḥujjāb) was as likely a candidate to command the pursuit.
52 Wajfī, vol. 8, 332.
of Forty. The chief chamberlain (ḥājib al-hujāb) was responsible for resolving disputes and arbitrating between amirs, or between amirs and soldiers. Actually this post was a non-religious judiciary organ. Two officers operated under the chief ḥājib; each of these was referred to merely as ḥājib (or: amir ḥājib) and was ranked an Amir of Ten.53

Those engaged as ḥājib or his aide, minor ḥājib (ḥājib ʿaghār) were not exclusively mamluks. There are a few examples of civilian ḥājibs. Such is the case of ‘Uthman b. Ismail, dating from the first half of the fourteenth century,54 or Rukn al-Dīn ʿUmar, who was reported to be wounded after chasing a mutinous Safedi ruler, Baybars al-ʿĀmid.55

A certain ḥājib named Aqūwān, alias ‘Alā al-Dīn al-Kāmilī, carried out several missions. He was a comptroller of the bureaus [mushād al-dawān], responsible for minor district counties [wāli al-wulāt], and commander of the castle [nāʾib al-qalʿa].56 It is perhaps an irregularity in Safed’s administrative organization that one person occupied various key duties. His son, Qurmush, an adherent of Ibn Taymiyya who was on friendly terms with the governor Aruqṭāy, operated first as a ḥājib, and later ascended to the rank of commander of the castle.57 This almost certainly reflects the genuine hierarchy.58

Atābīk. This was an officer in charge of the army in the town and the district. Also called muqaddam al-ʿaskar, this function is well-known from the time of the establishment of this niyāba. Among the atābīks of Safed were: ‘Alā al-Dīn Aydughdāy [or: Kundughdāy, see above] in 1266,59 Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī, around 1440,60 and Yusuf b. Yaghmūr in 1452, who was designated shortly thereafter as commander of the castle.61

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55 Ayūn, vol. II, 82.
57 Saʿadī himself, when in Egypt, wrote down the official promotion letter for Qurmush, the embellished text of which he inserted into his Waḥf, vol. XXIV, 228.
58 Ayūn, vol. IV, 105, 106.
A permanent force of 1000 ḥalqa troopers garrisoned in the castle was under the orders of the atābīk. He could call into action—when needed—another 1000 soldiers, those obeying the castle ruler, the local governor or the Amirūn. Their number varied according to circumstances. This high officer was also known as the amīr kabīr.62

Wālī/Wālī al-wulāt. The wālī was a police officer in charge of keeping law and order in town. His rank: Amir of Ten. One should not confuse him with wālī al-wulāt, who was higher in authority and rank, being an Amir of Forty,63 and who was responsible for the minor sub-sections (wilāyas) of the entire region (niyāba). The number of the wilāyas, however, grew throughout the years from 1064 to 11.64

This task was fulfilled either by mamluks65 or civilians,66 but was repeatedly coupled with the office of mushidd al-dawāwīn in a way which makes it difficult to distinguish the particular demands or qualifications of each duty.

Shādd [or: mushidd] al-dawāwīn. This was a high-ranking officer whose duty it was to check and observe the collection of the Sultans’ dues and taxes from state estates. He took over the function of controlling the proper conduct of government offices. Quite often, the wālī al-wulāt operated as mushidd al-dawāwīn.67

An amīr named Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, a non-Mamluk officer in the ḥalqa, was recorded as a shādd in Egypt in the diwān (government bureau) of Sallār, the executive head of state around 1305–1310. He later gained importance and was promoted by Tankiz, in 1324, to become mushidd al-dawāwīn and wālī al-wulāt.68

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62 Tūghān (d. 847/1443) is recorded as amīr kabīr, Na’aymī, vol. II, 257. On the prospective amīr kabīr in Safed see Zubda, 134; Ibn ‘Irān, al-Qawl al-Mustawraf [see note no. 123], 29. Perhaps the malik al-umār who is mentioned in ‘Utbūn, 485 as the officer in charge of spilling forbidden wine produced by the Druze in the village of Zābūd is another title for the atābīk.


64 ‘Utbūn, 480.


69 Ibid., vol. V, 303.
Another mushidd al-dissân, Ibn Runqush (? al-Turkumâni, is reported to have informed Tankiz in Damascus of apparent blunders made by the city governor. He is blamed for having caused the rift between Tankiz and Aruqâtây, as well as later between Tankiz and Aytamish.70

Commander of the Post (muqaddam al-barâd). There are no exact data on the names or ranks of officials holding this post. However, their attendance in the center of a niyâba is more than likely. They are said to have managed a vast set-up of stables, road-stations, horse riders, letter writers and scribes.

Treasurer of the Castle (Khâzindâr al-qalâ‘a). This official was in charge of the castle’s treasury, storerooms, household and ammunition stocks.72

Commander of the Tribes (muqaddam al-‘ushrân). This office-holder was honored with the rank of Amir of Forty. In all likelihood, he was a tribal leader acknowledged by the sultanate or the provincial governor. One report has it that such a commander, residing in Kafir Kannân (north of Nazareth), stemmed from Qaysi groups.73 Members of the rival tribal group (the Yamânis) lived in Nazareth and in Lajjûn (Biblical Megiddo), the main village in Marj bani ‘Amir (now known as the Jezreel Valley).74

It is very likely, though there is a lack of documentation, that other officials held esteemed posts in Safed. Such officials are usually to be found in neighboring provinces. The following posts and their revenue were traditionally assigned to mamluks: [a] the mihmandâr, who was in charge of ceremonies and organized receptions to missions or honorable guests; [b] the naqîb al-juyûsh, who was accredited with land appanages pertaining to the army; [c] the shâdî al-awqaf, an officer controlling religious endowments.

Among the bureaucratic officeholders in the niyâba of Safed, the chief functions were:

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70 Yûsufî, 286, 318.
71 ‘Uthmânî, 483 writes that Jenîn has a Barîd center which is never vacant of post-staff (barîdyye).
72 Mu‘aṣṣar al-Dîn Ibn ‘Abd al-Zâhir, Taṣrif al-‘ayyâm wal-‘awr fi sirat al-Mulîk al-Munâsir, ed. Murâd Kamîl (Cairo, 1961), 57; Yûsufî gives an account of the khâzindâr of Aytamish who, when his master passed away, cared for his private bequest, Yûsufî, 333.
73 ‘Uthmânî, 485.
74 Ibid., 483, 484.
Overseer (nā˙zi˙r) of the region in charge of the routine financial management of government departments, money expenditure and the officials’ salaries. Sometimes judges functioned as nā˙zi˙rs, as in the case of Jam˙ı˙l al-Dın Sulaymān who executed both jobs in 1318–1323. A certain Akram, who served in Egypt as the prestigious chief overseer [nā˙zi˙r al-dawla], was blamed of having behaved improperly and was sent to Safed in 724/1324. There he did very well in improving the town’s situation until he was confined and his wealth confiscated. Muhammad b. Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb came from Damascus, where he filled the posts of both nā˙zi˙r and šāhī˙b dīwān (head of a department), and visited Safed on official duty several times.

Inspector (kā˙shī˙f) of bridges, agricultural lands and irrigation canals. It is not certain whether this office was held continuously or only occasionally. It seems that not only scribes and clerks held this post, and that it was conferred upon Mamluk amirs as well.

That the kā˙shī˙f was authorized with controlling rights is clear from the case of Baktamur, who was sent, as kā˙shī˙f, to conduct an investigation of an Amir named ‘Umar who apparently filled the posts of both mushidd al-dawā˙wī˙n and wālī al-wul˙t. His findings were recorded in a certain document by the qā˙dī Mu˙˙ṣ˙ı˙n al-Dın who escorted him. This investigation aroused the rage of the chief scribe, even more so because Baktamur was himself formerly a governor of Safed (in 716/1316) and the scribe considered this decision wrong. He uttered his criticism against the wicked deed and faced the painful consequences. The judge Ghā˙z˙ı˙ b. al-Wā˙ṣ˙ı˙ﬁ, an author of a notorious pamphlet directed against non-Muslims, was sent as a kā˙shī˙f to Safed in Jumā˙d˙ı˙ al-Ūl˙a 687/June 1288, together with other financial controllers, but a month later he was called back to Cairo.

Market inspector (mu˙˙ta˙si˙b). This was a post common in every large Islamic town. It can be ascertained from Qalqashandī, who

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76 Ibid., vol. I, 583.
77 Ibid., vol. V, 194.
78 Ibid., vol. I, 703.
79 Ibid., vol. I, 703.
81 Şuh, vol. IV, 240; on the other hand, he is not mentioned in the detailed books of Şafā˙ıt.
records the resemblance in posts between Safed and Tripoli that such a commissioner did operate in Safed at the time, but the lack of other evidence seems bewildering.

Chief secretary (kātib al-sirr or kātib al-inshā'). This was the highest executive with the duty of composing the governor's letters and documents and of reading incoming mail. As a senior scribe, the holder of this post was expected to have high linguistic capabilities and erudition in Arabic culture. We find at times a few judges who annexed this post to their judicial commitments. A local celebrity named 'Umar b. Ḥalāwāt was given an official sultanic appointment letter [tawqīf]. He was then removed from Safed to Tripoli, following a row with Tankiz of Damascus whom he, 'Umar, admonished and even tried to harm. Below the chief secretary operated kātib al-darj (a minor correspondent); the best known among those who acquired literary fame for generations was Khalīl b. Aybak al-Šafādī, who launched around 723/1323 his stately career as kātib al-darj of a certain amir, originally from Anatolia, named Ḥusayn b. Abī Bakr. Higher in the hierarchy was the kātib al-dast, and above him the muwaqqīr (ratifier), whose job it was to sign and confirm the accuracy, validity and eloquence of the governor's epistles, including their copies. A certain ratifier (muwaqqīr) is said to have served his master for nine years, a rare phenomenon. Another muwaqqīr operated as preacher, probably in the castle mosque. The governor of Damascus took care to separate his duties. Najm al-Dīn, Šafādī's admired teacher, was simultaneously kātib inshā' and muwaqqīr. A dominant role in the correspondence-bureau was played by the Ibn Ghānim family: Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 1336), was head of the chancellery both in Gaza and in Safed, and Bahā' al-Dīn Abū Bakr filled this

82 Žahīr points out the muqtasibs of Karak, Aleppo and Tripoli (Ẓabda, 132, 133).
83 Ibid., vol. II, 5.
86 Wąd, vol. XII, 256–257; Ayān, vol. II, 233. There are some examples of preachers who operated simultaneously as ratifiers, though this was not considered a most desirable state of affairs. Ayān, vol. II, 234.
post in Safed until 1327 (then removed to Tripoli). Scribes of
different ranks were not exclusively officials of the governor’s court.
Other high executives were assisted by scribes, whom they found
reliable and sufficient enough to travel with from one site to another.

Superintendent of fiefs (nāzīr diwān al-jaysh). This was a civil posi-
tion involving the supervision of fiefs allotted—as salary—to soldiers.
This job was often carried out by judges. In a unique incident, a
man holding the post of muqābil al-istifā’ is also recorded as being
the nāzīr al-jaysh. This is a rare instance in the regular Mamluk gov-
ernment offices. He was probably given financial authority and
entrusted with the mission of tax collection and control of expendi-
tures. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Dāwud, a descendant of Ayyūbīd
rulers from Ba‘albek, performed this duty in Safed but then moved
to Tripoli, where he filled the same post.92

Financial controller (nāzīr al-māl). A qādī by education named
Sulaymān b. Abū al-Ḥasan was appointed as nāzīr al-māl three times
in Safed, where he stayed for a total of five years. He had previ-
ously operated as nāzīr al-jaysh in Aleppo and afterwards held the
posts of nāzīr and wakil bayt al-māl93 in Karak.

In the category of religious functions (al-wazā‘if al-dīniyya) the fol-
lowing are the most outstanding functions:

Judges

Chief among these was qādī al-qudā‘ of the Shāfi‘i school. The Shāfi‘i
magistrate held his office from 1266. Other high judges of different
rites were appointed later, the Ḥanafī around 1360 and the Mālikī
and Ḥanbalī in 1384. These last two posts were not very active, and
those who—through dubious means—were able to maintain them,
could therefore not claim much esteem or public regard.94

the castle governor, it is related that he—surprisingly, one may assume—did not
escort his superior when the latter was ordered to transfer to a remote place. ‘Ayān,
vol. III, 530.
90 So the qādī Fakhr al-Dīn, ‘Ayān, vol. IV, 101 or the qādī Muḥammad b.
91 Ibid., vol. III, 530.
92 Ibid., vol. IV, 439.
93 Ibid., vol. II, 427.
94 Though the following episode occurred in Gaza, it does seem typical and could
In the mid-fifteenth century, Zahirî depicts four judges, one from each school, and each assisted by his deputies (nuwwâb), mainly in the villages.95 The judges (probably not the chief ones, but rather, the ordinary qâdis), were forced—certainly due to poor income—to engage in other offices besides. Such were nâzîr al-juyûsh, as in the case of Shams al-Dîn b. al-Ḥâfîz in 1316; kâtib al-sîr, as in the case of Ibrâhîm b. Ahmad al-Biqa’î (d. 840/1437);96 or Jamâl al-Dîn b. al-Bâ’înî, who held both offices in 1432 and 143597 as well as the office of muwaqqî.98

An instructor of Ïafadî, ‘Abd al-Qâhir b. Muḥammad (d. 740/1339), was appointed temporarily in provincial towns (‘Ajlûn, Salamiyya) before settling in Safed as qâdi al-qudât.99

A prominent family of judges was that of Niḥâwandî. The father, Jalâl al-Dîn, occupied the office from the Mamluk takeover in 1266 until his last days.100 He was followed by his son, Sharaf al-Dîn, who officiated in ‘Ajlûn, Tripoli and Nablus and returned in 1316 to Safed, not for the first time during his governmental career.101 Jamâl al-Dîn al-Tibrîzî, another qâdi al-qudât, relates in rhyme the details of his former stay in ‘Ajlûn.102 The provincial chief judges were subordinate to the qâdi al-qudât of Damascus.103

A certain Nâṣîr b. Maṣûr, a regular qâdi (not qâdi al-qudât), arrived in Safed after many other regional petty stations, such as Zura’ (in Ḥawrân), Adhruṭât (the chief town in Ḥawrân), ‘Ajlûn, Nablus, Ḥimṣ and Tripoli.104

ostensibly have happened in Safed as well. A certain ex-official of Gaza, eager to return to a distinguished job, asked the chief kâtib al-sîr of Egypt to be nominated as a Shâfi‘ite judge, and if this was not possible, then as a Hanafi qâdi; and, should this also be impossible, then to the Mâlikî magistracy, and if not, then to the Hanbali job. The recipient of that letter could not avoid adding a personal comment to the pathetic request. Nyûm, vol. XIII, 40. Such undignified behavior was not unusual among aspiring officeholders.

95 Zubdûn, 134; We came across Zayd b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmân who officiated as qâdi in a nâkiya (village or a district) in the Safed province, ‘Ayûn, vol. II, 383.
98 ‘Uthmânî, 480.
100 Ibid., vol. III, 124.
103 ‘Uthmânî, 480.
105 Ibid., vol. V, 495.
The regional judges were ordinary qādis. One of them chose the Crusader castle of Mi'ilya as his abode.\textsuperscript{105} There are frequent cases in which judges adhered to the governors with whom they moved to new administrative provinces.\textsuperscript{106} The judges, like other public officials, were typified by the trend of local interchange, and those serving in Safed usually moved to Karak or Tripoli.\textsuperscript{107}

The best known judge among the magistrates of Mamluk Safed was Shams al-Dīn al-'Uthmān (d. 1378), author of the detailed local history \textit{Ta'rīkh Safād}, which is presumed to have been written in 1372 and has come down to us in only partial form.\textsuperscript{108}

\textit{Muftī}. A post assumed, by the afore-mentioned resemblance of functions in Safed and Tripoli, to include the office of supplying legal advice in Safed as well. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Ṣafadī (d. 891/1485) and his tutor in Safed, Shams al-Dīn b. Hāmid, his father-in-law, both served as \textit{muftīs}.\textsuperscript{109}

Prayer leader (\textit{imām}). In one note concerning a peculiar person called 'Alī b. Ismā'īl al-Ṣafadī, he is described as an \textit{imām} and a Qur'ān reader (\textit{muqri}) in the Shayzarī mosque. He later disappeared and was rumored to have been seen in Yemen.\textsuperscript{110} A \textit{waqf} donation dating from 890/1485 registers the \textit{imām} of Safed’s mosque as one of its beneficiaries.\textsuperscript{111}

Sermon preacher (\textit{khaṭīb}). The sources signify two serving seats, in the town and in the castle. Najm al-Dīn, another teacher of Ṣafadī, was active as preacher in both duties.\textsuperscript{112} His father, Kamāl al-Dīn, is named as the preacher only in the castle (\textit{khaṭīb qaḍat ṣafād}).\textsuperscript{113} The often-mentioned 'Umar b. Ḥalāwāt is recorded as giving sermons in the castle,\textsuperscript{114} a task which suited his many talents.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{105} 'Uthmānī, 484.
\item \textsuperscript{106} \textit{Ayān}, vol. II, 233.
\item \textsuperscript{107} \textit{Ibid.}, vol. II, 194. The above-mentioned 'Umar b. Ḥalāwāt, apart from his high scribal duties, was also a \textit{qādis} serving in Safed and Tripoli. \textit{Ayān}, vol. III, 592.
\item \textsuperscript{108} 'Uthmānī, 477.
\item \textsuperscript{109} \textit{Dawā'ir Lami'}, vol. IV, 338.
\item \textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ayān}, vol. III, 297.
\item \textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ibyāl}, 69, doc. 38.
\item \textsuperscript{113} \textit{Wāff}, vol. XII, 256–57; \textit{Ayān}, vol. II, 233.
\item \textsuperscript{114} \textit{Wāff}, vol. XII, 257; \textit{Ayān}, vol. III, 594, 595.
\end{itemize}
Supervisor of the State treasury (wakil bayt al-māl). This officer was held accountable for the moral and just supervision of the treasury (bayt al-māl) branch in Safed. This government department dealt mainly with the rights of orphan beneficiaries of the waqf, the validity of transactions where the State is involved (such as selling and buying public estates), and the disposition of wealth left with no heirs. This post was entrusted to an administrator (wakil) of religious repute, and was considered a religious post. Two wakils are named in Ḡafid’s Ayan. One was ‘Ala’ al-Dīn al-Kahhâl who was renowned for timidity and non-exploitation of his powerful authority. A second one was ‘Ala’ al-Dīn ‘Ali b. Muhammad, who was one of Ḡafid’s instructors; he initially served as a teacher in the mosque of Baybars (the Red Mosque) and was then promoted to the post of wakil. This ‘Ali perished in the Black Death.

A summary of this list of public officers might raise surprise due to its small number of teachers, Shaykhs, lecturers, educators or instructors common in other Syrian centers. This is related to the absence of madrasas, an institution which characterizes the philanthropic and pietistic construction initiatives in the Mamluk state. Even Ḡafid, who mentioned several of his instructors, fails to mention their “working” place. If there were educational endeavors, they were probably managed on a private, rather than a public, basis. In his criticism, though exaggerated and intended to amuse, an inhabitant of Safed grumbles that the town has “no madrasa and no ribāṭ”.

It is true that al-Ẓâhirî, an authority on Safed, does mention, a century later than ‘Uthmānī, madrasas (in the plural), among other merits of the flourishing city; even this, however, is done in a rather general way, with no specific establishments of study cited.

Teaching and learning were carried out in the Red Mosque, built by Baybars. It is even possible to name several scholars who contributed to its daily tutoring activity. Nevertheless, the fact that the
Red Mosque\textsuperscript{121} is almost the only institution which can be recorded as providing study services attests to the insufficiency and weakness of Safed in this domain of traditional education.

\textit{Summary}

Safed, after its conquest in 1266 could look forward to promising opportunities. It had almost no urban infrastructure which could have enabled original state initiatives without encountering the veteran population or existing ancient monuments. Safed was subject to nearly no threats from surrounding foes. It was centrally located in the fertile region of the eastern Galilee, indisputably commanding the region (after the fall of Acre) as far as the Carmel and the coastal area, and was relatively distant from the inspection of Damascus, and certainly from that of Egypt.

The conferral of an administrative status to Safed and its consequent urban expansion could have animated a building surge initiated by local entrepreneurs, and encouraged immigration; this, in turn, could have resulted in a more significant demographic growth.

In post-1266 Safed, there was indeed a wave of establishing buildings, baths, markets and caravanserais. It may be assumed that people moved to Safed, or at least expressed their satisfaction with the lifestyle there.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{121} Other madrasas mentioned in this article are those built by Governor Aruq\textsuperscript{123} (see “Governors of Safed”, paragraph h) and the Jāmi` al-Shayzar (see the paragraph on the imām). A certain Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Manṣūr gave lessons in two madrasas at Safed (al-Shihābīyya and al-Shamṣīyya), which later fell totally into oblivion: Ibn Qādis Shuhba [see note no. 120 above], vol. I, 126.

\textsuperscript{122} An amir named Dirbās was sent from Safed to officiate in Damascus. There he composed a poem expressing longing for his former city. “There are my friends, family and abode [\textit{awtād}] . . . these do I cherish openly and secretly”, Ā'yūn, vol. II, 453. In the comical debate on the merits and drawbacks of Safed, the arguments in its favor (among others, the healthy air, delicate fruits for export, edifices enabling

\textsuperscript{123} Other madrasas mentioned in this article are those built by Governor Aruq\textsuperscript{123} (see “Governors of Safed”, paragraph h) and the Jāmi` al-Shayzar (see the paragraph on the imām). A certain Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Manṣūr gave lessons in two madrasas at Safed (al-Shihābīyya and al-Shamṣīyya), which later fell totally into oblivion: Ibn Qādis Shuhba [see note no. 120 above], vol. I, 126.
At the same time, the subsequent shortcomings were apparent. These included inadequate transportation to and from Safed, a paucity of accommodation for temporary visitors (pilgrims or merchants), a dearth of institutions of learning and the rapid turnover of (mostly second-rate) ruling officials. Though a “new” town, conceived by an innovative and vital regime, Safed’s significance never surpassed its territorial boundaries. Sultans rarely paid a visit there (Qāṭībāy’s nocturnal stay was exceptional), imperial building initiatives were limited and its appeal to population was debatable. Safed lacked indigenous holy sites (apart from that of Jacob’s cave), and was passed over by scholars and students.

Its castle, which was the key reason for Baybars’ decision to strengthen Safed, suffered from diminishing importance after the expulsion of the Crusaders, and its former value was reduced to a prison for mutinous elements.

The low status of Safed can be clarified by the essential topographic and climatic flaws which engendered its isolation prior to the thirteenth century, as well as by the determined resolution of the Mamluk rulers. Consequently, Safed, in the broad medieval context, remained a provincial center.

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a spacious sight, singing of the birds at dawn, technical achievements in the castle, healing virtues of Jacob’s cave... can count as evidence of (at least relative) local contentment: ‘Uthmānī, 487.

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PART FIVE

IBN TAYMIYYA AND MAMLUK SOCIETY
CHAPTER NINE

IBN TAYMIYYA ON DIVORCE OATHS

Yossef Rapoport

I

Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (661–728/1263–1328), arguably the most illustrious scholar of the Mamluk period, was brought to trial and imprisoned on account of his views regarding three theological and legal issues. First, Ibn Taymiyya was convicted of anthropomorphism by several tribunals in Damascus and Cairo during the year 705/1305. In 726/1326, Ibn Taymiyya was imprisoned in Damascus for his attacks on the visitation of tombs. Less well known are his trials regarding his views on oaths undertaken on pain of divorce. While the established doctrine was that oaths on pain of divorce were considered as conditional divorces, Ibn Taymiyya wrote in 718/1318 a short treatise in which he argued that the legal rules that apply to

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oaths in the name of God apply also to oaths under pain of divorce. Ibn Taymiyya reasoned that, since violation of an oath in the name of God requires the expiation prescribed in the Qur’an, so too violation of a divorce oath requires expiation, not the actual dissolution of marriage. After having been prohibited twice from issuing fatwas on this subject, Ibn Taymiyya was eventually arrested for five months, until his release in 721/1321.

The debate over divorce oaths provides an insight into the social context of Ibn Taymiyya’s intellectual work, mainly because this was a legal debate, not a theological one. It is not always easy to draw the line between Islamic theology and law, but there is little doubt that the question of divorce oaths had much more immediate implications than the abstract issue of the attributes of God, or even Ibn Taymiyya’s attack on the visitation of tombs. Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), the Shāfi’ī jurist who composed the most effective refutation of Ibn Taymiyya’s views on divorce oaths, commented that Ibn Taymiyya’s theological positions constituted an abominable heresy, but only the select few could grasp them. Ibn Taymiyya’s innovative opinions on divorce oaths, however, have a far greater impact on the laymen, “who rely on his opinion and rush to endorse it, and as a result take lightly the laws of divorce”.

This essay will outline the development of Ibn Taymiyya’s ideas on the issue of oaths under pain of divorce, and propose an explanation for the way state authorities responded to them. The debate over divorce oaths, I believe, reflects some of the basic structures of social organization during the Mamluk era. Since the debate over

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3 In classical legal literature, the sentence ‘If I do such-and-such my wife is repudiated’ is discussed under the category of hilf bi’t-talaq, but is considered as a conditional repudiation, the repudiation taking place upon the fulfillment of the condition specified. Norman Calder, who studied the early Islamic legal doctrine on oaths, suggested translating the Arabic hilf bi’t-talaq as ‘swearing on the basis of divorcing’ (“Hinth, Birr, Tabarrur, Tahamuth: An Inquiry into the Arabic Vocabulary of Oaths”, BSOAS, vol. LI (1989), 215). For the purpose of this essay, and without any prejudice towards Ibn Taymiyya’s position, I believe that ‘an oath on/under pain of divorce’, or simply ‘divorce oath’, reflect better the actual social use of these phrases by Ibn Taymiyya’s contemporaries.

4 Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, al-Ra‘el‘al al-Sāhibīyya fi al-Radd ‘alā Ibn Taymiyya wa-Tīmuldhibī Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1983), 151–52. Al-Subkī notes that Ibn Taymiyya has influenced in particular the peasants, the Bedouin, and the inhabitants of the peripheral lands (al-bilad al-barā`īyya), meaning probably the Jazīrā and northern Syria.
divorce oaths was essentially about their violation and its appropriate punishment, it was therefore a debate about the value of oaths and their meaning in society. The debate prompted by Ibn Taymiyya points also to a link between the means of effecting social bonds in the public sphere and the relations of power in the domestic sphere. In this essay I will try to show that this link between the internal structure of households and the means of creating political and social commitments was a cornerstone of social organization.

The organization of this essay is as follows. First, I will describe the use of, and importance attached to, divorce oaths during the early Mamluk period. The second section will analyze the writings of Ibn Taymiyya on divorce oaths, as well as his work on the related issue of triple divorces. The third section will focus on the response of the state and the scholarly elite to Ibn Taymiyya's challenge, and will examine the immediate reasons leading to his persecution. In the last section I will attempt to explain the social significance of the debate over divorce oaths by analyzing the link between the domestic and the political spheres during the early Mamluk period.

II

Oaths on pain of divorce have had a long history in Muslim societies, going back to the early Islamic community. Oaths on pain of divorce, along with oaths on pain of manumission, had a special legal status, recognized by the earliest compendia of Islamic law. They were considered as conditional phrases, the act of divorce or manumission being contingent on the fulfillment of the condition. Thus, when a man says ‘If I do such-and-such my wife is divorced’, the divorce takes place immediately following the specified action.5 Oaths of divorce and manumission are therefore, according to most Muslim jurists, distinguished from oaths in the name of God, which are not construed as conditional phrases. The violation of oath in the name of God requires legally prescribed exiation. They are also distinguished from vows, which are conceived of as commitments

5 On oaths of divorce and manumission in the early compendia of Islamic law, such as al-Shāfi‘ī’s Kitāb al-Umm, al-Shaybānī’s Kitāb al-Ašt, and Šāhīn’s al-Mudawwana, see N. Calder, “Ḥinth”, 216–23.
towards God. Oaths on pain of divorce and manumission were included in the oath of allegiance (bay'a) introduced by the Umayyad governor al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf, and used by many Muslim rulers in subsequent centuries.\(^6\) Anecdotes regarding oaths on pain of divorce are interspersed in early Islamic belles-lettristic and legal literature, and reflect actual use of this kind of oath.\(^7\)

The development and the spread of oaths on pain of divorce in medieval Muslim societies are beyond the scope of this essay. There is no doubt, however, that by Ibn Taymiyya’s time divorce oaths were conceived as the most solemn form of oaths. The importance of divorce oaths is best exemplified by an anecdote concerning al-¸ahir Baybars, the founder of the Mamluk state. In 661/1263 Baybars conducted elaborate negotiations with the Ayyûbid ruler of Karak, al-Malik al-Mughîth, promising not to cause him any harm. However, when al-Malik al-Mughîth agreed to meet Baybars outside the citadel of Karak, Baybars immediately arrested him and sent him to Cairo, where he was duly executed. As al-Malik al-Mughîth was sent off to Egypt, we are told by the Damascene chronicler Qu†b al-Dîn al-Yûnînî, ‘signs of abhorrence appeared on the faces of several amîrs, for he [Baybars] had undertaken forty oaths, including an oath on pain of triple divorce from [his wife] the mother of al-Malik al-Sa’îd. It has been said that she resorted to a tahlîl marriage with a slave, who was afterwards murdered’.\(^8\)

Under Islamic law, after a husband has repudiated his wife three times, the couple cannot re-marry until the divorcee contracts and

consummates a marriage with a different man. It is lawful for the divorcee to re-marry her former husband only after the dissolution of this second marriage. At times, this second marriage would only be arranged with the intention and for the sole purpose of permitting the woman to her first husband, in which case it is called marriage of *taḥlit* (making lawful) and the contracting man is called *muḥallīl*. In spite of violating numerous other oaths, it was the violation of the oath on pain of divorce that most outraged the chronicler and Baybars’ own allies. Whether Umm al-Malik al-Saʿīd did actually contract a *taḥlit* marriage remains unverifiable, a rumor more than a fact. But for al-Yūnīnī and his contemporaries, a *taḥlit* marriage must have followed such an overt violation of an oath on pain of divorce.

Members of the military elite considered oaths of divorce to supersede any other form of commitment. The biography of the *amīr* Sayf al-Dīn Karāy provides another example. According to the chronicler al-Ṣafādī, Karāy’s only weakness was his addiction to sex. Karāy took his wives and concubines everywhere, even on his hunting journeys. In 711/1311–2, upon being appointed governor of Syria, Karāy made it publicly known that he had undertaken an oath, under pain of divorce, not to accept any gifts during his tenure of office. Shortly afterwards, Karāy married in Damascus the daughter of a former governor, not an unusual step for a new governor consolidating his power. In compliance with his oath, he refused to accept the customary wedding gifts, thus causing embarrassment to other *amīrs*, and especially to his *khushdāshs*. When one of them sent a representative to urge the governor to accept his presents, Karāy instructed the emissary to tell his master: ‘You know his [viz., Karāy’s] nature, and his love (*maḥabbatihī*) for his wives and concubines; and that he has undertaken an oath, on pain of divorcing the wives and manumitting the concubines, not to accept anything from any human being during the tenure of this governorship. . . . My *khushdāsh*, if you wish to see his wives divorced and his concubines manumitted, the choice is yours (*faʿl-amru amruka*). The excuse was accepted.9 The point of

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the story, of course, is that an oath on pain of divorce superseded, at least for Sayf al-Dīn Karāy, the mutual friendship emanating from ties of khushāshiyya.

Karāy’s exceptionally powerful libido notwithstanding, it seems that other members of Mamluk social elites shared his respect for divorce oaths. Chroniclers often report oath-taking among the military elite without specifying the form of the oath taken. When they do wish to emphasize the binding power of an oath, they refer either to the taking of an oath on a copy of the Qurān,10 or to an oath of divorce. In 735/1333–4, the chief bureaucrat Ibn Hilāl al-Dawla, under arrest and torture, denied on pain of triple divorce having any knowledge of the whereabouts of the money he was accused of embezzling.11 In 742/1340–1, the vice-regent ˇuquztimur had taken an oath on pain of divorce not to remain in office under the new sultan.12 In 776/1374, the Sultan al-Ashraf Sha’bān took an oath on pain of divorce not to accept the resignation of the chief qāḍī Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Jamā’a, a resolute act that convinced the qāḍī to remain in his office.13 The oath on pain of divorce was also part of the oath of allegiance inaugurating the reign of every new sultan.14

It would be a mistake to assume that oaths on pain of divorce were limited to the elites, military or civilian. The chronicles contain sporadic references to oaths on pain of divorce taken by commoners.15 But it is the extant contemporary fatwā collections that

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10 For an oath on a copy of the Qurān by an Ayyūbid ruler, see al-Yūnīsī, Dhayl, vol. II, 398–400; for an oath on a copy of the Qurān taken by a Mamluk amīr in 690/1291, see al-Šafādī, Ayyūn al-ʿĀrīf, vol. III, 1432.


14 See, for example, the text of the buqʿa given to the Sultan Ahmad in 742/1342, preserved in the contemporary chronicle of al-Shujāʿī (Taʿrīkh, 199). The texts of two oaths of allegiance to new caliphs, composed by al-Qalqashandī in the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, retain the same order of oaths, opening also with an oath on pain of divorce (Ṣubḥ, vol. IX, 312–13, 318–19).

15 Muḥibb al-Dīn Ibn Daqīq al-Īd (d. 716/1316), the son of the famous jurist and qāḍī, refused to begin a petition he composed on behalf of a commoner with the word ‘al-Mamlūk (your slave). The commoner then took a divorce oath not to let Muḥibb al-Dīn send the petition without this customary symbol of humility, leaving the jurist no choice (Ayyūn al-ʿĀrīf, vol. III, 1244; al-Uḍūwī, al-Tālīf al-Seʿīd al-Jāmīʿ b-Asmāʿ al-ʿAṣṣār waʾt-Ruwāt bi-ʾAlā al-Seʿīd (Cairo, 1966), 404; a badly
leave little doubt about the prevalence of divorce oaths among all classes of society, as real-life problems arising from divorce oaths were brought before contemporary jurists. In a case undoubtedly originating from the lower classes, brought before Ibn al-Shahrzaḏ (d. 643/1245), a man who had undertaken a divorce oath to make up for a debt by working for his creditor, eventually paid the debt in cash.16 Al-Nawawwâ (d. 676/1277) was asked about a master-artisan who, when his apprentice excused himself from performing a certain job by claiming lack of competence, swore on pain of divorce that the apprentice knew the dwelling place of Satan himself.17 Ibn Taymiyya was asked about a husband who warned his wife not to leave the house until he returned from a journey, on the pain of divorcing her three times. When he came back, the wife told him that she had to go out for a dire necessity (darûra).18 Jurists were often asked about divorce oaths undertaken by husbands during marital strife.19 All in all, divorce oaths appear in the fatwâ collections in a baffling variety of economic and social contexts.

deformed version of the anecdote appears in Ibn Hajar, al-Durrâ, vol. III, 113. Ibn Daqîq al-Id himself was appointed as chief qaḍî as a result of the determination of a certain famous Sufi shaykh, who undertook a divorce oath to approach the sultan and bring about the nomination (Ayn al-Asr, vol. II, 821).

16 In this case, Ibn al-Shahrzaḏ ruled that violation and divorce occurred if the oath-taker refused to continue to work for his creditor (Ibn al-Shahrzaḏ al-Shahrazûr, Fâtiwâ al-Masâystick ilâ Ibn al-Salâh, ed. ‘Abd al-Mu’tî Qal’ajj (Beirut: Dâr al-Ma’rifà, 1986), 687 (no. 1048). In another case brought before the same mufti, a creditor undertook a divorce oath not to allow the release of his debtor (Fatwâ, 445 (no. 399)). For other fatawâs of Ibn al-Shahrzaḏ on divorce oaths, ibid., nos. 396, 399, 402. For another example of the use of divorce oaths in a commercial context, see Ibn Taymiyya, Majmû‘ al-Fatwâ, ed. ‘Abd al-Rahmân b. Muhammad al-‘Ajamî al-Najjî (Riyadh, 1961–63), vol. XXX, 315–16. (A case of a man who lent something to another person, and then mistakenly took a third person to be the debtor, undertaking an oath of divorce to support his claim).

17 The legal problem was, of course, whether the apprentice does or does not know where Satan lives (Fâtiwâ al-Inâm al-Nawawî al-masumât bi’l-Masâystick al-Manthûrûn, ed. ‘Ali’ al-Dîn Ibn al-‘Atjâr (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1987), 140). In other cases, al-Nawawwî was asked about men who swore on pain of divorce that a certain muftî never errs, or that a certain school of law was the best and most noble of all schools (ibid., 140–1, 146, 147).

18 Ibn Taymiyya ruled that the oath was not violated, as necessity exempted the wife from strictly following her husband’s instructions. Ibn Taymiyya also exempted from liability a husband whose wife claimed to have forgotten his warning against entering a certain house (Ibn Taymiyya, Fâtiwâ al-Nisâ‘, ed. ‘Irâhîm Muhammad al-Jamal (Cairo, 1987), 253–258; Majmû‘ al-Fatwâ, vol. XX, 205–6; vol. XXX, 315–6). All these fatawâs do not refer to the expiability of divorce oaths, and therefore date, most probably, before 718/1318.

19 In fact, most of Ibn Taymiyya’s preserved fatawâs on divorce oaths were responses
The collections of *fatāwā* provide evidence for the prevalence of divorce oaths in yet another way. Many of the questions sent to these jurists concerned the permissibility of *taḥlīl* marriages and other legal subterfuges designed to allow triply-divorced wives to return to their husbands. In those cases for which we have details, the need to use one of these legal devices arose as a result of a violation of an oath. In addition, jurists discuss the permissibility of legal subterfuges specifically designed to circumvent the violation of divorce oaths, the most popular being a method called *khulʿ al-yamīn.* Under this legal device, the husband and his wife agree on a consensual divorce (*khulʿ*) just before the husband is about to violate an oath he has undertaken. When the oath is actually violated, the spouses are no longer married, and the triple divorce invoked upon the breach of the oath cannot take place. The spouses are therefore allowed to re-marry immediately.

By the eighth/fourteenth century divorce oaths were used, apparently for the first time in the history of Islamic law, in judicial processes. Under Islamic procedural law, in certain circumstances one of the litigants, usually the defendant, is required to take an oath in the name of God in order to support his or her claim. Some jurists, in particular from the Shāfiʿī school, allow the *qādī* to bolster the sanctity of the oath (*taghlīq al-yamīn*) by adding to the oath formula certain attributes of God, or requiring the litigant to take the oath in the city’s mosque after the Friday prayer. However, the chief Ḥanafi *qādī* of Damascus, Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭarsūsī (d. 758/1357), allowed the *qādī* to bolster the sanctity of an oath by requiring the litigant to take an oath on pain of divorce or manumission. Al-Ṭarsūsī acknowledges that this view has no precedent in legal literature, but comments that ‘in our days, however, it is said that he to cases originating in marital conflicts (Ibn Taymiyya, *Fatāwā al-Nisāʿ*, 253–58). For other instances of the use of divorce oaths within marital strife, see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Fatāwā wa-Maṣā'il*, 443 (no. 395), 684 (1032); *Fatāwā al-Nawawī*, 140; Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Fatāwā al-Subkī* (Cairo, 1936–38), 311.


21 Shāfiʿī jurists at this period generally approved of *khulʿ al-yamīn.* The disadvantage of this method, as used by the Shāfiʿīs, was that it could only be used twice. *Khulʿ* separations, according to the Shāfiʿīs, counted as divorces and not as judicial dissolution of the marriage (*faskh*). Therefore, if this legal device is repeated three times, a triple divorce ensues. See Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Fatāwā*, 443 (no. 395); al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā*, 136, 139; Ibn Abī al-Dam (d. 642/1244), *Kitāb Adab al-Qaḍāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Zuhaylī (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1982), 671–4.
[viz., the qādi] can do that, if he considers it in the public interest (maylaḥa).”22 His contemporary, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, also refers to litigants swearing an oath on pain of divorce, at a qādi’s instigation, in order to acquit themselves of a debt.23 The change in judicial procedure was a result of adaptation to social practices, and demonstrates again that oaths on pain of divorce had come to be considered the most solemn form of oath.

III

In 718/1318, Ibn Taymiyya wrote a short epistle, entitled al-ḥtimā’ wa’l-ḥfif bi’l-ṭālāq (The Meeting and Parting of Ways concerning Oaths on pain of Divorce).24 In this work, he propounded a novel doctrine regarding divorce oaths, contradicting not only established doctrine but also his own earlier views on the subject. Succinct and sometimes sloppy, this first treatise contained a rudimentary outline of a distinction between conditional divorces and oaths on pain of divorce. In the following years, Ibn Taymiyya composed many

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23 Ibn al-Qayyim describes an impermissible legal subterfuge used to circumvent this judicial divorce oath. He does not discuss the legality of requiring a litigant to take a divorce oath, which suggests it was common practice (I’lām al-Maṣūmī, vol. 3, 248). In the Haram documents, originating from the qādi’s court in Jerusalem at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century, there are many examples of ancillary oaths taken by litigants, especially in cases of debt. To date, the documents have not been fully published, but according to D. Little’s catalogue these oaths were taken solely in the name of God. Only in one case did the qādi order the defendant to undertake his oath in the city’s mosque, al-Masjid al-Aqṣā’ (D. Little, A Catalogue of the Islamic Documents from al-Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1984), 47; for taghāt al-dīn, see no. 648).

24 Al-ḥtimā’ wa’l-ḥfif bi’l-ṭālāq, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raẓūq Hamza (Cairo: al-Manār Press, 1346/1926–27). H. Laoust translated this epistle into French in “Une risāla”, 221–36, suggesting the title ‘Du serment de répudiation; rapports des deux notions’. The manuscript used for the published edition contains an ijāza by Ibn Taymiyya, dated 27 Rabi’ I 718 (10 May 1318), and it can be assumed that he completed the treatise shortly prior to that date. There is little doubt that al-ḥtimā’ wa’l-ḥfif was his first elaboration of this doctrine, for Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī’s response, written half a year later, refers only to this treatise.
more treatises and fatwās on this issue, which seems to have occupied him until his final arrest in 726/1326. For the sake of clarity, the following exposition will generally be based on these later works, as well as the discussions by his disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.25 It should be stressed, however, that it was al-Ījtimāʿ wa'l-Īftīrah that led to Ibn Taymiyya’s trials in 718/1318 and 720/1320.

At the crux of Ibn Taymiyya’s doctrine was his broad definition of intention. In his view, intentions supersede the explicit or formal meanings conveyed in speech; for speech has no significance in and of itself, but serves only to indicate the intention of the speaker. When a man says to his wife ‘If you agree to forfeit your ṣadīq, you are repudiated’, he has the intention to divorce her provided she absolves him of these debts. The conditional form of the sentence conveys the real intention of the speaker. Ibn Taymiyya argues, however, that when a man says ‘If I do such-and-such, my wife is repudiated’, he has no intention to repudiate his wife, even if he was to commit the specified action. The intention is merely to assert his determination, as in the sentence ‘By God, I shall not do such-and-such’. Accordingly, when a man says ‘If I do not take such-and-such action, my wife is repudiated’, his real intention is to convey determination to perform the specified act, rather than to commit himself to a divorce. The same applies to testimonies on past events, such as ‘May my wife be repudiated if this had happened’. When a man has the intention of either deterring (man’ūt) or inciting (ḥabūth) himself or someone else from or to a certain action, or attesting (ṭayḍīq) or denying (takḍīb) a certain information, he is in fact undertaking an oath.26

25 The most elaborate, and probably the latest, work of Ibn Taymiyya on oaths of divorce is found in the fifth and final chapter of his Ṣuṣn al-ʿUqūd (The Elucidation of Contracts), devoted to oaths and vows (Majmūʿat Ḥattāwī, vol. III, 349–84). A shorter treatise, called Lāmiḥat al-Mukhtaṣar fī al-Īthār bayna al-Talāq wa'l-Ḥiff (A Quick Glance on the Difference between Divorces and Oaths), as well as several fatwās on the subject, were published in Majmūʿat Ḥattāwī Ibn Taymiyya (Cairo, 1326–29/1908–11), vol. III, 2–8, 27ff. Ibn Taymiyya’s biographers list at least ten additional titles composed by Ibn Taymiyya on this subject (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādiʿ, al-ʿUqūd, 214). Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s eloquent exposition of his master’s views on divorce oaths is found in his Ṣuṣn al-Muṣawwīn, vol. III, 50–80; vol. IV, 97–118; Lāmiḥat al-Īthīfīn min Maʿād al-Shayṭān, ed. Muhammad Ḥamīd al-Fiqī (Cairo, 1939), vol. II, 87–97. It should be noted that the cause of Ibn Taymiyya’s final trials, on account of his doctrine on the visitation of tombs, was a treatise he wrote seventeen years earlier (Murad, “Ibn Taymiya”, 24–26). Thus it appears that he was occupied by divorce oaths until his final years.

26 The litmus test distinguishing between divorce oaths and conditional divorces,
If a man pronounces a conditional divorce with the intention of undertaking an oath, the legal rules pertaining to oaths must apply. God commanded men to respect their valid oaths to the utmost of their ability, but also allowed men to violate them, provided they perform proper expiation. The Divine legislation, argues Ibn Taymiyya, must apply to all oaths, including oaths on pain of divorce. According to the existing doctrine, a violation of an oath on pain of divorce is immediately penalized. Thus, a man who has taken such an oath has no way out, even if he had undertaken to commit an act of disobedience towards God. What Ibn Taymiyya proposes, therefore, is to allow men who had undertaken oaths on pain of divorce a way out, through an act of expiation. A violation of an oath on pain of divorce, like the violation of any other oath, should be expiated, not punished. For example, he reminds his readers that oaths on pain of pilgrimage, charity, manumission and divorce were all customarily included in the oaths of allegiance (bay'a), and therefore should all be subject to the same rules. If oaths on pain of pilgrimage or charity included in the bay'a are expiable, the same should hold for oaths on pain of divorce and manumission. Ibn Taymiyya considers it a religious duty to abide by one's oaths, and even more so with regard to an oath of allegiance to the sultan. But

according to Ibn Taymiyya, is whether the speaker finds divorce more repugnant than the action specified in the phrase. A more formal way to decipher the intention of a conditional sentence is to rephrase it in the form of an oath. If the conditional sentence 'If I do such-and-such, my wife is divorced' can be rephrased as an oath sentence, such as 'May my wife be divorced, I shall not do such-and-such', it follows that the speaker had the intention of undertaking an oath (Majmū‘at Fattāwā, vol. III, 6). However, when a man says to his wife 'If you commit adultery you are divorced', there is little doubt that he finds the adultery more abhorrent, and will wish to divorce her once she has committed adultery (Majmū‘at Fattāwā, vol. III, 6–7, 352–54; al-Ijtimā‘ wa’l-Iftirāq, 7–8).

The rules of expiation for violation of oaths are laid down in Q 5:89, "God will not call you to account for what is futile (laghw) in your oaths, but He will call you to account for your deliberate oaths. For expiation, feed ten indigent persons, on the scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom. That is the expiation for the oaths ye have sworn, but keep to your oaths."

The outline of these ideas appears already in al-Ijtimā‘ wa’l-Iftirāq, 14ff. Ibn Taymiyya's opponents have argued that men who had undertaken an oath on pain of divorce do have a way out, for violation results only in divorce. According to Ibn Taymiyya, however, divorce should be considered as too severe a punishment, especially when the spouses are attached to each other and have had children together. Ibn Taymiyya goes on, somewhat taken by his own rhetoric, to say that experience shows that spouses would rather lose their property and be banished from their homeland than be separated (Majmū‘at Fattāwā, vol. III, 364–69, 381).
oaths, whatever their form, can never supersede the obedience due to God.29

Ibn Taymiyya view of conditional divorces was in agreement with contemporary social practice. The one problem with this doctrine, however, was that no one seems to have held it before—at least no one who counted. The Zahiris, to be sure, hold that oaths on pain of divorce are invalid, not even requiring expiation. But their argument was based on their fundamental rejection of any conditional divorces, a methodology Ibn Taymiyya was not inclined to follow, and they were, in any case, on the margins of orthodox Sunni Islam. Neither could Ibn Taymiyya, the Sunni zealot, fully embrace the Shi'i-Imami doctrine, which rejects both conditional divorces and the utterance of triple repudiations at any one time.30 The established Sunni legal doctrine did recognize oaths of divorce as a separate legal category,31 but held that these oaths are subject to the rules of conditional divorces.32 There was no precedent to Ibn Taymiyya’s position among the Sunni schools, and the established doctrine seemed to rely on a consensus (ijma) of the jurists.

Ibn Taymiyya resorted to a subtle defense against the claims of ijma. In his later works he claimed that there is no sound tradition from the Companions on the issue of divorce oaths, and that all the traditions supporting the doctrine of his opponents date from the Umayyad period. This means, argued Ibn Taymiyya, that in the Prophet’s time no one undertook such oaths, and they were intro-

30 On the Zahir and Shi’i doctrines on divorce oaths, see Majm’at Fatwa’, vol. III, 8–9. See also Abu Zahra, Ibn Taymiyya, 419, 427.
31 The definition of divorce oaths varied slightly among the schools. The Hanafis considered all conditional divorces as divorce oaths, excluding divorces that depend on the will of the wife (as these belonged to the separate legal category of tamlik). The Hanafis held that divorce oaths are defined as any conditional divorce contingent on an action that can either be taken or avoided. The Shi’i’s held that divorce oaths are any conditional divorce made with the purpose of either inciting or desisting to or from an action, or confirming a certain item of information. The Shi’i definition of divorce oaths is practically similar to Ibn Taymiyya’s definition (Ibn Qudama, al-Mughni, vol. VIII, 335). However, this distinction between conditional divorces and divorce oaths carried almost no practical legal consequences for the orthodox schools.
duced only a generation after the Companions, in the time of the Followers. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya turned the absence of evidence into a useful weapon. If the Prophet and his Companions never resorted to oaths on pain of divorce, the practice itself is an innovation (bid'a), and no 'ijm concerning it could be considered valid. The evocation of the age of the Prophet came late in the development of Ibn Taymiyya’s argumentation. One finds no trace of it in al-Ijtimā' wa'l-Iftīrāq. Ibn Taymiyya, at least in this case, was not motivated by a salafi yearning to follow the practices of the Prophet. His doctrines were no idealist preaching. On the contrary, Ibn Taymiyya was consistently engaged with contemporary social issues. The reference to the age of the Prophet was not an end in itself, but rather a tool, used as a last resort to defend his heterodox doctrine against strong claims to an 'ijm to the contrary.

Some time after 718/1318, and perhaps as a result of the ban on his doctrines concerning divorce oaths, Ibn Taymiyya began to issue fatwās on the invalidity of triple repudiations. In these fatwās, Ibn Taymiyya ruled that repudiation is valid only if it is made in the way recommended by the Prophet, so-called ṭalāq al-sunna. In Islamic law, a distinction is made between a sunni divorce, that is a single revocable repudiation uttered when the wife is in a state of purity, and bid' divorces, that is acts of divorce made in any other way, including the utterance of a triple repudiation. While the orthodox schools unanimously agreed that bid' divorces are reprehensible yet valid, Ibn Taymiyya now argued that bid' divorces do not bind at all. For example, when a man says ‘You are repudiated thrice’, the established doctrine was that triple divorce follows; but Ibn Taymiyya ruled that the result is only one single revocable divorce, as the two other repudiations uttered are bid' divorces. In effect this was

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34 The debate on the expiability of divorce oaths must have preceded Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwās on triple repudiations. Ibn Taymiyya’s doctrine regarding triple divorces is not mentioned in his al-Ijtimā‘ wa‘l-Iftīrāq, nor in al-Subkī’s refutation written shortly later. Were Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwās on triple divorces already issued by that time, both authors surely would have taken note of them.
35 Ibn Taymiyya was, however, again holding views similar to those of the Zāhirīs and the Shi‘īs (Abū Zahra, Ibn Taymiyya, 419, 427). For Ibn Taymiyya’s treatises on bid‘ divorces see Majmū‘at Fatwāwá, vol. III, 13–27; Ibn Taymiyya, Majmū‘at al-Rasā‘īl (Cairo, 1905–6), vol. II, 203–16. See also Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Zād
another indirect attempt to mitigate the power of divorce oaths. 36 Divorce oaths were usually undertaken on pain of triple repudiation. When the oath was breached, re-marriage was possible only after the woman had contracted a 
\[\text{tahlîl}\] marriage and had had sexual intercourse with another man. In contrast, the implication of Ibn Taymiyya’s position was that a breach of an oath taken on pain of triple repudiation causes only a single, and revocable, divorce.

Ibn Taymiyya again had recourse to the model of the Prophet and the Companions. According to a tradition attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās (d.c. 68/687), during the age of the Prophet a triple repudiation issued in one utterance had been in fact considered only as a single revocable divorce. The law, however, was changed by the second caliph, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. ‘Umar was troubled by the fickleness with which Muslim men were divorcing their wives, and wanted to deter them from issuing unnecessary repudiations. He therefore decided to hold men to their word, and ruled that the utterance of a triple repudiation would, from now on, actually evoke triple divorce. Ibn Taymiyya used this tradition to show that the ijmā‘ reached by subsequent generations of jurists was based on ‘Umar’s legal reasoning (ijtihād) rather than on Divine legislation. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya argued that the tradition demonstrates the need to adapt the laws of divorce to public interest (maṣlaḥa). In ‘Umar’s time 
\[\text{tahlîl}\] marriages were either unknown or strictly prohibited. In our days, says Ibn Taymiyya, the corruption resulting from 
\[\text{tahlîl}\] marriages overrides the need to deter husbands from fickle divorces. Just as ‘Umar changed the laws of divorce in the interests of the community, jurists must now revert to the practice of the

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36 It is noteworthy that Ibn Taymiyya’s biographers grouped together all his doctrines on divorce. In a list of Ibn Taymiyya’s independent legal opinions, his biographer Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī singles out his master’s doctrines on divorce as ‘his well-known legal opinions, which caused him many tribulations, were that divorce oaths are expiable, that a triple divorce effects only a single divorce, and that a forbidden (muḥarsam) divorce is invalid.’ (al-Uqūd, 214; cf. Ibn al-Wardī, Taʾrīkh (Najaf, 1969), vol. II, 411.)
Prophet and the Companions, in order to combat the evil practice of *taḥlīl*.

At the heart of Ibn Taymiyya’s doctrines regarding divorce oaths and *bid‘a* divorces was his desire to eliminate *taḥlīl* marriages. Laoust, perceiving Ibn Taymiyya’s concern about social mores, interpreted these doctrines as an attempt to limit husbands’ unilateral power of divorce. Ibn Taymiyya occasionally did condemn divorces in general, but it seems to be a rhetorical tool rather than an end in itself. He did not attack the institution of divorce as such, and—as Laoust has noted—claimed that, in contrast to Christian matrimonial laws, the possibility of divorce in Islam demonstrates God’s clemency towards the believers. In fact, Ibn Taymiyya was trying to tackle formalistic interpretations that lead to *taḥlīl* marriages and other legal subterfuges. For Ibn Taymiyya, the perils of *taḥlīl* furnish the ultimate confirmation of his doctrines. Let us concede, he argues, that the evidence with regard to divorce oaths in the Qur’an and the Ḥadīth is contradictory and ambiguous. In that case, the correct analogy must lead us to support the expiability of divorce oaths, for this is in the interest (*maṣlahā*) of the Muslims. Otherwise, as happens in our day, the believers find themselves in a quagmire, having no way out other than *taḥlīl* marriages or other types of legal subterfuges.

In one of his later works, summarizing all his doctrines on divorce, Ibn Taymiyya offers the following rationale:

> When oaths on pain of divorce were innovated, many jurists believed that they were binding upon violation, with no possibility of expiation; subsequently, many jurists believed that forbidden (*muḥāram*) divorces

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38 *Essai*, 422–34, esp. 428ff. Laoust claimed that Ibn Taymiyya had recognized the dangers posed by frequent divorces to the solidarity of the family institution, and, moreover, to wives’ rights to justice. According to Laoust, “[c]ette dernière considération laisse déjà se dessiner, dans le doctrine d’Ibn Taimiyya, un féminisme discret dont on trouverait aisément d’autres exemples.” (“Une riṣāla”, 217). Ibn Taymiyya’s ‘feminism’ seems to me purely wishful thinking.


were valid, and some thought that it was not even forbidden to utter triple divorces; many of them believed that a divorce issued by a drunkard or under coercion was valid. Some of these questions were matters of dispute among the Companions and some were introduced later. The people have come to believe that divorces occur [in these cases], in spite of the immense harm and corruption, both in religious and in temporal affairs, that result from the separation of a husband from his wife.

When faced with divorces resulting from these controverted legal questions, men were divided into two groups. One group consisted of those who prohibited *talāl*, in accordance with the example of the Prophet and the Companions, while at the same time also prohibiting what the Prophet himself did not [with regard to these questions of divorce]. Their legal rulings imposed heavy burdens and yokes (*al-aghil wa'l-ā'ār*) and immense oppression, which lead to corruption in religious and temporal affairs, not least the apostasy of those who are told by a *mufti* that [their pronouncement of divorce] is binding, shedding of innocent blood, loss of sanity, enmity between people, replacement of Islamic law with a multitude of sins, as well as many other evils of this kind.

The other group consisted of those who thought that they would remove this immense oppression by using legal subterfuges to allow the return of the wife to her husband. First, the marriage of *talāl* was introduced, and some jurists even believed that God rewards those who contract *talāl* marriages, for they permit the wife to her husband and remove the cause of corruption. This legal subterfuge was used to circumvent all other forms of binding divorce. Later, other legal subterfuges were introduced with regard to oaths [of divorce] ... However, all past authorities and men of knowledge have denounced these legal subterfuges and their likes, regarding them as nullifying the wisdom of the Divine law and the true essence of the verses of the Qur'ān, and as nothing less than derision and mockery of the Divine word.42

Through a new interpretation of Islamic history, Ibn Taymiyya’s thought had come full circle. At the time of the Prophet, he argues, the Divine law must have been interpreted correctly. Divine clemency was apparent, and the believers were free from the shackles and fetters that bound followers of other religions. However, when the interpreters of the Divine law started following rigid and formalistic...
doctrines, swerving from the correct path, they burdened the believers with intolerable yokes. Only then were legal subterfuges introduced, sometimes by well-meaning jurists, in order to relieve the believers of these burdens. But, since God could not have prohibited something and then allowed it through trickery and deceit, these legal subterfuges are of no use, adding to the sources of corruption rather than reducing them. Legal subterfuges would not—indeed, could not—have been introduced to Muslim society if God’s laws had been interpreted correctly, that is through the understanding of their divine cause rather than according to their formal meaning.

IV

As soon as Ibn Taymiyya began propagating his views on the expiable nature of oaths on pain of divorce, leading jurists in Damascus and Cairo rushed to refute them. Among these jurists was Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Zamlakānī, the most prestigious Shāfi‘ī authority in Damascus. But it was the works of the much younger Cairo Shāfi‘ī jurist Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī that made the most impact. Ibn Taymiyya himself, we are told, acknowledged that ‘no jurist has refuted me except al-Subkī’. Born in 683/1284 in lower Egypt, in 718/1318 Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī was still a relatively young and not particularly famous immigrant Shāfi‘ī muftī. It was his refutations of Ibn Taymiyya that paved his way to higher offices. He was eventually appointed chief Shāfi‘ī qādī of Damascus in 739/1338, gradually acquiring several other offices in the city, many of which he was able to transmit to his sons. Compared to Ibn Taymiyya, al-Subkī represents, as a Shāfi‘ī Egyptian who amassed official appointments,
the opposite end of the social spectrum of Mamluk 'ulamā'. Ironically, unlike the ever-celibate Ibn Taymiyya, al-Subkī was married to several wives, divorcing his first, who was also his paternal cousin, at the age of fifteen.44

Al-Subkī composed his first refutation of Ibn Taymiyya’s doctrine on divorce oaths almost immediately following the appearance of al-Ijtimā’ wa’l-Iftīrāq, and later authored at least four more treatises about divorce oaths and triple divorces.45 At the core of al-Subkī’s refutation was his adherence to the established doctrine that considered divorce oaths as conditional divorces. It is true, al-Subkī admits, that laymen refer to conditional divorces as oaths, a term that was even accepted into the jargon of the jurists (urf al-fuqahā’). The jurists, however, do not use the term in a literal sense, and the term has no bearing on the legal rules that apply to this action.46 Even if, like Ibn Taymiyya, one assumes the primacy of the speaker’s intention, this intention could only be inferred from social practice. And as is well known, the praxis is that no expiation is allowed in divorce

44 The most detailed biography of Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī was composed by his son, Tāj al-Dīn, and included in his Tabaqāt al-Shafi’īyya al-Kubrā, vol. X, 139–338. In spite of being one of the most important legal thinkers of the Mamluk period, al-Subkī has not received the scholarly attention he deserves (see J. Schacht & C.E. Bosworth, “al-Subkī”, EI2). For a detailed study of a fatwā by al-Subkī regarding commercial law, see Nissreen Haram, “Use and Abuse of the Law”, in Muhammad Khalid Masud, Brinkley Messick & David Powers (eds.), Islamic Legal Interpretation. Muftis and their Fatwas (Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 72–86. For al-Subkī’s legal opinions regarding non-Muslim minorities, see Seth Ward, “Dhimmi Women and Mourning”, in Islamic Legal Interpretation, 87–97, and the sources cited there.

45 Al-Subkī’s first treatise on divorce oaths was al-Taḥqīq fī Mas’alat al-Talīq (The Determination of Truth in Conditional Phrases), of which apparently only extracts survive in a Damascus manuscript (Brockelmann, GAL, S II, 103). A second treatise, Naqī al-Ijtima’ wa’l-Iftīrāq fī Masa’il al-Aynān wa’l-Talīq, completed on 20 Ramaḍān 718 (15 November 1318), was a direct refutation of Ibn Taymiyya’s first treatise. It was published in al-Subkī, Kithār al-Fu’ūlāt (Cairo: Maḥfūz al-Qudstī, 1937), 303–9. At a later date, al-Subkī added a more detailed treatise, al-Durr al-Muḥdīyya fī al-Radd ‘alā Ibn Taymiyya (The Shining Pearl on the Refutation of Ibn Taymiyya), which dealt with triple divorces as well as with divorce oaths. These last two, together with another extremely short treatise on divorce oaths completed in Muḥarram 825/January 1325, were published in al-Ruṣūl al-Subkīyya, 151–91. An abridgement of al-Subkī’s first treatise, composed by al-Subkī himself and entitled Mas’alat al-Talīq al-Maṭlūla (On Conditional Divorces), is found in the Princeton Manuscripts Collection (Yahuda 878, 135a–139a). After Ibn Taymiyya’s death, al-Subkī composed a refutation of his opponent’s doctrines on the visitation of tombs, entitled Shif’ al-Saḥīf fī Zīyarat Khayr al-Anām (published in Hyderabad, 1952).

46 Al-Subkī, al-Ruṣūl, 179, 190; Mas’alat al-Talīq, 136b–137a.
oaths. Therefore, argues al-Subkì, a man who undertakes a divorce oath consciously commits himself to a divorce upon violation of his oath; otherwise he would not have taken the oath in the first place.47

At the time al-Subkì was writing his refutations of Ibn Taymiyya’s doctrines on divorce oaths, the state had already started to exert its coercive power. In Jumàdà al-Úlà 718/July 1318, no more than a couple of months after al-Íjtimà’ wa’l-Ífriq was completed, an edict of the sultan arrived from Cairo prohibiting Ibn Taymiyya from issuing fàtwàs on the subject of divorce oaths.48 The chroniclers tell us that the matter was brought to the attention of the sultan by his chief Ónafìqà∂ì, the Syrian-born Shams al-Dìn al-Íahrì. The edict, however, did not come as complete surprise, for the chief Hanbali qàṭì of Damascus had already approached Ibn Taymiyya two weeks earlier and asked him to discontinue issuing fàtwàs. The chroniclers suggest that Ibn Taymiyya complied with the sultan’s edict for more than a year, but then returned to the subject, claiming that he was not permitted to conceal true knowledge.49 Ibn Taymiyya received another royal reprimand in Rama∂àn 719/November 1319, and a council of the leading amàrs and jurists summoned by the local governor confirmed the earlier prohibition. Finally, in Rajab 720/August 1320, Ibn Taymiyya was summoned again to the governor’s palace, this time to receive a sentence of imprisonment in the citadel of the city for his fàtwàs on divorce. He remained in prison for five months until receiving a royal amnesty on the Day of ‘Ashùrà’ 721/January 1321.

Modern scholars have been puzzled by the state’s intervention in what was ostensibly a legal debate. Contemporary chroniclers explain the conflict between Ibn Taymiyya and the state in terms of persons rather than doctrines. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, for example, explains that his shaykh’s enemies ‘found no way to refute his doctrines other than petitioning the sultan’.50 Most modern scholars followed the

47 Al-Subkì, al-Rasà’il, 155, 171, 190.
49 The chroniclers note that the first royal reprimand, in 718/1318, dealt specifically with Ibn Taymiyya’s fàtwàs on divorce oaths, while the trials in the following years dealt with questions of divorce in general (Ibn ’Abd al-Íadì, al-Íqàd, 214–16).
50 Ïlam al-Musawqà’in, vol. IV, 114; vol. III, 62. Another fascinating illustration of the personalized way in which Ibn Taymiyya’s sympathizers perceived his trials
same path, and argued that the coercive power of the state was more or less manipulated by Ibn Taymiyya’s enemies from among the ranks of the jurists and other members of the ‘ulamā’. I believe, however, that it is misleading to accept uncritically contemporary chroniclers’ interpretations of Ibn Taymiyya’s trials. Contemporary chroniclers, at least before the breakthrough in the philosophy of history made by Ibn Khaldūn and al-Maqrīzī in the ninth/fifteenth century, understood history as the sum of individual personalities. Events were almost always explained through the personal traits of individuals. If we were to accept the analysis offered by medieval chroniclers en masse, we would still believe that affairs of state were dependent on the noble or ignoble character of the reigning sultan. In the same way, while one should acknowledge that contemporary chroniclers understood the trials of Ibn Taymiyya as being rooted in individual rivalries and enmities, the subject matter of these trials had some significance in its own right.

All the more so with regard to these particular tribulations, in which personal enmities seem to have played little part. All of Ibn Taymiyya’s detractors in 718/1318—apart from al-Subkī, who was too young—had stood by his side during previous trials. The Ḥanafī qāḍī Shams al-Dīn al-Harrī, who instigated the first royal reprimand in 718/1318, was previously deposed from his offices in 705/1305–6 because of his alleged support for Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn al-Zamlakānī, is found in al-Bazzār’s biography of Ibn Taymiyya. At the end of the extant manuscript, copied in the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century, the copist made for himself two lists, one of Ibn Taymiyya’s friends and one of his enemies. Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar al-Bazzār (d. 749/1348), al-Fātim al-‘Aṣiya b. Manṣūḥ Shaykh al-Ḥādim Ibn Taymiyya, ed. Ṣāḥib al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1976), 79–87.

51 Laoust argued that the trials of Ibn Taymiyya on the issues of divorce and visitation were instigated by opposition to his views among scholarly factions, especially the Malikīs (Essai, 477). Little, more cautiously, noted that contemporary chroniclers stress the rivalry among the ‘ulamā’ as the leading factor in the arrests of Ibn Taymiyya (“The Detention”, 323–27). E. Ashtor also believed that the military elite was acting at the behest of the scholarly elite. According to Ashtor, the alliance between the military elite and the scholarly elite required that the Mamluks act against any threat to the spiritual domination of their allies (“L’inquisition dans l’état mamlouk”, Rivista degli Studi Orientali, vol. XXV (1950), 14). M. Chamberlain argued that in the trials of Ibn Taymiyya, as in other contemporary heresy trials, the point was not only the doctrinal issues themselves, but rather the power to determine true knowledge (Knowledge and social practice in medieval Damascus, 1190–1350 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 167–73).

52 At the time, al-Ḥarīrī was the chief Ḥanafī qāḍī in Damascus (Murad, “Ibn Taymiya”, 14). Their mutual acquaintance went back even further. In 702/1302,
who would write a refutation of Ibn Taymiyya’s doctrine on divorce
oaths, was previously known as an admirer and close associate of
the Ḥanbalī jurist. In his own copy of a work by Ibn Taymiyya he
wrote verses of admiration for Ibn Taymiyya’s unrivaled knowledge
in all fields of science, and for acquiring all the conditions necessary
for independent reasoning (ijtihād). Although Ibn al-Zamālānī joined
Ibn Taymiyya’s prosecutors in the Damascus trial of 705/1305, he
was later summoned to Cairo to be reprimanded for his ties with
Ibn Taymiyya, and eventually dismissed from his position as the
administrator of the city hospital. As for the reigning sultan, al-Nāṣīr Muḥammad, not only did he release Ibn Taymiyya from his
Cairo imprisonment, he reportedly befriended Ibn Taymiyya during
his sojourn in Egypt. Now, it is possible to speculate about shifts in
factional politics that transformed allies into enemies, and such spec-
ulation was in fact made by the historian al-Ṣafādī, puzzled by the
relationship between Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Zamālānī. But it
makes much more sense to assume that al-Ḥarīrī, Ibn al-Zamālānī,
and the sultan himself were averse to Ibn Taymiyya’s views on
divorce rather than to any of his personal faults.

According to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, three specific accusations led
to Ibn Taymiyya’s arrest. First, the state authorities prosecuted Ibn
Taymiyya for his breach of the ūjmā‘ on questions of divorce. The

they were both accused of corresponding secretly with the recently repelled Mongols, together with another future detractor of Ibn Taymiyya, Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Zamālānī. The accusations arose after the discovery of a letter written by the three jurists and directed to one of the Mongol generals. Later, however, the letter was proved to be a forgery (Murad, “Ibn Taymiya”, 4; Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, 22; Ayīn al-ʿArq, vol. I, 266).


53 Al-Ṣafādī quotes Ibn al-Zamālānī’s panegyric about Ibn Taymiyya, and then comments: ‘I think that Kamāl al-Dīn wrote this poem when Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibn al-Wakīl [a Shāfiʿī jurist who headed Ibn Taymiyya’s persecution in 705/1305] was still alive, for he had disagreements with him, and wanted to prevail over him through Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya. But God knows best.’ (Ayīn al-ʿArq, vol. I, 143).

54 This reference to Ibn Taymiyya’s trials appears at the end of Ibn Qayyim
concern of jurists over Ibn Taymiyya’s breach of the ijmā‘ is echoed also in the accounts of chroniclers. Ibn Taymiyya’s breach of the Sunni consensus takes up much of al-Subkî’s refutations. From a political point of view, however, a breach of ijmā‘ was not merely a methodological error, but also a threat to the increasing uniformity of the judicial system since al-Ẓâhir Baybars established the four chief qâdis in Cairo and Damascus, one for each school of law. Qâdis and their deputies were no longer allowed to render justice according to their own reasoning, but only according to the established and dominant (mashhûr) view of their school. Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwâs posed a threat to legal uniformity. Outside the centers of Damascus and Cairo, among nomads, peasants and inhabitants of small towns, qâdis were still scarce and the interpretation of the law was in the hands of local muftis or shaykhs. The doctrine of ijmâ‘, the consensus of the community on a particular interpretation of the law, was the only way to impose some legal uniformity outside the urban centers. For this reason al-Subkî bemoans in particular the spread of Ibn Taymiyya’s ‘vile views’ among the Bedouins, peasants and the inhabitants of the peripheral lands. The claim to ijmâ‘ had social as well as

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57 Ibn Rajab states that jurists, traditionists and pious men detested Ibn Taymiyya’s support of weak opinions, which were already refuted by past authorities (Dhayl, vol. II, 394). Ibn Rajab probably refers here to the Hanbali qâdis Ibn Muslim, who requested Ibn Taymiyya to discontinue his fatwâs on divorce oaths in 718/1318. For similar remarks, see al-Ṣafâdi, Ayn al-‘Ar, vol. I, 137. Following the chroniclers, modern scholars have also concluded that Ibn Taymiyya’s alleged breach of ijmâ‘ was partly responsible for his tribulations (Abû Zahra, Ibn Taymiyya, 79–82, 437–38, 451; Little, “The Detention”, 326).

58 Al-Subkî cites several scholars, including Ibn ‘Abîl-Barr (d. 463/1071) and Ibn Rushd, who had claimed that an ijmâ‘ already existed on this question (al-Subkî, al-Rasâ’il, 156–57). For lists of Followers who supported al-Subkî’s position, see al-Rasâ’il, 159–61; Mas‘âdat al-Tâlîq, 136a–136b.

59 In the appointment decrees for qâdis cited in al-Qalqashandî’s manual for secretaries, the qâdis are almost always instructed to follow the dominant view of their school (Subh al-‘Aṣb, vol. XI, 95, 175–203; vol. XII, 40–58). Beginning in the seventh/thirteenth century, Shâfi‘î and Mâlikî jurists agreed that qâdis must follow the leading view of their school, recognizing that a judge’s freedom of interpretation severely undermines public confidence in the judicial system. (M. Fadel, “The Social Logic of Taqlîd and the Rise of the Mukhtasar”, Islamic Law and Society, vol. III (1996), 213–14).
legal implications. By demonstrating that Ibn Taymiyya had breached the consensus of the jurists, al-Subkì was identifying a threat to the legal system, in which both the state and the jurists had a stake.

The problem was exacerbated because the breach of the *ijm* concerned a particularly sensitive branch of law. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya notes that Ibn Taymiyya was arrested also on account of ‘the lowly and sheepish people who belittled him [viz., Ibn Taymiyya], and claimed that he prevented Muslims from divorcing their wives, and caused the number of bastards to grow. And those who have but a whiff of sense in them said that he prohibited conditional divorces altogether’.60 Indeed, al-Subkì feared that Ibn Taymiyya’s doctrines would lead laymen to disregard the laws of divorce and live in a state of sin.61 As a practical result of the popularity enjoyed by Ibn Taymiyya’s views, many husbands who had formally divorced their wives would be allowed to continue living together and having sexual relations with them—sexual relations that al-Subkì regarded adulterous. In that sense, al-Subkì refuted Ibn Taymiyya’s views in order to protect the believers’ children from becoming bastards. His friend, the historian and encyclopedist Ibn Faḍl Allàh al-‘Umarì (d. 749), believed that one of al-Subkì’s lasting achievements was safeguarding lineage and noble descent (*mahfūz al-ansāb wa-ma‘ẓūz al-aḥsāb*) from the danger posed by the doctrines of Ibn Taymiyya.62

But there was another accusation that probably tipped the balance against Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya says that Ibn Taymiyya’s opponents told their patrons from among the *amīrs* that ‘he [viz., Ibn Taymiyya] has released those who had undertaken the oath of allegiance to the sultan from their obligations’.63 The oath of allegiance was the most important sworn undertaking in the political sphere, and Ibn Taymiyya’s doctrines posed a threat to this

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60 *qad rafa al-†alāq hayna al-mushān wa-kaththara aslād al-zinā fi al-†alāmīn* (*Plām al-Muwaqqīn*, vol. IV, 115). The historian Ibn al-Wardî also thought that Ibn Taymiyya’s contemporaries were simply too feeble-minded to follow his logic: “He has assisted his enemies by dealing with complicated questions with which neither the minds of our contemporaries, nor their learning, are incapable of coping, such as the expiation of divorce oaths, and [the view] that triple divorce affects only a single divorce, and that divorce during menstruation is invalid” (*Ta‘rīkh*, vol. II, 411).

61 Al-Subkì, *al-†asa‘īl*, 152.


central symbol of the regime. If his views were to be accepted, a violation of the oath of allegiance would require the violator only to perform an act of expiation. Ibn al-Qayyim attempted to demonstrate that these allegations were unfounded, and that Ibn Taymiyya explicitly prohibited a breach of an oath of allegiance given to the sultan. To a certain extent, Ibn al-Qayyim had it right. Ibn Taymiyya tackled oaths of allegiance as a subsidiary issue, mainly because these oaths included oaths on pain of divorce and on pain of manumission. And Ibn Taymiyya did rule that one should obey the sultan as a moral obligation, whether this obedience is supported or not by an oath. Unfortunately, however, Mamluk political authorities were less interested in moral obligations. To Ibn Taymiyya’s contemporaries, oaths of divorce were the principal way by which a man could be made accountable for his sworn undertakings. Al-Subkî hints at the political ramifications of the debate when he comments that ‘Ibn Taymiyya began his innovation with this issue [i.e., oaths of divorce]. But his intention was to achieve, if he were to succeed, a further goal’.64

IV

It is obvious, but nonetheless worth stating: only men could undertake an oath on pain of divorce. From a legal point of view, oaths on pain of divorce or manumission were interpreted as conditional phrases because divorce and manumission caused changes in the status of others. But this legal reasoning reflected social realities. A man could affect these changes in status only towards those members of his household who were under his authority. Divorce and manumission were extreme manifestations of this authority, as well as its symbols, precisely because they severed the ties that held a household together. The most common example of a divorce oath, appearing already in the early Islamic legal literature, but also in numerous fatwâs from the Mamluk period, is that of a husband threatening his wife, ‘If you leave the house without my permission, you are...

64 wa-hâdidihi al-mas’ala allati ibade‘a ‘Ibn Taymiyya bid’atahu wa-qasada al-tawsîqul bihâ ila ghayrihâ in tammat lahu (al-Subkî, al-Rasî’dîl, 156).
In this example, the husband warns his wife against transgressing the spatial boundaries of the household, physical boundaries that serve also as a symbol of his authority. The warning is accompanied by a threat to use the extreme manifestation of this authority, the power to unilaterally sever the matrimonial ties. In the same way, a husband could threaten his wife with divorce in the event of other transgressions of his authority, like unauthorized meetings with her family and friends, pilfering his money, or refusal to have conjugal relations. In the domestic sphere, divorce oaths were used as legally binding threats that owed their credibility to the husband’s authority over his wife, to his mastery over his household.

Divorce oaths were borrowed into the public sphere, and employed in a variety of social contexts. However, their use in the public sphere continued to reflect, in several ways, their original use in the domestic sphere. First, because social power in early Mamluk society was located in the household over which a man held authority, the undertaking of a divorce oath was used to invoke this power. For example, when Sayf al-Dīn Karāy, the aforementioned governor of Damascus, wanted to impose severe punishments against bribery and theft, he undertook an oath on pain of divorce to execute these punishments. Instead of issuing his new policy in the form of edicts, deriving authority from his official position as governor, Karāy backed up the threats against bribery and theft with his authority as a head of a household. The same logic underlined the use of divorce oaths in commercial or social contexts. When a man committed himself

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66 Ibn Taymiyya, Fatwā al-Nisā’, 253–54, 257–58; al-Nawawī, Fatwā, 140. A husband could use divorce oaths to impose upon himself obligations in the wife’s interest, such as not to beat her, or to pay her maintenance on time—oaths that were equivalent to similar stipulations inserted in marriage contracts. For a divorce oath prohibiting the husband from beating his wife, see Ibn al-Salāh, Fatwā, 684 (no. 1032). For an oath regarding the husband’s payment of a debt to his wife, see al-Subkī, Fatwā, 311.

67 Official edicts were, of course, also used. A year later, when Karāy was no longer in office, a royal edict was sent from Cairo to Damascus, again prohibiting any form of bribery and laying down the implementation of the legal punishment in cases of murder (Laoust, (“Le hanbalisme sous les Mamlouks Bahrides (658–784/1260–1382)”, Revue d’études islamiques, vol. XXVIII (1960), 27–29; cf. Ibn Kathīr, al-Bulāy, vol. XIV, 66).
to perform a certain action in the political or public sphere, on pain of divorce, he was attesting to his authority as head of a household, and therefore to his ability to fulfill his commitment.

Second, taking an oath on pain of divorce, both in the domestic and the public spheres, was almost always construed as a threat or an obligation. Threats and obligations were expressed through reference to the authority conferred on heads of households, just as ‘positive’ loyalties and alliances were expressed through the household language of intimacy and friendship. When Al-Zahir Baybars made a pledge on pain of divorce to the Ayyubid prince Al-Malik al-Mughith, he was expressing his commitment not to harm the Ayyubid prince. The same is true of other instances in which amirs undertook oaths on pain of divorce to maintain the safety of a rival amir, and for the use of divorce oaths in non-political contexts. Men undertook oaths on pain of divorce not to marry off their daughter to their brother’s son, not to speak with their in-laws, not to eat together with a fellow-traveler, or not to reside in a certain house. All these oaths were made with the purpose of deterring the oath-takers from a certain action, in the same way that husbands tried to deter their wives from leaving the house without their permission.

Third, since the use of divorce oaths in the domestic sphere hinged on the legal authority of husbands to divorce their wives, their use in the public sphere also invoked a legally enforceable commitment. When a husband threatened his wife with divorce, he was referring to an authority enshrined in the law, and the credibility of his threat emanated from his ability to exercise this legal privilege. In this respect, undertaking an oath on pain of divorce differed from expressions of love, which were always symbolic rather than legally enforceable. Betraying an alliance cemented with declarations of love and friendship was morally reprehensible, but was not penalized by law. Divorce oaths, on the other hand, were grounded in the husband’s

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68 This distinction between ‘positive’ loyalties, serving as a basis for cooperation, and ‘negative’ commitments, is borrowed from Roy Mottahedeh’s discussion of loyalties in the Buyid period. However, in Mottahedeh’s analysis of Buyid political culture, ‘negative’ commitments were based on shared interests rooted in common membership in an ethnic, geographic or professional group. (Loyalty and Leadership, 40).

69 Ibn Taymiyya, Fatwa al-Nisat, 255, 256; al-Nawawi, Fatwa, 139, 140, 143, 145 (also an oath not to purchase or eat meat, and an oath not to allow someone to use a certain shop).
legal privileges, and were therefore considered legally binding, leading to actual divorce upon violation of the oath. A failure to perform a commitment in the public sphere affected the domestic sphere in a very real and direct way. Divorce meant the severing of the matrimonial ties that constituted the cornerstone of the household, the husband's source of social power—from Ibn Taymiyya's point of view, too severe a punishment for merely violating an oath.
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PART SIX

MAMLUK ECONOMY
CHAPTER TEN

THE CIRCULATION OF DIRHAMS IN THE BAHRI PERIOD

Warren C. Schultz

Introduction

Shortly after assuming rule in 658/1260, the sultan al-Zahir Baybars had a new silver coin minted in the Mamluk domains.¹ These coins were known as zahirī dirhams after Baybars’s royal laqab. These dirhams differed from the Ayyubid-style silver coins of the first Mamluk rulers most notably in appearance. Unlike the square-in-a-circle format of most of those earlier coins, the dirhams of Baybars featured several horizontal lines of legend, surrounded by a circular border. The most distinctive aspect of these coins was the presence of a feline figure—likely the heraldic symbol of Baybars—in the exergue of one side of the coin.² This epigraphic design and format, minus the feline, would remain the norm for Mamluk silver coins for the next 150 years of the sultanate.³ While this design was altered during the reign of al-Zahir Barqūq—when coins were issued bearing the name of that sultan inscribed in a circle in the middle of the coin—even these coins did not represent any major change in Mamluk silver money. That came later in the early decades of the ninth/fifteenth century, when lighter, thinner silver coins of a higher alloy and more consistent


³ After the death of Baybars, the only sultan to put a feline on precious metal coins was his son, Berke Khan; CMSES, types 105–111, 107–9.
weight were issued. 4 Those developments in the silver coinage of the ninth/fifteenth century lay outside the borders of this study. 5

The role of silver dirhams in the Mamluk monetary system to the end of the eighth/fourteenth century has been much debated. A widespread interpretation holds that these coins initially were the “standard” Mamluk money. The dirhams are thus said to have “supported” the irregular-weight Mamluk dinars (in actuality little more than ingots). The dirhams could then be exchanged with gold or copper coins at the varying exchange rates given in the chronicles. These exchange rates are often read as referring to actual coins of fixed weight and standards. By the end of the eighth/fourteenth century, however, silver is said to have become increasingly scarce. It therefore lost its role as the “monetary standard,” being replaced by copper fulûs, which in turn “supported” the silver. 6

This view and its component parts are neither theoretically sound nor supported by the numismatic evidence. Thanks to the work of Hennequin and others, the inadequacy of such concepts as “standard coinage,” “metallic standards,” and “basis of system” for understanding the Mamluk or indeed other medieval monetary marketplaces has been firmly illustrated, and need not be repeated. 7 Here, based upon a meshing of the literary and numismatic evidence, I offer a

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4 Other than the design change, these dirhams of Barquq are similar to those of the preceding sultans in their flan size, thickness, alloy, and irregular weight. There is some evidence suggesting a possible decrease in purity for these coins of Barquq, but it is inconclusive. See Jere Bacharach and Adon Gordus, “Studies on the Fineness of Silver Coins,” JESHO, vol. XI (1968), 298–317. And as Bacharach as pointed out, there is no other literary nor numismatic evidence to support the allegation by al-Maqrizî that low quality “hamawa” dirhams caused problems in the year 781/1379. Bacharach, “Circassian Monetary Policy, Silver,” Numismatic Chronicle, 7th series, vol. XI (1971), 267–81.

5 In addition to the work of Bacharach cited in the preceding note, see Boaz Shoshan, “From Silver to Copper, Monetary Changes in Fifteenth Century Egypt,” SI, vol. LVI (1982), 97–116.


revised assessment of how Mamluk silver coins circulated in this period. Mamluk dirhams were not the “standard” coinage of the sultanate; they were but one currency circulating amongst others of different metal, provenance, and fineness. Moreover, for all but the smallest transactions they passed by weight and not by tale, their value being determined by a money of account. The basic unit of this money of account was also called a dirham, and was based on the weight unit of that same name. Only in this latter context can “dirham” be understood as a denominational value. By far its most common meaning in the sources is generic, referring to a coin minted in silver.

The essential elements of this argument are all found in the following passage, written sometime between 1302 and 1309 C.E. by Eshtori Ha-Farhi, a Jewish traveler from Spain to Mamluk Jerusalem. It makes several claims about Mamluk dirhams, claims which serve as central reference points for an overview of how this coinage both circulated and was valued.

In the land of Israel we now use a coin that passes by weight; it is white and its name is dirham nuqra. It is round and its diameter is roughly one-half a thumb [breath]. This coin is also current at the same rate in Amon and Moab, Sihon and Og, in Syria and the land of Egypt, and it is the Egyptian drachmon that Maimonides of blessed memory refers to. . . . Its weight never changes, it is sixteen grains of carob, which grain is called a habba or kirat. . . . for the dirham is always two-thirds pure silver and one-third copper. 8

Metrology, “We now use a coin that passes by weight . . .”

The silver coinage of the first century and a half of the Mamluk sultanate should be considered as one type of coin when it comes to the question of how these dirhams circulated. As Ha-Farhi observed, these coins passed by weight and not by count. This conclusion is supported both by the numismatic and the literary evidence. I will examine the numismatic data first. Mamluk silver coins of this period

survive today in the thousands, the vast majority of which are unpublished. I have analyzed many of these dirhams by making use of frequency tables of coin weights. A frequency table plots the number of coins (of determined shared characteristics) which fall within set weight intervals, and the shape of the resulting graph can reveal much information about the coin sample plotted. Although not without its limitations, the frequency table is a useful tool in revealing metrological tendencies and developments. As the frequency tables which follow illustrate, the weight of Mamluk dirhams varied considerably and it cannot be said that they were prepared to a specific weight standard. There can be little doubt that this variance in weight affected their use in the market place.

Mamluk dirhams were struck with regularity in the mint cities of Cairo, Damascus, Tripoli, Ḥamāt and Aleppo. While the hoard evidence (discussed below) indicates that mint of origin would seem to have had little impact on subsequent coin usage and circulation, for reasons of space, discussion is limited here to dirhams struck in Cairo. Figure 1 plots the weights of 274 zāhirī dirhams minted in the Mamluk capital. Several comments are in order. The first concerns the shape of the graph. There is a prominent peak, but there is also a wide range of the weights. While the average weight of such a sample is sometimes said to represent a “weight standard” for the coinage, such a wide dispersal pattern renders such assertions meaningless. Next, the peak interval falls in the range of 2.70 to 2.79 grams. This is much less than any of the commonly encoun-

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9 There is a wide literature on the use and the abuse of frequency tables. The basic starting point is G.F. Hill, “The Frequency Table,” Numismatic Chronicle series 5, vol. IV (1924), 76–85. The tables here were first produced with a program prepared by David Sellwood, “A Basic Program for Histograms,” NC (1980), 201–4, as modified by Michael Bates.

10 The coins weighed for this study come from numerous public (chief among them the American Numismatic Society, the British Museum, the Ashmolean Museum, the Israel Museum, the Israel Antiquities Authority, and the L.A. Mayer Institute of Islamic Art) and private collections. I am indebted to the many curators and collectors who granted me access to the coins in their care.

11 Very few silver coins have been identified from the other major mint of Alexandria. Limited numbers of Mamluk coins were also struck at certain times in the provincial cities of Lādhiqīyya, Malatya, and even the fortress of al-Marqab.

12 The conclusions hold for the other cities as well; see my “Mamluk Money from Baybars to Barqūq, A Study Based on the Literary Sources and the Numismatic Evidence,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, the University of Chicago, 1995, 103–41.
tered values for the *dirham* weight unit, and it is doubtful that it could represent a standard value for that unit.\(^{13}\)

What conclusions can be drawn from such a table? First of all, the table shows that a desire for precisely controlled weight was not a factor governing the minting of the coins. Second, in light of the high intrinsic value of silver, it is difficult to imagine that a silver coin that weighs less than another coin would not have been worth less than that heavier coin. These conclusions are further supported by the remaining graphs, all of which reveal the same characteristics to varying degrees. Figure 2 graphs 104 *dirhams* of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, Figure 3 graphs 65 *dirhams* of the period 741–784/1340–1382, all from the reigns of the descendants of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.\(^{14}\) Figure 4 plots 30 weights of the new design *dirhams* of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq. Finally, Figure 5 charts 715 *dirhams* from the reign of Baybars through that of Barqūq. This large sample amplifies the same characteristics of its component parts, most importantly the extremely wide dispersion of the weights. Coins weigh anywhere from less than one to more than six grams, although the majority are clumped in between those extremes.

Furthermore, in every graph, more than half of the coins lay outside the peak weight interval, shedding little light from the coins themselves on a possible value for the *dirham* weight unit. In addition, no sample exhibits a rapid drop-off in the number of specimens that weigh more than that peak range. Such a drop-off would be expected in a situation where coins circulated at a par value greater than the intrinsic value of their bullion content. That heavier coins did not disappear from circulation is another argument against the applicability of Gresham’s Law to the Mamluk monetary situation.

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\(^{13}\) The actual value of the *dirham* weight unit in the Mamluk era is not clear. Given their widely irregular weights, the surviving silver coins for this period give little help in this matter. However, the numerous glass weights from Mamluk Egypt, although beyond the scope of this study, when combined with other numismatic evidence, suggest a *dirham* of approximately three grams. I believe further precision is as yet not possible. See my “Mamluk Metrology and the Numismatic Evidence,” *al-Masaq* 15.1 (2003), 59–75.

\(^{14}\) This bundling is made necessary by a shortage of specimens sufficient for a statistically viable sample from any one reign.
Figure 1. Cairo, Dirhams of al-Zāhir Baybars (274 coins).

Figure 2. Cairo, Dirhams of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (104 coins).
Figure 3. Cairo, Dirhams of the Descendants of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (65 coins).

Figure 4. Cairo, Dirhams of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (30 coins).
As is apparent from these tables, Mamluk dirhams were not struck with great accuracy in regard to weight standards. Graphs similar to these have been plotted before, but usually with far less data. The interpretations drawn from those tables have been varied. Some have found the graphs "baffling." Others have concluded that the graphs do indeed indicate that the Mamluk dirham was indeed stuck to a weight standard. Given the wide weight distribution, these dirhams must have circulated by weight. And once it became neces-

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18 Sari, "Karak Hoard," 436–44. Sari has done monetary historians a great service in his analysis of this hoard, but his metrological conclusions should be treated
sary to weigh coins used in transactions, it no longer was necessary for them to be prepared with any metrological precision.

But in the passage by Ha-Farhi, he went on to write that the weight of the silver coins "never changes." At first glance, this statement is difficult to reconcile with his first assertion, let alone the surviving numismatic evidence as seen in the frequency tables. Upon closer examination, however, a reconciliation is possible. The weight that "never changes" is not the weight of any actual coin, but that of an ideal silver coin, weighing exactly one dirham-weight unit. This unit is the basis of the money of account by which the actual coins were valued. The actual coins clearly vary tremendously in weight, but the money of account by which they are valued is fixed, and extrapolating from Ha-Farhi, is based on an ideal dirham weighing "sixteen grains of the carob."

Therefore, Mamluk silver coinage circulated in a fashion similar to Mamluk gold. Their primary value lay in the amount of bullion they contained. Coins passed by weight and not by tale, with their value determined by comparison to a money of account. The basic unit of this money of account for silver coins was also called the dirham, which has no doubt contributed to much of the confusion encountered regarding Mamluk silver. The following scenario illustrates how such a system would have operated. If a buyer contracted an obligation to purchase 30 dirhams worth of a commodity, he fulfilled that obligation with a payment of 30 dirhams worth of silver coins as determined by weight, regardless of the actual number of silver coins it took to reach that amount.  

Such a scenario not only fits the numismatic evidence cited above, but is also supported by the literary evidence. It is attested to in numerous written sources from the Mamluk era, ranging from the later Geniza material which mention the use of sealed purses of predetermined value, to anecdotal mention in the Mamluk literary sources. It is common, for example, to encounter in the chronicles the idiomatic expression wazana lahu ("to weigh out [in payment]")

with caution. His graphs show the same dispersion of weights seen here. There are no sudden drop-offs after his peak values, and those peaks are not so prominent as to justify the confidence with which he announces exact values for the dirham weight unit and its fractions.

19 See, for example, al-Suyuti, Husn al-Muhadarah, Cairo, 1321 A.H., vol. II, 180, where gold and silver to the amount of 30,000 dirhams were distributed to the poor.
when commercial transactions are mentioned.\textsuperscript{20} This expression is found in instances involving large and small amounts, ranging from the purchase of sweets to the payment of taxes.\textsuperscript{21} In such a system, where the primary determinant of value was weight, a heavier coin was more valuable than a lighter coin, but only in proportion to its greater weight. The coins circulated side by side because there was no deceit in such a system, weight was easily determined.

\textit{Purity, “It is white . . .”}

When Eshtori Ha-Farhi described the current silver coins as “white,” he was referring to their silver content. Coins of high silver content stay lighter in color once they enter circulation, while low-content silver coins darken, and are thus frequently referred to as “black.” Ha-Farhi returned to this matter of purity when he wrote that these \textit{dirhams} were always two-thirds silver in content. This statement reinforces what is already known of the fineness of Mamluk \textit{dirhams} from Baybars to Barqûq.

Both the contemporary literary evidence and modern metallurgical analysis indicate that the \textit{zāhīr} \textit{dirhams} issued under Baybars contained approximately two-thirds silver, with the remainder being mainly copper.\textsuperscript{22} In the literary sources two traditions exist, al-Maqrîzî wrote that the \textit{zāhīr} \textit{dirhams} were 70% silver;\textsuperscript{23} while al-'Umarî gave

\textsuperscript{20} I am grateful to Amalia Levanoni for suggesting this line of research. A corollary is that the word \textit{zinah} (verbal noun of the verb \textit{wazan}) may often be translated as “value” and not “weight.” See, for example, al-'Aynî, \textit{Iḫād al-jumān fī taʾrīkh ahl al-Zamān}, edited by Muhammad Muhammad Amin, Cairo, 1987, vol. I, 201 where a candelabra is said to have a “value” of 1000 \textit{dinars}.


\textsuperscript{22} The later round-flan silver coins of the Ayyûbîd were also two-thirds silver. See Balog, “The History of the Dirham,” 128.

the alloy as two-thirds silver. Modern analysis has vindicated both authors, as the dirhams of Baybars and his successors have consistently tested in the 65% to 75% range for silver content. This is true for both the Egyptian and Syrian mint issues, and irrespective of the size of the coin. While the possibility exists that this alloy dropped during the reigns of Barqūq, there is little evidence to suggest that the Mamluks, unlike their Ayyubid predecessors, minted silver coins of different alloys simultaneously. As Cahen pointed out, the issuance of coins of different alloys is not always done to deceive, but could also be done to provide for fractional money. In light of the consistent 65–75% purity range of Mamluk dirhams in the Bahri period, and considering the metrological evidence discussed above, the Mamluks evidently met their need for smaller change by minting coins of widely variant weight.

Terminology, “Its name is dirham nuqra . . .”

Eshtori Ha-Farhi clearly stated that a Mamluk silver coin of two-thirds silver content was called a dirham nuqra, and this term is also encountered frequently in the Mamluk chronicles. It would seem that there is little problem in accepting that this was indeed what these coins were called. There is, however, contradictory evidence for the meaning of the term nuqra. This is yet another example of the familiar complaint that the terminology of money was not used consistently in the contemporary sources. As mentioned earlier, the basic term dirham can have different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Often the only clue as to what meaning was

intended is found in any accompanying adjectives. Some *nisbas*, such as *zāhirī*, have been assumed to refer to the ruler whose *laqab* appears in the coin’s legend. Other modifiers, such as black, white, and *nuqra*, usually refer to the fineness of the coin. When silver coins of different alloys and hence value circulated in the marketplace, these terms are crucial to understanding what coin is being used in the transaction.

A discussion of this terminological problem for the money of the Mamluk Sultanate must begin with the silver coinage of the late Ayyubid period. As is clear from both the numismatic and literary evidence, it is known that coins of different silver alloy were struck by the Ayyubids and circulated throughout their domains. Three basic types of Ayyubid *dirhams* are known, coins of close to 100% silver usually referred to as *dirham nuqra*; *dirhams* of 50% silver usually called *dirham nāṣirī* since they were issued by al-Nāṣir Salāḥ al-Dīn; and *dirhams* of one-third silver—*dirham kāmilī*—issued by al-Kāmil Muḥammad in 622/1225. Exchange rates between gold and silver vary tremendously depending upon which silver coin was used in the transaction. Unfortunately, the important adjectives are not always found in the chronicles, and on occasion when they are, they are used incorrectly. In particular, this is the case with the term *kāmilī*.

This term has caused much confusion in modern analyses of Mamluk money, primarily due to the description and accounts of it found in the works of al-Maqrīzī. Writing more than 150 years after the *kāmilī dirham* was first issued, al-Maqrīzī alleged that it was both still in circulation well into the Mamluk period, and that its alloy consisted of two-thirds silver and one-third copper. In the abstract, there is nothing inherently wrong with the first assertion, as it was quite common for coins to circulate well after their date of issue, as is supported by both literary and coin hoard evidence. In this case, however, it should be noted that no *kāmilī*-type *dirhams* have as yet

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been found in the numerous Mamluk silver hoards that have been found and studied. His second assertion—that the kāmilī dirham was two-thirds silver—is clearly wrong however. Both Ayyubid era sources and modern chemical analyses indicate that the kāmilī dirham had an alloy of only one-third silver. Therefore, when al-Maqrīzī wrote that these coins circulated in Egypt at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century, did he mean coins that he incorrectly said were two-thirds silver, or was he referring to the actual one-third silver coins issued by al-Kāmil Muḥammad? If the former is true, then it is possible that the meaning of the term kāmilī had changed, or even that it was then applied to a different coin type. If the latter allegation is accepted, then the contrary numismatic information must be acknowledged; not only are there no kāmilī dirhams in the available hoards, there are no lower alloy coins either. Of course, given that the supposed re-appearance of the kāmilī dirhams is mentioned only by al-Maqrīzī and not by other contemporary observers, it is possible that al-Maqrīzī was simply wrong. Until, if ever, this confusion is cleared up, conclusions about Mamluk silver based on al-Maqrīzī’s passages about the kāmilī must be regarded cautiously.

Similar difficulties are encountered with the term nuqra. Drawing upon the evidence in the Ayyubid-era mint manuals, many scholars have pointed out that nuqra in those contexts always refers to high-quality silver, approaching 100% fineness. This meaning is also supported by the Geniza documents of the same period, where, as Goitein has pointed out, the word dirham alone refers to a low silver coins, but high silver coins are always described with a second term, usually nuqra or fijdu. Such usage would be expected for the Ayyubid era, since coins of different alloys were in circulation together. But the situation is somewhat different for the first 150 years of the

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30 See pp. 236–242 below.
31 Ehrenkreutz, “Contributions, I,” 504.
Mamluk sultanate. From the dirhams of Baybars to those of Barquq, the numismatic evidence indicates that only coins of two-thirds silver were struck. There is no evidence of any type to indicate that the Mamluks minted dirhams of a higher silver purity. Yet the term nuqra is still found in the sources. One possible explanation is that by the Mamluk period, a coin of two-thirds silver was considered as having a “high-enough” alloy to deserve the label.35

Another possible nuance exists, however. Perhaps the term “dirham nuqra” refers not to the actual coins but to the money of account used to determine the value of those irregular weight coins. Eshtor Ha-Farhi did, after all, write that the weight of the dirham nuqra never changed. This meaning of the term dirham nuqra has been suggested before, and is endorsed here.36 The question remains unanswered, however, whether this fixed-weight, money of account unit was assumed to be of pure or two-thirds silver content.

Appearance, “It is round...”

Eshtori Ha-Farhi mentioned that these silver coins were round and the size of a thumb. In the course of my research I found that this was not always the case. It is true that many of the thousands of Mamluk dirhams that have survived are circular in shape and approximately 20 millimeters in diameter. But there are many which are smaller and some that are larger. The thickness of these coins can also vary tremendously. In addition, it is evident from the appearance of these coins that the Mamluks utilized at least two methods for the preparation of blank silver flans to be struck by the coin dies. The first produced blank flans that yielded round coins after striking. The second evidently produced blank flans from cutting strips of silver. (It is clear that the cutting took place prior to striking.) The coins produced from these cut flans are immediately rec-

35 This would seem to be the usage in the following passage from Ibn al-Dawâdatî, Kanz al-Durar, vol. VIII, Ulrich Haarmann (ed.), Cairo, 1971, 305, which describes a large confiscation that took place in 689–1290. He wrote that 170 Egyptian qitâr of dirham nuqra were seized. The value of this amount can be calculated easily, at 100 ratl to the qitâr, and 144 dirhams to the ratl, the result is 2,448,000 dirhams' worth of silver.

ognizable by their near-rectangular shape. While usually smaller in
diameter than the round-flan *dirhams*, they are often thicker, but
other than that, few conclusions are possible. Coins of either type
are not consistently lighter or heavier, but exhibit the same wide
variance in weight. They are found co-mingled in hoards. Nor was
their any apparent difference in silver content. Examples have also
been identified where the same dies were used on flans of both
types.37 While it is unknown why these two production methods were
utilized, it is extremely unlikely that they represent any attempt at
denominational differentiation.

This leads to a final repercussion of the circulation of these *dirhams*
by weight. Just as these coins were not minted to a precise *dirham-
weight* standard, neither were the minted to half- or quarter-*dirham*
units as well. Such labels have meaning only in terms of the money
of account, and not for the coins themselves, nor do these terms
appear in any coin legends from the period under consideration. As
the tables discussed above clearly indicate, the weight of Mamluk
silver coins can vary from less than one to more than six grams.
There are no clearly demarcated peaks to indicate the difference
between a quarter- *dirham* and a half-*dirham*, or for that matter a third-*
dirham*. The most precise label that could be applied to these coins
is fractional, as their value was determined by their weight.

Therefore terms such as “half-*dirham*” should be used very care-
fully in discussions of these Mamluk silver money. They should be
used only when discussing amounts in terms of the money of account.
And, as Figure 6 indicates, it is not accurate to use such labels for
those Mamluk silver coins struck with special smaller dies.38 These
coins exist from the reigns of Baybars and his son Berke Khán.39
Figure 6 plots the weights of 58 such coins minted in Cairo. The
weights of these specimens vary from less than one gram to more
than two. Despite the special smaller dies, this sample was struck

37 I have benefited from conversations with Stephen Heidemann on this topic.
38 The terms may be used for the second period of Mamluk coinage, during
which terms such as “half” and “quarter” were actually incorporated into the coin
legend. This is yet another way in which these later dirhams differ from the coins
under consideration here.
39 These coins were struck in Cairo and Damascus, Balog, *CAISEX*, 91–3, 98,
108. While many of the surviving specimens are technically “mint-missing” or “mint
off flan,” they can be attributed to either mint on stylistic grounds.
with the same metrological imprecision seen in the dirhams struck with larger dies. Thus they too can only be regarded as small-change fractionals, and not possessing any denominational consistency.

_Currency, “This coin is also current... in Amon...”_

When Eshtor Ha-Farhi wrote that silver coin in use “in the land of Israel” was also current at the “same rate in Amon and Moab, Sihon and Og, in Syria and the land of Egypt,” his meaning is clear despite the use of Biblical place names. He was asserting that Mamluk dirhams circulated throughout the Mamluk domains. Significantly, he made no mention of the mint of origin of these dirhams, an omission that raises the possibility that mint of origin played little role in how Mamluk dirhams circulated. This possibility is further supported by the numismatic evidence. Not only have the few modern metallurgical studies shown no differences in alloy between the various Mamluk
mints, the available hoard evidence also provides abundant proof that mint of origin did not affect the value or circulation of Mamluk dirhams of the period studied.

Table 1 provides a summary description of sixteen hoards of Mamluk dirhams. The table is not exhaustive but it does reveal three important observations. The first is that regardless of mint of origin, dirhams circulated throughout the sultanate. All but one of the hoards listed, regardless of provenance, contain dirhams from multiple mints. There is nothing to indicate that coins of Hamāt, for example, were not accepted in Damascus or Cairo. Secondly, the hoards clearly indicate that coins remained current long after their date of issuance. It is not at all uncommon to encounter the coins of a particular sultan in hoards with terminal dates decades after his reign. The objection might be made that hoards containing such widely dated coins might represent the bullion troves of jewelers and silversmiths, if it were not for the fact that such wide chronological dispersions are the norm and not the exception for Mamluk hoards. Thirdly, it is also the norm to find dirhams that are either partially or even completely effaced in such hoards. While such coins cannot always be linked to a sultan or a mint, their presence in the hoard is proof that they still had value, and that their anonymity did not affect their currency. (Hoard number 11 is especially noteworthy in this respect, as fully a quarter of the trove, or 545 out of 2244 coins cannot be linked to a specific sultan.) Leaving aside the wider issues of literacy of the money-using population and whether they would have been cognizant of the minute differences catalogued by modern numismatists, these effaced coins suggest that it did not matter where or when the Mamluk dirham originated as long as it had the acceptable two-thirds silver content. This is further evidence that the primary determinant of value for Mamluk dirhams was their bullion content.

Table 1. 16 Mamluk Silver Hoards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of coins,*</th>
<th>21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description,</td>
<td>4 Mamluk, 17 Armenian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal Date,</td>
<td>1374 (by the Armenian coins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultans,</td>
<td>al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā‘īl, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mints,</td>
<td>Hamāt, MM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
   Number of coins, 74
   Description, 39 Ayyubid, 28 Mamluk
   Terminal Date, 658/1259
   Sultans, al-Mu’izz Aybak, al-Manṣur ‘Alī
   Mints, Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo

   Number of coins, 367
   Description, 2 Ayyubid, 355 Mamluk, 10 Ilkhanid, 1 Armenian
   Terminal Date, 741/1340
   Sultans, al-Mu’izz Aybak to al-Nāsir Muḥammad
   Mints, Cairo, Damascus, Ḥamāt, MM

   Number of coins, 30
   Description, 30 Mamluk
   Terminal Date, 801/1399
   Sultans, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to al-Ẓāhir Barqūq
   Mints, Cairo, Damascus, Tripoli, Ḥamāt, Aleppo

   Number of coins, 17
   Description, 17 Mamluk
   Terminal Date, 748/1347
   Sultans, al-Ẓāhir Baybars to al-Muṣṭafar Ḥajjī
   Mints, Cairo, Damascus, Ḥamāt, Aleppo, MM

   Number of coins, 305
   Description, 305 Mamluk
   Terminal Date, 689/1290
   Sultans, al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn
   Mints, Ḥamāt

   Number of coins, 116
   Description, 90 Mamluk, 23 Venetian, 3 Armenian
   Terminal Date, 741/1340

Table 1 (cont.)
Table 1 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sultans</th>
<th>al-Mansūr ‘Alī to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mints</td>
<td>Cairo, Damascus, Ḥamāt, Aleppo, MM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   Number of coins, 28
   Description, 26 Mamluk, 2 Venetian
   Terminal Date, c. 1400 (from the Venetian coins)
   Sultans, Not identified, coins are extremely worn
   Mints, Not identified

   Number of coins, 406
   Description, Ayyubid, Mamluk, and “effaced.”
   Terminal Date, 815/1412
   Sultans, al-Mansūr ‘Alī to al-Nāṣir Faraj
   Mints, Cairo, Damascus, Ḥamāt, Aleppo, MM

    Number of coins, approximately 1200
    Description, approximately 1000 Mamluk, some Armenian, a few Rasulid, others
    Terminal Date, 1382
    Sultans, Most are from reign of al-Ashraf Sha’bān
    Mints, “Egyptian and Syrian”

    Number of coins, 2244
    Description, 2244 Mamluk
    Terminal Date, 696/1297
    Sultans, al-Muẓaffār Qutuz to al-ʿĀdil Kitbughā, with 545 unidentifiable
    Mints, Cairo, Damascus, Ḥamāt, Alexandria

    Number of coins, 276
    Description, 251 Mamluk, 24 Artukid, 9 Armenian, 1 Venetian
    Terminal Date, 801/1399
    Sultans, al-Zāhir Baybars to al-Zāhir Barqūq
    Mints, Cairo, Damascus, Ḥamāt, Aleppo, al-Lādhiqiyya, MM
Table 1 (cont.)

   Number of coins, 2301
   Description, 2261 Mamluk, 23 Armenian, 9 Artukid, “assorted miscellaneous”
   Terminal Date, 804/1402
   Sultans, al-Mu‘izz to al-Nāṣir Faraj
   Mints, Cairo, Damascus, Ḥamāṭ, Aleppo, Tripoli, Malatya, al-Lādiğiya

   Number of coins, 139
   Description, 122 Mamluk, 27 Venetian
   Terminal Date, 815/1412
   Sultans, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to al-Nāṣir Faraj
   Mints, Ḥamāṭ, Aleppo, MM

   Number of coins, 62, plus 84 uncatalogued and unidentified Mamluk dirhams
   Description, 42 Mamluk, 18 Venetian, 1 Armenian, 1 Timurid
   Terminal Date, 801/1399
   Sultans, al-Zāhir Baybars to al-Zāhir Barqūq
   Mints, Damascus, Ḥamāṭ, Aleppo

   Number of coins, 25, plus 25 uncatalogued and unidentified Mamluk dirhams
   Description, 23 Mamluk, 2 Armenian
   Terminal Date, 784–1382
   Sultans, al-Zāhir Baybars to al-Ṣāliḥ Ḥāji‘ī
   Mints, Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo

* Refers to number of silver coins only.
In such a system, therefore, it is not surprising that silver coins from neighboring states are commonly found in Mamluk hoards. I interpret their presence in these hoards not as a sign of a foreign victory in a battlefield of money, but as a recognition by the hoarder that once again, what determined the value of these coins was their bullion content. Silver was silver, after all, regardless of country of origin. That this was the case is most clearly indicated by the case of the Armenian silver coins found in half of the hoards listed above. These coins became common in the Mamluk sultanate in the first half of the eighth/fourteenth century courtesy of the large annual tributes paid by the rulers of Cilician Armenia. They were frequently released into circulation right away, sometimes with Mamluk overstrikes, but often not. Their presence has often been interpreted as evidence of a silver shortage in the Mamluk domains, although that interpretation is not endorsed here.

Nevertheless, the numismatic evidence proves that these coins circulated alongside Mamluk dirhams. Figure 7 plots the weights of 70 such Armenian silver coins, all of which either bear a Mamluk overstrike or were found in Mamluk contexts (hoards or archeological sites). The table clearly shows that these Armenian coins did not adhere to any known Mamluk metrological system. The peak weight interval of 2.10 to 2.19 grams, followed closely by the 2.20 to 2.29 range, is less than what was seen in the Mamluk tables above. Neither of these ranges is close to a possible range of value for the Mamluk dirham weight unit. Yet this did not affect the way these coins circulated in the marketplace for we may assume that they too circulated by weight and not by tale.

The key to this assumption is the fact that these fourteenth-century silver coins from Cilician Armenia were also two-thirds silver. This is known from contemporary Venetian sources. Venetian merchants called these two-thirds silver coins taccolino to distinguish them from the earlier Armenian coin of higher silver content known as

the tram. The Armenian name for the two-thirds silver coin was apparently takvorin. They began to be minted around the beginning of the fourteenth century, or shortly before the massive tributes paid to the Mamluks. It is thus no wonder that they are frequently found in Mamluk contexts, for their fineness and weight-variance would have made them no different from any fractional Mamluk silver coins of that era.

The question of silver scarcity

While the passage from Eshtor Ha-Farhi does not address it, ultimately those interested in the history of Mamluk silver money must confront the topic of silver scarcity. Not only do the major numismatic collections frequently lack large numbers of Mamluk dirhams, but there are also passages in contemporary chronicles that refer to shortages of silver. The existence of a silver shortage is thus frequently encountered in modern discussions of Mamluk money.
But is this picture of silver scarcity completely accurate? Two objections must be raised. The first is that modern collections often do not reflect ancient reality as many scholars have stated. The choices made about what to include in a collection often tell us more about the collector than the objects collected.43 Secondly, it must be pointed out that the Mamluk literary sources provide contradictory information on this matter. Throughout the accounts of the eighth/fourteenth century, for example, we frequently read of the huge amounts of silver money mulcted from imprisoned officials or confiscated from the estates of the deceased.44 The amir Maḥmūd b. ʿAlī, for example, is said to have been mulcted of over one million dirhams shortly before his death in 799/1397.45 Yet this event occurred after the date al-Maqrīzī asserted that silver dirhams had disappeared from Egypt.46

I believe that an accurate assessment of this matter falls between simplistic assumptions of either silver shortage or silver abundance. It must be remembered that coin scarcity in the marketplace can result from more than bullion shortages.47 Silver could be used for things other than coins. But given the frequency with which personal treasuries are said to have contained large sums of dirhams, the greatest drain on silver from the marketplace in this period may have been thesaurization. It seems that those who held large amounts of silver chose not to advertise that fact by investing the money—and therefore risk confiscation should their status change—but rather hoarded it.48 It is thus possible that increased hoarding contributed to the alleged scarcity of silver in the marketplace. In effect, the coins were there, but they were not all in circulation.

43 It is safe to assert, for example, that the nondescript appearance of Mamluk dirhams does not engender widespread collector appeal.
44 In addition, in his *Les Métaux précieux et la balance des paiements du proche-orient à la basse époque*, Paris, 1971, Ashtor highlighted the large sums of money frequently given to leading amirs, 38.
45 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Najīm* (Popper translation), vol. XIII, 201–2. There are many such citations.
48 Such hoarded coin would then be what Abraham Udovitch has called “unproductive money.” See his “Bankers Without Banks, Commerce, Banking and Society in the Islamic world of the Middle Ages.” *The Dawn of Modern Banking* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979), 255–73.
Conclusion

It is worthwhile to compare this interpretation of the circulation of Bahri Mamluk silver *dirhams* to that of Paul Balog, who more than any other individual, laid the foundation for modern scholarship on Mamluk monetary history.

It has often been said of the Mamluks that their gold and silver coinage does not belong to any weight system. Each specimen of a Mamluk gold or silver coin was supposed to have an individual, irregular, weight, and whenever two coins were of the same weight it was considered a coincidence. We now know that this is untrue... Though the weight of the individual silver pieces was not very accurate, it was close enough to the *dirham*, and the adhesion to the *dirham* system is clearly recognizable in the coinage. Although there are considerable deviations from the theoretical weight of the *dirham*, the figures are mostly within reasonable limits.  

Underlying this passage is the assumption that Mamluk *dirhams* passed by count. In light of the metrological evidence presented in part II of this paper, Balog’s description of Mamluk silver must be rejected. The frequency tables clearly show that the most generous description that can be applied the weight of Mamluk *dirhams* is imprecise. In particular, his vague vocabulary cannot be defended. How close is “close enough” when talking about metrological standards and divisions? In graphs of samples where more than half of the coins weighed fall outside of intervals supposedly marking a full-*dirham*, a half-*dirham*, or a quarter-*dirham*, where are the limits between such distinctions drawn? If a coin of 1.70 grams is “close enough” to a half-*dirham*, what do you call a coin of 2.00 grams? Is it a heavy half-*dirham* or a lightweight full-*dirham*? It has been argued here that such coins are fractional *dirhams*, and that their value is determined only in comparison to the money of account. There is thus only one conclusion that fits the numismatic and literary data, Mamluk *dirhams* in the Bahri period circulated by weight and not by count.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE MUHTASIBS OF CAIRO UNDER THE MAMLUKS: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF AN ISLAMIC INSTITUTION

Jonathan P. Berkey

The ḥisba, noted Gaufroy-Demombynes many years ago, represented in the classical Islamic period “une notion assez vague.”1 Muslim tradition ultimately constructed an understanding of the ḥisba as a specifically Islamic institution, one tied to the familiar Quranic injunction to “order what is good and forbid what is evil,” and the term muḥtasib derives from the verb iḥtasaba, which means “to seek God’s favor by acting righteously.” Of course reports attributing its origin to an act of the pious caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb must be apocryphal.2 But by the early 'Abbasid period, at least, we have more reliable reports of individuals appointed to the office of the muḥtasib.3 It must have been relatively easy to find religious inspiration for the office. The Quranic duty to “order what is good and forbid what is evil” is incumbent upon all Muslims, but it was also a duty which might, under certain circumstances, prove advantageous—that, at least, is the impression left by the complaint of a Jewish merchant from Alexandria from the mid-twelfth century. “Everyone in the city,” he said, “behaves as if he were a muḥtasib set over us.”4 By virtue of his appointment, however, the muḥtasib

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assumed a personal obligation for enforcing the *hisba* within the Muslim community.⁵

On the other hand, it has also been customary to search for the origins of the office in the Greek *agoranomos* or “market inspector.” Although this view has recently been criticized,⁶ it has a long history in Western scholarship: the Latin “argumentum” to the nineteenth-century edition of Tabari’s history renders the term *muhtasib* as *agoranomos.*⁷ The approach of Emile Tyan, in his study of the administration of Islamic law, is typical of the older view in Western scholarship. Strip the office of the “porté exorbitante” with which, in view of its perceived religious foundations, doctrine invested it, and “the *hisba* appears as an administrative, municipal institution having, for its principal object, the supervision of markets and morals.”⁸ Others have been willing to associate the office of *muhtasib* even more exclusively with the *sūq,* translating the term, for example, as “inspector of weights and measures.”⁹ The effect of these arguments is to bring the *muhtasib* functionally within the sphere of the officials who supervised and regulated activities in the markets of the Hellenized Near East in Late Antiquity, whether we apply to them the term *agoranomos* or another.¹⁰

Nor is this manoeuvre entirely misleading. It may be, as Benjamin Foster argued, that it is “probably inaccurate” to assert that the *hisba* “derived” directly from the *agoranomia,* in part because it seems that there is no evidence that the Greek term *agoranomos* was in use, at least in Syria, in the centuries immediately preceding the Arab conquests.¹¹ But late Roman cities did nonetheless have officials who regulated affairs in the markets, even if they were known by other terms, and it is quite likely that the Muslim officer who came even-

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⁸ See Foster, “Hisba Jurisdiction,” 135 et passim for a discussion of the various terminology which was applied to the Greek “market inspector.”

⁹ Foster, “Agoranomos and Muhtasib,” 145 et passim.
tually to be known as the muhtasib exercised in some fashion the responsibilities of his pre-Islamic predecessors. Moreover, there is some evidence for individuals who were appointed by the very earliest Muslim leaders to supervise the affairs of the markets, in Mecca, Medina, and elsewhere, individuals who were identified by the less ambiguous term sāhib al-sāq (alternatively, 'āmil al-sāq). Moreover, as the hisba manuals and, as we shall see, the evidence of the medieval chronicles show, the focus of a muhtasib’s attention did indeed lie in the activities of the sāq, broadly conceived as “all those things that constitute the entirety of social life,” as Ibn ‘Abdūn’s treatise on the hisba phrased it. In Spain the muhtasib lacked much of the religious orientation as a guardian of morals with which, at least theoretically, he was imbued in the central Islamic lands, and there the term sāhib al-sāq remained the more common, perhaps because, under the Umayyads who fled to the west in the eighth century, the office retained its purely secular original character. Indeed, the very nature of the muhtasib’s jurisdiction, even as defined by religious scholars such as al-Ghazālī, al-Māwardī, and others, served to fill a gap left by Islamic jurisprudence, a gap which was felt most deeply in the urban markets. Ibn Taymiyya acknowledged as much when he described the muhtasib’s jurisdiction as embracing “those spheres not reserved to the governors, the judges, the administrative officers [ahl al-dīwan],” Several writers emphasized that the muhtasib, qua muhtasib, had no authority to exercise ijtihād in matters concerning the Shari‘a. But as they left much scope for “customi” in the law of sales, so the fuqahā’ left the muhtasib with a weapon far more significant in the context of the market, namely, the right to interpret custom, ijtihād al-urf. Al-Māwardī defined the competence of the muhtasib: “He may exercise independent reasoning [ijtihād] in matters pertaining to

custom, and not law, as, for example, rules of the marketplace.”

This judgment was not lost on those closer to the hisba as practiced in the Mamluk state; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa’s hisba manual Ma’ālim al-qurba reproduces al-Māwardi’s comment to the letter.19

Despite its religious veneer, the institution as it developed acquired more and more of what Emile Tyan described as a “praetorian power.”20 By assigning to the muhtasib the right to interpret, invalidate or enforce custom, while denying to him ijtihād proper, the fuqahā’ had already, in a sense, removed him from the confines of the Shari‘a. In theory, this restricted a muhtasib as much as it released him. Al-Māwardi, for instance, wrote that a muhtasib might prevent the over-burdening of pack animals on his own initiative, because this is not an interpretation of law but an “interpretation of custom which derives from the custom of the people and their practices;”21 he could only prevent the over-burdening of a slave, however, if the slave himself complained. The muhtasib, too, was granted the authority to inflict discretionary punishments (ta‘zīr); the legal punishments (hudūd), however, were outside the limits of his competence.22 In practice, we may question the consistency and effectiveness of these restrictions. Certainly, as we will see below, the punishments inflicted by a muhtasib could prove very severe indeed. By the fourteenth century, Ibn Khaldūn perceived that the muhtasib’s principal objective lay in ensuring “that people act in accord with the public interest in the town.”23 That is a wide mandate; and in a world in which the muhtasib was responsible only to political authority, “public interest” itself might have a very unstable character. It was public interest which, according to Ibn Taymiyya, justified the muhtasib in fixing the prices of foodstuffs in the market, in times of dire need.24 As we shall see, this became one of the muhtasib’s principal functions. But the association with the vague concept of “public interest” also pushed the muhtasib further beyond the bounds of the Shari‘a: a true Hadīth,

18 Al-Māwardi, Abū al-Ḥasan, al-Akhām al-sultānīyya (Cairo, 1966), 240.
20 Tyan, Histoire, 648.
21 Al-Māwardi, al-Akhām al-sultānīyya, 257.
24 Ibn Taymiyya, al-Hisba, 15–16.
Ibn al-Ukhuwwa declared, grants the muhtasib the prerogative to use threats not permitted in the law, on the basis solely of his own suspicion, if public necessity demands it.25

At the same time, we must acknowledge that medieval writers regularly described the post as a “religious position.”26 This is most evident in the writers’ discussions of the qualities required of the muhtasib,27 which, in varying formulae, demand of him faith (îmân), legal competence (taklîf), and a sense of justice (‘adâla). The high standards were retained by writers of the Mamluk period, even one with as practical a bent as al-Qalqashandî, who wrote of the ideal muhtasib: “His attributes are erudition and virtue and integrity, firmness of determination, and strength of will, and rigor, and great dignity, for encouraging the ordering of the good and the forbidding of evil, and caring for the improvement of the Muslims.”28 Whether or not the muhtasib was to be mujtahid in matters of the Sharî‘a, it is clear that ideally he was to have some understanding of the law,29 so that he might know exactly what to order and what to forbid. On the other hand, such ideals did not have the same force as, say, the informal but nonetheless generally compelling system by which religio-legal scholars were trained and evaluated and which, therefore, provided some effective standards for those appointed to professorships or judge-ships. In comparison to that of a qâdi or a mudarris, the office of the muhtasib was considerably less “professionalized.”

It is not my purpose here to explore in detail the hisba as it developed in the writings of the jurists; rather, my concern is to investigate the character of the office and the activities of its holders in Egypt between 1260 and 1517 C.E. Practical manuals for the muhtasib, such as that of Ibn al-Ukhuwwa or the fourteenth-century Egyptian

writer Ibn Bassām,\textsuperscript{30} provide a sort of benchmark for the contemporary understanding of the muhtasib and his responsibilities. But this study is essentially a prosopographic one; moreover, its scope is fairly broad. Rather than investigating any one muhtasib in depth, the goal is to see whether there is sufficient evidence in the chronicles and biographical dictionaries of the period to chart in broad outline the evolution of the office over the entire two and a half centuries of Mamluk rule.

My starting point is this: that the Mamluk muhtasib was heir to the tensions which reflected the office’s dual roots in a Quranic injunction and the custom of the market. Gaudefroy-Demombynes noted in 1947 that the muhtasib’s responsibilities broke down naturally into two categories, first, matters regarding the suq, its industry and commerce, and second, those with a more specifically “religious” character, such as the observance of prayer and fasting, and forbidding the sale and consumption of wine. The two charges—to encourage commerce and industry, and to enforce the Islamic moral code—gave the muhtasib a somewhat schizophrenic character: “Il est probable,” Gaudefroy-Demombynes wrote, “que l’agoranome ne se sent pas toujours à l’aise dans la peau du parfait mohtasib.”\textsuperscript{31}

To be sure, we might object to Gaudefroy-Demombynes’s characterization of the office, and insist that any distinction between commercial concerns and ethical/legal/religious ones is somewhat arbitrary, especially in the Islamic case. On the other hand, from a more general perspective, Gaudefroy-Demombynes may have had a point. Should a blurred dividing line obscure the almost palpable difference in tone and purpose between, say, enforcing the Muslim obligation to pray on the one hand, and on the other ensuring that sufficient wheat was available for purchase at a particular price? If we see the two constructs, not as absolute models of behavior, but as poles of a spectrum of activities associated at different times with the office of the muhtasib because of its complex roots, can the ensuing tension between them help us to understand the evolving character of the office as it was actually practiced in the Mamluk state? Given the

\textsuperscript{30} Ibn Bassām, Muḥammad b. Ahmad, Nihayāt al-rutba fī talab al-hisba, Baghdad, 1968.

potential breadth of the muhtasib’s power—guided by his own *ijtihād al-ʿurf*, or the more nebulous concept of “public interest”—it was perhaps inevitable that his ethical duties should be eclipsed by an increasing preoccupation with the marketplace. But the tension was never entirely resolved, and, combined with a growing pattern of patronage, corruption, and cooptation by the political powers, contributed to the complex development of the hisba in Mamluk Egypt.

*The Hisba as an institution*

By the Mamluk period, if not before, the hisba had acquired a precise administrative structure. The chief muhtasib had his seat in Cairo, from which he was responsible also for the district of Lower Egypt, to the exclusion of Alexandria, which had its own muhtasib. Another muhtasib, sitting in Fustat, was charged with the supervision of Upper Egypt, as well as his base city. (The cities of the Syrian provinces, too, had their own muhtasisbs). Obviously the responsibilities were too great for any one man; accordingly, each muhtasib assigned agents or deputies, who assisted him in his regulatory and administrative duties. Contemporary writers—for example, al-Qalqashandi, Ibn Khaldun, and Ibn al-Ukhuw wa—agreed with their predecessors in seeing the hisba as a “religious office” (*waṣīfa dīniyya*). As al-Maqrizi explained, the muhtasibs of Cairo and Fustat would sit in the principal mosques of the two cities, al-Azhar and ʿAmr respectively, to hear complaints and administer their judgments.

It is almost a commonplace to speak of a degeneration—political, social, and economic—in late Mamluk Egypt, a process linked to endemic power struggles among the amirs and the resulting patterns of patronage, bribery, and extortion. Of course the notion of “decline” is psychologically seductive, and Carl Petry has now given us a far

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32 Evidence for the Fatimid period is of course scantier; it seems, however, that under the Fatimids, the post of muhtasib was periodically attached to that of the shurta. Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh*, vol. 4, 452.


more nuanced understanding of the period.36 Still, the Mamluk state was certainly subject to extraordinary and ultimately crippling pressures. The muhtasib was no better insulated than any other official; he, too, was affected by the chaos. Aḥmad Darrag has described how, in the fifteenth century, the feuding Mamluks increasingly secured the office for their own proteges and, ultimately, themselves, and the destructive economic role played by these self-serving, military-minded muhtasibs.37

To speak simply of the degeneration of the official and his functions, however, does not do justice to the gradual, but hardly subtle transformation of the office, a transformation in the muhtasib’s activities, his relation to the state, and his perception in the popular mind—a transformation reflected in the unconscious witness of the chronicles. The transformation was part of a longer-term process of political evolution, one which picked up speed in the later Mamluk period. Ibn Khaldūn, in the Muqaddima, had already noted how “in many Muslim dynasties, such as the dynasties of the ‘Ubaydid (-Fatimids) in Egypt and the Maghrib and that of the Umayyads in Spain, (the office of market supervisor) fell under the general jurisdiction of the judge, who could appoint anyone to the office at discretion. Then, when the position of ruler became separated from the caliphate and when (the ruler) took general charge of all political matters, the office of market supervisor became one of the royal positions and a separate office.”38 Nonetheless, as we have seen, writers of the Mamluk period continued to see the ḥisba as a waqīfā diniyya: the muhtasib might be appointed by the Sultan, but was thought of together with the qāḍī al-ṣaqār, the qāḍī al-ṣakar, and the muṣṭi dār al-ṣādīq.39 But by the time Ibn Ṭaghrit Birdī wrote his chronicle in the mid-late fifteenth century, the popular conception of the muhtasib had changed. No longer did he list the position among others of a specifically religious character. Rather, in his periodic

36 Carl F. Petry, Protectors of Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt’s Waning as a Great Power (Albany, 1994).
lists of those holding important offices, Ibn Taghrī Birdī grouped it with political and military appointees in a carefully graded list, just above the wāli of Cairo, and just below the nāẓir al-jaysh.

The Muḥtasibs and their careers

From the prosopographical data on the muḥtasibs of Cairo in the Mamluk period available in the contemporary chronicles and biographical dictionaries, patterns in the appointments to the post of muḥtasib of Cairo emerge which reflect the transformation in the character and functions of the office. For the purposes of clarity, the entire two and one-half centuries should be subdivided into six successive periods of unequal duration, each of which marked a stage in the development of the muḥtasib’s character and responsibilities.

(1) From 658/1260 until approximately the end of the seventh/fourteenth century. Particularly in the earliest period, the records are incomplete. Nonetheless, some general conclusions can be drawn concerning the muḥtasibs of this period. In particular, the post was dominated by members of the ‘ulamā‘; Cairo’s muḥtasibs in this period included some of its best known scholars and religious functionaries, such as the Şāfi‘i jurist Ibn Bint al-A‘azz. This is not to say that every muḥtasib was an accomplished faqīh, but they were almost all ‘ulamā‘, often serving as qādīs of the Mālikī, Ḥanāfī, and especially Şāfi‘i schools. This does not imply that muḥtasibs in this period were uniformly pious, incorruptible men: the first muḥtasib who the chronicles specifically mention paid a certain (unknown) sum for the post was a former qādī appointed in 793/1391. Still, the dominant image of these men is one of scholarship and training in the law: a

41 Numbers 1 to 37 in ‘Abd al-Ra‘īq’s list.
sizeable number, for example, at one point or another taught fiqh in the various schools and madrasas of Cairo. More importantly, the evidence suggests a consensus that the hisba was, indeed, a ważifa dinīyya, one to be filled by men with a training in the šari‘a and related disciplines.

(2) From approximately 798/1396 to 816/1413, i.e., shortly after the accession of al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh.44 The most striking feature of the muhtasibs of this period is their short tenure: in these seventeen years, there were seventy-five appointments to the post (many of those appointed had held the position previously), indicating an average term of office of less than three months. More than one served for only a few days. The experience of Nūr al-Dīn al-Jīzī, who was removed from office after less than a month in 798/1396 because he was unable to pay the money for which he had been appointed,45 suggests that the unstable character of hisba appointments may be related to the growing role of the post in the collection of revenue—or, more precisely, in the extortion of money from the sūq—which, as we shall see, became one of the muhtasib’s principal functions. This period also witnessed a breakdown in the consensus for the appointment of fujahāt to the hisba. Although men such as al-Maqrīzī and his rival Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī were appointed, it was not unusual to find as muhtasibs men from outside the religio-legal establishment: a sugar-merchant,46 a perfumer/druggist (an “ignoramus in the guise of a faqih,” said al-Maqrīzī),47 even one who had begun his career as a bath-house attendant.48 The chroniclers, such as al-Maqrīzī, who was himself a muhtasib on several occasions and who was, presumably, aware of the higher professional and moral standards which the position might demand, disparaged such appointees as “scoundrels,” “devoid of learning,” and “famous for abominable deeds of stupidity, shamelessness, and evil conduct.”49 However, even a qādī appointed

44 Numbers 38 to 111 in ‘Abd al-Rāziq’s list.
47 Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulūk, vol. IV, 598.
in 805/1403 and dismissed one month later was, in al-Maqrīzī’s estimation, “without virtue.”

(3) From approximately 816/1413 to 825/1422. In this period, coinciding with the relatively stable rule of al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh, we can perceive the beginnings of a radical transformation in the office—not necessarily a “decline,” since the transformation may also be read as a tentative effort to reform the office and restore some of its authority, albeit in a different form. In the first place, the average tenure more than doubled, to over six months. A number of prominent scholars were appointed in this period, several of whom were simultaneously chief qādis, a development which might suggest an effort to strengthen both the moral stature and practical authority of the office. On the other hand, for the first time, Mamluk amirs were themselves appointed muhtasibs. By and large, however, the chronicles comment favorably on the intelligence, training, and activities of those appointed to the hisba in this period, regardless of their background. Sadr al-Dīn b. al-‘Ajamī, whom we will encounter later as one who took the religious and ethical sides of the hisba especially seriously, was appointed muhtasib in 822/1419, and twice in 824/1421. The Arabic sources judge even the amirs who held the post in this period in a more favorable light: one had a deep interest in the religious sciences and is called a faqih; another, although “tyrannical and unjust” (and nicknamed “Shayṭān”), was also “intelligent, skillful, shrewd, and of good morals as well as expert in administration.” In one case, al-Jawharī directly implies that an individual was appointed muhtasib with a mandate to reform the office, although he was unsuccessful in the attempt. One month after his removal from office, the Sultan felt obliged to appoint himself muhtasib for a short period. The evidence suggests that above all, this was a period of transition. In it representatives of virtually all types held the post at one time or another: pious scholars, efficient amirs, qādis appointed

50 Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulṭān, vol. IV, 1235.
51 Numbers 112 to 130 in ‘Abd al-Rāziq’s list.
52 Al-Sakkāwī, al-Daw‘ al-lāmī‘, vol. X, 173. Al-Sakkāwī appreciated the firmness of Mankīl Bughā—as muhtasib he was, the historian said, especially hard on women.
through bribery, others who saw the office chiefly as a source of personal income. The repeated appointment of men such as Ibn al-‘Ajamī suggests that the hisba was still, in the minds of some, a ważīfa dīnīyya. Such an opinion must have been considerably more difficult to justify later in the century.

(4) From 825/1422 to 841/1438, covering the reign of al-Ashraf Barsbāy.55 This was an interlude of relative stability, in which only four appointments were made. The historian and scholar Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī, a favorite of the Sultan, was appointed twice. Another muḥtasib was a leading Mamluk amir, İnāl al-Shashmānī, who held the office for more than four years.56 The last individual to hold the post during this span of time, Şalāh al-Dīn Muhammad b. Hasan b. Naṣr Allāh, from a prominent bureaucratic family, had an interesting and successful career, which blurred the usual distinctions between professional streams, and during which he held several important financial and administrative offices; his six-year tenure as muḥtasib was cut short only by the plague.57

(5) From 841/1438 until 910/1505.58 This period, covering the bulk of the Circassian period, including the strong tenure of Qāyṭ Bāy, witnessed the triumph of the military establishment in securing appointments to the hisba. In terms of tenure it was a relatively stable period: the average term of office for a muḥtasib was over sixteen months, although there existed a wide variation among individual appointees. Religious or legal figures were eclipsed, however: few of those appointed to the post had any significant legal training. Of these, two were relatively short appointments of Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī at the beginning of the period. A third was a minor scholar who had become a companion and ḥadīth reciter to Sultan Barsbāy, who appointed him at the end of his reign; when Barsbāy’s son was replaced by Jaqmaq, the muḥtasib quickly fell out of grace with the new sultan and was dismissed.59 Most of the others who had some

55 Numbers 131 to 134 in ‘Abd al-Razīq’s list.
58 Numbers 135 to 177 in ‘Abd al-Razīq’s list.
59 Ibn Ṭaghīr Bīrdī, Yūsuf Abū al-Mahāsin, Ḥawādīth al-dhūr fi muḥāt al-a‘yām
training in the Shari'a and the religious sciences, such as Salāh al-Dīn al-Maḳīnī (who was appointed muḥtasib for a payment of 3,000 dinārs)\(^{60}\) and Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. Muzhir,\(^{61}\) principally pursued bureaucratic rather than academic or religious careers. Others who were from outside the military establishment all were appointed through the patronage of powerful Mamluks, a development which, of course, marks the subordination of the post to political interests.\(^{62}\) But above all, muḥtasibs of this period were high-ranking amirs, or Mamluks on their way to that distinction. The contrast to the earliest period is stark; in fact, fuqahā’ had lost control over the institution, and with their departure the activities of the muḥtasibs were—to say the least—“secularized.” It must have been increasingly difficult to conceptualize the muḥtasib as a religious official; as we have seen, Ibn Taqhrī Birdī, who wrote his chronicle in this period, did not even try.

6) From 910/1505 until the capture of Cairo by the Ottoman armies in 923/1517.\(^{63}\) This final decade is distinguished from the five which preceded it only by the dominance of one man, who held the post of muḥtasib for all but seven months of the period. The chronicles at several points refer to Zayn al-Dīn Barakāt b. Mūsā as a “qādī,” but this simply seems to reflect a certain looseness in the use of the title. Of apparently humble origins (his father was a Bedouin), he began his rise to the top as the “squire” (rākib) of an amir, and was appointed—and for the most part held—the hisba of Cairo by becoming and remaining a close and (more or less) loyal companion of the Sultan (although he also developed an independent base of power, which contributed to a certain tension in his relationship with the sultan).\(^{64}\) His activities as muḥtasib will be discussed more fully below; for the present it is enough to comment that, under his direction, the post of muḥtasib shed any religious vestiges, and was fully incorporated as an arm of the government, not

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\(^{63}\) Numbers 178 to 184 in ‘Abd al-Rāziq’s list.

\(^{64}\) Cf. Petry, Protectors or Praetorians?, 144–46.
only with responsibilities for the sūq at least conceivable within the original framework of the hisba, but also with functions of a strictly political, administrative nature.

The transformation in the character of the hisba may be approached from a slightly different angle: by comparing the career patterns of two muhtasibs for whom we have comparatively more information. Jamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-ʻAjamī, known as Abū al-Thanā‘ (d. 799/1397), a Ḥanafī qāḍī, had arrived in Cairo “in the prime of his youth, poor and penniless, and lived in the Sarghitmiyya madrasa for a while in the service of the jurists.” After his legal training, he became a teacher to the Mamluks in the Citadel, and received his first appointment—to the hisba—in 778/1377. His appointment as muhtasib, as Ibn Taghrī Birdī explained, was the beginning of his career, as it was for other men advancing through the ranks of the fuqahā‘, such as Badr al-Dīn al-ʻAynī. He was muhtasib on three further occasions, for a total of seven years, but what is of particular interest is the wide range of positions he held. It is true that his appointments included bureaucratic and financial posts as well as religious and academic ones. While serving in the hisba, for example, he was also appointed controller of hospitals (nāẓīr al-māristān), as well as professor of Ḥadīth in the same madrasa in which he had first sought shelter. Later, he rose to become nā’īb qāḍī al-qudāt, nāẓīr al-aqāf, qāḍī al-askar, and, finally, nāẓīr al-jaysh, qāḍī al-qudāt, and head shaykh at the Shaykhūniyya monastery. But clearly the foundations of his career lay in his academic training.65

The career of Dūlāt Khujā (d. 841/1438), one of al-Zāhir Barqūq’s mamluks, presents a striking contrast.66 He held successively a number of military and administrative posts, including that of governor of Cairo. Only at the end of his career was he appointed muhtasib, and then, it seems, because, at a moment of crisis during an outbreak of plague, the Sultan had need of an “energetic” man to enforce order in the sūq. His career is typical of later muhtasibs in two respects, first and foremost because the hisba appears amidst a succession of military and political, and not religious or legal, appoint-

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ments. But secondly, in contrast to the earlier fuqahā’, for whom the hisba was often the first step in a long career ladder, later muḥtasibs of a character and training similar to Dūlāt Khujā’s seem to have become muḥtasibs at a more arbitrary stage: for some, most notably Barakāt b. Mūsā, the appointment came at the peak of personal power; for others it came earlier, or at a middle stage. The shift occurred at that time during which, as we shall see, the muḥtasib acquired new administrative and above all, financial functions. Appointment to the hisba, in short, depended less on one’s training or “seniority” in the hierarchy of the legal establishment, than it did on a particular conjunction of personal power, energy, connections, and bribery.

Taken together, the evidence indicates, at a minimum, that the men appointed to the hisba throughout the fifteenth century were increasingly unsuited, both professionally and temperamentally, for a religious or legal post. To be sure, that a man was an ʿālim did not guarantee his piety or attachment to those principles which a just enforcement of the hisba demanded. We have already noted, for example, that the first clear evidence of payments for the privilege of occupying the hisba appears during the tenure of certain qādis. The amirs appointed to the office might even be, from an ethical standpoint, superior: Yashbak al-Jamālī was appointed in 873/1468 for the quality of his character, for during his eleven-year tenure he “conducted himself according to the standards of the office, and brought to it great reverence,” in the opinion of Ibn Iyās. On the whole, however, even if we leave room for exaggeration, the chroniclers’ negative opinion of the amīr-muḥtasibs predominates. Since many of the chroniclers were ʿulamā’—al-Maqrīzī himself of course having served as muḥtasib—there may be something of “sour grapes” in their accounts. But behind them, too, lay a genuine transformation in the character of the office. Al-Maqrīzī relates that when, in 841/1438, the Sultan sought a new appointee to the hisba, a man who was energetic and strong, he determined to confer the office on the afore-mentioned Dūlāt Khujā, for he “was not a Muslim and did not fear God.” Al-Maqrīzī’s account indicates just how far, in the contemporary mind, the office had been transformed.

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amirs who became muhtasibs in this period, even if they were pious and principled, were first and foremost soldiers. Ibn Iyās praised Yashbak al-Jamālī for his conduct as muhtasib, but those of his activities which the chronicler records were of a political, or even military nature: personally advising the Sultan, or acting as ambassador to the Ottoman court. When, after several years in office, he was also named director of the armory (zardkāšī), he neglected even his market duties, so that prices rose, and bread became scarce—the worst that could be said of a muhtasib. Eventually the people complained, and he was removed from office.\(^69\) Would al-Ghazālī, or al-Māwardī, or even Ibn al-Ukhawwā recognize these men as muhtasibs?

The Muhtasib in action

The vague, ethical origins of the hisba were, of course, never entirely forgotten, even in the Mamluk period. When the duties of the muhtasib were discussed in a general way, the traditional obligation—“to command the good and forbid evil”—was usually cited.\(^70\) They might even be conceptualized in the broadest sense: the Ma‘ālim al-qurba, example, cites with approval a muhtasib who censured a certain sultan of Damascus for the purely ethical lapses of using silken cushions and wearing golden rings.\(^71\) Nonetheless, in Western scholarship we frequently find the term muhtasib translated as “market inspector,” or “inspector of weights and measures”—phrases which suggest a more limited, or at least more precise conception of the muhtasib’s duties. In the Mamluk period at least, these translations are justified, for the muhtasib was increasingly associated with activities in the sūq. When al-Qalqashandī attempts to define the duties of the muhtasib more precisely, he lists, among other things, the inspection of weights and measures, the preparation of food and drink, the supervision of prices and quack doctors (mutaţabbib), and combating the fraudulent practices of astrologers (ahl al-nujum), and in general, al-Qalqashandī says, he is to have jurisdiction over the sūq.\(^72\)

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\(^70\) See, for example, al-Qalqashandī, Subh, vol. IV, 37, vol. V, 451.


\(^72\) Al-Qalqashandī, Subh, 96–97.
Al-Maqrizi’s description of the muhtasib’s activities in his Khitat ties the “market inspector” no less clearly to the suq, to the inspection of weights and measures, and to the regulation of various commercial activities. That connection to the marketplace accelerated the transformation in the character of the office over the course of the Mamluk period.

Activities of a religious or ethical nature

In the eyes of those Muslim scholars who wrote on the hisba and (in theoretical terms) on the duties of the muhtasib, those obligations were clearly to include what we might call activities of a “religious” or “ethical” nature. Al-Mawardi, in al-Akhâm al-sultânîyya, described this aspect of the hisba most explicitly. When discussing the duties which fell to the muhtasib under his mandate to “order the good,” he mentioned first the enforcement of prayer regulations. Other duties included specifically religious obligations, such as enforcing the Ramaḍān fast, and the payment of zakât, as well as issues of public morality, such as the illicit public mixing of men and women, public displays of drunkenness, or the use of musical instruments. Responsibilities involving market activities were also mentioned, but only when there was a recognized basis for action in the Shari‘a, for example, preventing illicit exchanges (al-mu‘âmâlât al-munkârâ), such as contracts for usurious interest and invalid sales, provided, of course, there was no disagreement among the fuqahâ‘ over the transaction in question.

In the Mamluk period, however, the chronicles and biographical dictionaries provide little evidence that muhtasibs engaged in such activities. It is possible that their silence simply indicates that it was commonplace for muhtasibs to take seriously their supervision of

74 Al-Mawardi, Abkâm, 243f.
75 Al-Mawardi, Abkâm, 247–49 and 249f. For a full treatment of the muhtasib’s religious and ethical duties as outlined in the hisba manuals, see Buckely, “The Muhtasib,” 97–107.
76 That is, so long as the muhtasib was not required to use al-jihâd al-sharî‘i; al-Mawardi, al-Akhâm, 253.
religious and ethical matters. But the sources also lend themselves to a subtler reading, one attuned to an evolution in the character and function of the office. In the earliest period of Mamluk rule, in which the post was dominated by men of legal and religious training, the chronicles do occasionally reveal the muḥtasib engaged in these activities. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Buruluṣī, a Mālikī scholar who held the post in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century, ordered the muezzins to call out the evening prayer on Friday, “Peace upon you, O Apostle of God, prayers and peace upon you, O Apostle of God.” Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭanbādī, muḥtasib between 789/1388 and 791/1389, repeated the order when a shaykh, “in whose sanctity the people believed,” insisted that the Prophet had commanded him in a dream so to instruct the muḥtasib. This same al-Ṭanbādī once dispatched a number of poor legal scholars among the vendors, to teach them the necessary Quranic verses for prayer, and charged each shopkeeper “two coins” per day for the scholars’ troubles. In 779/1378, another muḥtasib supervised the destruction of a church whose members obstinately insisted on ringing its bells during the Friday prayers, “so that one almost could not hear the khaṭīb’s sermon.”

In later periods, evidence for activities of a strictly ethical or religious character all but disappears from the chronicles. When muḥtasibs did invoke their powers to “order the good and forbid evil” in matters religious and moral, they did so in one of two circumstances. On more than one occasion, muḥtasibs issued proclamations calling for public prayers, or fasts, or enforcing orders confining women to their homes. In each case, however, the action was undertaken as a direct response to a public crisis—a famine, for instance, or an epidemic—not, that is, to enforce a pious act for its own sake, but to command an exceptional one as a means of promoting public order. More significantly, the chroniclers frequently tie the muḥtasib’s activities in enforcing public morality specifically to the state of affairs in the market, as al-Ṭanbādī once took a special interest in the

77 For this argument, see Buckley, “Introduction,” 15.
prayers of the merchants. In 876/1471–72, the muhtasib proclaimed that women should not wear silk headbands, and should wear shawls that did not expose their hair; Ibn Iyās relates specifically that the muhtasib’s agents went through the streets of the markets, arresting offending women, and parading them before the public with their shawls suspended from their necks.\textsuperscript{83} A half-century earlier, a different muhtasib had ordered that women abandon their custom of sitting in the merchants’ stores, as the caravan gathered for the pilgrimage to Mecca, in order to catch a glimpse of the mahmal al-hajj, decorated and adorned for the festive occasion.\textsuperscript{84} We need not force the evidence in an attempt to prove that the muhtasib’s role as moral guardian was strictly limited to the markets; it is enough simply to say that the muhtasib was perceived as an officer whose interests, if not competence, were bounded by the sūq.

The exception may prove the rule. Sadr al-Dīn b. ʻAjami, a Ḥanafi qādī first appointed muhtasib in 808/1406, and then again on four separate occasions over the next sixteen years, was, in the opinion of more than one chronicler, “an outstanding, learned leader, a jurist, grammarian, versatile in many branches of science, esteemed among the Ḥanafi scholars for acumen, excellence of perception and apprehension”\textsuperscript{85}—a cut, one could say, above the rest. His character, and the activities he undertook while muhtasib, suggest that he may have owed his appointments to those tentative attempts at reform described above. The chroniclers repeatedly recount his attempts to instill pious behaviour in his Muslim charges, or to enforce restrictions against the dhimmīs: upbraiding the Coptic Patriarch and publicly shaming the Christian secretary to the wāzir, in retaliation for the mistreatment of Muslims in Ethiopia;\textsuperscript{86} ordering women not to pass through the al-ʻākim mosque, so that it might be “made clean, may God be praised, from the shameful acts which occurred in it between men and women;”\textsuperscript{87} shouting through the streets of Cairo the regulations against the dhimmīs, that they might not ride on horse

\textsuperscript{84} Al-Maqrīzī, al-Suluk, vol. IV, 614.
\textsuperscript{86} Al-Maqrīzī, al-Suluk, vol. IV, 494.
\textsuperscript{87} Al-Maqrīzī, al-Suluk, vol. IV, 511.
or donkey within the city limits, and wear the proper clothing, and hang bells around their necks when visiting the hammām. 88

In fact, the career of Ibn al-‘Ajamī highlights the extent of the transformation of the office in the eyes of his contemporaries. In 822/1419–20, Ibn al-‘Ajamī, as muhtasib, began to investigate the “places of wickedness” (amkān al-fasād), and to take appropriate action: he emptied the contents of and destroyed 1,000 jars of wine, forbade women to wail in lamentation for the dead, proscribed the use of hashish, and clamped down on prostitution in the markets. 89 Al-Māwardī, or al-Ghazālī, would have approved, but al-Maqrīzī—who of course himself had experience as muhtasib—expressed some surprise that the muhtasib should do such things himself (bi-nafsīhi), as if the event were out of the ordinary. In the career of such a pious man, we can perceive the frustration encountered by one who sought to energize the ethical dimensions of an institution which by then was dominated by a practical, secular, even mercenary approach. It was Ibn al-‘Ajamī who sought to end the custom popular among women of sitting in the merchants’ shops at the beginning of the hajj festivities, “so that they see the [decorated] māhmal on the following day, and mix freely with the men for a period of two days and a night.” 90 The people were not prepared to accept such an order from a muhtasib, however, and soon the women “returned as they had been before and neglected the order.”

Ibn al-‘Ajamī himself discovered, through a bizarre event in 822/1419–20, the extent to which the office of muhtasib had lost its moral authority. The fuqahā’ had agreed that the muhtasib was empowered, by the terms of his mandate to “order the good and forbid evil,” to censure and correct ʿimāms, qādis, even rulers: al-Ghazālī had dedicated an entire chapter to the exercise of the ḥisba in relation to amirs or sultans, indicating that at least a verbal exhortation to the prince to amend his behavior was well within the purview of the muhtasib. 91 Ibn al-‘Ajamī, perhaps naively, accepted this duty at face value. When the Sultan was taken ill, a group of fuqahā’ ruled, conveniently, that he might combine two prayers, in order, pre-

88 Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulāk, vol. IV, 495.
89 Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulāk, vol. IV, 486.
sumably, not to tax him in his weakened condition. Such laxity, Ibn al-'Ajami felt, violated the principles of the Ḥanafi school to which both he and the Sultan belonged, and the muhtasib reminded the ruler of his own obligations. His impertinence, however, was rewarded, for he was accused of, and punished for, having disparaged 'Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās in favor of Abū Ḥanīfa during the ensuing debate over the propriety of combining the prayers. According to the chronicler, however, the accusation was made without proof, and evidence was never offered. The circumstances strongly imply that Ibn al-'Ajami’s true offense was to have stepped beyond the accepted bounds of his office.92

Prices and food supplies

In 862/1458, a group of Mamluks complained to the nāẓir al-jaysh about the high cost of certain garments. “He replied to them, ‘This does not enter into my jurisdiction and is not one of my concerns; it is under the authority of the muhtasib of Cairo.’”93 In fact, throughout the Mamluk period, the muhtasib was responsible, both practically and in the popular mind, for prices in the market and for the supply of certain items, in particular foodstuffs.

There existed some disagreement among the fuqahā’ as to whether price-fixing (taṣrīr) was a licit activity. While the general principle that “the only price-fixer is God” was accepted, it was also recognized by some that, at least in time of famine or dire public necessity, it might be necessary to stabilize prices by official intervention in the markets.94 In practice, one can only say that the terms of the scholarly dispute bore less and less resemblance to the practicing muhtasib in Mamluk Egypt. In the chronicles, the setting of prices, particularly on foodstuffs, is the most often cited function of the muhtasib, even in the early phase of Mamluk rule. In 776/1375, following an epidemic, the muhtasib attempted to lower the cost of bread

94 This, for example, was the opinion of Ibn Taymiyya, Hisba, 15–16. On the role of the muhtasib in the fixing of prices in Mamluk Cairo, see Boaz Shoshan, “Grain Riots and the ‘Moral Economy’: Cairo, 1350–1517,” Journal of Interdisciplinary History, vol. X (1980), 459–78, esp. 466.
to consumers by fixing its price, and ordering millers to buy wheat only at a certain price. Wheat merchants, however, refused to sell at that level, and took their grains elsewhere; as a result, wheat became scarce, and the price of bread rose, despite the muhtasib’s efforts.95 Two decades later, another muhtasib sought to resign when prices rose, but the Sultan ordered him to return to his post, and to bring down the price of wheat, to accomplish which the market inspector, acting with the Wāli of Cairo, summoned a group of millers and had them flogged.96 In 821/1418, the muhtasib gathered together the “chiefs of the professions,” and ordered a general reduction of prices, not in response to a famine or epidemic, but corresponding to a reduction in the price of gold and silver.97 The practice continued through the end of our period; increasingly, the fixing of prices seems to have been less a response to a particular shortage or crisis than a standing government policy.

The chronicles confirm the primacy of price-watching/fixing among the muhtasib’s duties indirectly as well. Reasons for the removal of a muhtasib are rarely mentioned; when they are, however, the chronicles usually indicate “high prices.”98 The public mind clearly associated the muhtasib with prices in the ṣūq. Shortly after Bahā’ al-Dīn Muhammad b. al-Burjī was appointed muhtasib in 799/1397, prices rose steeply, an event the people regarded as an evil omen for his, and their future. In less than a month, he had been replaced.99 The results of that mental association could be ominous for a muhtasib unable to keep inflation in check. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Iskandārī, muhtasib in 798/1396, was forced to hide in his house for three days, fearing the violence of the crowds unhappy with the prices which he had set for foodstuffs.100 Mamluks, too, might be displeased with a muhtasib for similar reasons. In 891/1486, a group rioted and attempted to burn down the home of Badr al-Dīn b. Muzhir, because he had set the prices of certain commodities, including meat, bread, and

cheese, at levels unsuited to their taste.\footnote{Ibn Iyās, Bada‘ī’ al-zuhār, vol. III, 233.} Badr al-Dīn al-‘Āynī was forced to flee for his life from a crowd upset that he had negligently allowed the price of bread to rise while that of wheat was falling.\footnote{Ibn Ḥajar, Iskā’ al-ghumr, vol. VIII, 77–8; al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulāk, vol. IV, 698.}

Intervention in the market by the muhtasib might be justifiable in times of famine, or more generally by a vision of the hisba which required a concern for the welfare of the Muslim community. When prices rose sharply in 894/1489, the Sultan was presented a petition accusing the muhtasib, Kāsbāy al-Sharīf, of “not looking into the interests of the Muslims.” After the Sultan had reprimanded him, and ordered him flogged, Kāsbāy returned to the market, and took action against the retailers, action which, the chronicler somewhat ambiguously explained, “caused some disorder.”\footnote{Ibn Iyās, Bada‘ī’ al-zuhār, vol. III, 263.} But in the increasingly desperate circumstances of the fifteenth century, the muhtasib began to intervene in the market more directly, more frequently, and above all, less on behalf of the whole community than for his own benefit, and that of his patrons.

It has been convincingly suggested that the “rapacious” Mamluk policies of the fifteenth century were, at least in part, a consequence, and not an original cause, of the agricultural and industrial decline of Egypt, an attempt to extract more revenue from a shrinking economy.\footnote{A.L. Udovitch, “England to Egypt, 1350–1500. Long-term Trends and long-distance Trade, Part III,” in Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, ed. M.A. Cook (London, 1970), 115–28.} Changes in the administration of the hisba reflect the general pattern. We caught a hint of the change in the two instances, one from the tail end of the fourteenth century, the other from the last quarter of the fifteenth, in which crowds rioted against the muhtasib for having fixed prices—implicitly, at too high a level. More importantly, the muhtasib’s activities themselves changed: their intervention became deeper, more arbitrary, less “correctional.” It was not simply that the muhtasibs showed a greater inclination to use flogging and other punishments to attain their ends, although this did occur: it is not difficult to believe al-Maqrīzī that Dīlāt Khujā, the muhtasib appointed because “he was not a Muslim and did not fear God,” increased the number and severity of the punishments he administered.\footnote{Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulāk, vol. IV, 1033.} Increasingly throughout the final phases of the Mamluk
Sultanate, the muhtasib would enter the market directly, forbidding the sale of foodstuffs on the open market, and allowing sales only from supplies which he provided or controlled.\footnote{For example, al-Maqrizî, al-Sulâk, vol. IV, 334, 829.} In addition to helping supply a hungry capital with food,\footnote{Which certainly was often the object, or, at least, one of several goals; e.g., Ibn Iyâs, Bada‘î al-zuhûr, vol. III, 238.} such measures might also prove effective in \textit{supporting} prices, or, since the grain distributed by the muhtasib was often from the Sultan’s personal supplies, in increasing royal revenues.

Such activities implied a deepening reliance on the military government. When civilians, such as Badr al-Dîn al-‘Aynî (in one of his later appointments as muhtasib), or the aged Jamâl al-Dîn al-Bisâtî (appointed 824/1421), held the post, they might rely on the services of amirs to distribute grain to the millers\footnote{Al-Maqrizî, al-Sulâk, vol. IV, 343.} or simply to perform the normal \textit{hisba} duties.\footnote{Al-Jawharî, \textit{Naza`h al-nufus}, vol. II, 507.} When the muhtasib sold the sultan’s grain, he acted, at one level, as the ruler’s personal agent. All pretense of the muhtasib’s independence disappeared when, at the end of the year 818/1415, the sultan himself assumed the office, and dispatched a eunuch to Upper Egypt to search for supplies of grain, and return them to the capital for distribution.\footnote{Al-Jawharî, \textit{Naza`h al-nufus}, vol. II, 358; cf. al-Maqrizî, al-Sulâk, vol. IV, 337.}

Less and less as the sultanate stumbled toward its fall could the \textit{hisba} be considered a \textit{wazîfa dînîyya}. The muhtasib’s authority possessed an increasingly arbitrary, coercive, political character—a point to which we will return. His role in the setting of prices and the supply of food became less that of a disinterested referee than a willing cog in direct state intervention in the economy—intervention for the dual purposes of feeding the capital and boosting the government’s revenue (or that of a powerful patron or, for that matter, his own). These developments occurred, of course, simultaneously with the growing statistical dominance of the amirs among \textit{hisba} appointees. The change in the muhtasib’s functions, as well as in the character of those who held the office, should be seen as a response to a demographic and economic crisis, and as a reflection of the state’s reaction to that crisis. The change in the office’s character and functions could not be hidden, even from contemporaries, and so Ibn
Taghri Birdi, as we have seen, unconsciously reclassified the *muhtasib* as an officer of the political and military authority.

**Revenue collection**

In a society which demanded a financial contribution from those who would participate—*zakāt* from believers, *jizya* from *dhimmīs*—we should not be surprised to find the *muhtasib* collecting the taxes, as a part of his duty to “order the good.” In 779/1378, the *muhtasib* of Cairo assumed responsibility for collecting the “alms-tax,” *zakat*, from, significantly, the “merchants and financiers.” Ibn al-Ukhuwwa listed the collection of the *jizya* among the *muhtasib*’s responsibilities, and al-Maqrizi described the *muhtasib* Šadr al-Dīn b. al-ʻAjami accomplishing precisely that in 815/1412. In general, however, the chronicles are silent on this score. Of course, the chronicles’ silence may simply indicate that the practice was common. The knowledge that the one *muhtasib* whom the chronicles actually mention collecting the *jizya* was Ibn al-ʻAjami, whose devotion to the supposedly standard duties of the *ḥisba* caused such a stir, may arouse our suspicions, but the meager state of the evidence precludes firm conclusions.

Merchants and artisans were burdened with taxes of a more arbitrary nature, in the collection of which the *muhtasib* also played a prominent role, especially near the end of the fifteenth century. Though they mention the new taxes frequently, the chronicles generally speak of them as an accomplished fact, rather than an innovation requiring comment, so that their development is difficult to trace. Goitein cited a Geniza document from the Mamluk period (date?) which referred to a tax levied on each store and workshop as the “*ḥisba*, or payment to the *muhtasib*,” a payment regular enough to form an important part of a contract of partnership. In all likelihood, the Geniza document refers to a monthly tax (*mushāḥara*), payable to the *muhtasib* by those practising a craft or trade in the markets, which was in existence by the mid-fourteenth century—a

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decree of 762/1360–61 proclaimed its abolition. In the fifteenth century, however, the chronicles mention it regularly, usually by recording its (temporary) abolition. Though at times the tax occasioned dissatisfaction among the people, it must also have become a regular and expected burden: Barakât b. Müsä, though repeatedly collecting the mushâhara during his long tenure as muhtasib, nonetheless retained the good feeling of the populace, so much so that the population of Cairo once hung large banners of white silk, lit festive lamps, and perfumed themselves, all to celebrate his return to the post after a brief imprisonment.

The repeated references to the mushâhara leave no doubt that its collection constituted one of the muhtasib’s principal duties. Certainly contemporaries understood the connection. In the chaotic final year of Mamluk rule, a group of Mamluk recruits revolted after their pay had been discontinued; significantly, they demanded the abolition of the monthly taxes, as well as the dismissal of the wazîr, the Wâlî of Cairo, but especially the muhtasib, on whose firing (and, for that matter, execution) they were particularly insistent.

By the fifteenth century, then, the muhtasib functioned as much as a tax collector as a market inspector, let alone as the guardian of public morals which al-Ghazâlî, al-Mâwardî and others had envisioned. More muhtasibs in the final century of Mamluk rule had previously held the position of “controller” (nâzîr) in the various bureaus than any other post. But under the Mamluk sultanate, driven by a shrinking tax-base with no proportionate decline in expenditures, the collection of revenue became an ever more arbitrary practice. It was a process in which the muhtasib participated; he became, in one scholar’s estimation, “an arm of the royal extortion network.” When in 865/1461 the sultan demanded 100,000 dinârs “out of the price of spices” for distribution to his mamluks, the nâzîr al-khâsî, responsible for the sum, fled his post. His task was entrusted to the muhtasib who, along with the new nâzîr and the daâwâdîr, satisfied the sultan’s demands—“I mean they exerted themselves to collecting the money

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115 Lapidus, Muslim Cities, 99–100.
119 Cf. Petry, Civilian Elite, 224.
120 Petry, Civilian Elite, 224.
from various quarters.”\textsuperscript{121} Ibn Taghrī Birdī’s account does not specify how exactly the funds were collected, but no doubt their methods were not wholly dissimilar to those of the muḥtasib who, in 892/1487, on the sultan’s command convened the “notable merchants of the markets” and simply ordered that they help defray the cost of a military expedition; after some negotiation, he squeezed from them some 12,000 dinārs.\textsuperscript{122}

The new functions certainly detracted from the muḥtasib’s duties as originally conceived, but they were by no means without advantage for the individuals appointed to the post. The same period in which the muḥtasib became intimately linked to the process of revenue collection witnessed the transformation of the position from one dominated by the fuqahā’ to one in which most appointees were military figures; the proportion of amirs acting as muḥtasib was, in fact, higher than that for any other position in the legal category.\textsuperscript{123} Indeed, the post became one which potential appointees, amirs, merchants, and unscrupulous qādīs actively sought. In 813/1410, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shaḥbān, a qādī though “without virtue,” who had previously held the appointment and (presumably) tasted its rewards, traveled as far as Damascus, where the Sultan was staying, to secure from him—al-Maqrīzī does not say how, or for how much—a decree conferring upon him the hisba of Cairo.\textsuperscript{124}

The reason for the job’s popularity was simple: the opportunities for remuneration which the new functions offered.\textsuperscript{125} Ibn al-Ukhuwwa had indicated that the muḥtasib was to receive a regular payment—a salary—from the public treasury;\textsuperscript{126} al-Maqrīzī, who served as muḥtasib himself, suggested that his revenues were approximately 30 dinārs per month.\textsuperscript{127} By the fifteenth century, the muḥtasib was able to capitalize on his tax-collecting duties to supplement whatever emolument he might receive from the state. Exactly how much wealth a muḥtasib might appropriate we cannot say, but the figures must have been considerable: if those who held the post sought it one-half as

\textsuperscript{121} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujum al-zāhira}, vol. XVI, 260.
\textsuperscript{123} Petry, \textit{Civilian Elite}, 224.
\textsuperscript{124} Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulak}, vol. IV, 160.
\textsuperscript{125} Cf. Darrag, “\textit{al-Hisba wa-āthāruhā},” 127.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, \textit{Ma‘ālim al-qurba}, 11.
eagerly as did Ibn Sha’bān, then the rapid turnover would indicate an intense competition. The chronicles furnish more direct evidence that the post was a profitable one. Ibn Sha’bān himself returned to the hisba in 815/1412 for a payment of 500 dinārs, plus 100 dinārs for every month which he held it,128 a practice which seems to have become more frequent in the later Mamluk period. Other amounts paid for the hisba varied, but on the whole increased over time: 5,000 dirhams, 150,000 dirhams, 1,000 dinārs, then 3,000, finally 15,000 dinārs.129 Presumably the post was worth more than those figures—or at least, such was reasonably hoped—to justify the gamble.

The methods by which a muḥtasib might recoup his investment varied according to his functions. As a price-setter, the muḥtasib might hope to benefit from the manipulation of prices and supplies, through any one of those devices by which unscrupulous monopolies are still recognized. The muḥtasib Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī once reported that an amir had asked him to sell his supplies of wheat at an inflated price; when he refused, the amir became enraged, and al-ʿAynī was forced to resign his commission. Only al-Maqrīzī, al-ʿAynī reported, was willing to accept the post under these conditions.130 No doubt al-ʿAynī’s report is distorted by his rivalry with al-Maqrīzī; even so, it indicates how a less scrupulous muḥtasib might earn his reward. Or he might falsify the accounts of projects for which he had assumed responsibility, as did one who had been charged with supervising the construction of two towers over a gate beneath the Citadel.131 But the most important source of income for a muḥtasib lay in his share of—or surcharge upon—the mashāhara it was his duty to collect from the merchants and craftsmen in the market. The muḥtasib appointed in 823/1420 recovered his initial payment by “taxing the vendors and the like.”132 Ibn Sha’bān, too, probably recovered his investment through the monthly taxes collected in the market. Such sums could be substantial indeed. In 922/1516, Ibn Iyās reports that these taxes provided 76,000 dinārs annually to the royal treasury, in

addition to whatever the muhtasib retained for himself or which he distributed to other officials, perhaps his deputies. 133

Political and administrative duties

The tax-collecting duties which the muhtasib assumed in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries represent only the most prominent instance of a broader phenomenon: his progressive transformation into a political and administrative officer of the state, and an agent of royal coercion. Appointed by the sultan, the muhtasib came to perform, at the personal behest of the ruler, a variety of tasks which drove him well beyond the marketplace, and light years from the ethical duties which may once have been his domain. Once the sultans and muhtasibs were routinely drawn, broadly speaking, from the same military elite, it became natural to find the muhtasib acting (when circumstance and personal relationships permitted) as a personal advisor to the ruler on political matters. On several occasions, the muhtasib served as ambassador to a foreign court. 134 At other times, the muhtasib served the sultan as an officer of arrest. 135

The administrative and, especially, coercive role of the muhtasib blossomed in al-Zaynì Barakàt b. Mùsà, a man of humble, Bedouin origins who held the hisba for all but seven months during the final twelve years of the Mamluk sultanate. While in office, Ibn Mùsà amassed an unprecedented amount of power; indeed, so close was he to the sultan that when the ruler left Cairo to advance against the Ottomans, he placed Ibn Mùsà “in charge of all his personal interests.” 136 The nature of Ibn Mùsà’s responsibilities, and the depth of his power, not to mention his extended term of office, might suggest that he was an aberration, to be considered in a category entirely separate from the hisba. In fact, however, Ibn Mùsà merely developed and exercised more fully the power, and benefitted from the

134 For example, as ambassador to the Ottoman sultan Bayezid; Ibn Iyàs, Bada’ì’ al-zuhûr, vol. III, 94.
relationship to political authority, which his predecessors had acquired. What is striking about that authority is its thoroughly political character; more, its personal attachment to the sultan. Ibn Mūsā, like his immediate predecessors, served the ruler in administrative tasks utterly unconnected to his duty (still?) to “order the good and forbid evil,” and unconnected to the market and its practices. On a number of occasions, he served as the sultan’s paymaster in distributing funds to the troops, or—a less pleasant task—informing the mamluks of the cancellation of their expected bonus.137 Twice following the pillaging of the sūq by packs of marauding mamluks or ruffians from the countryside, the muṭāsib took inventory of goods damaged or stolen as a preliminary toward compensation—not surprising, perhaps, for a “market inspector,” but on both occasions specifically at the order of the sultan.138 For the sultan’s benefit, he combined—to put it gently—the power to arrest which his predecessors had acquired, with their role as revenue-collector, which perhaps they had sought. More bluntly, he acted as a royal “inquisitor,” not in matters religious, but in matters financial; more specifically, he imprisoned, flogged, tortured, even unto death, those whom the sultan had fined but who refused to pay, or those who, simply by means of their wealth, tempted extortion.139

Ibn Mūsā was muṭāsib in name only. Could al-Māwardī or al-Ghazālī even have recognized the office? Would not even Ibn al-Ukhuwwa have been shocked?

Conclusions

In the early period of Mamluk rule, the muṭāsib was strong enough institutionally—aided, we are tempted to add, by the moral integrity and authority of those who held the post—to proclaim and enforce the principles of his office in the face of selfish opposition from amirs. In 737/1336, during a period of food shortages and high prices, the muṭāsib, a religious scholar beloved by the people of Cairo for the quality of his legal rulings, was actively involved in supplying grain

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to millers, and in fixing its price. When word reached him that several amirs were selling their own grain at higher prices, he arranged to have them brought before the sultan, humiliated and beaten. “After this,” al-Maqrīzī commented, “not a single amir dared to open his granary without the muhtasib’s order.”\textsuperscript{140} It is not hard to imagine, on the basis of the prosopographical data examined at the outset of this study, that those who filled the post in the latter half of the Mamluk sultanate possessed little inclination to maintain the principles of their predecessors. Indeed, the table had turned. When a more conscientious muhtasib found himself in office, he might be unable to maintain his standards in the face of current expectations: that, at least, was the experience of one muhtasib who resigned in 798/1395, when more powerful Mamluk officials pressured him to compel millers to purchase wheat at inflated prices.\textsuperscript{141} From one perspective, there was this simple fact: that standards (as we are fond of saying) had declined.

More important than any decline of standards, however, the hisba experienced a transformation in its functions and in the nature and source of its authority, a process outlined in the pages above. The traditional notion of an official appointed to enforce public morality, to “order the good and forbid evil” within an Islamic ethical framework, bore less and less resemblance to the Mamluk muhtasibs. Market inspector, price-fixer, supplier of food, tax-collector, political agent and royal inquisitor—the muhtasib passed through a variety of guises, but one tendency predominated: the replacement of ethics by politics as the source of the muhtasib’s authority.

The prosopographical evidence adds another perspective to the transformation of the office. By the end of the sultanate, legally-trained men were all but excluded from (or uninterested in) the post: during the sixty years before the Ottoman conquest, only one muhtasib can certainly be said to have been drawn from the ranks of the ’ulūm. Carl Petry suggested that the absence of religiously-trained men from the hisba in the fifteenth century indicates that they no longer sought the office,\textsuperscript{142} a reaction, no doubt, not simply to the


\textsuperscript{141} Lapidus, \textit{Muslim Cities}, 53.

\textsuperscript{142} Petry, \textit{Civilian Elite}, 224.
decline of standards, but to the transformation of the office to one for which a Shari'a-minded individual would have no interest, let alone skill.

That contemporaries perceived the transformation of the office—the more important half of the phenomenon—suggests a final question: why was the hisba in particular subject to this vicissitude? Three causes, above all, contributed to the office's vulnerability. First, tradition did not require that the muhtasib be trained in the law, or any other religious science. While the loose but widely-appreciated system of education and the transmission of religious knowledge could, in theory, at least restrict the sultan’s choices in the appointment of the chief qādis and other prominent religious officials, no institutional safeguards for hisba appointments existed. Second, a distinct lack of “professionalism” characterized hisba appointments. It is striking, for instance, how rarely the sources provide evidence that a muhtasib had previous experience as a nā‘ib al-ḥisba. Muhtasibs transferred to the office from other posts; in particular, the high proportion with previous experience as the “controller” (nāzīn) of various bureaus must have accelerated the hisba’s transformation into an office of revenue collection. Most importantly, in the chaotic atmosphere of late Mamluk Egypt, characterized by economic crisis and extortion by virtually all levels of the ruling military elite, the vagueness of its definition doomed the hisba to manipulation and distortion—to its transformation. Guided not by legal or religious principles but by those of “custom” and “public interest,” even an honest muhtasib “ordering the good and forbidding evil” in the ṣūq wielded a weapon of enormous power. But under the prevailing circumstances of the last century of Mamluk rule, the association with the marketplace—with, that is, a source of exploitable wealth—proved fatal. Whether manipulating the price and supply of food, or collecting the mushāhara, or simply extorting money from merchants and artisans, the muhtasib sat on a potential gold mine.
CHAPTER TWELVE

THE ESTATE OF AL-KHUWAND FĀTIMA

AL-KHAṢṢBAKIYYA: ROYAL SPOUSE, AUTONOMOUS INVESTOR

Carl F. Petry

The prominence of women as supervisors of charitable trusts (awqāf) during the medieval and Ottoman periods is widely known. Islamic Law allows both men and women to administer property autonomously, and the narrative chronicles that constitute the primary foundation of our anecdotal knowledge about pre-modern Islamic History refer frequently to women in this context. But these narrative sources rarely provide statistical data about the estates of individuals they describe. Their tabulated information is confined for the most part to rates of exchange, commodity prices and, in Egypt, crests and troughs of the annual Nile flood. Archival sources, which are quintessentially statistical, have not survived in their original form throughout most of the medieval Islamic period. After the ninth hijrī/fifteenth common era century, they become progressively more replete as the Ottomans absorbed most of the central Islamic lands into their empire. Prior to the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and Syria in 922/1517, surviving archival material is limited for the most part to charitable trust documents (ḥūjaj awqāf) and related deeds. Scholars had made sporadic use of this material for decades before Muḥammad Amin published his path-breaking Al-Awqāf waʿl-Ḥayāt al-Ijtimāʿīyya fī Miṣr (Cairo, 1981). As is common knowledge to participants at this

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conference, Amin went on to compile a catalogue listing trust-related documents in Egypt, issued in the same year.²

I became interested in these documents when I worked through Amin’s monograph and began examining the deeds associated with the last significant rulers of the independent mamluk period: al-Ashraf Qaytbay (872–901/1468–96) and Qaṣṣū al-Ghawri (906–22/1510–16). Even before Amin’s catalogue was printed, I had already realized that the documents issued, or amended, by these two sultans accounted for an astonishing thirty-three percent of all deeds surviving from the mamluk era. But my understanding of Fāṭima al-Khaṣṣābākiyya’s role as a waqfīya developed after I had the opportunity to consult Amin’s catalogue. I then ascertained that the thirty-eight to forty documents she commissioned, depending on how their transactions are counted, stood out as the most thoroughly recorded legacy of a female estate builder during the Mamluk Sultanate.

Fāṭima al-Khaṣṣābākiyya descended, according to my reconstruction of her genealogy, from Sayf al-Dīn Khaṣṣāb al-Nāṣirī (d. 734/1433), a prominent officer in the service of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (third reign 709–41/1309–40). Ibn Taghri-Birdī states that he was the “progenitor” (wālīd) of Ghars al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Shaykhī (b. 813/1410), who would be Fāṭima’s paternal grandfather.³ Khalīl’s biography in al-Sakhwī’s al-ʿAlāʾī’s biography in al-Sakhwī’s Ṣaḥīḥ al-Dawʾ al-Lāmī⁴ makes no reference to this ancestral tie. Nor does Fāṭima’s father, ʿAlī, appear in the work. Since Fāṭima died in 909/1504, al-Sakhwī did not include her in his twelfth volume that lists women. Nor did he mention her in his detailed accolade to her spouse, Qaytbay. The particulars of Fāṭima’s life therefore remain unknown. The lengthiest commentary about her appears in Ibn Iyās’s Badāʾīr al-Duhūr and merits quoting:⁵

On Wednesday the twenty-second (of Diwāl-Hijja 909/6 June 1504), expired al-Khawand Fāṭima ibnat al-ʿAlī ibn Khaṣṣāb. She was the wife of al-Malik al-Ashraf Qaytbay. After him she married al-ʿĀdil

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Tūmānābāy and it was rumored that she had married al-Ashraf Qānūshī Khamsmī‘a morganatically (fīl-khaffā). She was one of the most eminent princesses, possessing a vast fortune. She left behind an immense patrimony (taraka ḥāfilā). She was mistress of the royal court (qū’a) for some thirty years, with her own apartment in the Citadel. She was honored and respected as was no other princess. She died having exceeded the age of sixty. Upon her death she was carried on a dais embossed in gold. Before her walked the four qādis and the senior amirs (muqaddamān). The Sultan (Qānūsh al-Ghawrī) descended from the Citadel to preside over her funeral prayers at the Mu‘minī (corpse washing) font. The masses surged forward disrupting the penitence (kaffāra) of the official mourners when her cortege entered the Cross Street (al-bābi). Her funeral was (thus) festive.

I add: At the end of her life, she encountered difficulties and adversity. The Juliūn recruits had invaded her residence next to the Sunqūr Bridge. They demanded a bonus (nafaqa) from her. They insulted her and intended to (continue) harassing her (further). The instigators of this (affront) were a cohort of mamluks belonging to the faction of Aqībīndī, the Executive Adjutant (Dawdar). When al-Malik al-Nāṣir (Muhammad, Qāytbāy’s son by a concubine and immediate successor) learned of this, he placed her under his protection. He proclaimed in Cairo that all mamluks were forbidden to approach the residence of al-Ashraf Qāytbāy’s widow nor even to stand outside her gate. Any violator of this decree was to be hanged with no exceptions. These abuses then ceased. Their cause: These mamluks had surmised that the Khawand had married Qānūshī Khamsmī‘a in secret. After his assassination, they intimidated (taqarrasha) her and demanded a bonus from her. She had remained in hiding away from her residence for some time after that. Subsequently, al-Zāhir Qānūsh mulcted her, extracting a large sum of money from her and placing her in the custody of the khuddām eunuchs until she yielded up the demanded sum. Similarly, al-Nāṣir (Muhammad) extracted a sum of money from her. She then married al-‘Adil Tūmānābāy but remained with him (only) two months (approximately). These events are known. After this, she became ill, suffering from an ulcer (ākila) in her side over a protracted period. When her condition worsened, she proceeded to Būlāq where she died. Her body was transported to her residence next to the Sunqūr Bridge, from whence her funeral cortege departed.

The details Ibn Iyās provided focused on the precariousness of Fātimā’s estate after Qāytbāy’s death. While the stance of the mamluk elite may appear draconian, it almost certainly reflected their concept of rights to a deceased peer’s patrimony. Property accumulated by individual members of the mamluk caste seems to have been regarded as part of a vast fiscal reservoir held collectively by the entire military oligarchy. Since a substantial portion of an individual’s
legacy had been alienated from land formally held by the Sultanate and allotted as ḣanṭā’s on a usufruct basis in return for service, his peers’ perception that they were improperly denied access to lucrative real estate that should have been restored to the diwān al-jaysh for redistribution led to feelings of intense resentment.

Although Fāṭima had amassed her holdings autonomously from her spouse’s properties, she could not avoid this deeply ingrained sense of collective entitlement after her powerful husband had died. Her marriages to the men who fought each other over the succession to her husband’s office should be interpreted as a last-ditch effort by which Fāṭima strove to maintain the integrity of her estate, if not ultimate control over its disposition. The impression left by Ibn Iyās of an aging and infirm woman who once enjoyed enormous social prestige entering into marriages of convenience with ruthless claimants to ward off confiscation is not edifying. Ibn Iyās was not impressed by their conduct, and remained an acerbic critic of the man who eventually consolidated his position as sultan: Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī.

But the rapacity of these claimants was in all probability the inevitable consequence of a political tradition that recognized no succession by inheritance as binding and regarded fortunes amassed by even the most esteemed of their caste as a common patrimony to be divided among successors as fiefs. Fāṭima clearly understood the implication of this deeply embedded attitude and indulged in no illusions about her own fate after her spouse had died. Yet by placing a substantial portion of her estate in waqf, Fāṭima sought to preserve at least part of her holdings for charitable posterity. Fāṭima’s trust deeds that survive should therefore be interpreted as tangible remnants of a strategy assiduously pursued over a period exceeding three decades to insure the preservation of her legacy.

The earliest document issued by Fāṭima is dated 21 Rabī‘ I 878/16 August 1473. The latest appeared soon before her death with a date of 27 Rajab 909/15 January 1504, and confirmed on 25 Ṣafar 910/7 August 1505. This latter date certified a transaction enacted sometime during Fāṭima’s last months but was legally validated after her demise. The span of time elapsing between these two documents thus encompasses thirty-two years. Six kinds of transaction were concluded in these deeds. In descending order of frequency they were: bay‘ or sale/purchase with prices provided irregularly; waqf or charitable trust with foundation objectives mentioned only sporadically;
intiqāl or transfer/reassignment of a unit of property of an alternate status of title; istibdāl or exchange/substitution of a unit of property for another of presumably equivalent value; ījār or rent/lease of a unit of property with the monthly fee provided; and tamliḥ or alienation of a unit of property with permanent transfer of ownership.

References to acquisition of property already held in waqf actually occurred only in Fāṭima’s initial deed. Document 469, dated 21 Rabi‘ I 878, proceeded through three transactions, the latest certified on 28 Dhūl-Hijja 887/7 February 1483. All sixteen units were acquired during the first transaction of 21/03/878, however. Of these sixteen, ten were listed as trusted waqf property transferred under title to Fāṭima. The remaining six were purchased. No distinction between the two categories is discernible with regard to the type of real estate acquired, although the six agricultural properties located in the Delta provinces of Gharbiyya, Sharqiyya and Qalyūbiyya were uniformly listed as waqf. The other properties were located within the former Fāṭimid district (dākhil al-Qāhirah, “inside Cairo”), the zone extending from the Bāb Zuwayla to the Citadel (ẓāhir al-Qāhirah, “outside Cairo”), and the city’s environs (ḍay’a al-Qāhirah). They included six residences (sakān), four retail shops or stalls (ḥānit), three of which were listed as a single unit, and a larger urban residence (qāṣr). The irregular incidence of purchase prices may indicate inconsistent reporting of sums paid, or may certify acquisition in which Fāṭima actually turned over money to possess the property. Final tallies of acquisition payments will be noted subsequently in this essay.

The confinement of transactions in which Fāṭima acquired title to existing trust properties to this document warrants attention. All of Fāṭima’s following transactions involved purchases, transfers, substitutions, rents or alienations. All of the six rural agrarian properties had initially been held in the dīwān al-jaysh for allotment as iqṭā’ usufruct. Document 469 passed over Fāṭima’s acquisition of these properties without comment on either their alienation from regime disposition to charitable trust, or to the gender of their final supervisor (nāẓira).

Fāṭima’s subsequent acquisitions are summarized on the List.6 Several years seem to have intervened between her initial foray into

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6 The list is divided in two sections. Deed i.d. numbers (from Amin) are repeated in section two to facilitate location of properties according to district. Deed #652
estate building and later agendas of acquisition. Document 502, transaction one, is dated 11 Rabī‘ I 886/10 May 1481. From that time, no more than three years separate the occurrence of a transaction until Fāṭima’s death. When I initially reflected on the chronological timing of Fāṭima’s transactions, I noted heightened activity concentrated between the years 894–896/1488–1491.7

I hypothesized that these years followed closely upon the first of Qāytbāy’s serious accidents in which he fractured his upper leg and verged on death. Although Qāytbāy recovered, he did not regain his former vigor and his health began a prolonged decline. I speculated that the increased frequency of Fāṭima’s acquisitions may have been tied to her apprehension over the implications of her husband’s waning health and possible death for her own status and the integrity of her holdings. Upon reconsideration of the chronological incidence of deeds, however, I do not find the salience of this particular interval of two and one half years persuasive. If the surviving deeds offer an accurate pattern of Fāṭima’s transactions, she was consistently engaged in property acquisition at the same rate until her death.

The List summarizes the range of property Fāṭima sought: uniformly real estate with reliable rates of return. These properties do not differ in type or preference from the profiles of real estate appearing consistently within trust documents of the Mamluk period. They are divided more or less equally between rent-generating residences, commercial sites for sale or storage of commodities, and agrarian

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7 C.F. Petry, Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt’s Waning as a Great Power (Albany, 1994), 201.
lands or irrigation sources. No manufacturing or processing centers of any sort emerged, confirming a disinclination sustained throughout the waqf-related documents of this era for investment in agencies that produced commodities or processed foodstuffs. No reference to any kind of cartage, shipping or transferral agencies appeared. Fāṭima’s investments were restricted to fixed properties that yielded set rents on a reliable basis.

Because of the irregular incidence of purchase prices provided by the deeds, no accurate estimate of Fāṭima’s expenditures is possible. Also, given our inexact understanding of currency values, equivalencies or exchange rates, final tallies are certain only in their imprecision. As summarized in the List, I came up with a total of 9,747 dinars listed as danānīr only; 6,443 dinars calculated from 8,053 danānīr jayshī or units of account (one dj worth ca. eighty percent of a genuine dinar); 1,500 ashrafi dinars; 700 zāhirī dinars; 2,250 nuṣṣ faḍdas worth ninety full dinars; and 10,125 dirhams, so severely debased at this time that 300 equalled one full dinar, for a figure of 34 dinars. The resultant total came to 18,513 dinars. Quite obviously, these figures can be useful only as the broad estimates they are. Given the frequent lacunae in the documents, coupled with the errors built into these estimates, I suspect that these totals underestimate substantially the amounts Fāṭima actually spent.

Nonetheless, a contravening tendency should be considered at this juncture. We cannot be certain that Fāṭima actually paid the amounts listed in the deeds. Many of these figures may have represented ‘front prices’ that concealed far more complex, covert arrangements involving laundered sums calculated by individuals occupying supervisory positions in the fiscal bureaus. I previously observed that Fāṭima bought shares in properties already held or controlled by persons closely allied with her husband. Her attempt to hedge against the likelihood of confiscation by so doing emerges as a readily discernible

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strategy. Less detectable would be the hidden deals that were struck over how much money actually changed hands, between whom and when. These caveats complicate our sense of the monies Fāṭima actually had at her disposal to lay out for her autonomous estate. Whether a more precise understanding of currency values and their rates of exchange would facilitate a better sense of the situation is unclear since these other matters of covert deals pose barriers that may defy a more accurate analysis.

One final issue merits comment: the ultimate disposition of Fāṭima’s holdings. In the year following her death, on 24 Şafar 910/6 August 1504, Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī formally appropriated Fāṭima’s properties into his own trust (Amin #652). As noted previously, this procedure was conducted according to past precedent. The entries in parentheses on the List indicate where specific units of property acquired by Fāṭima appeared in al-Ghawrī’s primary waqf. Qāytbāy and Fāṭima had produced no children who survived them. As noted previously, Qāytbāy’s heir, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, was the result of a concubinal union. Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī therefore violated no inheritance rights when he assumed title to Fāṭima’s estate. It is worth noting, however, that al-Ghawrī did not tamper with Qāytbāy’s own holdings that he (Qāytbāy) had placed in his primary trust (Amin #475). Again, the likelihood here is that Qāytbāy’s spouse could not expect the integrity of her personal estate to last after she died. An individual man of equivalent social rank, such as Qāytbāy’s eventual successor and consolidator, Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī, could lay legitimate claim to it.

Yet this claim was not filed until after Fāṭima’s demise. Ibn Iyāṣ wryly noted the marital ploys Fāṭima was compelled to attempt in order to ward off confiscation of the legacy she had carefully built up over thirty years. The fact that she apparently succeeded in her own lifetime, as a widow without surviving male issue, should attract notice at least equivalent to the unpleasant realities of her status within the mamluk elite at the end of her days. It is unlikely that Fāṭima or her male contemporaries wasted time lamenting the fate of an aged widow confronting the avarice of ambitious rivals for rule over the Sultanate. Their actions were predictable and all parties involved anticipated such behavior. Fāṭima’s achievement as the creator of an autonomous estate that rivalled the holdings of many prominent men in her caste merits respect as the legacy of a sophisticated investor fully attuned to the financial and political conditions
of her time. Fāṭima was an active participant rather than a passive bystander, who enjoyed the benefits of royal status and suffered the liabilities of royal widowhood.

List of Charitable Trusts (Awqāf) Endowed by al-Khawand Fāṭima al-Khaṣṣbakiyya (Section 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deed</th>
<th>Dākhil Q</th>
<th>Zāhir Q</th>
<th>Day'a Q</th>
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<td>469, tr. 1</td>
<td>sakan</td>
<td>Qaṣr</td>
<td>waqf</td>
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<td>kh. J. Azhar</td>
<td>kh. AqSanqur</td>
<td>waqf</td>
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<td></td>
<td>sakan</td>
<td>sakan</td>
<td>bay'</td>
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<td>kh. J. Mardīn</td>
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<td>9 ḥānūt</td>
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<td>548, tr. 1 25/11/894</td>
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<td>439, tr. 3 22/12/895 (652, tr. 1, #81)</td>
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Table (cont.)

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Summary of Property Units and Expenditures

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<th>17 Units</th>
<th>21 Units</th>
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<td>1 qaṣr</td>
<td>1 bustān</td>
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<td>9 ḥāṣṣūt</td>
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<td>1 anṣāb</td>
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<td>1 sāḥa</td>
<td>2 iṣṭābīl</td>
<td>2 bīṣr</td>
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<td>2 makhzan</td>
<td>8 qā‘a</td>
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<td>1 ḥāṣil</td>
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<td>1 wakāla</td>
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<td>2 khān</td>
<td>1 anṣāb</td>
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<td>1 khirba</td>
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<td>1 qā‘a</td>
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<td>5842dn</td>
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Calculated Totals

| 9747dn   |          |        |
|          | 6442dn   | (calculated from 8053dj at 80%) |
|          | 1500asr  |          |
|          | 700zāḥ   |          |
|          | 90dn     | (calculated from 2250nf)        |
|          | 34dn     | (calculated from 10,125dr)      |
| 18,513dn | total    |          |

List of Charitable Trusts (*Awqāf*) Endowed by al-Khawand Fatīma al-Khaṣṣbākīyya (Section 2)

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<tr>
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<td>Gharbiyya</td>
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<td>21/03/878</td>
<td>Gharbiyya</td>
<td>N. Tajrīj</td>
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Summary of Property Units and Expenditures

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PART SEVEN

THE MAMLUKS IN SYRIA
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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MAMLUKS AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS IN LATE MAMLUK DAMASCUS: A WAQF STUDY

Michael Winter

The sources

The importance of waqf (and milk) documents for the study of Muslim social and economic history is well known. For the Mamluk period, which is rich in literary sources, but relatively poor in surviving archival materials, the waqf and milk documentation has special value. Unfortunately, the majority of such documents that came down to us are limited to the last decades of the Mamluk sultanate; most of them originate in Cairo. These documents have been the basis for studies of Egyptian culture, society and economy by several scholars, among them Muḥammad Amīn, Carl Petry, Jonathan Berkey, L. Fernandes, U. Haarmann, D. Behrens-Abouseif, and others.1 The present study is based on waqf and milk documents from the Vilayet (Province) of Damascus (Shām) prepared after the Ottoman conquest of Syria in summer 1516 and located in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul.2 These documents give us an opportunity to look at some

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1 See, for example, Muḥammad M. Amīn, al-Awqāf waḥ-l-iṣṭimāʿayn il-Miṣr, 648–923/1250–1516, Cairo, 1980; Carl F. Petry, Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt’s Waning as a Great Power, (Albany, 1994); Jonathan Berkey, The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo; A Social History of Islamic Education (Princeton, 1992).

2 The main registers consulted for this study are located at Başbakanlık Arşivi, (the Prime Minister’s Bureau Archive), Istanbul. Tapu Defteri nos. 127, 263, 393, Maliyeden Müdevver, no. 247. My main source, however, is a unique register (although resembling in form Maliyeden Müdevver, no. 247, which is much shorter and less detailed). It is an untitled manuscript and without pagination (the page references in the present paper are mine). The register, Muhammed Cevdet O. 83:936, is located at the Atatürk Kitaplığı in İstanbul. I am preparing a study on the awqāf in the province of Damascus in the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods for which this defter is a central source. In addition to the data that is presented here concerning Mamluks’ awqāf, the register contains information about the early Ottoman period and aspects of the ways in which the Ottoman administration dealt with awqāf, which are outside the subject of this conference.
pects of the Damascus elites (since only members of the elites could afford to establish awqāf or possess amlāk (private real estate). The present paper attempts to use these documents for a closer look at Mamluk sultans, amirs, mamluks’ sons (awlād al-nās), and their households. The collection contains descriptions of hundreds of waqfs, including scores of mamluks’ awqāf and amlāk. Although the sample is modest in size, it seems representative, and allows several observations about the mamluks and their households, as well as their religious and social values as these are expressed in their pious endowments that are not available from other sources.

The archival documents are mostly registers (defters) prepared by Ottoman officials, who surveyed, among other taxable properties, the existing awqāf and amlāk around 950/1543, some 30 years after the conquest. As in most cases, the two categories were listed together, since neither were state lands, and thus could not be parceled out as military iqtā during Mamluk times, or timar under the Ottomans. Some of these registers summarize in Arabic (often clearly influenced by the clerks’ Turkish) the essence of the waqf and milīk documents that had been drawn up before and after the Ottoman takeover; and then, in Turkish, the Ottoman administration’s decisions as to the status of the properties and the rights of the claimants. Most of the defters available to me and, as far as I am aware, to other researchers,3 represent later surveys (made some 30 years after the conquest) of the earlier survey conducted by Ottoman bureaucrats immediately after the conquest. These, as well as the majority of the original documents from the Mamluk sultanate, seem to have been lost.

Not surprisingly, the waqf founders were men and women of means—a few sultans and amirs, merchants, high-ranking bureaucrats and ‘ulama’, qadis, and a considerable number of women from such families. As usual, waqf were typically lands or houses in the city or in villages in the province. These could consist of entire villages or parts thereof (particularly important were revenues from the

fertile al-Ghûta villages surrounding Damascus), khans, warehouses, water mills, orchards, gardens and vineyards and other revenue-producing properties.

As is well known, waqf foundations could be khayrî, charitable, when the revenue is designated for the funding of public, religious, educational or charitable institutions and projects, or dhurrî, in which the founder designates the money for his or her family, usually starting with the donor and often including funds for manumitted slaves ('utaqa'). In such awqîf, the final religious, that is, public, beneficiaries for whom the funds are designated after the family becomes extinct must be specified in the waqf deed (waqffiya in Arabic or vakıffname in Turkish). By far, the most frequently mentioned beneficiaries in such cases were institutions in the two holy cities of the Hijâz (al-Haramînî al-Sharîfînî: Mecca and al-Madina); mostly for the poor residents in the hospices (ribât, pl. arba'a), especially in al-Madina. Many founders of awqîf donated the revenues to institutions in Damascus: the great Umayyad mosque and lesser mosques in the city and its suburbs, primarily the important suburb of al-Şâlihiyya that had been founded in the twelfth century by Ḥanbîlî refugees from the crusaders in Palestine. The city’s numerous madrasas, the soup kitchen (matbakh al-dashîsha) near the Bâb al-Barîd gate and numerous mausolea (türba's) were also favored objectives. Sometimes the waqf documents mention “poor Muslims” generally, lepers, money to ransom prisoners of war and other people in need of help. It is important to note that almost all the waqf funds from local (the Province of Damascus) sources were to be spent in the province (the exception being, of course, the Holy Cities in the Hijâz). Most of the supported institutions existed in the city of Damascus itself, but a few religious institutions were in villages. The holy sanctuaries of Jerusalem (al-Aqṣâ mosque) and Hebron (al-Khalîl) are also mentioned among the recipients of waqf charities. It is important to note that only rarely do we come across a case in which sources of revenue in Syria were to support an institution in Egypt.

Despite the distinction between the khayrî and dhurrî waqf (these terms are not used at the time in our sources), the waqffiya in many cases combined both of them by dividing the funds at the time of establishing the waqf between family and charitable or religious projects (the two were really inseparable).

We learn from the chronicle of Muḥammad b. Tulun, a Damascene ʿalim and important historian, who was an eyewitness to the Ottoman
conquest of Damascus, about the methods by which the Ottomans conducted the survey of \textit{awqaf} and \textit{amlak}. This procedure was extremely unpopular, and it was interrupted by the rebellion of Jānbirdī al-Ghazālī, the Mamluk amir who was appointed by the Ottomans as their first governor of Syria (end of 1520-early 1521). The rebellion was crushed quickly, however (February 1521), and the Ottomans completed the survey of the province, including that of the \textit{waqf} and \textit{milk} entitlements. The official who carried out this survey was Defterdār Nūḥ Çelebi. He must have been as harsh a man as he was an indifferent administrator, perhaps also tainted by corruption, as is claimed in later Ottoman documents. He was dismissed owing to many complaints from the people to the authorities. His register was called \textit{Defter-i Nūḥ Çelebi}, and has not survived. Some 30 years later, a revision was conducted on the basis of documents and oral testimony. The results were written down in the \textit{Defter-i Cedit-i Haqqānī}, the New Imperial Register. This new register points out many mistakes made by Nūḥ Çelebi. Sometimes he had registered \textit{milk} and \textit{waqf} properties as \textit{timar}, either arbitrarily or because the luckless owners were outside the country at that time, occasionally for the hajj pilgrimage. By contrast, the procedures used during the new survey seem accurate and fair.

Finally, a note about the dates of the \textit{awqaf}. Although some of them, mostly those established by sultans- date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the great majority of the \textit{waqf} deeds in our collections are from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Generally speaking, the lifetime of most \textit{awqaf} does not seem to have exceeded one century. Usually by this time either the family died out or the revenues ceased for one reason or another. Often the dates of the purchase of the property, its conversion into a \textit{waqf} and its registration are close. In many cases, however, the time gap between the establishment of a \textit{waqf} and its registration is significant, in a few extreme cases, more than a century. It is probable that when it became known that an inspection was imminent, the trustees hurried to register their rights.

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Muhammad ibn Tūlūn, \textit{Maṣāḥafat al-khilāl fī hadīthī al-zamān}, ed. M. Muṣṭafā (Cairo, 1962), vol. II, 33, 36, 65.}
\item \footnote{Ibn Tūlūn writes that Nūḥ Çelebi issued an order that all men when walking in the streets on pain of castration had to wear trousers (\textit{sirwal}). This was not enforced, however. \textit{Ibid.}, 59.}
\end{itemize}
According to our documents, several Mamluk sultans founded waqāf for Syrian projects. It is important to emphasize this point, since Syria, or rather the Syrian provinces (al-Bilād al-Shāmīyya in Mamluk administrative terminology) were totally under the control of the sultan in Cairo. Nevertheless, it seems that the good sense of the center usually prevailed, and the resources funding waqāf in Syria were used for the benefit of local projects. In our sample, only one of the Mamluk sultans, Barqūq, used Syrian funds to support his madrasa in Cairo (in the Bayn al-Qaṣrāyin Quarter). All other Mamluk sultans established waqf for religious men and institutions in the Province of Damascus. Only al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars established waqāf for his own children and descendants, in addition to his waqf on his madrasa and his turba in Damascus.

The Mamluk sultans’ prominent support for Sufis and their institutions is also obvious from their Syrian waqf policies. A farm in the Ḥawrān region financed an ancient waqf, established at the beginning of the Mamluk sultanate by Baybars for the upkeep of a Sufi zācīya. The waqf was eventually confirmed by other sultans. Qālāʿūn, Khushqadam and Qaytbāy gave their confirmation to the continuity of that waqf (murabbaʿ al-istimār waʾl-muṣāmaḥa). Nevertheless, Niḥ Čelebi registered it as timar. Here religious beliefs (or rather superstitions) find their way into an official document. The clerk writes that two men (soldiers) who received this property as timar were afflicted with blindness (as a result of the holy man’s karāma or miracle), and gave up their rights to their timar.

Baybars also established another waqf for a certain Sufi shaykh and his descendants. Other sultans who donated waqāf for Sufis are al-Nāṣir Muhammad b. Qalāʿūn (on Shaykh al-Suyūfī and the Sufis who resided in the zācīya on the slopes of the famous Qāsiyūn mountain at the Ṣāliḥiyya quarter near Damascus), ʿInāl, and Jaqmaq (on

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6 Atatürk Library Defter (will be quoted as ALD, my pagination), fol. 57b. Also Tapu Defteri (TD) no. 263, 471.
7 ALD, fol. 76b; TD no. 393, 190. The Ottomans did not find Baybars’s waqfiyya for his madrasa; it was not necessary, since the terms of the waqf were engraved on stone on the gate of the madrasa.
8 ALD, fol. 38b.
9 TD no. 263, 536.
a zāwiyā in a village, as well as a madrasa near the Umayyad mosque).\textsuperscript{10} Salāh al-Dīn’s zāwiyā for an ascetic Sufi shaykh (Ibn al-Batā‘īhī) and his progeny is also mentioned as a continuously active waqf. Even the waqf established by his uncle Asad al-Dīn Shīrkuh (incorrectly called “sultan” in the Ottoman documents) to support a madrasa and a khānqāh in Damascus was functioning in the early sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{11}

Sultan Khushqadam, who focused special attention on Damascus to enhance his religious prestige there, built his turba in Damascus at the Bāb al-Jayrūn quarter, and endowed it with rich waqāf. It was a large institution, known by the name al-Wajţīyya. In some documents it is called a madrasa rather than turba. A school probably grew around the sepulcher. The waqīfīyya provides for salaries to the functionaries, such as an imām, a teacher, and custodial and maintenance personnel, as well as candles, rugs and mats.\textsuperscript{12} Al-Malik al-Nāṣir Faraj was another sultan whose turba was built in Damascus.\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{flushright}
Governors of the province of Damascus
\end{flushright}

Unlike the sultans’ awqāf which, as we have seen, survived until the early Ottoman period, there are no traces in our sources of the endowments established by the governors of the province (singular: nā‘ib al-saltana) apart from the last ones. For example, one looks in vain for awqāf founded by Tankiz, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalā‘ūn’s eminent governor of the province during the sultan’s long reign. What survived (at least in the collections that I have seen) were the awqāf of governors of the late Mamluk period, either their own endowments, or, in some cases, those established to honor them by their mamluks after their death.

For example, Nā‘ib al-Shām Arkmās (or Arkmāz) combined a family waqf with a large turba, his mausoleum, which was a center for dispensing charity in the name of this amir who was interred there. Three Qur‘ān readers were to recite at the site for a fee every day

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnotetext{10}{TD no. 393, 38 (al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalā‘ūn); \textit{Ibid.}, 20 (İnāl); \textit{Ibid.}, 55 (Jaqmaq).}
\footnotetext{11}{ALD, fol. 28a (Saladin). Shīrkuh’s khānqāh in Damascus, \textit{TD} no. 393, 76, his madrasa, \textit{Ibid.}, 77.}
\footnotetext{12}{ALD, fol. 4b; \textit{TD} no. 263, 418.}
\footnotetext{13}{TD no. 127, 101.}
\end{footnotesize}
after the afternoon prayer. Every Friday night, 300 loaves of bread were to be distributed to poor people at the gate of the turba. Drinking water in a cistern and oil for lamps were made available. The waqf deed specifies the monthly salaries of the custodian (qayyim), 300 dirhams, and the director (mutawallî), 1,000 dirhams. The waqfyya sees to it that the founders’ wives and concubines who had given birth to his children will be provided for after his death. What remained should be paid to the founder’s children, his brother’s son, and to the governor’s manumitted slaves. If no one remained, the money should be given to the poor wherever they are.14 It should be noted that this is a typical turba: a mausoleum, a devotional center that also functioned as an agency for dispensing charity. Some turbas were more modest, and others larger and more elaborate. A turba could be a teaching institution, and even a place where people could stay. We have evidence of numerous turbas, which had a budget for distributing sweets on certain festivals and feasts and meat during the nights of Ramadān. An amir establishes a dinner (ṣimāt) on the first Friday of Rajab, and the night of mid-Sha’bān and the nights of the two Muslim festivals (al-ʿidānī).15 In Damascus, there were many such turbas, which no doubt contributed a great deal to the well-being of the general population.

The largest and richest awqāf in late Mamluk Damascus were established by Sibāy, the last Mamluk governor of the province, who was killed at the battle of Marj Dābiq at which Sultan Selīm defeated the Mamluk army. Sibāy’s awqāf were funded from the revenues of many villages throughout the province, as well as from shops, bath-houses and caravansaries (khāns) in Damascus. Sibāy provided for his children and manumitted slaves through his awqāf. There is even an entire waqf known as “Sibāy’s children”. Sibāy also established a madrasa and a mosque. In his family awqāf, Sibāy mentions the poor people in the holy cities in the Ḥijāz and at al-Aqṣā mosque in Jerusalem and at the Hebron sanctuary as the waqf’s delayed beneficiaries, as befits a governor of al-Shām. Among his khayrī waqfs, there is one for a Rifā’ī Shaykh and for the Sufis who lived in his zāwiya in the village of Ṭabgha.16

14 TD no. 393, 112.
15 For example, ibid., 60.
16 See Sibāy’s awqāf, ALD, fol. 52a, TD no. 263 (madrasa); TD no. 127, 43 (a
Mamluk amirs as founders of awqāf

Many amirs founded awqāf, both family and charitable foundations, or a combination of both kinds. As is well known, it is not difficult to identify the mamluks among the names of civilians, whose awqāf and amlāk are naturally included in the same registers. The mamluks are immediately recognizable by their Turkish names and the fact that their fathers were always called Ibn ‘Abdullāh, a name indicating a convert to Islam. The same signs applied to female slaves of similar background about whom more will be said below. Mamluk amirs constituted a relatively small minority of those who founded awqāf, but not surprisingly, their awqāf were among the richest. Their religious beliefs and values, as can be judged from the documents, were quite similar to those of the civilian elite, that is, impeccably orthodox Sunnism. Yet, it seems that the Mamluk amirs, more than other wealthy founders of waqf, were inclined to donate money by means of the awqāf to public (i.e., khayrī) projects, although most of their awqāf had a dhurrī component as well. It should be mentioned in this connection that awqāf founded by ‘ulama’ were very rarely of the charitable type. The ‘ulama’ are associated with khayrī waqf as beneficiaries, functionaries and teachers, but not as founders. Yet the amirs, more than others, could afford to be generous. These charitable endowments increased their reputation and enhanced their legitimacy, which as converts and of foreign background they were concerned about as well.

It is interesting to note that only one waqf in our documents provides for a purely military project: A fund for the strengthening and arming with gunpowder, cannon, bows and arrows a tower (burj) defending the coastline at Shaydā against the Franks. Yet this waqf was established by a member of the wealthy al-‘Adawī family who were civilians. A Qur’ān reader was be hired to recite at that post.17

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17 ALD, fols. 81a–b. The waqfyya is dated 867 (1462 or 1463), when the Syrian coastline was frequently attacked by hostile ships. A question may be asked whether this defense post was still active and even necessary under the reign of Süleymān when the Ottomans had the strongest fleet in the eastern Mediterranean and after the island of Rhodes had been taken.
The family waqf of mamluks included support for many relatives, such as brothers, nephews, cousins, children, wives and concubines, and almost always also ‘utaqā’, freed slaves and their descendants. The causes for which Mamluk amirs founded charitable waqaf were similar to the civilians’ al-Óaramni al-Sharìfì, with a clear preference to the ribâts of al-Madina (they were more numerous than those in Mecca), mosques and madrasas, sometimes an institution founded by a former master of that mamluk, the local hospitals, and again their own turba, to commemorate their name after their death through prayers and acts of charity centered at their sepulcher.

The following is a typical case of an amir’s pious foundation. Jānī Bek b. ‘Abdullāh al-Nāshirí registered two waqīfīyyas, in the year 858 (1454) and 864 (1459 or 1460) respectively. He donated the revenues of two villages as waqf. In the first document, the administrator (nāzîr) is ordered to spend what is needed for the waqf’s maintenance and improvement. Then a certain sum (the figure is missing in the document) is allocated to the poor residents of the ribâts in the two Holy Cities. Every month a Qurān reader was to be paid 60 dirhams to recite at the sepulcher (darîth) of Barsbāy, which is adjacent to his mosque at Suwayqat (or Sūq Šārūja a market and a quarter in Damascus). The same sum was to be paid to a reader (i.e., teacher) of tafsîr (commentary on the Qurān), Arabic, and fiqh (jurisprudence) at that mosque. The same salary is allotted to a reader of hadîth there. The mu’adhdhîn of the mosque will receive 150 dirhams annually. Whatever remains after these expenses would go to the founder himself, his children and their descendants, after them to the manumitted slaves and their descendents. If no one remains, the money is designated for the interests of Barsbāy’s mosque. The founder’s attachment to the memory of Barsbāy is obvious, although the exact relationship is not clear. He could have been one of Barsbāy’s mamluks.18

The second waqīfīyya, prepared 6 years later, reveals Jānī Bek’s concern for his own sepulcher and memory after he is gone. A turba has not yet been erected, but he already makes provisions for acts of charity and piety that are to be performed at his sepulcher “whenever it may be”. Seven Qurān readers are to recite portions from

18 This Barsbāy al-Ḥājib (d. 851) was the governor of Ṭarābulus al-Shām and Ḥalab and built the mosque at Sūq Šārūja in Damascus.
the Book at his grave. Every week one kantar of wheat bread should be distributed to the poor at the site. At the Rajab festival, sweets will be distributed. During Ramadān nights, cows and sheep for a sum of 500 dirhams are to be slaughtered at the sepulcher, and the meat is to be given to the poor. Whatever remains afterwards should be given to the founder’s children and their children, and afterwards to his freed slaves. When all the family and the ‘utaqā’ die out, the money should go to the interests of the Barsbāy mosque.¹⁹

The Ottoman clerk adds after the awqāf’s summaries that a certain woman who claimed descent from one of the manumitted slaves was in charge of the waqf. Its supervision was taken away from her, however, and given to the Ottoman chief qādī of Damascus (Mevlānā Shām efendisi) in his capacity as supervisor of the awqāf (nāẓir al-awqāf), since she had not given anything to the Holy Cities or to the other religious institutions. In addition, her claim to have descended from one of the former slaves seems to have been false. Also, most of the waqf properties that had been abundant under the Circassian sultans had been sold, and only a small part remained. When Ibn Sultān, the local Ḥanafi mufti, was consulted, he issued a fatwa ruling that the manumitted slaves deserved nothing, since the al-Haramīn al-Sharīfīn that had been mentioned first (in the earlier waqfiyya) took precedence.

Awlād al-Nās

There are a few cases of awqāf founded by awlād nās, yet identification of the fathers as mamluks is not always certain. The following example is clear: Shādī (or Shādī) Bek al-Julbānī (d. 887) was a prominent amir in Damascus. According to some Arab biographers he was a tyrant, with false pretensions to religious knowledge. His son, al-Ṣārimī Ibrāhīm established a waqf for a Sufi zāwiyā in a village in the Hawrān region.²⁰ The waqf was to provide a meal every morn-

¹⁹ ALD, fol. 22b.
²⁰ ALD, fol. 40b. A biographical notice about this amir can be seen in Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Hādī, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīf al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣūlī (Beirut, 1999), vol. I, 373.
ing and evening in the zāwiyā. The nāẓir (director of the endowment) should read portions from the Qur’ān with the Sufis (fuqarā‘) every night after the evening prayer and the dhikr ritual. The founder and his descendants would receive the (religious) reward for these pious deeds. One can speculate that the son of that oppressive amir felt the need to atone for his father’s life-style, using the property he had inherited from him to support a Sufi zāwiyā in the remote Hawrān region. His insistence on the daily Qur’ān reading after the dhikr ceremony and the evening prayer is an indication of his intention to keep the Sufis firmly within the fold of orthodox Islam.

There are more founders of awqāf whose fathers or grandfathers could have been mamluks, such as al-Hājj Sharaf al-Dīn Mūsā b. Shādī al-Turkmānī, ʿAlī b. Ṣunqur, al-Nāṣirī Muḥammad b. Tashbughā, or ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Qorqūmāz.21 Yet, as has been said above, there may be doubts whether all the men behind these Turkish names were really mamluks.

The Manjak family were a special case of awlād nās. The head of this aristocratic family was Sayf al-Dīn Manjak (d. 776/1374) a Mamluk governor of Damascus. His grandson, Nāṣir al-Dīn Manjak, became extremely rich and bought lands and founded two mosques outside of Damascus, in the Maydān al-Qaṣāb and al-Qubaybāt quarters. The family maintained its strong standing with the Mamluk authorities. Later, the family was prominent under the Ottomans.22 Our sources are filled with information about vast awqāf founded by the family, as well as by others for the support of mosques that are named after them. The following is an example of one of the family’s religious projects. In the year 830 al-Nāṣirī Muḥammad b. al-Ṣārīmī ʿIbrāhīm b. Manjak established a waqf for the mosque at Maydān al-Ḥaṣā. The document specifies the salaries of the imām, the khaṭīb, the porter, the custodian, nine muʿaddhdhins, a ḥadīth reader, etc. On the floor that was on the level of the water fountain (sābil) a Qur’ān school (maktab) for ten orphans (a standard number at the time) had been established, with a budget to support them and their shaykh. The houses north of the mosque were prepared to serve as a residence for ten Sufis and a shaykh to teach them. The waqfyya

21 See ALD, fols. 37b, 45b, 61a. TD no. 393, 182.
22 M.A. Bakhit, The Ottoman Province of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century (Beirut, 1982), 189–90.
goes on to give details about the necessary expenses that would be 
needed to maintain this religious complex. The family also founded 
a separate Sufi zāwiyā.23

*Mamluk families and Mamluk women as visible in the waqf documents*

One of the most striking characteristics of Mamluk society in the 
Province of Damascus that emerges from the waqf documents is the 
cohesiveness of Turkish-Mamluk families and their households. They 
lived as an ethnic and socio-economic elite, and were less integrated 
socially in the local, Arabic-speaking, elite than is often assumed. Of 
course, because the mamluks’ sons no longer belonged to the ruling 
military class, this solidarity weakened naturally in the second gen-
eration that lost its Turkish characteristics. That the mamluks took 
measures to provide for the economic future of their children and 
descendants by *awqāf* is predictable, and abundantly clear from our 
documents as well.

The mamluks’ Turkishness in speech24 and personal names set 
them apart from their Arabic-speaking subjects. Mamluk status was 
a one-generation phenomenon, however. As a general rule, the mam-
luks gave their children typical Muslim (that is, Arabic) names, 
Muḥammad, Aḥmad and Maḥmûd being the most common choices. 
And yet, our sources show that some of the *awlād al-nās* were given 
Turkish names. A daughter of the Mamluk amir Baybars al-Jāliqī 
was called Gerildi Khātūn.25 Another case is the daughter of amir 
Jānebek al-Ḥamrāwī (or al-Ḥamzāwī) who founded a *waqf* for her 
son, Timūrbāy b. al-Sayfī Mughlabāy (or Mu'labāy).26

23 *ALD*, fols. 8b, 68b, 105a; *TD* no. 393, 7 (in which the Manjaki amir creates 
a charity fund and the rest for his two wives, both of them Turkish (Telek Khātūn 
and Yılığan Khātūn). *Ibid.*, p. 17 (a whole village in the Karak region is a *waqf* for 
the family’s two mosques in Damascus. *Ibid.*, p. 49 (a mill and orchards are for a 
*waqf* on a *zāwiyā*.

24 Even when they were Circassians who only learned to speak Turkish after they 
arrived in Egypt and Syria!

25 *ALD*, fol. 56b. This woman established in the year 737 a family and a char-
table *waqf*. It was still active under the Ottomans; the evidence of the *khāṭib* of the 
Umayyad mosque and other Muslims confirmed its validity.

26 *TD* no. 393, 133.
In addition to the famous solidarity of Mamluk factions, the waqf documents show the strength of solidarity, commitment and support within Mamluk families. One would like to know more about how the strong ties between brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews and other family relatives were maintained within a recruiting system according to which, in principle, every imported mamluk arrived as an isolated individual. It stands to reason that the slave traffic which brought mamluks and slave girls into the Sultanate did not disrupt all families, but brought members of the same families in clusters, at least in many cases. The pious endowments also reveal the loyalty to the memory of the mamluk’s master by donating waqf funds to institutions associated with him. Yet this kind of donation usually falls in the category of the delayed waqf; operative only after the founder’s family died out. This attitude, which is also supported by self-interest, applies to “Mamluk” women as well as to men.

For example, a woman, named Elchibây bint ‘Abdullâh al-Yahyâwî, founded in the year 908 a waqf for herself and then for her brother’s son. The brother is called Dawlatbây, a mamluk, and his son, al-Zaynî Mašṭûr. The waqf provides financial support also to her nephew’s children and to her own manumitted slaves. Finally, if no one remains, the funds should go to the turbâ of Qânsûh al-Yahyâwî outside the Bâb al-Jâbiya in Damascus. Qânsûh al-Yahyâwî was a governor (ma‘îb al-saltana) of Damascus who died in Shawwâl 902. The woman had a Turkish name, and was most probably Qânsûh’s concubine, hence her nisba al-Yahyâwî, unusual with regard to women.

At the time of the Ottoman inspection of the awqât, the property, a village in the Bîqâ’ valley, was under the control of Mašṭûr b. Dawlatbây, technically one of mawlûd al-nâs.27

Another typical example: Ardabesh Bek issued a waqfyya in the year 918. It was a family waqf for himself, his children, his brother Tîmûr Bek, his sister Yalmâs (reading uncertain), and his nephew Qâyîthîy. Only then came the turn of the founder’s own children and their progeny. After them were covered his own manumitted slaves and their progeny, and finally the manumitted slaves of his master Sîbây, the governor of Damascus, and their descendants. In another waqfyya, granted at the same year, the beneficiaries were the

27 Ibid., fol. 56b.
founder himself, his children, his brother, and finally, Sibây’s madrasa. Four years later, Ardabesh Bek issued another waqf, providing support for his own turba and also, at the end, Sibây’s madrasa again.28

The central role of women as founders and administrators of waqf is well attested. Our documents reaffirm this general fact. The percentage of the women in the registers of the Province of Damascus who owned private property (milk), converted it into awqaf, administered it, laid claims to milk and waqf privileges, and were named as beneficiaries of waqf funds is very high indeed. In one case, a waqf established in the year 830 by Zaynab bint Shams al-Dîn al-Ŝâbînî, was a century later under the control of a woman who was her descendant after five generations. The documents mention the names of all five women while no men’s names are given.29

Since mamluks are the subject of present paper, the following discussion will deal only with women who were Turkish slaves themselves, or who belonged to Mamluk families and households. Again, it is easy to recognize a “Mamluk” female slave by her Turkish name and the appellation “bint ‘Abdullâh”. Several female slaves were called by Arabic rather than Turkish names, but not names that would be given to freeborn women.30 According to our sample, mamluks’ wives and concubines were predominantly, though not exclusively, Turks (or Circassian) like themselves, who had been imported to the Mamluk Empire by slave traders. Although in the Mamluk regime it was unthinkable that a civilian would own a mamluk, there is evidence of Turkish slave women as the concubines (jâriya, singular jâriya) of rich civilians. As far as our evidence shows, those Turkish concubines were for all practical purposes considered as their master’s wives; sometimes they were referred to as zawja, a legally married wife. The following example demonstrates the point. A founder of a waqf (in 901) stipulates in his waqf, among other things, that his wife (zawja) Zaynab (a common Arabic name) will be given 720 dirhams each year. Exactly the same amount goes to Malakbây (a Turkish sounding name) bint ‘Abdullâh, his umm walad, a maid who had borne a son to her master.31

28 Ibid., fol. 91a–b.
29 Ibid., fol. 95b.
30 Faraḥ al-nâs bint ‘Abdullâh, ibid., fol. 23a; Sitt al-Awwal, TD no. 393, 43.
31 Ibid., fol. 3a.
In another case, a civilian stipulated in a *waqfiyya* that his *jāriya*, Savarbāy bint ‘Abdullāh, be paid 800 dirhams annually. His children would receive whatever remains. In a similar case, al-Najmī Yahyā b. Muḥammad al-Madānī willed his property as *waqf* to his wife Sakarbāy bint ‘Abdullāh. Another Turkish *jāriya* who was manumitted, Azwān Khāṭīn by name, previously in possession of a civilian, founded her own *waqf*. Yet it seems that such cases were rare. In most cases, the Turkish *jāwārī* became wives and concubines of Mamluk amirs.

The determination of the *waqf* founders, regardless whether they were mamluks or civilians, to care for the future of women in their families is obvious from the provisions of the *waqfiyyas*. In many documents the portions of what women obtained from the estate through *waqf* were explicitly higher than what they would have received by the Qur’ānic laws of inheritance (*bīl-‘irth al-sharī‘i*). The reverse did occur, but was considerably rarer. The general impression is that the interests of the women in families were at least as close to the founder’s mind as those of his sons. It is possible, of course, that the sons got their share through the mechanism of *sharī‘i* inheritance or by other means. Our documents certainly do not give the entire picture. It was evidently realized that widows and unmarried daughters whose fathers had died might more than men need the economic safety that the *waqf* could provide. The same applies to *‘utaqā‘*, manumitted slaves.

An amir called Tanam b. ‘Abdullāh min Sibāy (indicating that he had been a mamluk of Sibāy, the governor of Damascus) provided in his *waqf* document financial support for his wife Balqīs, who was also his female cousin. Her name appeared first before other beneficiaries, including his children. In another *waqf*, established in 917, the amir Azbak (Ozbek) b. ‘Abdullāh al-Sayyī Qachmās set up a family *waqf* for himself, his wife (*zawja*) Jān Sīvār (Jan Sever) and their daughter Satīta. The *waqf* provided financial support also for Jān Ḥābīb, his manumitted female slave (*‘utaqā‘*). After the family became extinct (*ba’d al-inqīrād*), the revenues would go to the Turbat

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32 Ibid., fol. 119a.
33 *TD* no. 393, fol. 111.
34 Ibid., p. 41.
35 *ALD*, fol. 5b.
al-Qachmāsiyya and Turbat Ināl. This amir was obviously a mam-
luk of Qachmās al-Zāhirī, the governor of Damascus from 886 until
his death in 892. Qachmās built a turba and a madrasa that were
named after him. When the Ottoman bureaucracy surveyed the enti-
tlements decades later, the clerk noted that the property, which was
12/24 (half the revenues) of a village, was now in the hands of the
above-mentioned women, both wives ( zawjātānī) of the founder. 36

In the year 921, amir Timūr Bāy b. ‘Abdullāh al-Yahyāwī granted a
waqf for his daughter Faraj and her mother (sic) Sulṭān Bāy, also
a Turkish former slave girl. In the year 947, already under the
Ottoman rule, the same Faraj founded her own waqf. 37

Khushqadam min Sibāy, another former mamluk of the governor
made a waqfyya for his wife Wardqān (unclear in the text, but cer-
tainly a Turkish name) and his daughter Balqūs (a favorite name).
When the family no longer existed, the revenues were to go to the
ribāts in al-Madina. No other beneficiaries are mentioned. 38 What is
remarkable in this short document (it is really only a summary) is
the date of the waqfyya—925 (1519), three years after the Ottoman
conquest of Syria. Several Arab writers praised the Ottomans at the
time for respecting the awqāf that had been established by the
Circassian mamluks, their fallen enemies. 39 Since the Ottomans wished
to respect the Shari‘a, it should have been self-evident. Yet, recog-
nizing legally established awqāf that had been founded before the
Ottoman Empire annexed the Arab lands is one thing, permitting
mamluks or members of their families to make new waqfs from mam-
luks’ private properties is another. Nonetheless, there is evidence of
such new awqāf dating from 927, 932, 928, 936, 946 and even 947. 40
This lenient approach on the part of the Ottoman administration
can be explained by the Empire’s policy with regard to Syria. The
number of mamluks in Syria was always much smaller than in Egypt.
After the Ottoman conquest, the number of surviving mamluks must
have been very small (in contrast to the situation in Egypt), and they

36 Ibid., fol. 110a.
37 TD no. 393, p. 132; ibid., 226.
38 Ibid., 56.
39 See, for example, Muhammad al-Ishāqī, Ktāb akhbār al-uwal fīmā tasawrāta fī Misr min asbāb al-duwal (Cairo, n.d.), 305–307. Several Arab writers who praise the
religiosity of the Ottomans are mentioned in my Egyptian Society Under Ottoman Rule,
40 ALD, fol. 5b; TD no. 393, 14, 38, 95, 226.
did not pose any threat to Istanbul. It is true that Jânbirdî al-Ghazâlî, the Mamluk amir who was appointed by Sultan Selîm as the Ottoman governor of greater Syria (not only the Province of Damascus), rebelled against Süleymân when the young sultan ascended the throne (end of 1520–early 1521). But this was a personal revolt, not a Mamluk uprising, and it was crushed immediately.

Now we must discuss the activity of Mamluk women as founders of waqf. From the waqf documents, the role of women in Mamluk families as active providers for the economic future of themselves and other members of their families emerges prominently. The following examples illustrate the point. While promoting the religious values of the community at large by pious endowments, women took care to ensure the interests and reputation of their Mamluk households.

Jân Sivîr (Sever) bint ‘Abdullâh, a manumitted slave girl of Yîlbây had a milk of 6/24 (a quarter) of the revenues of the Dayr al-‘Aşâfîr village in the Marj region. In the year 928 (6 years after the Ottoman conquest) Faraḥ al-Nâs bint ‘Abdullâh converted a mill on the al-A‘war river in Wâdî al-‘Ajam, which was her milk, into a waqf for al-Sharafî Mahmûd b. Özbek and his progeny. It is not known what her relationship to the recipient was, but this is a case of a former jâriya making a donation for one of the awlād al-nâs.42

The wife of a high-ranking Mamluk amir, Şanîbây al-Ḥajîb by name, made a waqf for herself and then their son (significantly, the text says only “her son”), al-Nâṣîrî Muḥammad b. Şanîbây. She also willed an income for another mamluk’s son, called Nâṣîr al-Dîn b. Sunqûr. It is not clear what he was to her. Half of the waqf’s income was to be paid to these two men and the other half to her manumitted slaves and for charity. The waqfyya’s date is 936 (1529 or 1530). It is interesting to note that in the year 919, Şanîbây al-Ḥajîb himself founded a much richer waqf for his two sons, the above-mentioned al-Nâṣîrî Muḥammad and al-Shihâbî Aḥmad, who was not mentioned in his widow’s waqfyya. It is possible that he fathered him by another woman.

Kamâ (reading uncertain) Khâtûn bint Aybak b. ‘Abdullâh granted a waqf for her son Shihâb al-Dîn Aḥmad b. Özdemir, subsequently

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41 ALD, fol. 7a.
42 Ibid., fol. 23a.
43 Ibid., fol. 59a.
for his children, and finally for her and her father’s manumitted slaves. This is a case of a Mamluk amir’s daughter who was married to a mamluk. Neither her husband nor his slaves are mentioned in the waqfy, only hers and her father’s.\footnote{ALD, fol. 64a.}

Another former slave girl, called Jân Sivär, who gave birth to the child of Bard Bek (mustawladat Bard Bek) set up a waqf for her sister (shaqqa, having the same parents) Jân Ḥabib, a former slave girl of Sibāy.\footnote{TD no. 393, 126.} Several women of Mamluk families founded their own turbas or donated money through waqf to support turbas established by their relatives.\footnote{See, for example, ibid., 33, 43, 97.}

There is a rare record of a waqfy granted in 866 of a Mamluk couple establishing together a pious foundation, which was unusual. Gōmūshbugha and his wife Aq Melek bint ‘Abdullāh made a waqf for themselves and for their (sic) children. After their family died out, part of the revenues was to be given to the soup kitchen, another portion to buy bread for the (poor) residents of the Umayyad mosque, and another for the poor residents of the ribāṭs in al-Madina, and to the founders’ manumitted slaves.\footnote{Ibid., 22, ALD, fol. 93a.}

Acknowledging the limitations of information in these waqf registers, one still may venture certain general observations about the size of families, Mamluk and civilian, by using the information provided by the documents. It seems that families (not households, which include persons other than the biological family) were rather small. If a man or women named their children, sons and girls, in a legal document as beneficiaries of the waqf they were establishing, it can be assumed that they did not omit names. Only rarely more than three or four names of children were mentioned. The number of children in Mamluk families that appear in the waqfy was not larger than civilian families. Indeed, the reverse seems to be the case. As to the number of wives, in practice, it was also limited to two, and that already included the jawārī (slavewomen), who, as shown above, enjoyed the same privileges as the zawjāt (legally married wives), and were often referred to as such. This indicates that almost all men, even those who belonged to the wealthy elite, usually dispensed with
their right to be married to four wives simultaneously and to keep
indefinite number of concubines. The only time I have encountered a
text which explicitly mentions more than two wives is a waqfiyya made
in the year 919 by Arkmās, the governor of Damascus, who pro-
vided clothes and money after his death to “his wives and concu-
bines who had borne him children (zawjā tuhu wa-mustawladā tuhu—
in the Arabic plural), as long as they remain unmarried”. Even in this
isolated case it, is not clear whether the plural form was used with
regard to specific women (no names are mentioned), or whether it was
a general statement to cover future eventualities in the amir’s life.

Concluding remarks

The limitations of the sources for this study notwithstanding, the
waqf (and the less frequent milh documents) offer a perspective on
the mamluks and their families, which is not available from other
sources. In many cases, the waqfiyyāt themselves have not survived,
and all we have are summaries of the originals. Sometimes the
Ottoman bureaucrats who prepared the registers did not see the
waqfiyya itself and they had to rely on mahdar, the qadi’s court records,
or in some cases on other documents and witnesses. Yet, the docu-
ments seem orderly and accurate overall and enable us to see social
and economic aspects of the wealthy people in the province of
Damascus who could afford to establish awqāf. As waqf researchers
are well aware, these documents can serve as informative sources
for the history of education, religious institutions, urban history and
the like. I am preparing a more comprehensive study in which I
hope to use the documents for some of these subjects. In this paper
I have attempted to focus on the mamluks themselves and have not
discussed other waqf founders, notably the ‘ulama’, bureaucrats or
merchants.

The fact that, in the view of the entire Mamluk elite—from the
sultans down—the relevant space for creating khayrī awqāf from Syrian
resources was Syria, Bīlād al-Shām, and in this case the Province of
Damascus, generally to the exclusion of Egypt, the center of the
empire, is striking.

48 TD no. 393, 17. See his short biographical notice in Muḥāt al-adhān (see note
There are indications, however, that the amirs were less inclined than the civilian elite to invest in purely residential institutions, such as mosques and school associated with a certain quarter or madhhab. This is not surprising, given their self-view as orthodox rulers of the whole population. Yet the mamluks did donate waqf for the benefit of charity, education and religion. They seem to have preferred institutions on which there was a “consensus”, such as the Umayyad mosque, awqaf al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn and Jerusalem and Hebron. They emphasized naturally the mosques, schools and turbas established by themselves or their masters. The subject requires further research.

The family awqaf and the dhuri components of the khayri foundations reveal important aspects of the Mamluk military society in late Mamluk Syria. We are considering not only individual mamluks or Mamluk factions, which are so important in understanding Mamluk politics, but families with widespread Mamluk (Turkish, even if these “Turks” were Circassian at the time) ties, common interests and loyalties that are reflected in the ways in which waqf funds were allocated. The Mamluk identities merged with family ties.

The centrality of women in creating and administering awqaf is well known, and obvious also in our documents regarding women with “Mamluk” background, as well as civilians. The women in Mamluk families fully exercised their economic and social power to enhance the solidarity of their families and households. We know from various studies of Mamluk society that mamluks married either women of a background similar to theirs, or daughters of the wealthy civilian elite. In our waqf documents at least, the women who were married to mamluks were predominantly former slave girls or, in some cases, daughters of mamluks. I have found very few other women. On the other hand, there are cases of former slave girls with Turkish names who were wives and concubines of rich civilians.

Finally, according the evidence of the waqf documents, I have ventured the generalization that the average Mamluk family was small. Frequently, only one wife was mentioned, and almost never more than two, including concubines. The number of children in the waqfiyyas was also low, rarely more than three, including daughters. The general impression is that civilians had more children than mamluks. This, too, is a preliminary impression that needs further investigation.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE LAST MAMLUK HOUSEHOLD

Thomas Philipp

The appearance of fully functioning, power wielding mamluks in Bilād al-Shām at the end of the eighteenth century was certainly an oddity. The Mamluk system in Syria had vanished with the conquest of the Ottomans. In sharp contrast to the situation in Egypt there also occurred later no resurrection of the system under Ottoman sovereignty. Why and how the Mamluk system should have survived and reorganized itself in Ottoman Egypt and how the mamluks there could again take over power, albeit recognizing officially the Ottoman Sultan—has been discussed extensively by Winter.1 He argues that from early on the Ottomans had decided to use the mamluks in Egypt for their own administrative and military purposes. When the weakness of the Ottoman Empire reached its nadir in the eighteenth century the mamluks used the opportunity to regain almost all their power in Egypt. Winter adds that especially for the early period of Ottoman rule much about the fate of the mamluks remains conjecture because of the dearth of information.

After the conquest of Syria the Ottomans experimented also there briefly with coopting the mamluks. Jānbirdī al-Ghazālī was appointed governor of Damascus. But when he rebelled upon the news of the death of Selim I his resistance was quickly crushed by the Ottomans. Southern Syria was reorganized into different provinces and sancaqs while the officials and governors were appointed from among the Ottomans, not the mamluks. From then on we do not hear of any mamluks in Syria for the next 250 years.

It is perhaps easier to tackle the question why there occurred no re-emergence of mamluks in Ottoman Syria than to answer the question why, indeed, they did re-emerge in Egypt. The first point that comes to mind is that the mamluk realm always had its center in Egypt. Syria was administered by mamluks sent from Egypt and mostly returning to Egypt again. Once the mamluks had lost their sovereignty in Egypt, they obviously could not project their power to Syria. While the Ottomans chose to keep the administrative system of Egypt unchanged they reorganized Syria. In Egypt seven military corps were organized, one of them manned by the defeated mamluks, paving the way for the later “mamlukization” of the Egyptian army. In Syria Janissaries and Timariots constituted the new army. In addition, the importance of Egypt over Syria was signified by the size of the local Ottoman armies: while in Egypt the army counted in the sixteenth century between 10,000 to 15,000 men in Syria it had only one tenth the size. To the greater demands for manpower by the army in Egypt was added the Ottoman unwillingness (practically a taboo) to use Egyptians or, for that matter, local Arabs anywhere, in the Ottoman army. In the ethnically very homogeneous Egypt this taboo forced the authorities to make use of the mamluks and tolerate the imports of new mamluks. In Syria one always could, in case of need, mobilize auxiliary troops among the Kurds, local Turkmens and possibly even Druze.

The appearance of mamluks in Syria, in Acre to be more precise, at the end of the eighteenth century occurred, ironically, at the very moment when the Mamluk system in Egypt began to disintegrate. But it is also the one moment in neo-Mamluk history when the Egyptian mamluks reached again for Syria: When Ṣāliḥ Bey al-Kabīr forged an alliance with Dāhir al-'Umar in 1770 and sent troops against the Ottoman wāli of Damascus. Eventually the mamluks in Acre outlasted the Egyptian mamluk system by a decade. If

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3 Winter, “Military Connections”, 140.
4 Ibid., 132.
5 For the reasons of this disintegration see Daniel Crecelius, “The Mamluk beylicate of Egypt in the last decades before its destruction by Muhammad Ṭāhir Pasha in 1811” and Thomas Philipp “Personal loyalty and political power of the mamluks in the eighteenth century.” Both in: Philipp and Haarmann, op. cit.
it did not sound too pedantic we could call them the post-neo-mamluks but we shall simply speak of the last mamluk household that wielded effective political power.

In the early seventies of the eighteenth century we hear for the first time of the appearance of the man in Syria who was to be the founder of the Mamluk household in Acre: Āḥmad Bey al-Jazzār, later better known as Āḥmad Pasha al-Jazzār. It is not surprising that he should have been a mamluk from Egypt, the only place where the system still existed.

In a way Āḥmad Bey’s career in Egypt was already symptomatic for the disintegration of the Mamluk system. He came from a for mamluks untypical region: the Balkan, not the Caucasus. It is also not very likely that he came as a slave, and he certainly was already over twenty when he arrived in Egypt. Eventually, however, the mamluks in Egypt accepted him as one of their own and he did acquire two essential Mamluk qualities: he became a superb warrior and he developed a fierce loyalty toward his mamluk masters and comrades. It was indeed this latter quality which made him refuse to participate in a treasonable plot and consequently forced him to flee from Egypt. When he surfaced, after some meandering, in Lebanon he had no claim to more than the clothes on his back. But as a true soldier of fortune he made his career in the shifting alliances, the intrigues, and the wars between Dāhir al-‘Umar, the Druze, the governor of Damascus and the Egyptian mamluks of Abū al-Dhahab. After the death of Dāhir al-‘Umar in 1775 he was appointed governor of the province of Sidon (with residence in Acre). This position he was to keep for almost thirty years until his death in 1804.

Given Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzār’s Mamluk background it was hardly surprising that he should have made the Mamluk patterns of military rule the principle of his own rule in Acre. He built up his own Mamluk household from which he drew his own bodyguard, his personal advisors, and trusted lieutenants who ruled various parts of the realm in his name and commanded most military expeditions. The inner circle of this group were Salīm Pasha al-Kabīr (the Elder), Salīm Pasha al-Saghīr (the Younger), Sulaymān Pasha al-‘Ādil, and ‘Alī Aghā Khāzindār. Apparently all were of Georgian origin and

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had been bought by or given to al-Jazzār in Egypt, though it is not clear when and how they reached him in Acre. During al-Jazzār’s first years in Syria, after 1770 and before becoming governor of Sidon, we do not hear of them. Yet his emotional attachment to this group of mamluks must have been very close. When his first mamluk, Salīm Pasha the Elder, died of the plague in 1786, al-Jazzār “cried like a child.” He was profoundly shaken by the rebellion of his mamluks in 1789, but when one of its leaders, Sulaymān Pasha, returned to him thirteen years later, he received him like a lost son. Al-Jazzār’s mamluks were somewhat apart from, and above all other units. They served as guards of the palace and the treasury, as commanders of various units and of specific military campaigns, or as mutasallims (temporary governors) in various cities, and formed a typical Mamluk household with al-Jazzār its head; hence their particular loyalty to al-Jazzār and his trust in them.

Recently it has been seriously questioned, whether the appearance of the so-called neo-mamluks in Ottoman Egypt implied indeed a reemergence of the Mamluk system of old or whether this was rather part of a much more general phenomenon, namely, the Ottoman household, understood as a “patron-client and kinship grouping, both for political solidarity and economic activity.” It was “neither rigidly defined nor a static entity” and “evolved to serve the needs of a highly competitive society that frequently received new members from far-flung places.” Military and administrative elites, freeman and Mamluk, local elements and newcomers were integrated in it. Widening the concept from a strictly Mamluk military household of the Middle Ages to an Ottoman household of the kind described above has its advantages. The concept certainly reflects

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7 Ibrāhīm al-‘Awra, Tārikh wilāyat Sulaymān Būshā al-‘Āmil, Sidon 1936, 14 claims that Salīm the Elder had come with him from Egypt and that Salīm the Younger was a present from Ibrāhīm Bey al-Kabīr. But on p. 111 al-‘Awra himself writes that al-Jazzār bought all of them only after he had settled in Acre; Haydar Ahmad Shihāb, Tārikh Ahmad Būshā al-Jazzār, Beirut 1955, p. 87. Hananya Munayyir, al-Durr al-mawfiq fī tārikh al-Shāfi‘, al-Mashriq 69 (1955), p. 265 claims he came with a slave, a mamluk and a groom.

8 Archives Nationales, Affaires étrangères, Paris (AN AE) B1 979, CC Acre, May 1, 1786.

9 Jane Hathaway The politics of households in Ottoman Egypt (Cambridge, 1997), see especially ch. II and the Conclusion.

10 Ibid., 169.

11 Ibid., 21.
much better the reality of the household in Acre. As we had seen it was even doubtful whether al-Jazzār himself was a mamluk properly speaking. In one source he is even quoted as claiming that he always was a free man and hence disliked by the Mamluk establishment.\footnote{12} Though he later acquired other mamluks, he also bought or hired a variety of other troops. Numerically the mamluks were always a minority in al-Jazzār’s household and seemed to have vanished after their rebellion in 1789. Sulaymān Pasha, al-Jazzār’s successor, rebuilt the system but also hired mercenaries and concluded alliances with the Metualis and Druze and used their tribal forces. Administrators of local origin also belonged to the household in Acre. ‘Abdallah Pasha finally included also elements of local elites in his household.

Notwithstanding the argument that these were not Mamluk households in the classical sense,\footnote{13} it is important to point out that their members considered themselves mamluks and referred to themselves as such. If this was “a calculated, if genuinely felt, nostalgia,”\footnote{14} as Hathaway claims, it was, nevertheless, a politically relevant sentiment. It could generate loyalties which caused al-Jazzār to risk his life. It identified political factions such as the party supporting Abū Nabbūt. Having been comrades (khushdāsh) under the same chief (ustādīkh) legitimized competing claims to power as was the case with ‘Alī Aghā Khāzīndār, Abū Nabbūt and Sulaymān Pasha. The mamluks under al-Jazzār and then again under Sulaymān Pasha self-consciously styled themselves as mamluks and over long periods they were the decisive element in the household in Acre. It seems, therefore, not unreasonable to call this particular “patron-clients and kinship grouping” a Mamluk household even if it did not reproduce the classical form of that model.

In a more general manner Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzār subscribed to the principle of using only imported soldiery. In contrast to his predecessor, Dāhir al-‘Umar, he never entered alliances with local tribal

\footnote{12} “The serving [low ranking] Mamluk race did not like anybody to serve their master who was not one of them, lest he would take precedence over them, because he was a free man. He [al-Jazzār] was a free man, a Bosnian.” This might, however, have been a strictly self-serving statement, to explain why he left Egypt. Mishāqî, 5. (I am translating here from the Arabic version, as the English translation is totally garbled at this point.)

\footnote{13} Maybe even the classical Mamluk households were much more porous and flexible than they appear today in the retrospective view.

\footnote{14} Hathaway, 170.
forces nor did he try to mobilize other local forces. He hired Maghrebi mercenaries, bought Albanian soldiers (both Christian and Muslim), and relied on Bosnian troops. He also hired some of the former Dalát cavalry troops which had been officially dissolved by the Ottoman sultan. A small group of Kurds under their leader Tāhā became responsible—in as so far as such distinction was made at all—for internal security, i.e., they ran the prisons and carried out tortures and executions. How large was this army of al-Jazzār? As so often in our attempt to reconstruct the history of the period, we encounter the greatest difficulties when searching for some quantitative information. We do not have any record of the troops themselves, their employment, or their provisions. French consuls and Arab monk chroniclers were not usually eyewitnesses to battles and warfare in general. Chroniclers and later historians supply us with numbers whose roundness alone must make us suspicious. Whether the numbers of participants in a battle, the numbers killed, wounded, or prisoners—they are all guesses, often with the purpose of emphasizing the might or the courage of one side. We have one eyewitness' report by the French consul Renaudot describing the caravan-cum-parade of troops when Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzār left Acre to assume, for the first time, the position of wālī of Damascus. He was at the peak of his power, and all the political and economic signs promised a great future for al-Jazzār. Leaving Acre for Damascus he was demonstrating his might. An important moment, and it is worth giving the description in full.

The caravan left Acre on 18 April 1785. It included 400 camels and 200 mules with baggage. Seventy-five banners of the Maghrebi infantry were followed by fifty-four banners of the Albanians, each group with its own music. Twenty banners of mounted Maghrebis and some 300 Dalát marching in pairs were next. Four field cannons and baggage carriages drawn by mules followed, together with twenty artillery men on camels equipped with fuses.

Une bande des santons et prophètes burlesquement accoutrés qui portaien tous les attributes de démence, en avaient les masques et leurs chansons s’en ressentaient bien qu’elles fussent à la gloire de Dgezzar qui suivait immédiatement avec Selim et ses grands officiers de sa maison.

15 Only once, during the mutiny of his mamluks, did he arm craftsmen and other people in Acre. See below.
16 A banner consisted of ten soldiers.
The litter of the Pasha was accompanied by nine hand-led horses. Musical bands followed and “100 mamluks curassés, bardis de fer, ayant les casques en tête et la visier basse.” The parade was concluded by 200 slaves mounted and bizarrely dressed, armed with rifles, two pistols, a sword, a dagger, and some even with hatchets. Renaudot commented:

tout cet appareil avait quelques choses de fort ridicule pour un homme accoutumé aux évolutions d’armes. Mais les gens du pays en etoient effrayés. Dgezzar lui même, quoique bon comédien, paraissait étonné de la grandeur de spectacle.17

The total was somewhat more than two thousand troops plus the baggage train, apparently enough to establish his authority in Damascus. How many more troops can we assume would have been left to garrison Acre, Sidon, Beirut, and perhaps in the Metuali region and assisting Amīr Yūsuf in the Mountain as well? Even a generous estimate could not more than triple the number at the time to reach a total of perhaps six thousand troops. We have a variety of estimates by eyewitnesses and other contemporaries but none of them indicates by which methods such numbers were reached. Volney in 1784 estimated all troops to consist of 900 Bosnian horsemen and 1,000 Maghrebi infantry. This would mean that practically the whole army participated in the expedition to Damascus. This seems extremely unlikely, and other sources indicate that in earlier years the army probably was larger. Most estimates, and this constitutes another difficulty, relate to specific military actions without telling us how many troops were left elsewhere in al-Jazzār’s realm. When al-Jazzār, who himself rarely left Acre for military operations, sent troops for one battle or another the Arab chronists most frequently use the terms “he appointed” (‘ayyanā), “collected” (jamma‘a), “equipped” (jah-haza) troops (‘askar)—which makes it sound almost as if he raised new troops each time. This is unlikely but perhaps partially true, especially considering the high casualties of his troops in many lost battles. We know he imported troops directly from the Balkans, hired Maghrebi and Dalāt troops locally, and bought individual mamluks. In the early years at least he also paid them well, so that they felt a certain amount of gratitude and loyalty to him.18 How many of

17 AN AE B1 979, April 30, 1785.
18 AN AE B1 1040, July 21, 1784.
these were demobilized after a particular military campaign, how many belonged to a standing army, what were the losses? We shall probably never know the precise numbers but estimates, coming from different sources, albeit some copied from each other, seem to be fairly consistent. An upper limit of 7,000 to 8,000 troops altogether appears to have been the rule. Military expeditions of a 1,000–2,000 seem to have been logistically sustainable; corps larger than this were rather the exception. This means in any case a regular army three to four times as large as any Dāhir al-ʿUmar had commanded. In contrast to the latter’s army it saw almost continuous action.

The vaguely ethnic character of the units had its advantages. It served as an organizing principle of the army and it guaranteed a minimum of loyalty and cooperation within these units. Typically their immediate commanders were of the same origin and could successfully establish some discipline. In fact it was they who commanded the loyalty of the troops, rather than the governor of Sidon who paid for them. But this arrangement also had its shortcomings. Troops of similar background and origin confronting each other on opposing sides in a battle were liable to refuse fighting. Dalāt troops refused to fight when facing other Dalāt units on the opposing side. In another incident Dalāt troops of al-Jazzār accepted orders from a Dalāt commander on the Damascus side, because most of the officers of the Dalāt troops “were his protégés.”

Any expeditionary corps containing troops from more than one of the above-mentioned ethnic units risked an outbreak of fighting between them. Joint military expeditions between troops of Aḥmad Pasha al-Jazzār and the Druze of whichever faction was momentarily allied with him can serve as an example: Returning from one such expedition in 1795 the troops under Amīr Bashīr’s command, Druze and Maghrebis, broke into a fight over the distribution of booty they had collected in the Mountain. In the following mêlée 500 people were killed. A few days later the two sides attacked each other again and another 300 lost their lives. A year earlier fighting had broken out between Dalāt troops and Maghrebis, stationed in the Mountain. When the

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19 Shihāb, al-Jazzār, 139–40.
20 Rufāʾīl Karāma, Ḥusnālṭa Labnān wa-Sūriyya, al-Bushriyya, n.d. 146.
Albanian units decided to side with the former the Maghribi troops were defeated and dispersed.

The troops were usually well paid and constituted a continuous financial burden. On occasions al-Jazzār would delay payments to Istanbul in order to pay his troops; at other times, the troops would get restless, when not receiving their pay.\(^{21}\) Once firmly established in Acre, al-Jazzār also seems to have had more resources available for paying his troops. They appeared to be “fort attachés à lui,”\(^ {22}\) badly trained and undisciplined. Frequently the desire to plunder won out over military discipline and fighting spirit. In one of the many campaigns against the Druze, an Albanian unit of five to six hundred soldiers disregarded explicit orders and advanced to plunder a Druze village. They were ambushed, and 100 were killed and as many wounded.\(^ {23}\) We never read about any particular training. The soldiers’ discipline usually was limited to a certain ethnic identity and loyalty to their immediate commanders. After each defeat or dispersal of troops Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzār spent enormous sums to buy and hire new troops at the cost of economic impoverishment.

The army of al-Jazzār distinguished itself by the variety of its organization, ranking, and payment of its units. The mamluks were only one of several military units, albeit the highest ranking one, mamluks seem to have been frequently in command positions. They manned the defenses of Acre and in particular of the palace of al-Jazzār. The highest ranking mamluks were regularly entrusted with the command of military expeditions, commanded occasionally the Pilgrimage instead of him, and filled high administrative posts. They were also in a true Mamluk sense his khushdāšāyya, his comrades, confidants and friends. We know very little about their background, how they joint al-Jazzār’s household, and when. Some were said to


\(^{22}\) AN AE B1 1040, CC Seyde, vol. XXIV, July 1784: “il a mis sa confiance en ces soldats, qui, de leur coté, luy paroissent fort attachés. Il le pays assez bien, pour devoir leur inspirer des sentiments de reconaissance a son endroit.”

\(^{23}\) AN AE B1 1040, CC Seyde, vol. XXIV, June 2, 1784.
have accompanied him from Egypt, though there is very little evidence for that. Most he could have only bought after his governorship and the trade of Acre provided him with the necessary means to do so. Some were bought as late as 1785. We can deduce al-Jazzâr’s intention to train new mamluks and to establish full-fledged Mamluk household from the fact that in 1789 there lived also a number of young mamluk boys at his court. Once more, we encounter difficulties when we want to estimate the numerical size of the Mamluk establishment. We know—mainly from Ibrâhîm al-‘Awra, but also some other sources—about twenty of al-Jazzâr’s mamluks by name. Renaudot had talked of “100 mamluks curassés.” Ḥaydar Aḥmad Shihâb mentions for 1789 “seventy” mamluks being in the palace of al-Jazzâr while an undetermined number was at the same time participating in a military expedition under Salîm and Sulaymân Pasha against the Druze.24 Compared to other military units, the mamluks seem to have been few. But there can be no doubt that they were at the core of the military and administrative organisation of al-Jazzâr’s rule. The whole Mamluk system in Acre, however, seemed to come apart in a gigantic crisis of loyalty and rebellion.

The rebellion of the mamluks in May 1789 was—apart from the French invasion and siege of Acre—Aḥmad Pasha al-Jazzâr’s gravest military and political crisis. In many ways it was more serious since it arose from an internal threat. It apparently also affected the personality of al-Jazzâr profoundly. On May 4, 1789, Salîm Pasha al-Šaghîr was dispatched by Aḥmad Pasha al-Jazzâr with 2,000 cavalry troops (presumably in their majority Albanian and Bosnian) to Ḥaṣbayya to convince Amīr Yûsuf to pay his taxes. Sulaymân Pasha was sent for the same purpose with some 800 infantry troops along the coast to the north. The French consul Renaudot suspected that behind this rather large campaign lay an attempt by al-Jazzâr to deflect any possible demand from Istanbul to contribute troops to the war against Russia by demonstrating the need to fight against the Druze. From Renaudot’s own account it also could very well be that al-Jazzâr sent his chief mamluks off on an expedition so that he could deal with the those remaining in Acre.25

25 Mishâqa, M., Murder, mayhem, pillage and plunder, Albany 1988, 39–40, makes this suspicion explicit. The two early Lebanese chroniclers, the monks Karâma and
Four days after the departure of these troops he discovered, or perhaps exposed, illicit relations between some of his mamluks and some women of his harem. He had the arms of many of the mamluks, who worked in the seraglio, cut off, and in following night he had some women drowned, "ce qui design le motif du châtiment des premiers." The next morning al-Jazzār continued with his purge. With a unit of thirty Bosnian soldiers he arrested more mamluks and killed some. At this point, the remaining mamluks offered resistance and defended themselves in the treasury which was situated in the Big Tower. The Khāzīndār, brother of Sālim Pasha, freed the imprisoned mamluks and moved with them to the tower, joining the other mamluks. According to the French reports, he was pushed into action after al-Jazzār killed his beloved valet. Barricaded in the Big Tower the mamluks turned the heavy guns, placed there to defend the city against enemies, on to the seraglio itself and threatened to blast it to pieces. In the ensuing stalemate the mufti of Acre played a mediating role and negotiated free departure with their weapons and horses for the mamluks, about seventy to eighty altogether. Their personal belongings were to be sent after them. Āhmād Pasha al-Jazzār had no choice but to let them go. Only the prepubescent mamluks remained. Al-Jazzār killed many of them and had others exiled to Egypt. Under the command of the Khāzīndār the mamluks rode to the north and linked up with Sālim Pasha and Sulaymān Pasha. After an unsuccessful attempt at reconciliation with Āhmād Pasha al-Jazzār, they all decided to fight against him. They reached a truce with Amīr Yūsuf and gained the support of the commander of the Maghrabi troops in Beirut, al-Jabartī, who had actually been ordered by al-Jazzār to deliver him the head of Sālim. Sidon, where Sulaymān Pasha had been appointed previously as mutasallim,

Munayyār are remarkably uninterested in and uninformed about the internal events in Acre. The whole rebellion is barely treated. As its motive Karāma, Hawīdī, 111, suggests that Sālim Pasha received orders from the Ottoman government to kill al-Jazzār as a rebel; al-Munayyār, al-Durū, p. 415, and al-Munayyār Tārikh, p. 413, follow basically this story. In this case the French reports from Acre seem to be more trustworthy. They, like Shihāb, al-Jazzār and al-Jabartī, 'Abd al-Rāman 'Ajīb al-adhār fī 'l-tanāṣīm wa 'l-adhārī, Cairo 1879–1880, 4 vols. vol. III, 321, mention the illicit relationships between mamluks and women of the harem as the trigger for al-Jazzār’s revenge which led in turn to open rebellion by the mamluk leaders in the field; see especially AN AE B1 1041, "Extrait de la correspondance entre M. Renaudot et Beaussier au sujet de l’insurrection contre Dgezzar".

26 Shihāb, al-Jazzār, 92.
served as the base for the rebels. They then proceeded south to Tyre, which refused to open its gates. The result was the sacking of the town and a subsequent looting in which the commanders lost control over their soldiers. This was the turning point of the whole rebellion: discipline among the troops could not be restored and they remained more concerned with plundering than with fighting. More importantly, the population in Acre, witnessing the events in Tyre, was no longer convinced that Salîm’s rule would be a liberation from oppression. Still, for the moment Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzâr’s position was desperate. All he had left for the defense of Acre were some 200 Albanian soldiers under their commander, Juwâq ‘Uthmân.28 But al-Jazzâr’s good fortune was that his opponents displayed a lack of planning and decisiveness of action which led Renaudot to observe: “leurs démarches ne portent point ce caractère d’Énergie qui annonce les grands actions, ces sont des Esclaves dechainés plutôt occupés à considerer leurs chaines qu’au soin de les rompre.” On June 3 the rebels finally appeared on the plain of Acre, some 1,200 troops altogether, but had no clear idea about how to proceed from there. In the meantime Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzâr had worked feverishly to strengthen the defense of the city. He collected all the workers and masons from the government workshops and armed them. Upon the advice of Shaykh Muḥammad al-Qâdir he prepared for a night assault on the camp of the rebels and at the same time had a ship in the harbor ready to sail with him in case of defeat.29 The rebels underestimated the resolve and initiative of al-Jazzâr and his resourcefulness. The sortie from Acre and the simultaneous bombardment from the cannons on the fortifications took them completely by surprise. In the ensuing five-hour battle Salîm Pasha and Sulaymân Pasha were defeated and their troops dispersed. The French consul commented that both sides fought without great conviction and were mainly concerned with plundering. But Salîm’s troops did not know anything about tactics, defected partially, and “those who fought did so only by fleeing.” Betrayal also seems to have played a role. Supposedly the Kurdish commander Shaykh Tâhir had contacted one of Salîm’s allies, Mulla Ismâ’il, commander of the Dalât troops, before the battle and had persuaded him to prevent his troops from fighting. A number of

28 Shihâb, al-Jazzâr, 95; AN AE B1 980, CC Acre, III, May 28, 1789.
29 Munayyar, al-Durr, 416.
mamluks had been killed, others already exiled, and the rest fled defeated. Salīm and Sulaymān reached the Mountain and then Damascus, for a while still hoping to raise new troops against al-Jazzār. For the moment the Mamluk household of al-Jazzār was destroyed, and ceased to exist as part of the military establishment and political institution. Renaudot wondered why, in the end, people such as Sulaymān and Salīm rebelled against their master. They had made their careers under him, had been pampered and become rich.30

Āhmād Pasha al-Jazzār must have asked himself the same question that Renaudot asked: Why would his top lieutenants rebel against him? Given his own identification with the Mamluk system and his keen sense of loyalty he was deeply traumatized by these events. Latent fears, suspicions, and distrust now jelled into a sense of paranoia: “After this event he became like an untamed animal. Nobody could stand up to him and he imagined that the whole world was against him.”31 Not surprisingly, he began a wave of purges, exiling and liquidating people from all ranks in society.

The military activities of al-Jazzār certainly continued on an undiminished level, but he must have had difficulties finding qualified commanding officers. He seems to have dealt with the problem by relying increasingly on a sort of military professionals who had flourished in an atmosphere of diminished Ottoman authority. These were military entrepreneurs who gathered volunteers around them: soldiers from dissolved units like the Dalāt but also tribal people, criminals and other dubious elements. They fed them, clothed them and provided them with money. The military entrepreneur—unlike the typical warlord—did not seek to control a particular region or province so as to ensure his and his soldiers livelihood, rather, he tried to hire out his military services to the various governors and amirs. These commanders looked at their military-for-hire services strictly as a business, not bound by territorial interests nor impeded by political loyalties. This explains also their frequent changing sides, which should not be understood so much as fickleness, but rather as a constant look-out for the greater benefits for his enterprise.

30 All the above information, unless indicated otherwise is drawn from the “Premier Cahier—Extrait de la correspondance entre M. Renaudot et Beaussier au sujet de l’insurrection contre Dgezzar,” AN AE B1 1041, CC Seyde, vol. XXV.
31 Shihāb, al-Jazzār, 95.
The name of Qarā Muḥammad, head of Dalāt units, appears now more frequently. He was charged with leading an expeditionary corps of different units during the all-out war against the Druze in 1791. Ten years later he was still performing the same tasks. Kanj Yusuf, later to become governor of Damascus, started his career, too, as officer and later independent military entrepreneur.

The most famous and typical was probably Mullā Ismā‘īl, another “commander of Dalāt.” We have already encountered him above in the battle of the mamluks against al-Jazzār. He had probably predetermined the defeat of the mamluks, once he had been swayed to stay out of the battle. Later he fought on al-Jazzār’s side and also on supported Sulaymān Pasha against Kanj Yusuf. Eventually Mullā Ismā‘īl was appointed by Sulaymān Pasha mutazzim of Hamāt and Homs.

The short but steep career of Ismā‘īl Pasha, an Albanian, who had come with the grand Vezier Yusuf’s army to dislodge the French from Egypt is also symptomatic for the shortage of officers in al-Jazzār’s army. After the campaign Ismā‘īl Pasha accepted service with Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzār and was immediately given command of a siege around Jaffa where a protégé of the vezier Yusuf, Abū Maraq, had been appointed governor. Later Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzār regretted his choice. He suspected Abū Maraq of conspiring with Ismā‘īl Pasha and had the latter imprisoned.

Sulaymān Pasha, one of the oldest and most trusted of al-Jazzār’s mamluks, but also one of the leaders of the Mamluk rebellion in 1789, returned in 1802 to al-Jazzār who received him like a lost son and immediately appointed him mutassallim of Sidon and commander of a campaign against Amīr Bashīr. Eventually, Sulaymān Pasha was to succeed al-Jazzār as governor of Sidon and quite a number of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzār’s mamluks continued to serve under him. But before we deal with the question of the role of the Mamluk

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32 Mishāqa, Murder, 41; Munayyar, al-Durr, 416 explains that after the mamluks were dispersed al-Jazzār used in their stead the units of Qarā Muḥammad and ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Tawīr (possibly also Kurds).
33 Shihāb, al-Jazzār, 116, 151; Munayyar, Tārīkh, 428, 434.
36 Shihāb, al-Jazzār, 167.
37 Ibid., 156.
establishment under Sulaymān Pasha’s rule we have to acknowledge a considerable lacuna in our information. From the contemporary reports it would appear that al-Jazzār’s reaction to the rebellion of 1789 dealt a final blow to the Mamluk establishment. The mamluks were either liquidated by him or had fled into exile. Apart from the surprising and touching return of Sulaymān a dozen years later we hear of no other mamluks playing any further role in al-Jazzār’s government. It is the more surprising then to see how under Sulaymān’s rule quite a number of mamluks, identified as mamluks of al-Jazzār, resurface and obtain positions of power and influence, ‘Alī Aghā Khazindār and Muḥammad Aghā Abū Nabbūt being the most prominent ones. Whether they had returned still during the rule of al-Jazzār or, perhaps, never left after the rebellion or whether they had been called back by Sulaymān Pasha, we do not know. The fact is that under the rule of Sulaymān Pasha the Mamluk household of al-Jazzār reconstituted itself again.

When Sulaymān Pasha acceded to power in 1805 the region was exhausted. Not only the French military expedition against Acre, but subsequent campaigns from Acre against Jaffa, Nablus, and the Druze, had devastated the economy. Trade stagnated and the exorbitant tax burden forced the peasants to flee from their villages. By force of financial circumstance but also, it seems, by political inclination of Sulaymān Pasha, the military was to play a much smaller role. After having dislodged Abū Maraq from Jaffa at the very beginning of his rule, Sulaymān Pasha was to fight only one further major battle, in 1810 against Kanj Yūsuf Pasha, governor of Damascus. But a major element of his army in that battle were the Druze troops of Amīr Bashīr. Sulaymān Pasha himself was reluctant to spend too much money on the military. The French consul observed in 1808 with amazement that he was dismissing his Albanian troops, the best he had. All this while he had no more than a thousand soldiers stationed from Beirut to Ghaza.38 Mishāqa, without specifying the year, speaks of some 1,500 or 2,000 troops.39

In December 1811 Muḥammad Abū Nabbūt, mutasallim in Jaffa, came to visit Sulaymān Pasha in Acre. He brought 500 troops, while in Acre itself barely 200 guards were garrisoned. As he was, like

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38 AN AE, CC Acre, vol. I, April 6, 1808.
39 Mishāqa, Murder, 58.
Sulaymān Pasha, a mamluk of al-Jazzār, Abū Nabbūt considered himself very much the equal of Sulaymān Pasha.40

The French consul Pillavoine described the regime of Sulaymān Pasha as follows:

La Syrie depuis Lataquie, jusqu’a Gaza est une République dont le Sénat composé d’affranchis qui ont toutes les places es soumis au juif Haim Farhi qui la gouverne Despotiquement sous le nom de Soliman Pacha, Mamlouc qu’en est le Doge.41

—a sort of republic à la Venicienne in which the mamluks held all the important positions. Pillavoine’s claim that they were, however, all subjected to the control by Haim Farhī is only somewhat of an exaggeration. We know of at least a dozen and a half high-ranking mamluks whose names appear again and again. The chief of the treasury and closest confidant of Sulaymān Pasha was ‘Alī Aghā [later: Pasha] Khāzīndār. He was Sulaymān Pasha’s lieutenant in Acre while the latter was governor in Damascus. He remained the second in command until his death in 1814. His son ‘Abdallāh Pasha was later to succeed Sulaymān Pasha. Most other high-ranking mamluks served as mutasallims in the various cities. There were occasionally changes but on the whole the permanence of the appointments was remarkable. Only in regions or cities that were beyond the immediate reach of Sulaymān Pasha would he make use of local strongmen: the Ṭūqāns in Nablus, Muṣṭafā Aghā Barbir in Tripoli, and, of course Amīr Bashīr in Mt. Lebanon. The coastal cities and the inland towns of the Galilee and the Jabal ‘Āmil regions and a few of the high administrative positions in Acre were always controlled by the same small group of mamluks who had already belonged to the Mamluk household of al-Jazzār. They were all khashāšūn of the same ustādī. This comradeship cemented their loyalty to each other, and was essential for the functioning of the mamluk system as a whole. For Sulaymān Pasha this personal loyalty was the best means to ensure his rule over Acre and its realm. New mamluks were bought, and they served at the court of Sulaymān Pasha.

In fact, Sulaymān Pasha was master of the last functioning Mamluk system in history. Understandably, there was great concern in Acre about the fate of the mamluks in Egypt who had been massacred

41 AN AE, CC Acre, vol. II, Jan. 20, 1812.
by Muḥammad ʿAlī. Two English travelers reported it in May 1811 and, soon after, a first-hand report was given by Amīn Bey, the famous mamluk who escaped the massacre in the Citadel by a daring jump over the wall with his horse. He settled for a time in Acre and worked as a cavalry commander for Sulaymān Pasha.42 Additional mamluks who escaped the massacre seem to have made their way to Acre.43 In September of this year the French consul reports that Sulaymān Pasha began to buy mamluks left and right after the massacre in Cairo “tout les Chretiens qui se font Tures sont amis dans ce corps à qui tous les emplois sont confiés.”44 Slave dealers flocked to Acre to sell their merchandise and by the summer of 1812 Sulaymān Pasha’s army had increased to some 2,500 troops.45 Partially these purchases must have been the result of a treasury flush with money from the grain exports to England in 1811. But we may suspect a more self-conscious motive: Listening to the travelers and the escaped mamluk himself, the mamluks in Acre were quite aware that they were the last of their kind, and perhaps the massive purchase of further mamluks was less a question of enlarging the army than an attempt to ensure their own way of life. From all the information we have, the mamluks seem actually not to have played a large role in the military. The 700 artillery troops in Acre were almost by definition not mamluks and probably not mamluk commanded. But even in the cavalry, the very service branch of the mamluks, we rarely hear of them. More frequently mentioned are the Kurdish Dalāl cavalry with their commander Shamlīn or Shamdīn Aghā who seems to have been another military entrepreneur.46 Mishāqa described the army as follows: “There was no longer any necessity for many soldiers [after settling relations with the Mutasīls], so only about two hundred infantry men were put under the command of an Albanian officer named Muḥammad Aghā al-Nuʾmān who lived in Tyre and

45 AN AE, CC Acre, vol. II, Jan. 20, 1812, Aug. 11, 1812.
46 Originally he had served in the troops of Kanj Yūsuf Pasha and had later accepted service under Sulaymān Pasha. Eventually he was made “head of the officers of the army.” He was also to serve ʿAbdallāh Pasha until the end: al-ʿAwra, Tārīkh, 221–22, Shihāb, Lubnān, vol. III, 560.
about five hundred cavalry men were put under the command of three Kurdish officers, Shamdīn Ṭabātā, Ni‘mat Aḡā and Ayalyaqūn Ṭabātā; and two officers, ‘Abī Abū Zayd Aḡā and Mūsā al-Ḥāṣī Aḡā where put in charge of around four hundred Ḥawwārā Arab horse-
men, while an officer called the sāḥb bāshī was posted over a few
infantry soldiers stationed as guards at the palace gate in Acre. A
group of canoneers [was also stationed] on the city walls, just as there were artillerymen and officers in every city.47

The role of the mamluks during the rule of Sulaymān Pasha should
not be looked for in their military tasks, though some clearly had also commanding functions there. As during the early period of al-
Jazzār’s regime the major function of the Mamluk household was it to provide coherence and stability to the rule of Sulaymān Pasha who appointed them to major political and administrative posts and could count on their loyalty. Sulaymān Pasha, like Ahmad Pasha al-
Jazzār, drew his legitimacy as a ruler from the fact that he was appointed governor of Sidon by the sultan. But neither ruler could count much on support or even acquiescence from the population in view of their stringent policy of monopolies applied to all cash crop cultivation and export.

The Mamluk system had been in decline since the rule of ‘Abī Bey al-Kabīr in the last third of the eighteenth century. In fact, his attempt to achieve absolute power, had been a symptom of the end of the traditional Mamluk system—just as Amīr Bashīr’s concentration of power in his own hands would bring another traditional order to its end: the feudal system of Druze and Christian lords in Mt. Lebanon. The Mamluk system was beginning to suffer internally from lack of good manpower, negligent training and increasing lack of loyalty.48 Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzār had been an early victim of such disloyalty in Egypt. Later his own Mamluk rebellion caused an almost complete destruction of the system in Acre. As worrisome were other signs of decay. As in Egypt before, mamluks in this last phase were not only inclined to marry and establish kinship relations but to promote their offspring: ‘Abdallāh Pasha, son of ‘Abī Pasha Katkhudā

47 Mishaqa, Murder, 58.
being the most glaring example. This added fuel to internal tensions. In April 1818 Sulaymān Pasha had been very sick, and people began to anticipate the time after his death. Possibly Abū Nabbūt had already insinuated in Istanbul that he would be the most suitable to take over the governorship from Sulaymān Pasha.\footnote{Shihāb, Lubnān, vol. III, 644.} The mamluks of Acre were in close contact with Abū Nabbūt in Jaffa. They wanted to recreate an exclusive Mamluk regime such as they believed had existed in Egypt.\footnote{AN AE, CC Acre, vol. III, April 27, 1818.} The son of the late ‘Alī Aghā Khāzīndār had no place in their planning. Perhaps Abū Nabbūt was acting out of a sense that he was Sulaymān Pasha’s equal, and perhaps he was willing to betray him.\footnote{In early 1818 a French traveler, observed that Abū Nabūt may be aiming at independence in southern Palestine: C. de Forbin, Travels in Greece, Turkey and the Holy Land in 1817–18 (London, 1820), 132.} But perhaps the mamluks altogether wanted only to safeguard their own existence and system. Natural children of mamluks had no place in this system. ‘Abdallāh Pasha, only twenty years old, and never truly part of the Mamluk establishment, tried to forge an alliance with local elements from religious and land controlling circles. This alliance was still shaky and he also depended on the support from Ḥaím Farḥī, the powerful secretary and finance administrator of Sulaymān Pasha. Ḥaím Farḥī “détésté de tous les parties,” also worried that his patron might die. Sulaymān Pasha seemed inclined to recognize Abū Nabbūt as his successor but Farḥī was opposed to this because he feared the latter’s strong position.\footnote{AN AE, CC Acre, vol. III, Nov. 12, 1818.} It was probably this fear that motivated Ḥaím Farḥī in the summer of 1818 to convince Sulaymān Pasha to move against Abū Nabbūt. He was removed from Jaffa through an internal coup. This step initiated the campaign against the mamluks which ‘Abdallāh Pasha began even before being confirmed as governor of Sidon. Ibrāhīm Aghā, chief of artillery since the time of Aḥmad Pasha al-Jazzār, was replaced in September 1819 with Muṣṭafā Aghā al-Istānbulī. Another mamluk lost his life under obscure circumstances, but probably was killed by ‘Abdallāh Pasha who suspected him of disloyalty.\footnote{AN AE, CC Acre, vol. IV, Sept. 22, 1819, and Sept. 1, 1820.} Throughout the summer of 1820 mutassallīms of various places, all mamluks of al-Jazzār, were removed. Saлим Aghā Abū
Sayf, mutasallim of Beirut, barely appointed to Sidon, was soon exiled, like Hasan Aghā and ‘Alī Aghā ex-mutasallims of Beirut—all three mamluk comrades of Abū Nabbūt. They were suspected of having contact with him in Istanbul. The mutasallim of Nazareth was replaced by a certain seventeen-years-old Safīm Aghā. It seems that ‘Abdallāh Pasha preferred to employ people as young as himself while pensioning off the old mamluks. Some mamluks survived, and stayed with ‘Abdallāh Pasha until the bitter end. But from the list of his commanders who fell during the siege of Acre it is evident that among the troops ‘Abdallāh Pasha used there were no Mamluk commanders any more: Ḥusayn Aghā, and Ḥamādī Aghā, both huğūra bāshās, militia commanders, ‘Alī Aghā Farahāt, mağribī bāshā, commander of Maghrebi troops, and Shamlīn, commander of Dalāt cavalry, who survived. All were units which with the exception of Shamlīn’s troops did not exist during Sulaymān Pasha’s time. The mamluks ceased to exist as the group they had been under Sulaymān Pasha’s rule with specific exclusive functions, political ambitions, and loyalties. Just as with the assassination of Ḥaīm Farḥī, it was ‘Abdallāh Pasha’s aim to eliminate all elements that had been too close to Sulaymān Pasha and were perceived as a potential danger to his rule.

We know little about the military establishment during ‘Abdallāh Pasha’s time. A rough estimate would indicate a standing army of less than two thousand men. In moments of war ‘Abdallāh Pasha obviously counted on the tribal levies of the Druze and possibly the Metualis. In 1824 ‘Abdallāh Pasha sent to battle some 3,000 troops, most of them Ḥawwārā militias under Abū Zaid Aghā, but also consisting of Dalāt, Albanians, and Maghrebīs.

In conclusion, we should ask ourselves why the Mamluk system was reintroduced in Syria at such a late point in time and how it could last for almost fifty years. The most obvious explanation is, of course, the personal one. Ḥaḏīd Pasha al-Jazzār was a mamluk and clearly believed, at least initially, in the advantages of the system. This was especially true as he tried to ascertain his rule over a region to which he himself was a stranger, in contrast to his predecessor Ḍāhir al-

54 AN AE, CC Seyde, vol. XXVII, July 10, 1820.
56 Shihāb, Lubnān, III, 852.
57 Shihāb, Lubnān, III, 766.
‘Umar, and where he could not rely upon local alliances and patronage systems to support his regime.

But I would suggest that there was a second more general reason leading to the attempt to govern with the help of a Mamluk household. These were times of enormous change in Acre and its hinterland. For the first time the region had been integrated into the European dominated world economy. The profits to be made from cash crop exports, mainly cotton, but later also grain, could be huge. The question was how this new economy could be used most profitably and by whom.

The organisation of the military forces in Acre reflected this challenge and the ambivalent responses to it. In fact, the whole spectrum of military options in Islamic history was tried out: from troops consisting of or controlled by a family clan to tribal alliances (predominant under Dāhir al-‘Umar) from hired mercenaries, vaguely organized along ethnic lines, to military entrepreneurs, and to a well-defined Mamluk household, from infantry troops to cavalrymen—all traditional patterns of military organisation, together with their known advantages and disadvantages, were used at one point or another in the short century of Acre’s power. It depended on the political circumstances and also on the personal inclinations of the respective rulers which sort of traditional military organisation would be preferred. The emphasis on fortifications and their defense was, at least since the crusades, in this region a particularly well-established military strategy. New tactics, new military technology or organization were not sought or needed, since the neighboring rivals and potential military opponents fought with equally traditional means and troop formations as the rulers of Acre. The contribution of the unique state monopoly on cotton and grain exports consisted in supplying the means to pay for more troops than the neighbors usually could afford.

The policy of government monopolies, introduced by Dāhir al-‘Umar but continued and elaborated upon by al-Jazzār and Sulaymān Pasha, necessitated the exclusion of local classes, such as merchants and primary producers, from the political process. To maintain the monopoly over cash crops and their export an imported foreign military elite, with no ties to the local population and only loyal to themselves, seemed the most suited, though the simultaneous use of all the above mentioned other military options shows that there reigned a great ambivalence about how to cope with the new economic situation. In any case, the revenues from the economic monopoly could
pay for and reinforce the foreign military elite. But once the cash crops were not in demand anymore on the world market, the mamluks were the least suited to deal with the economy and to respond to the changes. Once the economic basis had vanished, so did the mamluks.
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

URBAN RESIDENTIAL HOUSES IN MAMLUK SYRIA:
FORMS, CHARACTERISTICS AND THE IMPACT OF
SOCIO-CULTURAL FORCES*

Nimrod Luz

The house can be described as a manifestation and an epitomizing symbol of the self. This is a truism in the sense that our house represents us as it reflects our morals, ideas, needs, social understanding and conduct. To no lesser extent, houses represent and are by-products of group social values and norms. Empirical studies have indicated that individuals who belong to a group which is typified with weak relations would be more inclined to be unique and self representative as far as the architecture of the house is concerned. Those who identify with stronger groups (usually of more traditional nature) would be less concerned with the presentability of their house. That is to say, houses that belong to individuals whose social status is known and established in their peer group would be less self expressive. However, I am not suggesting that such individuals would not build impressive and formidable houses, rather that they would inclined to follow similar architectural patterns. This can partly explain the extravagance of mamluks’ houses within the urban context. These houses are supposed to inform “ignorant

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3 Ibid. See also on the importance of social networks, J.S. Duncan and N.G. Duncan, “Housing as Representation of Self and the Structure of Social Networks”, in G.T. Moore and R.G. Golledge, eds., Environmental Knowing, Theories, Research, and Methods (Stroudsburg, 1991), 247–253.
others” of the current status of the proprietor. At the same time, the house is also a manifestation and a product of physical conditions such as building materials, technology, site availability and such like mundane matters. The latter are more often than not external and independent to any socio-cultural forces.4

Thus, there are multiple variables one has to consider in order to fully understand the house as a manifestation of the human agent responsible for its construction. It would be a mistake to highlight one aspect and play down others. To say that home architecture is responsive only to the immediate needs of its owner, which stems from reciprocal relations to the particular surrounding, is a partial and insufficient conclusion. On the other hand, playing down the socio-cultural realm and its effect on the final outcome would again lead us to a crude streamlining of a complex reality. This, as I will suggest below, was more often than not a current theme concerning the houses of the Islamic Middle East. The house is a fundamental and indispensable part of almost any human settlement. In the urban scene clusters of houses form neighborhoods, and on a larger scale they comprise the matrix of entire cities. In order to understand cities—in a more abstract manner the society that exists within a particular city—the house may be regarded as a source and a meaningful evidence of the latter. As with any other “text” we have to know how to read the language, familiarize ourselves with the cultural symbols and signs, and put it in the correct context. A full analysis of houses within a broad urban reality exceeds the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, it needs to be stressed that it is inconceivable to understand historical cities as a portrayal of past societies without a full scale view of houses within the broad urban context. In this paper I would like to focus on the types and forms of houses in cities of Syria during the Mamluk period. The analysis of the individual types and forms of houses will be complemented by a critical review of the common and recurrent notion regarding the Islamic origin and nature of the courtyard house. Bringing to the fore the socio-cultural influence on the shape and forms of houses does not in any way imply that I consider it more important than other variables. On the contrary, it serves as a way to mitigate the

4 The various variables effecting house form and type are heavily considered in A. Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (New Jersey, 1969).
notion regarding the allegedly colossal impact of religion (i.e., Islam) on the residential dwellings.

A methodological note

The data and analysis put forward in this paper are the outcome of an extensive research regarding the provincial cities of Mamluk Syria. The main goal of this survey was to establish a set of indicative characteristics of the urban vernacular architecture during the Mamluk period within the Syrian region. This was a preliminary, yet indispensable, step toward a closer and more intimate acquaintance with the urban layers of the said period. The secondary goal was to enforce the results of the survey in the entire city and thus make it possible to define and classify various building artifacts of the Mamluk period and to distinguish them from other periods; a problem inherent in any discussion of the built environment in historical multi-layered cities. The physical evidence was corroborated with relevant studies and complemented with literary sources. Thus, I was able to arrive at a more coherent and reliable picture of types and forms of houses. This method further enabled me to map out and appreciate the contribution of different variables and their impact on the built environment.

Vernacular architecture—the term refers mainly to architecture that is created without architects. It is usually characterized by a lack of any theoretical or esthetical presumptions. A rigid set of rules is hardly in existence rather a practical need that is responded by functional acts. The lack of an elaborate theory implicates that the work is carried out in the basis or previous knowledge. The main

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5 N. Luz, Provincial Cities of Mamluk Syria 1260–1517, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2000. The field survey was conducted throughout 1997 in several cities in Israel (mainly Jerusalem).

6 The findings were corroborated with data collected in other cities of the region. I am currently preparing for publication the results of the field survey.

7 I am following here the meaning of the term as Amos Rapoport articulated it. See, Rapoport, House Form and Culture. Ibid., “Vernacular Architecture and the Cultural Determinants of Form”, in A.D. King, ed., Building and Society (London 1980), 283–305.

emphasis would be on the relations among the building particles rather than the nature of the particles themselves. This would indicate that the location of a window in a wall is essentially of higher importance than the style or the material of that window. This type of architecture is typically found in private houses, streets, and neighborhoods. It is, by and large, the sum of collective, yet independent, decisions of individuals. It is the absence if sufficient data regarding this type of architecture—as opposed to public-monumental Mamluk architecture—that necessitated the conduct of an extensive field survey in search for a better understanding of that particular manifestation (houses as in the case in point) of Mamluk urban society.9

The following discussion is based on the results of the field survey which by and large defines the material evidence to be found today. As always, with regard to morphological reality and findings, we can only examine what has survived in contemporary urban landscape. In the case of residential housing, this approach bears an inherent bias that needs to be explained.10 Most of the houses that have survived belong to the wealthier and upper strata of society. It is within reason to speculate that houses of lower socioeconomic classes were less resistant to the vicissitudes of time. In addition, it would seem logical to assume that these houses (i.e., those of lower socioeconomic status) are less represented in various documentations and literary references. This is all the more apparent in the number of studies concerned with public and monumental architecture compared to those of vernacular architecture and common residential dwellings.11 Our knowledge concerning the private house, or to put it more strongly, the house of the less fortunate members of society is considerably less than that relating to palaces and mansions. We can only speculate as to how many mud and straw bricks houses or wooden huts have existed in Tripoli in the fourteenth century. The nature of these materials as opposed to that of stone, a common enough building material in the area, is to be remembered

10 This idea was already put forward in A. Raymond, *The Great Arab Cities in the 16th and 18th Centuries, An Introduction* (New York, 1984), 70–71.
11 This is aptly demonstrated in the voluminous research regarding houses in Cairo, J.-C. Garçin et al., *Palais et Maisons du Caire L’Epoque Mamelouke (XIII–XVI siecles)*, (Paris, 1982), where the compounds discussed are mainly palaces or amiral houses due to their very existence and the extensive source material related to them.
in such assumptions about cities of the past. The case may very well be that due to the natural limitations of different building material the hundreds of years that elapsed have weeded out dwellings that were constructed of less durable materials. This, as I will relate later on, is a rather important fact that should at least make us realize how difficult it is to arrive at firm and definitive conclusions. And as the case maybe, any conclusion should be understood in the proper light of these research limitations.

Private houses

The Syrian city in the Mamluk period features few types of individual or private houses. The common term found in various sources for the house is *dār*. This term usually refers to a house composed of several units: residential units or rooms, courtyards and different necessary amenities such as cistern, oven, warehouse (*makhzān*), toilet and other facilities as the case may be. Houses were built of local stone (usually limestone) to be found throughout the region. Ornamental components, found mainly in luxurious houses, were made out of marble, (either imported or in secondary use), or in rare cases, of basalt.

The field survey highlighted the following morphological characteristics and architectural traits of private houses:

**House façade**—the frontal side of the house (i.e., the part facing the street), includes a single entry gate. The gate is usually lower than the average person’s height and not wider than 1 m. The entrance itself constitutes a massive door (either wood or metal) that stresses the transition and passage from the public, or semi-public, street into the private domain. Most of the houses surveyed had no more than two stories. In cases where a third story did exist, it usually carried indications of being constructed at a later date, i.e., Ottoman or modern period. This should not lead to the conclusion that Syrian Mamluk houses, unlike those in Cairo for instance, were limited to two stories height. It stands to reason that since upper floors were more exposed to eroding factors they were more accessible to dilapidation and hence to renovations and changes in the course of time.

**Windows and porches**—front windows are relatively small and few variants were found. On the whole, windows are not be found
in the entrance floor (street level). In the rare cases that windows were to be found at street level, they were usually very small and shaded, or covered with a grille. Porches were not a common feature in simple houses. In the few cases where a porch was built, it was on a much smaller scale than that of the type known as *kishk*, which is commonly found in Mamluk public buildings.

**Roof**—the roof was built, as in the rural building tradition of the area, in the shape of a masonry dome. This concurs perfectly with Mujir al-Din’s descriptions of the construction style in Jerusalem:

In regard to the building of Jerusalem it is of the highest order and craftsmanship all made of white carved stones and the roofs are vaulted (*ma’qūd*). No bricks are to be used in the buildings and no wood in the [construction of] the roof. 12

**The Courtyard**—In some of the houses, a corridor leads from the gate into a courtyard. The corridor is usually angular, and along its route a few twists and turns are a recurrent feature. The size of the courtyard varies considerably. The residential units (*bayt*, pl. *buyūd*) are built at the perimeter of the courtyard and their entrances face it. In cases where a second floor was built, a flight of stairs was constructed, usually at the side of the courtyard. The second floor is a mirror image of the first one that is, it is built of rooms/apartments facing the center of the courtyard. The central courtyard is but one of a few options of houses’ ground plan. Many of the courtyard houses were arranged along a different pattern altogether, namely the courtyard was not an inner one, i.e. not completely enclosed.

Thus far, I have focused on the exterior part of the house. There is a marked difference between the external and internal parts of houses in the sense that the latter are far more accessible and viable to changes. The survey established the fact that the exterior parts of houses kept, for the better part, their original features. The situation remarkably differs in regard to the interior of the house. Recurrent renovations or changes of ownership or economic status are among the factors that lead to this state of affairs. In addition, the current problematic political situation in Old Jerusalem prevents us from a full scale survey of houses interiors. In order to overcome

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this impediment, literary evidence and various sources were used to further our understanding in regard to inner components and layout of houses. It was at times the only plausible way to traverse the threshold of the residential unit.

Courtyard houses—In 4 Rabi’ I, 778/21 August 1376, a house was purchased in the Christian neighborhood (Harāt al-Naṣārā) of Jerusalem. The house, known as Dār ibn al-Launayn, comprised three vaulted units (bayūṭ), a kitchen and toilet facilities. The residential units encompassed a courtyard in which two cisterns and fruit-bearing trees were to be found. An additional vaulted room that functioned as a warehouse was constructed below the courtyard. The entrance opened onto an alley located to the east of the house. Indeed several houses of this type were found in the survey but as is elaborated below this was not the sole plan in existence.

The house of Shaykh Burhān al-Dīn represents yet a different type and form of house plan. The house (dār) was purchased by Shaykh Burhān al-Dīn on 21 Dhū al-Qa‘da 780/12 March 1379 at the price of 825 dirhams. It is composed of two vaulted parts; upper and lower. The transaction deed reveals that a courtyard and an external toilet unit were also within its legal domains. The courtyard in this case lay adjacent to the house. Few houses of the same plan were found in the field survey.

Individual houses of irregular plan—I have already established the fact that the term dār does not refer exclusively to houses that adopted the central courtyard plan. More then that, it can refer to houses which do not have any form of courtyard at all. Dār, as the equivalent of a residential house or unit, is a term constantly being used in hundreds of documents from the Mamluk period found in the Haram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem. Only rarely is a courtyard mentioned and even then one can not be certain that this refers to a central courtyard. The early Ottoman sijill records not less than two hundred and twenty eight houses. Only forty two of them had a

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13 D.P. Little, A Catalogue of the Islamic Documents from al-Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem, Beirut 1984, 255, no. 35. I am indebted to Mr. Kh. Salāmeh for enabling me to examine the original documents of the mamluk sijill of al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf library in Jerusalem.

14 Little, Catalogue, 278, no. 39.

15 See for example the description of a house from Tripoli, N.H. al-Khimṣī, Ta’rikh Tarabulus (Beirut, 1986), 352.
courtyard (either enclosed or adjacent). As with many other characteristics, the early Ottoman documents reflect the reality of the Mamluk period, in this case regarding the quantities of the various house plans and forms. So it is apparent that most of the houses were not of the courtyard type but rather what Raymond humorously called “atypical houses”.

**Luxurious private houses**

As with any other society, that of the Syrian cities included people of means. This was reflected on the urban scene in the existence of several houses that were considerably large in size featured on different plans than those of common private dwelling. In addition to a large plan, these houses are characterized with substantial investment in building material and ornamentation. The houses of this category (again one needs to stress the fact that the survey focused on external aspects of the house) employed architectural styles and features usually found in monumental Mamluk buildings. The facade of one such house, located above one of the main intersections of Tariq al-Wād in Jerusalem, features the typical mamluk monumental style known as *ablaq*. The windows of that wall are reminiscent in size and style of the ones that are usually found in public buildings. The entrance of the house located opposite Dār al-Sitt Tunshuq is also monumental in style. The house is surrounded with an external high wall containing a single entry gate. As one enters through the gateway, one encounters an imposing entrance to the house. The house itself comprises two stories; on the upper floor large windows are to be found as well as a beautifully decorated porch. A decorated roof terrace and windows were found in a house located adjacent to the Madrasa al-Mu‘āṭṭamiyya on the street leading to the Löns Gate in Jerusalem. Parts of the roof terrace were built of basalt, which is not to be found in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and was therefore obviously imported.

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17 Raymond, *Great Arab Cities*, 87.
The luxurious houses that were surveyed in Jerusalem were highly accessible to main routes in the city. This clearly indicates that residential location within the city was not altogether disconnected from economic status and personal preferences. In a period in which transportation was mostly on foot, proximity to main arteries of the city was indeed important. One cannot establish a firm conclusion based on the exiguous data presented here but as far as the field survey allows one to speculate, individuals of sufficient means chose to live in more accessible locations within the city. Again, this is a fundamental and well-recorded social behavior of people who belong to high socioeconomic strata. This in itself is not highly innovative as far as current geographical theories are concerned, but it is put forward here to further undermine notions that were commonly found in previous studies of cities of the vast Islamic world. This issue will be engaged with at the last section of this paper.

Collective houses

At least three types of collective houses were common in Syrian cities. However, the data, both literary and morphological, is somewhat sporadic in comparison to that available for private houses. In order to overcome this lacuna, analogies and references were made to the abundant material regarding urban life in Egypt.

*Khān* as a dwelling compound—*khāns* served as dwellings for parts of society that were in transitional phases (i.e., new immigrants) or for those who practised a life style of constant mobility (soldiers, merchants). Thus one may find merchants, soldiers who were not living in barracks, and new arrivals in town all living in *khāns*. Shaykh Ibrāhīm b. Ahmad b. Fālāḫ al-Sa’ḍī resided in a place called *khān Banū Sa’d* which was located in the north-western external area adjacent to wall of Jerusalem. The name Banū Sa’d indicates a

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18 On the life and luxurious home of a certain merchant (Abu Taqiyya) in Cairo circa 1600 see in N. Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600. The Life and Times of Isma’il Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant* (Syracuse, 1998), esp. 138–164. I would like to thank Warren Schultz for pointing out the relevance of this work to the current paper.


20 Mujir al-Dīn, 2, 167.
tribal group that immigrated to Jerusalem. The *khān* in question served probably as their collective dwelling site. Residence in a *khān* must have been a transitional stage for that particular group, along their sedenterization process from a nomadic and rural way of life to an urban one. The Banū Sa’d eventually settled down within the city, as the name of a residential area, al-Sa’diyā, aptly demonstrates.\(^{21}\) In addition to their traditional function as inns for various visitors and normative role as commercial compounds, some of the *khāns* were built (or at least served) as residential compounds for city dwellers. This conclusion may be inferred and supported not only by documentation, but also from their locations. Some of the *khāns* are situated within residential areas, as opposed to commercial or peripheral parts of the city. In this manner we find in Jerusalem a *khān* named al-Juḥaylī in the heart of a neighborhood called Marzubān as well as khān al-Sīṭ in Khaṭṭ Bāb al-’Āmūd.\(^{22}\)

*Rab*—the *rab* is a collective residential unit that was built for rental purposes.\(^{23}\) It resembles, at least morphologically, the modern apartment building. It is a multi-story building in which each story contains several apartments with their own private entrance. The apartments share a common staircase and street entrance. The apartments were facing the streets (i.e., had windows to the facade side of the building). The ground floor housed shops and warehouses while apartments were to be found on the upper floors. The data concerning *rab* compounds in Syria is restricted to literary evidences. As it so happens, no compound that even partially resembles the Cairene type has been discovered in the survey. In Jerusalem we learn about several compounds bearing the term *rab*, such as *rab* al-Ḥusaynī, *rab* ibn al-Ḥanbalī and *rab* Tankiz.\(^{24}\) Raymond’s survey of Cairo provides us with ample data about existing *rab* buildings. His conclusions are that the residence in such compounds was not based on kinship ties or other social connections, but rather on

\(^{21}\) See a map of the city’s neighborhoods, including that of the Banū Sa’ad, in A. Arnon, “The Quarters of Jerusalem in the Ottoman Period”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 28 (1992), 13–14.

\(^{22}\) For Khan al-Juḥaylī see Mujīr al-Dīn, 2, 53, and regarding Khān al-Sīṭ see Little, *Catalogue*, 116, no. 432.


\(^{24}\) Little, *Catalogue*, 66, 85, 140.
the needs of Cairene citizens, mainly small artisans and shopkeepers, to minimize distances between home and work. The burden of costly private house in a central location was mitigated by existence of cheaper collective house apartments. Entrepreneurs of substantial means responded to the need middle class citizens by supplying them with the *rab*. This collective housing style was a thus a commercial investment for the entrepreneur and an affordable solution for its residents.

*Hawsh*—this is a residential collective unit that is characterized by the low income of its residents and poor standard of the building. It is a cluster of residential units that share a common courtyard and other utilities. The entrance is through a single gate from which a corridor leads into the heart of the compound. It differs from the regular courtyard house in measurements and ownership. It is usually bigger then the common *dār* and belongs to a proprietor who leases it to the residents. A *hawsh* by the name of Şalâh al-Dîn al-Ţūrî is mentioned in Jerusalem as located not far from Bâb al-Asbât (one of the northern gates of Haram al-Sharîf). This compound is mentioned in the estate inventories of two men and a woman. The two men are described as pilgrims (*ḥâjî*), one being called al-Sûdânî and the other al-Turkumânî. The woman is referred to as al-Dimashqiyya, meaning, from Damascus. Judging from their *nisba*, as well as the fact that no relatives are to be found in the city, one may assume that the three figures were newcomers to the city and, even more likely, temporary residents. The dates of the documentary evidences put them together in the same compound simultaneously, which means that they shared accommodations although they shared no family ties. It stands to reason that in the absence of sufficient means the people in question could not meet with a better residential solution save the very basic and cheapest option, i.e., a *hawsh*. *Hawsh*-type residences may still be found in the historical parts of Syrian cities. The morphology basically has not changed from the earlier periods, that is residential units encompassing and facing a central courtyard with a single entrance.26

Characteristics of the residential house

Type and Plan—various house types and plans existed in Syrian cities. It seems that personal economic status was one of the primal forces leading to the choice of the house plan. The typical dwelling solution of lower strata was the collective residential house known as ˙awsh, or as the case may be the khān. Again, I should stress that houses of less durable material (that is, not solely of stone), did not survive, or may will not have existed at all, and therefore could not be dealt with in this current work. The private house, be it a courtyard house in several types or other “atypical forms” or the collective house called rab’, were used by classes of more substantial means. Only a small minority of the city dwellers could afford a luxurious type of house. Some of the houses of the latter group adopted architectural styles that are drawn from monumental Mamluk buildings.

Architecture—this may be defined as inside-out architecture.\(^{27}\) That is architecture that involves excessive use of methods and styles which enable maximum separation between the private domain and the street. Morphologically, this means a single entry point to the house, windows and other openings are usually found in upper floors while the ground floor is on the whole windowless. This type of architecture is an efficient tool for transferring activities of all sorts into the inner or rear parts of the house. It is an indication that privacy was a crucial factor for the contingent constructor or dwellers of these houses. Nevertheless, this building style, that helps preserve the privacy of the family, is not unique in any way to the Syrian region nor for that matter to Islamic domains. It is to be found in various traditional societies.\(^{28}\) But cultural demands were not the sole constraint that shaped the house plan and architecture. A substantial role was played by climatic conditions, technology, building materials, and other variables that existed in the region prior to the presence of Islam. This will be elaborated upon in the closing section of this paper.

Preferred Locations—within the residential areas it was possible to discern a gradient of housing types that was an outcome of

\(^{27}\) For inside-out architecture see Rappoport, *House Form and Culture*, 48–49.
\(^{28}\) Ibid.
economic status. The luxurious houses were more accessible to the main routes of the city. Location within one’s neighborhood and city was dictated, as the few examples allow us to conclude, by one’s economic position and ability. This conclusion is based on what might be legitimately criticized as only exiguous examples. Nevertheless, it can be corroborated by David’s survey of 16th century Aleppo. The survey and classification of house types in Aleppo disclosed the existence of a gradient of residential rings surrounding the urban center. The crucial factor in regard to house location was land cost. The price of land parcels drops as one draws away from the city center. Therefore, in addition to socio-cultural factors (kinship, ethnic affiliation) one has to consider economic and other personal issues when one is analyzing houses’ location within the city. The decision concerning house plan and location were directly linked to a person’s economic constraint.

In search of the socio-cultural impact: The case of the courtyard house

One of the most prominent plans, found in this survey of Mamluk Syrian cities, was the courtyard house type in its various manifestations. The data collected in the field survey did not refute or minimize either the existence or the occurrence of this plan. However, it is clear that the courtyard house was not the only type in existence. More than that, any assessment of its relative occurrence within Mamluk cities in comparison to other house types is impossible. There is no way one can estimate the ratio of houses that disappeared without leaving a trace in the landscape of cities or the literary evidences. One can only assume that for the lower strata of society the obtaining or constructing of a courtyard house was beyond reach. In spite of such limitations, a marked tendency in numerous previous studies was to play down or totally ignore the existence of other building plans and house types. Instead, the role and existence of the courtyard house, as an outcome of Islamic culture and its omnipresence and influence on the urban environment, was usually

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I would like to conclude this paper with a critical analysis of the traditional approach in regard to the Islamic traits and origins of the courtyard house. Houses are, as any other human product, cultural and social artifacts. As such, they may be examined as a non-verbal document reflecting the agents/ agencies that were responsible for their construction. Throughout this paper, I have stipulated the existence of various types and forms of houses within urban societies of Syria. This state of affairs leads to the understanding that many variables are responsible for the final outcome: the individual house. Be that as it may, the quest for a clear cut definition and origin of the house throughout the vast Islamic world has not yet exhausted itself. This is aptly demonstrated in George Marçais’s article regarding the term Dār in the Encyclopedia of Islam. Marçais is of the opinion that the traditional courtyard house is the optimal physical manifestation of Islamic moral values and needs. He is well aware to the existence of such houses prior to the Islamic era, but prefers to underscore their advantages as an ideal infrastructure for Islamic life:

It is well adapted to the patriarchal view of the family and creates for it an enclosed sphere; it conforms easily with the element of secrecy dear to the private life of the Muslim, and this idea is reflected in the architectural arrangement both in elevation and in plan.31

This house type supposedly fulfills, by its introverted plan, Islamic social demands. The unified facade of houses allegedly bring together members of the community and helps to establish social harmony within cities. One may also find that this house plan carries with it, in addition to other cultural symbols, a cosmic meaning, because it enables its residents to communicate with the entire universe but not with other people.32 In the face of such rampant generalization Raymond supplies us with two critical observations that need be

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31 Ibid.

remembered in any discussion concerning the “typical” house form in Islamic domains.  

1. The origins of the central courtyard house are Mediterranean. Plans of courtyard houses have been excavated throughout the Middle East and along the Mediterranean basin and dated as early as three thousand B.C.E. The reasons for its widespread dispersion derive from climatic conditions and cultural demands that existed in the region long before the emergence of Islam. 

2. Houses and other dwelling solutions of lower classes of society were not always documented, and in the same manner may have been less durable, and thus left us with fewer material findings than middle and upper class house types. I referred earlier to the inherent bias regarding the alleged typical house plan in historical cities.

The methodology applied in this research has helped to define few types of houses within the urban context. Most of the houses were not of the central courtyard type. But even if we cast aside all other options save the central courtyard house, we should remember that this plan pre-dates the introduction of Islam to the area. This in itself does not negate the religious realm as a crucial factor but rather indicates that the reasons are by far more general than just applying Islamic codes. It is indeed within the socio-cultural sphere that one can perhaps but explain the abundance of this house form. At the same time, it was a direct result of the climatic conditions. Indeed several studies have already demonstrated that the inner courtyard’s key function is to serve as a regulator and modifier of micro-climatic conditions of residential solutions in hot environments and arid and semi-arid climates. The introverted plan is a practical solution and

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33 Raymond, Grand villes arabes, 305ff.  
34 See for example the excavation at Catal Huyuk where a radio-carbon dating has established its earliest levels to 5600 B.C., J. Mellart, Catal Huyuk (London, 1967). See also a similar ground plan of houses in, L. Woolley, Ur of Chaldees (Ithaca, NY, 1982), (revised and updated edition by P.R.S. Moorey).  
morphological prop in shutting the house to outside effects such as excessive sunlight, hot winds and dust. Focusing on the climatic reasons for the development of house plans is not to be understood as minimizing or ignoring cultural aspects that have affected the morphology of dwelling places. The concept of the introverted house, with its various facilities and functions hidden from the outside world, is without dispute an expression of an outlook that stresses the role of the family as the primal social nucleus of a person’s life. It is also a perfect house form for cultures which aspire for privacy and the protection of the female side of the family from outsiders. These notions are not innovations introduced by Islam, as they were already existing throughout the Middle East and parts of the Mediterranean long before the seventh century. Thus, one may deduce that the view, so often expressed in various studies, of the cultural demands of Islam as the primary and critical reasons for the overwhelming occurrence of the courtyard house plan, is simplistic and misleading. In addition, the cities of the Syrian region, and elsewhere, as the Egyptian case demonstrates, featured many different plans and house forms. And what about places where no courtyard houses were found; should they be considered atypical? Are they to be considered non-Islamic? The case of Thulà in Yemen may serve as an example for a different urban reality. The houses depicted by Golvin and Formont in Thulà had no inner courtyard and more than that, the walls facing the streets were supplied with excessively wide windows.36 Within the confinements of climate, religious codes, other socio-cultural norms this was probably the best solution for the local population in Thulà.

The tendency to highlight the role of Islam and the omnipresence of the courtyard house is, more then anything else, an expression of a modelistic view. Models may be defined as selective approximations which, by the elimination of incidental detail, allow some fundamental, relevant or interesting aspects of the real world to appear in generalized form. Naturally, only by being unfaithful in some

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respect can a model represent its original. This in itself is not a vice, as generalizations are a product of many scientific works. But in regard to the house plan, as with many other traits of the physical urban manifestations within the Islamic world, the reduction to a single house plan has yielded a forbidden fruit. The courtyard house is not Islamic in its essence nor does it derive from any Islamic law. It is first and foremost the optimal dwelling solution found under climatic and other constraints, mostly within the expanded Middle East. Islamic societies inherited this house plan and adopted it in accordance with private needs and abilities. Stressing the role of Islam as a cultural factor is misleading, because under the vague heading of culture, other traits that have nothing to do with Islam coexist. The ongoing attempt to create a complete congruence between the Islamic sphere and the urban milieu through the prism of a house plan is not successful since Islam (if one can accept such a clumsy definition) is not the sole factor that shapes the urban landscape. The house plan is surely a morphological expression of culture and it is, as I have portrayed it in the current paper, highly affected by socio-cultural forces. But as culture itself, the house should not be defined under a sole characteristic. The plan, space and use of a house are malleable subjects. They keep changing according to our viewpoint, sometimes dramatically within the same society from one individual to another due to the fact that so many variables are responsible for the final outcome. The search for socio-cultural impact is far from over. But it is better to unburden ourselves of the many chimeras and postulates regarding the typical and a-typical house forms in the area.

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PART EIGHT

THE MAMLUKS IN OTTOMAN EGYPT
CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE WEALTH OF THE EGYPTIAN EMIRS AT THE END
OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

André Raymond

I

At the time when I was using the archives in Cairo to work on the
preparation of my book, Artisans et commerçants au Caire,1 I had the
occasion to note that the records of the Tribunal of Bāb al-ʿĀlī, where I was researching the estates of the artisans and merchants,
naturally also contained a wealth of information with regard to the
Egyptian emirs, whose estates were, generally speaking, set forth in
the records of the “military” (ʿaskariyya) section of the Tribunal.2 At
the time, I made a collection of those estates for the two periods,
each covering some 20 years, which then constituted the principal
object of my attention: 1679–1700 and 1776–1798.

I thought it would be of some interest to study some of those doc-
ments, those having to do with the years between 1679 and 1700,
because this important aspect of the ruling class—the financial means
that was at the disposal of its members—has not yet been addressed
in any systematic work. The basic studies which have been devoted
to that elite, especially those by S.J. Shaw, P.M. Holt, Michael
Winter, Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Jane Hathaway and Daniel Crecelius,3
cover other characteristics.

1 Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIème siècle, Damascus, IFD, 1974, 2 vols.;
reprinted in Cairo, IFAO, 1999.
2 The sample includes only three cases of liquidation of the estates of those emirs
in the qisma ʿarabyya of the Mahkama: Qayṭān Bey, vol. 60, 103, December 8, 1681;
ʿĀlī Bey, vol. 70, 266, February 15, 1693; Mūsā Aghā, vol. 64, p. 29, November
14, 1686.
3 S.J. Shaw, The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman
Egypt, Minneapolis, 1981; “The Mamluk Beylicate of Egypt”, in The Mamluks in
For the purpose of composing this compendium, I have perused Vols. 75 to 89 of the *qisma 'askariyya* of the Tribunal of Bāb al-'Ālī (for the years 1679–1700). From those volumes, I have studied the estates of 14 beys and 99 aghas and *katkhudās* of the seven militias, for a total of 113 high-ranking dignitaries of Ottoman Egypt. I am certain that this is only the outline of the study which should be devoted to the problem, given that this enumeration is neither as exhaustive nor as detailed as would be desired, and also given that the sample used was too small in dimensions to enable the drawing of truly definitive conclusions in figures. Nonetheless, I hope that this study will constitute an apposite starting point for the consideration of this question, and will encourage scholars to develop their investigations in this direction—that is, by consulting the archives of the Tribunals, which have already been widely exploited in the study of the native society and economy, and are naturally likely to provide no less valuable information on the ruling class.

II *The wealth of the emirs at the end of the seventeenth century*

The data relative to the estates of the emirs studied, dating from the years 1679–1700, may be summarized in the following table, in which the amounts are expressed in constant paras, based on the value of that silver currency in the years 1681–1688.

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4 The beys (*sanjaq bey*), successors of the great Mamluk emirs, governed provinces and exercised the highest powers in Egypt. The aghas were the commanding officers of the regiments (of which there were seven in Cairo). In actual fact, the command of the *ojaqs* was exercised by their assistants, the *katkhudās* (or *kāhyas*). See the works cited in the previous note.

5 The wealth of the emirs was evaluated according to the total assets, prior to the various deductions to which the estates were subject.

6 On the determination of a constant para, see *Artisans et commerçants au Caire*, LIII.
The first comment elicited by this table obviously concerns the vastness of the average overall wealth of the members of the ruling elite, which appears in all its glory if we compare these figures with those concerning individuals who belonged to “civilian society”. For the same period, the 468 estates of artisans and merchants which I studied in my *Artisans et commerçants* amount to an average of 138,272 paras—four times lower. It is true that our sampling of emirs naturally provides us with the most important estates, because it concerns the superior officers of the militias and the beys. It would be interesting to be able to access comparable information on the wealth of ordinary soldiers and mamluks; the comparison between those classes and the average strata of the urban population would be significant.7 Nonetheless, we may note that even the wealthier representatives of native society, the major merchants (*tujjār*) of coffee and textiles, were far from that level: the average of the 169 estates studied was 299,344 paras, just slightly over half the average estates of the emirs. The exploitation of Egypt and its active population (citizens and *fellahīn*) produced a surplus which generated far more wealth than commercial speculation.

Within the group studied, the superiority of the beys over the officers (estates five times as large) is quite striking, especially as the emirs included were not always the most powerful of the period. Only three of them appear in the list provided by P.M. Holt, which

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mentions the emirs who played the most important roles and political life and who may also be assumed to have been among the wealthiest. These are Qaytās Bey, d. 1691, who left an estate in the amount of 5,978,617 paras (Holt, 88); Ḥusayn Bey, dişinārār, d. 1696, whose estate totaled 134,308 paras (Holt, 32); Murād Bey, d. 1696, who left an estate amounting to 933,744 paras (Holt, 71). The most considerable estate recorded by us is that of Ibrāhīm Bey, son of Dhulfiqār Bey, amīr al-ḥajj, d. 1696, in the amount of 7,130,124 paras. This was an extremely important personage, to whom, by the way, Jabartī devotes an obituary notice. We may appreciate the vastness of such an estate by noting that Muṣṭafā, a tājir dealing in coffee, left, upon his death in 1695, an estate in the amount of 2,423,540 paras—the largest estate observed by us for a “civilian” during that period, at the end of the seventeenth century: that of the emir is three times as large.

Another striking characteristic is the great inequality of the wealth of the emirs whose estates we studied. The case of Yahyā Bey, whose estate, liquidated in 1681, amounted to only 4,170 paras, should no doubt be set aside, because he was only a follower (ṭābi‘) of the kakhkhaṭ (lieutenant) of Ḥutmān Pasha; it is possible that he had only been in Egypt for a limited time. On the other hand, Qaytās Bey mīr ḥāwā, d. 1681, left only a meager estate in the amount of 57,053 paras—definitely comparable to that of an average artisan or merchant from Cairo.

The superiority of the wealth of the beys, relative to that of the superior officers of the militias, appears extremely important. While there is only a rather limited number of beys in the sample proposed, the gap nonetheless appears significant. If we rank the largest of the estates, we see that the richest of the officers (Muṣṭafā Aḡā of the ‘azzab corps, d. 1691) ranks no higher than fourth (with an estate in the amount of 2.8 million paras)—rather far behind Ibrāhīm Bey (7.1 million), Qaytās Bey (5.9 million) and Dhulfiqār Bey (2.9

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10 Mahkama, 76, 578, November 22, 1681; q. ‘arabīyya, 60, 103, December 8, 1681.
The wealth of the Egyptian emirs

In the course of my study of the Mahkama records, I turned my interest to the superior officers of the Cairo militias: the aghas (regimental commanders) and the katkhudās (lieutenant colonels) who were effectively in charge of the ojaqs. The 99 estates compiled by me were those of superior officers in the seven militias then existing in Cairo, all of which (albeit unequally) were represented in the sample: the mutafarriaq militia (32 aghas and 1 katkhudā); the janissaries, or mustahfīzān militia (eight aghas and 16 katkhudās); the ‘azab (10 aghas and 13 katkhudās); the gamāliyya (four aghas and two katkhudās); the chāvishīyya (three aghas and three katkhudās); the tufukchīyān (two aghas and three katkhudās); the charākisa (two aghas).13 These numbers certainly confirm the extreme numerical superiority of the three principal ojaqs: those of the mutafarriaq, the mustahfīzān and the ‘azab.

The modest size of the sample studied hardly permits us to draw conclusions with regard to the greater wealth of the katkhudās, relative to that of the aghas: an average of 415,737 paras (for 38 individuals), as against 331,880 (for 61 persons). The difference does not appear to be very significant. However, it is slightly more noticeable

11 Mahkama, 94, 441, 28 May 1691; 89, 382, 25 October 1696; 83, 8, 15 August 1691; 80, 411, 7 September 1687.


among the janissaries, where the average wealth of the aghas was 446,822 paras, and that of the kathkudás 592,433 paras. This superiority would seem logical, given that the kathkudás constituted the element which effectively commanded the ojaq at the time.

By contrast, the difference between the average amount of the estates of the janissaries (543,896 for 24 persons) and the ’azab (473,555 for 23 individuals), relative to that of the remaining officers of the other five ojaqs (232,643 for 52 persons), may well reflect the greater financial power of the officers of the two ojaqs which, at that time, were in the final stages of ensuring control over the urban population, by means of protection (himáya), and that of production and commerce, by means of tax farming (muqāta‘a).14 From this point of view, the relative wealth enjoyed by the kathkudás of the janissaries, who controlled the ojaq and its resources and were very actively engaged in commercial speculation, particularly the coffee trade, appears quite significant: the average figure of 592,433 paras should again be compared with the average fortune of a Cairo trader (tājir) at the same time: 299,344 paras.

The majority of the “millionaires” (four and five respectively) came from the ’azab and the janissaries, as against only one each for the shawishya, the mutafarriqa and the charākisa. The richest of all, Muṣṭafā Aghā of the ’azab corps, left an estate in the amount of 2,891,928 paras upon his death in 1691—the largest of our sample, at least were the officers are concerned.15 The details of the estates indicate that it essentially consisted of property owned by the officer in 16 villages, held in ištizām; part of the estate, however, consisted of merchandise which had arrived from Turkey—a fact which may indicate a certain degree of implication in commercial activity. This is even more evident in the case of Sulaymān “Kūrji”, kathkudā of the mustahfīzān, the wealthiest of the janissary officers, whose estate, liquidated in 1690, amounted to 2,878,062 paras. Over and above the property related to his possession of four villages held in ištizām, this officer left a large quantity of coffee and real estate, which attested to his interest in commercial activities: a bathhouse, a mill (tāhūn), an caravanserai (sukāla) and a rabā‘ (building acquired for rental pur-

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14 On this question, see Artisans et commerçants au Caire.
15 Mahkama, 84, 441, 28 May 1691; 462, 13 June 1691.
poses) in the Shawwā’īn quarter and another wakāla in Būlāq.16 Sulaymān “Kūrji” is the worthy predecessor of those who were to become the great emirs of the Qāzdaghlī “house” of janissaries at the beginning of the following century, on even a grander scale: Hasan Katkhudā (estate in the amount of 4.5 million paras in 1715) and especially “Uthmān Katkhudā (estate in the amount of 21.5 million paras in 1736).17

It is interesting to note, with regard to officers as well as beys, the remarkable disparity of wealth disclosed by our sample—from the modest estate of 4,005 paras left by Muḥammad, agha of the mutafarriqa in 1694 to that of Muṣṭafā Aghā of the ‘azāb, cited above (2,891,928 paras in 1691).18 This disparity is accentuated in the ojaq of the janissaries, where the smallest estate is 14,905 paras (Salīm Katkhudā, in 1686) and the largest, that of Sulaymān “Kūrji”, is 2,878,062 paras in 1690. Given the fact that our sample gives us no data with regard to simple soldiers, we must conclude that military society was as inegalitarian as “civilian” society.19

III Wealth and places of residence

It would be interesting, in order to improve our knowledge of the general structure of the city, to be able to cross-match two sets of data: those which concern the wealth of the emirs and those which concern their places of residence within Cairo. Part of the documents which I studied in the Maḥkama archives actually mention the “addresses” of the emirs whose estates were liquidated. Unfortunately, this applies to only a few of the estates of beys: only four out of 14. This low proportion, in a sample which is already small, does not enable the drawing of general conclusions. I shall therefore merely mention that Darwīṣh Bey, who died in 1690 (estate in the amount of 1,163,647 paras), lived in Darb al-Gamānī (Description de l’Egypte:

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16 Maḥkama, 83, 93, 21 January 1690.
18 Maḥkama, 87, 465, 6 August 1694; 84, 462, 13 June 1691.
19 Maḥkama, 79, 57, 21 February 1686; 83, 93, 21 January 1690. As we know, this inequality was especially pronounced among “civilians”; see Artisans et commerçants au Caire, 373–378; see also C. Establet, J.-P. Pascual and A. Raymond, “La mesure de l’inégalité dans la société ottomane”, JESHO, 37 (1994).
46 R 10, near Birkat al-Fil; Qaytās Bey, who died in 1691 (estate in the amount of 5,978,617 paras), lived in Qanāṭīr al-Sibā'(Description: 252 U 13); Saлим Bey, who died in 1692 (estate in the amount of 2,482,922 paras), lived in Khurunfish (Description: 164 G 7) within Qāhirah; Husayn Bey, who died in 1696 (estate in the amount of 134,308 paras), lived in the Muğaffar quarter (Description: 124 T 8, near Birkat al-Fil).20 Two of the entries in this short list mention Birkat al-Fil, but there is no sensible way of exploiting this fact.

The situation is more favorable with regard to the militia officers, where 50 (one-half) of the estates studied between 1679 and 1700 provide the information necessary with regard to domiciles. Although the sample is limited, it allows us to propose certain general tendencies. These 50 documents concern 17 mutafarriqa, 15 'azab, nine janissaries, three gamaliyya and two representatives of each of the other three ojaqs. The following table summarizes these data, according to the various large areas of the city: Qāhirah, the southern region, the western region, and, within those regions, according to the characteristic areas:21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 16.2. The residences of the militia officers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qāhirah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern region</td>
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<tr>
<td>of which, Darb al-Ḵāmar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citadel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birkat al-Fil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western region</td>
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<tr>
<td>of which, Qanāṭīr al-Sibā’</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Abdīn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>northern section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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20 Makhkamah, 84, 112, 22 October 1690; 85, 8, 15 August 1691; 86, 3, 31 August 1692; 90, 514, 2 June 1696.

21 I divide the city into three large parts: Qāhirah, the Fatimid foundations of the city, within the walls and east of the Khalīf; the southern area, beyond the southern Fatimid wall (Bāb Zuwayla), east of the Khalīf (Canal); the western area, beyond the Khalīf.
The distribution of residences which may thus be sketched falls within the framework of a development which had begun during the Mamluk era and continued throughout the first two centuries of the Ottoman period, as I had the occasion of pointing out in my article “The residential districts of Cairo’s elite”.22

The tendency to leave the Qâhira region, which henceforth became a center of economic activity and a residential area for the native population, is evident in this sample. It is marked, on one hand, by the small number of officers living there, and, on the other, by the mediocrity of their wealth: the average of 168,679 paras is barely higher than the average of the estates of “civilians” during the same period (138,272 paras). This move out of Qâhira by the elite was somewhat masked by the existence of “little houses”—residences which were in some way “secondary”, which could be used by the emirs to store part of their wealth in order to protect it in case of misfortune, and, if necessary, as a place of refuge. Still, none of the wealthier officers maintained a dwelling place in the old part of the city.

The southern area of Cairo, outside the Fatimid walls, remained the area most preferred by the officers. Their residences, however, were primarily concentrated in the region of Birkat al-Fil, which—as early as the fifteenth century—had begun to be the elite quarter. In the rest of that area, the decline in the number of emirs’ residences was quite marked. To the south of Bâb Zuwayla and in Darb al-Ahmar, as well as around the Citadel, the number of residences owned by superior officers was small—six and seven respectively; these, moreover, were officers of relatively modest wealth, as we will see by comparing the average amount of their estates (124,208 and 95,691) with the average amount for the total sample. It seems logical to explain this gradual decrease in terms of the growth of the native population in the southern region of the city—a population which was also relatively poor—and the development of business activity in that region, which motivated the officers to move else-

22 A. Raymond, “The residential districts of Cairo’s elite”, in The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society, 207–223. In that publication, referring to the end of the seventeenth century, I supplemented the Makhatta documents with information from various chronicles. Accordingly, the figures are not comparable with those of the present study.
where. With regard to the regions adjacent to the Citadel, there was undoubtedly an additional, and understandable, hesitancy to settle in a region often disturbed by demonstrations among the common people and commotion among the military forces, inspired by the presence of the ruling power (the Pasha’s palace) and the large barracks; this region may have been preferred as a place of residence by ordinary soldiers.

The high-ranking officers were concentrated around Birkat al-Fil (Elephant’s Pool), as shown by the number and importance of the estates registered. The region around that pool, which was flooded whenever the Nile waters rose—an occasion of festivity, as described by chroniclers and travelers—was favored by this military elite: 20 individuals (out of 50) whose estates averaged 530,719 paras, far above the overall average for the sample (431,998 paras). Four of the seven “millionaire” officers appearing in the sample had residences which were located around the Birka. The residences were particularly numerous in several of the streets which surrounded the pool: Ḥabbānīyya (66 Q 10), three officers; Darb al-Gamāmīz (46 R 10), five officers (this was apparently the most prestigious address); Qawsūn (74 R 7), five officers; Sheikh al-Zalām (138 S 8); Hadrat al-Hanna (near 183 U 9). It may be assumed that, over and above the pleasant surroundings (a pool with greenery), the officers were attracted by the convenience of a site relatively close to the Citadel—a center of power and the location of the janissary and ‘Azab barracks, which naturally facilitated their incessant movements back and forth between their residences and the Qal’a. It is interesting to note that Birkat al-Fil was particularly popular as a place of residence for the janissary officers: out of nine whose dwelling I could identify, seven lived in that quarter. By contrast, of the 15 superior officers of the ‘Azab appearing in the sample, only three lived near Birkat al-Fil. This attests to a double tropism, positive and negative: we cannot assume that it was due to pure chance, or that there was no collective “regimental” behavior in the case of these two ojaqs. It is entirely logical that the officers of the same ojaq would have a tendency to take up residence in the same quarter. It is just as interesting to observe that Birkat al-Fil—which was to remain the favorite place of residence of the ojaq officers until the end of the eighteenth century—was almost entirely closed to natives, even those belonging to the elite. Only a very few merchants resided there. That quarter, from this point of view, was apparently more tightly closed, during
the eighteenth century, than Azbakiyya, which was then also inhabited by some rich members of native society.\textsuperscript{23}

The existence of a large core of residences maintained by members of the military elite in the southern part of the western area of Cairo, beyond the Khali{j}, constituted the continuation of a movement which had begun during the Mamluk era. The largest group was located in the area of Qanatir al-Sib\textsuperscript{a} (\textit{Description}, 252 U 13) and Suwayqat al-Lal\textsuperscript{a} (115 T 12), with a total of seven residences maintained by officers whose estates averaged 768,588 paras, a figure higher than that in the area of Birkat al-Fil; nonetheless, the limited number of documents makes it impossible to draw conclusions in this matter as well. Nor can we do so with regard to the ‘Abdun quarter (138 O/P 11), which had only three residences, although the average amount of the estates pertaining to those residences was quite high (958,071 paras). This entire region was subsequently to undergo a great degree of development and to become, during the eighteenth century, one of the principal places of residence of the military elite. In the course of research on the last two decades of the eighteenth century, I succeeded in locating, within that area, 18 of the 69 officers located, or more than one-quarter.\textsuperscript{24}

The present study, however, indicates that the trend by members of the ruling elite to move into the northern half of that western area (especially the area adjacent to Azbakiyya) had not yet begun at the end of the seventeenth century. In my sample, this region is only mentioned once, in connection with the estate of Iqbal, agha of the chawishiyya, whose domicile was located at the extreme southern end of that area (M 10). Moreover, this was only a relatively mediocre estate, in the amount of 303,576 paras.\textsuperscript{25} The movement which was to lead the ruling elite to colonize the Azbakiyya area had not yet begun; at the time, the merchant bourgeoisie of Cairo maintained summer residences in that quarter, which subsequently became permanent homes. This migration would not develop until after 1725; still, it was rapid enough for the situation to have entirely

\textsuperscript{23} Certainly, however, toward the end of the century, Azbakiyya was increasingly taken over by members of the Mamluk elite.

\textsuperscript{24} Results of an extensive search of the Makkama archives for documents related to the estates of the emirs between 1775 and 1798.

\textsuperscript{25} Makkama, 90, 468, 24 May 1696.
changed by the end of the eighteenth century. In my study of the estates of officers between 1775 and 1798, I noted that the northern part of the western area been included seven residences (of a total of 69 estates studied).

In my opinion, these considerations—which admittedly must remain rather general, in view of the incomplete nature of the available documentation—appear to confirm that the location of the residences maintained by members of the ruling elite complied with a particular type of logic. Many of the residences were concentrated in the two (neighboring) areas of Birkat al-Fil and Qanāṭir al-Sibā’—a total of 27 of the 50 residences studied—far from the areas where the native population lived and worked; in this respect, some type of segregation was very strictly observed. On the other hand, the choice of location of the residences maintained by members of the ruling caste was largely determined by the extent of their personal fortunes, with the preferred quarters inhabited by the richer elements of that caste. With few exceptions, only the less well-to-do members of the elite resigned themselves to living in less prestigious quarters, where they found themselves in contact with the native population; this proximity was undoubtedly one of the reasons for the shunning of those areas by the wealthiest members of that caste.
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‘Abd al-Raḥmān Katkhudā was one of the most important Egyptian amirs of the eighteenth century, yet his career remains somewhat out of focus. His longevity was itself unusual, but he is best known for the large number of constructions with which he endowed Cairo in the period 1744–1765.1 His lineage and the incredible wealth he accumulated would suggest that he would have also assumed the leadership of his ḏawāb (faction), but this was not the case. Following the lead of the famous late eighteenth century Egyptian historian al-Jabarti, whose career overlapped with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Katkhudā for approximately the last two decades of the amir’s life, modern historians have concluded that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Katkhudā eschewed the rough and tumble of political life and preferred to devote his energies, and considerable wealth, to the large number of constructions which have beautified Cairo and immortalized his name. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s seeming unwillingness to participate actively in the political plots and counter-plots that remained a constant during his long career have been said to be a function of his character, that is, a preference for the cultural life, a desire to avoid the political arena, and a devotion to construction.2 This paper will question that view and suggest that it was the political culture of the prevailing Mamluk

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2 The best review of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s career is André Raymond’s Le Caire des Janissaires: L’apogée de la ville ottomane sous ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Katkhudā (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1995). Raymond notes ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s superior education, his ability to draw and understand architectural plans, and his command of Arabic. He also feels that the manner in which ‘Abd al-Raḥmān led the Janissaries demonstrates his lack of interest in politics and preference for construction. See page 42.
system of the period that prevented him from actively pursuing the leadership of his powerful political faction, a faction that dominated the political and economic life of Egypt from the 1730s to the arrival of French forces in 1798.

We are not certain of the exact date of 'Abd al-Raḥmān’s birth, but it is usually attributed to a period shortly before the death of his father, Ḥasan Jāwīsh al-Qazdughli, in 1716. His mother, Ḍu‘aymīn, the daughter of the amir Ḥasan Shurbāji Mustaḥfīzān, was the free-born wife of Ḥasan Jāwīsh, so ‘Abd al-Raḥmān was himself a free-born Muslim. I believe this freeborn status made the difference in his subsequent career.

In the late seventeenth century the politically astute Ḥasan, the agha of the Gönülliyen corps, had formed a triumvirate with his son-in-law Ismā‘īl Bey al-Daftardār and his former sarrāj Muṣṭafā al-Qazdughli to dominate the political life of Cairo. Ḥasan Aghā had been instrumental in placing Muṣṭafā al-Qazdughli as katkhudā of the most powerful Ottoman regiment in Egypt; the Janissary corps controlled the most lucrative tax farms, particularly the customs houses of the ports, was heavily involved in the extensive coffee trade of the Red Sea, and acquired significant payments from the estates of deceased corps members and from local and foreign merchants upon whom it imposed a “protection” tax. It is to Muṣṭafā Katkhudā, who died in 1704, the same year as his patron Ḥasan Aghā, that the Qazdughli faction traces its roots.

The Qazdughli faction split into two upon the death of Muṣṭafā Katkhudā in 1704. One branch was headed by his manumitted mam-lūk Ḥasan Jāwīsh, who remained dominant; the other was headed by Sulaymān Jāwīsh, another of Muṣṭafā Katkhudā’s freed mam-lūks.3 The base of Qazdughli power remained firmly established in the Janissary corps and upon the death of Ḥasan Jāwīsh in 1716 the faction, and the Janissary corps, was headed by ‘Uthmān Katkhudā al-Qazdughli.4

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When Hasan Jāwīsh died, his infant son ‘Abd al-Raḥmān suffered the first of many disappointments that marked his career and which have been attributed to his passivity. His father’s senior mamluk, ‘Uthmān al-Qazdughli, married his master’s widow Āmina, the mother of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, and withheld the considerable inheritance due the infant ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. In maintaining control of the Janissary corps ‘Uthmān, who was katkhudā, designated his own freed mamluk Sulaymān al-Çuhadar the bash odabashi of the unit and executor of his will, and in 1734 made his stepson a jāwīsh in the unit.5

‘Uthmān Katkhudā had a hand in a wide range of economic activities that made him a very wealthy amir and permitted him to undertake numerous constructions. He was actively involved in the lucrative trade between Cairo and the Hijaz, held many rural tax farms, gained control of the customs houses of Egypt’s ports, and as a result of the great plague of 1736 acquired much from the inheritances of the members of his corps and of those rich merchants who died without heirs. He also profited from offering his protection to the foreign merchant community, particularly to the French. His fortune was therefore considerable when he was assassinated in the plot that was organized by the Ottoman governor Bākir Pasha in November 1736.6

Upon the death of ‘Uthmān Katkhudā his freed slave and heir, and executor of his will, Sulaymān Jāwīsh, became head of the Qazdughli faction and laid his hand on his master’s entire fortune, leaving ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, who was then around 21 years of age, a rural tax farm producing only four purses, or 100,000 misfīddas profit per year. Finding no support among his Janissary comrades, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in disgust transferred to the ‘Azab corps, vowing not to return to the Janissary corps while Sulaymān Jāwīsh was alive.7


In 1739 Sulaymân Jáwîsh was named sîrdâr of the troops assigned to guard the pilgrims on their journey to the Hijaz. Suffering from syphilis, and infirm, he was carried on a palanquin to Birkat al-Ḥâjî, the starting point for the departure of the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan. He was accompanied by his wife, the Sît Shuwaykar, the former concubine of his deceased master ʿUthmân Katkhudâ. Sulaymân Aghâ, the katkhudâ of the Jáwîshîyya and freed mamluk of ʿAbd al-Raḥmân’s father Ḥasan Jáwîsh, who had married ʿAbd al-Raḥmân’s mother ʿĀmina after the assassination of ʿUthmân Katkhudâ in 1736, was present in Sulaymân Jáwîsh’s tent when he expired. As described by al-Damurdâshī, Sulaymân Aghâ then “took the registers from the assistant (mustawfî) and put them in a trunk. He took the keys to the other trunks, boxes and crates and informed ʿUthmân Bey Zayn al-Faqîr (the amîr al-Ḥâjî). He then brought his heir, ʿAbd al-Raḥmân Jáwîsh, and bestowed upon him the robe of the sîrdâr of the Mustaḥfizân guards. Sulaymân Aghâ handed him the keys, and he took charge of the pavillion with its furnishings, necessities, ground coffee and all other comestibles.” Al-Damurdâshî comments that “This was a gift of the powerful Lord, given without any effort [on ‘Abd al-Raḥmân Jáwîsh’s part].” While ʿAbd al-Raḥmân left the ‘Azab corps and returned to an important post within the Janissary regiment, the estates of ʿUthmân Katkhudâ and Sulaymân Jáwîsh were not settled until 1740 when ʿAbd al-Raḥmân had returned from his service with the troops guarding the pilgrims. Shuwaykar, Sulaymân Jáwîsh’s widow, was taken by İbrâhîm Katkhudâ, one of Sulaymân Jáwîsh’s manumitted mamluks who would assume the leadership of the main Qazdughli faction.

Although ʿAbd al-Raḥmân finally came into the immense delayed inheritances of his father, ʿUthmân Katkhudâ, and Sulaymân Jáwîsh Čuhadâr in 1740 he was unable to claim the leadership of the Qazdughli amirs, which instead was seized by the ambitious and

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At least part of ʿUthmân Katkhudâ’s fortune by law should have gone to the son of his master Ḥasan Jáwîsh, that is, to ʿAbd al-Raḥmân Katkhudâ. See André Raymond, La Caire des Janissaires, 34. Hathaway, op. cit., 79, notes that Sulaymân Jáwîsh had received an imperial order entitling him to inherit ʿUthmân Katkhudâ’s tax farms, some of which he was to divide among the other heirs, including ʿAbd al-Raḥmân.

8 Al-Damurdâshî, op. cit., 320.
9 Loc. cit.
10 Ibid., 380 cites Shuwaykar as one of İbrâhîm Katkhudâ’s wives.
astute Ibrāhīm Jāwīsh. Some historians have sympathized with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s fate on the death of his father in 1716, but ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s misfortune was not unusual, whether among the general public or the mamluks. Several points can be made to explain the events surrounding the transfer of power and wealth from Ḥasan Jāwīsh to ʿUthmān Katkhudā.

While recognizing that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān had a clear claim to his legal share of his father’s inheritance, it must be remembered that he was still a child at the time of his father’s death; he had neither the age, political acumen, retainers of his own well placed to leverage his claim to his father’s succession, nor the political power to challenge his father’s senior freed mamluk. Nor was he able to contest Sulaymān Jāwīsh’s usurpation of the inheritance of his master ʿUthmān Katkhudā. Finding little support within his Janissary ranks, he transferred to the ‘Azab corps and attempted to establish friendly relations with the remnants of the defeated Qāsimī faction. The problems faced by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, and his frustrated claim to his rightful inheritance, can be explained satisfactorily with reference to the prevailing mamluk culture of that period.

Within Mamluk political culture of the eighteenth century the senior manumitted slave held a special position within his master’s household. It was generally he to whom the rest of the household looked for leadership when the head of the household died. He usually was connected by marriage to his master. He frequently was given one of his master’s daughters or concubines in marriage and, on the death of his master, married his master’s senior wife, moved into his master’s house, and, as in the case of ʿUthmān Katkhudā, acquired much of his master’s wealth and positions. As the recognized new head of the household he was expected to maintain the “open house” for the faction and to maintain or expand the faction’s control of positions and revenues within the province’s administration. All of these aspects of a “succession” can be seen in the

11 ʿUthmān Katkhudā’s partial inheritance amounted to 21.5 million paraṣ, while Sulaymān Jāwīsh Čuhaṭār’s partial inheritance totalled 6.8 million paraṣ, most probably making ‘Abd al-Raḥmān the richest man in Egypt. It should be remembered that these figures do not include all of the deceased amirs’ passive assets, such as potential income from tax farms and other sources of income controlled but not owned. See Raymond, Le Caire des Janissaires, 36.

12 For the meaning of “open house” see David Ayalon, “Studies in al-Jabartī I:
career of Dhū al-Faqār Aghā, the retainer of Qānishaw Bey al-Qāsimī. Jabartī notes that upon the death of Qānishaw Bey in 1715, “his offices of amir and sancak bey were given to his retainer Dhū ’l-Faqār Aghā, who married his daughter and maintained the splendor of his master’s house.”13 Another example would be Muṣṭafā Katkhudā, who acquired all the inheritance of his master ʿAlī Bey Zayn al-Faqār (died in 1734), including his widow.14 This special relationship between a master and his freed mamluk was consolidated in several ways, given legal status, and became a tradition.

First of all, the bond between master and slave remained unbreakable even after the manumission of the slave. At that moment the master often gave a woman of his own harem, either a concubine or his own daughter, in marriage to his slave. Examples abound throughout the century of the marriages of favorite manumitted mamluks being arranged by their masters.15 Another tradition was for the most powerful (usually the senior) manumitted mamluk to marry the senior wife of the deceased master, as ʿUthmān Katkhudā did in marrying ʿAbd al-Rahmān’s mother Āmina.16 The other wives or favorite concubines of the deceased master were taken by other of his powerful manumitted slaves; some of these, such as Shuwaykar or Naʿīsa Khātūn, the famous wife of ʿAlī Bey who was claimed by Murād Bey following the death of ʿAlī Bey, played significant roles in the political careers of their new husbands, bringing considerable wealth and legitimacy to their new households.

13 Al-Jabartī, *op. cit.*, vol. I, 182. Likewise, when ʿAlī Bey Zayn al-Faqār died in 1146 (1733–34), Muṣṭafā Katkhudā acquired all his inheritance, including retainers and mamluks, paid the hulwan for his tax farm villages, and married his master’s widow. See al-Damurdatī, *op. cit.*, 319.
14 Al-Damurdatī, *op. cit.*, 319.
16 Upon the death of ʿAlī Bey Bulūt Kapān in 1773 Muḥammad Bey Abū al-Dhahab took his master’s senior wife ʿA’isha Qādin in marriage and permitted his
The tradition of the senior manumitted mamluk being brought closer to the master of the household through marriage with one of the chosen women of the master’s harem was not just a reward to a favorite, but was meant to provide continuity and protection to the household. That this was a tradition nurtured by mamluk grandees themselves can be seen in the stipulations they frequently included in the documents (waqfiyyât) establishing their awqâf. It is common to find among the stipulations that the senior manumitted slave is named supervisor (nâzîr) of the waqf, even when children of the donor/master are cited as beneficiaries.\(^{17}\) It is clear that the children could not defend the wealth and property endowed in their father’s waqf as well as a senior, well-placed manumitted mamluk amir. It is equally clear that a freeborn son, even one who had reached manhood, did not have the leverage and power to protect the family’s inheritance against the increasingly frequent usurpations of the inheritance of deceased amirs as the century unfolded. ‘Abd al-Râhmân Katkhudâ is a good example, for he would not have acquired the fortune he came to possess without the intervention at a propitious moment by his father’s freed mamluk Sulaymân Aghâ, who was his stepfather. An amir often designated his senior manumitted mamluk to act as supervisor of his waqf with the clear intention that this was a better way to hold the inheritance together and to insure its benefits to his wives and children. Moreover, in the lawless decades following the death of Muhammad Bey Abû al-Dhahab in 1775 mamluks frequently usurped the inheritances of their deceased colleagues and of citizens alike. It was a particularly tumultuous time.

Of the pandemic plague of 1790–1791 which killed off so many citizens, among them entire mamluk households, al-Jabarti mentioned that “It happened that succession was transferred three times in one own mamluk Murâd Bey to marry ‘Âlî Bey’s second wife, the famous Nafisa Qâdîn, ‘Âlî’s was the freed slave of ‘Âlî Bey’s master, the famous Ibrâhîm Katkhudâ. ‘Âlî Bey’s other two wives were Munawwar Khâtûn bint ‘Abdallâh al-Baydâ and Gulsan bint ‘Abdallâh al-Baydâ. This information is recorded in ‘Âlî Bey’s waqfiyya, preserved as Number 743 in the Ministry of Awqâf in Cairo. See also Crecelius, \textit{op. cit.}, 116–17.\(^{17}\) Many \textit{waqfiyyât} include this stipulation, even stipulating that the eldest surviving mamluk should always hold the supervision of the \textit{waqf}. Jabarti, vol. II, 352–53, gives an example of a mamluk taking care of the family of his deceased master, noting that Muhammad Aghâ al-Bûrîdî married his master’s widow and took care of his stepsons.
week.\(^{18}\) When the plague had passed and the Ottoman-supported government of Cairo, including virtually the entire household of Ismā‘īl Bey the shaykh al-balad, had been carried away, the forces of Ibrāhīm Bey and Murād Bey returned to Cairo. Al-Jabarti describes the return of the rebel amirs thusly:

The amirs entered their houses and spent the night there, forgetting what had happened, for in most of the houses that had been occupied by amirs who had died of the plague, their wives had remained in them, while most of the wives of those who had been absent had died. Then when they returned, they found the houses populated by women, servant girls and slaves, so they married them and renewed their beds and made their wedding feasts. Whoever had no house, entered whichever house he liked best and took it with everything in it without hindrance. He sat in the places of the men and awaited the completion of the waiting period, if any of it remained. So God bequeathed to them their land and houses, their wealth and their wives.\(^{19}\)

Although ‘Uthmān Katkhudā acted illegally when he denied ‘Abd al-Raḥmān his inheritance and had no clear intent to benefit his young stepson, his actions are understandable within the context of mamluk political culture in eighteenth century Egypt. Sulaymān Jāwīsh likewise disregarded the rules of inheritance to usurp the inheritance of his master ‘Uthmān Katkhudā. That Sulaymān Aghā would restore the lost inheritance to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān upon Sulaymān Jāwīsh’s death in 1739 demonstrates that Sulaymān Aghā felt that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān had been denied his share of the inheritance of his father, and he was fulfilling an obligation to the son of his deceased master Ḥasan Jāwīsh. Was Sulaymān Aghā acting in an altruistic manner, or in self-interest? By turning Sulaymān Jāwīsh’s fortune over to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, he was insuring that his own wife Amina (‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s mother) and stepson now had one of the grandest fortunes in Egypt.

The leadership of the Janissary corps, and of the Qazdughli faction whose base of power was within the corps, now fell to Ibrāhīm Jāwīsh, the manumitted slave of the deceased Sulaymān Jāwīsh Çuhadar. This paper will not examine the duumvirate that Ibrāhīm Jāwīsh formed with the Jūlī leader Riḍwān, the katkhudā of the ‘Azab

\(^{18}\) Al-Jabarti, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. II, 315.

\(^{19}\) \textit{Ibid.}, vol. II, 321.
PROBLEMS OF 'ABD AL-RAḤMĀN KATKHUDĀ’S LEADERSHIP

corps, or the transformation for which Ibrāḥīm Jāwīsh and Rīḍwān Katkhudā are responsible in appointing their mamluks not only to positions within their respective corps, but to the beylicate. Instead, it shall continue to examine the relationship between 'Abd al-Raḥmān Katkhudā and the succession of Qazdughli leaders.

With Rīḍwān Katkhudā as a junior, one might almost say silent, partner, Ibrāḥīm Jāwīsh dominated the politics of the 1740s and the early 1750s and controlled a great portion of the revenues of the richest of Ottoman provinces. The contemporary historian al-Damurdāshī remarked that, “The leadership of Egypt devolved upon Ibrāḥīm Katkhudā Qazdughli and Rīḍwān Katkhudā al-Julfī. Everything first went to Ibrāḥīm Katkhudā Qazdughli, whether the spice revenues, bribes, or the like, and then he gave one-third to Rīḍwān Katkhudā al-Julfī.”20 Although in possession of the largest fortune in Egypt, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān was denied an active political life by the imposing will of Ibrāḥīm Jāwīsh and contented himself with the income from the customs revenues of Alexandria, which the Janissaries held as a tax farm, and from his association with the Jewish and foreign (particularly French) merchant communities from whom he extracted an income in return for his “protection.”21 During the 1740s ‘Abd al-Raḥmān accompanied several pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina in his capacity as sirdār of the troops guarding the pilgrims and began the massive building program that left Cairo and environs with so many religious edifices, both restored and newly constructed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān played no direct role in the continuing plots and counterplots of the 1740s which saw the elimination of Ibrāḥīm Jāwīsh’s rivals such as the Qaṭāmishiyya and Damiyāṭiyya factions, the flight of Uṯmān Bey Dhū al-Fiqr and the deposition of the governor Rāḥib Pasha in 1748, but was said to instigate many of these conflicts.22

20 Al-Damurdāshī, op. cit., 376. Much like ‘Abd al-Raḥmān himself, Rīḍwān Katkhudā refrained from taking an active role in the political life of the capital and devoted his energies to constructions of his own.
21 See, for example, Raymond, Le Caire des Janissaires, 37.
22 Al-Jabarti, op. cit., vol. II, 9–10. Raymond, Le Caire des Janissaires, 34, notes the remark made by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s own stepfather, Sulaɣmān Jāwīsh, who had secured ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s fortune for him. When he was exiled in 1765 by ‘Ali Bey, Sulaɣmān Jāwīsh was asked if he didn’t want to say something in his defense. “My son,” said Sulaɣmān Jāwīsh, “is a hypocrite who has endeavored to create dissention among people. He has deserved (his exile).”
Towards the end of 1747 Ibrāhīm Jawīš suddenly ordered the exile of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān to Mecca, where he stayed for slightly more than three years, when Ibrāhīm permitted his return to Cairo in the company of the amīr al-ḥājī ‘Alī Bey, one of his mamluks whom Ibrāhīm Katkhudā had raised to the beylicate. Upon his return Ibrāhīm, who himself had finally assumed the office of katkhudā of the Janissaries, named ‘Abd al-Raḥmān to that important office for a two year period. Ostensibly, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān was now the head of the Qazdughli faction and in control of the most powerful Ottoman corps in Egypt. While he continued to enrich himself by access to the many ways in which the Janissaries were able to exploit the rich revenue system in Egypt, he remained subordinate to Ibrāhīm Jawīš/Katkhudā until the latter’s death in November 1754. It was then that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Katkhudā married the oft-widowed Sitt Shuwaykar.

One can rightfully ask why ‘Abd al-Raḥmān was so easy to push around and why he seemed to accept exile to the Hijaz without resistance. The answer, I believe, lies in his status as a freeborn “outsider” within the network of Mamluk households. There are, of course, examples from the eighteenth century of the freeborn sons of Mamluk amirs being named to their father’s positions and assuming the control of their tax farms, but this was not the rule. Far more often, these sons were passed over, forgotten, or given a small stipend or tax farm to sustain them, but they seldom were accepted within the inner circles of Mamluk ranks and seldom played a significant role in the politics of the period. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Katkhudā was unique because of the enormous wealth he commanded, and even though Jabartī states that he purchased mamluks and concubines of his own, these were not placed in prominent positions within

23 Al-Damurdāshī does not state that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān was exiled, but that he decided to accompany the amīr al-ḥājī ‘Umar Bey on pilgrimage in 1747. He incorrectly has ‘Abd al-Raḥmān returning to Cairo in 1748 in the company of the amīr al-ḥājī ‘Alī Bey and being made katkhudā of the Janissaries for the next two years. See al-Damurdāshī, op. cit., 365; 372. In 1760 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān would name ‘Alī Bey the Shaykh al-balad. The chronicle by al-Jabartī is equally vague on this period. But Raymond used French consular reports for establishing a more accurate chronology for ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s career. Moreover, ‘Alī Bey served as amīr al-ḥājī in 1751, not in 1748. For a list of the amirs who led the pilgrimage, see Shaykh Ahmad al-Rashīdī, Husn al-Safā‘ wa ʾl-Ḥibbūḥ bi dhikr man Imārat al-Ḥājī, edited by Laylā ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Aḥmad al-Ṣafā‘ (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1980), particularly 217.
the Ottoman regimental corps or the beylicate controlled by mam-
luks. While he was the recognized head of both the faction and the
Janissaries between 1754 and 1765, the year of his second exile to
Mecca, the officers of the corps and the mamluks who dominated
the beylicate were not his own creatures, but rather the amirs
appointed by Ibrāhīm Katkhudā and Rīdwān Katkhudā.\footnote{24}

As a freeborn Muslim, ‘Abd al-Rāhīm Katkhudā had no khush-
dāshiyya to support his political ambitions, to defend him when under
attack, or to intervene as mediators on his behalf. Without a well
placed cadre of mamluks or khushdāshiyya willing to fight for him, he
was an easy person to manipulate. Despite his enormous wealth,
he could not defend himself against a powerful bey or regimental
commander. He accepted passively his exile in the Hijaz and was
rewarded for his submission to his fate when Ibrāhīm Katkhudā
brought him back to Cairo and installed him as katkhudā of the
Janissary corps. We might repeat al-Damurdāsh’s earlier remark
“This was a gift of the powerful Lord, given without any e-
fort [on ‘Abd al-Rāhīm Jāwīsh’s part].”

Upon the death of Ibrāhīm Katkhudā in November 1754 ‘Abd
al-Rāhīm could finally claim the leadership of the Qazdughli fac-
tion. With his influence in the Janissary corps and his enormous
wealth, he could prosper even greater than before by exploiting the
wide range of tax farms controlled by the faction’s high ranking
officers. The customs of Egypt’s busy ports, the “protection” taxes
that the Qazdughlis extracted from the various domestic and foreign
merchant communities, the revenues of the urban tax farms and the
vast revenues of the agricultural tax farms and awqāf now controlled
by Qazdughli beys and kāshīfs, all these sources and more were
manipulated by ‘Abd al-Rāhīm Katkhudā.

In May 1755, just six months after the death of Ibrāhīm Katkhudā,
‘Abd al-Rāhīm provoked his allies to attack and kill Rīdwān
Katkhudā al-Julīf. Perhaps remembering how he had been poorly
treated when his own father died, ‘Abd al-Rāhīm assured the sons

\footnote{24 Al-Damurdāsh, \textit{op. cit.}, 382 reveals that Ibrāhīm Katkhudā had sons and
grandsons who had been assigned the tax farms of villages before his death, yet
these did not engage in the contest for power. It was his mamluks and the mam-
luks of his ally Rīdwān Katkhudā al-Julīf who dominated the Ottoman corps and
the beylicate following Ibrāhīm Katkhudā’s death.}
of Riḍwān Katkhudā a respectable income from rural tax farms that were registered in their names. Although free of serious challengers from rival factions, ‘Abd al-Rahmān continued to demonstrate a personal aversion to direct involvement in the political infighting that characterized the struggle for leadership following the death of Ibrāhīm Katkhudā and the murder of Riḍwān Katkhudā. Even so, he could not contain splintering within his own faction. For instance, he abstained himself from the capital and made a long five month tour of the delta to avoid the dispute among the amirs over the succession of Ibrāhīm Katkhudā. And in October 1760, when he was challenged by one of the senior mamluks whom Ibrāhīm Bey had elevated to the beylicyate, he fell back on countering this threat by elevating another of Ibrāhīm Katkhudā’s mamluks to the leadership of the beylicyate. Upon learning that ‘Alī Bey al-Ghazzawī was plotting his assassination, ‘Abd al-Rahmān Katkhudā called a council of Qazdughli amirs and officers, explained the threat posed by ‘Alī Bey al-Ghazzawi who had left Cairo with the pilgrimage, and asked, “O amirs, who am I? They all replied, ‘You are our master, son of our master, to whom we owe allegiance.’” He then proclaimed that “‘Alī Bey (Bulut Kapan) here shall be shaykh al-balad and chief; and I will be the first to obey and the last to oppose him.” The next day ‘Abd al-Rahmān “rode to ‘Alī Bey’s residence; the diwān and the assembly were transferred there as of that day, and ‘Alī Bey’s power became momentous.”

Available manuscript sources, including al-Jabarti’s famous history, remain largely silent on the period 1760, when ‘Abd al-Rahmān Katkhudā elevated ‘Alī Bey to the mashyakha of the beylicyate, so we know little of the activities of the two amirs until April 1765, when

25 Ibid., 386. The sons, one an adult, one a minor, were assigned villages producing a profit of 30 purses, or 750,000 paras.
26 Raymond, Le Caire des Janissaires, 42.
27 Al-Jabarti, op. cit., vol. I, 418–19; I, 637. Jabarti notes that “Since ‘Abd al-Rahmān Katkhudā was the son of their chief and the mainstay of their power, (‘Alī Bey) became his ally. (‘Abd al-Rahmān) for his part, befriended him in order to win influence through him over the leaders of the ikhtiyāriyya of the ocaks. All the while, (‘Alī Bey and (‘Abd al-Rahmān Katkhudā were each vying for supremacy,” Jabarti, op. cit., vol. I, 418. ‘Alī Bey was eligible to assume the leadership mantle of the Qazdughlis by virtue of being the manumitted mamluk of Ibrāhīm Katkhudā, the Qazdughli leader who had firmly established the dominance of this faction over both the Janissaries and the beylicyate only a few years earlier.
‘Ali Bey, who strengthened his own household considerably by the acquisition of many mamluks and retainers and the appointment of senior mamluks to important positions within the regiments and the beylicates, suddenly ordered the banishment of a group of amirs to the delta and the exile of ‘Abd al-Rahmān Katkhudā to Mecca. The contemporary historian al-Jabarti remarked the ease of this coup d’etat by ‘Ali Bey.

On that day Cairo was in a commotion, especially at the departure of ‘Abd al-Rahmān Katkhudā, for he had been the most important of the lot, the son of their former master, and a man of power, authority, and reputation. Because of him, the power of the Janissaries had increased over that of the ‘Azab. Furthermore, he had so large a clan and so many Mamluks, retainers, Maghribi and other troops that the people supposed that on that day there would be great civil strife. However, all that occurred was a great deal of popular confusion and astonishment.28

This second exile of eleven years effectively ended ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s career. He was brought back, in ill health, in March 1776, after the deaths of ‘Ali Bey and his mamluk and successor Muḥammad Bey Abū al-Dhahab, and died only 11 days after his return.

How does one explain ‘Abd al-Rahmān Katkhudā’s passive acceptance of his second exile to the Hijaz? He put up no resistance, did not assemble the mamluks and retainers of his own household to defend him, and apparently made no effort to return from exile and reclaim his position of leadership of the Qazdughli faction. “He lived during that time in Mecca as a lonely stranger.”29 Once again, I believe his inability to assume effective leadership of the now dominant Qazdughli faction was owing to his freeborn birth. He could call on no one to defend him because he was not a mamluk himself; hence was not truly a part of the governing system. It was in deference to his lineage that the mamluks of the Qazdughli faction paid him respect and it likewise was his enormous wealth that made his residence the “open house” used by the Qazdughlis between the death of Ibrāhīm Katkhudā in 1754 and his own exile in 1765. His control of the Janissaries and the respect he had from the ‘ulama

29 Ibid., vol. II, 10, had also noted that when ‘Ali Bey turned on him like a mad dog, “he found nobody to defend him.”
and the common people who benefited so magnificently from his constructions and endowments could not be translated into political influence when he was suddenly ordered to leave Cairo.

He had been unable to insert his personal mamluks into positions of leadership within the regiments or the beylicate, hence had little political leverage within these two centers of political power. His household, despite supporting numerous personal mamluks, played no significant political role after his exile or death. Nor could the few remaining representatives of imperial power, such as the governor and the kizlar agha, intervene on his behalf. In reality, he might be compared to a rich merchant like the head of the Sharāyibī family, who possessed enormous wealth, a luxurious house, and mamluks and servants of his own. But Sharāyibī would not presume to interfere in the politics of the dominant ruling households.

In his review of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s career, André Raymond asks if his freeborn status was not a hindrance to his leadership of the regiments since virtually all the officers of these corps were mamluks. I believe the answer is an emphatic “Yes.” It was not merely his personality, his alleged aversion for politics and preference for construction, that affected the course of his political career, but the norms and traditions of a political system that assigned little influence or roles to those of freeborn status.

30 Raymond, Le Caire des Janissaires, 35.
A key question in the historiography of Ottoman Egypt is whether the administrative leadership of the province continued or revived the administrative usage of the Mamluk sultanate. The very manner in which this question is posed, however, reflects an unexamined assumption—one of several in the historiography of Ottoman Egypt. It assumes that Mamluk Egypt was an objective reality of which the administrative elite of Ottoman Egypt had unmediated knowledge. This seems a dangerous assumption when one considers, for example, that nineteenth-century Egyptian observers had a distorted view of conditions in eighteenth-century Egypt, even though these conditions had existed less than a century before. A prominent exponent of these distortions is Ismā‘il al-Khashshāb, who composed a modern history of Egypt at the request of the French occupying force in the opening years of the nineteenth century. His treatment of Egypt’s grandee households and political factions in the eighteenth century contains lacunae and errors obvious to anyone familiar with the corpus of eighteenth-century chronicles of Egypt. Al-Khashshāb is, by his own admission, relying on the accounts (akhbār) told him by his own father.


We are accustomed nowadays to take European travellers', diplomats', and administrators' accounts of Egyptian and other Middle Eastern societies with a large grain of salt, expecting their descriptions and opinions to be colored by Orientalist preconceptions. Yet this skepticism seems not to extend to sources generated from within such a society but at one or more centuries' remove. How can we know that an eighteenth-century Egyptian grandee's view of Mamluk Egypt is accurate? By the same token, if such a grandee claims to recreate Mamluk institutions, should we take him at his word? If, on the other hand, it seems to us that he is recreating Mamluk institutions, can we be sure that this is his perception, as well? How can we know that he is not, like al-Khashshāb, relying on popular stories?

To be blunt, we cannot know because, in fact, he is. A scholar such as Abd al-Ra‘ūm al-Jabarī was familiar with the major “canonical” Mamluk chronicles—those of al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Taghri Birdī (Tarûverdî), and Ibn Iyās—and drew his perceptions of the Mamluk sultanate largely from them. Ottoman-era administrators, for their part, were certainly aware of the most prominent Mamluk sultans, particularly those who left behind mosques, tombs, and pious foundations with which they had to contend. Thus, a document of the seventeenth or eighteenth century may refer in passing to “the waqfs of Sultan Qânûn-i Gavri” or “the mosque of Sultan Barqûq.”

Ottoman-era chroniclers can identify a character as “among the emirs of Qâytbây” without further explanation, evidently confident that their readers will be familiar with Qâytbây and other leading rulers of the late Mamluk era. But can we be sure that a chance reference to Qâytbây reflects a solid knowledge of the conditions and institutions of the Mamluk sultanate?

What evidence we have of Ottoman-era depictions of the Mamluk sultanate should leave us far from certain. The Mamluk sultans most
frequently mentioned in Ottoman-era chronicles are, on the one hand, the most recent—Qāytbāy (r. 1468–1496), Qansūh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501–1516), and Tumanbay (r. 1516–1517)—and, on the other hand, the “founding fathers”: Baybars (r. 1260–1277), who founded the Mamluk sultanate; Qalâ‘ūn (1279–1290), who founded his own century-long dynasty; and Barqūq (r. 1382–1399), the first of the Circassian Mamluk sultans. These five sultans are all “fabled,” whether because of their great accomplishments or, as in the case of al-Ghawrī, because of their appalling failures. Familiarity with any or all of them could be the result of common knowledge, as well as proficiency in Mamluk history.

The specific contexts in which these sultans appear, furthermore, point not so much to a profound appreciation of the “realities” of the Mamluk sultanate as to a sort of Mamluk nostalgia, nurtured by folkloric presentations of key sultans. Thus, the perception that Ottoman-era grandees had of the Mamluk sultanate was a largely folkloric perception, comparable to the manner in which every American schoolchild learns the story of George Washington chopping down the cherry tree, then refusing to lie about it. Moreover, the reasons why grandees had such a perception were similar to the reasons why American schoolchildren learn about George Washington and the cherry tree: the transmission of such stories was part of the future grandee’s education and acculturation. In the end, these folkloric accounts tell us much more about Ottoman Egypt than they do about Mamluk Egypt.

In this essay, I shall examine the presentation of several key Mamluk figures in Ottoman-era literary sources in order to demonstrate the folkloric qualities inherent in these presentations, and the correspondingly folkloric appreciation that Ottoman grandees must have had of Egypt’s Mamluk past. Ultimately, I shall consider the utility of such folkloric presentations, both for the grandees themselves and for the Ottoman administration.

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6 I use the terms “folkloric,” “folklore,” and “folktales” as layperson’s terms, not intending to invoke the theoretical issues attached to the academic discipline of folklore studies. The terms “popular histories” and “popular narratives” could also be applied to the sorts of stories I discuss here.
Baybars al-Bunduqdârî, the founder of the Mamluk sultanate, was evidently by the eighteenth century a legendary figure not unlike Alexander the Great as he appears in medieval Persian literature. A Kipchak Turk, probably from the territory of what is now Ukraine, Baybars was purchased as a mamluk by the Ayyûbid sultan al-Ṣâliḥ Ayyûb (r. 1240–1249). Ten years of bloody coups and counter-coups followed al-Ṣâliḥ’s death in 1249, as the late sultan’s mamluks struggled for supremacy. In perhaps the most notorious episode of this interregnum, al-Ṣâliḥ’s widow, Fâṭima Shajar al-Durr, married the mamluk commander Quṭîb al-Dîn Aybak al-Turkomânî; both were ultimately assassinated by rival mamluks. After scoring a critical victory over a Mongol army at ʿAyn Jalût in Syria in 1260, Baybars participated in the assassination of the Mamluk general Quṭuz and ascended the throne himself.\(^8\)

That said, the folkloric persona of Baybars bears only the most tenuous resemblance to the historical reality, hazy as the latter is. Baybars is the hero of an immense and varied epic cycle, originally orally transmitted, known as the *Sîrat al-Ẓâhir Baybars*. Several manuscripts of this epic exist, most dating from the nineteenth century.\(^9\) Like other tales from the Arabic oral tradition, all are chock-full of accretions from the Ottoman era, so that the Baybars of the epic routinely fires off cannon and drinks coffee. Moreover, Ottoman titles and institutions abound in the tales; provincial governors are termed pashas, for a notable example.\(^10\) Notwithstanding, much of the story line centers on continual struggles against the Crusaders, on the one

\(^7\) The three most popular literary sources in which Alexander (Iskender) appeared were the tenth-century poet Ferdowsi’s *Shāhnamé*, the fifteenth-century poet Ahmedî’s Persian epic known as the *Iskendernâme*, itself derived from a Byzantine source; and the fifteenth-century poet Nizâmi’s cycle of poems known as the *khamsa*.

\(^8\) These events are described in some detail in Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250–1382* (Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986), 22–34.


\(^10\) See, for example, *Sîrat al-Ẓâhir Baybars*, vol. II, 821.
hand, and the Mongols, on the other. We can conclude only that these tales reflect Ottoman-era popular memory of the events of the early Mamluk sultanate, embellished with stock elements of shape-changing wizards and damsels in distress.

As depicted in these tales, Baybars is not really a Turkish mamluk at all but the “Persian” (Ajam) prince Maḥmūd, son of the last Khwarazm-shah, “Alqān Shāh Jamak,” whose kingdom has been overrun by “Hulâqūn” (Hulagu) and the Mongols. This legendary identity does, to be sure, retain a hazy connection to historical reality, for the Kipchak tribe from which Baybars came was driven into the Crimea by the Mongol incursions; moreover, Baybars married the daughter of the historical last Khwarazm-shah, Ḥuṣām al-Dīn Berke Khān. His son by this marriage was named Berke Khān after his grandfather. In the stories, Baybars’ comrades-in-arms, improbable as it may seem, are the Ismāʿīlī guerrillas who inhabit the mountains of Lebanon. Different manuscripts present different versions of the rivalries between Baybars and other mamluks. In a late-nineteenth-century Egyptian manuscript, Aybak is Baybars’ chief rival, while in the most extensive manuscript, copied in nineteenth-century Aleppo, his nemesis is Qalaʿūn. In this latter manuscript, Baybars and Qalaʿūn are purchased from the same slave market and transported to Egypt jointly. Qalaʿūn is contemptuous of Baybars’ degraded physical state, which is only exacerbated by a bout of diarrhea during the journey to Egypt. Qalaʿūn himself is portrayed as an arrogant Turk who speaks a broken Arabic replete with Turkisms. (This feature may have some basis in historical fact, since Qalaʿūn was enslaved at a relatively late age and never achieved fluency in Arabic.) When Baybars dies, Qalaʿūn attempts to promote his son Khalīl for the succession.

How do we know that these tales were widespread in the eighteenth century and before if the only extant specimens date from

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the nineteenth century? Intriguingly, allusions to the *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars* appear in a group of chronicles on which historians commonly rely. This is the Damūrdāshī group of chronicles, so-called because all four of the chronicles in question derive from a common *urtext* and have some connection to officers of Egypt’s ʿAzeban regiment who bear the sobriquet al-Damūrdāshī. These allusions, moreover, appear right at the beginning of all four chronicles, when the chroniclers are explaining the origins of Saʿd and ʿArām, Bedouin factions allied with the Faqārīs and the Qāsimīs, two political and military factions whose rivalry permeated Egypt during the seventeenth century and the early years of the eighteenth.

The Damūrdāshī chroniclers never explicitly state that they are referring to these folktales; rather, they make a metaphorical comparison between the implacable opposition of Saʿd and ʿArām, on the one hand, and that of a series of opposed pairs from Arabic folklore. Thus, Muṣṭafā b. Ibrāhīm al-Maddāsh al-Qinālī, the author of one of the earlier chronicles, known as *Majmūʿ latīf*, explains, “The people of Egypt since ancient times were in two factions (fiṣqatayn), soldiers and Bedouin (ʿurbān) and reaya, white flag and red flag; the white was Tubbaʾī and the red Kulaybī, Zughbī and Hilālī, Qalaʿūnī and Baybarsī, until the reign (dawla) of Āl ʿUthmān, may God make it victorious, [when they became] Faqārī-Saʿd [and] Qāsimī-Ḥarām . . .”16 “Qalaʿūnī and Baybarsī” clearly refer to Baybars and Qalaʿūn, his archrival in some versions of the *Sīra*.


Likewise, the other two pairs of binary opposites that al-Qīnālī presents allude to other figures in Middle Eastern folklore. Like “Qalaʿūnī and Baybarsī,” “Tubbaʿī and Kulaybī” have undeniable historical resonances. Tubbaʿī was the title of the Himyarite kings who ruled northern Yemen in the early centuries of the Common Era. Kulayb, meanwhile, could be a diminutive form of Kalb, a southern, or Yemeni, Arab clan who supported the caliph Marwān b. Hakam in the Umayyad civil war of 683 C.E. On the other hand, Kulayb could as easily refer to the pre-Islamic northern, or Qaysī, Arab tyrant Kulayb b. Rabīʿa al-Taghlibī. More to the point, however, the characters Ḥasan al-Tubbaʿī and Kulayb, both drawn, in somewhat distorted fashion, from historical figures, play prominent roles in the Arabic folktale known as the Qiṣṣat al-Ẓīr. In this story, Kulayb is the brother of Salīm, known as al-Zīr. Ahmad Katkhudā b.ʿAzabān al-Damūrdašī, putative author of the latest and most detailed chronicle, makes an unmistakable reference to this tale when he includes, among his own string of binary opposites, “Kulayb the brother of al-Zīr.”

As for al-Qīnālī’s remaining pair of opposites, “Zughbī and Hilālī,” these derive from the great epic cycles memorializing the migration of the Banū Hilāl Bedouin into the region of the central Arabian peninsula known as al-Najd, then westward into Egypt and, ultimately, as far as Morocco and Spain. What al-Qīnālī is doing, in

21 Ahmad Katkhudā b.ʿAzabān al-Damūrdašī, Al-Dunr al-musāma fi akhbār al-kināna, British Museum, MS Or. 1073–1074, 1.
22 There are three cycles: ʿStrat Banū Hilāl al-kubrā, Taghribāt Banū Hilāl, and ʿStrat
fact, is alluding to irreconcilably opposed enemies from well-known bodies of lore or Islamic tradition in order to underline the opposition of Sa’d and Harâm.

The strategy of al-Qimâlî and the other chronicles of the Damûrdâshî group becomes comprehensible only if we bear in mind that the chroniclers are telling stories. This is, indeed, how Âhmad Katkhudâ ‘Azebân presents his endeavor: “Some of the brothers (ikhwân) had asked me about events in Cairo among the sancak beys (sanâ‘î) and the aghas and the officers (îkhtiyârîyya) of the seven ocaks since the deposition of Sultan Mehmed [IV, r. 1648–1687].” He, like al-Qimâlî, proceeds to tell them by letting loose a string of binary oppositions. This strategy is reminiscent of the formula with which Turkish fairy tales typically begin: “Bir var mı, bir yok mu,” “There was and there was not.” Thus, although they are recounting “real” events, chronologically arranged, that occurred in history, these chronicles exploit the framework of popular folktales.

Barqûq and the Fabricated Genealogy

Sultan Barqûq makes a striking appearance in the fabricated seventeenth-century genealogy of one Ridvân Bey. P.M. Holt erroneously identified this Ridvân as Ridvân Bey al-Faqârî, who monopolized the office of pilgrimage commander (amîr al-hâji) for an astonishing twenty-five years, from 1631 until his death in 1656. As I have indicated elsewhere, the true identity of the genealogy-commissioner must be the contemporaneous Qâsimî leader Ridvân Bey Abûl-Shawârib.
Barqūq in this genealogy is not the historical mamluk of the emir Yalbugha but, instead, a descendant of one Kīsa b. ‘Akrama, a member of the Prophet’s clan of Quraysh. This Kīsa had fled the Arabian peninsula after accidentally putting out the eye of a bedouin, who complained to the caliph ʿUmar (r. 634–644 C.E.); the Byzantine emperor had allowed him to settle in what is now Circassia. Generations later, his descendant Barqūq was kidnapped by Bulgar slave traders and brought to the Mamluk court. 27 Barqūq’s story is one of several included in the genealogy to illustrate the noble descent of Riḍvān Bey, who is himself supposed to be a descendant of Barqūq and, by extension, of the Quraysh. Barqūq’s fictionalized origins bear a striking resemblance to those of the fictionalized Baybars, who is likewise supposed to have been kidnapped by Bulgar merchants and brought to Egypt. The genealogist may well have used some version of the Sīrat al-Żāhir Baybars as a model; when he first introduces Barqūq, he implausibly claims that he was initially sold to the Ayyūbid sultans. This was, of course, Baybars’ fate; by Barqūq’s time, however, the Ayyūbids had long since vanished from the scene. More broadly, the genealogy taps into a well-established tradition that the Circassians and other Caucasian peoples descended from Arabs; typically, however, their ancestors are not the Quraysh but the southern, or Yemeni, Arab rulers of the kingdom of Ghassān, a Byzantine vassal state conquered by the early Muslims. 28 This tradition features in the chronicles of Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-‘Aynī (1361–1451)...

27 Anonymous, Nisba sharţa wa-risâla munîfâ tashtamîl ʿaľâ dhikr nasab al-Jarîkasa min Quraysh, Princeton University Library, Garrett Manuscript Collection, MS 186H. Holt consulted manuscripts in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, England; and in the British Museum. He also had access to a published edition entitled Kitâb qahr al-wuţal al-awâbisa bi-dhikr nasab al-Jarîkasa min Quraysh, published under the auspices of one Muḥammad Ḥaţīf al-Jarkasī al-Bājī by al-Maḥī’a al-Bajīyya al-Miṣrīyya in 1316 A.H. In this edition, Nisba sharţa . . . is the first line of text after the opening invocations. I am grateful to Professor Holt for supplying me with a copy of this publication.

composed for the sultans al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh (r. 1412–1421) and al-Zahir Tatar (r. 1421); it is later represented in the Majalis sponsored by Qânsûh al-Ghawrî.29 The same tradition is reported by Evliya Çelebi (c. 1611–1682), and also appears in a nineteenth-century collection of Circassian folklore.30 The purpose of Riḍvân Bey’s genealogy was most likely to make the point that Riḍvân Bey, by virtue of his Circassian-cum-Qurashî lineage, deserved to be appointed pilgrimage commander at the expense of the likes of Riḍvân Bey al-Faqîrî, who could boast neither an exalted lineage nor an ancestral tradition of service to the Holy Places.31 The appearance of the genealogy, I believe, points to another element of “Mamluk nostalgia” that had evidently emerged by the middle of the seventeenth century and that seems to have found a champion in Riḍvân Bey Abûl-Shawârib: namely, a form of Circassian self-assertion. Abûl-Shawârib evidently gloried in his Circassian ethnicity, using it to justify appointment to high office and even naming two of his sons Khushqadam and Özbek, an unmistakable allusion to a sultan and a general, respectively, of the late Mamluk sultanate.32 There were a large number of Circassian grandees in Egypt toward the middle of the seventeenth century, as Evliya Çelebi tells us.33 In all probability, the Mamluk emirs pardoned by Selim I after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt continued to purchase mamluks from Circassia, as, no doubt, did the beys and regimental officers assigned


32 Anonymous, Nisba sharîfa, fo. 20r. On Khushqadam (r. 1461–1467), see Carl F. Petry, Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamluk Sultans al-Ashraf Qâyshâ and Qânsûh al-Ghawrî in Egypt (Seattle: Middle East Center, Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington; distributed by University of Washington Press, 1993), 20–21, 29, 47, 58; on Özbek (Azbak), see ibid., 46–50, 59–69, 78, 92–100, 113–15. Kushqadam, however, was not himself Circassian but Greek (Rûmî in the sense it carried under the Mamluk sultanate).

to Egypt from Istanbul. By the mid-seventeenth century, the number of Circassian grandees in Egypt may have reached the “critical mass” necessary to support a Circassio-philic political culture and, by extension, a nostalgia for the late Mamluk sultanate, when Circassian grandees dominated.

Large numbers of Circassians, however, do not suffice to explain a culture of “Mamluk nostalgia.” Following the Ottoman conquest, after all, Selim had sought to prevent such a development by, among other things, forbidding the grandees of Egypt to take Circassian names; they were obliged instead to settle for Turkicized Arab Muslim names. Yet little over a century after the conquest, Abū’l-Shawārīb Kıldvān Bey apparently felt no compunction about naming his sons Özbek and Khushqadam, to say nothing of commissioning a genealogy glorifying his Circassian identity. The key to this change may be simply the passage of time. Naming one’s sons after Mamluk notables and ordering a pro-Circassian genealogy in 1524 would have been construed as an act of near-rebellion, a thinly-veiled call for the resurrection of the Mamluk sultanate. And of course, the Ottomans had had to put down three major rebellions of this kind in the years immediately following the conquest: those of Janbirdī (Canverdi) al-Ghazālī, the governor of Damascus, in 1521; two sub-provincial governors of Egypt, Jānim al-Sayfī and Ināl, in 1522; and the Ottoman governor of Egypt, Ahmed Pasha “al-Khā’īn” (“the traitor”), in 1523–1524.34 By 1640, on the other hand, the Mamluk sultanate was only a dim memory. Such nostalgic touches as names of Mamluk sultans and Circassian pedigrees were now tolerable, if not necessarily welcome. Moreover, the grandees were drawing their visions of Mamluk and Circassian identity not from memories of the Mamluk sultanate—which they, of course, could not have had—or even from histories produced under the Mamluk sultanate, but from folktales. Both Mamluk nostalgia and Circassian self-assertion were, by their very nature, heavily folkloric.

The Influence of Ibn Zunbul

Much the same could be said of another seemingly pro-Mamluk, anti-Ottoman demonstration described by Evliya Çelebi: the grandees

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of Egypt, he tells us, bowed their heads toward the tomb of the last Mamluk sultan, Tūmānbāy, whenever they passed it, as well as that of the Mamluk emir Kurṭbāy, who in the course of the Ottoman conquest had killed the grand vezir Sinan Pasha. In contrast, they averted their heads from the tomb of Khayrbāy, whose collaboration with Selim had made the Ottoman victory possible.\textsuperscript{35} In his survey of Egyptian society under Ottoman rule, Michael Winter adduces this custom as proof of the seventeenth-century grandees’ hostility toward the Ottoman Empire and, by extension, their eagerness to re-establish Mamluk institutions.\textsuperscript{36} Such an analysis, however, neglects the context in which this custom was practiced. Evliya was resident in Egypt during the 1660s and 1670s, when, as noted above, nostalgia for the Mamluk sultanate and assertion of Circassian identity were apparently a tolerated feature of provincial political culture.

Beyond this, however, this sort of analysis assumes that grandees of the seventeenth century subscribed to an unchanging, linear narrative of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt centered on verifiable events and consistent with the account of Ibn Iyās, which forms the basis for most present-day accounts of the conquest. This was in all likelihood not the case. The version of the Ottoman conquest story with which Ottoman-era grandees would have been familiar was most likely that of the chronicler Ahmad b. Zunbul, composed around 1553 and entitled Wāqi‘at al-sulṭān al-Ghawrī mu‘a Salīm al-Uthmānī; indeed, numerous Turkish translations of Ibn Zunbul’s short chronicle had appeared by the early eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{37} Ibn Zunbul’s account, as opposed to that of the more scholarly Ibn Iyās, is decidedly ahistorical; in fact, it is reminiscent of the Sirat al-Ẓāhir Baybars, complete with imagined conversations among the protagonists. In Ibn Zunbul’s pages, Tūmānbāy is depicted as a noble warrior who is laid low by Ottoman gunpowder weaponry and the treachery of the Mamluk emirs Khayrbāy and Jānbirdī (Canverdi) al-Ghazālī.


\textsuperscript{36} Winter, Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule, 54.

Time and again, Ibn Zunbul stresses that the Ottomans were poorly skilled in the equestrian arts and would never have defeated the Mamluks had it not been for their cannon and rifles. Selim, meanwhile, is portrayed as a worthy sultan who, however, is misled by the Mamluk traitors on whom he relies. Decisive battles take place not between massed armies but between single combatants, one pro-Mamluk and one pro-Ottoman; such combats are a hallmark of the heroic narrative, familiar from the *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baybars* and other Arabic folktales. On being captured by the Ottomans, the emir Kurtbāy and, later, Tūmānbāy lecture Selim on the cowardice of using firearms. As if to underscore the folkloric context in which he writes, Ibn Zunbul compares the well-nigh superhuman heroism of the Mamluk emir Sharbak to that of ‘Antar, the Herculean pre-Islamic hero of the *Sīrat al-‘Antar*. Ibn Zunbul’s tale exhibits the binarism typical of heroic folktales: heroes and villains are clearly distinguished in almost cartoon-like fashion. Tūmānbāy, in particular, is clearly a hero—in fact, a martyr—while Khayrbāy is just as clearly a traitor. If grandees in seventeenth-century Cairo had been exposed to this version of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, then it is little wonder that they bowed toward Tūmānbāy’s tomb and were repulsed by Khayrbāy’s. Their behavior would have reflected not a genuine rejection of Ottoman rule but a folkloric nostalgia for an idealized late Mamluk order.

‘Alī Bey’s Revolt

This reconceptualization of Mamluk nostalgia can likewise be brought to bear on the most far-reaching revolt in pre-nineteenth-century Ottoman Egypt—and, not coincidentally, the one that historians of the province invariably single out as the epitome of Mamluk revivalism: that of Bulut Kapan ‘Alī Bey, also known as ‘Alī Bey al-Kabīr,

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in 1768–1770. After leading an expedition to the Hijāz on the Ottoman sultan’s orders, in order to settle a dispute between two rival candidates for sharīf of Mecca, ‘Alî Bey invaded Syria in collaboration with the Bedouin chieftain of Tiberias, Dāhir al-‘Umar. ‘Alî Bey’s general, his freedman Meḥmed Bey Abū al-Dhabab, succeeded in conquering Damascus but then, for reasons that remain obscure, turned back. In justifying his rebellious actions, ‘Alî Bey is said to have remarked, “The kings of Egypt were mamluks like us; these Ottomans took Egypt through superior force and the treachery of [Egypt’s] people.” Modern-day historians cite this alleged remark, put into the bey’s mouth by al-Jabarti, as evidence that ‘Alî Bey, too, had a “realistic” picture of the Mamluk sultanate drawn from canonical Mamluk-era chroniclers such as al-Maqrizi and Ibn Taghri Birdi. Yet it is not difficult to recognize in the bey’s remark the rhetoric of Ibn Zunbul, from the vague reference to “kings of Egypt” to the trope of the unchivalrous Ottoman deployment of firepower to the allusion to the treacherous emirs who engineered Selim’s victory. Indeed, it seems possible that the works to which ‘Alî Bey was exposed more closely resembled that of Ibn Zunbul than those of the “canonical” Mamluk chroniclers. They may, in fact, have included Ibn Zunbul’s own chronicle or Turkish translations based on it.

If ‘Alî Bey did make this remark or remarks similar to it, perhaps our focus should be not his veiled allusion to Ottoman illegitimacy but his mention of “mamluks like us,” a reference that was not to be taken lightly at a time when mamluks from Georgia in particular had achieved unprecedented administrative authority in the Ottoman Empire. As I have noted elsewhere, we might even speak of a Georgian mamluk preponderance in the late eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire. ‘Alî Bey’s archrival, Gürçü Osman Pasha, the governor of Damascus, was, as his name implies, a Georgian mamluk—specifically, the Georgian mamluk of former governor As‘ad Pasha al-‘Azm. Indeed, ‘Alî Bey’s antagonism toward Osman Pasha

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42 Holt, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 94–98; Crecelius, Roots of Modern Egypt, 72–90.
43 Quoted in Holt, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 96.
44 See n. 3, above, and Crecelius, Roots of Modern Egypt, 65.
45 Hathaway, Politics of Households, 170.
has been adduced as an incitement to his invasion of Syria. At the same time, the strategically vital province of Baghdad was governed by the Georgian mamluk “dynasty” founded by the governor Hasan Pasha (1704–1723) and his son Ahmed (1724–1747). In Egypt, in contrast, a Georgian mamluk purchased by the governor or by a provincial grandee and trained in the province could never hope to attain the governorship. Instead, governors were still sent out from Istanbul, and by the mid-eighteenth century, they were more likely to be free-born Anatolian bureaucrats, “efendis-turned-pashas,” than slaves of any kind. This can only have seemed a gross injustice to the ambitious ’Ali Bey. Although a re-examination of his motives lies well beyond the scope of this essay, I believe it is plausible that his true goal was not to revive the Mamluk sultanate—which he knew only in the mythologized form supplied by the likes of Ibn Zunbul—but to become governor of Ottoman Egypt.

_A usable past_

So far from representing hostility toward the Ottoman Empire, these rather fanciful legends and invented traditions were an integral part of Ottoman rule in Egypt during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nor were Egypt’s grandees unique in constructing an idealized vision of their province’s pre-Ottoman past. Grandees in other Ottoman provinces certainly exploited spurious genealogies and legends of ancient heroes to enhance their own status within their respective localities.

The Afrasiyab household, a localized clan who governed the southern Iraqi port of Basra during the seventeenth century, claimed descent from the Great Seljuks, whose empire had straddled Iran and Iraq during the eleventh and twelfth centuries C.E. It seems

46 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, _The Province of Damascus_ (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), 250–84; Crecelius, _Roots of Modern Egypt_, 76, 80–83, 88.
49 Holt, _Egypt and the Fertile Crescent_, 134–135, 140, 142.
more than coincidental, furthermore, that the clan’s collective patronymic, that of Afrāsiyāb, evoked a hero of the Persian epic Shāhnāme: Afrāsiyāb, in this work, is the king of the Turanians, or Turks, the perennial enemies of the Iranians. In the course of the epic, he fights lengthy wars against the Iranian forces, led by the hero Rustam; he is finally killed by the Iranian king Key Khusrau. In the sixteenth century, the Turanians appear in a magnificent illuminated manuscript of the Shāhnāme, produced at the Safavid court in Tabriz, as virtual stand-ins for the Ottomans, while the heroic Iranians represent the Safavids. In this context, the patronymic of the Afrāsiyāb clan arguably emphasized their military and ideological opposition to the Safavids, who, in southern Iraq, posed an ever-present threat to Ottoman authority. This interpretation makes it seem unlikely that the Afrāsiyābs’ manufactured Seljuk pedigree conveyed a desire to return to the pre-Ottoman past, the more so since the Seljuk sultan, according to legend, sent a flag and a military band (mehter) as symbols of legitimacy to Osman, the founder of the Ottoman dynasty. On the contrary, the genealogical myth can itself be interpreted as an anti-Safavid statement since it evoked a time when the Great Seljuks, an ethnically Turkish, albeit Persophone, dynasty, ruled both Iran and Iraq. This makes it all the more ironic that the last Afrāsiyāb governor, caught in a regional struggle for influence, fled to the Safavids in 1668.

Over a century later and far to the west, the Phanariot Greek governors whom the Ottomans appointed to govern the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (present-day Romania) employed a similar strategy, albeit for slightly different reasons. The Phanariots took their name from Istanbul’s Fener quarter, the traditionally Greek neighborhood on the Southern shore of the Golden

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52 Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent*, 140.


Horn, west of Balat. Here most of their leading families, wealthy Greek Orthodox merchants and government functionaries, originated. Known as hospodars, they were assigned to the Principalities to replace the voyvodos, governors drawn from the provincial elite who showed too many signs of independence.55 Aside from their religion, they had little in common with the indigenous population of these regions. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the Phanariots had evolved their own elaborate provincial court culture, which in turn spread throughout the Romanian nobility. It was modeled on the usages of the Byzantine empire: the court language was Greek; Byzantine titles, ceremonies, and even costumes were used.56 Yet the Phanariots were unquestionably the sultans’ servants; they cannot have wished to rebuild Byzantium in actual fact. Rather, they used their own Byzantine heritage, as well as the distant Byzantine past of Romania, to project authority at the local level.

In fact, all three of these provincial authorities—the Afrāsiyābs in Basra, the Phanariots in Romania, and the grandees of Egypt—exploited the pre-Ottoman past of their respective locales as a source of the grass-roots authority with which the Ottoman center could not supply them. Nonetheless, this local authority was not so much a threat to Ottoman authority as a complement to it. Claiming authority by reimagining the pre-Ottoman past seems, indeed, to have been a key strategy in Ottoman provincial administration by the seventeenth century. By this time, Ottoman territorial expansion had slowed, and incorporating conquered empires and kingdoms into the Ottoman domain was no longer a constant military and administrative challenge. Hence, the Ottoman central authority could allow its provincial elites a usable past.

Ironically, the elites who posed the greatest threat to Ottoman authority in the provinces during the seventeenth century came from within the Ottoman palace. These were Abaza Mehmed Pasha, governor of Erzurum, who rebelled in 1623, and Abaza Ḥasan Pasha, governor of Aleppo, who rebelled in 1657–1659. Both Abkhazian

mamluks reared in the imperial palace, the two were assigned to the provinces, where they raised personal armies of mercenaries (sekban) culled largely from the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia. Gabriel Piterberg has demonstrated that Abaza Mehmed’s rebellion in particular constituted a delayed reaction against the deposition and murder of Sultan Osman II (1618–1622) by the Janissaries, whom he sought to replace with sekban.57 This regicide resulted in a reinforcement of Janissary-based palace culture that would culminate in the regime of the Köprülü grand vezirs from 1656–1676; indeed, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha’s reforms triggered Abaza Hasan’s revolt.58 Nonetheless, the image of the rebellious, untrustworthy Abkhazian itself became legendary.

It is this image, ironically, that the Ottoman statesman Şemdanizade Fındıklı Süleyman Efendi evokes to explain ‘Alî Bey’s rebellion in Egypt. Claiming that ‘Alî Bey was Abkhazian, Şemdanizade interprets his overtures to Russia as a scheme to ensure a steady supply of Abkhazian mamluks, and even has the bey exclaiming, after the disastrous Ottoman naval defeat by the Russians at Çeşme in 1770, “There can be no more auspicious time for Abkhazian supremacy than this!”60 If Şemdanizade’s account is a fair indication, representatives of the Ottoman central authority unquestionably saw ‘Alî Bey as a threat, but not as a Mamluk revivalist threat. They had their own alternative lore within which to frame his uprising.

Folklore as a tool of acculturation

Even if we agree that Egypt’s grandees were not attempting to resurrect the Mamluk sultanate, we still face the question of why

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58 Holt, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 105.
59 In all likelihood, he was either Abkhazian or Georgian; on his ethnicity, see Crecelius, Roots of Modern Egypt, 40–41, n. 5.
they exploited legends of the Mamluk sultans, as well as tales of other heroes, both historical and fictional. Again, the Damūrdāshī chronicles’ connection to the ‘Azeban corps provides a clue. Aḥmad Katkhudā ‘Azābān’s claim that “the brethren” asked him to recount the deeds of past heroes makes sense if we consider the circumstances of soldiers in the ‘Azeban or any other regiment. Egypt’s regiments and grandee households in the early eighteenth century contained young men—mamluks, mercenaries, members of the palace soldiery—from a disparate array of locales: Abkhazia, Albania, Anatolia, Armenia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Circassia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Serbia. These young men suddenly found themselves in a strange land, attached to the troop or household of a patron and, perhaps, to a political faction for no self-evident reason, although some may well have shared ethnicity, language, or even blood ties with the heads of their households. In any event, they needed to be socialized and to make sense of their new environment. More than that, they needed to internalize their new identities as members of a particular household and faction.

Folktales provide an instrument for this sort of acculturation, much as the story of George Washington and the cherry tree introduces American children to one of their country’s founding fathers. To this analogy, we might add that of a child at the Jewish holiday of Passover. At the ritual Passover meal, or _seder_, the youngest child makes sense of the unfamiliar holiday traditions by asking ritual questions that begin with “why”: “Why is this night different from all others?” “Why on this night do we eat unleavened bread?” and so on. By the same token, we can imagine a raw recruit from Bosnia or Georgia or eastern Anatolia asking his commanding officer, Why do we hate the Qāsimīs? How did these two factions originate, and why? Why do we carry a white banner while the Qāsimīs carry a red one? (We must bear in mind, of course, the difference between a highly ritualized annual holiday and the presumably more casual, _ad hoc_ atmosphere of barracks story-telling.) Just as the youngest child, over years of _seders_, internalizes the story of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt, so the recruit internalized a body of lore repeated by successive household heads and barracks commanders.

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61 On this point, see Hathaway, _Politics of Households_, 44–46, 101–03.
62 See _ibid._, 57, 61–62, 71 and n. 79, 103–05.
Thus, the tales of the Mamluk sultans aided the indoctrination of recruits to an Ottoman-era provincial political culture. The typical seventeenth- or eighteenth-century grandee viewed the Mamluk sultanate through an Ottoman provincial lens that presented a highly idealized, anachronistic picture, heavy with larger-than-life heroes and heroines in dire struggles with irredeemably evil villains. Nonetheless, we should view these stories as fluid rather than fixed, and as having a genuine relationship with the historical figures and events on which many of them loosely draw. The Mamluk sultanate portrayed in the Siyarat al-Zahir Baybars, the chronicle of Ibn Zunbul, or the genealogy of Riḍvân Bey was not a wholly fictitious creation; rather, these stories represented a point in the transformation of historical reality into myth and fable. This “mythologization” was an ongoing process to which events were—and, arguably, are, even in our own societies—susceptible. True, the aforementioned literary works testify to the mythologization of the Mamluk sultans and transmitted that mythologized history to new generations, such as al-Damūrāshī’s “brethren”. At the same time, however, the Ottoman-era events documented by the Damūrāshī chronicles and other chronicles—which are, to some degree, mythologized in the pages of the chronicles by virtue of the authors’ arrangement and presentation—would later be transformed into myths and fables by the likes of al-Khashshāb.

Indeed, al-Khashshāb’s purpose in writing Tadhkira li-ahl al-bayā‘ir was not unlike that of the authors of the Damūrāshī chronicles: to instruct a population—in this case, the French—new to Egypt, who knew little or nothing of its history and customs. The French, like the raw barracks recruits of earlier years, did not know any better than to take al-Khashshāb’s memoir at face value, although they were presumably aware that he was not an historian and was drawing on popular tradition. We historians, I fear, too often assume the same position: we take our narrative sources’ evocations of the Mamluk sultanate at face value and ignore the fact that they are, blatantly or not, stories, with all the insights and distortions that stories can offer. We, however, are supposed to know better.
CHAPTER NINETEEN

BEDOUIN AND MAMLUKS IN EGYPT—CO-EXISTENCE IN A STATE OF DUALITY

Reuven Aharoni

The destinies of the Bedouin and the Mamluks\(^1\) in Egypt, were intimately linked ever since the mid-thirteenth century, when the Mamluks founded their sultanate and established its ruling center in Cairo, lasting until they vanished from the stage in 1811 with the massacre of their leaders by Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha. During this period of almost 600 years, the Bedouin elite developed complex symbiotic relationships with the Mamluk military elite. These relationships were rooted in historical and cultural heritage, which each of the Bedouin and the mamluks had practiced. From the start, the Mamluk Sultanate granted some Bedouin shaykhs the title of amir in the Mamluk military administration. The Bedouin amirs built *bayts* (households) and had mamluks at their disposal. Despite their social marginality in Egypt, the Bedouin were significantly involved in most of the historical developments in which the mamluks played a role.

The article shows that the Bedouin were both natural enemies and natural allies of the Mamluks simultaneously: the Bedouin needed the Mamluk backing in order to maintain a reasonable degree of independence, local military strength and political power, while the central government and their mamluks found it useful to integrate the Bedouin, who were a key element in the countryside and in the peripheral desert regions, into the local Ottoman/Mamluk military and fiscal administration. With the elimination of the Mamluk leaders, the Bedouin became marginal in the Egyptian life, both socially and politically.

\(^1\) The discussion in this article refers to the elite groups—the Mamluk leaders of factions and their households, and the Bedouin chiefs of clans and other tribal groupings, i.e., the amirs and the shaykhs and their associate groups.
Bedouin tribal society and the Mamluk militaristic and slave-based society were characterized by a complex set of similarities and dissimilarities, that may be viewed as a two-sided mirror. Politically and socially, Mamluk society was based on a singular origin and a military lifestyle of the group. Young boys were imported to Egypt from the Caucasus and neighboring regions in Central Asia and sold to high-ranking military figures-amirs—who educated them and trained them to be skilled cavalrymen. In return, the recruit was loyal to his master and felt solidarity with his master’s other slaves—the khushâšûn (“brothers”). The “brothers” formed the Mamluk household (bayt) made up of the master, his retinue and allies. The recruitment of this society from distant ethnic and religious backgrounds strengthened the loyalty of the recruit, or at any rate reduced any temptation to leave. Like the Bedouin tribesmen, they came from a rough background and were not accustomed to comforts that often weaken urban rulers. Unlike the Bedouin, however, they were also severed from the pull of kin links. Ernest Gellner has argued that the Mamluk system was an alternative to a tribal base and pure versions of either one constitute the two endpoints of a spectrum. It endeavored to dispense with the kin or tribal element altogether. The mamluks, in effect, constituted a replacement tribe, forged by a specific type of education. ²

Like the Mamluk amirs, each of the Bedouin shaykhs also had an armed protective retinue. Kin societies generally have self-created warrior bands that are rarely distinct from their descent groups, forming for other lineage activities, i.e. to acquire and secure means of productivity, like pasture and water, usually through the threat of force. Secondly, they are responsible for controlling the population and securing its continuity against any threat of rebellion from within or attack from without.³ The military element in both Mamluk soci-

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² E. Gellner, “Tribalism and the State in the Middle East”, in P. Khoury, and J. Kostiner (eds.), Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 115, 121.

eternity and in tribal society was relied on to achieve and maintain power. This meant that the milieu of both Mamluk amirs and Bedouin shaykhs, was made up of slaves and a sedentary population. Both, Bedouin tribal groups and Mamluk houses solved conflicts by military means and they carried on their feuds for long periods. In the process, not only were rival lineages destroyed, but also close relatives within a ruling clan or house, eliminated one another when power and prestige could not be equitably divided. Power transferred among the Mamluk factions from the leader of the clan to his chief mamluk or another prominent amir. Among the Bedouin, the successor to the shaykh might be a son, but equally he could be an uncle or a cousin. Both Mamluk amir and the Bedouin shaykh were regarded as the ideal linchpin for binding the household/clan together as a durable and effective military faction.

A parallel historical heritage: Heroic epics

The mamluks were descendants of nomadic tribes from Central Asia, masters of a culture of perpetual movement. Based on expertise in horsemanship and martial arts. The firm bond to horse, lance and bow went back to earliest childhood in Mamluk culture, when the fighters still lived in the wild prairies or mountains of their homeland. Similar values underlay Bedouin society. Knighthood (ṣirūṣiyā), which was also based on horsemanship, was the pivot of Bedouin tribal life, viewed as society’s pride and strength. The role models in both societies were male warriors.

Poetic Epics reflecting these ancestral customs, emerged in both societies in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The heroes of these epics are tribal horsemen—in Central Asia Turkish speakers, and in the Arabian epics famous Bedouin horsemen of the pre-Islamic period. The motifs in these epics are similar and became integral to the cultural heritages of both the mamluks and the Bedouin.

4 See on the relations and distribution of power among the mamluks in Egyptian Society, 63–66.
6 The epics of the Turkomans’ Dede Korkut, the Azars’ Körngül, the Uzbek’s Alpamiş, and the Kirghizians’ Manas, for example, are based on the tribal and nomadic traditions. The epics emphasized the characteristics of glory in the battlefield, splendor
The similarity of social patterns between the Bedouin leading clans and the Mamluk houses resulted in a conceptual blurring on both parts between the two elite-groups upon their encounter with each other in Egypt. David Ayalon has pointed out that the Bedouin terms 'ashîra (tribal confederation) and qabîla (tribe) were used to signify a Mamluk faction. A member of Mamluk "qabîla" was precisely parallel to a khushdûsh in his obligatory loyalty to "tribe".7 The growing influence of the Bedouin during the sixteenth century was a factor in closing the gap between the mamluks and the other sectors of Egyptian society, as compared to their superior status at the time of the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517). However, in Ottoman Egypt, the intimate relationships that developed between various Mamluk factions and certain Bedouin clans, paradoxically inflamed the hatred between the factions and the clans, compared with the situation in the earlier period. Conceivably, these links heightened the practice of blood revenge, which was already inherent in the structure of Mamluk society under the Ottomans,8 especially as relationships in the Mamluk qabîla were based on quasi-kin relationship as in the tribal structure.

So blurred did the boundaries become between mamluks and non-mamluks, implies intermarriage as well, during the Ottoman period, that the nineteenth century Egyptian chronicler 'Abd al-Râhîm al-Jabarî used the terms 'ashîra and qabîla interchangeably with bayt (household) and 'aîla (clan, family), i.e., he viewed Mamluk factions as tribes and clans rather than households precisely as the Bedouin social structure. It also indicates that there was an interaction between the Bedouin and the mamluks at that time.9


8 Ibid., 303.

Michael Winter, examining the use of the term awlād al-‘Arab (lit. sons of the Arab, local Arabic speaking population) as referring to the Ottoman army, reached the conclusion, similarly, that in Ottoman Egypt no distinctions existed between the mamluks and other local social groups, which meant Bedouin in certain cases. He argued that most of the Janissaries and the ‘azab regiment were awlād al-‘Arab in a broad sense, i.e., that Bedouin Arabs were included as well. With this, however, the tension between mamluks and awlād al-‘Arab did not vanish.

The mamluks settled in Egypt after succeeding in suppressing a resistance by a coalition of tribal groups in 1253. The resistance was widespread throughout several provinces beginning in Upper Egypt (al-Sa‘īd) in 1249 and spreading to the provinces of Manūfīyya, Gharbiyya and Buḥayra. It marked a turning point in the history of Muslim Egypt in the Middle Ages. The failure of the resistance, according to Maqrīzī, boded ill for the destiny of the Egyptian Bedouin, and their power diminished over time.

The Mamluk army, which was based exclusively on Mamluk soldiers then, showed decisive military superiority over the Bedouin, heightening from then on the alienation between the mamluks and the Bedouin and turning it into rivalry. With their weakness exposed, the Bedouin had no choice but to accept the supremacy of the mamluks. Although more numerous, the Bedouin did not manage to unite for a joint struggle against the mamluks. Rivalry became an integral

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10 M. Winter, “Turks, Arabs and Mamluks in the Army of Ottoman Egypt”, Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlands, vol. LXXII (1980), 113. He was referring to the chronicle by al-Hallaq (al-Khallaq). He also pointed out that in 1698–9 the Hawwārā Bedouin refused to pay taxes in cash or in goods, pleading that they were ‘azab and inakishāriyya. He posits the theory that the semi-nomads of Upper Egypt could claim this because the barriers that had been set up against the entry of the ra‘īyya (subjects) into the army were removed. See also Aḥmad Shalabī, (Celebi) b. ‘Abd al-Ghanī, Awarah al-shawārāt fīman wa‘lamu Mīr wa‘l-Qibla man al-uṣurāt wa‘l- bāshāt al-mulqūb bi-ta‘ārikh al-‘Ayn, Cairo, 1978, 203, 442.

part of the relationship between the two populations, yet reality, which forced them to live close to each other, ultimately led to an interweaving of the Bedouin into the Mamluk order.

A vital aspect of this reality was the necessity for the mamluks to rely on the Bedouin as mercenaries. This was problematic from the Mamluk point of view for several reasons. The Bedouin were fickle and wayward. They took advantage of every opportunity to profit from the battlefield losses of those who hired their services by plunder. They did not hesitate to desert the battlefield the moment they realized that victory would elude their masters. They perceived warfare as a business transaction with no political commitment whatsoever, not even to the shaykh of their fighting unit, through whom they were recruited. Moreover, the Bedouin never forsook their traditional economy—livestock and seasonal arid agriculture, which gave them their basic economic security. All Bedouin fighters left behind grazing animals and fields that needed care. Their behavior stemmed from their perception of the heads of the Mamluk factions for whom they fought not as ruling authorities but more as local partners or allies. This enabled the Bedouin to allow themselves a large degree of freedom of action.

The Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517 fanned the Bedouin-mamluk hostility to a new peak. The Bedouin exploited the unsettled situation at the time of the conquest to retaliate against the mamluks for their bloody repression whenever the Bedouin would rebel. Bedouin vengeance underlay the betrayal of Tûmân Bây, the last Mamluk sultan. Tûmân Bây escaped when the Ottomans invaded Egypt in 1517 and was given asylum in the camp of Shaykh Ḥasan b. Marṭî. The shaykh however, handed him over to the Ottomans, an act contradictory to the Bedouin tradition of asylum. The mamluks, seeking to avenge this betrayal, could do so only after they were integrated into the new Ottoman order in Egypt. Indeed, they recovered their authoritative status and restored their position as provincial governors. In March 1519 mamluks murdered Ḥasan b. Marṭî and his nephew. That same month Shaykh al-ʿArab ʿAlî al-

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12 Ḥasan b. Marṭî was the shaykh of al-Muḥārīb Bedouin. He was murdered in March 1519. See Aḥmad al-Rimāl Ibn Zunbul, Aḥrat al-Mamālīk, uṣūl al-Sultān al-Ghārî muḫ Sālim al-Uthmānī, Cairo: al-Maʿāḍ, 1962, 105.
13 Ibn Iyās argued that following this event, the Circassian mamluks increased their power at the Bedouin’s expense. See Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, Bulāṭi
Asmar b. Abī al-Shawārīb was invited to visit the kāšīf (provincial governor) of Minūfiyya. He was served wine and became drunk. Afterwards, he was murdered by the kāšīf’s deputy. In this case, the kāšīf was forced to pacify the Bedouin’s anger and execute his deputy. The shaykhs of ‘Arab al-Sawālim were murdered in a similar way in December 1519 by mamluks who were assisted by Bedouin from other tribes. The Bedouin were forced to appeal for help to the Ottoman authorities.

The Ottomans incorporated tribal structures in paradigmatically Ibn Khaldūnian fashion, on one hand, and the rival Mamluk/slave bureaucracy on the other, exploiting both in various proportions in the formation of Ottoman state in Egypt. The central authority made use of the sociopolitical link between mamluks and Bedouin in Egypt through two traditional supra-structures or leagues, Sa’d and Hanām. They were the largest traditional social grouping to be found in Mamluk and Ottoman Egypt. Sa’d and Hanām were loose informal twofold factions that gained a hold among both nomad and sedentary groups in Egypt. This social grouping resembled in several respects the kind usually referred to by the term “moiety” or “dual” organization. Entire tribes and Mamluk factions belonged to one or the other of such dual groupings, which were known by name pairs in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East, such as Qahtān and ‘Adnān, Yafa and Hamān, Hināwī and Ghāfrī, and Qays and Yaman. Sa’d and Hanām as the other pairs, were actually, old and mythological tribal confederate groupings. This division into groups of tribes went back to tribal conflicts in pre-Islamic period and the emergence of Islam.


14 Ibn Iyās, 298.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the interwoven social history of the Bedouin and mamluks in Ottoman Egypt was the bond that emerged between the Bedouin Sa’d and Harâm groupings and two major Mamluk factions—Faqâriyya and Qâsimiyya.16 Tribes and Mamluk factions were associated with either one of the two factions. Through their association with Sa’d and Harâm, the various Mamluk factions forged on identification with historic populations and ancient mythologies of Arabia. This identification had only a loose connection to their actual roots, and was based on an imagined genealogy that blended Egyptian Bedouin, Mamluk and classic Arab tribal characteristics.

The major Egyptian-based Faqâriyya-Nisf Sa’d faction comprised mamluks, urban elements and Bedouin belonging to the Nisf Sa’d. The other major faction, Qâsimiyya-Nisf Harâm, comprised rival mamluks, other urban elements and Bedouin of the Nisf Harâm. According to the chronicle by al-Qinâli:

[3a] From ancient times the people of Egypt, soldiery, Arabs (’urbâni) and civilians (’ur’iyya) were two parties: white flag and red flag. The white was Tubhâ’î and the red was Kulaybî; Zughbî and Hilî, Qâlûnî and Baybarsî until the time of the House of ’Uthmân... when the two parties became Faqâri-Sa’d and Qâsimi-Harâm.17

By the seventeenth century, the Bedouin were fully involved in most of the political intrigues and military disputes between the Mamluk factions, exploiting this situation in their favor. The link between the Faqâriyya and Sa’d and between the Qâsimiyya and Harâm positioned the Bedouin as a pivot in the political arena. The weaker the central government became and the stronger the Mamluk beys grew, the greater the influence of clans and tribal groups.

Further evidence of the imagined Mamluk genealogy as a reflection of Mamluk assimilation in Egyptian society is discernible in the struggle between the two Mamluk factions, the Faqâriyya and the

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17 Mustafa b. Ibrâhîm al-Maddâh al-Qinâli, Majmu‘ latîf, Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (MS. Hist. Osm. 38), 3a. The chronicle is part of the eighteenth century Dimurdâshi group.
Qāsimiyā, during the eighteenth century. Their symbols of identity were a white flag (Faqārī) and a red flag (Qāsimī). The white flag embraced the Tubbā‘ī, Ḥusaynī, Zughbī, Qalā‘ūnī, Sa‘d and Faqārī groupings. The red flag, the Kulaybī, Yazīdī, Hilā‘ī, Baybarsī, Ḥarām and Qāsimī. The genealogical differences between mamluk and non-mamluk, by than, were ambiguous.

Historiographically, too, the non-differentiation between the Bedouin tribal groups and the Mamluk factions was almost complete by the eighteenth century, to the extent that a distinction made between sanjāq [bey]s (high ranking amirs) of Niṣf Sa‘d and sanjāq of Niṣf Ḥarām referred in actuality to the Faqārīyya and the Qāsimiyā. This was also the case regarding the various Bedouin groupings in Egypt. “The Bedouin of Buhayra their flag is red, [they are] always with the Qāsimiyā.”

The tribal confederation of the Ḥabība, which dominated parts of central Egypt under the leadership of Shaykh Ḥabīb and his sons Sālim and Suwaylim in the second half of the eighteenth century, was identified with the Faqārīyya.

The mamluks, acknowledging the Bedouin’s link to these ancient confederations, defined their own political loyalties accordingly. When the amir Ibrāhīm Abū Shanab appointed in 1703–4 his mamluk Aḥmad al-As‘ad governor, he posted him in the province of Buhayra “because it always belonged to him, since the Bedouin there are Niṣf Ḥarām without exception.” However, the Bedouin were not always faithful in their group affiliation. Bedouin groups transferred from one camp to the other according to pragmatic interests, state of relationship and personal connections with particular mamluks. The Bedouin were clearly involved in the armed conflict of 1711, between the Faqārīyya and the Qāsimiyā, known as the fitna (lit. rebellion). However, the support they gave to one or the other of the rivals was not necessarily determined by their belonging to the Niṣf Sa‘d

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19 Ayalon, Studies, 157–60.
20 Majmū‘, 306.
21 Al-Qnāfī, 68a.
or the Niṣf Ḥarām. Al-Zaydiyya Bedouin, who belonged to the Niṣf Ḥarām, found themselves in the Ḥabāiba camp, which belonged to the Niṣf Saʿd. In contrast, Muḥammad Bey Çerkes, the leader of the Qāsimiyya, managed to unite most of the groups identified with Niṣf Ḥarām around himself, in addition to the Zaydiyya. These groups were Bedouin of Buḥayra province, Ḥanādīt Bedouin and others.²³ Saʿd and Ḥarām existed as Bedouin groupings in Egypt at least until the end of the eighteenth century.

The primary manifestations of the close mamlik-Bedouin relationship were marriage alliances and the granting of asylum to each other’s rebels and to rebels from allied camps. Ibn Zunbul noted that the Mamlik amir Qanṣūh al-ʿAdī had marriage alliances with the Bedouin of Qatāra, and that he escaped there after his defeat by Sultan Selim’s army during the Ottoman conquest.²⁴ The remnants of the Qāsimiyya, who took refuge in Upper Egypt after their defeat by the Ottomans, settled there and intermarried with the Hawwāra Bedouin. This may have been the reason that they named ‘Alī Bey al-ʿArmanī Ṣāḥib al-ʿArab.²⁵ The Abwāziyya, one of the households within the Qāsimiyya faction that had an alliance with Niṣf Ḥarām, established marriage alliances with the ʿĀqīd tribe in the Sharqiyya province. This intermingling produced the Ābaẓa clan, which played an important role in the local political life of the Sharqiyya in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Amirs and šaykhs: Similarities between households

Mamlik society in Egypt was divided internally by factional rivalries. The mamlucks, who held senior ranks and had a high income, established households, ṣayt or ṣafā’afa—a cluster of groups and indi-

²⁴ Ibn Zunbul, 106.
²⁵ He held a governmental post in Jirja, later becoming responsible for the granaries in Cairo. See al-Asrūr al-musūnā, 71. It appears that in this case the granting of asylum should be ascribed to political considerations and not necessarily to the close relations that led to marriage alliances (and certainly not to the Bedouin custom of hospitality). As is known, marriages in contemporary Bedouin societies, are agreed upon mainly because of economic considerations, and it is absolutely reasonable to assume that the considerations were the same then.
viduals, bound to the head of the household. In time, these house-
holds coalesced into factions based on kinship and origin. The house-
hold provided the context for the various components of Mamluk
elite, including marriage alliances aimed at consolidating political and
economic interests. This practice led to the absorption of rootless
clients and associates and increased the household membership,
enhancing the political power of the household and its control over
sources of wealth. Ultimately, the goal was to create political alliances
and attain access to economic resources. The wives, concubines and
daughters of the head of the household exercised influence and con-
tributed to the economic strength of the household. This social
structure closely resembled Bedouin society, which was a system of
tribal organizations based on a common origin according to mytho-
logical, imagined or real blood kinship and divided into rival tribes
and sub-tribes that carried on persistent struggles against each other.
Evidence shows that Bedouin shaykhs bearing the title of amir
established households with similar features in Upper Egypt at the
end of the Mamluk period (late fifteenth—early sixteenth centuries).
Moreover, marriage alliances were made between Bedouin and
Mamluk households. Like the mamluks, the Bedouin tribes used this
strategy to enhance the power of the group. Such households con-
sisted of kin living in the same compound, although they could vary
greatly in composition and size. Large households could also include
non-kin, such as servants and retainers. Furthermore, the Bedouin
shaykh’s residence was a center for political gathering. These house-
holds were part of a diversified system of tribal frameworks, each of
which filled certain functions. They were organized sociopolitically
and territorially according to economic tasks. For example, the pas-
turing of camels and other flocks demanded the organization of small
groups for wandering in search of pasture, while agriculture called
for seasonal settlement in larger groups. The distinguishing feature
of the household was the maintenance of a shared set of resources,

XXVII, 1995, 46.
27 The Bedouin amirs of Banū ‘Umar of the Hawwāra federation held the iqṭā’
(tax farm) of Girga since the end of the fourteenth century. See the list of the
Hawwāra beys and amirs edited by J.-C. Garcin, “Emirs Hawwāras et beys de
including land and all other property, to which all members contributed and from which they subsisted. In short, the Bedouin household was a corporate political unit. In this it differed from the households of the mamluks, who were not nomads and whose economy rested on a different base (mainly income from taxation and government allowances). Although when Bedouin shaykhs moved from the tribal areas and settled on lands granted to them by the authorities, or shifted to sedentary settlements, they did not cut themselves off from the tribal federations. These groupings, acting as territorial organizations and controlled a dīra (moving territory), secured their members’ rights to pasture and water resources.

The Bedouin shaykhs kept fewer mamluks than the amirs, in their households, despite the fact that their households were fairly similar to those of the mamluks. Perhaps the Bedouin feared the emergence of Mamluk clans within the tribal framework, which were likely to threaten the integrity of the Bedouin social organization and even block the option of entering into alliances with the mamluks in Cairo. Perhaps the mamluks of Cairo themselves would have not been favorable to the establishment by Bedouin of their own separate Mamluk units. In a similar vein the Ḥabayba, who belonged to the Niṣf Sa‘d and were the most important nomadic element in Central Egypt, had quotas of black slaves who could participate in battles. Only Shaykh al-ʿArab Humām, the shaykh of the Hawwāra confederation and the de facto ruler of Upper Egypt during the second half of the eighteenth century, held a large number of mamluks in addition to black slaves and concubines. He belonged to the Niṣf Ḥarām camp, and making him an ally of the Qāsimiyya. After their defeat in battle against the Faqāriyya in 1730, many members of the Qāsimiyya found refuge with the Hawwāra, worked in Humām’s service, and eventually were assimilated into the local tribal society. Humām


29 Bedouin did not regard the dīra as a fixed geographical location; rather it was a territory for moving, which could in principle be delineated spatially around any moving individual male. On the distinction between the concepts of dīra and territory, see A. Meir, As Nomadism Ends, Boulder: Westview Press, 1997, 23–24, 77–78.

30 ʿAjāʻib, I, 345, 346.

31 Ibid., 343.
successfully dominated Upper Egypt, where the rebel mamluks who sought refuge in the area benefited by his benevolence and became totally reliant on his good will.

The households established by prominent Bedouin shaykhs in the nineteenth century functioned as political units. They resembled kin factions and had some of the characteristics of the Mamluk households of the eighteenth century and the kapı of the Ottoman-Egyptian elite of the nineteenth century, which Kenneth Cuno termed joint family households. The members of these households consisted of his wives, his married sons with their families, and a retinue of attached persons who included Coptic and other clerks, soldiers, black slaves, concubines and various protégés. 'Ali Mubārak, in his biography of Shaykh al-'Arab 'Alewa Abū Kuraysha, provided evidence that Bedouin shaykhs kept slaves in the nineteenth century. “When Abu Kuraysha went for a ride, all his slaves followed him on foot.” The residence of the shaykh’s estate functioned as an administrative and center of control. The primary impetus of notable Bedouin families to establish joint family households was their wish to reproduce their political and economic status into the new reality and to perpetuate their control and entrench sedentary settlement. The greater the threat to group solidarity, the stronger the impetus of the shaykhs and notables to strengthen the familial household structure. Such households were evidence of the growing wealth of the Bedouin shaykhs in the nineteenth century. Many of the shaykhs went so far as to build a castle (qasr) in a strategic location close to the tribal dīra. For example, the shaykhs of the Lamlūm clan of the Fawā’dī tribe built a castle, which they named Lamlūm. Shaykh al-'Arab

32 Literally, door or gate. The kapı was a variation of a political/military/administrative unit based on status and descent.


35 Cuno argued that setting up a joint household was a tactic by rural notables to prevent the fragmentation of the land as an outcome of divided inheritances. See “Joint family”, 485.
al-Sa‘dāwī al-Jabālī of the Ḥarābī tribe built several castles, one in the town of al-Fayyūm and others in a nearby suburb.36

The households of the shaykhs, who held offices in Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha’s administration, became foci for the buildup of large estates. The shaykhs enjoyed an advantage over the rest of Bedouin society because they could acquire land both legitimately, through grants from the ruler or by purchase, and through coercion. The wealthiest shaykhs were those who held positions at the lower level of the provincial hierarchy (for example district chiefs).37 An outstanding example was Muḥammad Sulṭān (1825–1884), whose acquisition of large tracts of land had a significant sociopolitical effect: the land became a source of benefits to the members of the shaykh’s clan while also enhancing their personal influence in the province or the district (nābīya) in the same way as had occurred with the Mamluk leaders of the past. The shaykhs had a retinue of their own warriors, which enabled them to impose control in their area as well as fulfill missions assigned by the authorities, for example, supplying horsemen to the pasha’s army. A Bedouin shaykh who built up a sedentary settlement or an estate elevated his status in his tribe. His tribesmen favored and supported him in this move, perceiving him as having gotten close to the governing center and thus better able to promote their interests. For this reason they were not distressed at his leaving the tribal territory and did not try to harm his interests or the social and economic rights of his kin group in his absence. So long as the shaykh could manage to represent his tribesmen successfully, no one undermined him or challenged his leadership. However, one can see some problematic aspects of the Shaykh al-ʿArab’s status.

With this, the shift of the status of some shaykhs to landlords engendered certain problems. It exposed them to greater dependency on the authorities. They were obliged to pay taxes and to carry out various tasks for the government. The pasha, for his part, preferred that the shaykhs reside in their tribal vicinity in order to control the tribe and the tribal territory more efficiently.

36 See “settlement”, 11; al-Rītāt, vol. XVII.
37 Ibid., vol. IX, 14, 99; vol. XV, 73.
Amirs and shaykhs: Integration in the administration and the military

Bedouin shaykhs were regarded as an integral part of the Mamluk Sultanate military and government. The most prominent and the powerful among them were granted the title amir, with military and administrative functions. Mamluk amirs and prominent Bedouin shaykhs appeared to have the same level of political power. Both of them were at one and the same time leaders of groupings and commanders of military structures. The military Mamluk society, was open to assimilate military structures of tribal society, such as the kin base of the warrior bands. The last Mamluk sultans appointed Bedouin shaykhs to high positions in their administration, such as post of amir tablíkhánéh and kásíf (provincial governor). From the period of the rule of Sultan Barquq (1382–1398) onward, prominent shaykhs of the ‘Áid Bedouin bore the title amír. Toward the end of the Mamluk period, Bedouin shaykhs were also employed in the ḥājj caravans in administrative posts traditionally held by mamluks.

Clearly, the Bedouin ruled Upper Egypt during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as part of the Sultanate administration. The Banū ‘Umar clan of the Ḥawwāra Bedouin in Upper Egypt had a close relationship with the Mamluk authorities and its shaykhs bore the title amír. After the death of the Mamluk amir Yashbaq in 1480, the central government appointed Muḥammad b. Yūnis of the Ḥawwāra as amír, marking the beginning of the continuous rule of the clan for over 120 years. From 1493 their ruling center was at

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39 Shwartz, 304.


Girga. The Ottomans, who arrived in 1517, recognized and confirmed the status of the Banū 'Umar and integrated the Bedouin amīrs of this clan into the new administration. During the process of the Ottoman takeover, Amir al-Hawwārā 'Alī b. 'Umar denied a request for help by Tumānbāy, the last Mamluk sultan, and declared his loyalty to the new suzerain the Ottoman sultan Selim. As a reward, the Ottomans recognized his rule in Upper Egypt. Ibn Iyās described 'Umar as “the administrator of Upper Egypt regions” (mutawalli jihāt al-Šī‘id). Under his rule, Girga became the capital of Upper Egypt and evolved into a new Muslim urban center that displacing Qūs. The amīrs of Banū 'Umar continued to rule until 1607, after which the Ottomans succeeded in appointing an amīr of their own in 1608. The Bedouin Hawwārā clan of the Awlād Humām then gained power, prompting the ketkhudā (deputy commander) of the grand vizier to note that when he had been the agha (commander) in Upper Egypt, the Bedouin undermined the position of the sanjaj, owned Mamluk fighters and slaves, had representatives who purchased concubines in Cairo for them and were mālucūzs (tax farmers).

In the province of Buḥayra, the Bedouin amirs Ḥamd al-‘Adīlī and his brother Mūsā were recognized kāshfūs in 1596, responsible for security, for which they were paid. In the Sharqiyya, the Bedouin amir Ahmad b. Baqar retained his position under the Ottomans.

The Bedouin shaykhs had been granted the title Shaykh al-‘Arab during the Mamluk Sultanate and were granted estates (iqṭā‘āt) as a return for services rendered to the authorities, such as guarding the roads and tracking down robbers. This system continued until 1525 when Grand Vizier Ibrāhīm Pasha introduced the Qanūn-nāme-i Mīsr marking an entrenchment and reinforcement of the role of the shaykh

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43 Ibn Iyās, III, 130, 159.
44 See Emirs Hawwāras and Qūs, n. 1; 517, n. 2.
45 Kitāb al-amīrs, 17.
47 Ibn Zunbul, 145, 146.
al-'Arab in the administration of the countryside (al-rif'). At the same time the Ottomans evicted the shaykhs from the iqtā‘at and appointed them tax farmers tasked with collecting the khārij (land tax) from tenant farmers and tribute payments from “despised” and protege tribes. The tax farmers were required to set aside the government share—the mīr— and submit an annual report to the pasha.

The imperial decrees of the sixteenth century are an important source of information about the position of the Bedouin shaykhs in the Ottoman administration. Michael Winter made extensive use of this resource regarding the offices of the Shaykh al-'Arab, the amir and the kāshif. The decrees confirmed the strong position of the Bedouin shaykhs in certain provinces where their dominance was undisputed. He found that the decrees refer to the shaykhs as rulers of a region and not merely as tribal leaders. In acquiring the status the Qānūn-nāme, the Bedouin shaykhs were given the same functions and authority as kāshif. Moreover, Winter argued the offices of Shaykh al-'Arab and kāshif were virtually synonymous in the imperial decrees. The kāshifs and the shaykhs were responsible for agriculture, public works and public order. Both constituted backbone of the tax collection system. The central government treated them identically and both were granted the same authority and functions. The only difference between them was that the kāshifs were army officers with the title of amirs, while the shaykhs were not members of the military elite.

Still, some noted Bedouin shaykhs were integrated in the military establishment and became commanders over Mamluk amirs. This occurred in the provincial areas, which in any case were under the control of the Bedouin shaykhs. Winter concluded that this demonstrated the vitality of the Bedouin as well as the greater flexibility (or even weakness) of the military class. Yet the point should be made that not only were the Bedouin the only population group readily available, they were structurally suitable and qualified to play a major role in the government administration and become

50 Tribes, which were ascribed to inferior pedigree, i.e. the Hatīn in the Sinai and the “protected” Murābiṭīn tribes of the Awlād ‘Āf Bedouin in the Western Desert.
51 Egyptian Society, 90–102.
52 Ibid., 95.
integrated into the Mamluk-based military and fiscal system. Both the Bedouin and the mamluks spent much of their time in warfare. Furthermore, the Bedouin were not committed to a sedentary life, they were knowledgeable about the social and economic conditions in the countryside, and maintained reasonably good relations with the local Mamluk officials. The central Ottoman government could not fail to take note of the similarities between the Bedouin and the mamluks and to perceive the potential for cooperation between the two groups.

The Bedouin gradually entered the ranks of the regiments of the Ottoman garrisons, the *ojāqs*. Ahmad Shalabī referring to this issue, claimed that the Hawwārā Bedouin were *‘azab* or *mustādhfizān* (Janissaries) and that they exploited this status in refusing to pay the *māl* and *ghilāl* (grain) tax on land they were granted. The governor of Girga, ‘Abd al-Rahman Bey, complained about this in 1698, and the pasha promised to issue a *ḥujiya* (legal title) annulling Bedouin membership in the military class (*‘askariyya*). Shalabī pointed out that a few years earlier, residents of Cairo alleged claims that Bedouin nevertheless serve in the *ojāqs* and indeed they were dismissed in 1657–8 following an imperial decree (*firmān*). The Hawwārā’s entitlement to serve in the *ojāqs*, however, was retained in the law, and they were registered as *inkishāriyya* (Janissaries) and *‘azab* in Ibrāḥīm Pasha’s registers (*daftars*) already in the first half of the sixteenth century. In 1723 Muḥammad Pasha, the Ottoman viceroy of Egypt, made an effort to remove them from the *ojāqs* but withdrew this initiative when he realized that their status was officially entrenched.

Winter cites several examples of Bedouin chiefs who attained senior military ranks in the Ottoman/Mamluk *‘askariyya* under Ottoman rule and who were regarded as military commanders or governors of regions, based on the *Mühimme Defteri* documents. Ahmad b. Baqar, the shaykh of the Bani Wā‘il Bedouin, was appointed amir of forty elite *amīr tablkhāneh* (commander of orchestra) at the end of the Mamluk Sultanate. Hammād b. Khabīr, (1571), who had been given the district of Jabal al-Akhdar in Cyrenaica as an *iltizām* (tax farm) was granted the military rank of amir (*ṣanjaj bey*), Shaykh al-‘Arab ‘Umrān’s predecessors of the Banu ‘Umar clan in Upper Egypt (1573).
had 50–60 Janissaries from Cairo at their disposal, Shaykh ‘Arab al-Ghazālā ‘Umrān al-Khabīrī (1713–4), bore the rank of amīr in the nāḥiyā (district) of Umm Hanān in the province of Gīza. Powerful Bedouin shaykhs also served in the position of commander of the annual pilgrimage caravan (amīr al-hājj), considered one of the most prestigious offices in Egypt. One of the prominent of them was ‘Īsā b. Ismā‘īl b. ‘Amīr, the amīr of the Bānū ‘Awna Bedouin in the Buhayra in 1555–6 and during 1562/3–1564/5. His son ‘Umar succeeded him in 1590/1, 1591/2, 1593/4 and 1594/5. ‘Īsā was the wālī (governor) of Buhayra province until 1561/2 and was succeeded in this post, too, by his son ‘Umar. Both these shaykhs had mamluks under their command as well. According to al-Jazarī, the reason for ‘Īsā’s promotion in the Ottoman military hierarchy was solely attributable to the gifts he brought during his annual visits to the court of the sultan in Istanbul.

**Allies in the struggle for rule over Egypt**

The end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries witnessed a continuous state of war between the Ottomans and the various Mamluk factions, with French and British forces periodically fighting alongside one or another of the parties. Bedouin tribal groups played a key role in these confrontations, fighting in the service of all the parties. During the French occupation, tribesmen served in the ranks of the Mamluk beys as well as in the struggle against the French. This was the last period the Bedouin could exploit their advantages to assist rival Mamluk factions in their battles against each other and to reinforce the Mamluk ranks against the Ottomans, the British and the French. Notably, just as the Mamluk struggle for rule in Egypt after the French withdrawal was

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55 In the manuscript titled *Asr al-munsāna* that I used, his name is ‘Umar al-Khabīrī. See 61. Also see Kitāb al-du‘ra al-munṣāna, 185a.
57 In 999, 1000, 1002, 1003 hijra. See Al-Jazarī, 947, 1076, and by index.
59 Al-Jazarī, 947.
not national character, but economic and territorial, the Bedouin too, sought only to preserve their economic and territorial interests. They favored Mamluk control of Egypt so as to exploit the rivalry between the Mamluk factions for their own purposes.

An important source of information about the last stage in Bedouin-Mamluk coexistence is the chronicle by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī.\(^{60}\) It shed light on the political role of the Bedouin in the Mamluk’s final struggle for the rule of Egypt after the French withdrawal, a struggle that ended with the victory of Muhammad ‘Ali. With the Mamluk amīrs constituting the main political actors in the chronicle, most of the information about the Bedouin deals with their relationship with the Mamluk beys and the amīrs. The chronicle reveals that in many cases the Bedouin pinned their hopes on the leaders of the major Mamluk factions, perceiving them as a source of stability. While al-Jabartī illuminate the background descriptions to the treaties and the rivalries between the Bedouin and the mamluks, his attitude toward the Bedouin is revealed as mostly hostile. Because of his social background as a man of urban middle class family, he was not familiar with the Bedouin lifestyle and was prejudiced against them. In this case, he sided with the French, who claimed that the mamluks and the Bedouins aimed to plunder the country and destroy Egypt.\(^{61}\)

Following the French evacuation from Cairo in July 1801 and two months later from Egyptian territory entirely, several Bedouin tribal groups joined the Mamluk beys and amīrs in making a stand against the Ottoman attempts to re-establish their sovereignty over Egypt. With this, the Bedouin enjoyed unprecedented freedom of action then because Ottoman rule was impotent and political chaos reigned. Even so, there is no indication that Bedouin groupings formed any kind of independent chiefdom in one of the regions or even had exclusive control over any part of Egypt.\(^{62}\)

\(^{60}\) Al-Jabartī is a valuable source for descriptions of the relationships between mamluks and Bedouin in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although there are gaps in his coverage and he constitutes a secondary source regarding such chronicles as Awdah al-ishārāt covering Jabartī’s early period. However, al-Jabartī was an eyewitness to the events between the years 1776/7–1820/1.

\(^{61}\) ‘Aṭib, III, 76.

After the death of Murād Bey (1801), two factions vied for Mamluk leadership. One, led by Muhammad Bey al-Alfi al-Kabir, consisted of supporters of the late Murād and favored a treaty with the British. The other, led by 'Uthmān Bey al-Bardīsī and Ibrāhīm Bey, sought affiliation with the Ottomans. The major Bedouin tribal groups assisted both parties. Bedouin from Upper Egypt secured the superiority of the al-Alfi faction and went so far as to attack Ottoman posts in September 1802. Following a failed attempt by al-Bardīsī in 1802 to eliminate al-Alfi, the Huwaytāt and Ma‘āza Bedouin helped al-Alfi escape and the Ma‘āza Bedouin gave him asylum. It was Muhammad ‘Alī, however, who was the most serious contender for rule over Egypt. According to the picture sketched by al-Jabartī, most of the Bedouin tribes joined one or the other of the Mamluk factions and in addition to fighting as part of Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha’s troops, exploited the prevailing political disorder to steal and plunder. One of the major battles that the pasha led took place in April 1804 near Imbābā in Gīza province. Al-Jabartī reported that the Egyptian (Mamluk) amīrs (al-umārī al-misrīyya)64 and the Bedouin deployed in the Gīza region until they reached Imbābā, which they attacked and pillaged while the inhabitants escaped. A description of events following a battle near Bāb al-Naṣr in Cairo a month later again emphasizes the Bedouin’s role in acts of plunder while fighting in the Mamluk ranks and further illuminates the convoluted relationship and cooperation between mamluks and Bedouin. At the end of the battle the amīrs and the Bedouin retreated and dispersed through the provinces of Sharqiyya and Qalyūbiyya, wreaking havoc along the way. They destroyed grain harvests in the fields and seized what had been threshed. Afterwards, they released their mounts to graze on whatever was still growing in the fields and set fire to what had not been threshed. They also pillaged the livestock, slaughtering it and eating the meat. One of the Bedouin fighting unit took the kāshīf of Sharqiyya prisoner at Bilbays for two days while they pillaged the town, killing some two hundred people. The shaykh of the ‘Aid Bedouin, Abū Tawila, came to the amīrs and rebuked them for the pillaging, saying: “These crops belong mostly to the

64 The Mamluk leaders were referred to thus in the chronicle.
Bedouin, but your allies, the dregs of the Bedouin, have no part in it.” When the Hanādī Bedouin shaykhs and other allied Bedouin who were fighting on their side heard the word “dregs,” they were enraged and came close to killing Abu Tawila, and fights broke out between the various Bedouin groups. The amīrs also besieged the kāshīf of Qalyūbiyya, summoning the shaykhs of the Zawāmil and ‘Ā‘id Bedouin in the area and ordering them to carry out forced-labor projects (kulaf). They also levied heavy taxes on the villages, appointing Bedouin allies as collectors and paying them unusually high commissions.

Al-Alī was Muḥammad ‘Alī’s most dangerous Mamluk adversary once the French withdrew from Egypt in 1801. Al-Alī sought the support of prominent Bedouin shaykhs such as Ibn Shādīd, shaykh of the Ḥuwaytāt, shaykhs of the ‘Ā‘id in the Sharqiyya, and the shaykh of the Bedouin of the Jazira area, to help him become the new ruler of Egypt. Muḥammad ‘Alī, meanwhile, had the support of the Ḥuwaytāt and Niṣf Ḥarām Bedouin and of Shaykh Ibn Shā‘ir, leader of one of the tribal groups in the Buḥayra province. The reconfirmation by the Sublime Porte of Muḥammad ‘Alī’s appointment as pasha of Egypt in July 1805 marked al-Alī’s failure in his quest. He understood this once and for all while waiting in the Buḥayra province for three months for British help that had been promised to him but was late. The time was the height of summer, when there were no crops or pasture. The Bedouin in his service demanded to be allowed to go to Upper Egypt in search for food and pasture. Al-Alī had no choice but to submit to the demand and to depart to the Sa‘īd with his force, which included 6,000 Bedouin fighters, among them the Awwād ‘Alī and Hanādī tribes as well as Bedouin from the Sharqiyya, the core of his army. He

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66 Al-Jabartī uses the term hubūd al-‘Arab. See ‘Ā‘ib, III, 294.
67 Corvée, (in Arabic, kulfa), or forced labor, was a practice imposed by the Ottoman authorities.
68 ‘Ā‘ib, III, 295.
71 Ibid., 43.
arrived with his troops at Kafr Ḥakīm on January 27, 1807, dismounted on a hill near Cairo, and while delivering a speech, suddenly fell ill. He managed to appoint Shāhīn Bey as his successor and died that night. The Bedouin tribes that had rallied around him promptly went their separate ways, returning to their lands tend their animals and fields. Some sent requests to the pasha for an amnesty, realizing that he would succeed in stabilizing his rule. 72

Months of continual warfare and sieges of this kind between the two sides—Muḥammad ‘Alī and the amīrs—thus came temporarily to an end, although law and order were not soon restored. Land and sea routes were disrupted, local Bedouin shaykhs imposed arbitrary control in the wake of ineffective governments, and the fellahīn (the rural peasant population) mounted unsuccessful efforts at resisting the Bedouin. The mamluks, for their part, were uncoordinated and focused on internecine struggles for control, with each of the rival amīrs engaging Bedouin to assist him in his fight.

Muhammad Bey al-Alfī, the “Bedouin” mamluk

Al-Alfī’s special ties with the Bedouin propelled to the head of the anti-pasha Mamluk camp and positioned him as having the best chance to get the upper hand in the Mamluk struggle for power. The amīrs who preceded him in this struggle, late in the eighteenth century, such as Ibrāhīm Jawīsh, Muḥammad Bey al-Ṣaʿīdī, Ṣāliḥ Bey al-Qāsimī and Ḥusayn Kashkash had gained only limited support from the Bedouin tribes and only of small tribal groups, mainly from their own provinces. The pasha often said: “As long as this al-Alfī lives, my life will not be comfortable.” Informed of al-Alfī’s death, he obscured: “He and I are like two acrobats walking a tightrope, except that he has wooden shoes on his feet.” 73

Al-Jabarti is including detailed biography of al-Alfī in his chronicle, provided rare insights into the Mamluk attitude to the Bedouin and the relationship between the two groups:

Al-Alfī was an important and dignified amīr. . . . A noteworthy accomplishment of his—one unique to him—was that all the Bedouin tribes

73 Ibid., 38.
in Egypt were subservient to him, carried out his orders, and never disobeyed him. He had an uncanny ability to manage them and such deep knowledge of their character and circumstances that he might have been one of them or raised among them. They would stand or sit at his command, in spite of the fact that he exacted money, camels, and livestock from them, imprisoned them or released them and killed some of them. Despite this they never turned away from him. He frequently married Bedouin women; those he liked, he would keep as long as it suited his purpose; those who did not suit his temperament would be sent back to live with their families. Only one of them continued in his household, one who had pleased him, and whom he left at his death. When the Bedouin learned of his death, their women gathered to mourn him with remarkable dirges that have since been sung again and again by singers to the accompaniment of musical instruments.

How strange it was! When he came into the area formerly under the sway of the Bedouin, making his yearly stay east of Bilbays, he would enforce his control over the Bedouin, punishing them with arrests and imprisonment, cooperating with one faction against another, taking money, horses, camels, sheep and goats from them, taxing them heavily, and preventing them from exercising their power over the peasants. Yet, when he returned from England, and al-Bardīsī with his army had ganged up against him and beset him on every side, he went into hiding among the Bedouin and fled to al-Wādī and the home of ‘Ushayba the Bedouin, who gave him refuge, hid him, and kept the matter secret. . . . This was unprecedented; some even said he was using magic on them or had some secret means of reducing them to obedience. When he died, their unity broke up and they no longer gathered around a single man after him. Each tribe went to its own area; some sought amnesty from the Pasha.74

Continuing al-Jabartī records a typical monologue that testifies once again to the Bedouin’s fickleness even toward al-Alfī, who had built up an exceptional relationship with them. In a moment of frankness the Mamluk leader addressed one of his companions and articulated what he probably really thought about the Bedouin:

It is no easy matter for me [to live] now that I have become one man among thousands of enemies. Here are my own kin and companions who abandoned me and attacked me for no fault of mine. . . . Then there are these Bedouin gathered around me, whom I must cajole and lead, now with conciliation, now with threats, and likewise my horsemen and mamluks. Each of them ask me for a position of influence.

74 Ibid., 39.
or a command, thinking in his heedlessness that the country is under my control and believing that I am curtailing his rights. Sometimes I treat them with gentleness; sometimes I rebuke them with severity. In the midst of all these groups, I am like a hunted animal, and those around me are like hungry dogs trying to tear me to pieces and devour me. Not having at my disposal the treasures of Qarun to support these throngs of people, I am forced to commit unjust actions against God-fearing men, seizing their money and eating up their crops and livestock. If God grants me victory, I will compensate them for it and treat them kindly...

Twilight of the Mamluk beys’ rule: The loss of allies

Al-Alfî’s death paved the way for Muhammad ‘Ali to try to impose control over all the Bedouin tribes, attempting to capitalize on the wide connections that al-Alfî had with the Bedouin. However, the strong Awlād ‘Alî, al-Hanîdî and al-Hawwârî tribal federations, which had been allies of the Mamluk amîrs Murâd Bey, Muhammadd Bey al-Alfî and al-Bardîî, resisted his efforts. Still, to the pasha’s good fortune, the hatred between the Hanîdî and Awlād ‘Alî groupings was so strong that a united Bedouin front against him did not emerge. So long as the mamluks remained active, Muhammadd ‘Alî encountered difficulties, as the Bedouin maintained their practice dating back to the Ottoman conquest, of forming alliances with rival Mamluk factions. Only in 1811, after massacring all the Mamluk chiefs, could the pasha begin to try to implement his ideas concerning the Bedouin and the desirable policy toward them.

Significantly, al-Jabartî observed that with al-Alfî’s death, there was no Mamluk amîr who could rally the Bedouin around himself. Indeed the amîr Yâsîn Bey still managed gathering Bedouin in order to fight Sulaymân Bey al-Alfî, but was defeated in June 1808 despite the fact that Sulaymân Bey was killed in an ambush. The amîr Shâhîn Bey al-Alfî also had good relationship with the Bedouin. He was the intermediary in settlement of a conflict between the Awlād ‘Alî Bedouin and two other Bedouin tribes—the Hanîdî and the Jahna in the Bu‘ayra province—in October-November 1808 and managed by that to drive out the Awlād ‘Alî from the province.

75 Ibid., ibid.
76 Ibid., 75, 78.
However, they were of the last Mamluk leaders to have significant relations with Bedouin.

The year 1810 was critical for the Bedouin. Muḥammad ‘Alī and the mamluks held discussions about the future governing of Egypt. Shāhīn Bey, the central personality in the Mamluk camp, crossed over to the pasha’s side but after a serious falling out returned to the Mamluk beys as one of their chief leaders. It seems that the Bedouin perceived that the mamluks’ role would end during Muhammad ‘Alī’s rule, and that it was only a matter of time before the pasha would finally subdue them. Late in 1809, the amīrs Shāhīn Bey al-Alī, Muḥammad Bey al-Ibrāhīmī and Muḥammad Bey al-Manfūkh al-Murādī had led a revolt against the pasha. This revolt reached a turning-point in May-June 1810, when large numbers of Bedouin fighters were massed in a Mamluk camp erected outside Gīza under the command of ‘Uthmān Bey Ḥasan. They awaited the firing of the pasha’s canons, which would augur his arrival to sign a peace agreement, but the pasha chose not to appear, leaving the Mamluk camp humiliated. This act marked the beginning of the final deterioration of the mamluks’ relationship with the pasha. Shortly thereafter, Ibrāhīm Bey, one of the amirs who attended in the camp, was given an ultimatum by the pasha under which Ibrāhīm would submit to his authority and would then be appointed to any position he desired, on the condition that he pay all the levies assessed in his districts, including the mīrī, grain and kharāj, and the customary retainer fees to the Bedouin. That same night, most of the Mamluk amīrs abandoned Cairo, took their horses, camels and chattel, and crossed the Nile toward Gīza. There they all gathered together and split up into three camps: the Murādis, led by Shāhīn Bey; the Muḥammadis, led by ‘Alī Bey Ayyūb and the Ibrāhīmis, led by ‘Uthmān Bey Ḥasan. The first step they took was to write letters to the Bedouin shaykhīs with the intent of ensuring the Bedouin’s support. At that very time, however, the shaykhs of the Awlād ‘Alī were making their way to the pasha who granted them robes of honor, cashmere shawls and 150 purses.77

Following the failure of the negotiations with the pasha, Shāhīn Bey took the Mamluk initiative and led a series of battles against Muḥammad ‘Alī over a six-month period, which was to constitute

77 Ibid., 113, 114.
the final stage of the pasha's-mamluks struggle. Bedouin horsemen took part in all the campaigns as an act of support and identification despite their perception that the mamluks' effort was doomed. The three amirs of the Alī wing had abandoned the Mamluk camp, prompting Shāhīn Bey to reorganize the mamluks' war effort and appoint the amirs Na'mān Bey, Amin Bey and Yahya Bey as commanders. Once the news of the split among the amīrs spread through Upper and Lower Egypt, however, the Hanādī Bedouin and their shaykhs, who were on their way to join them decided instead to head for the pasha declared their loyalty to him and asked for safe conduct. The pasha heaped cloth and other gifts on them.

Following several defeats and attempts at mediation, Shāhīn Bey returned to Cairo in December 1810 and contracted an alliance with Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha. This, however, did not enable him to survive the massacre of the Mamluk amīrs in the citadel of Cairo three and a half months later, at the pasha’s orders. His Bedouin allies had proven to be unstable. As ever, the Bedouin, foreseeing the future, had deserted after each defeat. Some of them found their way into the pasha’s camp. Indeed, the Bedouin were no longer valuable partners to any of the amirs, in their ongoing resistance to the pasha. Some of Bedouin began searching for ways to cooperate with Muḥammad ‘Alī, who was gradually entrenching his position as the ruler of Egypt, others withdrew to their desert territories and ceased being involved in warfare and politics.

On March 1, 1811, Muḥammad ‘Alī invited the amīrs and their Mamluk retainers and soldiers to the citadel to greet him and than killed them all, thereby removing the most serious threat to his rule on Egypt. Until their elimination, the mamluks were the Bedouin’s main allies and chief partners in intrigues, revolts and takeover of various regions in Egypt. Once the mamluks left the stage, the Bedouin lost their constant ally. They were now entirely in the hands of the regime that the pasha had fashioned and were forced to choose between maintaining a relationship of alienation and suspicion toward the government or submitting to the pasha’s authority. In the event, they chose submission while keeping some degree of alienation.

78 For details about the massacre, see ibid., 126–29.
Conclusion

The intimate relations between mamluks and Bedouin in Ottoman Egypt were the result of a similarity of attitudes, values and social norms. The elite of both groups developed a similar social and political structure based on the household (bayt). However, the Mamluk-Bedouin relationship was a reluctant one: it would not have evolved if the Bedouin had not been the population in the countryside (al-rif) available to render services to the ruling mamluks and back it in warfare. The Bedouin were better acquainted with the social and economic system in the Egyptian rif and were rooted in its agricultural and cattle-based economy. The central authorities were compelled to grant them a major role in the local administration, where they developed a symbiotic relationship with the local Mamluk office-holders. These Mamluk amirs were so preoccupied by inter-factional rivalries, that they required qualified, reliable and available allies. The Bedouin were there at the right time and the right place.
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The ground plan
(according to Mayer, Pinkerfeld and Hirschberg)

Fig. 2: Safed, The Red Mosque. Ground plan. After Mayer, Pinkerfeld and Hirschberg.
Fig. 3: Safed, The Red Mosque. *Muqarna* portal. General view.
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