

pating amirs in the December 1366 rebellion and its aftermath, such as Uzdamur al-‘Izzī, Asanbughā al-Qawṣūnī, and Ṭaydamur al-Bālisī, it is attested that they conspicuously shared similarly twisted Yalbughāwī origins.⁶⁰

Interestingly, the same may also be inferred for most of those on the March 1366 list of Yalbughā’s newly promoted amirs. In most cases, specific information on an amir’s origins remains wanting, and linking the various *nisbahs* in that list to those origins, as could be done for Qajmās and Qarābughā, quickly turns into an extremely hazardous exercise.⁶¹ Nevertheless, such great variety already suggests that for the majority, just as for Qajmās and Qarābughā, their entry into Mamluk society has to be situated beyond the confines of Yalbughā’s household, most probably in the secondary households of preceding amirs of lower profile, rank, or status. Nevertheless, for a handful of these amirs, information on their mamluk origins has been preserved, indeed again confirming, as in the case of Uzdamur al-‘Izzī, such a non-Yalbughāwī background. It is more precisely the great households of Yalbughā’s political predecessors from the 1350s that emerge as the cradles of the latter amirs’ careers, most notably those set up by Qalāwūnid magnates like Baybughā Rūs al-Nāṣirī (d. 1353), Shaykhū al-‘Umarī al-Nāṣirī (ca. 1303–57), the aforementioned Ṣarghitmish, and, once again, the Qalāwūnid sultan who managed to free himself from those magnates’ reins in the late 1350s, Yalbughā’s own master al-Nāṣir Ḥasan.⁶²

obituaries in any of the era’s chronicles. Their names are therefore all there is to reconstruct some biographical information (on Mamluk *nisbahs* and their uses, see D. Ayalon, “Names, Titles and ‘Nisbas’ of the Mamlūks,” *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975): 189–232, esp. 213–23).

⁶⁰ Uzdamur’s *ustādh* was the amir Baktamur al-Mu’minī al-Wishāqī (d. 1370) (Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 1:355); Asanbughā was linked to the mamluk corps of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 3:456); Ṭaydamur’s precise mamluk origins remain unknown, but the fact that he is said to have been “transferred in the executive offices before he became an amir of one hundred and commander of one thousand in the year 65 (1363)” suggests that his origins similarly lay beyond the Yalbughāwīyah (Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 3:525).

⁶¹ These many *nisbahs*, derived from either the title (*laqab*) or the proper name (*ism*) of a mamluk’s master (or occasionally of his slave dealer) (see Ayalon, “Names, Titles, and Nisbas,” 213), are: al-Jawharī, al-Qashtamurī, al-Badrī, al-Kashlāwī, al-‘Uthmānī, al-‘Izzī, al-Muḥammadī, al-Khalīlī, al-Yūsufī, al-Quṭlūqtamurī, al-Nizāmī, al-Bālisī, al-Ḥasanī, al-Jamālī, al-Sha‘bānī, al-Azqī, al-Aḥmadī, al-Argḥūnī, and al-‘Alā’ī. They are all either too common or too vague to allow for any positive identification of the masters to whom they were referring.

⁶² Three amirs, Raslān al-Sayfī, Yūnus al-‘Umarī, and Sūdūn al-Shaykhūnī, may be positively linked to the household of Shaykhū al-‘Umarī (al-Bayrūtī, fol. 40v; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 1:596–97; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:33; idem, *Manhal*, 6:104–9); apart from Qarābughā, Qurqumās’ *nisbah* also unequivocally suggests that he originated in Ṣarghitmish’s mamluk corps; Kakbughā al-Sayfī, also referred to as al-Sayfī Baybughā and al-Baybughāwī, originated most probably from among the mamluks of Baybughā Rūs (al-Bayrūtī, fol. 40r; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:161, 223); Alṭunbughā al-Māridānī was said to have been a mamluk of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 3:417–18); and, finally, the amir Arghūn al-Aḥmadī is suggested to have had a career of some sort predating

Apparently, in the 1360s there was a considerable pool of veteran mamluks available, stemming from a variety of high- and low-profile households that had dominated the preceding decades, but that all had ceased to exist one way or another due to one of the several purges of Qalāwūnid magnates in the 1340s and '50s, or that of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan in 1361.⁶³ While by the 1360s their masters had thus disappeared and their direct access to the regime's resources and to rank and status had therefore been blocked, these mamluks were obviously still around, undoubtedly looking for alternative avenues of subsistence and socio-political participation. In later times, the standard pattern for this would have been their re-employment in a secondary unit of the sultan's mamluks.⁶⁴ In the fourteenth century, however, such a formalized procedure is not yet attested, and considering the ephemeral status of the Qalāwūnid sultans of the 1360s, it is easy to imagine how at that time they ended up in the fresh but rapidly expanding corps of this decade's new magnates, including Yalbughā's, which were only being established in the wake of the ascendance of the latter in the late 1350s and early 1360s.⁶⁵ The fact that the numerical strength of these leaderless mamluks was supposedly still substantial by this time, stemming from regiments numbering from a handful to many hundreds of mamluks,⁶⁶ coupled with their status as "time-tested and battle-tried veterans"—as the sultan Mu'ayyad Shaykh (1412–21) was to explain his employment of similar uprooted mamluks in his service half a century later⁶⁷—undoubtedly led their new masters to welcome them with open arms. They must have seemed extremely useful to these 1360s magnates in compensating for the evident lack of military and political experience in their own relatively fresh mamluk corps. These qualities were then clearly put to good use by these magnates to settle the new scramble for pre-eminence between 1361 and 1366, compensating those veteran mamluks for their support with promotions to military rank and status. Such is clearly borne out by one of the eventual outcomes of that scramble, the aforementioned March 1366 list naming Yalbughā's supporters who were thus compensated. That this prag-

Yalbughā by the statement that "he was transferred [in the services] until Yalbughā appointed him [in 1363] in the sultan's service" (Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 1:351; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 3:438). On these Qalāwūnid magnates and their whereabouts in the 1350s, see Van Steenberg, *Order Out of Chaos*, 153–58.

⁶³ See Van Steenberg, *Order Out of Chaos*, 153–58.

⁶⁴ On this fifteenth-century fate of an amir's mamluks after his disappearance from the Mamluk scene, see David Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army, I," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15 (1953): 204, 220–22, referring to al-Zāhirī; al-Zāhirī, *Zubdah*, 116.

⁶⁵ See Van Steenberg, "The Amir Yalbughā al-Khāṣṣakī."

⁶⁶ See Van Steenberg, *Order Out of Chaos*, 89.

⁶⁷ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 14:112; quoted here from a paraphrase of this text in Ayalon, "Studies–I," 220.

matic utilization and compensation of veteran mamluks in the 1360s was a general policy, practiced also by patrons other than Yalbughā, may be further derived from the names that were mentioned at that same occasion for the arrested supporters of Yalbughā's opponent Ṭaybughā al-Ṭawīl, which hint at most of these associates' variegated pre-1360s origins. "[Ṭaybughā] was caught, as were his associates among the amirs, including Arghūn al-Is'ardī, Urūs al-Maḥmūdī, Kūkandāy, brother of Ṭaybughā al-Ṭawīl, Jariktamur al-Sayfī Manjak, Arghūn min 'Abd Allāh, Jumaq al-Shaykhūnī, Kilim, brother of Ṭaybughā al-Ṭawīl, Tulak, brother of Baybughā al-Ṣāliḥī, Aqbughā al-'Umarī al-Bālisī, Jirjī ibn Kūkandāy, Uzramuk min Muṣṭafā, and Ṭashtamur al-'Alā'ī."⁶⁸

Even after Yalbughā's removal and the ascent to power of veteran mamluks from his corps in December 1366, this pool continued to prove extremely apposite and appealing to these new patrons, who lacked more than ever the time and means to set up proper corps that could be of any value in the power struggles that immediately ensued. Eventually, as mentioned, by June 1367 the veteran amir Asandamur al-Nāṣirī emerged victorious, and the radical change he once more is reported to have instilled in Egypt's military hierarchy on this occasion—rewarding his supporters—reflects again the similarly variegated and predominantly pre-1360s, non-Yalbughāwī background of the latter:

On 10 June 1367, a robe of honor was bestowed upon the following [newly promoted] amirs *muqaddams alf*: Uzdamur al-'Izzī Abū Daqn, appointed *amīr silāḥ*, Jariktamur al-Sayfī Manjak, appointed *amīr majlis*, Alṭunbughā al-Yalbughāwī, appointed *ra's nawbah kabīr* [and promoted] from the rank of amir of ten (*min al-'ashrah*) [to the rank of *muqaddam alf*], Quṭlūqtamur al-'Alā'ī, [appointed] *amīr jāndār*, Sulṭān [Shāh] ibn Qārā, [appointed] *ḥājib thānī*, Bayram al-'Izzī, [appointed] *dawādār* [and promoted to the rank of] *muqaddam alf* from the rank and file (*min al-jundīyah*), and he was granted the *iqṭā'* of Ṭughāytamur al-Nizāmī, as well as all the horses, textiles, mamluks, money, grain, etc., that had been the latter's. The following were made members of the sultan's *jūkāndārīyah* ("masters of the polo mallet"): Qarāmish al-Ṣarghitmishī, Mubārak al-Ṭāzī, and Īnāl al-Yūsufī. Tulaktamur al-Muḥammadī was confirmed as *khāzindār*, as usual, and Bahādur al-Jamālī was made *shādd al-*

⁶⁸ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:31; also listed with slight variations in al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:116–17. For most of these twelve amirs, any further prosopographical information again remains wanting; only the pre-1366 whereabouts of Urūs (d. 1373) and Jariktamur (d. 1375) are known, originating indeed in the corps of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan and of the long-standing amir Manjak al-Yūsufī (ca. 1315–75), respectively (Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 3:438, 490); additionally, it may be safely assumed that Jumaq's *nisbah* indicates that he stemmed from the household of the amir Shaykhū (d. 1357).

dawāwīn, instead of Khalīl ibn ‘Arrām. Khalīl ibn Qawṣūn was offered the rank of *muqaddam alf*, and Qunuq al-‘Izzī and Arghūn al-Qashtamurī were [also] granted the rank of *muqaddam alf*. . . . Muḥammad ibn Ṭayṭaq al-‘Alā’ī, servant of Asandamur al-Nāṣirī, was granted a rank of *muqaddam alf*. The following were promoted to the rank of amir of forty by the sultan: Arghūn al-Muḥammadī al-Ānūkī al-Khāzin, Buzlār al-‘Umarī, Arghūn al-Arghūnī, Muḥammad ibn Ṭaqbughā al-Mājārī, Bākīsh al-Sayfī Yalbughā, Sūdūn al-Sayfī Shaykhū, Aqbughā Aṣ al-Shaykhūnī, Kubak al-Ṣarghitmishī, Julbān al-Sa’dī, Īnāl al-Yūsufī, Kumushbughā al-Ṭāzī, Qumārī al-Jamālī, Baktamur al-‘Alamī, Arslān Khujā, Mubārak al-Ṭāzī, Maliktamur al-Kashlāwī, Asanbughā al-‘Izzī, Quṭlūbughā al-Ḥalabī, and Ma’mūr al-Qalamṭāwī. [The following were promoted to] the rank of amir of ten: Alṭunbughā al-Maḥmūdī, Qarābughā al-Aḥmadī, Kizil al-Arghūnī, Ḥājji Bak ibn Shādī, ‘Alī ibn Baktāsh, Rajab ibn Khidr, and Ṭayṭaq al-Rammāh.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Al-Bayrūtī, fols. 5v–6. With only slight variation, indicating again an obvious textual interdependence, in Ibn Duqmāq, “Nuzhat al-Anām,” fols. 5v–6. Very similar listings are also found in al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:144–45; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:44–45. Also present in al-‘Aynī, “‘Iqd,” fol. 149, but in a summary format (referring only to the first three high-ranking amirs and their new positions). On the court offices of *amīr silāh*, *ra’s nawbah kabīr*, *amīr jāndār*, and *khāzindār*, see the references in Van Steenberghe, *Order Out of Chaos*, 40–41, nn. 65 and 66; on the secondary court positions of *ḥājib thānī*, *shādd al-dawāwīn*, and *jūkāndār*, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A’shā*, 4:22, 5:458; al-Zāhirī, *Zubdah*, 114–15.

This June 1367 list indeed looks very similar to the March 1366 list as far as the diverse, pre-1360s background of the majority of these amirs is concerned. Both lists have many different pre-1360 *nisbahs* in common (besides the most conspicuous and suggestive *nisbahs* al-Ṣarghitmishī, al-Ṭāzī, and al-Shaykhūnī, these are al-Qashtamurī, al-Kashlāwī, al-‘Izzī, al-Muḥammadī, al-Jamālī, al-Aḥmadī, al-Arghūnī, and al-‘Alā’ī); they moreover also share the amirs Uzdampur al-‘Izzī, Arghūn al-Arghūnī, Sūdūn al-Shaykhūnī, Qumārī al-Jamālī, and Jariktamur al-Sayfī Manjak, whose veteran status has been discussed before. Apart from all this, the origins for six more amirs on this list can moreover be positively located in preceding, vanished households; they are Bayram al-‘Izzī (a former mamluk of the amir ‘Izz al-Dīn Tuqtay al-Nāṣirī [1319–58] who was now not just granted a high rank, but also the household means to perform that rank’s demands [see Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 1:514; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 3:327]), Mubārak al-Ṭāzī (as his *nisbah* indicates, he stemmed from the household of the aforementioned Qalāwūnid magnate Ṭāz al-Nāṣirī [see Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Inbā’ al-Ghumr bi-Abnā’ al-Umr fī Tārīkh*, ed. M. ‘Abd al-Mu‘īd Khān (Beirut, 1986), 1:287], Bahādur al-Jamālī (whose mamluk origins went back to the household of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn [Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 1:496]), Khalīl ibn Qawṣūn (son of the illustrious Qawṣūn al-Nāṣirī [d. 1342], who made a career in the reign of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan [Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 5:280]), Arghūn al-Muḥammadī al-Ānūkī (as his *nisbah* indicates, he had been a mamluk of Ānūk ibn Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn [d. 1340] [Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 3:489]), and Buzlār al-‘Umarī (a former mamluk of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan [Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 1:476; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 3:361]). In all, this list of 39 beneficiaries of the June 1367 round of promotions still only mentions

Nevertheless, the employment of veteran mamluks also entailed some serious disadvantages. As suggested by Ibn Taghrībirdī on a similar, but much later situation, “they are as nothing, for they generally follow the majority; none of them is tied to any particular ruler, but they serve whoever happens to ascend the throne much in the manner of the popular dictum: ‘Whosoever marries my mother, to him I cry: ‘O my father.’”⁷⁰

The pragmatic, opportunist, and second-hand nature of the ties that bound most of these veteran mamluks and amirs to their new households seriously conditioned their loyalty to their patrons. Most importantly, new opportunities and a change of fortune were bound to affect those ties. Thus, one might speculate, there was little to prevent some from trying their luck against Yalbughā in December 1366, when differences of opinion on the treatment of his mamluks were emerging and an opportunity arose near Giza to attack him by surprise. Certainly, most amirs at first decided to join forces with Yalbughā to quell a rebellion that only a handful of them had started anyway and that seemed too remote and isolated to succeed. There even were a handful of rebellious amirs who regretted their initial actions against Yalbughā and who still managed to cross over to Cairo, including “some of his mamluks whom he had made amir, like Aqbughā al-Jawharī, Kumushbughā, and Yalbughā Shuqayr.”⁷¹ But when the rebels managed to involve the sultan and, quite unexpectedly, to return to the citadel with him and turn the conflict’s tide, there similarly was little to prevent the great majority of amirs from changing sides, so that sources observed how eventually: “Yalbughā’s associates slipped away, batch after batch, and Yalbughā was forced to flee. . . . He mounted his horse and left for his residence at al-Kabsh . . . while the common people were making fun of him and were calling him names, all the way until he reached his residence.”⁷²

four genuine members of the Yalbughāwīyah (Alṭunbughā al-Yalbughāwī, Īnāl al-Yūsufī, Bākīsh al-Sayfī Yalbughā, and Ma’mūr al-Qalamṭāwī [on their unambiguous Yalbughāwī origins, see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 3:70, 190; idem, *Nujūm*, 12:122; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 1:362, 3:327; Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’ li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi’* (Beirut, 1992), 2:320]).

⁷⁰ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Extracts from Abū ‘l-Maḥāsīn ibn Taghrī Birdī’s Chronicle Entitled Ḥawādith ad-Duhūr fī Madā ‘l-Ayyām wash-Shuhūr*, ed. William Popper, University of California Publications in Semitic Philology, vol. 8 (Berkeley, 1930–42), 3:443; translation quoted from Ayalon, “Studies–I,” 220.

⁷¹ See al-Bayrūtī, fol. 3r; Ibn Duqmāq, “Nuzhat al-Anām,” fol. 3r; al-‘Aynī, “‘Iqd,” fol. 145. Aqbughā was a member of the Yalbughāwīyah (see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 2:474), as Kumushbughā was also said to have been, though his mamluk origins really lay elsewhere (see al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍaw’*, 6:230 “the son of the lord of Ḥamāh had bought him when he was a young boy; he raised him and then presented him to al-Nāṣir Ḥasan; after Ḥasan’s murder Yalbughā al-‘Umārī took him and made him a *ra’s nawbah* with him”). No further information has survived on Yalbughā Shuqayr.

⁷² Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:135–36. Variant reading in al-Bayrūtī, fol. 3v; Ibn Duqmāq, “Nuzhat al-Anām,” fol. 3v.

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While a composite group of freshly promoted veterans clearly took the lead in the December 1366 rebellion and its aftermath, this surely does not invalidate the assertion most commonly found, namely that it was Yalbughā's non-promoted mamluks who stood up against their master. Most importantly, all source descriptions of the conflict agree that it was mamluks who bore the brunt of the action, including Yalbughā's eventual lynching; as suggested above, Yalbughā's harsh disciplining undoubtedly convinced many of them to go along with those bold and defiant amirs and act against their master.

But as with the amirs above, and even more so in this context of Yalbughā's numerous mamluks, the question that remains to be answered is whether such an unusually insubordinate attitude was similarly adopted by all of them at the same time, for similar reasons, or in similar fashion. In fact, a detailed analysis of the sources' representations of the role those mamluks really played in the December 1366 conflict and its aftermath adds a number of significant nuances to the overall picture.

After Yalbughā had barely escaped the amirs' attack while he was encamped at Giza, al-Maqrīzī details the reaction of his mamluks in particular as follows:

When they learned about Yalbughā's escape, they announced that "whoever wants his *makhdūm* Yalbughā should follow him, and who wants the sultan should stay with us." So a group (*ṭā'ifah*) followed Yalbughā, while most of them remained behind. The latter then hastened towards those who had defected from them and they overcame and enchained them, dividing everything they had brought with them among themselves.⁷³

Clearly, not all of Yalbughā's mamluks had been equally ill-disposed towards their master at the start of the conflict, at least according to the later historian al-Maqrīzī. Furthermore, this author suggested in a similar vein that thereafter "a group of his intimates" (*naḡar min khāṣṣatihi*) escaped to Cairo with him and that he then managed to rally "amirs and rank-and-file soldiers" (*min al-umarā' wa-al-ajṇād*) around him in Cairo, spending the night with this "troop of his" (*bi-jam'ihī*) in his residence at al-Kabsh.⁷⁴

Suggestions like these, that at least some of Yalbughā's mamluks maintained their loyalty, certainly gain credibility when Yalbughā's manifest and impressive resilience in the hours and days following the outbreak of the conflict—includ-

⁷³ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:132.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 3:131, 132. Very tellingly, Ibn Taghribirdī explains the enigmatic "a group of his intimates" by clarifying that they were "his intimates from among his mamluks" (Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:36).

ing the enthronement of a new sultan—is taken into consideration. In the volatile Mamluk political climate of this era, where a “shortage of men” was considered “the worst possible merchandise” (*qillat al-rijāl akhass biḍā‘ah*),⁷⁵ this would have been extremely difficult for anyone to effect without any numerically persuasive support from one’s own mamluk regiment.

Finally, the same consideration similarly lends validity and weight to al-Maqrīzī’s detailed representation of the conflict’s final hours on Saturday 12 December 1366. Whereas, as referred to above, most sources flatly claim that Yalbughā’s end was drawing nigh when all the amirs fled his party and “there was no one left with him,”⁷⁶ al-Maqrīzī adds that also “his mamluks fled one after the other (*farra mamālīkuhu shay’an ba‘da shay’in*)” and that in spite of this “a mere hundred horsemen yet remained with him (*wa-lam yabqa ma‘ahu illā dūna al-mī‘ah fāris*)” until he got arrested.⁷⁷

It may therefore be convincingly argued that in December 1366 Yalbughā was not just opposed by, amongst others, mamluks who all identified themselves as members of his Yalbughāwīyah, but that at the same time a substantial number of the rank and file maintained their loyalty, and that the latter group undoubtedly equally included such Yalbughāwīyah. Only in the course of the four days that this conflict lasted, therefore, and in particular when al-Ashraf Sha‘bān decided to join the rebels’ cause and managed to return to Cairo, did Yalbughā’s chances to emerge victorious evaporate and did most of his supporters from the Yalbughāwīyah leave him, as did the amirs, deciding the conflict to the detriment of their patron.

Unlike those promoted veterans, however, Yalbughā’s non-promoted mamluks did not benefit at all from the conflict’s outcome, whatever their initial stand. Actually, the precipitate fall of their patron may have done them more harm than good, for with his decapitation, they may have solved the alleged problem of their maltreatment, but at the same time a new, much bigger problem appeared. Since Yalbughā, as their employer, had been the guardian of their access to income and further resources, their killing of him, almost in a moment of insanity, had in fact deprived them of legitimate leadership, social status, and secure income. They, as it were, had severed the links that had embedded them within Mamluk society and that had offered them warrants for their own future. There is a hint at a new round of promotions a few weeks after Yalbughā’s death, when al-Maqrīzī, just as in March 1366, describes how “on Thursday 21 January 1367, the group of amirs came down from the citadel [proceeding] to the Maṣūriyah madrasah, where they were made

⁷⁵ Shams al-Dīn al-Shujā‘ī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥī wa-Awlādihi*, ed. B. Schäfer (Wiesbaden, 1977), 1:173; Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos*, 91.

⁷⁶ Al-Bayrūtī, fol. 3v; Ibn Duqmāq, “Nuzhat al-Anām,” fol. 3v; al-‘Aynī, “‘Iqd,” fol. 146; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:39.

⁷⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:135, 136.

to swear and [where] they were dressed with the fur hats, as is the custom [for the promotion of amirs].”⁷⁸ Unfortunately, in this case no names are mentioned. Yet, considering the aforementioned pattern of promotions on similar occasions, as well as the corps’ subsequent history, only a handful of Yalbughā’s mamluks, if any at all, may have benefited from this round.

In the months after December 1366, therefore, the majority of Yalbughā’s non-promoted mamluks were forced to try to find ways to overcome a certain destiny on the edge of Mamluk society, either spreading terror in Cairo’s streets and looting what they could no longer legitimately acquire, or seeking new employment and hiring their services out to new patrons, hoping for suitable rewards.⁷⁹ Thus, to mention but one example, immediately after the conflict, on 16 December 1366, one close companion of Yalbughā, the amir Aynabak al-Badrī, avoided being arrested and obtained rehabilitation, not just by “sending a lot of money to the amirs,” but also by “offering to every one of [Yalbughā’s] mamluks 1000 silver dirhams, which at that time was equivalent to more than 50 *mithqāl* in gold,” as a token of their aggressive, fearful reputation in those days, but also of the opportunities their precarious position offered.⁸⁰

Eventually, the one who according to all sources best managed to make use of those opportunities was the aforementioned veteran Asandamur al-Nāṣirī, who succeeded more than any of his peers in portraying himself as a credible substitute for the Yalbughāwīyah mamluks’ murdered *ustādh* and patron. Hence, by early June 1367, when this evolution of re-grouping and re-employment came full circle, Yalbughā’s mamluks are all presented as playing a key role in Asandamur’s aforementioned ousting of his veteran peers.⁸¹

Now, it has already been established that an important part within those Yalbughāwīyah ranks was reserved for mamluks of veteran status, who either gained rank and status in the course of the years 1366 and 1367, or were forced once again to seek new employment after December 1366, in both cases surely losing their Yalbughāwī-status for reasons of irrelevance. What is very interesting in the same context, however, is that source reports for what happened after the December 1366 rebellion hint with increasing explicitness at a crucial common identifying feature for those Yalbughāwīyah who continued to be labeled as

⁷⁸ Ibid., 3:140.

⁷⁹ For ample source references to their violent engagements in Cairo in the course of 1367, see al-Bayrūtī, fols. 5r–v, 37r–38r, 42; Ibn Duqmāq, “Nuzhat al-Anām,” fols. 5r–v, 40r–41r; Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, 5:457, 458, 461–62; al-‘Aynī, “‘Iqd,” fols. 148–49, 152–54; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:141, 142–43, 150–51, 153–54; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 3:295, 296, 309–11, 326, 327; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:42–44, 47–49, 103.

⁸⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:139.

⁸¹ See al-Bayrūtī, fol. 5r–v; Ibn Duqmāq, “Nuzhat al-Anām,” fol. 5r–v; Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘Ibar*, 5:457; al-‘Aynī, “‘Iqd,” fols. 148–49; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:142–43; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:42.

such, even after their *ustādh*'s demise. In his account of the December 1366 rebellion, al-Maqrīzī, in fact, already defined the rebellious mamluks very precisely as Yalbughā's "*ajlāb* mamluks (*mamālīkuhu al-ajlāb*)," even clarifying at one point that their number had been no less than 1,800.⁸² To my knowledge, this is in fact the very first time the sources generically apply the term "*ajlāb*," which is well known from fifteenth-century Mamluk history to denote a royal corps' last import of mamluks, but quite unusual for preceding periods. Al-Maqrīzī, however, is the only one among the chroniclers to use the term in the context of this December 1366 rebellion, which suggests that it may well be an anachronism from the first half of the fifteenth century, when this historian was writing his chronicle and when use of the term, especially in the context of multifarious local problems with the sultan's junior mamluks, indeed became ubiquitous in the era's historiography.⁸³

Nevertheless, also in his description of Yalbughā's mamluks' continued search for alternative patronage after December 1366, al-Maqrīzī persists in frequently applying the term "*ajlāb*."⁸⁴ Moreover, from the accounts on early June 1367 onwards, when this search ended in Asandamur's employing these mamluks' services to impose his authority, the term "*ajlāb*" gradually comes to be used by all sources alike. At first, in the course of those June 1367 actions of Asandamur against his peers, the contemporaries al-Bayrūtī and Ibn Duqmāq, and Ibn Taghrībirdī with them, still used the common denominator "Yalbughā's malicious mamluks (*mamālīk Yalbughā al-ashrār*)" for those whom al-Maqrīzī grouped in the same context under the term "*ajlāb*."⁸⁵ After that point in the sources' historical chronologies, however, "*ajlāb*" seems the appropriate term, applied by all sources alike to denote Asandamur's new rank-and-file supporters who continued to prove extremely difficult to control.⁸⁶ Even Ibn al-Furāt (1134/5–1405), for instance, mentions how eventually "al-Ashraf Sha'bān was victorious over the '*ajlāb*' mamluks of the amir Yalbughā al-Khāṣṣakī (*al-ajlāb mamālīk al-amīr Yalbughā al-Khāṣṣakī*)

⁸² Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:130, 139.

⁸³ See Ayalon, "Studies–I," 204, 206–13 (207: "In the Circassian period, a new name for the mamluks of the ruling sultan appears which becomes more frequent than *mushtarawāt*, without displacing it entirely, viz. *ajlāb*, or *julbān*, sing. *jalabī* or *jalab*"); Amalia Levanoni, "The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (1994): 386–87; Jean-Claude Garcin, "The Regime of the Circassian Mamluks," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume 1, Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 295, 300–2, 309–10; Amalia Levanoni, "The Sultan's *Laqab*: A Sign of a New Order in Mamluk Factionalism," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni (Leiden, 2004), 79–116.

⁸⁴ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:141, 142, 150, 152, 153–55.

⁸⁵ Al-Bayrūtī, fol. 5r; Ibn Duqmāq, "Nuzhat al-Anām," fol. 5r; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:42.

⁸⁶ Al-Bayrūtī, fol. 40r; Ibn Duqmāq, "Nuzhat al-Anām," fol. 40r; Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-Ibar*, 5:457, 458, 472; al-ʿAynī, "Iqd," fol. 152; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:47.

and arrested the amir Asandamur al-Nāṣirī.”⁸⁷ Another contemporary, al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī (d. 1372), also used this term in a similarly telling way in his passing reference to these events of late 1367: “the common people had come to the aid of the sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Sha‘bān during the operation of the *ajlāb* mamluks (*fī ḥarakat al-mamālīk al-ajlāb*) . . . , when they intended to cause trouble for the sultan, in conjunction with the amir Asandamur al-Khāṣṣakī. . . . But the common people were mobilized, killing the *ajlāb* and making them bite the dust.”⁸⁸

In a very curious and puzzling addendum, the same author even explains such disturbing events by claiming that upon examination of these defeated “*ajlāb*,” it turned out that “they had their foreskins intact and were not circumcised (*wa-hum ghulf bi-ghayr khitān*), by which it became known that they were Christians who kept away from the true faith (*naṣārā ba‘īdūn ‘an al-īmān*).”⁸⁹

It has been convincingly argued that one should be very wary of treating al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī and his literary compendium as a historical source, for its key event of the Alexandrian crusade as much as for any other contemporary occurrence.⁹⁰ This “islamicized” and at once also surprising explanation for the turmoil of the year 1367 certainly warrants this kind of historiographical wariness. At the same time, however, it is doubtful that such an explanation has no bearing whatsoever on the historical reality of the late 1360s, during which its author was living and writing; it should certainly not be denied that in essence it represents in one way or another a version of the story of these “*ajlāb*” as it was being told and retold in contemporary Alexandria.⁹¹ At the very least, al-Nuwayrī’s remark hints at the extremely negative perception of these “*ajlāb*” by contemporaries by the time he was writing up his work.⁹² Furthermore, in conjunction with the other contem-

⁸⁷ Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*, ed. Qusṭantīn Zurayq and Najlā ‘Izz al-Dīn (Beirut, 1936–42), 9:319.

⁸⁸ Al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī, *Kitāb al-Ilmām*, 6:18.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Weintritt, *Formen spätmittelalterlichen islamischer Geschichtsdarstellung*.

⁹¹ Furthermore, in the context of literary *topoi*, there seems to exist an intriguing degree of similarity between this contemporary assessment of the “*ajlāb*” as Christians and reports by European travelers to the Mamluk sultanate that portray all mamluks as Christian renegades (cf. Ulrich Haarmann, “The Mamluk System of Rule in the Eyes of Western Travellers,” *MSR* 5 (2001): esp. 6–16).

⁹² Quite intriguingly, Robert Irwin, in his article “Mamluk Literature” (*MSR* 7, no. 1 [2003]: 12), stated that the term *ajlāb*, or rather its variant *julbān*, already occurred earlier, during the reign of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, in the context of which it would have been used by the “jack-of-all-literary-trades” Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ḥajalah (1325–75) in his “account of the revolt of the *julbān* (newly imported mamluks) against that sultan.” Closer inspection, however, reveals that this account, ominously entitled “Dawr al-Zamān fī Ṭaḥn al-Julbān,” does not concern the reign of that sultan, but indeed, as would be expected from the argument presented here, it deals with Yalbughā’s junior mamluks and their disturbing behavior in the timeframe between December 1366 and October 1367. In fact, this brief account as preserved in its Dār al-Kutub manuscript (5664 Adab)—contained in 9 folia, only

porary and later authors' common use of "*ajlāb*" in their accounts of the events of the summer and autumn of 1367, there can be no doubt that there was at the time a distinctive body at work in Cairo that was identifiable by a generic term that explicitly linked them to Yalbughā's leaderless junior mamluks and to the December 1366 rebellion and its chaotic aftermath.

In general, it should come as no surprise that the 1360s not only provided contenders for power with a recruitment pool of ready-made veteran mamluks of various stock, but also with sufficient opportunities to acquire the usual junior rank-and-file recruits, firmly tied to their own *ustādh*'s patronage only.⁹³ However, as far as Yalbughā is concerned, this traditional building block of a magnate's mamluk household was expanded to a giant scale, reaching massive dimensions of, allegedly, 1,500 to 1,800 juniors.⁹⁴ Numerically, therefore, his personal corps of mamluks, including veterans as well as these *ajlāb*, surely outdid those of any of his contemporaries, with the later historian Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah claiming that "one of [the contemporary historians⁹⁵] stated that it was said that he had three thousand mamluks."⁹⁶ In fact, this more than anything else is what Yalbughā continued to be remembered for long after his death, so that eventually Ghars al-Dīn al-Zāhirī (d. 1468), in his administrative manual, considered it still apposite to include a reference to Yalbughā's corps rather than to any other historical number of mamluks, claiming that Yalbughā even had had "3,500 mamluks in his service, one of them being al-Malik al-Zāhir Barqūq who was still a junior (*ṣaghīran*) at the time."⁹⁷

This quote reminds us once more of the fact that by 1366 these Yalbughāwīyah ranks were still made up in large part of juniors like Barqūq. In view of this junior status, not yet having completed their training, most of his corps surely was still

5 of which were actually used for this text—was according to the colophon written down by one ʿUmar al-Dumyātī al-Shāfiʿī in 1465–66 (870 AH) and annotated by a Muḥammad ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī on Sunday 17 July 1611, and it was therefore only indirectly a text by Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, as suggested in the beginning of the text ("the high-minded *shaykh*, the *imām* Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Abī Ḥajalah said . . .). Most importantly in the present context, in its berating, even vituperative anti-"*ajlāb*" language, this short treatise in rhymed prose by an author who, like al-Nuwayrī, died before these juniors' partial rehabilitation in the second half of the 1370s, clearly also presents the same extremely negative perception of them as was still in vogue at the time.

⁹³ On the links between junior mamluks and their *ustādh*, see Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos*, 88–92; for the classic study on the subject, see Ayalon, *L'Esclavage du Mamlouk*, esp. 27–29.

⁹⁴ Al-Bayrūtī, fol. 37v; Ibn Duqmāq, "Nuzhat al-Anām," fol. 37v; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:151 (1500), 139 (1800).

⁹⁵ This may well refer to Ibn al-Furāt (d. 1405), whose chronicle for these years is lost, but who was a well-attested source for Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah (see David Reisman, "A Holograph MS of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's '*Dhayl*,'" *MSR* 2 (1998): esp. 29–42.)

⁹⁶ Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 3:306.

⁹⁷ Al-Zāhirī, *Zubdah*, 113, also repeated on 148.

more of a liability than an asset to Yalbughā, despite its numerical strength. Hence his and his colleagues' pragmatic employment of veterans in the same ranks, as detailed above. In fact, the questionable political and military usefulness of the junior mamluks that made up those ranks may be further inferred from the fact that many seem to have been acquired only shortly before 1366. Thus, according to one biographical note, Barqūq was only imported and bought from a slave merchant in the course of the year 1363.⁹⁸ Indeed, the generic term “*ajlāb*” (recent imports) by which Barqūq and the many hundreds of his cohorts eventually became known in the streets of Cairo and beyond suggests that his was not a unique case.

At the same time, however, Barqūq and the other “*ajlāb*” whose biographies have survived (such as Ibn Khaldūn's eyes and ears, Alṭunbughā al-Jūbānī, or the patron of today's famous Khān al-Khalīlī in Cairo, Jarkas al-Khalīlī) were surprisingly older than one would expect of junior mamluks like this, as they were all said to have been born around the year 1340 and were therefore already in their twenties when they became mamluks.⁹⁹ In view of the career of their *ustādh* Yalbughā and his quickly rising political star, especially after the murder of Sultan Ḥasan in 1361, it can be quite convincingly suggested that it must have been for reasons of impatient ambition, peer rivalry, and concomitant time pressures that Yalbughā acquired his own mamluks at such an advanced age, attempting to transform them into a useful army in the shortest time possible by subjecting these novices to spartan training methods and relentless discipline. Undoubtedly, Yalbughā's intentions and his *ajlāb*'s training were cut short by the December 1366 conflict. This policy's partial success would nevertheless show again when the survivors among these “*ajlāb*,” including Barqūq, were allowed to return to Cairo in 1373 “to train [al-Ashraf Sha‘bān's] mamluks.”¹⁰⁰

Overall, however, by 1366 their training and experience were still deemed insufficient, despite their numerical usefulness for Yalbughā's political muscle. When therefore support and loyalty had to be rewarded and ranks redistributed in the course of Yalbughā's struggle for pre-eminence, as in March 1366, it was in general not these junior Yalbughāwīyah who benefited. As detailed above, in view of their expertise of considerable years, their more veteran status, and perhaps also their much more artificial household membership, it was Yalbughā's veteran mamluks who were almost automatically preferred for promotion. Only in a very few cases did juniors manage to break into the military ranks, but these are exceptions that rather seem to confirm the general rule. As mentioned before, Aqbughā al-

⁹⁸ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:223.

⁹⁹ See, for references to their age, al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:476; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 12:120; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 1:308. On the issue of a mamluk's age, see Ayalon, *L'Esclavage du Mamlouk*, 13–14.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, 5:462.

Aḥmadī (quite tellingly nicknamed “*al-jalab*”), for instance, was made an amir of one hundred in March 1366, but this seems primarily to have been the result of “his having a privileged status with Yalbughā.”¹⁰¹

When this factor of numerous very junior Yalbughāwīyah mamluks is taken into consideration for the December 1366 conflict and its background, it becomes clear that dissatisfaction with their harsh training played an important role in inducing these “*ajlāb*” to take part in it. Moreover, a role was surely also played by the *ajlāb*’s frustrations with what those veterans in their corps were already achieving while, despite their mature age, most of the *ajlāb* were still reckoned too junior for such advancement.¹⁰²

All in all, however, whatever the role of such *ajlāb* frustrations, it seems that all sorts of practicalities, including even the Nile, were surely as much of a decisive factor in the course the conflict took for the Yalbughāwīyah as Yalbughā’s relentless and selective patronage may have been. First of all, considering that Yalbughā had only gone to Giza in December 1366 for a hunting party, it is highly unlikely that his entire corps of mamluks crossed the Nile with him, especially in view of its infamously giant size. Obviously, sufficient numbers had been left in or near his residence at al-Kabsh to prove extremely useful when, after the failed attempt against his life, he hastily returned with only a handful of his intimates. Secondly, changing camps was not made easy for those Yalbughāwīyah mamluks who had been left near Giza, considering Yalbughā’s instant blockade of the Nile; as mentioned earlier, some amirs and “mamluks he had promoted” still did manage to cross and switch back to Yalbughā’s side on Friday, but most who tried failed and, as stated by al-Maqrīzī, fell into the hands of their rebellious peers.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ See Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, 3:298.

¹⁰² In this context, it is worthwhile to compare the case of, for instance, the amir Uljībughā al-Muẓaffarī al-Khāṣṣakī, who was said to have been only nineteen when he died in 1349, and who despite that young age already had been a leading amir in Cairo and a governor of the province of Tripoli (al-Ṣafadī, *A‘yān*, 1:594–98; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Nujūm*, 10:216 [“his moustache had not yet come out”]); a less extreme, more mainstream, and equally interesting example concerns that of the amir Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī (d. 1347), who was already mentioned as an amir in Cairo in 1333 (see Mūsā ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyá al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāzīr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāsir*, ed. A. Ḥuṭayṭ [Beirut, 1986], 179), that is, when he was in his early twenties, as suggested by paleopathological investigations of his remains in his burial crypt in Cairo (“These bones belong to the male of massive morphological structure in good state of health, most probably of the White Variety, 173 cm tall. His age at death was 35–40 years.” [Tadeusz Dzierzykraj-Rogalski, Jerzy Kania, and Medhat al-Minabbawi, “The investigations of burial crypts in the mausoleum of princess Tatar al-Ḥijāziyya in Cairo,” *Annales Islamologiques* 23 (1987): 83–84]). That these examples date back to two or three decades from the situation of the “*ajlāb*” is, in fact, revealing for the profound changes that are occurring (see below).

¹⁰³ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:132.

In all this, however, fear of Yalbughā's retaliation rather than any type of maltreatment seems to have been the driving force behind these and most other actions of the mamluks who tried to return to Yalbughā. Anxieties about their treatment may have easily tricked many of the Yalbughāwīyah-mamluks in Giza into their promoted veteran colleagues' scheme, but when this failed and Yalbughā escaped, leaving them cut off from the center of power on the Nile's "wrong" side, the following painful observation by one later historian may indeed have guided their further actions: "When they realized that their *ustādh* had saved himself and [that] he had fled, they became extremely worried (*ishtadda takhawwufuhum*) that when he would overcome them thereafter, he would not leave any of them alive (*lā yubqī minhum aḥadan*)."¹⁰⁴

Such fears, undoubtedly most vivid among those of Yalbughā's *ajlāb* who had been at Giza with him, obviously did not materialize. Nevertheless, they eventually did to some extent become a reality for all of Yalbughā's "*ajlāb*." With the loss of their *ustādh* and their training incomplete, they did as a matter of fact experience death in financial, social, and political terms. When they realized this, and when hiring out their numerically useful services to Asandamur and his peers in 1367 did not seem to result in any lasting change of fortune or sufficient tangible rewards—unlike once again for the veteran mamluks—the consequences were dearly felt in Cairo's streets and palaces. Going totally out of control, especially after June 1367 and another missed round of rewards and promotions, they started looting and attacking whatever and whomever they could lay their hands on, and no one, not even Asandamur, seemed willing or capable to rectify that situation. It is this process that goes a long way in explaining how there gradually was generated a public and very negative awareness of their distinctive identity as Yalbughā's junior mamluks, or his "*ajlāb*," as attested by source reports. The immediate outcome of this parallel formation of a hateful public opinion of them surely can be read in the remarkably bad press they received from al-Nuwayrī.¹⁰⁵ In the longer run, however, this abusive tone was moderated, reflecting in fact the lasting change of fortune that a number of these *ajlāb* did eventually experience. Hence, in a much milder and rather functional account, al-Maqrīzī (once more inspired by the very similar remarks of Ibn Khaldūn) presents the final, but in his version also rather purifying, whereabouts of Yalbughā's junior mamluks as follows:

On Thursday 14 [October 1367], the sultan drowned a group from the Yalbughāwīyah mamluks, who had agreed to kill him, in the Nile. . . . In the morning of this Thursday, 100 of the notables of these Yalbughāwīyah *ajlāb* (*al-ajlāb al-Yalbughāwīyah*) were

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:36.

¹⁰⁵ And from Ibn Abī Ḥajalah (see n. 92)

nailed and cut in two. A group of them were drowned. The remainder of them were banished to Syria and to Aswan. Among those of the Yalbughāwīyah that were banished were Barqūq, Barkah, Altunbughā al-Jūbānī, Jarkas al-Khalīlī, and Aqbughā al-Māridānī. The *sharīf* Baktamur, *wālī* of Cairo, took them and detained them in his house, their hands fixed in wood. His lunch came, but he did not give them anything to eat. He assigned over them someone to take them to Qatyā. The *wālī* of Qatyā took them and sent them to Ghaz-zah. Its governor sent them to al-Karak. They were imprisoned in a dark pit, in its citadel, for several years. Then they were released and they went to Damascus, where they served the amir Manjak, *nā'ib al-Shām*, until the sultan called for the Yalbughāwīyah mamluks to employ them in the service of his two sons. So Barqūq served amongst the others that were in the service of the two sons of the sultan, until the sultan got killed after his return from 'Aqabat Aylah. Then, the amir Aynabak led the regime, Barqūq becoming one of the amirs of forty. Thereupon, he took hold of the stable and remained there until he became sultan.¹⁰⁶

ON THE BRINK OF A NEW ERA?

In sum, in the course of the four days this conflict lasted, two clear-cut but fluctuating parties appear as opposing each other, including Yalbughāwīyah mamluks and amirs on both sides. This already seems quite surprising from a modern historiographical perspective, but even more surprising is the general observation that the friction between these two multifarious parties seems less to have been caused by any lack of morality or respect for traditional values in either camp, and rather to have been closely tied up with the actual composition of the Yalbughāwīyah, and, by extension, with the subtle but irrevocable changes the Mamluk political scene was undergoing. From this perspective, modern historiography was right after all to implicate the Yalbughāwīyah, but has failed so far to grasp the actual background and the deeper meaning of that allegation!

Most importantly, one of the more conspicuous lines along which friction developed in the 1360s was a generational one, with on one end mamluks of veteran status, stemming from households long gone and yet increasingly managing to improve their status, and on the other end their junior colleagues, recently imported and firmly tied to their *ustādhs'* current successes, but despite that only left with crumbs of benefit. Undoubtedly, the actual picture was less black and white than stereotyping like this allows for. Nevertheless, from the above discussion it is clear that at the time there generally were such pragmatic processes at work in the Mam-

¹⁰⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:154–55; see also Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, 5:458, 472.

luk sultanate, from veteran re-employment and rewarding to junior acquisition and frustration. Most importantly, the friction caused by the more striking extremes of these processes was a reality that should not be questioned and that became particularly apparent and relevant as time elapsed. Thus, in December 1366, Yalbughā al-Khāṣṣakī became the victim of a remarkable coinciding of these processes in the course of a rather classical Mamluk struggle for power. On that occasion, veteran ambitions concurred with junior frustrations to ignite a rebellious spark, and geographical circumstances, including the young sultan's presence on the rebellious side of the river, encouraged that spark to turn into a blaze that even the almighty Yalbughā proved incapable of fighting.

As seen above, this outcome did not mean the end of those processes, or of the subsequent friction. Quite to the contrary: whereas the processes were simply continued throughout 1367, the friction came increasingly to the forefront in the new struggles for power that ensued after Yalbughā's murder. In the end, Yalbughā's "*ajlāb*" themselves very prominently fell afoul of that friction, when al-Ashraf Sha'bān's survival was at stake again and his reaction proved surprisingly astute (with due assistance, as all sources did not fail to notice, from Cairo's populace, fed up as they were with the havoc).

In the short run, therefore, the new social and political reality that emerged from this situation seriously advantaged veteran mamluks once more, when from the end of 1367 onwards al-Ashraf Sha'bān turned—either deliberately, or simply by lack of any serious alternative, or perhaps even as a result of both—to such veterans to sustain his reign. Thus, in the course of the next few years, he signed up veterans to become the executive pillars of his regime, as with the amirs Uljāy al-Yūsufī (d. 1373), Manklī Bughā al-Shamsī (ca. 1320–72), 'Alī al-Māridānī (ca. 1310–70), and Manjak al-Yūsufī (ca. 1315–75).¹⁰⁷ Even more striking, however, is the fact that Sha'bān also chose to continue the more general line of policy vis-à-vis veterans that had been favored by Yalbughā al-Khāṣṣakī and his peers before, singling out mamluks with a clear pre-1360 background rather than his own recruits in any round of promotions, as may be gathered once more from another set of detailed lists of promoted amirs that has been preserved for the remainder of his reign, even up to its final year 1377.¹⁰⁸ Clearly, in the 1360s and 1370s power and authority remained closely linked to the fate and status of the many mamluks who had entered the regime in the 1350s, the 1340s, and even before.

In the long run, however, this situation did not last, and this was surely not just due to those veterans' natural life cycles. As summarized by al-Maqrīzī above, in

¹⁰⁷ See Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos*, 109, 162–63.

¹⁰⁸ For these lists, see al-Bayrūtī, fols. 40r–40v, 52v, 56v–57, 80–80v, 82, 84, 100, 107; Ibn Duqmāq, "Nuzhat al-Anām," fols. 43r, 60r, 83v, 85, 110v–111r; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:161–62, 176–77, 185, 216, 219, 225–26, 255, 270, 387–88.

March 1377 rehabilitated survivors from Yalbughā's "ajlāb" in particular suddenly managed to engage successfully in a program of estrangement between Sha'bān and his supporters, finally generating their own access to rank and status and eventually culminating, in November 1382, in the dissolution of the Qalāwūnid sultanate and the enthronement of one of their own, Barqūq.

Surely, friction between veterans and their established interests on the one hand and juniors and their hunger for change on the other is nothing new in history, and this qualification is all the more valid for the Mamluk sultanate, in the era of the Qalāwūnid sultanate between 1279 and 1382 as well as in general. What is remarkable in this respect, however, offering insight into another conspicuous line along which that friction developed in the 1360s, is that these processes and the conflicts they fed into no longer took place within the confines of one royal household, be it fourteenth-century Qalāwūnid or thirteenth-century Ayyubid/Ṣāliḥid. This was not a friction that involved the royal household and its members in any meaningful manner, despite the political nature of what was at stake. Rather, in the 1360s things revolved increasingly around the household of the amir Yalbughā al-Khāṣṣakī, without any royal involvement, but also without strictly being limited to Yalbughā's assorted environment. This was in fact not even a friction that took place within the confines of any one household, between its senior and junior members, as had happened so often in the past, from the Baḥrīyah's actions against Tūrān Shāh to al-Nāṣir Ḥasan's collisions with his father's mamluks and, eventually, with some of his own. Rather, there were two broad generational social categories at work that, especially as far as veterans are concerned, had little more in common than the insecure fate they were sharing and the pragmatic approach they took to circumventing that problem. As such, the December 1366 conflict and its aftermath was one of the very first political conflicts of substance in the fourteenth century that was fought outside of the umbrella of the Qalāwūnid sultanate, that is, by a majority of contenders for authority and status that had at most only very limited ties with the royal house. This was therefore a first, but ominous, breach of the Qalāwūnid political monopoly, originating in the fissioning of great households under the Qalāwūnid umbrella in the 1340s and 1350s.¹⁰⁹

Moreover, this was also a first and ominous breach in Qalāwūnid household politics, when the friction and resulting conflict were no longer about realigning loyalties within the Qalāwūnid house or its offshoots, but about gaining support

¹⁰⁹ For more details on this fission, see Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos*, 147–58. On the origins of this process, and its consequences for the Qalāwūnids, see idem, "Caught between Heredity and Merit: The Amir Qawṣūn and the Legacy of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (d. 1341)," in *The Mamluk Sultanate: Political, Military, Social and Cultural Aspects*, ed. Reuven Amitai and Amalia Levanoni, forthcoming. For an assessment of the life and times of the Qalāwūnid political monopoly in general, see Van Steenbergen, "The Mamlūk Sultanate as Military Patronage State: Royalty, Household Politics and the Case of the Qalāwūnid *Bayt* (1279–1382)," forthcoming.

and status by a majority of outsiders to any such traditional framework of reference. In such a transforming environment, new political strategies had to be devised, including the tendency to give absolute priority to the alignment of those outsiders through material rewards, as opposed to the more traditional preference that used to be shown to those that were already firmly tied to one's social and political success.

The far more tiered and friction-prone political system which such strategies automatically gave rise to—with veteran amirs on one side of the political spectrum and junior mamluks or “*ajlāb*” on the other, tied through quite distinct sets of alliances to the political leaders of the day—is actually quite reminiscent of Mamluk politics as it has been described for the fifteenth century. In fact, the similarities are so striking that Jean-Claude Garcin's description of this aspect of that next century's political system in the *Cambridge History of Egypt* reminds one immediately of the historical processes described above for the December 1366 conflict and its aftermath:

From 1428 . . . the problem first appeared of recruits who were unruly, not because they . . . would not have had a political future in the framework of their integration into the system, but because that integration could not happen fast enough. Faced with the recruits, the amirs, now with fewer mamluks, found themselves at a loss. The rift between the old troops and newcomers brought about a corresponding strengthening of the move to form the older ones into an aristocracy. . . . So a new political mechanism had gradually been imposed: any amir who rose to be sultan had first to remove his predecessor's recruits, relying on the previous age group that had been kept in the wings until that point, which marked their genuine entry into the political arena. The initial rhythm of Mamluk political life was thus much slowed down.¹¹⁰

Clearly, “the problem . . . of recruits” and the “new political mechanism” did not first appear in 1428 or thereabouts, but became increasingly apparent already from the December 1366 conflict onwards, filling the vacuum left by the slowly disintegrating Qalāwūnid house.

¹¹⁰ Garcin, “The Regime of the Circassian Mamluks,” 300–1. The workings of this “mechanism,” including the new types of alliances between non-promoted *julbān* and promoted amirs, were further explored by Amalia Levanoni in her very insightful “The Sultan's *Laqab*”; on p. 115, she in fact already seems to hint at earlier precedents for this “new order,” without however naming them. This “rift between the old troops and newcomers” as a typical feature of fifteenth-century Mamluk politics was first fully formulated by Amalia Levanoni in her “The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate,” esp. 386–87.

Viewed from this perspective, however, the ascendancy of the *ajlāb*, Barqūq's ending of the Qalāwūnid sultanate in November 1382, and his deliberate attempt to impose his own Zāhiri household, including his own lineage and his own mamluks, as the new framework of social and political reference instead of the defunct Qalāwūnid one, actually suspended the emergence of such an entirely new political system. As such, the sultanates of Barqūq and his sons (1382–1412) were not so much a radical break from the past, as references traditionally tend to portray them, but rather an attempt to link up again with that past and to restore to pre-eminence the traditional royal household, as a comprehensive political unit that firmly monopolized the regime, its political economy, and Mamluk society at large, far beyond the limits of generational pragmatism.

Despite the fact that the latter observations and their background obviously need further qualification, it is already clear that this attempt at a reversal of historical processes that had first come to the surface in the 1360s did not, in the long run, manage to eradicate those processes. This was surely as much due to their innate resilience and embryonic presence in traditional Mamluk political practices (as in the cyclical or “generational” nature of rank-and-file acquisition, training, and employment, as well as in the aforementioned reliance on numerical strength), as to the many crises that the turn of the century witnessed. From 1412 onwards, therefore, change did eventually re-emerge, when a tiered, exclusive system of veteran amirs, junior mamluks and political (and financial!) pragmatism gradually came to supersede a more inclusive household system, and an overall process set in that unmistakably should be identified as one of Mamluk state formation, at the cost of traditional household politics.¹¹¹

Processes of historical change such as these, then, originating in the middle of the fourteenth century, catching momentum from the 1360s onwards, and only temporarily suspended towards the end of the century, led the sultanate towards its own version of early modernity in the course of the fifteenth century. Clearly, no one in particular, not even Yalbughā or his mamluks, can or should be blamed individually for generating transformations that they were all subject to. They are rather a token of the dynamic nature of Mamluk history, as they were gradually yet irrevocably heralding a new era.

¹¹¹ A research project at Ghent University (financed by the European Research Council and by the university's Research Foundation) is currently involved in the detailed reconstruction and assessment of these transformations on the basis of prosopographical research. The overarching project's title is “The Mamlukisation of the Mamluk Sultanate: Political Traditions and State Formation in 15th Century Egypt and Syria.”