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The Sons of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the Politics of Puppets: Where Did It All Start?

بيت قلاوون سعاداته في عاجل كانت بلا آجل
حل على أملاكه للردى دين قد استوفاه بالكامل[1]

The period from al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death (741/1341) until the emergence of the Circassian dynasty under al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (784/1382) witnessed the unbridled succession to the throne of Egypt and Syria of the scions of that sultan, who ruled for 31 years during his third reign. These eight sons, two grandsons, and two great-grandsons are generally characterized as puppets whom the amirs enthroned as they wished. Their youth is usually identified as the reason why these sultans could be deposed as easily as they were put on the throne; their lack of experience, or perhaps more exactly of proper training, may have led them to behave in inappropriate ways or to make decisions not in accordance with those expected from a ruler. The rationales which the modern historian can invoke to try to understand how and why this situation continued for such a long period of time, particularly after the very long and successful reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, are numerous and can involve politics, sociology, and economics. As in many cases in history, it is probably a combination of several factors that played an undeniable role. From a historical point of view, it remains very tempting to try to generalize the whole period in that way, but the result necessarily offers a simplistic view of the events.

In the eyes of a later Mamluk historian such as al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), this succession of reigns looked like a mere coincidence, albeit strange in its regularity; this is what Muslim historians called *gharāʾib al-ittifāq*.[2] On the basis of a comment made by al-Ṣūlī, who noticed that, from the beginning of Islam down to his time, every sixth holder of authority was dismissed, al-Qalqashandī completed the list provided by a predecessor (al-Ṣafadī) for the later periods, considering the

I thank Amalia Levanoni of the University of Haifa for reading a draft of this paper and making insightful comments.

[1] Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿAṣr wa-Aʿwān al-Naṣr*, ed. ʿAlī Abū Zayd et al. (Beirut and Damascus, 1997), 2:524 (read *ḥalla* and not *ḥakka,* as in idem, *Al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt* [Istanbul and Beirut, 1931–] 9:155).

[2] See Barbara Langner, *Untersuchungen zur historischen Volkskunde Ägyptens nach mamlukischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1983), 111–12.

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Fatimids, the Ayyubids, and the Mamluks.[3] While al-Ṣafadī stopped his assessment with al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, the first ruler of a new series of six, al-Qalqashandī went further up to the reign of Baybars al-Jāshankīr, then started a new series with al-Manṣūr Abū Bakr (al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's first successor) up to al-Muẓaffar Ḥājjī, then from al-Nāṣir Ḥasan up to al-Ṣāliḥ Ḥājjī, and finally ending with the last series for which the first ruler was, rather opportunely, the founder of the Circassian regime, al-Ẓāhir Barqūq. Al-Qalqashandī compiled this list during the reign of Barqūq's successor, al-Nāṣir Faraj, the second ruler of this new series, and he concluded by saying: "God knows best who will be the sixth!"[4] In this rather schematic presentation, the involved historians did not bother to twist the truth (several depositions intervened in between the pattern of every sixth ruler), but it shows that they felt a need to explain the phenomenon.[5]

Modern scholarship, after having shown more interest in the reigns of great rulers, has finally felt it necessary to study the factors that could explain why and how al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's succession led to such a shift in power. Amalia Levanoni's studies have analyzed the role that the innovations and modifications introduced in the Mamluk system by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad may have played in this respect.[6] Recently, Jo Van Steenbergen focused his attention on the period that followed al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death up to Barqūq's accession to the sultanate.[7] The work of both scholars has helped to further our understanding of the processes that were taking place during the entire period. The aim of this article is not to provide another analysis of the political role played by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's successors; it is rather to explore al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's influence on his succession. In other words: did he prepare for his succession, and if so, in what manner? It is hoped that through the attempt to answer this question, some insight will be gained into the events that took place in the roughly forty years that followed his death before the rise of Barqūq.

[3] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá bi-Ṣināʿat al-Inshāʾ* (Cairo, 1913–19), 1:443–45.

[4] In his earlier work on the caliphate, *Maʾāthir al-Ināfah fī Maʿālim al-Khilāfah,* ed. ʿAbd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj (Kuwait, 1985), 3:352–54, al-Qalqashandī made the same statement regarding the caliph ruling at that time, but given the subject of this book, he limited his remarks to the caliphate and made no comment on the sultanate.

[5] In one particular case, an attempt to circumvent this law of the series is documented by Ibn Nubātah. The Abbasid caliph al-Mustanṣir (r. 623–40/1226–42) received the oath of allegiance, but being the sixth of a series, he was deposed and then enthroned again for fear of this fate. See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá,* 1:444.

[6] Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (1310–1341)* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne, 1995). See also idem, "The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (1994): 373–92.

[7] Jo Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos: Patronage, Conflict and Mamluk Socio-Political Culture, 1341–1382* (Leiden and Boston, 2006).

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"*Al-Mulk ʿAqīm*": Paving the Way for Succession

With the words "Kingship is childless *(al-mulk ʿaqīm),*" the Abbasid caliph al-Mustakfī I indicated that the authority conferred by him upon the sultan was by no means transferable to the offspring of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (who had just abdicated in 708/1309),[8] thus arguing that it could be bestowed on Baybars al-Jāshankīr, who had no genealogical link to the Qalāwūnids.[9] For lexicographers, this idiom represents the fact that no genealogical link is of use when it comes to political power, given that a ruler can kill his own son, brother, uncle, or the like in order to maintain his rule. In this way, authority is by no means inheritable.[10] This should have been all the more true in the case of the Mamluks, given that one's ability to rule was determined by several personal qualities.[11] Despite this factor, it remains that the hereditary, dynastic principle was strong throughout the Turkish period. Some historians have considered that dynasticism in this case was only the result of a "specious and misleading" impression: if the Qalāwūnids succeeded in monopolizing the throne, it was only for the sake of convenience, with the different sultans playing the role of under-aged puppets in the service of

[8]By that date, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had at least two male children, presumably both by his wife Ardūkīn: al-Malik al-Manṣūr ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī, who was born in 703/1303–4 and died in 710/1310 (al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk li-Maʿrifat Duwal al-Mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah and Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr [Cairo, 1934–73], 2:91; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah fī Aʿyān al-Miʾah al-Thāminah,* ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Jād al-Ḥaqq [Cairo, 1966–68], 3:190 [no. 2892]), and al-Malik al-Muẓaffar, who was born in 704/1304 (Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmiʿ al-Ghurar* [Cairo, 1960–92], 9:126). The date of his death is unknown, but we are told that when his brother ʿAlī died, he was al-Nāṣir's only son at that time, from which we may infer that al-Malik al-Muẓaffar died before that date. It is to be noted that this al-Malik al-Muẓaffar, whose name *(ism)* is never quoted in the sources, cannot be identified with Ḥājjī, as put forward by P. M. Holt, "The Position and Power of the Mamlūk Sultan," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38 (1975): 241, given that the latter was born in 732/1331–32 (al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafāyāt,* 11:237; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* ed. Muḥammad al-Yaʿlāwī [Beirut, 2006], 3:73).

[9]"I dismissed his predecessor [al-Nāṣir Muḥammad] after I came to know that he had abdicated. I regarded that as my duty, and the four judges delivered their judgment in favor of that. Know—may God have mercy upon you—that kingship is childless: it is not transmitted by inheritance to anyone, be it from a predecessor to a successor, or from an illustrious elder to a peer." These words are part of the deed of nomination drawn up on al-Mustakfī's behalf and meant for Baybars al-Jāshankīr. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:65.

[10]On this issue, see P. M. Holt, "Some Observations on the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate of Cairo," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47 (1984): 505–6; Ulrich Haarmann, "Regicide and the 'Law of the Turks,'" in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson,* ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City, 1990), 130; Konrad Hirschler, "'He is a child and this land is a borderland of Islam': Under-age Rule and the Quest for Political Stability in the Ayyūbid Period," *Al-Masāq* 19 (2007): 39.

[11]See Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah's comment on this in al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:65 (n. 4).

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an oligarchy of amirs.[12] More recent research has demonstrated that, at least in the case of the Qalāwūnids, "a dynastic reflex was at work";[13] when the necessity to enthrone a new sultan was felt, it was always a scion of Qalāwūn, through his son Muḥammad, who was chosen. Moreover, in the great majority of the cases, it was the eldest surviving son who was chosen, suggesting that he was expected to play a greater role than that of a puppet. In some way, primogeniture forced itself upon the amirs once a choice had to be made.[14] By that time, the above-mentioned principle of the non-hereditary character of authority had been superseded, and it took decades before it could be invoked again, with the accession of Barqūq. Even in this case, it was only by pretending that none of the surviving descendants of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad could hold legitimate power that this genealogical link could be broken and power could pass to an amir who was not considered a usurper.[15]

Given that a dynastic principle was at work, together with some sort of primogeniture—if not in favor of the eldest son, then at least one of the eldest—during the Qalāwūnid period, it is legitimate to question whether the ruling sultan was likely to prepare for his succession, and if so, how this was done. Before considering the practical aspect of this preparation in the case of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, it is necessary to examine what was expected from a theoretical point of view. It is probably no coincidence that one of the latest treatises of the *Fürstenspiegel* genre is dated to that very period. Written by a scion of the Abbasid family, who started to compose it on Saturday 23 Shawwāl 708/5 April 1309, *The*

[12]Holt, "The Position and Power of the Mamlūk Sultan," 240. See also Levanoni, "The Mamluk Conception," 379.

[13]Jo Van Steenbergen, "'Is anyone my guardian . . .?' Mamlūk Under-age Rule and the Later Qalāwūnids," *Al-Masāq* 19 (2007): 55. Cf. the words pronounced by Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Aḥmadī while al-Nāṣir Muḥammad expressed the wish, on his deathbed, to designate his successor: "Amirs! We are the mamluks of this family, and even if there only remained from our master's offspring a blind daughter, we should obey her until her death." Al-Shujāʿī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥī wa-Awlādihi,* ed. Barbara Schäfer (Wiesbaden, 1977), 105.

[14]However, it must be kept in mind that the Mamluks always adopted a contradictory stance towards hereditary rule. Even though they selected an heir of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, their aim was mainly to ensure stability among the different factions. See Levanoni, "The Mamluk Conception," 382–83.

[15]Importantly, in this context, the last Qalāwūnid sultan, al-Ṣāliḥ Ḥājjī, who had been deposed by Barqūq in 784/1382, was restored to the throne in 791/1389 on the basis that "he had been overthrown by Barḳūḳ." See Amalia Levanoni, "Al-Ṣāliḥ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ḥādjdjī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 9:987. Anne Broadbridge has recently established that the Qalāwūnids were fully aware that they were members of a royal ruling family, as is confirmed by some passages found in documents issued by these rulers and the frequent mention of their lineage up to their ancestor Qalāwūn on their coins. The chancellery may have played a decisive role in fostering the continuity of this ideology. See Anne Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge, 2008), 147–48.

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Remains of the Past Regarding the Organization of the States[16] aims at providing the usurper of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's throne, Baybars al-Jāshankīr, with a manual of rules and advice to administer the state. The third chapter of the third section of this book deals with the manners of children and relatives.[17] In the body of this chapter, the author touches upon the question of preparing the ruler's child to succeed him on the throne. Among its advice is that the ruler is encouraged to appoint to an office the son in whom he sees nobility and efficiency, so that he can be drilled and given practice and so that if authority should be bestowed upon him, he would thus be experienced. But the author acknowledges that, when the ruler feels that he can designate one of his sons or relatives as his heir to the throne, the decision must be taken after mature consideration and selection without neglecting the advice of others. If he is resolved in his choice, the deed of appointment should be written down and attested by those he usually consults on matters of state. Then, two options are available: either he keeps his decision secret, commanding those he consulted to act in the same way and leaving the deed of nomination in a secure place, or he reveals it and consequently enables his heir to administer freely, authorizing him to grant land tenure and money. In any case, the ruler is cautioned not to waver between these two options, for example by revealing his intention but prohibiting his heir from acting as such. This behavior could only lead to his son's resentment against him and his willingness to overthrow his father if the latter's life continues long thereafter.[18]

Despite the non-hereditary character of authority, the idea of preparing a ruler's son to succeed his father on the throne was nonetheless accepted, as is attested in this *Fürstenspiegel* which is contemporary with the events dealt with in this article. The advice provided, though theoretical, tallies with the factual elements which we will now consider.

[16] Al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-ʿAbbāsī, *Āthār al-Uwal fī Tartīb al-Duwal* (Būlāq, 1878), 199. The starting date of composition (13 Shawwāl 708) is provided on the title page, on the basis of the manuscript used for preparing the edition. It appears to be erroneous, as the given date did not fall on a Saturday, but on a Wednesday. Moreover, it is established that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad left Cairo, presumably to fulfil the pilgrimage, on Sunday, 10 Shawwāl, and that Baybars al-Jāshankīr was put on the throne on Saturday, 23 Shawwāl. It is thus impossible that the author started his work for al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who was away and already considered as having abdicated, but rather he did so in order to attract the new sultan's benevolence. In the light of this, it may be established that the author started his book on the 23rd of Shawwāl, a Saturday and the day of Baybars' enthronement (see al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:45). In the colophon (p. 198), the author mentioned the name of the ruling sultan, Baybars al-Jāshankīr, which means that he completed his work in a very short period of time. Be that as it may, the manual was not meant for al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.

[17] Al-ʿAbbāsī, *Āthār al-Uwal,* 109–11 (*fī ādāb al-awlād wa-al-aqārib wa-ḥusn al-sīrah maʿahum*).

[18] Ibid., 110–11.

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Laying Out the Family's Genealogical Tree

In order for the matter to become clear, it is crucial to understand who al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's offspring were and how many they were. Although much work has been done on this aspect of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's life,[19] it is hard to have a clear picture of his offspring and of the marital links arranged by him, and after his death, by his sons. In this respect, a genealogical tree is clearly needed.[20] Ideally, this tree should not be limited to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's offspring: it would rather take as its starting point the ancestor, Qalāwūn himself, and also consider the marriage policy that he developed, a policy that was continued over several decades by his scions. I have thus decided to meet this need in producing a genealogical tree of the Qalāwūnid family.[21] It must be kept in mind that this is a preliminary result of a few months of research into the sources. Indeed, to get a clearer picture of all the links, it is necessary to go through numerous contemporaneous and later sources for which indexes are not always available, meaning that some data is found either by chance, or through reading a considerable amount of material. While some of the persons considered performed an important role in the state, and were thus subjects of biographical entries in dictionaries or chronicles, it remains that the majority of them were rather unknown to historians, thus not deserving any particular mention. Data regarding these persons are found in rather unexpected places, as is the case with most women, whose names are seldom mentioned and whose existence is confirmed in the entries of their husbands. Another problem in establishing this genealogy lies in the identification of the mothers of these near-phantoms. In a genealogical tree, each person must be connected to both a father and a mother, hence the necessity to attribute all those for whom a mother is not mentioned in the sources to a unique unnamed mother. This is the case for a great number of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's daughters, but also for some of his sons. Hence, there is an unrealistically large number of daughters who could be identified

[19] See P. M. Holt, "An-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (684–741/1285–1341): His Ancestry, Kindred and Affinity," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras: Proceedings of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1992, 1993 and 1994,* ed. Urbain Vermeulen and Daniel De Smet (Leuven, 1995), 313–24; Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History,* 48–49; Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos,* 82–85; idem, "Mamluk Elite on the Eve of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's Death (1341): A Look behind the Scenes of Mamluk Politics," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 9, no. 2 (2005): 192–94; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "*Waqf* as Remuneration and the Family Affairs of al-Nasir Muhammad and Baktimur al-Saqi," in *The Cairo Heritage: Essays in Honor of Laila Ali Ibrahim,* ed. Doris Behrens-Abouseif (Cairo and New York, 2000), 58–60.

[20] A first attempt was provided by Eduard de Zambaur, *Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie pour l'histoire de l'Islam* (Hanover, 1927), 106.

[21] A preliminary version of the genealogical file on the basis of which the above-mentioned chart (see http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/mideast/qalawunids/qalawunid-pedigree.pdf) was created is available at the following address: http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/mideast/qalawunids (The Qalāwunids: a pedigree).

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only occasionally with persons mentioned as wives. It is hoped that, in pursuing this project and the analysis of the sources, greater precision will be gained. On the other hand, the continuity of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's lineage was ensured for more than a century: the last descendant known thus far from the sources died in 852/1448–49, but it is expected that later descendants will be discovered in the future.[22] A quite complete genealogy could thus be produced, despite the above-mentioned drawbacks, taking into account the various collateral links and the relative offspring.

Like Father, Like Son

Being himself the heir of a sultan, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad knew that advance planning for matters of succession was crucial. His father, Qalāwūn, had prepared for his own successor well in advance: he designated his favorite son, ʿAlī, as his heir to the throne and simultaneously appointed him joint sultan. ʿAlī eventually died before his father, in 687/1288, and Qalāwūn chose, rather reluctantly, his second-oldest son, Khalīl.[23] Although this designation was made public, the official deed of appointment was never signed by Qalāwūn, which demonstrates his reluctance regarding Khalīl, but the latter's accession to the throne, on his father's death, was not questioned.[24] In any case, the only other son available at that time, Muḥammad, was not of age (he was 5 when Qalāwūn died) and was still living in the harem. When, at the age of 9, he succeeded his elder brother, he was an inexperienced boy, and it was not long before a usurper removed him from the throne. His own experience with power had taught him that no ruler is able to maintain his authority unless he is prepared to do so. Setting up a dynastic principle had unexpected consequences, such as the tendency to "demilitarize" the ruler, who was unable to take part in battle or to lead an expedition. Although al-Nāṣir Muḥammad managed to impose himself in the end as an autocratic sultan, he was aware of the drawbacks of failing to prepare. The solutions he crafted were multifarious, as we will see, and regarded several of his sons.

Considering that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad could not determine with certainty which sons would survive him, such preparation had to involve several sons, but of course this did not preclude favoritism. The timeline chart below shows which sons were

[22] Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Shaʿbān ibn al-Nāṣir Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (d. 852/1448–49). When he died, his parents were still living, and he left numerous children. He was one of Jaqmaq's courtiers. See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-Ṣāfī wa-al-Mustawfá baʿd al-Wāfi,* ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1984–), 2:663–64 (no. 2280); al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsiʿ* (Cairo, 1934–36), 8:184–85 (no. 470).

[23] Holt, "The Position and Power of the Mamlūk Sultan," 241.

[24] Holt, "An-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (684–741/1285–1341): His Ancestry, Kindred and Affinity," 314–15.

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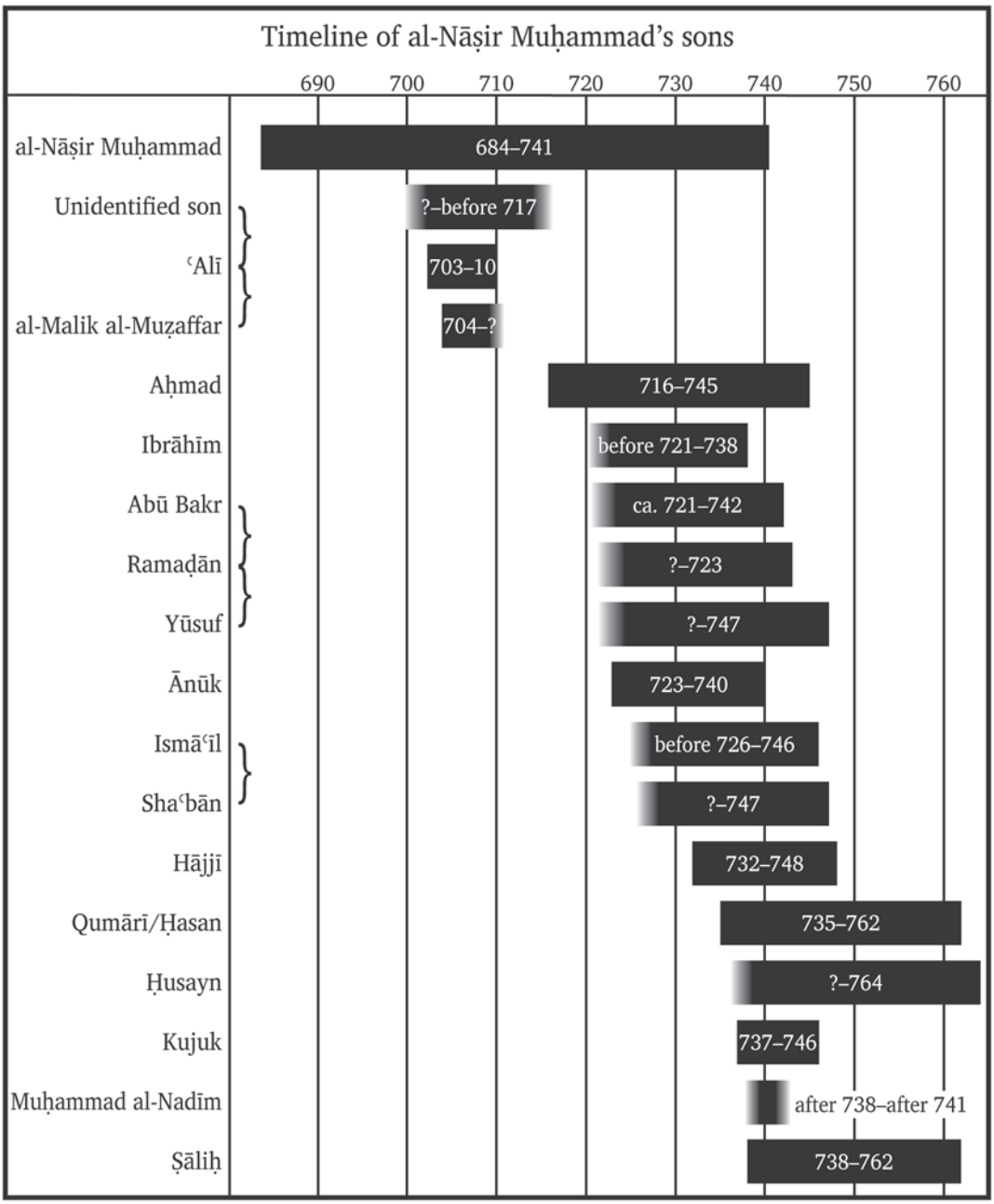
likely to succeed him on the throne and thus to receive an appropriate designation (disregarding whether they were favored for the succession in actuality).

On his deathbed, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad is reported to have gathered all his sons



Estimated dates of birth or death are indicated with shading. Full brothers are joined by braces.

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(except Aḥmad, who was in al-Karak), in order to designate his heir to the throne; they were, in all, twelve at that time,[25] which tallies with the data provided by most of the sources.[26] Five sons had already died: three at an early stage of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign, and two shortly before his own death. The first three were apparently the sons he had with his first wife Ardūkīn, the widow of his brother Khalīl.[27] Little is known about them except that the two named sons received a *malik* title together with a *laqab:* al-Malik al-Manṣūr ʿAlī[28] and al-Malik al-Muẓaffar.[29] In naming his sons in such a way, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad respected a tradition going back to the Ayyubid period and adopted by Qalāwūn himself. Instead of being reserved for the ruling sultan, as was the custom in Mamluk rule, the *malik* title was given to some of his sons who were, perhaps, considered as future successors. That such a title could be given simultaneously to more than one son is evidenced by the mention of his two sons, ʿAlī and Khalīl, with their royal titles in an official document dated to 684/1285. On the other hand, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad himself is said to have received his royal title upon his birth.[30] Be that as it may, if al-Nāṣir Muḥammad followed this practice with the desire to see the two sons succeed him, his hopes were soon dashed with the premature deaths of both of these sons. He apparently no longer followed this practice for his younger sons. In subsequent years, no other son is reported to have been born, hence his divorce from Ardūkīn in 717/1317.[31] It was not before 716/1316–17 that his lineage was finally guaranteed: from that date to the end of his life, no less than fourteen sons were born, their mothers being either legal wives or concubines.

[25] Al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 110. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah provides only eleven names (*Al-Tārīkh,* ed. ʿAdnān Darwīsh [Damascus, 1977–97], 2:133), while al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:546, leads us to believe that when al-Nāṣir died, he left *(taraka)* fourteen boys, including Muḥammad and ʿAlī. The latter had died by that date. See below.

[26] According to a pronouncement by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad on his deathbed, he had fifteen sons. See Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, *Al-Nahj al-Sadīd wa-al-Durr al-Farīd fīmā baʿd Tārīkh Ibn al-ʿAmīd,* ed. Samira Kortantamer (Freiburg, 1973), 264 = 105 (Ar. text). It might be that this figure is the result of a later reconstruction made by the author on the basis of the total number of sons al-Nāṣir had during his lifetime (seventeen in the chart).

[27] Al-Malik al-Muẓaffar is never said in the sources to have been the son of Ardūkīn, but it is highly probable that she was his mother, as at that time al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had no other official wife.

[28] He died at the age of six in 710/1310. In 709/1309, he was said to be al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's only child. Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿAṣr,* 3:512; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:91; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 3:190 (no. 2892).

[29] His *ism* is unknown. He was already dead when his brother ʿAlī died. He thus lived less than six years. See Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar,* 9:126.

[30] See Holt, "The Position and Power of the Mamlūk Sultan," 241.

[31] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:177. In Rajab 719/August–September 1319, she was expelled from the citadel. Ibid., 195.

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Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had six legal wives, of course not simultaneously. Aside from Ardūkīn, he also married, in 720/1320, Ṭulunbāy/Dulanbiya, the niece of Üzbek Khān;[32] in 721/1321, Ṭughāy,[33] a Turkish slave-girl he bought from Tankiz al-Ḥusāmī, his governor in Syria;[34] then in 734/1334, Quṭlūmalik,[35] Tankiz al-Ḥusāmī's daughter and Aḥmad ibn Baktamur al-Sāqī's widow.[36] At an unknown date, but before 740/1339, he married Zādū, the sister of Ṭūlū Qurṭaqā who was married to Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī,[37] and, also at an unknown date, he married the sister of Qawṣūn.[38] As for concubines, his love of them was proverbial,[39] but only six are known for sure to have borne him children, and among these only four are

[32] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:203–5; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar,* 9:302; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 2:329–30 (no. 2052, Ṭūlū). On the question of her genealogical link to Üzbek Khān, see Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology,* 132. She did not bear any children and was repudiated in 728/1328. She was successively married off, by al-Nāṣir himself, to three of his amirs. See Holt, "An-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (684–741/1285–1341): His Ancestry, Kindred and Affinity," 316–17. See al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir,* ed. Aḥmad Ḥuṭayṭ (Beirut, 1986), 235, for the attestation of a forgery written by a judge in regard to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's declaration to Üzbek's envoy that she was dead, though she was still alive.

[33] Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 16:447–48 (no. 381); Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 2:322 (no. 2025). She bore him Ānūk.

[34] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:232.

[35] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar,* 9:380. She bore him Ṣāliḥ and a daughter.

[36] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:289.

[37] Ibid., 473. Yalbughā's wife gave birth on that date and Zādū is referred to as al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's wife. Zādū is not reported to have given birth to any children.

[38] Al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 160. No child reported.

[39] Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History,* 184.

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named by the sources:[40] Narjis,[41] Bayāḍ,[42] Ardū,[43] and Kudā.[44]

In the end, it can be said that the sons who were the most liable to succeed him, given their dates of birth, were: Aḥmad, Abū Bakr, Ibrāhīm, Ramaḍān, Yūsuf, and Ānūk.[45] The remaining sons were born too late to be considered realistic successors by their father and, indeed, the former sons often appear in the sources regarding events that took place during their youth and linked to what could be considered education and training, while the latter sons are mainly mentioned after their father's death because it was only then that they finally played politically significant roles. The forthcoming comments will thus deal with four of the aforementioned six eldest sons, as Ramaḍān and Yūsuf are seldom mentioned in the sources with respect to events that took place during their father's lifetime.[46]

[40]The first of the two unnamed concubines was the mother of Ismāʿīl, Shaʿbān, and a daughter (married to Bahādur al-Damurdāshī). She was later married by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to Arghūn al-ʿAlāʾī. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:756. The second unnamed concubine gave birth to Ḥājjī. She was later married to Lājīn al-ʿAlāʾī. The latter was compelled by al-Kāmil Shaʿbān, during his reign (746–47/1345–46), to divorce her. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 3:73; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 2:83. Other unnamed concubines probably bore him children. These are all classified under the same mother in the pedigree for the aforementioned reasons, but it does not reflect reality.

[41]Mother of Abū Bakr, Ramaḍān, and Yūsuf. Later, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad married her to Ṭuquzdamur al-Ḥamawī (who died in 746/1345; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:551). After the latter's death, she was married to Arghūn al-Ismāʿīlī (still living with him in 756/1356; al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 139).

[42]Mother of Aḥmad. A slave-girl and singer, she was set free by Bahādur Āṣ, the *raʾs nawbah,* and later married to Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī (at least before 731/1331; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 3:384).

[43]She was a Tartar and the mother of Kujuk. After al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, she was married to Āqsunqur al-Nāṣirī, in 743/1343, at the latter's request (al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:635), and finally to al-Kāmil Shaʿbān (before 746/1345; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:683).

[44]Mother of Qumārī/Ḥasan and Tatar. She died in Qumārī's infancy (al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:745).

[45]The youngest, Ānūk, was 17 years old when he died almost a year before his father.

[46]Their dates of birth are unknown, but they were born after Abū Bakr. Yūsuf was married in 738/1337 by his father to a daughter of his amir Badr al-Dīn Jankalī ibn al-Bābā, which means that he was probably born between 722–25/1323–26. He died in Rabīʿ II 747/July–August 1346, perhaps murdered on order of his brother Shaʿbān. See al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿAṣr,* 5:99; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:436, 707; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 5:248 (no. 5160) and 2:83 (suspicion against his brother for his killing). Ramaḍān and Yūsuf were full-brothers of Abū Bakr, who had just been put to death (Jumādá II 742/November 1341); their mother was Narjis. No marriage is reported for Ramaḍān in the sources, and this might imply that he was younger than Yūsuf. In 743/1342, after the accession of Ismāʿīl, Ramaḍān attempted to rise against him, though he had no real support among the senior amirs. He had to flee to al-Karak, where he tried to join his brother Aḥmad, but he was killed before he could reach him. See al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿAṣr,* 5:99; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 2:42; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 2:203 (no. 1726); Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Tārīkh,* 2:326–27.

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The order followed will be chronological, except that the youngest son, presented by the sources as the preferred son, will be treated first here.

The Paramount Son: Ānūk

Although the youngest of the brothers listed as the most likely to succeed their father, Ānūk[47] quite quickly began to hold an important place in his father's heart: his mother, Ṭughāy, had become his beloved and preferred wife because of her beauty, probably around 721/1321, after the dispassionate marriage to Ṭulunbāy.[48] Ānūk is also said to have been the dearest son to his father by reason of his handsomeness, in addition to his father's deep affection for his mother.[49] Once he left the harem, his father took charge of his fate. As early as 731/1331, when Ānūk was aged 8, he married him to the daughter of one of his senior amirs, Baktamur al-Sāqī:[50] the contract was concluded on 2 Ṣafar 732/4 November 1331[51] and by the end of the same month (23 Ṣafar/25 November), his father expressed the wish, in the presence of his amirs, to designate him as his heir to the throne *(walī ʿahd),* a wish to which they all adhered.[52] He consequently granted him an *imrah miʾah taqdimah alf,*[53] and it was issued by decree that a ceremony would take place to celebrate this designation; it was decreed that Ānūk would ride through the city, wearing the emblem of the sultanate *(shiʿār al-salṭanah),* surrounded by the other amirs. An unknown event made al-Nāṣir Muḥammad change his mind: he ordered that all the preparations for the ceremony of official designation be stopped and, in the end, decided that Ānūk would ride through the city just to celebrate his new function of amir of one hundred. Instead of wearing the emblem of the sultanate,

[47]Sources are not unanimous in giving his date of birth: either 15 Jumādá 721/12 July 1321 (al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:242; idem, *Al-Muqaffá,* 2:175-76; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 2:322), or 30 Rabīʿ I 723/8 April 1323 (al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:231–32, who did not notice that he reported two different dates) or Rajab 723/July 1323 (Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 1:446). One of the two later dates is more probable as a contemporaneous chronicler (Ibn al-Dāwadārī, *Kanz al-Durar,* 9:309) mentioned his birth during that year.

[48]Ṭulunbāy did not please the sultan, who went out hunting the day after the consummation, which took place on the same day as the wedding (2 Rabīʿ II 720/12 May 1320). See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:205.

[49]Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 9:431; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 2:176; idem, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:176. He bore the same *laqab* as his father: Nāṣir al-Dīn, another sign of this preeminence (al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 2:175; idem, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:343).

[50]On 15 Ramaḍān/22 June. See Ibn al-Dāwadārī, *Kanz al-Durar,* 9:358.

[51]A copy of the marriage contract *(ṣadāq)* is to be found in al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá,* 14:303.

[52]Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:343. One can see in this decision al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's intent, at an early date, to perpetuate the dynastic system established by his father.

[53]Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 9:431; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 2:176.

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he decided to let his son wear the one of his grandfather, Qalāwūn.[54] The effect was obviously less impressive, and although it indicated Ānūk's preeminence over his elder brothers (who were only amirs of forty),[55] al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's final intent was nevertheless clear, but not definitive. His change of mind was perhaps induced by the fact that the official designation could have led to his own premature end.[56] Despite this step backward, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad went on showing favoritism to Ānūk. In the course of the same month, he gathered the various clerks working in the ministries to select the person who would be put in charge *(khāzindār)* of Ānūk's personal purse *(dīwān)*. His new title and function *(amīr miʾah-taqdimah alf)* brought him a large amount of money:[57] his purse is said to have reached a total of six thousand dinars—not *jayshī,* but cash—without taking into account business transactions *(matjar)*. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's choice fell on al-Nashw. A steward *(ustādhdār),* Alṭunqush al-Jamālī, was also appointed on the same occasion.[58] A few months later, on 11 Shaʿbān 732/8 May 1332, on the occasion of Ānūk's marriage *(ʿurs),* a stupendous feast was organized.[59] The

[54]Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:343. Qalāwūn's mausoleum was repeatedly associated with such ceremonials dealing with the appointment of the sultan's sons to titles in the military hierarchy. See Jo Van Steenbergen's remark on its social implications, which were perhaps more symbolic than he suspects, in "'Is anyone my guardian . . .?' Mamlūk Under-age Rule and the Later Qalāwūnids," 62 (note 23). See particularly Mounira Chapoutot-Remadi, "Symbolisme et formalisme de l'élite mamluke: la cérémonie de l'accession à l'émirat," in *Genèse de l'État moderne en Méditerranée: approches anthropologiques des pratiques et des représentations,* ed. Henri Bresc (Rome, 1993), 61–79; idem, "Liens propres et identités séparées chez les Mamelouks bahrides," in *Valeur et distance: Identités et sociétés en Égypte,* ed. Christian Décobert (Paris, 2000), 181. This is confirmed by the following event: in 767/1366, amirs who received the honors of the sultan went down from the citadel to Qalāwūn's mausoleum (al-madrasah al-manṣūrīyah) where they fulfilled their oath as it was customary *(kamā hiya al-ʿādah)*. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 3:118.

[55]This fact rather impressed the historians who reported it as they all insisted on the lower status of the elder brothers, who were consequently considered inferior to him and had to dismount before him and to be at his service. See al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 2:432; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 2:177.

[56]See al-Shujāʿī's comment (*Al-Tārīkh,* 113) regarding al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's management of the state: "*wa-law takhayyala min wuldihi ahlakahu ḥifẓan li-mulkihi*" ("If he had been suspicious about one of his children['s bad intentions], he would have put him to death to preserve his rule").

[57]He was granted, on that occasion, the *iqṭāʿ* held by the late Mughulṭāy al-Jamālī. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:343.

[58]Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 9:431; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:343–44. Alṭunqush was also the steward of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:674). Another person, Arghūn al-ʿAlāʾī, was Ānūk's *lālā*. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:492 (Arghūn was replaced by Ṭaybughā al-Majdī in 740/1339–40). As for his purse, al-Nashw was replaced by his own brother, al-Mukhliṣ, in 739/1339–40. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:469.

[59]The ceremony started at sunset on the given day, i.e., at the end of Thursday in our calendar. See al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 9:431; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:345–46; idem, *Al-Muqaffá,* 2:176.

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apex was reached when his father stood at the door of the palace with his son standing in front of him with the same bearing, while the amirs approached one-by-one according to their rank and accompanied by their mamluks, bringing the lighted candles they had presented five days earlier during a similar ceremony. Each one kissed the ground before al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, then Ānūk, until they were relieved from respecting the ceremonial towards the son.[60] Such a ceremony reinforced Ānūk's preeminence over his elder brothers and confirmed the father's good intentions towards him.

A few months later, in Shawwāl 732/July 1332, Ānūk was still closely associated with his father's activities. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad decided to go to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage, and he took with him his beloved wife Ṭughāy and his son Ānūk. Two other sons were likely to join the convoy at al-ʿAqabah: Aḥmad and Abū Bakr were brought to the meeting point by Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī, the governor of al-Karak, where they were both residing together with their brother Ibrāhīm. In the meantime, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had learned of the bad intentions that Baktamur al-Sāqī, who was Ānūk's stepfather, harbored towards him, and once al-Nāṣir had reached al-ʿAqabah, he pretended Ānūk had fallen ill and sent him back with his mother and the two brothers to al-Karak under the protection of Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī. The sultan eventually succeeded in unmasking Baktamur's conspiracy and in getting rid of him, and Ānūk was later transferred safely with his mother to Cairo.[61] The event is interesting in that it shows al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's anxiety to protect the son who was most likely his heir, putting him in the protective hands of an amir who was closely related to him.[62]

With regard to Ānūk's later years, which must have been important for his development and education, the sources are silent, at least until 740/1339. The event which took place in that year might have been insignificant if its effects had not been so dramatic. Now a young man (17 years old) and married for eight years, Ānūk did not seem to be fond of his wife.[63] He would rather spend time with a young female singer named Zuhrah, with whom he fell deeply in love, and he spent his time in a house he had built near Birkat al-Ḥabash; since he was particularly keen on animals, there was also an enclosure for birds at this

[60] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 2:176. More than three thousand candles were presented on that occasion, which means the etiquette should have been respected by more than that same number of persons!

[61] Al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir,* 135–36; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:355.

[62] Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī had married the sultan's concubine, Bayāḍ, who was the mother of the latter's son, Aḥmad, at an early date sometime before 731/1330–31, the date of Bayāḍ's death. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 3:384.

[63] When he died a few months later, she was still a virgin. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:683.

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place.[64] When his father heard of his fondness for this girl and, more importantly, that he neglected his wife, he took measures against the entire class of female singers. Separated from Zuhrah, Ānūk felt resentment against his father, though the latter had made every arrangement to ensure that his son would not know that these measures had been decreed by him. Ānūk's reaction demonstrated the level of his anger: with the help of one of his personal mamluks, he plotted against his father, giving him the impression that two of his senior amirs were conspiring against him. The plot was soon unmasked, and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad would have beheaded his son were it not for the intercession of his mother and his female slaves.[65] Frightened, Ānūk is said to have stayed in bed until he died on 7 Rabīʿ I 741/31 August 1340, less than a year before his father. Despite al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reaction, his sorrow was deep[66] because his preferred son, in whom he had laid his trust, had perished and with him the plans for his succession, which had to be modified *in extremis*. We will see that, rather opportunely, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had prepared other sons for the succession as well.

"As for Aḥmad, Who Is in al-Karak, Do Not Let Him Cross [the Soil of] Egypt!"

As of 719/1319–20, Aḥmad, who was born the previous year, was the only son of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. His mother, Bayāḍ, was a singer who had been set free by Bahādur Āṣ and perhaps offered to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. She does not seem to have borne him any other children, and this might explain why (although she had not been al-Nāṣir's legal wife) she was later married to an amir, who became Aḥmad's stepfather. This kind of marriage link appears to have been a common feature of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's Machiavellian management of the state.[67] It is unknown when the marriage took place, but Bayāḍ died in 731/1330–31. Aḥmad, in the meanwhile, had been sent to the fortress of al-Karak on 7 Jumādá I 726/11 April 1326; he was not yet 10 years old.[68] A contemporary historian considered this to be a young age,[69] but al-Nāṣir Muḥammad intended to provide the boy with a good education and a sound training both in hunting and horsemanship *(furūsīyah)* under the supervision of the new governor of al-Karak

[64] According to Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, *Al-Nahj al-Sadīd,* 80–81, it was his father who had built a birdcage *(ḥawsh)* and a house *(dār)* for his son.

[65] See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:492; idem, *Al-Muqaffá,* 2:177.

[66] Al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 120.

[67] Providing in this way a tutor and substitute father-figure for the future. On this practice in the Mamluk political system, which led to a crossover of blood and biological ties, see Mounira Chapoutot-Remadi, "Liens propres et identités séparées," 178.

[68] Eight years old, according to al-Maqrīzī (*Al-Sulūk,* 2:272; *Al-Muqaffá,* 1:384).

[69] Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 8:86: *akhrajahu wāliduhu ilá al-Karak wa-huwa ṣaghīr laʿallahu yakūn ʿumruhu lam yablugh ʿashr sinīn.*

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designated on that occasion, Bahādur al-Badrī.[70] To ensure that this plan went aright, a treasury, which had to be deposited in the fortress, accompanied the child. For the next five years, nothing is known of Aḥmad. However, in Shaʿbān 731/May 1331, he was called back to Cairo by his father who expressed the wish to see how he had grown up. On 16 Shaʿbān/25 May, he arrived at the capital brought by the governor of al-Karak, Bahādur al-Badrī, who had to be replaced by Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī, Aḥmad's stepfather.[71] Maliktamur must have been widowed by that date, and the decision to give him the governorate of al-Karak, where al-Nāṣir Muḥammad regularly sent his sons Aḥmad, Abū Bakr, and Ibrāhīm to reside, may be seen as a consolation, or more probably, as an attempt to tie the stepfather more closely to his son Aḥmad. Two days later, at the age of 12, Aḥmad was circumcised.[72] This event, which took place rather late in the life of the boy, was to be followed by a joyful announcement: his father had decided to promote him and to grant him an amirate, a title he received on 26 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 731/30 September 1331, two months before his much younger brother Ānūk.[73] Festivities were organized to celebrate this promotion, and a retinue made up of the amirs and all the *khāṣṣakīyah* rode to Qalāwūn's mausoleum in the service of Aḥmad, who was wearing a *sharbūsh* and carrying a standard. The next day, he was sent back to al-Karak, where his stepfather welcomed him. Orders had been given to Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī to see to his upbringing and education *(tarbiyah wa-taʾdīb).*[74] Nothing is heard of Aḥmad until 738/1337, aside from the fact that he and his brother Abū Bakr went to al-ʿAqabah in 732/1332 to join their father, who was on his way to Mecca; al-Nāṣir Muḥammad then changed his mind and sent both of them, along with their brother Ānūk, back to al-Karak under the protection of the governor. However, in 738/1337 al-Nāṣir Muḥammad learned that Aḥmad was on intimate terms with the "riffraff" *(awbāsh)* of al-Karak and requested that he come to Cairo. His anger towards his son was tempered when he saw how handsome the boy had

[70] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:272 *(li-yaqūm bi-amrihi . . . bal yumarrinahu ʿalá al-ṣayd wa-al-furūsīyah);* idem, *Al-Muqaffá,* 1:384 *(li-yurabbiyahu wa-yumarrinahu ʿalá al-furūsīyah).*

[71] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:332; idem, *Al-Muqaffá,* 1:384. Maliktamur officially received his new title and charge on 10 Ramaḍān/17 June and left for al-Karak on the same day, without Aḥmad. See idem, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:333. His deed of nomination is found in al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá,* 12:223–25 (read Maliktamur al-Nāṣirī instead of Tuluktamur al-Nāṣirī).

[72] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:333; idem, *Al-Muqaffá,* 1:384.

[73] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar,* 9:357; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:334–35. Aḥmad's title at that date is not known, and from the quoted source, it might be inferred that he was made amir of ten, as al-Maqrīzī specifies that three amirs were promoted to this rank on the same day as Aḥmad. On the other hand, he was made amir of forty *(ṭablkhānah)* in 739/1339. See al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 1:49.

[74] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:335.

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become, a fact from which it can be inferred that he had probably not seen him for a long time.[75] In an attempt to redress Aḥmad's leaning towards men, he married him to the daughter of one of his senior amirs, Ṭāyirbughā, whose health was declining. The contract was concluded on the same day as one for his brother Ibrāhīm.[76] The consummation took place a few weeks later, unusually without any special ceremony.[77] Aḥmad was sent back to al-Karak, burdened with a wife and gifts received from his father. Eventually, Aḥmad succeeded in regaining al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's favor: he protested against his stepfather, the governor of al-Karak, which demonstrates that their relations were far from cordial, or rather, that Aḥmad was able to manipulate his entourage. Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī was discharged from his office and al-Karak was given to Aḥmad.[78] The unique source which reports this fact is not explicit and goes on to report that an amir was appointed as the mentor of Aḥmad in al-Karak.[79] From this, it might be inferred that this amir was the new governor, but it actually seems that Aḥmad was appointed as governor of al-Karak—a fact generally ignored—with an amir who received instructions to supervise Aḥmad. This is supported by the evidence provided in the copy of the "deed of appointment to the governorate of al-Karak written down on behalf of the Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn for his son al-Malik al-Nāṣir Aḥmad."[80] Once stripped of its rhetorical metaphors, the text is very informative about al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's feelings towards his son. The document stresses God's blessings that favored the family

[75] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:432; idem, *Al-Muqaffá,* 1:384.

[76] See al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 8:86. On 20 Rabīʿ I 738/16 October 1337, according to al-Maqrīzī (*Al-Muqaffá,* 1:384), or in Rabīʿ II 738/November 1337, according to al-Shujāʿī (*Al-Tārīkh,* 18) and al-Maqrīzī (*Al-Sulūk,* 2:432, who fixes it on the same day as in *Al-Muqaffá* (20 Rabīʿ II 738/15 November 1337). Ṭāyirbughā died a short time later (28 Jumādá I 738/22 December 1337). See al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 28. Ibrāhīm was married to the daughter of Jankalī ibn al-Bābā. See al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 18.

[77] On 4 Jumādá I 738/28 November 1337. See al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 18.

[78] It is not easy to understand whether this event took place on the same occasion of the marriage or during another visit to Cairo. Al-Shujāʿī (*Al-Tārīkh,* 18) doesn't say a word about the riffraff episode, but places his nomination on the occasion of his marriage. On the contrary, al-Ṣafadī (*Aʿyān al-ʿAṣr,* 1:370–71) speaks of two visits for each event. He reports that things started to go wrong between Aḥmad and his stepfather and that they were both conveyed to Cairo. The sultan got annoyed with his son, and he let him reside in Cairo for a while until he sent him back alone to al-Karak, without any governor *(waḥdahu bi-lā nāʾib)*. This last element is in contradiction with the evidence provided in what follows.

[79] Al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 18: *wa-aʿṭá al-Karak li-Aḥmad wa-aʿṭá ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Ṭaybars al-Zumurrudī arbaʿīn fāris wa-jaʿalahu nāʾib Aḥmad bi-al-Karak.* Al-Zumurrudī was in fact his steward *(ustādhdār)*. See ibid., 47.

[80] Found in al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá,* 12:226–32. The text adds: "before he was made sultan." This is a later addition referring to his rule as sultan after the death of his father.

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with rule,[81] securing it in the genealogical tree of Qalāwūn through his son Muḥammad.[82] Allusion is then made to Aḥmad through a pun on his *laqab* (Shihāb al-Dīn), where he is compared to a star *(shihāb)* equal in perfection and beauty to the moon. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's treatment of his son resulted from a divine order to behave kindly to the reverent son. Consequently, he decided to offer Aḥmad what God had granted al-Nāṣir himself: a place in which to rule.[83] By this act, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was following the righteous example of Abraham, who had worked together with his son Ismāʿīl to build the Temple. God had shown the sultan how lovely and commendable this design was, and this was why he settled Aḥmad in al-Karak during that period.[84] Now, the decision was taken to make him the ruler of this place with which he was familiar and whose population showed him their affection.[85] Thus, the order was decreed that he be appointed governor of al-Karak and al-Shawbak.[86] The sultan's intuition *(firāsah)* would have to be confirmed by the results, but how could it go wrong, given that Aḥmad was the son and the grandson of noble rulers, the one on whom hopes had been pinned to perfect the rulership before he would completely take charge of it?[87] The deed then goes on with recommendations and advice addressed to Aḥmad for good ruling practices as well as for good manners (undoubtedly an allusion to his preference for boys). The document is revealing in that, at that date, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad still had trust in Aḥmad: this appointment appears to have been a test which could have been decisive in case the succession had to be modified, i.e., if the preferred son, Ānūk, were to die in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's lifetime. It seems that Aḥmad did not seize the opportunity, either because he failed to realize the importance of this test, or because he did not want to do it. Aḥmad behaved badly, at least in the eyes of his steward, al-Zumurrudī, and consequently in the eyes of his father. Al-Zumurrudī sent a letter to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad informing him that Aḥmad had

[81] Ibid., 227: "*wa-wahabanā fī al-mulk al-nasab al-ʿalī al-ʿarīq wa-al-ḥasab alladhī huwa bi-al-taqdīm wa-al-taḥkīm ḥaqīq.*"

[82] Ibid.: "*fa-fayyaʾanā min shajarah hādhā al-bayt al-sharīf al-nāṣirī al-manṣūrī kull ghuṣn warīq.*"

[83] Ibid.: "*wa-awdaʿnā ladayhi mā awdaʿahu Allāh taʿālá ladaynā: mamlakah murtafiʿah muttasiʿah li-yartafiʿ maḥalluhu wa-yattasiʿ amaluhu wa-lā yaḍīq.*"

[84] Ibid., 228.

[85] Ibid., 229: "*ḥakkamnāhu fī hādhihi al-niyābah allatī alifahā wa-darrabahā wa-ʿarafa umūrahā wa-jarrabahā wa-istamāla khawāṭir ahlihā wa-istajlabahā.*"

[86] Both fortresses were part of this *mamlakah*. For its geographical limits, see Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *La Syrie à l'époque des Mamelouks d'après les auteurs arabes* (Paris, 1923), 125–34.

[87] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá,* 12:230: "*wa-firāsatunā talmaḥ natāʾij al-khayr min hādhā al-taqdīm wa-siyāsatunā tuṣliḥ mā qaruba minnā wa-mā baʿuda bi-taʿrīf aḥkām al-taḥkīm wa-kayfa lā wa-huwa al-karīm ibn al-karīm ibn al-karīm al-muʾammal li-tamām al-suʿdud qabla an yuʿqad ʿalayhi al-tamīm.*"

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fallen in love with a young Bedouin boy named Shuhayb and that he spent most of his time with him, drinking and dressing like an Arab. Aḥmad was summoned to Cairo where he arrived, together with Shuhayb, in Shaʿbān 739/March 1339. He was coldly received by his father and then sent to the palace. Orders were given to imprison Shuhayb and to recover the amount of money that he and his father had received from Aḥmad. Aḥmad's reaction was to sequester himself in his room and refuse to eat. In the meanwhile, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had tried to dissuade his son from continuing his relationship with Shuhayb, his envoys in this delicate case being his two senior amirs Bashtāk and Qawṣūn. Both of them tried to convince the rebellious son, threatening him with warnings of his father's determination, but to no effect. Aḥmad preferred to stay with his boyfriend, even rejecting his father's proposal that he take one hundred of his own mamluks. In the end, conscious of Aḥmad's stubbornness, al-Nāṣir bowed to the arguments of his two senior amirs. Firm in his judgment that nothing good would come of this son, he decided to resign himself: Aḥmad was made an amir of forty, but he had to remain in Egypt, his brother Abū Bakr being sent to al-Karak in his place.[88]

For the next two years, Aḥmad seems to have kept a low profile, with Shuhayb still in his close entourage, until 741/1341, when the latter was involved in a conflict with a eunuch over a frivolous case of bird competition. Aḥmad championed his cause and the case reached the ears of the sultan, who confronted his son once again by means of Bashtāk and Qawṣūn. The mediation ended in the same way as in 739/1339: Aḥmad refused to abandon Shuhayb. He was thus exiled by his father to the fortress of Ṣarkhad,[89] but before he reached it, amirs, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's wives, and the harem spoke in his favor. Aḥmad was called back to Cairo, but in the meanwhile his father had ordered that his horses be sold, and in the end he decided to send him back to al-Karak with al-Sarjuwānī as governor.[90] Clearly, in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's mind, Aḥmad was not to play any

[88] Al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 47–48; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 1:384–85. Although the sources remain silent about the appointment of Abū Bakr as governor of al-Karak on that occasion, it is highly probable that he took the place of Aḥmad not only as resident but also as governor. Both he and his brother Ibrāhīm had been amirs of forty since 738/1337–38, a year before Aḥmad. See below under Ibrāhīm and Abū Bakr.

[89] He was accompanied by Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī, his stepfather, and al-Dāwūdī, his *lālā.* See al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 97; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 1:385. In another source, it is established that his father reached this decision because of indisputable evidence *(bayyināt)* he found; one must understand this to mean documents. Unfortunately, their nature is not explicated, but the prospect of a coup should not be rejected. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:515. By that time, Abū Bakr had already been nominated as heir to the throne (see below).

[90] At the beginning of 1 Ramaḍān 741/18 February 1341, according to al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 97, or in Ṣafar 741/August 1340, according to al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 1:385. Meanwhile, Abū Bakr had been called back to Cairo, hence the appointment of al-Sarjuwānī as new governor. Al-Maqrīzī,

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future role, at least not in his own lifetime; the order was given not to let him make any decisions.[91] Aḥmad did not leave his place of exile, enjoying life with Shuhayb, not even when his father was at death's door.

On his deathbed, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was urged—according to the sources—by his amirs to designate his heir to the throne, as though he had not prepared his successor. On that occasion, he is said to have rejected any solution in favor of Aḥmad, though he was his eldest surviving son:[92] "As for Aḥmad, who is in al-Karak, do not let him cross [the soil of] Egypt; do not put him in charge of anything, because he would cause the ruin of the state!"[93] Whether by intuition or paternal feeling, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was convinced that Aḥmad would not be fit for the sultanate; on several occasions, he gave him opportunities to show his mettle and in each case he was found lacking.

Ibrāhīm the Prodigal[94]

Younger than Aḥmad and older than Abū Bakr,[95] Ibrāhīm was born between 719/1319 and 721/1320.[96] The sources remain silent on him until he reached his teens: in 731/1331, on 11 Rajab/11 July, he was sent by his father to al-Karak accompanied by some amirs, among them the newly appointed governor, Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī.[97] Chroniclers are more laconic in his respect than with Aḥmad, as they do not explain why his father decided to send him there,[98] but it can be understood that his purpose was to provide Ibrāhīm with the same military training as Aḥmad. Ibrāhīm's younger brother, Abū Bakr, joined him some time later, and al-Ṣafadī indicates that the residence of the three brothers in al-Karak continued until they grew up *(taraʿraʿū)*.[99] In 735/1335, Ibrāhīm was

Al-Sulūk, 2:515.

[91] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:515: "*wa-awṣāhu al-sulṭān allā yadaʿ li-Aḥmad ḥadīth wa-lā ḥukm bayna ithnayn.*"

[92] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Tārīkh,* 2:133. It was Bashtāk who pronounced Aḥmad's name. In some way, the competition between Bashtāk and Qawṣūn was already visible, each one having a favorite candidate.

[93] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 1:389: "*wa-ammā Aḥmad alladhī bi-al-Karak fa-lā tadaʿūhu yaʿbur Miṣr wa-lā tuwallūhu shayʾan fa-yakūn sabab li-kharāb al-mamlakah.*" See also Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 1:315. Al-Maqrīzī (ibid.) adds that the father's intuition *(firāsah)* was right and imputes to Aḥmad, when he was made sultan, the deterioration and the ruin of both the lands of Egypt and Syria.

[94] His prodigality, for which his father used to blame him, is reported by al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 34.

[95] Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 6:138.

[96] The name of his mother is ignored in the sources.

[97] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:332–33.

[98] Al-Maqrīzī, ibid., uses the verb "*aqarra*" (to establish).

[99] Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 6:138; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-Ṣāfī,* 2:159. In 732/1332, when al-Nāṣir

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conveyed to Cairo at his father's request.[100] It seems that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had decided that Ibrāhīm was to remain with him at the citadel, together with his brother Abū Bakr, who had also arrived in Cairo in the meanwhile, while Aḥmad had to remain alone in al-Karak.[101] A year later, on 9 Ramaḍān 736/21 April 1336, Ibrāhīm received the title of amir, and the two preferred amirs of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, Qawṣūn and Bashtāk, organized the cortège and ceremony associated with such an appointment for a sultan's son.[102] In 737/1336, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad proceeded further with his policy of creating a web of relationships between his amirs and his children, both male and female. On 17 Muḥarram/26 August, a marriage contract was concluded between his son Ibrāhīm and Ṭuquzdamur al-Ḥamawī's daughter.[103] A year later, two similar contracts were made on the same day, one for his brother Aḥmad, and another for himself; this time, he was to get married to Jankalī ibn al-Bābā's daughter.[104] A few weeks after the consummation, his father decided that a third tie could be useful, and another marriage was arranged with another of Ṭāyirbughā's daughters.[105] Meanwhile, Ibrāhīm had just been promoted to the rank of amir of forty together with his brother Abū Bakr.[106] This promising career was suddenly interrupted by smallpox; isolated from his brothers for fear of contagion, and without a last visit from his father, he died on 25 Dhū al-Qaʿdah 738/14 June 1338.[107] With his death, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad lost a possible candidate to succeed him.[108]

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stopped in al-ʿAqabah on his way to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage, Ibrāhīm is not mentioned among the sons who were brought there by al-Sarjuwānī; only Aḥmad and Abū Bakr were meant to take part in the trip. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:355.

[100] Al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir,* 272; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:387. According to al-Maqrīzī, Ibrāhīm arrived in Cairo on Monday 3 Dhū al-Ḥijjah/25 July 1335, but this day fell on Tuesday, not Monday.

[101] Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 6:138; al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir,* 272; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:387.

[102] Al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir,* 290; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:392. He was probably made amir of ten at that time, because he received the higher rank (amir of forty) later.

[103] The marriage was consummated on 1 Rabīʿ I/8 October of the same year. See al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 3.

[104] In Rabīʿ II 738/October–November 1337 (consummated on 20 Shaʿbān 738/13 March 1338). See al-Shujāʿī, *Tārīkh*, 18 and 29. For Aḥmad, see above (the dates do not really tally). It is interesting to note that another of Ibrāhīm's brothers, Yūsuf, was married during the same year to another daughter of the same amir. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:436.

[105] The marriage, probably never consummated, took place just before Ibrāhīm died. See al-Shujāʿī, *Tārīkh*, 34 and 33.

[106] Ibid., 34.

[107] He was buried in his uncle al-Ashraf Khalīl's mausoleum. Ibid.; al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 6:138; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 1:68.

[108] If the following words are to be trusted, Ibrāhīm was aware that he could have ruled at some

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The Last Resort: Abū Bakr

When Abū Bakr was put on the throne, on 21 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 741/7 June 1341, it is said that he was about 20, from which it may be inferred that he was born around 721/1320. His mother, Narjis, gave her husband two other sons (Yūsuf and Ramaḍān) who were Abū Bakr's younger brothers. Nothing is known of his childhood, either in the harem or after he left it. However, in 732/1332, he was already in al-Karak with his brothers Aḥmad and Ibrāhīm, whom he probably joined in 731/1331 (the same year in which the latter arrived there). He thus left Cairo at the age of about 10 to receive the same military training as his brothers. These years are shrouded in mist; unless events that occurred there had an echo in the capital, as with Aḥmad's debacle for instance, chroniclers ignored what happened in this peripheral place. It seems that Abū Bakr's teenage years were different from those of his elder brother, as nothing is reported regarding him before 735/1334. On 4 Rabīʿ I/4 March, Abū Bakr, who like his brother Ibrāhīm had been brought back to Cairo, was granted the title of amir a year before the latter was to receive this title.[109] On that occasion, Qawṣūn led a procession from his stables up to the citadel, during which all the royal mamluks rode in attendance of Abū Bakr, who was wearing the *sharbūsh*. Apparently, Abū Bakr remained in Cairo with Ibrāhīm, at which point his father made another decision that would have an enormous impact on his career: he decided to marry him to Ṭuquzdamur al-Ḥamawī's daughter. This was indeed a profitable day for this amir, as the contract was concluded on the same day as Ibrāhīm's with Ṭuquzdamur's other daughter.[110] Incidentally, by that time, Ṭuquzdamur was probably already married to Abū Bakr's mother and one of his other wives was one of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's daughters.[111] The place where the contract was concluded (Qawṣūn's house) demonstrates once more that these marriages between the sultan's children and his amirs and their children had implications beyond what is generally believed. A few months later (12 Ramaḍān 737/14 April 1337), Abū Bakr was poised to play a significant part in an attack against al-Nashw which could have cost the latter his life. Abū Bakr's name is mentioned as one of the potential enemies engaged in the affair, but in the end, al-Nashw was not harassed.[112]

It has been noticed that Ibrāhīm and Abū Bakr had almost parallel careers in their appointments and relationships. This was again true when Ibrāhīm was

time after his father: "*anā amūt qablak aw atamallak baʿdak.*" See al-Shujāʿī, *al-Tārīkh* 34.

[109] Al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir,* 236; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:379.

[110] Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 10:252; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:407. For Ibrāhīm, see above.

[111] For the latter marriage, see al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:698.

[112] Ibid., 422. The name provided is Abū Bakr ibn al-Nāṣirī Muḥammad. See also Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History,* 75.

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made amir of forty: Abū Bakr was promoted to the same rank in the same year (738/1337–38). During the following year (739/1339) al-Nāṣir Muḥammad lost any hope for Aḥmad; he had been called back to Cairo and admonished to abandon his boyfriend, but had refused and was ready to commit suicide if he was not left in peace. In view of this, his father made the decision not to waste any more time with this son and to send Abū Bakr in his place.[113] As had been the case with Aḥmad, this settlement in al-Karak, at a time when their father was already an old man, can be considered a test. Ānūk was still the first choice for succession, but he needed a backup. The experiment does not seem to have been concluded: in 740/1339, after his brother Ānūk had disappointed his father with his infatuation for a singing slave-girl, Abū Bakr was invited to visit al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. He brought along a gift of more than two hundred thousand dirhams, but it soon was discovered that this amount had been taken from the people of al-Karak in the form of an unrefusable loan—those who opposed it had been killed.[114] Later, Bashtāk was asked to bring Ānūk and Abū Bakr to al-ʿAbbāsah, where they all stayed a few days before coming back to the citadel: no reason is given for this retreat,[115] but in the end, Abū Bakr turned back to al-Karak, now his residence. He remained there until 20 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 740/17 July 1340, when he returned to Cairo at his father's request, and the latter gathered his amirs and asked them to take an oath in the form of a sworn covenant to support him *(ḥilf)* personally and his son Abū Bakr, after his death.[116] The oath was augmented by generous gifts of money to each amir according to his rank. The news of this official designation put the city in a state of agitation.[117] Interestingly, Ānūk was still alive at that time (he died a month and a half later), but it is reasonable to think that he was not in good health. Backed up by an official appointment, Abū Bakr rode back to his stronghold at al-Karak, expecting news of his brother's impending death. The order to present himself at the citadel of Cairo arrived in Rajab 741/January 1341; Abū Bakr's arrival, on the 24th/13th of the same month, was accompanied by another gift of one hundred thousand dirhams for his father. On that occasion, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad gave orders to bring Abū Bakr's units (his *ṭulb* and mamluks) from al-Karak to Cairo, as well as all the revenues held in al-Karak.[118] Aḥmad, on his

[113] Al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 49.

[114] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:492.

[115] Ibid., 2:493.

[116] On the oath as a form of designation in the Mamluk period, see Holt, "The Position and Power of the Mamlūk Sultan," 241. The case is quite different here, as it took place before the sultan's death and in presence of the army (the amirs first, then the soldiers). Moreover, as shown by the sources, they were paid for taking that oath.

[117] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:499.

[118] He also received the *iqṭāʿ* of a Mamluk whose charge had been modified (Bahāʾ al-Dīn Aṣlam

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way to his exile in Ṣarkhad, was finally directed to al-Karak, where he was likely to remain quiescent under the supervision of Maliktamur al-Sarjuwānī, the newly appointed governor.[119] Clearly, Abū Bakr had to remain in residence in Cairo out of necessity, as his elder brother was not to play any role in the succession. The following months were marked by new signs of Abū Bakr's preparation to succeed his father: he was granted the fief of an amir, Bashtāk was asked to look after his interests and, consequently, the *wāfidīyah* of Aleppo were put in his service, along with other troops. The reason for all of this was clear: the old sultan wanted his son to be prepared to rule.[120] The effective nomination took place when al-Nāṣir became convinced that he would not survive his illness. On 18 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 741/4 June 1341, on his deathbed, al-Nāṣir convened his senior amirs and his royal mamluks and asked them to swear the covenant in favor of Abū Bakr. He gave him his grandfather's sword and conferred upon him the latter's *laqab* (al-Malik al-Manṣūr).[121] His last will was fulfilled three days later: the transfer of power went smoothly, to the greatest surprise of the populace.[122]

"I Am Aware That Not One of My Children Is Fit [for the Sultanate]"

The starting point of my investigation was to consider whether al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who had a greater progeny than any other Mamluk sultan, consistently planned to prepare his sons to succeed him on the throne. Given that Qalāwūn himself was succeeded by two of his sons (without taking into account a nominated son who died well before he could rule), it is legitimate to ask whether al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ever thought of being succeeded by one of his sons, and if so, whether he did anything in order to facilitate his accession to the throne and to compel his own mamluks to accept an heir on the basis of genealogy.

Conscious of being the son of a mamluk himself, and thus a member of the *awlād al-nās* (sons of the elite), al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was fully aware that, in a self-defining non-hereditary system such as the Mamluk sultanate, where legitimacy lay more in merit than in genealogy, his desire to see one of his sons succeed him on the throne would remain a vain wish if he failed to plan carefully. Preparation, i.e., education and training (from a military point of view), but also the creation of a network of faithful supporters, could constitute a decisive element in this respect. Considering the biographical elements gleaned from what historians and

received the governorship of Ṣafad instead) on 18 Ramaḍān 741/7 March 1341. See al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 97.

[119] Ibid.; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk* 2:515.

[120] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:517. Interestingly, it must be noted that Abū Bakr also married Ānūk's widow during this period.

[121] Ibid., 2:523; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Tārīkh,* 2:133; al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 104–5.

[122] Al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 107.

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chroniclers have deemed worthy of mention, we notice that several concordant elements concern the sons who received such training (Aḥmad, Ibrāhīm, and Abū Bakr): residence in al-Karak, promotion, and marriages.

Ever since it was seized by the Ayyubids, the fortress of al-Karak had been linked to the ruling sultan in Egypt. In the Mamluk sultanate, during the Turkish period, this link was not weakened; on the contrary, several members of the Qalāwūnid family resided in the fortress on several occasions and under various circumstances. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad himself was well acquainted with it—he resided there on two occasions when his power was usurped by a rival. When he regained power the first time, he had spent most of his teens in that place, consolidating his ties with the inhabitants and the neighboring Bedouins, among others. It is thus no surprise that he decided to send the sons who were the most likely to succeed him to al-Karak, once they came out of the harem; their age was between 8 and 10 and their stay there, far from the court, the harem, and the intrigues, was meant as a formative exile during which each son must be trained in horsemanship and hunting, according to the sources, and also educated in the Mamluk way.[123] As *awlād al-nās,* they would always lack *khushdāshīyah,* the fraternal ties that characterized the mamluks raised in the barracks, but at least they could develop relationships with the mamluks put in their service. Among the three sons, the one who best succeeded in creating a network of relationships was Aḥmad. However, his network relied not on the mamluks, but on the Bedouins of the surrounding area: he dressed like them, he hunted with them, and he even loved one of them. His link with al-Karak was so strong that he even refused to leave it once he was chosen as sultan, and in the end, when he did leave it, it was for a short period of two months, before he went back to the place where he had grown up.[124] Instead of *khushdāshīyah,* Aḥmad had developed *ʿaṣabīyah*![125] This tribal network worked for several years, even after his deposition, but in this context, it was the wrong type of network.

During his long reign, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad is reputed to have introduced an innovation generally regarded as detrimental to the Mamluk system: promotion of

[123]This formative role played by al-Karak had already been noted in 1976 by Muḥammad ʿAdnān al-Bakhīt. The original work in Arabic was not available to me. The quote is from the German translation: Alexander Scheidt, *Das Königreich von al-Karak in der mamlūkischen Zeit* (Frankfurt, 1992), 84–85. On al-Karak, see now Marcus Milwright, *The Fortress of the Raven: Karak in the Middle Islamic Period (1100–1650)* (Leiden, 2008).

[124]Once deposed, he proposed to remain in al-Karak as governor, considering the fortress as a heritage received from his grandfather and father, where his brothers, sent in exile to Qūṣ by Qawṣūn, had to be sent in order to live with him. See al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 147 ("*inna hādhihi qalʿat al-Karak hiya wirāthah la-nā min abī wa-jaddī*").

[125]Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Muqaffá,* 1:385 ("*fa-kathurat qālat al-Karakīyīn wa-tajammaʿū khawfan ʿalá Aḥmad wa-ʿaṣabīyatan ʿalayhi*").

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the *awlād al-nās,* a rather new category in Mamluk society, in the army. Promotion regarding his own sons must thus not be considered an unusual practice. In each case, with the exception of his preferred son, Ānūk, who was presented as the designated heir and immediately made amir of one hundred, they started their career in the hierarchy at the lowest rank, i.e., amir of ten. They were then promoted to the intermediary rank of amir of forty, but never to the highest rank. These promotions must be seen in the light of the training mentioned earlier, but also as answering to the necessity to link the eldest sons to the army, the senior amirs, and the royal mamluks. The ceremonies that took place on each occasion were orchestrated by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's closest amirs (Qawṣūn and Bashtāk). In every instance, the sons wore a symbol of power, albeit one associated with a previous ruler: the emblem of the grandfather, Qalāwūn, whose mausoleum was always the meeting point for the procession through the city. On the other hand, it is reported that none of these four sons received a *malik* title. As a young father, at the beginning of his reign, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had followed his own father's practice in attributing such a title to more than one son; his first two sons were thus known to have received such titles. However, they died in infancy, and it seems that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad never applied this practice again. When a contemporary chronicler, al-Ṣafadī, mentioned that Abū Bakr and Ibrāhīm were made amirs of forty, he stressed that they received neither a *malik* title nor a *laqab*—they were just called "Sayyidī Ibrāhīm or Sayyidī Abū Bakr, the amirs."[126] From this, it may be inferred that, in the eyes of a contemporary witness who was fully acquainted with the Mamluk system by origin, a logical link existed between such a promotion and the attribution of such a title to a sultan's sons. The reason why al-Nāṣir Muḥammad no longer conferred the *malik* title is unknown, but it might be for fear of losing his own power, or out of superstition (as already stressed, two sons who received it died in infancy).

Marriages undoubtedly played another important part in preparing the way for his sons to succeed him. "Al-Malik al-Nāṣir's ingenious marriage policy, reminiscent of the dynastic manoeuvrings of the house of Habsburg in fifteenth century *Felix Austria,* created a network of dependencies and loyalties between the sultan and his sons and daughters, on the one hand, and the senior amirs and their offspring, on the other."[127] The effects of this marriage policy have been considered questionable because the fathers-in-law of his sons were "outsiders," and as such they were devoid of *khushdāshīyah* and thus unable to lead a faction

[126] Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 6:138: "*wa-lam yusamma aḥad minhumā bi-Malik wa-lā luqqiba bal kāna al-nās kulluhum yaqūlūna Sayyidī Ibrāhīm aw Sayyidī Abā Bakr al-umarā*'."

[127] Ulrich Haarmann, "Joseph's Law—The Careers and Activities of Mamluk Descendants before the Ottoman Conquest of Egypt," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society,* ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge, 1998), 66.

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powerful enough to impose itself on Mamluk politics.[128] Whatever these effects might have been if they were ever weighed, it remains that they created strong ties in most cases which proved beneficial after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death.[129] One can take the case of Ṭuquzdamur al-Ḥamawī, who crafted numerous links with the sultan; he was not only the husband of Narjis, the former concubine of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and mother of Abū Bakr,[130] but he later married a daughter of his master,[131] and two of his own daughters were married to the sultan's sons Abū Bakr (now his stepson),[132] and Ibrāhīm.[133] It is no wonder that he became Abū Bakr's *nāʾib al-salṭanah* when the latter was enthroned, as well as his strongest supporter. One may wonder, once again, if these ties were not created to strengthen the position of the sultan's sons and to substitute for the lack of links between these sons and the mamluks.[134]

What went wrong? On his deathbed, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad is said to have advised his mamluks to obey his designated heir Abū Bakr on the condition that he acted as a good ruler. If this proved not to be the case, they were urged to depose him and replace him with any of the surviving sons (referred to as minors, which they were), but under no circumstances should Aḥmad be brought to Egypt and put on the throne.[135] Though the historian must remain cautious with the sources, especially with alleged oral reports, it appears that in this particular case, the substance of this advice was more than likely part of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's last will. The fact that this advice was repeatedly followed by mamluks who were present on that occasion, when one of his sons had to be deposed, even twenty years later, corroborates its historicity.[136] In pronouncing these words, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad put in the mamluks' hands a double-edged sword. They were indeed authorized to depose those sons who disrespected the mores of proper rulership, but on the other hand, they were exhorted subsequently to enthrone

[128]Holt, "An-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (684–741/1285–1341): His Ancestry, Kindred and Affinity," 320–23.

[129]See Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos,* 82–85.

[130]Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:551.

[131]Ibid., 2:698. At al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, eight of his daughters were already married. See al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 111.

[132]Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī,* 10:252; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:407.

[133]Al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 1:3.

[134]Later on, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's scions by his daughters could even be considered as eligible for rule. See Amalia Levanoni, "*Awlad al-nas* in the Mamluk Army during the Bahri Period," in *Mamluks and Ottomans: Studies in Honour of Michael Winter,* ed. David J. Wasserstein and Ami Ayalon (London and New York, 2006), 100.

[135]Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Al-Tārīkh,* 2:133.

[136]Al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 163; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 2:709; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah,* 2:289.

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another son. It would take forty years for this cycle to be broken. Aside from the various reasons that could be invoked to try to explain why one faction could not prevail over another and consequently seize power to the detriment of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's scions, it must be acknowledged that his last decision was his most successful, the apex of a long and perhaps Machiavellian reign: he managed to keep power within his family. In most cases, when one of his descendants was deposed, whatever the reasons put forward, the mamluks routinely chose the elder rather than the younger candidate, thus demonstrating that they were hoping for a promising sultan rather than a puppet.[137] Moreover, for several decades, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's progeny supplied an almost endless reservoir of suitable candidates to the sultanate; among the *awlād al-nās,* they constituted a separate, privileged category, the *asyād,* the descendants of a sultan, the family of a ruler, the members of a *bayt,* who not only formed a special unit inside the *ḥalqah,*[138] but also had the right to reside at the citadel.[139] It was not until almost a century later, during Barsbāy's reign (in 836/1433), that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's scions were finally ousted from the citadel, together with the idle mamluks.[140] Even in

[137]See Van Steenbergen, "'Is anyone my guardian . . .?' Mamlūk Under-age Rule and the Later Qalāwūnids." See also, for instance, al-Shujāʿī, *Al-Tārīkh,* 140 (Baybars al-Aḥmadī's reaction at the nomination of Kujuk, still a child: "*lā yaṣluḥ illā man yakūn rajul kabīr yaʿrif tadbīr al-mulk*").

[138]Ulrich Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt and Syria," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33 (1988): 103; idem, "Joseph's Law—The Careers and Activities of Mamluk Descendants before the Ottoman Conquest of Egypt," 64.

[139]See al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ,* 3:87, regarding Ḥājjī ibn al-Ashraf Shaʿbān: "*wa-amarahu bi-iqāmatihi fī dārihi bi-qalʿat al-jabal jaryan ʿalá ʿādat banī al-asyād.*" According to al-Maqrīzī, there were more than 600 of them living in the citadel in the twenties of the ninth/fifteenth century. They got revenues from various sources (salaries from the sultan and fiefs). See al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿUqūd al-Farīdah,* ed. Maḥmūd Jalīlī (Beirut, 2002) 1:572–73 ("*wa-aqāma fīman aqāma min Banī Qalāwūn bi-qalʿat al-jabal wa-la-hum fuḍūl amwāl wa-murattabāt sulṭānīyah wa-iqṭāʿāt wa-kāna yuqāl la-hum al-asyād wa-balaghat ziyādatuhum ʿalā sitt miʾah fa-lam yazal ʿadaduhum yaqillu wa-māluhum yanquṣu wa-saʿduhum yadburu wa-jāhuhum yaḍmaḥillu ḥattá ṣārū ilá ḍīq baʿd jāh ʿarīḍ wa-dawālīb kathīrah li-iʿtiṣār qaṣab al-sukkar bi-bilād al-ṣaʿīd wa-maṭābikh lil-sukkar bi-madīnat Miṣr wa-khuddām ṭawāshīyah la-hum ʿadad kathīr wa-amwāl jammah wa-takhdimuhum ʿiddat mubāshirīn yuʿrafūn bi-mubāshirī al-asyād li-kull kabīr min al-asyād dīwān mufrad.*") Besides this, the *asyād* were awarded amirate ranks with suitable *iqṭāʿāt.* See Levanoni, "*Awlad al-nas,*" 100–1. The lands they held were reintroduced in the *iqṭāʿ* system when Barqūq instituted the *dīwān al-mufrad.* See Ulrich Haarmann, "The Sons of the Mamluks as Fief-Holders in Late Medieval Egypt," in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East,* ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut, 1984), 142–44.

[140]See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Sulūk,* 4:889–90 : "*wa-muniʿa man baqiya min al-asyād awlād al-mulūk min dhurrīyat al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn min sukná al-Qāhirah wa-ṭulūʿihā wa-ukhrijū min dūrihim bi-hā wa-kānū lammā muniʿū min sinīn sakana aktharuhum bi-al-Qāhirah wa-ẓawāhirihā fa-dhallū baʿd ʿizzihim wa-tabadhdhalū baʿd taḥajjubihim wa-baqiya min aʿyānihim ṭāʾifah muqīmah bi-al-Qalʿah wa-tanzil bi-al-Qāhirah li-ḥājātihā thumma taʿūd ilá dūrihā fa-ukhrijū bi-ajmaʿihim fī hādhihi al-ayyām*

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801/1398–99, some of them had been granted a stipend by Barqūq on the sole basis that they were part of the late sultan's progeny.[141]

In conclusion, we have seen that the issue of succession inside the Qalāwūnid house had been considered by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad at a very early date. In order to prepare his most promising successors for the throne, he chose to adopt a series of measures that concerned most of these sons, measures mostly echoed by a "mirror for princes" written contemporarily with these events. The main motive for such preparation was the notion that, being sons of the ruler and thus *awlād al-nās,* they would lack relationships, ties, and links with the most powerful mamluks, a network of supporters, and qualities needed for rulership. If preparation was not a guarantee of success, it should have helped these sons in any case. What al-Nāṣir Muḥammad probably failed to realize was that experience was also required to be an effective ruler.

wa-muniʿū min al-qalʿah fa-tafarraqū shadhar madhar kamā faʿala abūhum al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn bi-awlād al-mulūk Banī Ayyūb wa-kadhālik faʿala Allāh bi-Banī Ayyūb kamā faʿala abūhum al-Kāmil Muḥammad ibn al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb bi-awlād al-Khulafāʾ al-Fāṭimīyīn 'wa-la yaẓlim rabbuka aḥadan' [*al-Kahf*, 49]." The reference to a previous partial expulsion must be dated to the end of 825/1422, at the beginning of Barsbāy's rule. See al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ,* 8:184.

[141] See al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ,* 7:216, regarding Muḥammad ibn Ḥājjī: "*ṣallá ʿalayhi al-Ẓāhir Barqūq bi-al-ḥawsh al-sulṭānī min al-qalʿah wa-qarrara li-awlādihi wa-hum ʿasharah rātiban.*"

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