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The Enigma of the *Baḥrīyah* and the Political Legacy of Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (1240–49)

INTRODUCTION

Elsewhere, based mostly on volume six of Ibn Wāṣil's (1208–98) history of the Ayyubids, I have discussed the transition from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks.¹ Ibn Wāṣil's chronicle is a huge text, with many autobiographical references. Although his focus is on political history and military campaigns, battles are not described and other relevant military details are seldom mentioned. In this article I offer a more thorough reading of the text with thirteenth- and fourteenth-century historiography at the fore of the discussion. Moreover, although aware of Makīn ibn al-ʿAmīd's (1205–73) text, I regrettably made sparse use of it in my earlier article and also overlooked the annotated French translation.² Ibn al-ʿAmīd was a scion of a Christian family originally from Takrit in Iraq that flourished in Egypt during the Fatimid-Ayyubid period. He, like his father, had served in the Office of the Army.³ Additionally, I will refer to Ibn Khallikān's (1211–82) text to argue that, in political terms, the period between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries constituted an unbroken continuum. Finally, some of my earlier observations on Ibn Wāṣil's text and the decade from 1250 to 1260 are modified.

Although the world of Ayyubid politics frames my discussion, I do not seek to redefine it. “Ayyubid confederation,” the term coined by R. Stephen Humphreys, is quite satisfactory, and his discussion of its origin explains its structure and

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¹See “The Transition from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks: Ibn Wāṣil's Account,” in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, vol. VIII, ed. U. Vermeulen, K. D'Hulster, and J. Van Steenbergen (Leuven, 2016), 244–70.

²Ibn al-ʿAmīd's text was published in 1957: Claude Cahen, ed., “La ‘chronique des ayyoubides’ d'al-Makīn b. al-ʿAmīd,” *Bulletin d'études orientales* 15 (1955–57): 109–84. It has also been translated: Anne-Marie Eddé and Françoise Micheau, trans., *Chronique des ayyoubides (602–658/1205–6–1259–60)* (Paris, 1994).

³For the family's fortunes in Egypt during the Fatimid-Ayyubid period, see Ibn al-Ṣuqāʿī, *Tālī kitāb wafayāt al-aʿyān*, ed. Jacqueline Sublet (Damascus, 1974), no. 167 (text and trans.); al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-muqaffā al-kabīr*, ed. Mohammed Yalaoui (Beirut, 1991), 3:16–18; Samuel Moawad, “Al-Makīn Jirjis ibn al-ʿAmīd (the elder),” in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 4 (1200–1350), ed. David Thomas and Alex Mallet (Leiden, 2012), 566–70.



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how it functioned.⁴ I also adopt Nasser O. Rabbat's sober view regarding al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's troubled personality (born 603/1206–7, ruled Egypt between 1240 and 1249), his propensity to shed blood, and his destructive politics, which undermined "the last vestiges of the system of collective sovereignty."⁵

Scholarly discussion of the *baḥrīyah* is dominated by David Ayalon's 1951 article, and the subsequent publications by Amalia Levanoni. One must bear in mind, however, that neither Ibn Wāṣil's text nor al-Makīn ibn al-ʿAmīd's text were available to Ayalon in 1951, and today there is also a better and fuller edition of Ibn Khallikān's biographical dictionary. The *baḥrī* regiment established by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb is at the focus of my discussion and my question is how this small corps that lacked cohesion and eventually dispersed came to be considered a key element in the transition from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks.⁶

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BAḤRĪYAH

The first significant reference to al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb is from 618/1221, and appears in the context of the agreement that secured the withdrawal of the armies of the Fifth Crusade from Egypt. The agreement included the exchange of hostages, and the fifteen-year-old al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and his boon companions were offered as hostages. The effect of this short episode on the life of the young prince remains obscure, but in 627/1230 relations between al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and his father,

⁴See R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260* (Albany, 1977), chapters 1–2; idem, "Legitimacy and Political Instability in Islam in the Age of the Crusades," in *The Jihad and its Times: Dedicated to Andrew Stefan Ehrenkreutz*, ed. Hadia Dajani-Shakeel and Ronald A. Messier (Ann Arbor, 1991), 5–15, examining theories of political legitimacy versus political practices.

⁵See Nasser O. Rabbat, *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mamluk Architecture* (Leiden, 1995), 85. While Rabbat draws attention to al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's execution of his brother (al-ʿĀdil Sayf al-Dīn), "a vile act unprecedented in Ayyubid history," Ibn al-ʿAmīd singles out al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's indifference to the fate of his son (al-Mughīth ʿUmar) who died in prison in Damascus. See Ibn al-ʿAmīd, "Chronique," ed. Cahen, 159; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 85. Al-Dhahabī, (*Tārīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashahīr wa-al-aʿlām*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām al-Tadmūrī [Beirut, 1989–], vol. 47 [covering the years 641–50], 133) emphasizes al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's agony over the death of the son. Elsewhere, he explains that the events that led to al-Mughīth ʿUmar's death also involved machinations on the part of the vizier (see *ibid.*, 5). For al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's vindictiveness, see *ibid.*, 40–41. It should be noted that al-ʿĀdil Sayf al-Dīn's execution was a premeditated act that took place after long years of imprisonment.

⁶Note on conventions: I use the terms *mamlūk* pl. *mamālīk/mamlūks* to denote military slaves. The adjective Mamluk (with capital "M," and with no transliteration) is used when referring to the state or society of the Mamluk period. See D. S. Richards, "Mamluk Amirs and Their Families and Households," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge, 1998), 40. I use CE dates when dating is firmly established and CE/Hijri dates when referring to information derived from sources.



al-Malik al-Kāmil, sultan of Egypt, became strained because of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's actions during his father's absence from Egypt. Consequently, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's designation as heir apparent was revoked and he was exiled to the East—meaning to the territories east of the Euphrates—but was given no independent rule. In 630/1233, however, following al-Malik al-Kāmil's successful campaign along the Upper Tigris, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb was granted rulership of Ḥiṣn Kayfā. During 634/1237 and 635/1238, he vastly increased the territories under his rule and asserted his position within the politically and geographically diverse and shifting Ayyubid confederacy.⁷

In 1238, after the death of al-Malik al-Kāmil, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb took control of Damascus and sought to expand his territories in Syria. He also began making preparations to oust his younger brother, al-ʿĀdil Sayf al-Dīn, who ruled Egypt (1238–40). Al-ʿĀdil's position was weakened following the desertion of leading amirs, who joined al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb.⁸ However, during the latter's absence from Damascus he lost the town to al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl (the son of Sultan al-ʿĀdil of Egypt, 1200–18), the ruler of Baalbek, and the force (5,000–6,000 strong) al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb had assembled for the Syrian—and possibly also the Egyptian—campaign crumbled. He was also deserted by some of his inner circle, such as eunuchs, household slaves (*ghilmān*), military slaves (*mamālik*), and administrators. He ended up imprisoned in Karak, accompanied by his slave girl Shajar al-Durr and Baybars al-Bunduqdārī, the future sultan (1260–77).⁹ After seven months of imprisonment, following a coup against al-ʿĀdil Sayf al-Dīn in Egypt, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb was invited to take the reins of power. During his nine-year rule in Egypt he created the *Baḥrīyah* corps and initiated an extensive building project on Rawḍah island (Jazīrah), opposite Fuṣṭāṭ.

Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb died on 15 Shaʿbān 647/23 November 1249 in al-Manṣūrah, fighting the armies of the Seventh Crusade. His death was kept secret by those of his inner circle, which included Shajar al-Durr (his widow) and the eunuch (*ṭawāshī*) Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥsin, who had unrestrained access to the sultan and was also in charge of his *mamālik* of the *jamdārīyah* (masters of the robes) and *baḥrīyah*. They followed the hereditary principle and recognized al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's son Tūrān Shāh, who was exiled in Ḥiṣn Kayfā and had to be summoned, as his successor. Their adherence to the hereditary principle should come as no sur-

⁷ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, vol. 4, ed. Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Rabīʿ and Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr (Cairo, 1972), 98, 99; Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 139, 140, 142, 144, 148–49.

⁸ Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 146–47.

⁹ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, vol. 5, ed. Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Rabīʿ and Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr (Cairo, 1977), 233–34; Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 147; Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 248–61.



prise, since it was a driving force in medieval life. Dynasties of qadis, jurists, administrators, physicians, and merchants dominated the socio-religious and economic life of the period, and political realities were merely a reflection of wider trends. As a temporary arrangement, they entrusted Yūsuf Fakhr al-Dīn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh with the command (*atābakīyah*) of the army and running the state (*tadbīr al-mamlakah*). His main responsibility was to issue official documents (*manāshīr*) confirming grants of *iqṭāʿ*.¹⁰ Tūrān Shāh arrived in al-Manṣūrah on 6 Dhū al-Qaʿdah 647/10 February 1250, but he failed to consolidate his position as sultan and, on 29 Muḥarram 648/3 May 1250, was assassinated by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's *mamlūks*.

Following the assassination of Tūrān Shāh, power was handed to Shajar al-Durr and command of the army was given to the amir ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turkumānī. For a brief three months the Friday sermons began with the proclamation of the caliph's name followed by a reference to Shajar al-Durr: "O God, protect the Lady Ṣāliḥīyah, the Queen of the Muslims, the Guardian of the World and the Religion, the Lady of the Honorable Veil and Splendid Curtain, the Mother of the Deceased Khalīl."¹¹ Eventually, she was forced to marry Aybak (19 Rabīʿ II 648/21 July 1250), who assumed the royal title al-Muʿizz. Seemingly, the Ayyubid suzerainty continued since the declared nominal ruler was a six-year old boy, al-Malik al-Ashraf, son of the deceased al-Malik al-Masʿūd, eldest son of al-Malik al-Kāmil. For some time both names appeared on official documents but the boy was eventually imprisoned and removed from political life.

The year 1257 proved to be fatal for both Shajar al-Durr and Aybak. Suspicious of Aybak's intention to marry into the ruling family of Mosul, she conspired against him and had him killed. Shajar al-Durr paid with her own life for the killing of her husband. These events paved the way for Quṭuz, Aybak's *mamlūk*, to seize power. In 1260, he led a diverse Muslim force to victory over the Mongols

¹⁰Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrīj al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, vol. 6, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām al-Tadmurī (Beirut, 2004), 101; Ibn al-ʿAmīd, "Chronique," ed. Cahen, 159; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Michéau, 86. The standard translation of the term *ṭawāshī* is eunuch (see notes 51 and 87). For the *jamdārīyah*, see note 35. Fakhr al-Dīn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh was a member of the well-known Ḥamawīyah family. See al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 47:372–74.

¹¹Lev, "Transition," 248–49. Very little about Shajar al-Durr's actions can be found in the sources. Al-Dhahabī, for example, writes that she distributed robes of honor and money among the amirs. She also married off *mamālīk* and *baḥrīyah* to slave girls in the Citadel of Cairo and provided generously for them. He omits the question of whether manumission from slavery also took place on those occasions. See *Tārīkh*, 47:57. Shajar al-Durr has attracted considerable scholarly attention. See, for example, D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Tree of Pearls: The Extraordinary Architectural Patronage of the 13th-Century Egyptian Slave-Queen Shajar al-Durr* (New York, 2020), with ample references to sources and studies.



at ‘Ayn Jālūt but then fell victim to a conspiracy by Baybars. The next two subsections deal with Ayyubid military slavery and the creation of the *baḥrīyah*.

Ayyubid Military Slavery

Ibn al-‘Amīd’s history of the Ayyubids is a plain text and, with one exception, devoid of any autobiographical references. Ibn al-‘Amīd reports that in 627/1230, when Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil had been in Syria, he (the sultan) was informed that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, while acting as heir apparent and his deputy in Egypt, had bought 1,000 *mamlūks*.¹² Who it was who insinuated that the act signified al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s intention to take control of the country remains vague. In fact, while absent from Egypt, al-Malik al-Kāmil divided the responsibilities of running the country between his son and the amir Fakhr al-Dīn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, who was entrusted with financial and administrative authority.¹³

According to Ibn Wāṣil, the letter was written by al-‘Ādil Sayf al-Dīn’s mother, complaining that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb had bought many Turkish *mamlūks* and taken vast sums of money from merchants and the treasury. She had perceived these actions as an attempt to seize the country and as a threat to herself and her son.¹⁴ Upon his return, al-Malik al-Kāmil arrested several of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s men and tried to recover the money that had been spent. As in other medieval Muslim ruling families, in the Ayyubid family there were both siblings with two parents in common (*shaqīq, shaqīqah*) and half-siblings with only a father in common. The family squabble was exacerbated by the sultan’s response. In 632/1235, when al-Malik al-Kāmil left Egypt for a campaign in Syria, he made al-‘Ādil heir apparent and conferred upon him the title Sayf al-Dīn.

The history written by Shihāb al-Dīn Qirṭāy al-‘Izzī al-Khāzindārī (d. 708/1308–9) offers another perspective on these events, but this work must be approached cautiously. Al-Khāzindārī’s text is a mixture of belles-lettres (*adab*) and history. The author introduces dialogues between the protagonists and locates the events in artificial invented contexts that, supposedly, explain the actions of the main players on the political scene. Al-Khāzindārī begins the account of the years 626–27/1228–30 by explaining al-Malik al-Kāmil’s family situation: he had three sons, of whom the eldest, al-Malik al-Mas‘ūd, was sent to conquer Yemen. Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and al-‘Ādil Sayf al-Dīn, the two younger sons, were with their father in Cairo. Before al-Malik al-Kāmil’s Syrian campaign, he held a kind of father-son conversation with al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, entrusting him with authority and ordering him to follow his instructions. The gist of the account

¹² Ibn al-‘Amīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 139; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 44.

¹³ Ibn al-‘Amīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 137; Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 204–8.

¹⁴ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 4:277–78.



consists of al-Malik al-Kāmil's directions concerning al-ʿĀdil and his mother, who is described as a foreigner, “not one of us.”¹⁵

Al-Khāzindārī contends that during al-Malik al-Kāmil's absence from Egypt, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb mistreated al-ʿĀdil and his mother and he reports that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb purchased 400 *mamlūks*, whom he called *baḥrīyah*, and granted them vast *iqṭāʿ*'s yielding incomes between twenty to thirty thousand (dinars/dirhams?). Al-Malik al-Kāmil was informed about al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's actions through a letter sent by al-ʿĀdil's mother. The main difference between al-Khāzindārī's account and the letter lies in the reference to al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's *mamlūk* build-up, and concerns the number quoted in the letter: 500 *mamlūks*. It seems that this disparity was a deliberate literary device on the part of al-Khāzindārī: al-ʿĀdil's mother had faithfully described al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's actions but had exaggerated slightly, while his account quotes the correct number: 400 *mamlūks*, not 500. If we follow the drift of al-Khāzindārī's account, al-Malik al-Kāmil's harsh response was driven by the misdeeds of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, who had disobeyed his father's instructions to keep the peace in the family.¹⁶

It is easier to dismantle the literary framework created by al-Khāzindārī than to understand his account of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's actions, which defy everything we supposedly know about military slavery. Our knowledge of the institution assumes that young *mamlūks* were purchased in order to be trained as soldiers. Giving them *iqṭāʿ*'s at that stage is simply improbable. Whatever shortcomings al-Khāzindārī's account might have, it is nonetheless useful for understanding Ibn Wāṣil's account. It seems that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb definitely did two things: he bought *mamlūks* and he distributed *iqṭāʿ*'s among the amirs. His immediate goal was to create a body of loyal amirs and, in the future, of loyal *mamlūks*. Al-Malik al-Kāmil's efforts to recover some of the money spent by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb involved rescinding the *iqṭāʿ*'s and imprisoning the amirs.

In the broader context of Ayyubid history al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's actions made perfect sense; he did what other sultans had done: cultivated amirs and fostered *mamlūks*. References to *mamlūks* are abundant and, in some cases the military meaning of the institution can be safely assumed. Ibn Wāṣil, for example, while writing about al-Malik al-Masʿūd's conquest of Yemen, also mentions the ruler of the Holy Cities, whom he describes as a powerful and awe-inspiring potentate, who had many Turkish *mamlūks*, and whom the Bedouins dreaded.¹⁷ The term can, however, stand for both military and household slaves, and some of

¹⁵ Al-Khāzindārī, *Tārīkh majmūʿ al-nawādir*, ed. Hurst Hein and Muḥammad Ḥujayrī (Beirut, 2005), 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3, 4, 5, 14; David Ayalon, “Le régiment Bahriya dans l’armée mamelouke,” *Revue des études islamiques* 19 (1951): 133–34, based on fifteenth-century Mamluk historiography.

¹⁷ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 4:121, 124.



the references to *mamlūks* are ambiguous. Al-Ṣafadī (1297–1363), for example, provides a short biographical note on the son of the caliph al-Nāṣir (1180–1225), who died on 20 Dhū al-Qa‘dah 612/11 March 1216. He was clearly being groomed as the successor, and his father had bought him Turkish *mamlūks* and allowed him to ride with a large train of attendants composed of eunuchs. Al-Ṣafadī also wrote a biographical note on ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr, the *kātib al-sirr* of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, whose train of attendants included sixteen Turkish *mamlūks* for whom he had paid some extraordinary sum. His acculturation into the Turkish milieu of the rulers whom he served also included his predilection to speak Turkish. In both accounts, the references to Turkish *mamlūks* seem to indicate domestic slaves.¹⁸

Other references to *mamlūks* indicate military slavery, and the sources offer illuminating insights into the institution during the period. Highly relevant examples of this come from al-Malik al-Kāmil’s reign. In 617/1220, after the fall of Damietta, at the time that the sultan was fighting the armies of the Fifth Crusade, a group of amirs conspired against him. Because of the wartime circumstances, al-Malik al-Kāmil chose to appease the amirs through gifts of money and increased their *iqṭā‘*s. A year later, after the retreat of the Franks, he took decisive measures against the conspirators: he exiled them from Egypt and redistributed their *iqṭā‘*s among his *mamlūks*.¹⁹ When al-Malik al-Kāmil began buying *mamlūks* is unknown, but he was born in 1180 and from 1200 to 1228 he *de facto* ruled Egypt, as sultan until his death in 1238. By 1221, he had been in power for two decades and his *mamlūks* could by then have reached maturity and been promoted to the ranks of amirs. How many *mamlūks* he might have had is unknown, but during 1200–2 Egypt suffered a calamitous drought, from which recovery was slow during the first decades of the thirteenth century. Although Ibn Wāṣil portrays al-Malik al-Kāmil as a ruler who had personally supervised Egypt’s irrigation infrastructure and taken care of the country’s prosperity, the costs of the *mamlūk* system were high.²⁰

Other references pertaining to Ayyubid military slavery are also relevant for the current discussion. In 624/1227, for example, a conflict erupted between

¹⁸ Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, vol. 20, ed. Aḥmad Ḥuṭayṭ (Beirut, 2008), 353, 390. Earlier accounts of the caliph’s son omit the references to his *mamlūks*. See, for example, Abū Shāmāh, *Tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa-al-sābi‘*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid ibn al-Ḥasan al-Kawtharī (Beirut, 1974), 91.

¹⁹ Ibn al-‘Amīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 133, 134; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a‘yān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut, 1968–71), 5:80. For the Fifth Crusade and al-Malik al-Kāmil’s dilemma, see Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 162–70.

²⁰ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5:157. For the 1200–2 crisis, see Yaacov Lev, “Saladin’s Economic Policies and the Economy of Ayyubid Egypt,” in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, vol. V, ed. U. Vermeulen and K. D’Hulster (Leuven, 2007), 343–47.



al-Malik al-Kāmil and his brother al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam ‘Īsá, the ruler of Damascus. Al-Malik al-Kāmil became suspicious that his father’s *mamlūks* would side with al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam. He arrested and expropriated the possessions of two leading conspirators and ten amirs of *al-baḥrīyah al-‘ādīliyah*, referring to a *mamlūk* corps created by his father Sultan al-‘Ādil. The arrested amirs were Fakhr al-Dīn Alṭunbā al-Ḥubayshī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Fayyūmī, who had served as amir *jāndār* and probably was also an *iqṭā‘* holder in the Fayyūm.²¹

The reference to the *baḥrīyah*, which pre-dates al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s reign, is interesting, and a possible explanation is suggested by al-Dhahabī (1274–1348), who offers a paraphrased summary of Ibn Wāṣil’s obituary note on al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. Al-Dhahabī states that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb bought a great number of Turks and made them the majority in his army, preferring them over the Kurds. He made them amirs and the mainstay of his regime, naming them *baḥrīyah*. Al-Dhahabī offers his own explanation of the term: “I say, because the merchants brought them over the sea from the Kipchak.”²² According to al-Dhahabī, in the Egyptian context *baḥrīyah* was a generic term, indicating a *mamlūk* corps, not necessarily connected to al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and his military build-up.

Al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam died in 624/1227, and al-Malik al-Kāmil launched a campaign to seize Damascus. Upon his approach to the city he was greeted by another brother, the ruler of Baniyas, as well as by the amir ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Mu‘azzamī and many of the latter’s comrades-in-arms (*khushdāshs*), i.e., the *mamlūks* of the *mu‘azzamiyah*. The most interesting part of Ibn al-‘Amīd’s account is the description of how al-Malik al-Kāmil financed the incorporation of the new group. First, he paid them twenty thousand dinars from the treasury. In social terms, the sultan did not engage directly or personally with the individual members of the group, but used ‘Izz al-Dīn as an intermediary. Through the latter he also allocated them twenty thousand *irdabbs* of grain from the Qūṣ region in Upper Egypt. In addition ‘Izz al-Dīn was given the properties expropriated from the family of the deceased vizier Ṣafī al-Dīn ibn Shukr, and he divided the grain and properties among his comrades-in-arms according to their rank/

²¹ Ibn al-‘Amīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 137; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 39. The term *jāndār* is widely attested to during the Ayyubid period and its origin goes back to the Seljuks of Rum. The *jāndārīyah* served as the ruler’s bodyguard but their function during the Ayyubid period is more elusive. See Anne-Marie Eddé, *La principauté ayyoubide d’Alep (579/1183–658/1260)*, (Stuttgart, 1999), 248–49.

²² Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā*, ed. Muḥammad Ayman (Cairo, 2006), 16:389 (accessed through al-Maktabah al-Shāmilah al-Ḥadīthah). I owe this reference to the kindness of Koby Yosef. The term *baḥrīyah* persisted during the second half of the thirteenth century. See Ayalon, “Le régiment Bahriya,” 137, 139–40; Linda S. Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan* (Stuttgart, 1998), 104, 105, 267, and see index under *baḥrī/baḥriyya*.



standing (*qadr*).²³ Quite clearly, military slavery was also common among the Ayyubids of Syria and the supply of slaves was provided through both land and sea routes.

The *ashrafiyah*, the *mamlūk* corps of al-Ashraf Mūsá (son of sultan al-ʿĀdil and brother of al-Malik al-Kāmil and al-Muʿazzam ʿĪsá) played a key role in the events that took place during the 630s/1230s. In 635/1237, following the death of al-Ashraf Mūsá in Damascus, the *ashrafiyah* fled to Egypt.²⁴ In 637/1240, they conspired against al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb’s brother al-ʿĀdil Sayf al-Dīn, who became aware that al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb had been freed from his imprisonment in Karak and was making military preparations to fight him, moving to a camp outside Cairo. The conspiracy involved ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Asmar of the *ashrafiyah* and three eunuch commanders of the *ḥalqah*: Masrūr, Kāfūr al-Fāʿizī, and Jawhar al-Nūbī. Several Kurdish amirs tried to assist al-ʿĀdil but were defeated by the conspirators, who invited al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb to Egypt (23 Shawwāl 637/17 May 1240).

Al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, however, distrusted the conspirators. Immediately after his arrival in Egypt he avoided public appearances and remained in the Citadel of Cairo, but later he arrested a number of people whom he had suspected of conspiracy, including the commander of the *ashrafiyah*, ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak al-Asmar, the eunuch Jawhar al-Nūbī, Shams al-Khawāṣ, and others who had been amirs of his father. They were all imprisoned in Šadr or in the Citadel of Cairo.²⁵ The *ashrafiyah* were systematically persecuted and their *iqṭāʿ*s redistributed among al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb’s own *mamlūks*. By 639/1241, the reshaping of the amir class had been achieved and most of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb’s amirs now came from his own *mamlūk* corps.²⁶ The accounts of Ibn al-ʿAmīd and Ibn Wāṣil suggest that already during the first two years of al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb’s rule in Egypt he had *mamlūks* mature and experienced enough to be promoted to the rank of amir. We can also infer from this that they were given command over dozens, if not hundreds, of troops.

In the light of Ibn al-ʿAmīd’s employment in the Office of the Army, his accounts and terminology concerning military history should be considered highly authoritative. Nevertheless, the question must be asked as to who these *mamlūks*

²³The vizier died in 622/1225, and his sons were arrested shortly afterwards. Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 135, 138; Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 184, 195–201; Gary Leiser, “The Life and Times of the Ayyubid Vizier al-Šāḥib b. Shukr,” *Der Islam* 97 (2020): 112.

²⁴Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5:199.

²⁵The Šadr fortress in Sinai, south of Suez, was built by Saladin and rebuilt by al-Malik al-Kāmil. For a comprehensive description of the site and its archeology, see Jean-Michel Mouton et al. *Sadr, une forteresse du Saladin au Sināi* (Paris, 2010).

²⁶Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5:272–73, 276, 277, 300; Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 147, 151, 152.



were and how al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb had acquired them. In light of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's personal vicissitudes during 627–37/1230–40 and the history of Egypt during that decade, it seems very unlikely that these were the 400 or 500 *mamlūks* acquired in 627/1230. Al-Dhahabī's account of how al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb was deserted in 1240 sheds some light on the question. Most of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's *mamlūks* abandoned him, but the few who stayed were able to ward off a Bedouin threat. However, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's majordomo, the *ustādh-dār* Wazīn al-Dīn Amīr Jāndār had 70 *mamlūks* of his own; what happened to them remains vague.²⁷ Evidently, during his period of exile and independent rule in the East, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb commanded sufficient financial and organizational resources to purchase *mamlūks*, and other high-ranking individuals of his circle did the same. In light of the fickleness of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's *mamlūks* in 1240, one would have expected him to be disillusioned with the *mamlūk* institution; why he continued to adhere to it is another question that must be asked and somehow answered.²⁸

CREATION OF THE BAḤRĪYAH

In Mamluk historiography, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's establishment of the *baḥrīyah* is associated with the extensive building activity on Rawḍah island. Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. after 1335), for example, makes a number of probable and improbable assertions regarding al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's military policies. He states that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's purchase of Turkish *mamlūks* was unprecedented, apparently meaning unprecedented among Ayyubid rulers. Although this claim remains unverified, he was probably right. However, the claim that they constituted the majority of the army is simply untenable. He also offers the explanation that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's preference for *mamlūks* was due to the treachery of the Kurds, the Khwārazmians, and other military elements. In addition, he explains how the policy was implemented: when a *mamlūk* died, his *iqṭā'* was transferred to his son or—in the absence of a son—to a comrade-in-arms. Ibn al-Dawādārī also asserts that buying Turkish *mamlūks* became an established custom (*sunnah*) among the kings after al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, meaning the Mamluk sultans.²⁹

The *baḥrīyah* is at the center of al-Maqrīzī's (1364–1442) narrative. He states that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb established the corps in Egypt and repeats the claims that

²⁷ See al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 47:343. For the term *ustādh-dār* and its Fatimid precedents, see Anne-Marie Eddé, “Quelques institutions militaires ayyoubides,” in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, ed. U. Vermeulen and D. De Smet (Leuven, 1995), 170–72.

²⁸ The supposed loyalty of military slaves to their masters is re-examined by D. G. Tor, “Mamluk Loyalty: Evidence from the Seljuk Period,” *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 65 (2011): 767–97.

²⁹ See Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmi' al-ghurar*, vol. 7, ed. Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1972), 370–71.



the act was motivated by the treachery of the Kurds and that *baḥrīyah* constituted the majority of the army. Al-Maqrīzī draws a wider picture of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's military policies, and he mentions al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's persecution of his father's and brother's amirs, whom he imprisoned and divested of their *iqṭāʿ*s. He does not repeat the improbable claim that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's *mamlūks* were given *iqṭāʿ*s, but does write that they were promoted to the rank of amir, implying that those amirs were the recipients of the *iqṭāʿ*s taken from the deposed amirs of his predecessors. He states categorically, however, that the name *baḥrīyah* is derived from the corps being installed on Rawḍah island, when al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb took up residency there.³⁰

The association between the construction on Rawḍah and the *baḥrīyah* is mentioned by neither Ibn al-ʿAmīd nor Ibn Wāṣil. Whereas Ibn al-ʿAmīd's reference to building on Rawḍah is laconic, Ibn Wāṣil's description is detailed and extensive. The building commenced in 638/1240, but no link to the *baḥrīyah* is made. A *maydān* (large open ground) for playing polo (*ṣawālījah*) was also built since the sultan was an enthusiastic player of the game.³¹ Ibn Wāṣil also credits the sultan with the building of the town of al-Ṣāliḥīyah (northeast of Cairo and Bilbays on the edge of the desert and the route to Syria), which included a mosque and markets and such urban institutions as a qadi and *wālī* (meaning either governor or chief of police).³² Although the creation of the *baḥrīyah* is ascribed to al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, the corps is barely mentioned during his reign but is frequently referred to after his death and the Battle of al-Manṣūrah.

Fakhr al-Dīn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, the commander of the army immediately after al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's death, was killed on 5 Dhū al-Qaʿdah 647/9 February 1250 when fighting the French who had attacked al-Manṣūrah. A force of 1,400 cavalry commanded by the brother of the king of France reached the town but upon dispersing in the markets and streets, it was annihilated.³³ It can be argued that, writing in Syria, Ibn al-ʿAmīd's knowledge of the events was insufficient and he left the crucial question of who had turned the tide of the battle in the Mus-

³⁰Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah (Cairo, 1957), 1:2:339–400. For al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's building on the Rawḍah, see Neil D. MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo: A Topographical Study* (Cairo, 1992), 72–78, including a translation of al-Maqrīzī's account in the *Khiṭāṭ*; Rabbat, *The Citadel of Cairo*, 84–96.

³¹Polo was an ancient game with roots in the Sassanian period. It attracted the attention of eighth- and ninth-century luminaries like Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, who translated treatises on polo from the Persian; and Jāḥiẓ, who wrote on the subject. See Franz Rosenthal, *Gambling in Islam* (Leiden, 1975), 55–56; Shihab al-Sarraf, “Mamluk *Furūsiyah* Literature and Its Antecedents,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 1 (2004): 145.

³²Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 159, *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 85; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrīj al-kurūb*, 5:278; 6:84–85.

³³Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 159, *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 86.



lims' favor unanswered. However, what he describes is a quite typical medieval battle: the side that was winning initially was caught off guard while looting and was consequently defeated. Ibn Wāṣil, however, was in Cairo and in close contact with Tūrān Shāh, attending his sessions in al-Manṣūrah. In his version of the events, the Turkish *mamlūks* of the deceased sultan, the *jamdārīyah* and *baḥrīyah*, saved the day at the Battle of al-Manṣūrah. He extols their military skills and their ferocious attack on the French, who were defeated by the swords and maces of the Turks.³⁴ Elsewhere I have accepted Ibn Wāṣil's version rather uncritically, but I must now revise this approach for two reasons: it is uncorroborated and, more significantly, it constitutes a motif in a literary artifice created by Ibn Wāṣil about the true legacy of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and the transition from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks.

It could nevertheless be argued that corroboration is unnecessary since Ibn Wāṣil is a well-informed source. His account, however, strangely conflates *jamdārīyah* and *baḥrīyah* and Anne-Marie Eddé has already pondered about relations between the two. The question must thus be asked: were the *jamdārīyah*—*maîtres de la garde-robe*/masters of the robes—a fighting unit at all?³⁵ The impression is that they were pages rather than soldiers. One might also ask whether an Ayyubid or Mamluk sultan would really have wanted to have armed *jamdārs* responsible for his wardrobe with easy access to him.

The main reason for re-examining Ibn Wāṣil's contention that the *baḥrīyah* altered the tide of the Battle of al-Manṣūrah derives from his manipulation of these events. This contention was instrumental for the creation of a literary artifice that sought to explain al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's true political legacy. It consisted of three elements: Tūrān Shāh's unfitness to rule, two other closely interlinked issues with al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's true legacy, and the role of the *mamlūks*/Turks as defenders/saviors of Islam.

Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's Political Legacy

For Ibn Wāṣil, while the hereditary principle constituted a political term of reference, some rulers were simply unfit to rule and their removal was therefore justified. During his stay in al-Manṣūrah, Tūrān Shāh publicly declared his desire to replace the people who had been the cornerstones of his father's regime and made no effort to work with them. Ibn Wāṣil implies that this conduct was unacceptable and Tūrān Shāh's assassination was thus justified. It should be pointed

³⁴Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:112; Anne-Marie Eddé, "Saint Louis et la Septième Croisade vue par les auteurs arabes," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales (XIIIe–XVe s.)* 1 (1996): 73, quoting late Mamluk sources.

³⁵For French and English translations of the term, see Eddé, "Quelques institutions militaires," 173; Amir Mazor, *The Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment* (Bonn, 2015), 35.



out that Tūrān Shāh's allegedly foolish conduct in al-Manṣūrah stood in contrast to his politically wise actions in Damascus on his way to Egypt. He arrived in Damascus at the end of Ramaḍān 647/early January 1250 and, in the words of Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “took over the city and its resources (*amwāl wa-khayrāt*).”³⁶ In other words, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's death was known in Damascus and Tūrān Shāh was recognized as the legitimate heir. He celebrated the feast of the end of Ramaḍān in Damascus and bestowed robes of honor on “the Syrian amirs” and rewarded them. He confirmed the amir Jamāl al-Dīn Mūsá ibn Yaḡhmūr as viceroy (*nāʿib al-salṭanah*) and set free the people imprisoned by his father.³⁷

Ibn Wāṣil was not a crude falsifier of history; his touches are light and sophisticated. His account of Tūrān Shāh in Damascus adheres to the facts. He was acknowledged as al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's legitimate heir and welcomed by the viceroy and amirs. The rulers of Hama and Aleppo sent emissaries and recognized his rule. Ibn Wāṣil depicts Tūrān Shāh as buying support through vast gifts of money among the amirs and troops and making promises to civilian administrators about future appointments. Reports of his actions in Damascus are juxtaposed with reports of the fighting against the French, creating a contrast between the amirs on the front line and the heir who was in no hurry to join the fighting. The reader is carefully led to recognize Tūrān Shāh's limitations, of which his father had been fully aware. Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb had intended to transfer the suzerainty over the territories he ruled to the Abbasid caliph, not to his son.³⁸

When writing about al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, Ibn Wāṣil faced the tremendous challenge of presenting positively a ruler who was devoid of achievements and did not consider his own son to be a worthy heir.³⁹ Ibn Wāṣil's biography of the sultan (nine pages long) presents a soft version of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's character and policies, revealing that the sultan was a recluse who felt at ease only among his boon companions. Although he did not keep the company of the ulama, the sultan had an inclination for learning and provided generously for the pious. An unusual feature of the text is the long list of learned people (*ahl al-ʿilm*) who immigrated to Egypt during his rule. The sultan's passion for building is also mentioned.

These are, however, secondary themes in the narrative, which from the beginning is devoted to the purchase of Turkish *mamālīk* and the military significance of this policy. Three names (the future sultans al-Turkumānī, Baybars, and Qalāwūn) are singled out and one military corps (the *bahrīyah*) is explicitly

³⁶ See Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 159; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 86.

³⁷ Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 160–61; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 86–87.

³⁸ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:109–11.

³⁹ For a more positive assessment of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's rule, see Amalia Levanoni, “The Mamluk Ascent to Power in Egypt,” *Studia Islamica* 72 (1990): 121–44.



mentioned. It was the Turks, *mamlūks*, and *baḥrīyah* who defeated the French and Mongols, implying that these were al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's true heirs.⁴⁰ As strange as the text might seem to us, it reflects the mindset of the people of the age, who thought and wrote about society in terms of confessional, ethnic, and gender categories. They perceived society in terms of a vertically structured model with each group having a role to play and the elite having responsibility for the hierarchal order and proper functioning of society. People in the medieval Middle East perceived different ethnic groups as each possessing particular characteristics and being suitable for certain tasks and, within this vision of society Turks were considered as belligerent and warriors.⁴¹ The three sultans mentioned by Ibn Wāṣil came from the ranks of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's *mamlūks*. They were his true heirs and continued his legacy of fostering *mamlūks* and Turks.

Ibn Wāṣil conceptualizes the actions of the main actors in the political arena during the 1250–60 decade. The theoretical framework he created for the transition of rule from al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb to the *mamlūks* mirrored the events and comprised his personal input. For the actions of the protagonists we must return briefly to the events of 648/1250–51 in Egypt, which reflected a country in turmoil. In that year an attempt on Aybak's life was foiled, several amirs were arrested, and new oaths of loyalty were sworn. Other amirs fled to Karak, ruled by the *ṭawāshī* Badr al-Dīn al-Ṣawābī in the name of a minor Ayyubid prince, al-Malik al-Mughīth, the son of al-ʿĀdil Sayf al-Dīn. The most significant event that took place in that year was the invasion of Egypt by al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf of Damascus and the strange Battle of Kurāʿ on the route between Egypt and Syria (also known as the Battle of al-Ṣāliḥīyah).⁴²

The assassination of Tūrān Shāh had an impact on the political scene in Damascus. Ibn al-ʿAmīd explains that the Kurdish amirs of the Qaymar tribe

⁴⁰Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:82–91. The notion that sovereignty is achieved through war is illustrated through Ibn al-Dawādārī's account of the negotiations between al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf and Aybak in 650/1252–53. Cairo rejected the demand to recognize al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf's sovereignty and the refusal was formulated in the following way: "And the *baḥrīyah* said: with our swords we had wrested Egypt and Syria from the hands of the Franks. There won't be peace between us (*ṣulḥ*) unless we get (the territories) from Gaza to 'Aqaba." See Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar*, vol. 8, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo, 1971), 22. For a mid-thirteenth-century perception of Mamluk rule as a "necessary evil," see Remke Kruk, "History and Apocalypse: Ibn Nafis' Justification of Mamluk Rule," *Der Islam* 72 (1995): 332–33.

⁴¹Baybars al-Manṣūrī (1247–1325), for example, attributes the victory at the Battle of ʿAyn Jālūt to Quṭuz and the courageous Turks who fought on his side. They were God's instrument in the victory of Islam. He also describes Sultan Baybars' exploits while pursuing the fleeing Mongols. See *Zubdat al-fikrah fī tārikh al-hijrah*, ed. D. S. Richards (Beirut, 1998), 51.

⁴²For the events in Karak in 1250, see Ibn al-ʿAmīd, "Chronique," ed. Cahen, 161; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 89, and for the site of the battle, see 91, n. 6.



were afraid of a possible collaboration between the amir Jamāl al-Dīn Mūsá ibn Yaghmūr, *nāʿib al-salṭanah* (the viceroy on behalf of Tūrān Shāh) and *al-umarāʾ al-mamālīk al-ṣāliḥīyah* (i.e., the amirs who were former *mamlūks* of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb); and, therefore, they invited al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf of Aleppo to take control of the town. This led to the arrest of *al-umarāʾ al-mamālīk al-ṣāliḥīyah* and the redistribution of their *iqṭāʿ*s among the Qaymarī amirs.⁴³

Al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, in collaboration with the Qaymarī amirs, set out to conquer Egypt and encountered the Egyptian army led by Aybak. The confrontation was marked by a strange battle in which one wing of the Egyptian army was defeated and fled to Cairo but, at the same time, the *ʿazizīyah*, who had fought on the side of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf (they were the former *mamālīk* of his father al-Malik al-ʿAzīz Muḥammad), deserted him and directed Aybak to launch an attack on his position, which ended in al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf's ignominious flight to Damascus. The victors returned to Cairo with many high-ranking prisoners and spoils. When they passed the captive al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl near the tomb (*turbah*) of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, they shouted: "Ho! Master, are your eyes seeing your enemy?" He was imprisoned together with his sons for several days, then separated and secretly killed and buried.⁴⁴ The living were fighting the wars of the deceased sultan. They were his heirs, forging a spiritual transfer of rule from him to them.

The precise meaning of the reference to the *turbah* of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb remains enigmatic, but monuments were used to disseminate the notion of the transfer of rule from al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb to the *mamlūks*.⁴⁵ The first monument to be considered is al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's madrasah (law college) built between 1242 and 1244 in Fatimid Cairo (Bayn al-Qaṣrayn), on the ruins of a section of the Eastern Fatimid Palace. This was an innovative institution in both its function and architecture. It was the first law college that served for the teaching of the four Sunni schools of law and, during Aybak's rule, royal justice was dispensed there. Aybak's *nāʿib al-salṭanah* established at the madrasah officials (*nuwwāb*) of Dār al-ʿAdl (the Hall

⁴³ Ibn al-ʿAmīd, "Chronique," ed. Cahen, 161–62; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 90–91.

⁴⁴ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 47:58–60. By referring to al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl as al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's enemy they referenced the 1240 events in Damascus, when al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb lost the town to al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl. For the battle, see Ibn al-ʿAmīd, "Chronique," ed. Cahen, 162–63; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 91–93; Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 309–21; Eddé, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep*, 150–53. Al-Malik al-ʿAzīz Muḥammad of Aleppo (1216–36) was a grandson of Saladin (his father was al-Malik al-Zāhir Ghāzī).

⁴⁵ Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's temporary burial place was in the Rawḍah Citadel. Al-Maqrīzī states that following Shajar al-Durr's marriage to Aybak, the couple and the nominal ruler, al-Malik al-Ashraf Mūsá, together with the *baḥrī mamlūks*, *jamḍārīyah*, and amirs, moved from Rawḍah to the Citadel of Cairo. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-al-iʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār* (repr. Beirut, n. d.), 2:374.



of Justice) to examine complaints about the misconduct of state officials (*nāzir fi al-maẓālim*). In 1250, at the northern end of the building, Shajar al-Durr constructed a domed mausoleum (*qubbat al-Ṣāliḥ*) as the final resting place for the deceased sultan. The building, in its two components—madrasah and *qubbah*—became a template of Mamluk funerary architecture: law college and tomb. Shajar al-Durr also established readers of the Quran at the mausoleum, and al-Maqrīzī remarks that the family that had been the beneficiary of her endowment continued to hold the post in his day.⁴⁶ The inscription on the *qubbah* emphasized two motifs: al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s military role as warrior of the holy war and defender of Islam; and his being an heir in a long line of the Ayyubid family. During Aybak’s rule the madrasah also served as a focal point for the ceremony of investiture of officers with the rank of *amīr*, who would march from the Citadel of Cairo to the madrasah and later attend a banquet at the mausoleum.⁴⁷

As innovative as al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s madrasah was, the choice of the site followed a precedent set by his father, who, in 662/1225, had ordered the construction of Dār al-Ḥadīth at Bayn al-Qaṣrayn. The scholars of hadith were the primary beneficiaries of the endowment established by the sultan, followed by the Shafi‘i jurists. A tenement block (*rab‘*) built by al-Malik al-Kāmil was endowed for the institution, which was built on the ruins of the Western Fatimid Palace.⁴⁸ The redevelopment of Bayn al-Qaṣrayn continued in the Mamluk period with two notable additions: the madrasah of Baybars (the Ṣāliḥiyah) and al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn’s complex. The Ṣāliḥiyah, built between 660/1262 and 662/1264 (destroyed in 1874), was adjacent to the madrasah of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. It was a multifunctional institution endowed for the Shafi‘i and Hanafi jurists as well as scholars of hadith and reciters of the Quran. In addition, it had a library and a Quranic school for orphaned boys. The madrasah’s endowment consisted of a *rab‘* built outside the walls of the Fatimid city.⁴⁹

The direct influence of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s madrasah is discernable in al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn’s complex, built opposite al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s madrasah-tomb. As in the case of Baybars’ mosque in Cairo, the foundation inscription of the complex proudly bore the Ṣāliḥi affiliation (*nisbah*, a descriptive surname, indicating

⁴⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2:375. For a partial English translation, see MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 123–24. For the building’s innovative architecture, see Lorenz Korn, “The Façade of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s Madrasa and the Style of Ayyubid Architecture in Cairo,” in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, vol. III, ed. U. Vermeulen and J. Van Steenbergen (Leuven, 2001), 107–15.

⁴⁷ Jo van Steenbergen, “Ritual, Politics, and the City in Mamluk Cairo: The Bayna l-Qaṣrayn as a Dynamic ‘Lieu de Mémoire,’” in *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. Alexander Beihammer et al. (Leiden, 2013), 232–33.

⁴⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2:375. For a partial English translation, see MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 121.

⁴⁹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2:378–79.



origin, occupation, etc.).⁵⁰ The madrasah, which was part of the complex, was endowed for the four Sunni schools of law. Other functions typical of such law college-tomb foundations also featured in the complex. The teaching of hadith was carried out at the mausoleum and the new post of a professor of *tafsīr* (exegesis) was added. The mausoleum became a burial chamber for other Qalawunid sultans and a guard corps of eunuchs was installed at the place. An unusual feature of the complex was the inclusion of a hospital, built on the site of the palace of the Fatimid princess Sitt al-Mulk (970–1023).⁵¹ The creation of the complex and the establishment of hereditary rule within the Qalawunid line divested al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's madrasah of its ceremonial role in Mamluk military life. The ceremonies marking the promotion of *mamlūks* to the rank of amir moved to al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn's madrasah.

The concept of a spiritual political inheritance from the defunct al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's line to his *mamlūks* and the three future sultans, as propagated by Ibn Wāṣil, was entirely in line with the mood of the time, which is captured eloquently by Tehnyat Majeed:

In medieval Cairo, living with the dead was a fact of life. Likewise, it could be said that Cairo was a dedicated necropolis where the living and the dead were in perpetual communion, continually negotiating mercy and salvation. An exchange of this nature was predicated on two sets of belief: first, that certain pious individuals after the death had a great power of blessing or *baraka* which the living could obtain through remembrance, prayers, and by visiting their graves; and second, that the prayers of the living influenced the afterlife of the dead, to the extent that when performed with utmost sincerity, prayers could wash away the sins of the dead.⁵²

The perpetual communion between the living and the dead had many manifestations in both daily life and the funerary architecture. It was maintained, for example, through the establishment of reciters of the Quran in the ma-

⁵⁰Van Steenbergen, "Ritual, Politics, and the City in Mamluk Cairo," 254. For the foundation inscription of Baybars' mosque, see Jonathan M. Bloom, "The Mosque of Baybars al-Bunduqdārī in Cairo," *Annales Islamologiques* 18 (1982): 23.

⁵¹Al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2:380, 406. The translation of the term *ṭawāshī* as eunuch is, apparently, informed by this passage (380). Al-Maqrīzī explains that it is a Turkish word/term and applies it to the eunuch corps at the *qubbah*.

⁵²See Tehnyat Majeed, "The *Chār Muḥammad* Inscription, Shafā'a, and the Mamluk Qubbat al-Manṣūriyya," in *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*, ed. Sebastian Günther and Todd Lawson (Leiden, 2017), 2:1010.



drasah-tomb complexes. In the case of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn's complex, recitations of the Quran, orientated toward the street, took place continuously.⁵³ The same goal could be achieved through the *du'ā'* prayers (non-ritual individual prayer, in which the person performing the prayer beseeches God for himself and for others). The Quranic school for orphaned boys that was attached to the Zāhirīyah was a charitable institution par excellence, but charitable provisions and the quest for spiritual reward went hand in hand. In sultanic complexes of the late Mamluk period, the endowment deeds required boys at the Quranic schools to perform *du'ā'* prayers for the sultan and for Muslims on a regular basis. Ibn Wāṣil was a man of his age who wrote for his contemporaries. For him and for them the notion of spiritual transfer and the legitimizing power of such transfer was not a far-fetched idea.

Ibn Wāṣil's construct regarding the transfer of rule from al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb to his *mamlūks* also emphasizes a shift from the Kurds to the Turks. Ayalon has pointed out that, beginning with Ibn al-'Amīd, this perception pervades Mamluk historiography.⁵⁴ The notion was embodied in the expression *dawlat al-atrāk*, which, according to Koby Yosef, should be understood as referring to "the rule of the ones who speak Turkish/the rule of the Turkified." In the pre-Circassian period: "...the defining characteristic of the ruling elite was not slave origin but rather ethnic origin and language."⁵⁵ Whether the Kurds played a significant military role in the Mamluk sultanate is beyond the scope of the present paper, but indeed they played a central role in the Ayyubid period and were present militarily in eleventh-century Egypt.⁵⁶

The claim regarding the "treachery of the Kurds" served as justification for the shift toward the *mamlūks*. The claim appears to have little substance, particularly as throughout the Ayyubid-Mamluk period tribal groups such as Kurds, Khwārazmians, Turcomans, and others (*wāfidīyah*) were opportunistic, serving various masters. In many cases, this was a survival technique in the face of circumstances that were beyond their control. The same was true for those individuals who moved across the political and socio-ethnic religious divide between the Mamluks and Mongols.

⁵³ Van Steenbergen, "Ritual, Politics, and the City in Mamluk Cairo," 234.

⁵⁴ David Ayalon, "Baḥrī Mamlūks, Burjī Mamlūks: Inadequate Names for the Two Reigns of the Mamlūk Sultanate," *Tārīḥ* 1 (1990): 3–53; for exceptions, see 18–22.

⁵⁵ Koby Yosef, "Dawlat al-atrāk or dawlat al-mamālīk? Ethnic Origin or Slave Origin as the Defining Characteristic of the Ruling Élite in the Mamluk Sultanate," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 39 (2012): 391.

⁵⁶ For an extensive and nuanced discussion, see Anne-Marie Eddé, "Kurdes et Turcs dans l'armée ayyoubide de Syrie du Nord," in *War and Society in the Eastern Mediterranean, 7th–15th Centuries*, ed. Yaacov Lev (Leiden, 1997), 225–36.



However, the notion that ethnicity played a major role in the political and military life of the period cannot be dismissed easily and the events of the Battle of Kurāʿ require an examination. On the one hand, neither Kurds nor Turks are referred to in Ibn al-ʿAmīd’s description of the battle—only the names of individual people and the ʿazīzīyah corps are mentioned. On the other hand, as has been noted by Humphreys, *jinsīyah* (ethnicity, ethnic solidarity) appears as an explanatory motif in Ibn Wāṣil’s narrative. He explains that most of the ʿazīzīyah were Turks and, because of *jinsīyah*, they were inclined towards “the Turks in Egypt.” At a certain stage of that confused battle they, and apparently the *nāṣirīyah* too, joined Aybak, but Ibn Wāṣil is quite cryptic about their exact role in the events.⁵⁷ It is difficult to offer a satisfactory commentary on Ibn Wāṣil’s narrative since one is left with a lingering question: Why is it that what was so obvious to him—the *jinsīyah* of the ʿazīzīyah—had remained obscure to al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf?

Ibn Wāṣil’s text is cohesive and his account of the events in Damascus and al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf’s invasion of Egypt can be read as an ethnic struggle between Kurds and Turks. In this account, while avoiding the term *jinsīyah*, Ibn Wāṣil emphasizes the role of the Qaymarīyah Kurds in inviting al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf to Damascus. He also identifies the amir Jamāl al-Dīn ibn Yaghmur as belonging to them. The Qaymarī takeover of Damascus led to the imprisonment of the “Egyptian amirs, the military slaves of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb.” In response to the events in Damascus, the Qaymarī amirs in Cairo were arrested.⁵⁸ Whether Ibn Wāṣil was an astute commentator of the events and he correctly indicated the ethnic element or he merely epitomized the prevailing thinking in categories that typified people of his age remains an unsettled question. It is quite possible that we shall never understand the full complexity of the events, which were reduced to an ethnic conflict of Kurds versus Turks.

THE DISPERSAL OF THE BAḤRĪYAH

While Ibn Wāṣil considered *jinsīyah* to be the driving force behind the actions of the ʿazīzīyah, modern scholarship perceives factions and factionalism as the driving force in Mamluk politics. This approach has been posited by Robert Irwin, who equates *khushdāshīyah* with the faction identity of the “-īyah” corps.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 317; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:156, 158, 160, 161. For the *jinsīyah* explanation, in a different context, see Tor, “Mamluk Loyalty,” 778.

⁵⁸See Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:136, 137, 138. For the geographic origin of the Qaymarī Kurds and their support of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, see Eddé, “Kurdes et Turcs,” 227–28.

⁵⁹Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250–1382* (London, 1986), 88–89. Irwin quotes Ayalon, who perceived *khushdāshīyah* as a binding social force among the *mamlūks* during the period of their military training and after their graduation from the military schools. See David Ayalon, *Lesclavage du mamelouk* (Jerusalem, 1951), 29–31, 34–37, esp.



However, he is cautious in his assessment of the validity of this explanatory model, writing that: “Though an awareness of the role of the *khushdāshiyya* is an aid in charting political developments in the Mamluk period, it did not constrain those developments. It was invoked more often in the breach than the observance.”⁶⁰

If we understand the term faction as meaning a small organized dissentient self-seeking group within a larger one, we must admit how little we know about the “-īyah” corps of the 1250–60 decade. We know nothing about their military specialization, or their numeric strength and composition. They were certainly slaves, but this is actually more an educated deduction than a well-documented fact. I would argue that the sources depict them as small fragmented groups of soldiers of fortune or, to put it more bluntly, as rootless desperados. This would seem to reflect the devastating effect that military slavery had on their lives.

These gaps in our knowledge are illustrated by the events of 651/1253–54. The ‘*azīziyah* and *nāṣiriyyah* received *iqṭā’*s in Egypt, and we can only wonder about Aybak’s motives. The *baḥriyyah* and *jamdāriyyah* perceived his favoritism of the new arrivals as a threat and lent their support to Fāris al-Dīn Aqṭāy al-Jamdār. Ibn Wāṣil singles out four amirs, including Baybars, as supporting Aqṭāy. The problem that Aybak faced can be described as a struggle for the control of Egypt’s resources. The *baḥriyyah-jamdāriyyah*, represented or commanded by Aqṭāy, were unrestrained in their demands for money and *iqṭā’*s and Aqṭāy took control of Alexandria.⁶¹ This was apparently not just a struggle over resources, and one of Aqṭāy’s actions must have greatly concerned Aybak: Aqṭāy’s marriage into the Ayyubid ruling family of Hama. Ibn al-Dawādārī writes that people were amazed by the marriage because Aqṭāy was a *mamlūk*. The stigma of slavery is rarely alluded to in the sources. Yosef has pointed out that military slavery was considered just as degrading as any other form of slavery, and Mamluk sultans

29–30, 34. For a fresh discussion of the *khushdāshiyyah* bond and its historical development, see Koby Yosef, “*Ikhwa, Muwākhūn and Khushdāshiyya in the Mamluk Sultanate*,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 40 (2013): 335–63. The term *iyya* groups/corps was coined by Ayalon, who also provided a list of these groups throughout the Ayyubid-Mamluk period. See David Ayalon, “From Ayyubids to Mamluks,” *Revue des études islamiques* 49 (1981): 47.

⁶⁰ Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 90.

⁶¹ Al-Dhahabī, on the authority of al-Jazarī (1260–1338), provides some information about Aqṭāy’s servile past. He was apparently bought as a young lad in Damascus by Zakī Ibrāhīm al-Jazarī, who brought him up and then sold him for 1,000 dinars. When Aqṭāy became the *iqṭā’* holder of Alexandria, he secured the release of his former slave master from imprisonment in Hama and brought him to Alexandria. Al-Dhahabī also notes his violent and tyrannical conduct while serving (twice) in Upper Egypt. See *Tārīkh*, 48 (covering the years 651–60), 119. For Aqṭāy acting “like a pretender to the throne,” see Amalia Levanoni, “The Consolidation of Aybak’s Rule: An Example of Factionalism in the Mamluk State,” *Der Islam* 71 (1994): 247–48.



of servile origin made efforts to associate themselves with established dynasties, as Aybak himself did.⁶²

The marriage must have been perceived as a direct challenge to Aybak's authority and on 10 Dhū al-Qa'dah 651/1 January 1254, in collaboration with the 'azīziyah, he instigated Aqtāy's assassination. Most of the baḥrīyah fled to Damascus and those who failed to flee were persecuted by the 'azīziyah; some were imprisoned and others killed and lost their possessions. The flight of elements of the baḥrīyah brings into question the validity of both the jinsiyyah and the faction explanations: al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf welcomed the baḥrīyah, composed supposedly like the 'azīziyah of Turks, and reconfirmed the iqtā's they held in Palestine. Their arrival in Damascus followed a negotiated settlement with its ruler. After fleeing Cairo they stopped in Gaza and wrote to al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf.⁶³ The hasty flight of groups of baḥrīyah reflects more an individualistic behavior than a cohesive factional response. The collaboration between Aybak and the 'azīziyah did not last long. In 653/1255 they corresponded with al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf and conspired against Aybak, but failed.⁶⁴

The year 655/1257 saw the deaths of both Aybak (25 Rabī' I 655/12 April 1257) and Shajar al-Durr. Ibn Wāṣil depicts Shajar al-Durr as a political player with no real power base. She lived in the Citadel of Cairo and her collaborators in the assassination of Aybak were a small group of al-Ṣālīḥ Ayyūb's eunuchs who, apparently, had long been in her service. After the killing, however, she failed

⁶²Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:25; Koby Yosef, "The Term *mamlūk* and Slave Status during the Mamluk Sultanate," *Al-Qantara* 34 (2013): 9–21. Al-Ṣafadī (*Al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, vol. 9, ed. Josef Van Ess [Wiesbaden, 1974], 317–18) claims that Shajar al-Durr was also alarmed by the proposed marriage and the plot against Aqtāy was hatched by both Shajar al-Durr and her husband. How shameful the stain of slavery must have been is revealed by another short biographical note (al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, vol. 14, ed. Sven Dederling [Stuttgart, 1982], 340) on the amir 'Alā' al-Dīn Kushtughdī al-Zāhirī. Though described as one of the senior amirs in Egypt, it became apparent shortly before his death that he had never been manumitted from slavery, so the sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn bought him and set him free. The act must have been symbolic, for his master, sultan Baybars, was dead, and the act conveyed an homage to the amir. 'Alā' al-Dīn Kushtughdī died in the Citadel of Cairo at an advanced age and the sultan attended his funeral.

⁶³Ibn al-'Amīd, "Chronique," ed. Cahen, 164; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 96–97; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:175–76, 177, 178, describing how the plot was hatched and carried out.

⁶⁴Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:181–82. One of the key 'azīzi amirs, Jamāl al-Dīn Aydughdī, played a passive role in the events, and his imprisonment in the Citadel of Cairo is described as phony. Al-Khāzindārī depicts the baḥrīyah as an internally divided lawless and destructive element. He also lists the names of the baḥrīs who found employment with the Seljukid sultan of Rum, 'Alā' al-Dīn. His systematic negative depiction of the baḥrīyah makes one suspicious that the text has some hidden political meaning. If indeed there is a sub-text here, its wider context eludes me. See *Tārīkh majmū' al-nawādir*, 69–73, 74–76, 91.



to find anyone to support her. The scheme simply had no political feasibility and one is inclined to endorse Ibn Wāṣil's observation that jealousy obscured her judgment.⁶⁵ Ibn al-ʿAmīd's short obituary note on Aybak contrasts his qualities as a military man and a capable administrator with his intentional violence aimed at terrorizing the population and facilitating the collection of a new type of taxes. He was loyally served by his vizier, the qādī al-Asʿad Sharaf al-Dīn ibn Hibat Allāh, who employed a deputy (Zayn al-Dīn ibn Zubayr) whose main assets were his fidelity and ability to speak Turkish with the amirs.⁶⁶

In the confusion after Aybak's killing, the adherence to the hereditary principle offered some hope for stability. Aybak's son ʿAlī (entitled al-Malik al-Manṣūr Nūr al-Dīn) became the nominal ruler and a new *atābak* and a new vizier were also appointed. These appointments were supported by the amirs and the army, but the seeming calm was then shattered by Aybak's *mamlūks*, who arrested the *atābak*. The arrest triggered the flight of some of the *umarāʾ al-ṣāliḥīyah* (the amirs of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, meaning those who had been appointed by him) to Syria. The group was fragmented and the new *atābak* was one of the *umarāʾ al-ṣāliḥīyah*.⁶⁷ The political scene was volatile and divided between what is described as the amirs and army and Aybak's *mamlūks*. The references to the army are vague and its composition and strength remain unknown. Two amirs challenged Aybak's *mamlūks* stationed at the Citadel of Cairo—Bahāʾ al-Dīn Bughdī, the commander of the army, and Badr al-Dīn Bulghām al-Ashrafī—but both were defeated and the houses of the *ashrafī* amirs in Cairo were looted.⁶⁸

On 28 Dhū al-Qaʿdah 657/16 November 1259, Quṭuz arrested al-Malik al-Manṣūr Nūr al-Dīn, his mother, and the amirs who had supported his nominal rule, and seized the reins of power. He received an oath of allegiance from the army and retained Fāris al-Dīn Aqṭāy al-Mustaʿrib as the commander-in-chief.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ See Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:194–201, passim, esp. 201. How little we know about her is revealed by a long undated fragment of a letter sent by her to Quṭuz, who became sultan after her death, and is titled “Amīr of the Army of God.” The identification of the sender as Shajar al-Durr is quite certain, and the letter strikes the reader by its tone of familiarity between the two. It also reveals economic relations between the two that remain quite enigmatic. See Yūsuf Rāḡib, “Une lettre de Ṣaḡar al-Durr au future sultan Quṭuz,” *Annales Islamologiques* 48 (2014): 135–65, esp. lines 11–35 (text and trans.).

⁶⁶ Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 165–66; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 100–1.

⁶⁷ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:199.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 6:203. *Ashraf* was the title of Mūsá ibn Yūsuf, the nominal ruler between 1250 and 1254, for whom Aybak served as *atābak*. It is more probable, however, that the term refers to the remnants of the *mamlūk* corps of Ashraf Mūsá; see Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5:199.

⁶⁹ Ibn al-ʿAmīd, “Chronique,” ed. Cahen, 168, 169–70; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 105, 107–8.



The flight of the *baḥrīyah* to Damascus brought no real advantage to al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf. In 655/1257 they were suspected of plotting against him and, consequently, fled once more, this time to Gaza, and contacted al-Mughīth ʿUmar, ruler of Karak. Fighting erupted between al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf's forces camped in Nablus and the *baḥrīyah*, who rampaged through Palestine and eventually found refuge in Karak.⁷⁰ In mid-Dhū al-Qaʿdah 655/late November 1257, an attempt by al-Mughīth ʿUmar to invade Egypt failed, but some of the *baḥrī* soldiers returned to Egypt. The second round of fighting between Cairo and Karak took place in 656/1258 and saw the rise of Baybars as the leader of the *baḥrīyah*, allied with al-Mughīth ʿUmar, and the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols. As in 655/1257, the forces of Karak were defeated in a battle fought near ʿAbbāsah and the *baḥrī* commanders captured in the fighting were executed in Cairo.⁷¹

In 657/1259, driven by an apparent desire for vengeance, al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf made a bold move and sent an army to Karak, demanding the surrender of the *baḥrīyah*. His demand was granted but Baybars and some of the *baḥrī* troops had in the meantime fled Karak and secured a welcoming reception in Damascus: Baybars was given an *iqṭāʿ* and the command of 120 cavalry troops.⁷² Damascus made preparations to face the Mongols and al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf set up camp in Barzah, south of Damascus. His army is described as a conglomeration of diverse elements: Bedouin, Persian, Turcoman, Turk, volunteers for the holy war, and segments of the *baḥrīyah*, *ʿazīziyah*, and *nāṣiriyyah*. The sultan was aware of the internal divisions that plagued his force, but the most disruptive element proved to be the *nāṣiriyyah*. Afraid of an attempt on his life by the *nāṣiriyyah*, al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf fled to the Citadel of Damascus. His flight brought about the disintegration of the army in Barzah. Baybars and his *baḥrī* troops fled to Gaza and al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf's full brother (*shaqīq*; their mother was a Turkish *umm walad*), al-Malik al-Zāhir Ghāzī, left the camp.

Damascus was in turmoil and people were abandoning the town: Kurdish amirs of the Qaymarīyah sent their families, accompanied by troops, to Egypt, while Christian families went to Tyre. In mid-Ṣafar 658/early February 1260, al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf allowed Ibn al-ʿAmīd and other Christian scribes to join their families in Tyre. The fate of the high-ranking families that had fled to

⁷⁰Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:202, 204–5.

⁷¹Ibid., 6:205–6, 212. Baybars al-Manṣūrī describes the flight of the defeated *baḥrīyah* in 656/1258 to the Jordan Valley (Ghaw), where they met the Kurds of the Shahrazūrīyah and Baybars married into a Kurdish family. The alliance between the *baḥrīyah* and the Shahrazūrīyah dissolved quickly, however, and the Kurds went to Egypt and the *baḥrīyah* to Karak. On their way to Egypt, in Gaza, the Shahrazūrīyah fought Turcomans over access to water. See *Zubdat al-fikrah*, 34.

⁷²Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:259–60.



Egypt, including al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf's wife and *ghilmān*, was grim: Quṭuz seized their wealth.⁷³

Why Quṭuz welcomed Baybars and his detachment of *bahrī* troops of unknown strength in Egypt and granted them the Qalyub as *iqṭā'* remains unfathomable. Although nothing in the sources alludes to their military value or significance, Quṭuz must have seen them as an asset.⁷⁴ On 25 Ramaḍān 658/3 September 1260, Quṭuz led a diverse Egyptian army in a battle against the Mongols at 'Ayn Jālūt. Ibn al-ʿAmīd provides no information about the battle itself but claims that Quṭuz personally led the charge against the Mongols. He is more informative about the events in Damascus after the battle and the way in which Quṭuz took control of the city and of Syria. He redistributed the *iqṭā'*s of the Qaymarī amirs to amirs of the *ṣālīhiyah* and *mu'izzīyah*, and executed a Kurdish amir who had betrayed al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf to the Mongols. Ibn al-ʿAmīd reports without comments on the killing of Quṭuz (15 Dhū al-Qaʿdah 658/22 October 1260) and the coronation of Baybars on the same day.

Personal animosity would appear to have been the underlying cause of Quṭuz's violent end; he had been one of the slayers of Aqṭay. Al-Dhahabī claims that Quṭuz had promised Aleppo to Baybars but failed to keep his word.⁷⁵ The reliability of this version seems doubtful, however, as Quṭuz must have been aware of the danger of violating such a promise. Nevertheless, perhaps the conspirators had been disappointed by the way that *iqṭā'*s were distributed in the aftermath of 'Ayn Jālūt. Quṭuz's contribution to defeating the Mongols is fully acknowledged by al-Dhahabī, who also mentions Quṭuz's claim to a Muslim pedigree that, allegedly, went back to the royal family of the Khwārazm Shāh. Evidently, al-Dhahabī did not endorse the claim. His obituary of Quṭuz is dedicated to Quṭuz ibn 'Abd Allāh, indicating his non-Muslim descent. Al-Dhahabī's appraisal of Quṭuz is, however, entirely positive, and he states that God will reward him in Paradise.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibn al-ʿAmīd, "Chronique," ed. Cahen, 172, 174; *Chronique*, trans. Eddé and Micheau, 113–14.

⁷⁴ Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:263, 267.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 6:178. For the resentment held by the *bahrīyah* against Quṭuz, see Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikrah*, 53. For the way Quṭuz handled (or mishandled) the appointment of governor of Aleppo, see Douglas Patton, *Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu': Atabeg of Mosul, 1211–1259* (Seattle, 1991), 72–73.

⁷⁶ It seems that al-Dhahabī's enumeration of Quṭuz's positive traits and his role in the victory over the Mongols, which appears at the beginning of the account, are his own independent remarks. Other sections of the text are based on al-Jazarī's *Tārīkh* (1260–1338) and on al-Yūnīnī (1242–1326). See *Tārīkh*, 48:352–55. Al-Ṣafadī's account of Quṭuz echoes al-Dhahabī's in its structure and sources, including the latter's independent statement regarding Quṭuz. See *Al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, 14:251–53. He also writes that Quṭuz's household slaves (*ghilmān*) buried him and his grave became a pilgrimage site. People pitied him and cursed his slayer. Consequently, the grave was obliterated on Baybars' order and Quṭuz's burial place became forgotten. Al-Ṣafadī,



AYYUBID-MAMLUK POLITICS: THE VIEWS OF IBN KHALLIKĀN AND AL-ŞAFADĪ

Although Ibn Khallikān is better known as the author of a biographical dictionary of the luminaries of medieval Islam, he also had a career as a qadi in Egypt and, in 1261, was appointed supreme qadi of Syria. He was familiar with Mamluk politics and his comments (and omissions) can serve as a guide to this world. The later part of Ibn Khallikān's biography of al-Malik al-Kāmil in the biographical dictionary is actually devoted to al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb's reign and the events that took place after his death. It also states that al-Malik al-Zāhir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars is mentioned in the biography of the qadi al-Majlī, the author of *Kitāb al-dhakhā'ir*.⁷⁷ The biography of the qadi is a short text, explaining that his origin was from Arsūf in Palestine but he had lived in Egypt and gained fame as a leading Shafi'i jurist. Ibn Khallikān provides a positive appraisal of his book and specifies the dates of his term in office as qadi. The location of Arsūf is explained, and its conquest by Baybars, always referred to by his royal titles, is mentioned. The text then moves on to explain that the earlier-mentioned al-Malik al-Zāhir had been a *mamlūk* of al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb and was crowned sultan after the killing of Quṭuz; a brief description of the circumstances follows. Ibn Khallikān states that he was in Cairo when Baybars entered the town, so one might have expected a more insightful discussion of the events on the part of the author. Ibn Khallikān's text is plain and explicit; no commentary is offered. Baybars is praised for his personal valor and military achievements. Baybars' death in Damascus is mentioned and Ibn Khallikān reports that it was kept secret by the sultan's manumitted *mamlūk* the amir Badr al-Dīn Bīlik, the *khāzindār*, who managed the situation well and arrived in Cairo, where he handed over power to Baybars' son and the kingdom was preserved.⁷⁸

Like Ibn Wāṣil, Ibn Khallikān provides important testimony that the dynastic principle was the main political term of reference during the thirteenth century.⁷⁹ In line with Ibn Wāṣil, Ibn Khallikān's narrative also illustrates the limits of the dynastic principle or, to put it differently, what was needed to maintain a dynastic ruler in power. In 1279, during a visit to Damascus, the amirs turned against Baybars' son Barakah Khān. In a short sober account, Ibn Khallikān narrates the latter's removal from power and his transfer to Karak and death in the

Al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt, vol. 24, ed. Muḥammad 'Adnān al-Bakhīt and Muṣṭafā al-Hiyārī (Stuttgart, 1993), 253.

⁷⁷ See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 5:87.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 4:154–56.

⁷⁹ For a different view, see Albrecht Fuess, "Mamluk Politics," In *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies: State of the Art*, ed. Stephan Conermann (Bonn, 2013), 99–102.



same year. The dynastic principle alone was not powerful enough to keep a ruler in his position: he also needed to create the conditions to stay in power.⁸⁰

Iḥsān ‘Abbās’s edition of Ibn Khallikān’s text also includes late additions (a kind of update) to the text. One of these deals with al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn’s son al-Malik al-Ashraf, who succeeded him in 1290. In political terms and military achievements, al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (r. 1279–90) had been no less successful than Baybars, but al-Malik al-Ashraf held power for only three years. In 1293 he was assassinated by a group of amirs. The anonymous addition to Ibn Khallikān’s text offers an evaluation of al-Malik al-Ashraf’s personal deficiencies: he promoted no one, respected no one, and showed no loyalty to those who served him and were close to him.⁸¹ The inescapable conclusion is that these were not the qualities expected of a sultan; he created his own undoing. The text and subtext of this account bear a resemblance to Ibn Wāṣil’s description of the assassination of Tūrān Shāh.

In contrast to Ibn Khallikān, who as qadi was also involved in Mamluk politics, Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (1296–1363) was a man of letters, the author of biographical dictionaries. Because of the uneven quality of the biographies in the huge *Al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, it is not the first choice of text when searching for materials on the subject under discussion. Nonetheless, some scattered remarks about al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s political legacy are consistent and interesting. In contrast to Ibn Wāṣil’s abstract idea of a spiritual political legacy, al-Ṣafadī introduced something more concrete but well understood by his contemporaries: the idea of a household not just as a social organism but also as a political concept. In al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s biography, his life, rule of terror, death, and succession are cast in a single narrative, and Shajar al-Durr’s short reign is also mentioned. Al-Ṣafadī remarks that Friday sermons were proclaimed in her name and immediately states that: “The rule (*mulk*) had been preserved after him among his Turkish *mawālī* until this day.”⁸²

The same idea of a household as a hereditary unit also appears in the biography of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, which is a short and disappointing text but does include the sultan’s letter of nomination (*taqlīd*). The sultan was succeeded by

⁸⁰For a more detailed discussion of Baybars’ succession, see Angus Stewart, “Between Baybars and Qalāwūn: Under-Age Rulers and Succession in the Early Mamlūk Sultanate,” *Al-Masāq* 19 (2007): 49–53, with ample references to sources and studies.

⁸¹See Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5:88; Stewart, “Between Baybars and Qalāwūn,” 53. For fourteenth-century Qalawunid politics and succession problems, see Jo van Steenberghe, “Is Anyone My Guardian...?” Mamluk Under-Age Rule and Later Qalāwūnids,” *Al-Masāq* 19 (2007): 55–65, esp. 61, 62, referring to the “Qalawunid reflex” as reflecting a dynastic principle.

⁸²See al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, vol. 10, ed. ‘Alī ‘Amārah and Jacqueline Sublet (Wiesbaden, 1980), 57.



his son, who acted properly and distributed generous charities upon the death of his father. The deceased sultan is described as a mighty monarch who did not shed blood but accumulated riches. Al-Ṣafadī ends the account by stating: “God has preserved the rule (*mulk*) in his house (*bayt*) among his sons, his *mamālīk*, and grandsons.”⁸³

In political terms, there is no sense of rupture between the Zangid-Ayyubid period and the fourteenth-century Mamluk period. I would argue indeed for a political continuum between the rule of ʿImād al-Dīn Zangī (1122–46) and al-Nāṣir Faraj (1405–12). This becomes clearer when the two ends of the continuum are examined. ʿImād al-Dīn al-Zangī’s son and heir was al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Nūr al-Dīn, the Warrior of the Holy War (*al-mujāhid al-murābiṭ*), the sultan of Syria (1146–74), who claimed to uphold justice and religion and to wage war on the Franks. In Syria the Zangids were supplanted by the Ayyubids, while Saladin also put an end to the rule of the Fatimids. The fall of the Fatimids (1171) marked the end of one of the two regimes that claimed divine sanction for their rule. The Fatimids, who contended that they were a prophetic dynasty that dispensed justice, were replaced by a sultan called Yūsuf and who claimed to be Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wa-al-Dunyā (1171–93) but had no publicly declared pretensions to divine legitimacy.⁸⁴ However, similar to other upstart rulers of his age and those of the Mamluk period, he sought Abbasid legitimization and confirmation for his territorial gains.⁸⁵

The fall of the Fatimids marked a total military reorganization of how armies were recruited, maintained, and fought, including the disappearance of a vast court establishment.⁸⁶ None of the military and court terms typical of the Ayyubid-Mamluk period—*ṭawāshī*, *ḥalqah*, *mafāridah*, *ṭulb* (pl. *aṭlāb*), *jāndār*, *jamdār*, *atābak*, *ustādhdār*, and *nāʿib al-salṭanah*—can be traced back to the Fatimid peri-

⁸³ See al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, 24:267.

⁸⁴ Yaacov Lev, “The Uniqueness of the Fatimid State,” *Der Islam* 96 (2019): 345–73. While the Fatimids built mosques and mausoleums and invented religious festivals such as the Birthday of the Prophet, the Zangid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk rulers, as well as the top military and civilian echelons, including women, built law colleges, Quranic schools for orphans, lodges for mystics, *ribāṭs*, *dār al-ḥadīths*, and occasionally hospitals.

⁸⁵ For the significance of the name Yūsuf in creating the Saladin legend, see Hannes Möhring, “Zwischen Joseph-Legende und Mahdī-Erwartung,” in *War and Society in the Eastern Mediterranean, 7th–15th Centuries*, ed. Yaacov Lev (Leiden, 1997), 186–217.

⁸⁶ For Saladin’s replacement of the Fatimid army’s large component of black infantry with a much smaller, all-cavalry force, see Yaacov Lev, *Saladin in Egypt* (Leiden, 1999), 143–44, 148–50.



od.⁸⁷ A whole new monoculture appeared.⁸⁸ The principal of collective familial hereditary rule had prevailed throughout the Zangid, Ayyubid, and Qalawunid period, but collapsed after the reign of al-Nāṣir Faraj, which marks the extreme end of the continuum.

Suggesting a political continuum is one thing and offering a characterization of the system is something else. The assassination of Tūrān Shāh was a turning point and the event requires an explanation. On the one hand, his hereditary right to rule led the people of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's inner circle to summon him to Egypt. On the other hand, it was they who killed him. I find the notion of "The Mamluk Sultanate as a Military Patronage State" a useful paradigm by which to explain the tension between the hereditary principle and the power of the amirs.⁸⁹ Their power was achieved through grants of *iqṭā'* ceded by the sultan in expectation of military service and personal/political loyalty. From the amirs' point of view *iqṭā'* grants were indispensable for establishing a household, and held the key to bequeathing wealth to the second generation. Surplus income generated by the *iqṭā'* could be channeled into a variety of investments, including the urban economy through the construction of commercial buildings (*funduqs*, *dār al-wakālahs*, *khāns*, and *rab's*) and ownership of sugar factories

⁸⁷Two terms mentioned here need a brief discussion. In the context of the all-cavalry force created by Saladin in Egypt after 1171, the term *ṭawāshī* meant a heavily armed cavalry trooper. Such a type of warrior is also mentioned in the Latin sources. However, the most frequent appearance of the term is in connection with specific people, as *ṭawāshī* So-and-So. The standard translation is eunuch, but whether this is always justified remains unclear. The term *ḥalqah* has attracted considerable attention and numerous publications, which cannot be fully discussed and listed here. See, for example, Eddé, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep*, 238; Lev, *Saladin in Egypt*, 156. For al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's and Baybars' reigns, see al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 47:32; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 6:61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 132, 383. For the shift to non-mamlūk manpower in the *ḥalqah* of the Mamluk period, see Mazor, *The Rise and Fall*, 22–23, 101–2. The term *mafāridah* (plural of *mufrad*) was part of the court-military monoculture of the Seljuks of Rum. See Alessio Bombaci, "The Army of the Saljuks of Rum," *Annali Istituto Orientali di Napoli* 38 (1978): 349–50.

⁸⁸The terminological shift is illustrated by the change from *zimām al-qaṣr*—the Fatimid term for a major-domo—to the Zangid and Ayyubid-Mamluk term, *ustādhdār*.

⁸⁹Jo van Steenberg, "The Mamluk Sultanate as a Military Patronage State: Household Politics and the Case of the Qalāwūnid Bayt (1279–1382)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 56 (2013): 189–217. The construct of "the Mamlukization of the Mamluk Sultanate" is also a powerful tool for re-examining the history of the Mamluk sultanate. However, where the fifteenth century is concerned, the particular circumstances of that period—the demographic consequences of the Black Death, accelerated waqfization of agricultural lands, the introduction of gunpowder weaponry, and the growing European threat in the Red Sea—must be taken into account. For the "Mamlukization" concept, see Jo van Steenberg, Patrick Wing, and Kristof D'Hulster, "The Mamlukization of the Mamluk Sultanate? State Formation and the History of Fifteenth Century Egypt and Syria," Parts I and II, *History Compass* 14 (2016): 549–59, 560–69.



(*maṭabikh*); while turning *iqṭāʿ* lands and urban properties into *waqfs* ensured the economic future of the second generation. In pre-modern agricultural societies investment in the urban economy alone could not sustain a viable household and, therefore, the amirs needed increasingly extensive *iqṭāʿ*s. Consequently, self-interest came to dominate their actions in the political arena. It should also be remembered that the “Mamluk Military Patronage State,” its Ayyubid predecessors, and other medieval regimes also applied economic violence to their subjects and administrators in the form of oppressive taxation and the confiscation of property and goods. The demarcation line between patronage and brute force was thin.

In the late Ayyubid and thirteenth-century Mamluk states, *mamlūks* of the sultan pervaded the amir echelon.⁹⁰ The role of the *mamlūk* system in the political and military life of the period requires re-examination. Militarily, during the Zangid-Ayyubid period, the *mamlūk* system was insignificant. Zangid and Ayyubid armies were composed of freeborn people and the *mamlūk* troops, numerically, were too small to have an impact on the battlefield.⁹¹ There is no evidence, other than Ibn Wāṣil’s unsubstantiated claim regarding the Battle of al-Manṣūrah, that they were crack troops capable of altering the tide of a battle. The significance of the system was political, and the sultan’s *mamlūk* corps served as recruiting grounds for filling the ranks of the amir class. As disillusioned as al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb might have been with his *mamlūks*, who had deserted him after the loss of Damascus, his political future as sultan in Egypt was related to his possessing a pool of *mamlūks* for inclusion in the amir class. The main significance of the enigmatic *baḥrīyah* was not as a military corps but as the breeding ground of amirs who became future Mamluk sultans.

⁹⁰It is explicitly stated that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb made his Turkish *mamālīk* amirs, and the same is said about Aybak. In 650/1252–53 he made his senior *mamālīk* amirs and appointed Quṭuz *nāʾib al-salṭānah*. See al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, 10:56; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikrah*, 7.

⁹¹Here as elsewhere (*Saladin in Egypt*, 153–58), I concur with the arguments posited by Humphreys (“The Emergence of the Mamluk Army,” *Studia Islamica* 45 [1977]: 68, 89) regarding the composition of the Ayyubid armies. In a number of publications Ayalon argued that *mamlūks* and Turks played a dominant role in military and political life during the Seljukid and Ayyubid periods. See “From Ayyubids to Mamluks,” 46–50; “The Mamlūks of the Seljuks: Islam’s Military Might at the Crossroads,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6 (1996): 305–33; “Aspects of the Mamluk Phenomenon,” *Der Islam* 53 (1976): 196–225, esp. 205–25; “Aspects of the Mamluk Phenomenon, Part Two” *Der Islam* 54 (1977): 1–32. The role of the *mamlūk* component in the ninth–tenth-century Samanid, Ghaznavid, and Abbasid armies has been questioned by D. G. Tor, who reached the conclusion that freeborn people constituted the majority in these armies. She has also noted the unreliability of the *mamlūk* corps. See “The Mamluks in the Military of the Pre-Seljuq Persianate Dynasties,” *Iran* 46 (2008): 213–25.



Within the broader area of medieval Islamic studies, Arabic papyrology and Mamluk studies are the most dynamic fields, highlighted by the publication of new sources and paradigm shifts. There is a need to adopt a diachronic approach to Mamluk history and the history of military slavery, which should be studied from within the broader framework of medieval socio-military history.⁹² The synchronic approach to military slavery has established the subject as a major field of research. However, like any other institution, it was not a uniform system but had a history and differing manifestations of varying historical significance.

⁹²Ulrich Haarmann has used European testimonies regarding fifteenth-century Mamluk politics for a diachronic discussion of how the exclusion of the hereditary principle evolved. See “The Mamluk System of Rule in the Eyes of Western Travelers,” *MSR* 4 (2000): 1–24, esp. 5, 15, 22, 23.

